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# **Educational assortative mating after divorce. Persistence or divergence from patterns in first marriages?**

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## *Abstract*

Higher order unions are playing an increasingly important part in Western family life. Still, even if there is a large literature on educational assortative mating in first unions, research on matching in higher order unions is scarce. Research about educational assortative mating patterns gives insight into factors of attractiveness on the remarriage market and is relevant for understanding and predicting the reproduction, and maybe reinforcement, of social inequality after divorce. Using data from divorced men and women in Belgium (Flanders), we examine educational assortative mating patterns in higher order unions and how the first partner choice is associated with the second partner choice. Our results, based on competing risks event history models, indicate that people tend to meet and mate partners similar to their former partners. We do not find evidence of educational assortative mating patterns in first marriages being extended to patterns in higher order unions.

## Introduction

Due to the increased divorce rates, higher order unions are playing an increasingly important part in Western family life. While the number of first marriages has been decreasing since about the 1970s, the share of remarriages in the total number of marriages has grown substantially. At the same time, the marriage propensity of divorced people has fallen sharply. Unmarried cohabitation with a new partner after a first divorce, either as a permanent alternative or as a prelude to a new marriage, has gained ground (Cherlin, 2010; Corijn, 2005; Pasteels, Lodewijckx & Mortelmans, 2013; Spijker & Solsona, 2012).

Needs, attractiveness and opportunity in social, economic and cultural terms are the three most mentioned arguments why people enter a new union after divorce (de Graaf & Kalmijn, 2003; Oppenheimer, 1988). Entering a new union might fulfill the need for love and companionship. Feelings of loneliness and deteriorated well-being are very common for people whose first marriage ended (Amato, 2000; Pasteels, Heylen & Mortelmans, forthcoming). Repartnering may be a way of coping with this. Similarly, for many men and women a new relationship may represent an important route out of poverty (de Graaf & Kalmijn, 2003; Dewilde & Uunk, 2008; Jansen, Mortelmans, & Snoeckx, 2009; Shafer, 2012; Sweeney, 1997). International research has indicated that repartnering is a selective process: among the divorced, some are more likely to remarry or recohbit than others, probably because some hold more resources that make them attractive as potential partners. Differences across age, gender, race/ethnicity, parental status, educational attainment, labor force status and income have been identified (Bumpass, Sweet, & Castro Martin, 1990; de Graaf & Kalmijn, 2003; de Jong Gierveld, 2004; Matthijs, 1987; Pasteels, Corijn, & Mortelmans, 2012; Sweeney, 1997; Wu & Schimmele, 2005). Yet, these may not only be related to differential needs and attractiveness but also to opportunities to meet potential partners.

Insights into how needs, opportunities, and attractiveness play out on the remarriage market cannot only be provided by investigating ‘who repartners?’. Also the question ‘who repartners whom?’, or which partnerchoice people make depending on their own characteristics, is important to explore (Shafer, 2009, 2012). A number of studies have already investigated the degree of similarity in higher order unions in terms of age, educational attainment, religious background, marital history, and socio-economic status (Dean & Gurak, 1978; Goldscheider & Sassler, 2006; Gelissen, 2004; Jacobs & Furstenberg, 1986; Ivanova & Kalmijn, 2012; Mueller & Pope, 1980; Ní Brolcháin, 1988; Ono, 2005; Shafer, 2009; van Leeuwen & Maas, 2007; Whyte, 1990; Wu & Schimmele, 2005). But there is hardly any research about how individual or contextual factors are associated with patterns of educational assortative mating in the remarriage market. To our knowledge, there is only one published study addressing this issue: Shafer (2012) tried to identify whether second marriages follow a more contemporary homogamous pattern or a more traditional form where men marry less-educated and younger women. In the US context, his findings support the latter: while educational and age

homogamy are more likely in first marriage (cf. Schwartz & Mare, 2005), heterogamy seems to be more common in second marriages.

This paper investigates patterns of educational assortative mating after divorce in Belgium, more precisely in the Northern, Dutch speaking part of the country. We focus on educational attainment because this is a consistent and enduring determinant of socio-economic status in industrialized societies (Fernández, Guner & Knowles, 2005; Shavit & Müller, 1998). In addition, education is strongly associated with culturally shaped individual preferences for partners with specific traits (Blossfeld & Timm, 2003). Researching educational assortative mating is relevant for understanding and predicting the reproduction of social inequality (Blossfeld & Timm, 2003; Breen & Andersen, 2012; Mare, 1991; Press, 2004; Schwartz, 2013). Rates of homogamy are a reflection of the boundaries between groups in society and reveal the potential existence of interaction across groups. People seem to prefer to a large extent marrying a partner within their own social group. An increase in homogamy may therefore imply a decline of social mobility in modern societies (Kalmijn, 1998; Schwartz, 2013). The link between assortative mating patterns in first and higher-order unions indicates the consistency of assortative mating over the life course. If higher order unions diverge from the strong educational homogamy observed in first unions, divorced men and women are crossing new social boundaries. In contrast, if educational homogamy is reinforced in higher order unions, the choices made by divorced men and women may be reinforcing existing social boundaries.

We use a new rich data source called *Divorce in Flanders* that questioned partners as well as ex-partners, children and grandparents about their experiences with the divorce process (Mortelmans et al., 2012). We enhance the perspectives of earlier work in three ways. First, we include unmarried cohabitation as well as remarriage. Indeed, like in many other populations, unmarried cohabitation has become the most common form of postdivorce union in our study population. Second, we not only look at assortative mating in higher order unions as such, but also examine the link with patterns observed in first unions. Are people's partner choices in first marriages reproduced by the partner choices made in their second unions? Do divorced people tend to choose educationally more similar or more dissimilar partners than in their first marriages? Third, this is the first study that explicitly adds a measure to the equation of the opportunity to mate assortatively after divorce. Higher educated divorcees may prefer to match with equals, but what happens if the number of singles with the same educational attainment is limited? We account for this by including time-varying estimates of the number of singles aged 25 to 50 years by level of educational attainment in our study population, constructed from the Belgian *Generations and Gender Survey* (De Winter et al., 2011; Vikat et al., 2007).

## Theory and previous research

### *Needs, preferences and opportunities*

The literature relates reasons for forming a match commonly to the concepts of needs, preferences and opportunities. The need for economic security, affection or companionship is argued to be an important factor in people's desire for a partnership and depends on the available resources. The greater the need, the more likely it is that a person will enter a partnership (de Graaf & Kalmijn, 2003; Dykstra & Poortman, 2010). Preferences about factors of attractiveness, and opportunities to meet potential partners are more indicators of people's "marriageability" (Goldscheider & Waite, 1986: 94). Unattractiveness and marriage market constraints are expected to lower the marriage rate (de Graaf & Kalmijn, 2003; Dykstra & Poortman, 2010; Lewis & Oppenheimer, 2000).

With traditional, specialized gender roles, economically low-resource women and high-resource men are supposed to face high economic benefits and low costs in union formation (Dykstra & Poortman, 2010). According to Gary Becker's (1981) "gains to trade" model, union formation is only beneficial if both partners believe they are better off together than single. Although his theory is in principal gender neutral, it is usually argued that the gains from marriage will be the highest where men and women follow a traditional sex-based division of labor. Traditional marriage patterns implied that educational capital was particularly important for men, since it would yield them greater occupational success, which would make them more desirable "trading partners" on the marriage market. At the same time, the need of a wife as "homemaker" makes men prefer women with low labor market orientation (Blossfeld & Timm, 2003; Dykstra & Poortman, 2010; Sweeney, 1997).

Choosing a desirable partner is, however, constrained by the size and composition of the available pool of potential partners (England & Farkas, 1986; Guttentag & Secord, 1983; Oppenheimer, 1988). In a society with a gender-based division of labor, not all highly educated men are in a position to find a woman with equal qualifications, since there are on average more highly educated men than women. Highly educated women as well as low educated men have, besides the lower gains from marriage, also restricted opportunities to enter a union: highly educated women with high resources have to compete with highly educated women who have not invested too much in career resources and low educated men have to compete against all higher educated men.

Thus, together with Becker's gender-traditional model, the restricted opportunities suggest a tendency towards male educational hypogamy (men marrying educationally downwards) and female educational hypergamy (women marrying educationally upwards) (Blossfeld & Timm, 2003; Blossfeld, 2009).

However, gender role expectations have been changing quite dramatically in recent decades. Several authors have made the case that women with a high level of educational attainment and high earning potential in the labor market have become more attractive as marriage partners (Kalmijn,

1994; Oppenheimer, 1988, 1997; Press, 2004; Raley & Bratter, 2004; Sweeney & Cancian, 2004; Sweeney, 2002). The gainful employment of wives, including mothers, has become accepted if not expected, and the need for additional income to meet enhanced consumption aspirations has grown. As a result, the wife's income has become a crucial determinant of a family's socio-economic status (Beller, 2009). Consequently, women's own achieved socioeconomic status has become more important in union formation (Dykstra & Poortman, 2010; Kalmijn, 1991; Oppenheimer, 1988; Sweeney and Cancian, 2004).

This change in preferences, along with the expansion of female participation in higher education, is expected to have implications for assortative mating (Sweeney & Cancian, 2004). Oppenheimer (1988) suggests that the tendency for both men and women to remain attached to a work career increases the likelihood that men and women with similar educational levels will meet in the labor market and form relationships. Mare (1991) argued that the structurally increased chance of meeting a partner with the same qualification in the educational system should raise the level of educational homogamy, and specifically reduce educational hypogamy of men across cohorts (see also Kalmijn & Flap, 2001).

Studies of the last two decades on educational assortative mating in first marriages have indicated tightening educational homogamy, combined with male hypogamy and female hypergamy: women have the tendency to marry men at least as highly educated as themselves while men tend to marry women who are at most as highly educated as themselves (Blossfeld, 2009; Esteve, Garcia-Roman, & Permanyer, 2012; Kalmijn, 1994, 1998; Mare, 1991; Rose, 2004; Schoen & Cheng, 2006; Schwartz & Mare, 2012; Van Bavel, 2012). These observed patterns were compatible with the traditional gender-specific preferences and marriage market opportunities. Since the mid-1990's, however, the gender gap in higher education in favor of men has reversed: today, more women than men participate in higher education and they are more successful in obtaining a college degree (Goldin, Katz & Kuziemko, 2006; Vincent-Lancrin, 2008). Van Bavel (2012) argues that this represents a fundamental tipping point that may lead to major shifts in age-old patterns of assortative mating and reproduction. Esteve et al. (2012) recently showed that female educational hypogamy has already become more common than the traditional female hypergamy in a wide range of countries where the gender gap in educational attainment has turned around.

### *Educational assortative repartnering*

After divorce, people typically face a curtailed marriage market. This is not only because they are generally older and the number of single people at higher ages is limited, but also because divorced people are less integrated in typical marriage markets such as schools, voluntary associations, and leisure locations. Instead, divorcees have a higher chance of meeting new spouses at work, in a public space (such as a bar, a restaurant, or a theater), in social organizations, through online dating and

through informal contacts within the social network (de Graaf & Kalmijn, 2003; Hitsch, Hortaçsu & Ariely, 2010; Jappens, Wijckmans, & Van Bavel, 2011; Kalmijn, 1998).

Besides social embeddedness, other personal and structural characteristics can stimulate the opportunity to form a desirable match after divorce. Highly educated men as well as young childless women are assumed to have the largest pools of potential partners. High-resource, previously-married men may be attractive marriage partners because they are expected to support a family. They are typically somewhat older than other singles on the mating market but this also implies that they tend to be more established in their careers than never-married men. Higher socioeconomic status makes men more attractive potential partners and enhances male repartnering rates (Hughes, 2000; Shafer, 2009, 2012; Sweeney, 1997). For women, in contrast, a negative impact of socioeconomic status is expected, if anything (Shafer, 2009). The argument is that divorced men would have a preference for traditional matches with younger and less-educated women who are committed to domestic labor (South, 1991). While women in most cases suffer from a decreasing level of prosperity following a divorce, men often experience an increase in their economic well-being (Andreß, Borgloh, Bröckel, Giesselmann, & Hummelsheim, 2006; Jansen, Mortelmans, & Snoeckx, 2009; McManus & Diprete 2001; Peterson, 1996). As a result, divorced men with a high socioeconomic status may feel less pushed by economic need to partner women with high earning potential. They may rather be looking for a partner who can take care of children (Goldscheider & Sassler, 2006) – and highly educated women often opt out of this kind of traditional domestic gender role (Oppenheimer, 1997). As a result, highly-educated women may suffer from a particular disadvantage in the remarriage market. An alternative perspective suggests that educational attainment neither benefits nor hurts women in the remarriage market because they are particularly evaluated on non-economic characteristics, like age and beauty for example (Goldscheider & Sassler, 2006; Shafer, 2009, 2012; Wu & Schimmele, 2005).

All this would imply that, for women, the value of a high level of educational attainment and a strong labor market position has gone up to a lesser extent in the remarriage market than it has on the first marriage market. Recent research has found mixed results about the association between educational attainment and repartnering for both men and women: sometimes no correlation for both sexes (Dewilde & Uunk, 2008; Meggiolaro & Ongaro, 2008; Skew, Evans, & Gray, 2009; Xu, Hudspeth, & Bartkowski, 2006), otherwise a positive correlation for both sexes (Pasteels et al., 2012: only in a specific divorce cohort; Wu & Schimmele, 2005) and sometimes only a positive correlation for men (de Graaf & Kalmijn, 2003; Poortman, 2007; Shafer, 2009).

Differences in parental status and age at separation may be considered as crucial factors in how constrained divorced women are in their opportunities and choices on the remarriage market (de Graaf & Kalmijn, 2003; Shafer, 2009). Despite the fact that joint-custody arrangements are on the rise (especially in our Belgian study population, see Sodermans, Vanassche, & Matthijs, 2013), women are still more likely to remain the primary caregiver to children after divorce (Goldscheider & Sassler, 2006; Hughes, 2000; Ono, 2005). The presence of children implies financial as well as time

constraints that affect the needs and opportunities to meet a new partner, but these appear to be more salient for women than for men (Beaujouan, 2012; de Graaf & Kalmijn, 2003; Ivanova, Kalmijn & Uunk, 2013; Lampard & Peggs, 1999; Poortman, 2007; Shafer, 2009; Skew et al., 2009; Sweeney, 1997). As to age at separation: the older men and women are at separation, and the more time they spend in the remarriage market without having found a match yet, the fewer and fewer potential partners will be available in the pool (de Graaf & Kalmijn, 2003; Gelissen, 2004; Lewis & Oppenheimer, 2000). For women in particular, it has been found that even women without children draw from a smaller partner pool than men do, because men traditionally exhibit a preference for younger women (England & Farkas, 1986; Oppenheimer, 1988; South, 1991). Thus, divorced women encounter also compositional disadvantages such as unbalanced sex ratios at older ages, which can reduce the probability of remarriage (de Jong Gierveld, 2004; Gelissen, 2004; Shafer, 2009).

If men and women in the remarriage market are indeed evaluated on more traditional characteristics and are more likely to meet potential spouses in less educationally settings (de Graaf & Kalmijn, 2003), educationally homogamous matches after divorce may be less likely. Shafer's (2009, 2012) results on educational sorting outcomes in second marriages, based on an American panel study (NLSY79) beginning in 1979 and with available data until 2008, seem to confirm this. His study showed that remarriage patterns are different, and especially more traditional, than contemporary first marriage patterns: men have the tendency to make traditional matches by remarrying younger and less-educated women; women's remarriage prospects and marital sorting outcomes are more influenced by age and social background characteristics. First marriage experiences, like age at first marriage, cohabitation prior to first marriage and an educationally homogamous first marriage are associated with both men's and women's assortative remarriage patterns.

When research results confirm that second marriages or unions are less homogamous than first marriages, they seem to be in line with the often cited *marriage market hypothesis*. In the literature on the association between spouses' characteristics in their first and second (or current) union, this hypothesis emphasizes that the pool of potential partners for the divorcees is more heterogeneous and smaller in size. Hence, divorced people are more restricted in the realization of finding a similar partner than (younger) people on the first marriage market (Dean & Gurak, 1978; Gelissen, 2004; Hirschman & Matras, 1971; van Leeuwen & Maas, 2007). Yet, in the same literature, the hypothesis has also been advanced that divorced people will prefer a new partner who is more similar to them. Divorcees learn from the adjustments problems of their often non-homogamous first union, so the argument goes, and become choosier the second time around. Thus, according to the 'optimistic' *learning hypothesis*, divorced people change their preferences towards a more similar partner because they believe that a more homogamous match should imply less trouble. Individuals who already have been married homogamously the first time will not change their preferences and continue their search for 'the ideal partner' within their group to (Dean & Gurak, 1978; Duberman, 1975; Gelissen, 2004; van Leeuwen & Maas, 2007; Whyte, 1990). A further hypothesis, the *remarrying kind hypothesis*,



hold that the ‘divorce prone’ or the people who are inclined to marry heterogamously and have unstable relationships the first time are also inclined to form heterogamous relationships after divorce. So after a divorce, these persons do not learn from their experiences in the sense that they cannot or do not want to change their preferences (Dean & Gurak, 1978; van Leeuwen & Maas, 2007).

Studies explicitly testing these three hypotheses on educational assortative mating patterns before and after divorce have not yet found much evidence for either the *learning-* or the *marriage market hypothesis*. One study (Dean & Gurak, 1978) found support for the ‘divorce proneness’ of certain women; other research (Jacobs & Furstenberg, 1986; Whyte, 1990) found that remarried women do not resemble their new husbands more or less than their first husbands. More recent Dutch findings with respect to educational homogamy support the *learning-hypothesis* for repartnered men, but not for repartnered women: for men, Gelissen (2004) reports a significantly stronger association between own and new partner’s education than between own and former partner’s education.

The purpose of this paper lies not in testing these three (competing) hypotheses by the traditionally used log linear analyses. Instead, we want to investigate how the partner choice after a divorce (in terms of education) is associated with the first partner choice *and* if the association (if there is one) sustains when controlling for marriage market opportunities and other individual socioeconomic and cultural characteristics.

## Method

### *Analytic strategy*

Most research on assortative mating patterns has applied log-linear analysis to contingency tables that contain the observed frequencies in the joint distribution of variables measuring spousal characteristics. An important limitation of that approach is that people who have not (yet) entered a new union at the time of data collection cannot be included. Since repartnering is a selective process, this is a crucial drawback for our purposes. Therefore we will use event history models instead of log-linear models. Event history analysis (Mills, 2011) allows us to include censored cases in the analysis, consisting of people who did not repartner during the observation period.

More specifically, we estimate competing risks discrete-time event history models for the transition to a new cohabitation and/or second marriage, using a multinomial logistic specification for that purpose. Discrete-time multinomial logistic regression (Allison, 1982; Mills, 2011; Scott & Kennedy, 2005) allows us to take the educational degree of the new partner into account and to track how the risk of educational assortative cohabitation or remarriage changes with time in the repartnering market.

We model the rate of entering a cohabiting or marital union (versus staying single/unmarried) with a partner who is low, medium, or highly educated. So, rather than categorizing our outcome variable in terms of “homogamous”, “hypogamous”, or “hypergamous” (see e.g. Shafer, 2009, 2012),

we directly distinguish between the levels of education of the new partner. This avoids the problem that people on top and at the bottom of the ladder of educational attainment cannot repartner upwards or downwards, respectively.

We go beyond earlier work by explicitly accounting for quantitative constraints in the repartnering market to mate assortatively. We do this by estimating the number of singles with a given level of educational attainment in the relevant population for every month during our study period. These monthly estimates are then introduced in our hazard models as explanatory variables. The basic outline of our models is as follows:

$$\log \left[ \frac{h_{tij}}{1 - \sum_{j=1}^3 h_{tij}} \right] = \alpha_{0j} + \alpha'_{1j} \mathbf{m}_t + \beta'_j \mathbf{x}_i + \gamma'_j \mathbf{z}_{it} + \delta'_j \mathbf{s}_t \quad (1)$$

In equation (1),  $h_{tij}$  is the hazard rate at month  $t$  for individual  $i$  to mate a partner whose level of educational attainment equals  $j$ . The reference category in our multinomial logit is the probability that there is no repartnering at all, which is the complement of the hazard rates summed over all three categories of educational attainment.  $\alpha_{0j}$  is a fixed intercept, estimated separately for each level of partner's level of education, while the vector  $\alpha_{1j}$  specifies how the baseline hazard rate varies over the time spells  $\mathbf{m}_t$ . The vector  $\mathbf{x}_i$  contains individual level time constant variables, vector  $\mathbf{z}_{it}$  has the time varying characteristics, and vector  $\mathbf{s}_t$  incorporates the numbers of singles by level of education per time unit.

## Data

To investigate assortative repartnering after divorce, we use data from the multi-actor and multi-method survey *Divorce in Flanders* (DiF) (Mortelmans et. al., 2012), collected in the Dutch speaking part of Belgium during the period September 2009 - December 2010. The DiF-study consists of Belgian citizens living in the region of Flanders who got married for the first time between January 1971 and December 2008 and had experienced a divorce on the time of the interview. The dissolved marriages were proportionally to the wedding year selected from the National Register. However, the marriages were only sampled if man and woman were at least 18 years old and maximum 40 years old at the time of the wedding ceremony and had the Belgian nationality since birth. In order to limit the heterogeneity within the group of divorcees, only people who divorced just once were selected. Through computer-assisted personal interviews, information was collected about 4592 divorced men and women. A weighting coefficient ensures that the sample is representative by every five-year divorce cohort (Pasteels et. al., 2012).

We examine the repartnering of heterosexual people who divorced between 1980 and 2005 and who were in their first post-divorce relationship at the time of the interview, if they ever entered a new relationship at all. In the DiF-survey, respondents were asked about their own, their first marriage

partner's, and their current new partner's (if any) level of educational attainment. We do not know the education level of *all* post-divorce partners; we have that information only for the relationships that lasted until the date of the interview. Respondents were asked to sum up every romantic relationship that lasted at least 3 months after the break-up of their first marriage; only if the last specified relationship did not end yet, the highest qualification obtained by the current partner was questioned. For this reason, people with a broken post-divorce relationship or people who are currently in a relationship with their second, third or higher post-divorce partner (around 36% of all divorced respondents) are not included in our analyses.

Our sample selection criteria may entail some selection bias. Indeed, because respondents should have experienced exactly one legal divorce in order to be selected, and because homogamy is positively related to marital success (Janssen, 2002; Schwartz & Han, 2012; Schwartz, 2010), the sample selection criterion mentioned could imply that heterogamous remarriages or unmarried cohabitations are underrepresented in our sample.

In order to estimate the monthly number of singles with a given level of educational attainment, we use data about the Flemish population from the Belgian *Generations and Gender Survey* (GGS). GGS-Belgium is a large-scale and representative survey that was organized during the period 2008-2010. It is part of an international research project that is aimed to study the evolutions of relationships between men and women on the one hand and between different generations on the other hand (De Winter et al., 2011; Pasteels, Lodewijckx & Mortelmans, 2013; Vikat et al., 2007). The realized sample for the Flemish region consists of 1860 men and 2000 women. More details about the constructed measure are discussed next.

## *Measures*

*Education.* Our models include the levels of educational attainment of the respondent and of the former partner in the dissolved marriage as explanatory variables and the level of education of the new partner, if repartnered, in the dependent variable. Levels of educational attainment were coded using the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) (UNESCO, 2012). We collapsed the 7 ISCED classes into 3 categories so that a low educational level corresponds to the ISCED-codes 0-2 (i.e., lower secondary education at most), a medium educational level to the ISCED-codes 3-4 (i.e., post-secondary but not tertiary; i.e. high school finished but not college) and a high educational level to the ISCED-codes 5-6 (i.e., tertiary education finished at Bachelor or Master level; see Table 1 for an overview). Means and standard deviations for these as well as the other variables are reported in Table 2.

**TABLE 1.** ISCED 2011 classification

ISCED-code	Name of the level	DiF- and GGS-outcome
0	Pre-primary education	
1	Primary education	Low educated
2	Lower secondary education	
3	Upper secondary education	Medium educated
4	Post-secondary non tertiary education	
5	First stage of tertiary education (Bachelor)	Highly educated
6	Second stage of tertiary education (Master)	

Source: UNESCO, 2012

Subdividing unions into two types (cohabitation versus marriage) and taking account of the educational level of the new partner yields two dependent variables with each 4 possible outcomes: (1) remaining single/unmarried; (2) recohabit/remarry with a low educated partner; (3) recohabit/remarry with a medium educated partner; and (4) recohabit/remarry with a highly educated partner. We chose to model both cohabitation and remarriage separately, but not as competing outcomes, because we suspect that the analysis may reveal different aspects of relationship formation after divorce. However, making these two dependent variables has an important implication. People at risk to recohabit, can still remarry after they recohabited and people at risk to remarry are most of the time also have been at risk to recohabit unmarried. So in most of the cases, the person-months observed before recohabitation are a subset of the person-months observed before remarrying. Only respondents who remarried immediately did not experience an event in the case of cohabitation.

The effect of own education on the repartnering rates by education of the new partner indicates educational assortative mating after divorce. The slope for the level of education of the former, first marriage partner indicates the continuity in assortative mating across unions. Obviously, these regression parameters should not be interpreted as causal effects but rather as measures of association – which is what we aim for when investigating the extent of assortative mating.

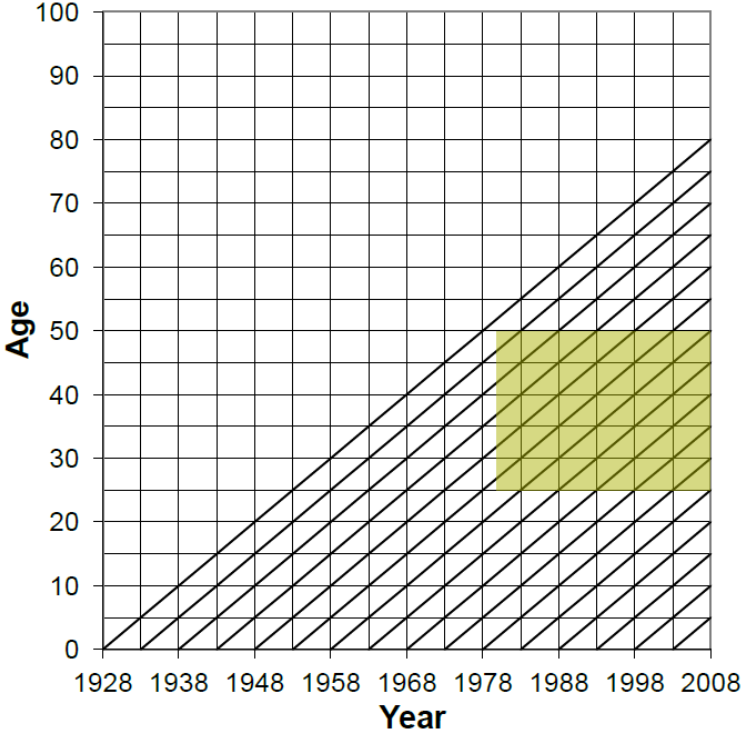
*Time.* Of every reported relationship after divorce, we know when it started and ended. We also know when the respondent started living and/or married with the new partner. With these dates, we calculated the number of months between the *de facto* separation (rather than legal divorce) and the new cohabitation/second marriage or, if no new cohabiting relationship or second marriage got started yet, the end of the observation period (December 2007). Respondents who remained single or unmarried during a period of 20 years after separation were right censored and received a maximum exposure of 240 months. We model duration dependency by means of a piecewise constant hazard approach (Blossfeld & Rohwer, 2002), allowing separate time splines for the first 4 years after separation (year 1 being the reference category in our dummy coding), because then the hazard differentiates the most. In the DiF-dataset, some men and women reported to live already with their new partner even before the stated date of *de facto* separation: those respondents were recoded as

starting to rehabit in the same month of separation. After the 4<sup>th</sup> year past the separation, we applied broader splines because the hazard is then at much lower level and doesn't change very much from year to year. We specify splines covering years 5 until 7, 8 until 10 and finally year 11 until 20 after separation.

Besides the indicator for duration dependency, we also constructed three other time variables. An age-effect is captured by the time-constant variable age at separation, divided into 3 categories: younger than 31, between 31 and 40 years and 41 years or older. In order to control for changes across time, we constructed the time-constant variable divorce cohort, also divided into 3 categories: 1980-1989, 1990-1999 and 2000-2005. A continuous variable first marriage duration controls for the time that the respondent was married with the former partner.

*Mating market opportunities.* In order to take into account the quantitative constraints in population of the opposite sex to mate assortatively by education, we estimated the number of singles by level of education based on GGS. For each GGS-respondent, we were able to determine which partner status she or he had in every month after their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. Being single could mean that the respondent (1) never had a partner before, (2) had no partner after a breakup or (3) had no partner after widowhood. By a summation of the men and women within these three partner statuses, we calculated the number of singles aged 25 to 50 years old in every month between January, 1980 and December, 2007. The logic for choosing the time period and age cohort is visualized in the lexis diagram in Figure 1. We chose not to include all age groups in our measure of singles in the mating market. The minimum age limit, 25 years old, is justified by the fact that, by the age of 25, most individuals have achieved their final level of educational attainment. Since the oldest person in the Belgian GGS-data was born in 1928, he or she could only have reached the age of 52 in 1980. Therefore we chose 50 years old as our maximum age limit. If we would have increased the upper age barrier till say 55, we would not be able to calculate the number of singles within the same age range in every month during the period January 1980 - December 2007. We recognize that men and women may also divorce and/or look for a new partner on the repartnering market before they are 25 years old or after they are 50 years old and therefore may look for partner who is younger than 25 and older than 50. Still, only a small proportion of the selected respondents from the DiF-survey rehabituated before or after the ages 25-50 (around 8%). The start of our observation period is 1980, because of the fact that the DiF-respondents included in our subsamples married since 1971 and divorced since 1980. The choice of 2007 as upper limit for our observation period is the result of a practical consideration: as the GGS-data were collected during the period 2008-2010, we have the complete relationship-histories of *all* the GGS-respondents until December 2007.

**FIGURE 1.** Lexis diagram of the analyzed GGS-data



In Figure 2, the absolute and relative distributions of the 25- till 50- year old single men and women per educational level are displayed. Our estimates indicate that the number of singles has risen over time until about the year 1998; afterwards the number of singles declined somewhat but remained relatively stable. The percentage of singles in the total population has, according to the GGP-data, raised with about 8 percentage points during the period 1980-2007: from around 12% in January 1980 to around 20% in December 2007. These GGS estimates fit well with what we know from official statistics: figures from Statistics Belgium show similar trends –we choose not to use the official statistics because they do not allow us to distinguish at the same time between level of educational attainment and marital status.

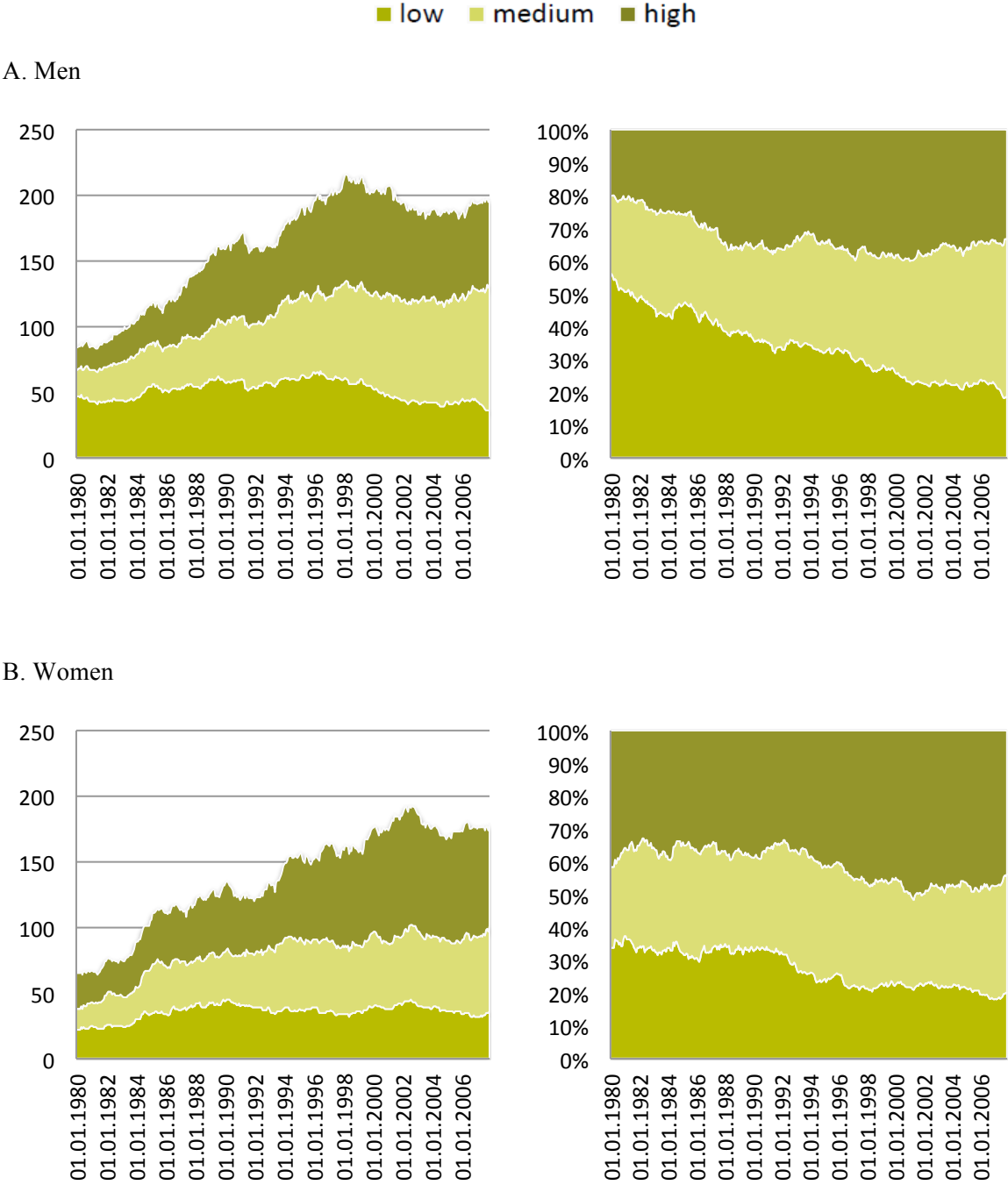
Among singles, the proportion of low educated men sharply declined over time, which was the result of the general expansion of education in Belgium. Both the proportion of medium and highly educated men in the population of adult singles increased, but towards the end of the observation period there was a slight decrease in the proportion of highly educated single men. We speculate that this may be explained by the fact that college graduates are desirable matches on the mating market, so few of them remain single even after divorce. The reversal of the gender gap in higher education is likely to play a role as well: if there are more highly educated women than men while men and women are prone to educational homogamy, highly educated men have a large pool of potential partners available to them (Van Bavel 2012). Among single women, the proportion of college graduates remained relatively high during the whole observation period. Just as like the male respondents, we

observe a decreasing proportion of low educated single women, which is most likely due to the general expansion of education.

We choose to include number of singles (scaled down to the GGS sample size) by education in our regression analyses rather than percentages. We expect that mating prospects are affected by the number of potential partners with desired characteristics, not just by the proportion of these characteristics in the relevant population. The number distributions were included as time-varying variables, i.e. varying by calendar month. For female repartnering, the male distribution of singles by education was entered in the equation; for male repartnering, the female distribution of singles was used.

*Control variables.* Several variables are introduced as controls because of their demonstrated relationship with divorce, repartnering and/or educational matching. Respondents were asked to distinguish and sum up every period of full-time work, part-time work and unemployment. By this detailed information, we could make a time-varying variable which indicates that the respondent works full-time (95% or more); works part-time (less than 95%) or is unemployed. Due to retrospective information on every child that did or did not form a part of the household on the moment of interview, we were able to include a time-varying variable indicating whether the respondent has no, 1 or 2 or more co-resident biological, adopted, foster child(ren) from the previous marriage. A dummy for pre-marital cohabitation (with the first marriage partner) was entered as an additional first marriage characteristic. Religiousness and the degree of boundary ambiguity, both measured at time of interview, index how individuals' values and beliefs are correlated with their repartnering patterns. Since we do not have an indication of how religious someone was at the time of divorce, we made the explicit assumption that someone's degree of religiousness at time of interview is highly correlated with his or her degree on time of separation. Religiousness was scored on a simple scale from 0 to 10. The degree of boundary ambiguity, or the way someone copes with the changes in his or her family since divorce, can also change over time (Boss, Greenberg, & Pearce-McCall, 1990). Yet, we suppose that a high boundary ambiguity on time of interview would also be high (or even higher) on time of separation. The divorced adults Boundary Ambiguity Scale used in the DiF-survey is based on the original Boundary Ambiguity Scale compiled by Pauline Boss, but with slight modifications in wording and a few changed items (Boss et al., 1990; see appendix). We operationalized the 22 items - Boundary Ambiguity Scale without the five last items (items 17-22 were only asked to the divorced respondents with children) and by the rules of Boss et al. (1990): a high score on the scale indexes a high degree of boundary ambiguity (Cronbach's  $\alpha=0.55$ ). Finally, the time-constant variable parental educational level indicates if the respondent has at least one parent that completed upper secondary education, at least one parent that completed upper secondary education or at least one parent that completed lower secondary education. We made this parental educational level by the respondents reported educational level of each parent. If one parent was lower educated than the other, we kept the educational level of the highest educated parent.

**FIGURE 2.** Absolute (left) and relative (right) distributions of 25-till 50-years old single men (upper layer) and women (lower layer), per educational level



Source: Generations and Gender Survey, Wave 1 Belgium; own calculations



**TABLE 2.** Descriptives of the independent variables (weighted percentages, means, standard deviations and/or ranges; unweighted N)

Variable Names	Recohabitation								Remarriage							
	Men				Women				Men				Women			
	%	M	SD	R	%	M	SD	R	%	M	SD	R	%	M	SD	R
<b>Time</b>																
Divorce cohort																
1980-1989 (ref.)	15,0				14,6				14,9				14,6			
1990-1999	38,2				41,9				38,5				42,1			
2000-2005	46,8				43,5				46,6				43,3			
Age at separation																
≤30 (ref.)	23,8				35,0				23,7				35,1			
31-40	51,3				46,9				50,8				46,7			
≥41	24,9				18,1				25,5				18,2			
Duration first marriage		13,8	7,5	1-36		13,8	7,4	0-35		13,8	7,5	1-36		13,8	7,4	0-35
<b>Educational attainment</b>																
Respondent																
Low educated (ref.)	26,0				21,8				26,1				21,8			
Medium educated	40,6				39,5				41,0				39,2			
Highly educated	33,4				38,7				32,9				38,9			
Former partner																
Low educated (ref.)	31,2				29,3				31,5				29,3			
Medium educated	38,6				42,3				38,7				42,0			
Highly educated	30,2				28,3				29,8				28,7			
<b>Mating market opportunities</b>																
n low educated single men (TV)						51,2	7,7	39-66						51,2	7,7	39-66
n medium educated single men (TV)						64,4	15,7	21-83						64,4	15,7	21-83
n highly educated single men (TV)						65,4	14,5	17-83						65,4	14,5	17-83
n low educated single women (TV)	38,0	3,6	23-45						37,9	3,6	23-45					
n medium educated single women (TV)	48,8	8,4	16-58						48,8	8,4	16-58					
n highly educated single women (TV)	69,9	18,4	22-94						69,9	18,4	22-94					
<b>Control variables</b>																
Occupational status (TV)																
Full-time (ref.)	94,8				62,5				94,8				62,6			
Part-time	1,1				22,9				1,1				22,8			
Unemployed	4,0				14,6				4,0				14,5			
Co-residential child(ren) (TV)																
no co-residential child (ref.)	56,9				26,3				56,7				26,3			
1 co-residential child	19,1				28,7				19,0				28,9			
2 or more co-residential children	24,1				44,9				24,3				44,8			
Premarital cohabitation with former partner																
No (ref.)	70,1				74,9				70,4				74,9			
Yes	29,9				25,1				29,5				25,1			
Religiousness		3,7	2,9	0-10		4,4	2,7	0-10		3,7	2,8	0-10		4,4	2,7	0-10
Degree of boundary ambiguity		26,1	4,9	20-64		26,9	5,4	20-55		26,1	4,9	20-64		26,9	5,4	20-55
Highest educational level parents																
Low educated (ref.)	63,3				58,8				63,5				58,5			
Medium educated	22,3				24,8				22,3				25,2			
Highly educated	14,4				16,4				14,2				16,2			
<b>Person-months</b>		47 746				66 197				84 019				101 968		
<b>N</b>		911				1090				929				1104		

Source: Divorce in Flanders, 2010; Generations and Gender Survey, wave 1.

ref. = reference category

For time-varying variables (TV), the descriptive refers to the month in which the respondents got separated (time t=0).

## Results

Tables 4 and 5 report regression parameters for post-divorce entry into cohabitation for men and women, respectively. Tables 6 and 7 report the equivalent parameters for formal remarriage, again for men and women, respectively. In each of these tables, the first column reports estimates for a hazard model for entry into cohabitation or marriage irrespective of the level of education of the new partner; these estimates refer to a binary logistic specification of the hazard model. The three last columns of each table contain the results of the competing risk models, taking assortative mating into account. The reference category in the latter multinomial logistic regressions is staying single (for the cohabitation models) or not remarrying (for the remarriage models).

Despite the absence of a significant effect of a woman's educational level on her *overall* risk of cohabiting or remarrying after separation, there is a statistically significant effect on assortative mating. Highly educated women do have a significant lower risk of both cohabitation and remarriage with a low educated man compared to low educated women. Conversely, they have a significantly higher risk of cohabiting and remarrying with a highly educated man compared to low educated women. Medium educated women have only a significantly lower risk of remarrying a low educated man compared to low educated women. While there is no significant educational effect on women's entry into a cohabiting union with a medium educated man, highly educated women do have a significantly lower risk of remarrying a medium educated man than lower educated women.

We can draw more or less similar conclusions for men: highly educated and medium educated men all have a lower risk of cohabiting a low educated woman than low educated men and they have also a higher risk of cohabiting a highly educated woman than low educated men. The significant positive coefficient of being highly educated for men on the overall risk of cohabiting, can largely be explained by the high relative risk ratio of being highly educated on the risk of cohabiting a highly educated woman. In the case of remarriage, only highly educated men have a lower risk of remarrying a low educated woman and a higher risk of remarrying a highly educated woman compared to low educated men.

These findings are illustrated by Figures 3 and 4, which show the model-predicted proportions of educational homogamous and heterogamous cohabiting or marital unions within 5 years after separation. Estimating the cumulative probability of being recohobited or remarried with a low, medium or highly educated man or woman by the level of education of the respondent reveals that the degree of homogamy after separation is high. This holds especially for the higher educated. Among low and medium men and women, on the other hand, there is also considerable heterogamy. For example, low educated women are at least as likely to repartner a medium educated man than to repartner homogamously with a low educated man. This might be related to their often precarious financial situations after separation. During marriage, many women leave the labor market in order to take care of kids. After separation, highly educated former housewives may have more chances for

employment than low educated peers. For the latter, repartnering may be a more effective strategy to overcome financial problems, especially if the new partner is higher educated than themselves (Jansen, Mortelmans, & Snoeckx, 2009). For low educated men, the chances to remarry a medium educated woman are also quite high. A possible interpretation here is that it may be related to their preference for younger women, who are increasingly at least medium educated due to the educational expansion (Pasteels & Mortelmans, 2013). Medium educated men have a remarkably high chance to recohobit and/or remarry heterogamously with a highly educated woman. This may be explained by the reversal of the gender gap in higher education (Van Bavel 2012): medium educated men may be the available partners for highly educated women who do not find a highly educated man on the mating market.

We now turn to the level of educational attainment of the former partner (i.e., the first marriage partner). For women, this is not significantly associated with their *overall* rate of cohabitation or remarriage but is clearly associated with mating a man with a specific level of educational attainment (see Figures 5 & 6). Net of the effect of their own education, divorced women have a significantly lower tendency of cohabiting with a low educated man if their previously marriage partner was medium educated and especially when their previously marriage partner was highly educated. The latter finding is also significant in the case of formal remarriage. The risk of women's entry into cohabitation with a highly educated man is higher when their former partner was also highly educated. For men, having been married with a medium educated woman has a significant negative effect on their entry into cohabitation with a low educated woman and a significant positive effect on their entry into a cohabiting union with a medium educated woman, net of the own level of education. For formal remarriage, only the positive effect of having a medium educated ex-partner on the chance of mating a medium educated woman remains significant. We observe no significant differences between having a low educated ex-partner and having a highly educated ex-partner on the risk of men's entry into cohabiting or marital union with a low, medium or highly educated woman compared to staying single or not remarried.

Thus, although that the results for men are less outspoken than for women, we observe a clear trend regarding the partner choices after divorce, net of the own educational level: divorced men and women tend to choose or prefer a new partner who has similar characteristics as their former partners. The answer to the question if educational assortative mating patterns in first marriages (taking the own and former partner's educational attainment into account) are extended to the ones in relationships formed after divorce seems to be negative. In our sample, interaction-effects between the educational level of the respondent and the educational level of the former partner on the risk to recohobit or remarry a partner with a specific level of education were not significant (not shown). So, previously homogamously married men and women, for example, do not seem to have a higher or lower chance of forming a homogamous partnership after divorce.

However, looking at Table 3 gives us a general indication of how homogamous second unions are, compared to first marriages. The first row of Table 3 shows measures of agreement between the

educational level of the respondent and the educational level of the former partner for the complete samples. The second row represents the same measures, but only for men and women who did experience an event (unmarried or remarried cohabitation – remarried). For the latter group, we displayed measures of agreement between the educational level of the respondent and the educational level of the new partner in the third row. Since the measures of the third row are all lower than the measures of the first and second row, we may conclude that people’s second current unions are educationally less homogamous than all first marriages in our samples.

**TABLE 3.** Kappa measures of agreement between level of education of the respondent and level of education of the former partner or new partner (weighted  $\kappa$ , unweighted N)

$\kappa$ (N)	Recohabitation		Remarriage	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Educational level respondent – former partner	0.380 (911)	0.366 (1090)	0.372 (929)	0.364 (1104)
Educational level respondent – former partner <sup>a</sup>	0.430 (624)	0.356 (659)	0.423 (313)	0.365 (341)
Educational level respondent – new partner <sup>a</sup>	0.278 (624)	0.277 (659)	0.253 (313)	0.294 (341)

Note: <sup>a</sup> Measure of association for those men and women who experienced an event.

We did not found a significant trend across the different divorce cohorts.

The number of potential new mates seems to play a role in the *recohabitation* chances of men on the one hand and the *remarriage* chances of women on the other hand. For men, a high number of highly educated single women increases the *overall* risk of cohabitation after separation. This is chiefly due to the high relative risk ratio of recohabiting a highly educated woman. In other words, the chances for men to start cohabiting with a highly educated woman are significantly enhanced if there is a high number of highly educated single women in the population. Women, on the other hand, experience a significant higher risk of marrying a medium educated man if the numbers of low and medium educated single men increase. Additional analyses (not shown) indicate that a high number of low and medium educated single men is particularly positively associated with the chances to remarry a medium educated man versus a highly educated man, when taken as the reference category in the dependent multinomial variable. A high number of medium educated single men is also positively associated with the chance to remarry a medium educated man rather than a low educated man. For the other numbers of potential partners by level of education, we found no statically significant effect, suggesting that preferences play a bigger role in the process of assortative repartnering than availability.

The time and control variables reveal some interesting results too. To start with, the age at separation coefficients confirm that getting older does not facilitate the chances of repartnering. Both men and women older than 40 years are less likely to find a partner on the remarriage market, or are

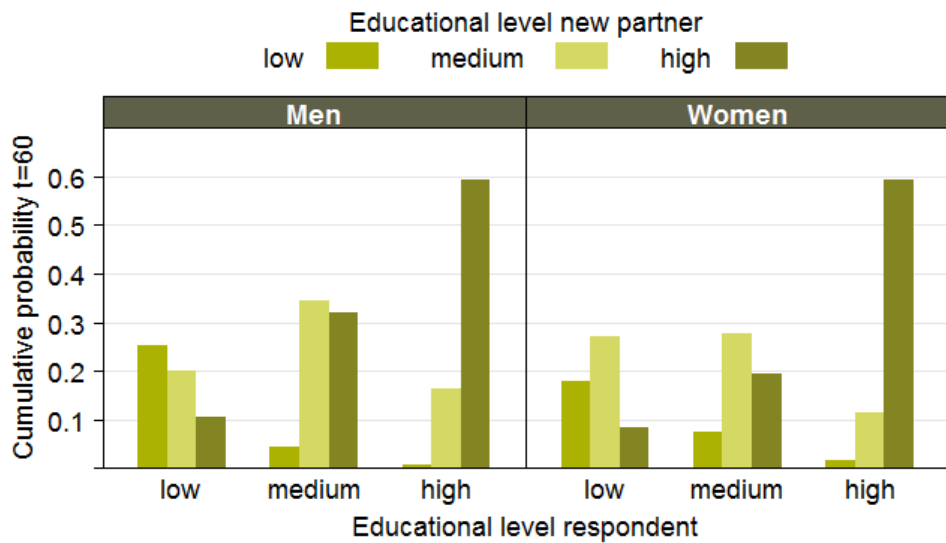
no longer looking after one. Only for women, the longer the former marriage, the lower the chance of recohobiting and remarrying (a medium educated man). Having co-residential children and a highly ambiguous relationship with the former partner have also a negative impact on the chance of both cohabiting and marrying after divorce. In contrast to what is often believed (and found recently by Ivanova et al., 2013), having co-resident children is not just an obstacle to repartnering for women. In our study population, it is also an obstacle for men. In addition, having co-resident children is mainly an obstacle for repartnering a medium or highly educated man or woman. For men, a high score on the Boundary Ambiguity Scale has an especially negative impact on the change to recohobit and remarry a medium or highly educated woman. For women, the association between the boundary ambiguity score and the partner choice after divorce is only significantly negative for recohobiting a medium educated man and remarrying a low or medium educated man. Being religious is just positively correlated with men's chances to remarry (assortatively), while premarital cohabitation with the former partner has only a significant negative effect on women's risk to remarry a low educated man.

Unexpectedly, working part-time is positively associated with recohobiting rates (not remarrying rates) for men. Both the difference between part-time work and unemployment (not shown in table) as well as the difference between part-time work and full-time work are statistically significant, with part-time working men exhibiting higher repartnering rates not just compared to unemployed men (which was expected) but also compared to full time working men (which represents, we think, a novel finding). Moreover, it turns out that the significant positive effect of working part-time on the rate of men's entry into cohabiting unions can be fully allocated to the high relative risk ratio (3.409) of part-time working men for starting to cohabit with highly educated women in particular. In our sample, part-time working men are scarce (just over 1%). So, even when they are hard to find, they seem to be particularly attractive to highly educated women. A speculative explanation for this finding is that highly educated, divorced women may be attracted to men who may be more likely to contribute to household chores given the fact they are not fully committed to their jobs (Kravdal & Rindfuss, 2008: 858). The reverse is also still true: part-time working women have a higher risk of remarrying (not recohobiting) a medium and especially highly educated man than full-time working women. Unemployed women, on the other hand, have an elevated risk to remarry a low educated man. Our threshold for calling labor market activity fulltime is at 95%, but even when we lower the threshold to 75%, the results remain about the same. Also, recall that part-time work is a time-varying variable, not reflecting the situation at the time of interview but rather reflecting the changing conditions during the at risk period.

According to our estimates, the parental level of educational attainment can also be associated with educational sorting outcomes after divorce, but only for men. Men with parents who are at least medium educated have a significantly higher risk of cohabiting and remarrying a highly educated woman than men with low educated parents. Like the educational group of the former partner, the educational group of parents (which is highly related to social class background) can function as a

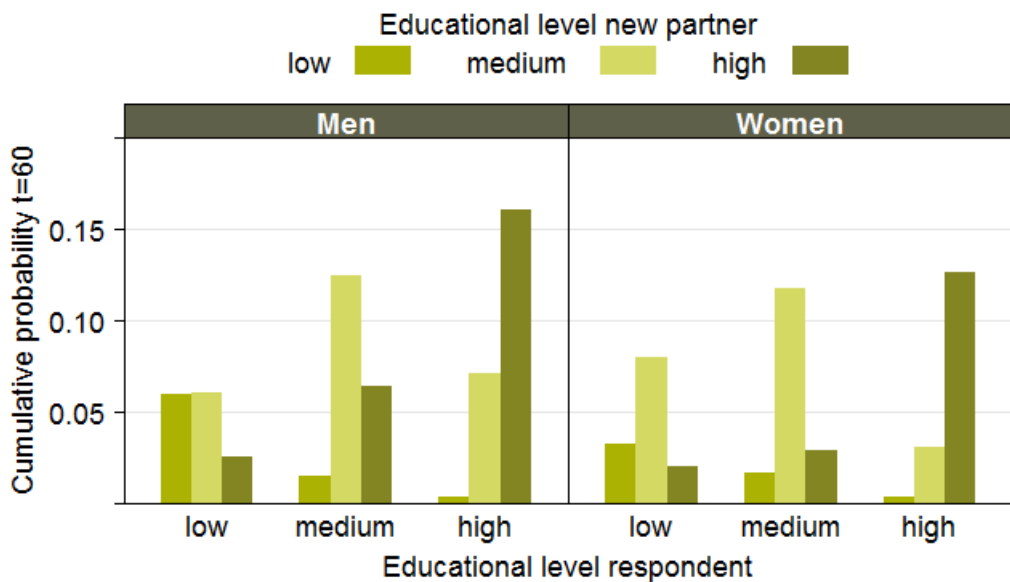
barrier to other social circles in which single men and women circulate (Blossfeld & Timm, 2003; Musick, Brand & Davis, 2012). So, besides the own educational level, also the educational level of the former partner and/or the parental education seems to play an important role in the chance of meeting and mating a partner with a specific educational attainment. The fact that we do not find a significant role of the parental educational attainment on women's educational matching after divorce may be because of men returning more often than women to live with their parents after divorce (Jappens, Wijckmans & Van Bavel, 2010).

**FIGURE 3.** Proportion of educational assortative *cohabiting* unions within 5 years after separation



Note: The proportions were estimated for prototypical men and women: divorced between 1990-1999, 31-40 years old when got separated, work full-time, have no co-residential children from first marriage, did not cohabit with their former partner, have an equally educated former partner, have equally educated parents and have a mean value on first marriage duration, mating market opportunities, the religiousness scale and the boundary ambiguity scale.

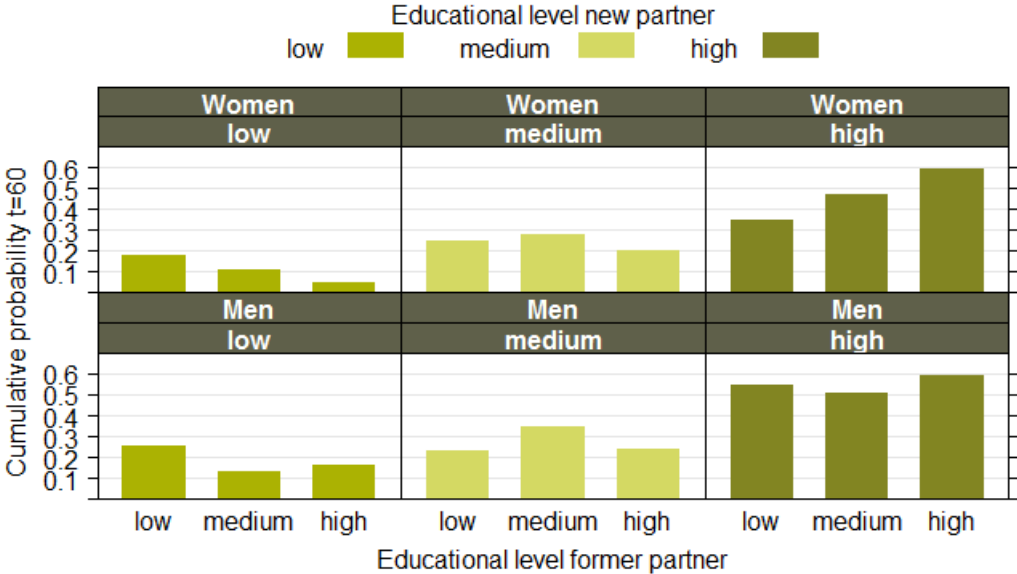
**FIGURE 4.** Proportion of educational assortative *marital* unions within 5 years after separation



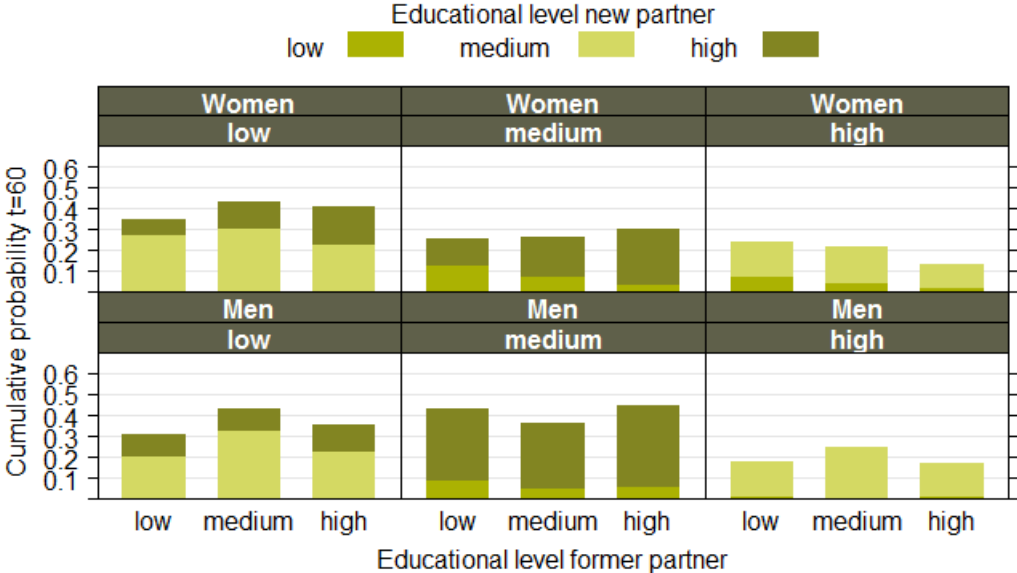
Note: The proportions were estimated for prototypical men and women: divorced between 1990-1999, 31-40 years old when got separated, work full-time, have no co-residential children from first marriage, did not cohabit with their former partner, have an equally educated former partner, have equally educated parents and have a mean value on first marriage duration, mating market opportunities, the religiousness scale and the boundary ambiguity scale.

**FIGURE 5.** Proportion of educationally assortative *cohabiting* unions within 5 years after separation (vertical axes) by level of education of the former partner (horizontal axes)

A. Homogamous unions



B. Heterogamous unions

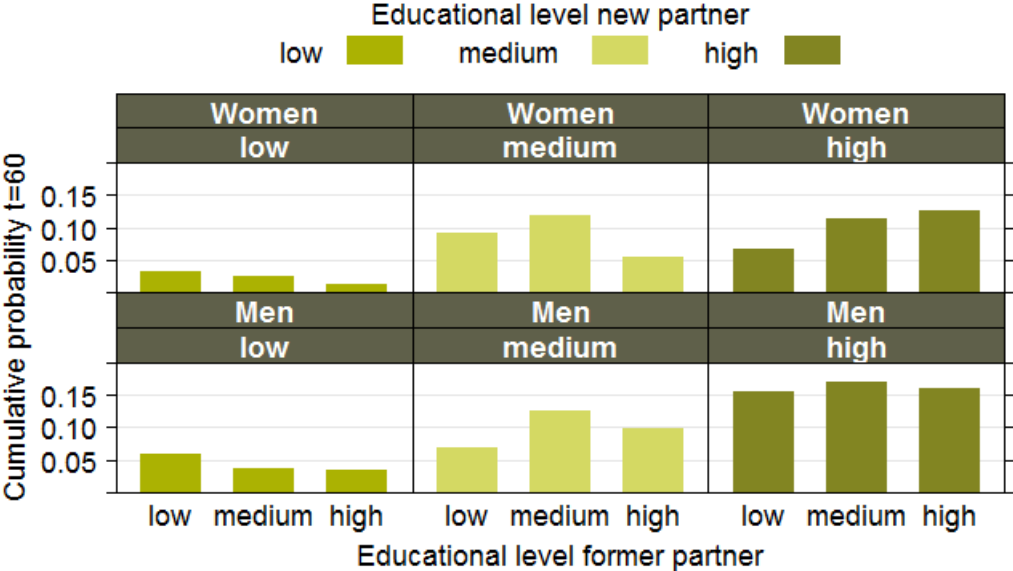


Note: The proportions were estimated for prototypical men and women: divorced between 1990-1999, 31-40 years old when got separated, work full-time, have no co-residential children from first marriage, did not cohabit with their former partner, are equally educated as their parents and have a mean value on first marriage duration, mating market opportunities, the religiousness scale and the boundary ambiguity scale.

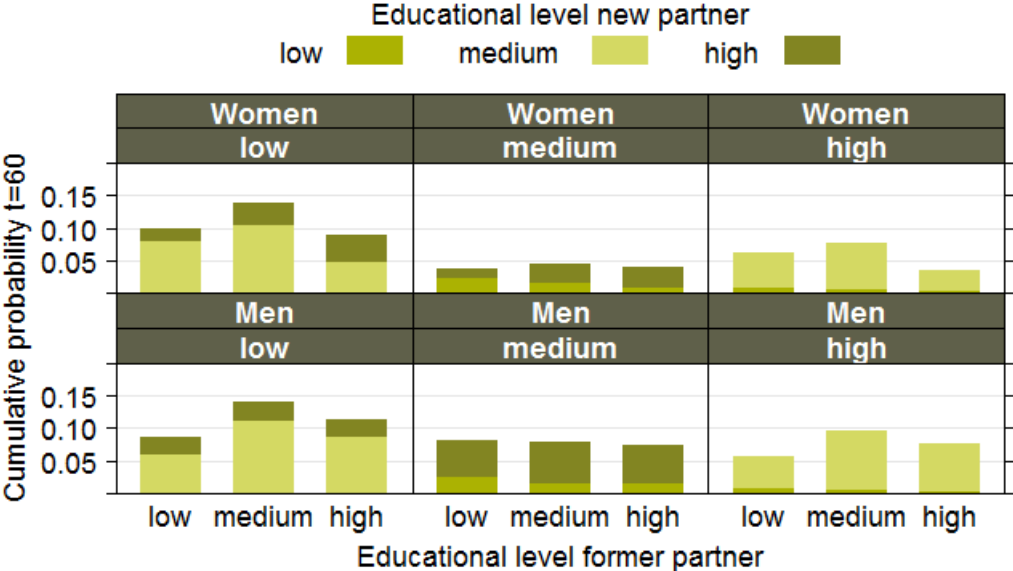


**FIGURE 6.** Proportion of educationally assortative *marital* unions within 5 years after separation (vertical axes) by level of education of the former partner (horizontal axes)

A. Homogamous unions



B. Heterogamous unions



Note: The proportions were estimated for prototypical men and women: divorced between 1990-1999, 31-40 years old when got separated, work full-time, have no co-residential children from first marriage, did not cohabit with their former partner, are equally educated as their parents and have a mean value on first marriage duration, mating market opportunities, the religiousness scale and the boundary ambiguity scale.

**TABLE 4.** Exponentiated coefficients for predictors of men's entry into cohabiting unions after separation (weighted coefficients, unweighted N)

Independent variables	Cohabit with			
	Cohabitation versus staying single	a low educated woman	a medium educated woman	a highly educated woman
		versus staying single		
<b>Intercept</b>	0.043 ***	0.014 **	0.029 ***	0.004 ***
<b>Time</b>				
Duration since separation (0-12 months=ref.)				
13-24 months	0.718 **	0.665	0.618 **	0.876
25-36 months	0.546 ***	0.284 ***	0.476 ***	0.811
37-48 months	0.598 ***	0.497 *	0.519 **	0.783
49-84 months	0.302 ***	0.348 ***	0.231 ***	0.362 ***
85-120 months	0.253 ***	0.274 **	0.224 ***	0.281 ***
121-240 months	0.129 ***	0.083 ***	0.163 ***	0.138 ***
Divorce cohort (1980-1989=ref.)				
1990-1999	0.820	0.563	1.183	0.706
2000-2005	0.755	0.645	1.288	0.491
Age at separation ( $\leq 30$ =ref.)				
31-40	0.900	1.039	0.710 *	1.134
$\geq 41$	0.566 **	0.457	0.555 *	0.744
Duration first marriage	1.006	1.002	1.013	0.994
<b>Educational attainment</b>				
Respondent (low educated=ref.)				
Medium educated	1.123	0.566 **	1.393 *	2.040 **
Highly educated	1.381 *	0.265 ***	1.197	3.970 ***
Former partner (low educated=ref.)				
Medium educated	1.027	0.532 **	1.613 **	1.019
Highly educated	1.005	0.623	1.073	1.181
<b>Mating market opportunities</b>				
n low educated single women (TV)	1.000	0.982	1.008	1.004
n medium educated single women (TV)	1.004	1.036	0.987	1.007
n highly educated single women (TV)	1.018 ***	1.006	1.016	1.026 **
<b>Control variables</b>				
Occupational status (TV) (full-time=ref.)				
Part-time	1.890 *	1.716	0.810	3.409 **
Unemployed	0.710	0.519	1.024	0.566
Co-residential child(ren) (TV) (no co-residential child=ref.)				
1 co-residential child	0.767 *	0.894	0.734	0.684
2 or more co-residential children	0.507 ***	0.555	0.305 ***	0.695 *
Premarital cohabitation with former partner (no=ref.)				
Yes	1.072	0.755	1.129	1.168
Religiousness	1.003	1.039	1.022	0.962
Degree of boundary ambiguity	0.931 ***	0.962	0.922 ***	0.923 ***
Highest educational level parents (low educated=ref.)				
Medium educated	1.159	0.691	0.911	1.799 ***
Highly educated	0.980	0.170 *	0.817	1.611 **
<b>Miscellaneous parameters</b>				
Number of person-months	47 746		47 746	
Number of events	624	125	245	254
$\chi^2$ of all coefficients (df)	313.658 (27)		547.572 (81)	

Source: Divorce in Flanders, 2010; Generations and Gender Survey, wave 1

TV = time-varying; ref. = reference category

\*  $p \leq 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p \leq 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq 0.001$

**TABLE 5.** Exponentiated coefficients for predictors of women's entry into cohabiting unions after separation (weighted coefficients, unweighted N)

Independent variables	Cohabitation			
	Cohabitation versus staying single	Cohabit with		
		a low educated man	a medium educated man	a highly educated man
<b>Intercept</b>	0.103 ***	0.052 **	0.692 **	0.003 ***
<b>Time variables</b>				
Duration since separation (0-12 months=ref.)				
13-24 months	0.497 ***	0.469 ***	0.488 ***	0.541 **
25-36 months	0.556 ***	0.505 **	0.495 ***	0.728
37-48 months	0.475 ***	0.363 ***	0.427 ***	0.692
49-84 months	0.293 ***	0.280 ***	0.254 ***	0.389 ***
85-120 months	0.179 ***	0.244 ***	0.052 ***	0.347 **
121-240 months	0.113 ***	0.072 ***	0.097 ***	0.194 ***
Divorce cohort (1980-1989=ref.)				
1990-1999	0.983	0.854	0.771	1.541
2000-2005	1.154	1.121	1.066	1.395
Age at separation ( $\leq 30$ =ref.)				
31-40	0.668 ***	0.617 *	0.692 *	0.725
$\geq 41$	0.495 ***	0.603	0.490 *	0.458 *
Duration first marriage	0.981	0.975	0.962 *	1.008
<b>Educational attainment</b>				
Respondent (low educated=ref.)				
Medium educated	0.973	0.741	1.052	1.472
Highly educated	0.971	0.497 **	0.698	3.178 ***
Former partner (low educated=ref.)				
Medium educated	0.962	0.619 **	1.142	1.528
Highly educated	0.852	0.252 ***	0.782	2.029 **
<b>Mating market opportunities</b>				
n low educated single men (TV)	0.992	0.999	0.991	0.995
n medium educated single men (TV)	1.003	1.008	1.005	1.000
n highly educated single men (TV)	1.006	0.999	1.010	1.005
<b>Control variables</b>				
Occupational status (TV) (full-time=ref.)				
Part-time	1.063	0.982	1.235	0.908
Unemployed	0.685	1.318	0.787	0.637
Co-residential child(ren) (TV) (no co-residential child=ref.)				
1 co-residential child	0.611 ***	0.647 *	0.576 ***	0.629 **
2 or more co-residential children	0.545 ***	0.679	0.610 **	0.349 ***
Premarital cohabitation with former partner (no=ref.)				
Yes	0.977	0.668	1.092	1.031
Religiousness	1.002	1.021	0.984	1.014
Degree of boundary ambiguity	0.970 ***	0.966	0.959 **	0.988
Highest educational level parents (low educated=ref.)				
Medium educated	0.923	0.901	0.862	1.062
Highly educated	1.113	0.817	0.965	1.418
<b>Miscellaneous parameters</b>				
Number of person-months	66 197		66 197	
Number of events	659	164	291	204
$\chi^2$ of all coefficients (df)	478.364 (27)		729.072 (81)	

Source: Divorce in Flanders, 2010; Generations and Gender Survey, wave 1

TV = time-varying; ref. = reference category

\*  $p \leq 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p \leq 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq 0.001$

**TABLE 6.** Exponentiated coefficients for predictors of men's entry into marital unions after separation (weighted coefficients, unweighted N)

Independent variables	Marry with			
	Marriage versus not remarried	a low educated woman	a medium educated woman	a highly educated woman
		versus not remarried		
<b>Intercept</b>	0.006 ***	0.001 **	0.003 ***	0.002 ***
<b>Time variables</b>				
Duration since separation (0-12 months=ref.)				
13-24 months	5.016 ***	2.225	7.924 ***	5.465 *
25-36 months	6.785 ***	3.238	7.915 ***	10.820 ***
37-48 months	5.848 ***	3.113	5.398 **	10.864 ***
49-84 months	5.906 ***	2.128	6.148 **	11.899 ***
85-120 months	4.010 ***	1.426	3.595	8.818 **
121-240 months	3.130 **	0.863	5.206 *	4.016
Divorce cohort (1980-1989=ref.)				
1990-1999	0.991	0.856	1.226	0.719
2000-2005	0.867	0.800	1.072	0.614
Age at separation ( $\leq 30$ =ref.)				
31-40	0.978	1.037	0.773	1.257
$\geq 41$	0.701	0.402	0.730	0.980
Duration first marriage	0.987	1.007	0.989	0.971
<b>Educational attainment</b>				
Respondent (low educated=ref.)				
Medium educated	0.926	0.683	1.041	1.196
Highly educated	1.104	0.281 *	0.811	2.595 **
Former partner (low educated=ref.)				
Medium educated	1.200	0.645	1.880 **	1.156
Highly educated	1.064	0.594	1.438	1.065
<b>Mating market opportunities</b>				
n low educated single women (TV)	0.975	0.996	0.983	0.955
n medium educated single women (TV)	1.005	0.990	1.021	0.997
n highly educated single women (TV)	1.008	1.028	0.994	1.015
<b>Control variables</b>				
Occupational status (TV) (full-time=ref.)				
Part-time	0.972	1.487	0.824	1.021
Unemployed	0.658	1.067	0.662	0.442
Co-residential child(ren) (TV) (no co-residential child=ref.)				
1 co-residential child	1.124	1.417	0.817	1.311
2 or more co-residential children	0.775	0.548	0.409 *	1.242
Premarital cohabitation with former partner (no=ref.)				
Yes	0.807	0.456	1.028	0.757
Religiousness	1.063 **	1.045	1.077 *	1.054
Degree of boundary ambiguity	0.924 ***	0.960	0.903 ***	0.924 ***
Highest educational level parents (low educated=ref.)				
Medium educated	1.253	0.601	1.094	1.916 **
Highly educated	1.396	0.402	1.061	2.431 ***
<b>Miscellaneous parameters</b>				
Number of person-months	84 019		84 019	
Number of events	313	65	124	124
$\chi^2$ of all coefficients (df)	137.431 (27)		260.260 (81)	

Source: Divorce in Flanders, 2010; Generations and Gender Survey, wave 1

TV = time-varying; ref. = reference category

\*  $p \leq 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p \leq 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq 0.001$

**TABLE 7.** Exponentiated coefficients for predictors of women's entry into marital unions after separation (weighted coefficients, unweighted N)

Independent variables	Marry with			
	Marriage versus not Remarried	a low educated man	a medium educated man	a highly educated man
		versus not remarried		
<b>Intercept</b>	0.003 ***	0.002 ***	0.000 ***	0.002 ***
<b>Time variables</b>				
Duration since separation (0-12 months=ref.)				
13-24 months	2.484 **	5.006 *	1.977	2.388
25-36 months	5.252 ***	11.876 ***	4.341 ***	4.131 *
37-48 months	5.174 ***	14.088 ***	3.374 **	5.248 **
49-84 months	3.822 ***	7.585 **	2.845 **	4.155 **
85-120 months	2.125 *	8.737 **	0.986	1.947
121-240 months	1.647	8.422 *	1.010	0.845
Divorce cohort (1980-1989=ref.)				
1990-1999	0.807	1.124	0.619	0.985
2000-2005	1.051	2.223	0.851	0.806
Age at separation ( $\leq 30$ =ref.)				
31-40	0.683 *	0.487 *	0.752	0.816
$\geq 41$	0.458 *	0.632	0.527	0.235 *
Duration first marriage	0.973 *	0.979	0.949 *	1.007
<b>Educational attainment</b>				
Respondent (low educated=ref.)				
Medium educated	0.768	0.613 *	0.886	0.896
Highly educated	0.731	0.268 ***	0.541 *	2.773 **
Former partner (low educated=ref.)				
Medium educated	1.140	0.771	1.322	1.781
Highly educated	0.756	0.380 *	0.586	1.934
<b>Mating market opportunities</b>				
n low educated single men (TV)	1.008	1.005	1.044 *	0.954
n medium educated single men (TV)	1.008	0.982	1.035 *	0.988
n highly educated single men (TV)	1.003	1.015	0.985	1.020
<b>Control variables</b>				
Occupational status (TV) (full-time=ref.)				
Part-time	1.532 ***	1.247	1.498 *	2.107 **
Unemployed	1.491 *	2.135 **	1.220	1.007
Co-residential child(ren) (TV) (no co-residential child=ref.)				
1 co-residential child	0.709 *	0.731	0.694	0.678
2 or more co-residential children	0.606 ***	0.934	0.569 *	0.379 ***
Premarital cohabitation with former partner (no=ref.)				
Yes	0.774	0.471 *	0.999	0.669
Religiousness	1.037	1.053	1.023	1.038
Degree of boundary ambiguity	0.956 ***	0.937 *	0.953 *	0.976
Highest educational level parents (low educated=ref.)				
Medium educated	1.108	1.114	1.281	0.898
Highly educated	1.235	1.093	1.245	1.167
<b>Miscellaneous parameters</b>				
Number of person-months	101 968		101 968	
Number of events	341	96	153	92
$\chi^2$ of all coefficients (df)	211.750 (27)		363.459 (81)	

Source: Divorce in Flanders, 2010; Generations and Gender Survey, wave 1

TV = time-varying; ref. = reference category

\*  $p \leq 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p \leq 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq 0.001$

## Conclusion and discussion

During recent decades, people's first marriages have tended to become more homogamous along the lines of educational attainment (Blossfeld, 2009: 523). The question is whether this also holds in higher order unions – a question of high relevance in a context of high and rising divorce rates. Knowing how patterns of homogamy in higher order unions differ from patterns observed in first marriages is relevant for understanding and predicting the reproduction of social inequality, especially because we know that people are often particularly vulnerable after divorce (McLanahan & Percheski, 2008) and because repartnering may be one way to overcome an adverse socio-economic situation (Dewilde & Uunk 2007; Jansen et al., 2009). While the literature on assortative mating in first marriage is large, not many studies have been published about this issue in a postdivorce context.

This contribution complements the literature by adding a measure of mating market opportunities to the equation and by examining the link between educational assortative mating patterns observed in first marital unions and patterns observed in second marital *and* cohabiting unions. Previous research did not account for mating market opportunities, while men and women may not always realize a 'perfect match' because of restricted opportunities to meet an educational similar partner. Investigating the degree of *intragenerational* mobility or stability in partner choices through people's life courses can be important for several reasons. First of all, it gives an indication of whether or not and how divorced men and women cross group boundaries by remarrying or starting a new relationship with someone that does not have the same characteristics as their former partner. Secondly, the way of handling with possible negative consequences of divorce can depend on someone's position in his or her first marriage on the one hand (being lower educated, for example, may have put someone in a lower bargaining position during but also after the divorce arrangements) and/or on the repartnering patterns made after divorce on the other hand (which includes the kind of new partner someone chooses or needs).

The Belgian Generations and Gender Survey is used to construct 3 male and 3 female indicators of mating market opportunities, each representing the number of singles of the opposite sex, aged 25 to 50 years old and of a certain educational level (low/medium/high). Calculating these numbers for every month during the observation period January 1980 – December 2007 enabled us to link them to the 2 person-month files which include the samples of the 'Divorce in Flanders'-survey: one file to estimate the risk to rehabit, another file to estimate the risk of a second marriage.

Our competing risks analyses to mate a partner with a specific level of educational attainment, lead to the following conclusions. First, like in contemporary first marriages, people have the highest rates of remarrying or rehabitating a low, medium or highly educated man or woman if he or she is respectively low, medium or highly educated. The highest, very pronounced homogamy rates were found among the higher educated. So, even after a divorce, highly educated men and women have a strong tendency to mate within their own group, which confirms Smits's (2003) finding (on first

marriages) that there is a relatively high degree of social closure among the higher educated. The lowest homogamy rates were found among the least educated. Low educated women may prefer to repartner a higher educated man to compensate the economic disadvantages of a divorce. Men with a low educational attainment may have a higher risk to repartner a higher educated woman because of their preference for younger women, who are often higher educated than older women (due to the educational expansion across cohorts). This means that low educated divorced women seem to repartner in a more 'traditional' way than in contemporary homogamous first marriages (because of their needs), while low educated divorced men (and to a lesser extent, medium educated men) tend to choose a partner with whom they repartner upwardly. The latter finding can be interpreted in line with the determined lower prevalence of hypergamy (women marrying upwards) among younger cohort members aged 25-34 by Esteve and colleagues (2012). The women in these younger cohorts can be the preferred women of divorced (older) men.

Second, partner choices after separation are not only associated with the own educational level, but also with the educational level of the former partner. According to our results, people have a high chance of making new unions with partners being educationally similar to first marriage partners: the risk of repartnering a low, medium or highly educated man or woman is positively correlated with being previously married to a respectively low, medium or highly educated man or woman. This means that people mate not only new partners educationally similar to themselves, but also similar to their former partner. In contrast to what is found earlier (Gelissen, 2004; Shafer, 2012), we did not find evidence of educational assortative mating patterns in first marriages being extended to the ones in relationships formed after divorce. Interaction terms between the own educational level and the educational level of the former partner had no significant effect on recombining/remarrying a man or woman with a specific educational level. Yet, we did find evidence for second unions being less educationally homogamous than first marriages, for both men and women: the agreement between the respondents' educational attainment and that of their new partners is less strong than that with their former partners. This result seems, to us, quite robust because of the DiF-sample design and the made selection criteria. The exclusion of people being divorced more than once and the maintaining of still ongoing second unions make that the most unstable post-divorce matches may be underrepresented in our sample; unstable matches may be more common among heterogamous ones, so we may underestimate the degree of heterogamy. On the other hand, this also means that we should interpret our estimates of the absolute degree of educational homogamy and heterogamy in post-divorce relationships with caution. Still, our results of how partner choices after divorce are conditioned by the own educational level as well as the educational level of the former partner are very robust.

Third, people's educational assortative mating patterns after divorce are not only related to their needs and preferences, but also to the opportunities to meet a man or woman with a specific educational attainment. Men, for example, have a higher chance of recombining a highly educated woman if the number of potential higher educated women increases. Women's chances to remarry a

medium educated man are higher if there are more low and medium educated men in the single population. For this reason, we want to encourage other researchers to create similar measures of mating market opportunities, especially for investigating people's specific partner choices (in terms of education, but also in terms of other characteristics). Our measure has some drawbacks, for instance, which can be offset in future studies. By using the GGS-data, we were able to calculate the number of singles during the desired observation period, but with a very specific age range (25-50). A broader age range would have been more preferable and could have given us the opportunity to create age-specific measures of available partners in the mating pool. Generally, divorced women and men of 30 years old have a different partner pool (with respect to age) than divorcees of say 40 years old. Calculating the number of singles between two age barriers for a man or woman with a certain age could have been a way to account for this issue. However, our DiF-sample would have become too small and, subsequently, our results less reliable.

How social characteristics, like the degree of social integration and the way people's networks are connected to the network of their former partner, shape educational assortative mating patterns after divorce could not explicitly be investigated. Yet, being attached to an association or being active during leisure time could also create opportunities to meet possible matches with specific characteristics (de Graaf & Kalmijn, 2003). However, in our analyses, we did check if the educational group of the parents is associated with people's risk to repartner someone with a certain educational attainment. The parental educational level is, after all, highly correlated with men or women's social networks of the family origin (Blossfeld & Timm, 2003; Musick et al., 2012). For men, the results concerning the education of parents suggest that the social background may indirectly be associated with the educational sorting outcome after divorce. So, besides the own level of education and the level of education of the former partner, also the parental education level points to the role played by men's social networks and background, which may often survive through the post-divorce period. The fact that we do not found a similar conclusion for women may be explained by men returning more often than women to live with their parents after divorce. Still, more research is needed to explain how people's social networks before *and* after divorce are related to people's post-divorce partner choice's.

Fourth, the different results between recombination and remarriage among men and women emphasize the importance of making a distinction between the two types of union formation. A man's chance of starting an educational assortative cohabiting union is, for instance, far more selective than his chance of starting an educational assortative marital union: observed significant effects for recombining a woman with a certain educational level lower off (the own, parental and former partner's educational level) or disappear completely (the age at separation, the number of highly educated women and the occupational and parental status) in the case of remarriage. The lower remarriage intensity and the slightly higher recombination intensity of women compared to men may be a possible explanation for the observation that there are more selection effects on men's educational sorting outcome in the case of recombination and slightly more selection effects on women's



education sorting outcome in the case of remarriage. Thus, even if we do find more or less similar educational assortative mating patterns after divorce in the case of re-cohabitation and remarriage, it is clear that researchers should be aware that mechanisms to mate educationally assortatively after divorce may work differently across union types.

Most previous research on educational assortative mating patterns after divorce used log-linear analyses to compare the degree of homogamy between first and second (or current) unions and/or categorized the outcome variable in terms of ‘homogamy’, ‘hypergamy’ and hypogamy’. Our way - using only the level of educational attainment of the new partner in the outcome variable - makes our results therefore difficult to compare with previous research. However, we definitely think that the often formulated hypotheses to compare educational homogamy between first and second unions (namely, the *marriage market* hypothesis, the *learning* hypothesis, and the *remarrying kind* hypothesis) do not work as competing hypotheses. Even if we do find less educational homogamy in second unions (what would support the *marriage market* hypothesis), people may have a greater preference for dissimilar partners (like the low and medium educated men and women in our DiF-sample), also after controlling for the available single men and women of the relevant educational group. Instead, we argue that all three mechanisms (needs, preferences and opportunities) work together, although that one mechanism may have a higher weight than the other according to the educational group to which you belong. Unfortunately, our data is too small for including interaction terms between the educational level of the respondent and other independent variables.

A final remark is related to the fact that we only investigated people from dissolved marriages and not from dissolved cohabiting unions. Whether our results can be generalized to people from dissolved cohabiting unions would be an interesting question for further research. Nevertheless, we estimate the probability of large differences quite low. Studies comparing the degree and patterns of educational homogamy between marital and cohabiting unions (regardless of their parity) show none or only small differences (Blackwell & Lichter, 2004; Schwartz, 2010). So, people of dissolved cohabiting unions might also prefer an educationally similar partner as their former partner. The reverse might be true for differences across same-sex and opposite-sex couples. Till now, researchers found small to large differences in educational matching by couple type (Jepsen & Jepsen, 2002; Schwartz & Graf, 2009). Since we did our analyses on only opposite-sex couples, our results might not be extended to same-sex couples.

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## Appendix

### *Boundary Ambiguity Scale for divorced adults*

The following statements are about changes in your family since your divorce. Using the scale provided as your guideline, choose the number that best shows how you feel.

1. Never
  2. Rarely
  3. Sometimes
  4. Most of the time
  5. Almost always
- 
1. I still consider myself a wife/husband to my former spouse.
  2. Calling myself a divorced person feels comfortable to me now.
  3. I feel upset when I imagine my former spouse with another man/woman.
  4. I find myself wondering where my former is and what s/he is doing.
  5. I feel that in some sense I will always be attached to my former spouse.
  6. I still get my former spouse's advice about important personal decisions (e.g., health, career).
  7. I continue to keep alive my hope that I will be reunited with my former spouse.
  8. I continue to hope that my relationship with my former spouse will improve.
  9. I feel competent performing the household or outside tasks that my former spouse used to do
  10. I feel guilty about dating (or wanting to date)
  11. I feel that I have completely recovered from my divorce
  12. I still consider some members of my former spouse's family to be part of my family
  13. I feel incapable of establishing meaningful relationships with another man/woman
  14. I find myself asking my former spouse for advice about the areas s/he used to handle
  15. I often wonder what my former spouse's opinion or comment would be on events that happen or things I see during the day
  16. My former spouse and I discuss our new relationships with each other

If you do not have children, stop here. If you do have children, answer items 17-22:

17. My children and I are able to talk about my former spouse without becoming emotionally upset
18. I worry that my children feel caught in the middle between me and my former spouse
19. My former spouse and I agree on how to share the responsibilities of parenting
20. My children are aware of the facts and are reconciled to the divorce
21. My former spouse and I have difficulty discussing financial matters involving the children
22. It feels like a complete family when the children and I are together without my former spouse