

Life as a couple in the late 20th and early 21st centuries

**How do men's and women's socioeconomic
resources influence union stability?**

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*Urte guzti hauetan nirekin eramán
ditudan herriari eta jendeari*

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Summary

This thesis evaluates whether the increasing socioeconomic resources of women and men and the distribution of work within the couple have an effect on union instability. On the one hand, it assesses each spouse's satisfaction with the union, testing the differences between partners in their perceptions of the quality of the marriage. On the other hand, it studies the stability of the relationship, focusing on the risk of dissolution over time and differentiating between cohabiting and married unions. The focus is on the factors that account for this stability and whether their effects differ by type of couple, both from the perspective of the individual (distinguishing between men and women) and of the couple. The findings suggest that the nature of marriage is different from that of cohabitation and that cohabiting partners are more susceptible to the internal and external negative conditions that unions have to deal with. Finally, the thesis demonstrates that it is important to take into account, if possible, the responses of both partners.

Resumen

Esta tesis evalúa si el incremento en los recursos socioeconómicos de mujeres y hombres y la distribución del trabajo dentro de la pareja afectan a la estabilidad de la unión. Por un lado, investiga la satisfacción individual con la pareja, investigando las diferencias en las percepciones de la calidad de la relación. Por otro lado, estudia la estabilidad de la relación, centrándose en el riesgo de separación en el tiempo y diferenciando entre parejas que cohabitan y parejas que se casan. En concreto, analiza los factores que pueden incidir en la estabilidad y comprueba si sus efectos difieren por tipo de pareja desde una perspectiva individual (diferenciando entre hombres y mujeres) y desde una perspectiva de pareja. Los resultados de los análisis parecen indicar que la naturaleza del matrimonio es diferente de la naturaleza de la cohabitación y que los cohabitantes son más vulnerables a las condiciones negativas, tanto internas como externas, a las que tienen que hacer frente las parejas. Por último, esta tesis demuestra que es importante, si es posible, tener en cuenta la información de los dos miembros de la pareja.

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INTRODUCTION

Life as a couple in the late 20th and early 21st centuries

In the last decades of the 20th century, it was argued that the best strategy for married partners to maximize the utility of their union was for one member of the partnership to specialize in paid work while the other would be better off staying at home and taking care of the household (Becker, 1981). As a consequence, husbands enjoyed a position of power within the household. They were the ones in paid employment, which provided the household income, while wives, who were less likely to be employed, were responsible for housework. Regardless of their level of satisfaction with the partnership, if spouses embraced specialization, the risk of dissolution was substantially reduced. At that time, many married women could not afford the cost associated with a stigmatized and expensive divorce (Härkönen and Dronkers, 2006; Flaquer and Garriga, 2009). Moreover, marriages could last over time with well-established gender role attitudes for husbands and wives supporting such a division of paid and unpaid work (Brines, 1994; Nock, 1995).

Today, specialization as the way to maximize the utility of a marriage seems outdated (Sweeny, 2002). Wives are now educated to a university degree level in similar proportions to husbands (Blossfeld and Timm, 2003). Furthermore, the proportion of married women working for pay in the labour market is constantly increasing (Blossfeld and Drobnic, 2001), which should affect the

lives of couples. On the one hand, wives' increasing economic resources might be considered a source of stability for the marriage due to the couple having better protection against unexpected events such as illness or unemployment (Oppenheimer, 1997; Sayer and Bianchi, 2000; White and Rogers, 2000). On the other hand, as women work for pay they become more financially independent of their husbands. This is expected to lead employed wives to separate if they are not satisfied with their marriages (Schoen et al., 2002; Sayer et al., 2011). One of the reasons for such marital dissatisfaction might be related to the fact that the increase in female labour force participation (i.e. the proportion of the female population that is economically active) has not been accompanied by a similar increase in men's share of household work (Sayer, 2005). Wives continue to do the lion's share of housework, regardless of the amount of paid work they do (Hoschschild, 1989; Coltrane, 2000; Sayer, 2005). Consequently, the extent to which spouses contribute more socioeconomic resources to the union might be responsible for different levels of marital satisfaction between spouses, and it might account for an eventual dissolution of the marriage (Härkönen, 2014).

Furthermore, other forms of partnership different from marriage are emerging, with marriage no longer considered the only acceptable arrangement under which couples live together (Seltzer, 2000). Due to a process whereby the practice of cohabitation is diffusing across advanced countries (Liefbroer and Dourleijn, 2006), it is becoming a normalized living arrangement (Lesthaeghe, 2011). However, the speed at which it is diffusing and the meaning

of cohabitation might differ from one country to another (Heuveline and Timberlake, 2004). In general, the two types of partnerships are rather different from each other. Marriage is understood as a long-lasting partnership in which both spouses are committed to the relationship and the risk of rupture is considered low. Cohabitation, in contrast, is more often considered a short-term living arrangement with a relatively high probability of leading to either marriage or break-up within a few years (Smock, 2000). Thus, the decision to cohabit or marry might have consequences for the future of a partnership. Married individuals are more committed and satisfied with their spouses, while cohabitants tend to show less commitment to and satisfaction with their partners (Brines and Joyner, 1999; Wiik et al. 2009; Tai et al., 2014; Hiekel et al., 2014). The profile of people who opt for cohabitation also differs from those who decide to marry. Spouses tend to be older, more educated and traditional than cohabitants (Smock, 2000; Kiernan, 2004; Beaujouan and Bhrolcháin, 2011). Therefore, whether two partners decide to marry rather than cohabit or vice versa might have an impact on the quality and stability of their union.

The increasing trend in cohabitation has been accompanied by a general increasing trend in relationship instability across developed countries. This trend has occurred at different points in time and at different levels depending on the specific context of each country (Heuveline and Timberlake, 2004; Amato and James, 2010).

In sum, couples in the 21st century are expected to suffer from more relationship instability and lower marital quality than

couples in the late 20th century (Bradbury, 2000). In recent decades, the costs and stigma associated with divorce have decreased, which makes divorce easier (Härkönen, 2014). Previously, most couples remained together because the partners were highly specialized, they could not afford the costs of divorce, and alternatives to marriage were not socially accepted options for them (e.g. cohabitation). Today, individuals are able to decide whether they want to cohabit or marry. Furthermore, the two members of a couple are expected to have greater socioeconomic resources compared to two partners from several decades ago, as both partners are expected to contribute to the union. In this scenario, the woman especially, although it could be either partner, is more likely than in the past to initiate a separation process if she is not fulfilled by the partnership (Kalmijn and Poortman, 2006; Sayer et al., 2011). As a result, the extent to which two partners are able to adapt and distribute their resources and workloads in a more equitable way might be responsible for differences in their individual perceptions of marital quality, and it may reduce the risk of dissolution.

Relationship instability

Given the increases in divorce and in women's labour force participation, this thesis researches whether the changes in employment and the division of work inside the couple affect union stability. This instability is captured in two ways. First, each partner's satisfaction with the union is analysed to test whether there are any differences between men and women in their

perceptions of the quality of their relationship. Second, instability is evaluated by analysing the risk of dissolution over time and the conditions that affect such a dissolution.

As noted, the dependent variables in this thesis are satisfaction with the partner (i.e. relationship quality) and the risk of dissolution. Karney and Bradbury (1995) suggest that despite being related, the two concepts do not refer to the same marital processes and need to be measured separately. Indeed, some marriages remain turbulent for years without separation, while other apparently stable marriages decide to break up (Amato and Hohmann-Marriot, 2007). Moreover, whereas the two spouses both go through a divorce process if they decide to separate, each of them might have enjoyed a different level of relationship quality.

When discussing relationship quality, Fincham and Rogge (2010) comment that many terms are used simultaneously and interchangeably to address this variable. This ranges from satisfaction to adjustment, success, happiness, or companionship, among others, but they all refer to the same concept: relationship quality or relationship satisfaction. Relationship quality is based on how individuals self-evaluate the state of their relationship. It can be understood as a single measure, reflecting the level of happiness with the union, or a composite measure of satisfaction with many dimensions that affect union quality (Brockwood, 2007). Some time ago, marital quality was relevant to the future stability of the union, but the prominent position of men within partnerships meant the preferences of women were generally ignored. However, this scenario has changed. In the early 21st century, more women are

better educated and they receive increasing returns from employment. This has meant that women have gradually gained more important positions within partnerships. They no longer have to be subordinate to men and are able to negotiate their preferences with men from a more equal position. Hence, in this new setting, relationship quality is important, since it can determine whether the two partners have a satisfactory or unsatisfactory union, or simply different opinions about its quality. As a result, studying relationship quality can provide a more comprehensive picture of ongoing couple dynamics. Previous studies have mainly focused on the resources that made spouses satisfied or dissatisfied with the union, but very few have explored potential differences in wives' and husbands' individual reports on their marital quality (e.g. Amato et al., 2003). Furthermore, the literature suggests more research needs to be done regarding marital quality. Schoen et al. (2002) state that the role of marital quality should be accounted for in studies that analyse the relationship between employment and marital instability, and Amato and James (2010) argue that the quality of relationships remains understudied in research on divorce, although it could help to understand the reasons why some couples divorce (Amato, 2010).

The second way to account for relationship instability is the risk of dissolution, which is understood as the point at which a couple ceases to live together. Until now, empirical research has focused on women rather than men. In particular, the interest has been on women's increasing participation in paid work, measured via working hours or labour income, and its impact on union

dissolution. The results suggest two possible effects of women's employment on union dissolution. On the one hand, being employed makes women independent, because the exit costs of potentially leaving a marriage are more affordable for employed women (Cherlin, 1979; Rogers, 2004). On the other hand, women who work provide an additional source of stability and protection for the couple against unexpected events such as illness or unemployment (Oppenheimer, 1997; Sayer and Bianchi, 2000; White and Rogers, 2000). However, many of these studies do not take into account the two members of the union, and as a result the impact on men remains understudied. In this regard, it has been suggested that European research on divorce should turn to focusing on whether the impact of wives' employment on union dissolution is conditioned by husbands' willingness to do family work and by gender role attitudes (Härkönen and Dronkers, 2006; Amato, 2010; Amato and James, 2010). Therefore, it should be interesting to study the internal and external conditions of partnered men and women. It may be that partners' individual behaviour has an influence on the quality and stability of relationships.

Family-related studies on the quality and stability of partnerships have centred on studying married unions, and they have largely neglected other forms of partnership, notably cohabitation (for exceptions, see Brines and Joyner, 1999; Kalmijn et al., 2007; Oláh and Gähler, 2014). As mentioned, cohabitation as an alternative to or substitute for marriage is becoming normalised, and many people opt for cohabitation arrangements (Bumpass and Lu, 2000; Lesthaeghe, 2011). Although the meaning of cohabitation

might differ from one country to another (Heuveline and Timberlake, 2004; González et al., 2010), the existing literature shows that, in general, the features of people who opt for cohabitation are different from those who opt for marriage (Poortman and Mills, 2012). For instance, it has been found that the household and labour arrangements differ from one type of union to the other (Baxter, 2005; Domínguez-Folgueras, 2012). Differences also extend to the level of commitment to, the duration of, and the risk of dissolution of the two types of partnership. Cohabiting relationships tend to be shorter and more unstable, with partners being less committed to their union, and the partnership presenting higher levels of union dissolution relative to married unions, in which spouses tend to be more committed, stay in the relationship for longer periods of time, and show a lower likelihood of union dissolution (Brines and Joyner, 1999; Beaujouan and Bhrolcháin, 2011). As a consequence, it may be that the socioeconomic resources of partnered men and women have a different impact on relationship instability depending on whether the partners are in a married or cohabiting union.

Conditions related to relationship instability

Within a couple there are internal and external conditions that might have an impact on the stability and quality of the partnership. Among the internal conditions of partnerships that could have an influence on the quality and stability of unions, three stand out and are the focus of this thesis: the distribution of socioeconomic resources – education, income, and occupational

status; the distribution of household labour; and the changing conditions of employment.

First, individuals enjoy greater freedom to decide what kind of partner they want to live with. Hence, finding a good match seems to be more essential today than it was in the past. In other words, singles are increasingly concerned about finding what they consider to be the right partner before marrying. Who they decide to live with will have an impact on the duration of the union as well as on the quality of the relationship. A good match seems to be ever more important for long and happy relationships. Some authors suggest that it is increasingly likely that individuals will select partners that are like them in terms of education, because they might want a person who shares similar worldviews or culture (Kalmijn, 1994; 1998; Blossfeld and Tim, 2003). However, others think that, especially in married unions, wives might prefer a husband who has greater economic resources due to the expected breadwinner role of married men (Brines, 1994; Nock, 1995). Moreover, the resources of partners are usually measured in terms of education, income, and occupational status, although very few studies take all three of them into account (e.g. Jalovaara, 2003, Kalmijn, 2003 – marital dissolution; Gong, 2007; Amato et al., 2007 – marital quality). This thesis takes the three resources into account in order to obtain a more comprehensive idea of the extent to which the distribution of socioeconomic resources is related to the quality of the union.

Second, the way in which partners allocate their time to housework might be crucial for the survival of the union. The traditional distribution of work tended to strengthen married unions,

because women did not usually participate in the labour market (Becker, 1981). However, this is no longer possible and couples need to arrange the way in which housework is divided between them (Poortman and Van der Lippe, 2009). The quality and stability of the union might change depending on whether partners agree or disagree on the way housework and paid work is distributed. Existing research has barely accounted for the distribution of work between partners based on the time spent on paid work and housework, and to my knowledge only Cooke (2006) has evaluated the extent to which the amount of time spent on housework and paid work has an effect on the risk of dissolution. However, she only studies married individuals, while this thesis includes both married and cohabiting couples. This is because we know that the partners in cohabitations and marriages arrange their housework differently (Davis et al., 2007) and have different risks of dissolution (Beaujouan and Bhrolcháin, 2011). Thus, there is a need to investigate whether the two phenomena are associated. In doing this, it should be interesting to control for the female labour income share (Brines and Joyner 1999; Kalmijn et al., 2007).

Third, changes in the external conditions of partners, such as their working situations, are also likely to affect the duration and stability of partnerships. The proportion of people who are able to and want to work for pay has rapidly increased over the past few decades with the progressive incorporation of women into the labour market. This might be partly responsible for some of the working conditions in the 24/7 economy (Presser, 2003). Moreover, employees are likely to suffer from more temporary contracts and

irregular working hours. As a consequence, it might be expected that the work instability of partners may spill over into their home lives. However, it is not yet clear whether these changing working situations are associated with more unstable unions. Previous studies have used general employment conditions such as labour income and working-time related measures to assess the relationship between employment and marital instability at the individual level (Brines and Joyner, 1999; Poortman and Kalmijn, 2002; Poortman, 2005; Kalmijn et al., 2007). This thesis uses couple-level analyses and a more extensive set of working characteristics, including temporary employment, promotion opportunities, and job responsibility, to evaluate the relationship between working conditions and union instability. Moreover, the union type is also taken into account, since cohabiting couples are believed to behave in a different manner to married ones (Brines and Joyner, 1999; Kalmijn et al., 2007).

Contributions and structure of the thesis

This thesis makes various contributions to the literature. First, it takes into account the union type, distinguishing between cohabitation and marriage. Second, it analyses both internal and external conditions that affect couple instability. On the one hand, it looks at couples' internal conditions related to partners' individual socioeconomic resources and how partners distribute the work within their households. On the other hand, it focuses on external conditions associated with partners' work characteristics. Third, unlike most previous studies on this subject, the thesis analyses

these issues both at the individual and at the couple level, using datasets in which both members of the union provide information.

The thesis consists of three independent articles. The first article focuses on relationship quality, while the second and third assess the risk of dissolution. The first article explores differences in marital quality between heterogamous marriages – i.e. marriages in which spouses have different levels of resources – and homogamous marriages – i.e. marriages in which spouses have similar levels of resources. The relation between marital quality and the division of socioeconomic resources between the spouses is examined. The article also analyses whether husbands and wives in the same marriage report similar or different levels of marital quality. It uses data from the United States, exploiting the first wave of the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH) (1987–1988). Previous studies have mainly analysed the extent to which the difference in the level of resources between spouses is related to the risk of dissolution (Kalmijn, 2003; Jalovaara, 2003), but its effect regarding marital quality is not yet clear (e.g. Gong, 2007). In addition, as far as I am aware, no study has analysed whether, when differentiating by male-led heterogamy, female-led heterogamy, or homogamy, the distribution of resources within a couple has a similarly positive or negative impact on the marital quality of each spouse; or whether the distribution of resources results in one of the partners being more satisfied with the marriage than the other spouse.

The second article looks at the distribution of domestic and paid work between partners and its relation to union dissolution,

which is a relatively unexplored research question (except by Cooke, 2006). By also controlling for the income of the partners, it evaluates whether the allocation of work, understood as the way in which the two partners distribute the amount of time spent on unpaid and paid work, has an impact on union dissolution. To do this, longitudinal data from the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) (1992–2008) is used, and separate analyses for married and cohabiting unions are carried out. The two types of union not only show different levels of commitment and risks of dissolution (Brines and Joyner, 1999; Beaujouan and Bhrolcháin, 2011) but also different work distributions (Baxter, 2005; Domínguez-Folgueras, 2012).

The third article analyses the relationship between working conditions and the risk of dissolution from the moment in which two partners decide to live together until the union is dissolved. Whereas previous studies focus on the effect of labour income and working time on union dissolution (Brines and Joyner, 1999; Kalmijn et al., 2007), this study also addresses other working conditions in the 24/7 economy: temporary employment, promotion opportunities, and job responsibility. The analyses are run separately for married and cohabiting couples using data from the United Kingdom (BHPS, 1991–2008).

In sum, the thesis evaluates whether the increasing socioeconomic resources of women and men and the distribution of work within the couple have an effect on couple instability. On the one hand, it assesses each spouse's satisfaction with the union, testing the differences between partners in their perceptions of the

quality of the partnership. On the other hand, it studies the stability of the relationship, assessing the risk of dissolution over time and differentiating between cohabiting and married unions. The focus is on the factors that account for this stability and whether their effects differ by type of couple, both from the perspective of the individual (distinguishing between men and women) and of the couple.

Context

This thesis uses data from two of the countries that have been in the vanguard of family changes over the past few decades. The first article uses data from the United States. This country has witnessed one of the highest rates of union instability over time. The second and third articles use data from the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom has a relatively high rate of union dissolution compared to other European countries, and, more importantly, it has a variety of established union types. The two countries have two of the highest percentages of female labour force participation in advanced societies, although higher proportions of women tend to work full-time in the US than in the UK. These two countries are good examples of societies in which the rates of female employability and union dissolution have remained high over time despite all the changes in union types and the lives of couples.

In the United States, the crude divorce rate¹ in 1990 was about 5, and, although it had fallen to 3.5 by 2010, it has continued

¹ The crude divorce rate is the number of divorces per 1000 people in the population per year.

to be one of the highest rates among advanced countries (National Center for Health Statistics, 2015). Similarly, US female labour force participation rates have also been among the highest. In 1990, the percentage of women aged 15–64 who were economically active in the labour force was about 67%, and this was the same in 2010 (World Bank, 2015). The reasons for such high percentages of couple instability and female labour force participation include high rates of women with a tertiary education, premarital cohabitation, and the postponement of marriage (McLanahan, 2004). Moreover, changes such as the increase in the age at which individuals marry, levels of education, women's and family incomes, decision-making equality between partners, and the decrease in marital fertility appear to have improved the marital quality of American marriages (Amato et al. 2003). Nevertheless, other changes such as the increase in premarital cohabitation, remarriage, employment demands on women, and less support for life-long unions are thought to have contributed to reducing marital quality (Amato et al., 2003).

One of the main reasons for selecting the United States as a case study is related to the richness of one of the available datasets. The first wave (1987–1988) of the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH) represents an unrivalled dataset for the study of marital quality. At the time it was carried out, the proportion of dual-earner American couples in which both partners were educated and enjoyed social and economic resources was sufficiently high to avoid important problems of selection. More importantly, this dataset contains a broad variety of questions related to marital

quality that were administered to both members of the couple. This allows analyses to be run at both the individual and the couple level.

In the United Kingdom, the crude divorce rate remained constant over time, at 2.6 over the last decades of the 20th century. In the past decade, this has decreased to 2.1 divorces per 1000 individuals in the population (Eurostat, 2015). As in the United States, the rates of female labour force participation have been consistently high over time, although the United Kingdom also has one of the highest rates of female part-time employment (World Bank, 2015). In 1990, the percentage of women aged 15–64 who were economically active in the labour market was about 67%, while in 2010 this percentage rose to 69% (World Bank, 2015). In terms of part-time work, women accounted for 85% of the total number of part-time workers in 1990 and 75% in 2010. Moreover, one of the peculiarities of this country is its diversity of union types, including cohabitation. Although cohabitation does not have the same legal status as marriage (Barlow et al., 2008), it is quite institutionalized and is rapidly increasing in terms of numbers. While 3 million people were cohabiting in 1996, there were 5.9 million in 2012 (Office for National Statistics, 2012). In general, the individuals who opt for cohabitation have different profiles to those who opt for marriage. Married individuals are older, more educated, and more traditional than cohabiting individuals (Kiernan, 2004; Beaujouan and Bhrolcháin, 2011). In this country, many people opt for cohabitation either as a prelude (Berrington, 2001) or as an alternative (Kiernan, 2004) to marriage. Thus, analysis of the two

types of couple is viable and indeed necessary when analysing data from the UK.

In the United Kingdom, there are a variety of excellent datasets that facilitate analyses of family outcomes. The dataset for the second and third articles of the thesis is the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS), a longitudinal survey covering the period 1991–2008 and following the same representative group of people over time. One of the features of this dataset is that it also allows couple-level analyses, because most of the questions are administered to every adult in the household.

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CHAPTER 1

DISTRIBUTION OF SOCIOECONOMIC RESOURCES AND MARITAL QUALITY: DO WOMEN AND MEN PERCEIVE MARRIAGES DIFFERENTLY?

Abstract

This study analyses whether the distribution of socioeconomic resources – education, income, and occupational status – in dual-earner marriages is related to husbands and wives perceiving marital quality similarly or differently. An investigation into couple-level data from the first wave of the National Survey of Families and Households suggests that homogamy is not associated with higher quality marriages. Comparing when husbands are more educated than their wives to when the spouses have similar levels of education, wives are more satisfied with the former state of affairs. This can be contrasted with husbands' reports in relation to spouses' income: husbands report to be more satisfied when the spouses earn similar amounts than when the wife is the higher earner. Concomitantly, wives appear to be more satisfied than husbands in either type of marriage in which either of the spouses has more economic resources than the other. No evidence is found for different evaluations of marital quality when spouses' levels of occupational status differ.

Introduction

Recently, there has been increasing interest in studying the extent to which heterogamous marriages, in which one spouse enjoys higher resources than the other, and homogamous marriages, in which the two spouses share similar levels of resources, are related to marital outcomes such as marital quality and union dissolution. Fuelled by the increase in women's labour force participation, most studies tested Becker's claim (Becker, 1981),

whereby the resulting erosion of the traditional specialization model (i.e. the husband works for pay and the wife is responsible for housework) may have placed married partnerships at higher risk (e.g. Booth et al., 1984; Vannoy and Philliber, 1992; Lee and Ono, 2008). Whereas studies on union dissolution have thoroughly analysed and reached conclusive findings on the relationship between the risk of dissolution and the distribution of spouses' socioeconomic resources (education, income, and occupational status) (e.g. Jalovaara, 2003; Kalmijn, 2003), studies on marital quality have not evaluated in such detail the association between spouses' socioeconomic resources and relationship quality, and as such the findings remain inconclusive (for an exception, see Gong, 2007). Furthermore, all of the previous studies do not test, or only indirectly test, whether the allocation of socioeconomic resources between partners is related to similar or different perceptions of marital quality as detected in individual reports on the quality of the marriage.

For some authors, the relationship between marital quality – also known as marital satisfaction (Fincham and Rogge, 2010) – and marital dissolution is straightforward (Amato and Rogers, 1997; Gager and Sanchez, 2003). It is suggested that higher quality unions tend to last longer (Rodrigues et al., 2006). However, a bad relationship is not always conducive to an eventual break-up, much like a good relationship might sometimes end in divorce (Amato and Hohmann-Marriot, 2007). Similarly, low marital quality does not necessarily involve the same marital processes that marital dissolution does (Karney and Bradbury, 1995). Besides, whereas

the two spouses go through a divorce process if they decide to break up, each of them might have enjoyed a different level of marital quality. In this regard, White (1990) suggests that husbands and wives might have different expectations of marriage, with wives being more concerned about marriage than husbands (Amato and Rogers, 1997). Wives are the ones who report more marital problems than husbands, which might be due to the second shift on housework and child care that many wives have to do (Hoschschild, 1989) or to the difficulties that men have with reporting marital conflicts (Kitson, 1992). As a consequence, the distinction between the husband's and the wife's marital quality should help better understand to what extent the way in which spouses allocate their socioeconomic resources is related to significant differences in their evaluations of marriage.

The current study uses couple-level data from the first wave of the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH), in which the two spouses were asked separately about the quality of their relationship. The distinctive feature of this study is that it relies on wives and husbands having potentially different assessments of marital quality. If only one member of the couple were asked, the estimates would be gender biased due to women's higher propensity to report their own marital problems relative to that of men (Jackson et al., 2014). Moreover, the study examines how varying distributions between spouses of three types of socioeconomic resources – namely education, income, and occupational status – affect marital quality. Finally, and differently from previous studies (e.g. Gong, 2007), this study investigates all possible types of

couples. These couples can be described as follows: the husband is the main provider of resources, i.e. male-led heterogamy; the wife is the main provider of resources, i.e. female-led heterogamy; and both spouses share similar levels of resources, i.e. homogamy (Amato et al., 2007; Gong, 2007). In this way, it is possible to evaluate whether two spouses with different levels of socioeconomic resources – i.e. male- or female-led heterogamous couples – in relation to the three resources mentioned above enjoy a higher or lower quality marriage than two spouses with similar levels of resources – i.e. homogamous couples. It is furthermore possible to determine whether husbands and wives report similar or different levels of marital quality.

Theoretical Background

This section introduces the main debates about the distribution of socioeconomic resources and spouses' marital quality. First, the dependent variable of marital quality is described. Then, the relationship between the distribution of socioeconomic resources and marital quality is discussed. Thereafter, the three main theoretical approaches used in previous studies to explain such a relationship are presented. This is followed by a discussion about the possible differences in men's and women's evaluations of marital quality. Finally, the predictions of the current study are stated.

The dependent variable: Marital Quality

Throughout the course of a marriage, spouses continuously try to adapt to each other, resulting in unions that vary in their degree of satisfactoriness, closeness, and stability (Huston, 2000). Brockwood (2007) defines marital quality as "the global evaluation of the state of one's marriage or current long-term romantic relationship [...] which can be measured as a composite of satisfaction with several specific facets of the marital relationship".

Increasingly, marital quality is considered a multidimensional concept (Johnson et al., 1985; Glenn, 1990), involving many items such as conflict, satisfaction, divorce proneness, and interaction (Rogers and Amato, 1997; Amato et al., 2003; Gager and Sanchez, 2003; Willets, 2006; Gong, 2007; Lee and Ono, 2008). These different items are usually measured separately, because, although related, some of them refer to different dimensions. For instance, divorce proneness might be more affected by barriers to divorce or costs of exiting the relationship (Knoester and Booth, 2000) than by marital satisfaction, which is the general assessment of the quality of one's marriage (Brockwood, 2007).

In addition, there are two main ways to account for variability in marital quality, by focusing on either the relationship – interpersonal processes – or the individual – intrapersonal processes (Fincham and Rogge, 2010). The two perspectives are not mutually exclusive and should be considered jointly if the aim is to obtain the most comprehensive measure of marital quality.

To complicate things further, the dimensions that give shape to marital quality may not all work in the same direction. Couples with high levels of positive affect may be more successful than other couples in compensating for the negative aspects of the relationship. Some authors claim that these positive and negative aspects should be measured separately, because they might offset each other (Fincham and Rogge, 2010). Nevertheless, in spite of the theoretical argumentation for two separate dimensions, this article uses only one measure for marital quality. As shown below, this choice is justified empirically, based on the results of factor analyses.

Effects of homogamy/heterogamy on marital quality

Couples differ in terms of how they distribute resources between spouses. In some couples, spouses share similar levels of resources – a condition known in family studies as homogamy. In others, one of the two spouses has higher resources than the other – commonly referred to as couple heterogamy. When the husband has more resources than the wife, I term it ‘male-led heterogamy’; when the wife has more resources, I refer to ‘female-led heterogamy’. Some studies focus on homogamy (e.g. Simpson and England, 1981; Blossfeld and Timm, 2003) while others focus on either male- or female-led heterogamy (e.g. Tynes, 1990; Willets, 2006; Gong, 2007).

Resources can be of different types. Most family scholars focus on three: education, income, and occupational status (e.g. Kalmijn, 2003; Jalovaara, 2003, Gong, 2007). Education is

associated with cultural differences and the ability to use and access knowledge. Different amounts of income lead to variations in access to goods and in life chances (Dahlberg, 2015). Occupational status is related to hierarchical relations that express superiority, equality, or inferiority regarding individuals' ascribed social positions (Chan and Goldthorpe, 2004; 2007). With the rise in dual-earner couples (Blossfeld and Drobnic, 2001), studying the occupational status of spouses has become as important as studying education and income (Amato et al., 2007; Conger et al., 2010).

While the impact of homogamy and heterogamy on education, income, and occupational status has been analysed thoroughly in relation to marital dissolution (Jalovaara, 2003; Kalmijn, 2003), it remains understudied in relation to marital quality (Amato et al., 2007; Gong, 2007). The few studies that do examine this latter relation tend to focus on the impact of only one or two of the resources but not on all of them together (for an exception, see Gong, 2007). Thus, some studies focus on education (e.g. Hornung and McCollough, 1981; Tynes, 1990; Amato and Rogers, 1997; Amato et al., 2003; Willets, 2006; Dakin and Wampler, 2008; Rauer et al., 2008; Boertien and Härkönen, 2014), others on income (e.g. Blair, 1993; Amato and Rogers, 1997; Brennan et al., 2001; Amato et al., 2003; Willets, 2006; Dakin and Wampler, 2008; Lee and Ono, 2008), and still others on occupational status (e.g. Hornung and McCollough, 1981; Simpson and England, 1981; Blair, 1993; Conger et al., 2010).

This lack of interest in studying the impact of homogamy and heterogamy comprehensively, by taking into account the joint

distribution of all key resources between partners, is unfortunate, because it may be that homogamy and heterogamy have a different impact on marital quality depending on the particular resource being considered, or that the effect of one resource changes once one controls for the effect of the others. There is some evidence that this is the case. For instance, homogamy in education (Blossfeld and Timm, 2003) and in status (Simpson and England, 1981) appears to lead to higher levels of marital quality due to more similarities between wives' and husbands' worldviews and social networks (but see Tynes, 1990 and Willets, 2006 for opposite results). However, heterogamy in income has been shown to reduce potential disputes between spouses and to stabilize marriages (e.g. Kalmijn, 2007), especially when the husband earns more than the wife. This has been explained as a consequence of spouses having traditional gender role expectations of who should be the main provider of resources within the marriage (Brines, 1994; Amato and Booth, 1995).

To complicate things further, many of these studies do not control for the effect of other factors affecting the two spouses either as a unity – such as wealth, premarital cohabitation, or children in the household (e.g. Booth et al., 1984; Karney and Bradbury, 1995; Amato and Rogers, 1999; Umberson et al., 2005; Jose et al., 2010; Fincham and Beach, 2010) – or individually – such as age at marriage, religiosity, growing up with both biological parents, or favourable attitudes towards divorce (e.g. Karney and Bradbury, 1995; Bradbury et al., 2000; Gottman and Notarius,

2002; Amato et al., 2003; Umberson et al., 2005; Brockwood, 2007; Whitton et al., 2008).

Theoretical approaches to the relationship between homogamy/heterogamy and marital quality

Three main theoretical approaches have been used to analyse the relationship between the distribution of socioeconomic resources and marital quality in previous studies. The first theoretical approach is propinquity theory (Festinger et al., 1950). It states that homogamy has a beneficial impact on a marriage by increasing spouses' marital happiness (Blossfeld and Timm, 2003). This approach tends to emphasize spouses' similar worldviews. It focuses on spouses' similar levels of education and occupational status, which are expected to help people form relationships and be happier in these relationships (Kalmijn, 1994; 1998). Here, similarities between worldviews or, more generally, social relations explain 'good' matches and happiness (Stewart et al., 1980; Prandy and Lambert, 2003). This theory could also be extended to income, provided that it is taken as an indicator of socioeconomic similarities or differences between the two spouses. In general, propinquity theory expects homogamy in all types of resources to lead to spouses' positive evaluations of marital quality. Conversely, it expects heterogamy to be associated with spouses' negative evaluations of marital quality due to higher conflicts as a result of partners' lack of understanding. In other words, both male- and female-led heterogamous couples should have lower levels of marital quality than homogamous marriages, reflecting heterogamy sub-optimality due to lack of understanding between spouses.

The second theoretical approach may be labelled complementarity theory. This approach is mostly economic and hence it focuses on the distribution of income and wealth between partners and on the effects of this distribution on marital quality, but it can be extended to the other types of resources. Specialization theory (Becker et al., 1977; Becker, 1981) and exchange theory (Levinger, 1965; 1976) are good examples of this approach. These theories defend specialization between spouses. Individuals search for partners that complement themselves well. In this way, the utility of the partnership is maximized. The predictions of these theories are that either male- or female-led heterogamy in resources, especially in income, should encourage happier marriages, while homogamy should lead to unsatisfactory marriages due to lack of partnership maximization or stronger conflicts between equals.

The third theoretical approach is the status inconsistency theory (Lenski, 1954; Sampson, 1963; Brandon, 1965), which stems from traditional sociological theories of gender. This theory is social and hence focuses on hierarchical status relations between partners – relations that are based on gender. Although social in nature, it has also been applied to economic and, more rarely, educational resources. It predicts that spouses would be dissatisfied in relationships in which women challenge men's traditional superiority (i.e. the patriarchal social order), like when the wife has a higher status or earns more than the husband. In contrast, in situations of male-led heterogamy, the theory expects spouses to have positive views of the partnership. Finally, homogamous couples would also be more likely to display marital dissatisfaction,

because spouses would prefer to be in male-led heterogamous marriages.

Differences between men's and women's evaluations of marital quality

Up to this point, I have assumed that marital quality is a variable that affects men and women in similar ways. However, Whyte (1990) suggests that the two spouses may or may not enjoy the same positive or negative levels of marital quality and may consequently show similar or different evaluations of such quality. In this regard, previous research has consistently found that men tend to be more satisfied with their marriage than women (e.g. Bernard, 1972; Rhyne, 1981; Jackson et al., 2014). For some, this is just a consequence of the higher likelihood for women to report marital problems (Amato and Rogers, 1997; Jackson et al., 2014). Yet, many of these studies do not analyse men's and women's evaluations of marital quality within the same couple and rather base their conclusions on evaluations from men and women in different couples (e.g. Amato and Rogers, 1997; Amato et al., 2003). Probably, this is due to the difficulties in finding proper couple-level data to analyse marital quality when it comes from husbands and wives from the same couples (e.g. Tynes, 1990; Karambayya and Reilly, 1992; Vannoy and Philliber, 1992; Blair, 1993; Brennan et al., 2001; Whitton et al., 2008). Furthermore, Jackson et al. (2014) show that when both partners provide the information, differences in marital quality between males and females are lower – i.e. more similar – than when men's and

women's reports of marital quality are compared across couples (Jackson et al., 2014).

When the reports of marital quality come from both wives and husbands, there are three possible outcomes. The first outcome is that husbands and wives report to be similarly satisfied with the partnership (e.g. Dakin and Wampler, 2008; Jackson et al., 2014); the second is that both report to be similarly dissatisfied (e.g. Karambayya and Reilly, 1992; Amato and Rogers, 1999; Jose et al., 2010); and the third is that one of the two partners reports to be more satisfied than the other (e.g. Rhyne, 1981; Amato et al., 2003; Whitton et al., 2008). In this latter case, it may be that husbands show more satisfactory evaluations than wives or that wives evaluate their marital quality more positively (e.g. Hornung and McCollough, 1981; Brennan et al., 2001).

Of the studies that have investigated differences in husbands' and wives' evaluations of marital happiness, only a few have taken into account the impact that homogamy/heterogamy in resources (either male- or female-led) has on these differences. Furthermore, to my knowledge, none of them has jointly considered the distribution between spouses of all three main types of socioeconomic resources mentioned above.

In education, Hornung and McCollough (1981) show that spouses' marital quality evaluations are more likely to differ when the marriage is heterogamous. They find that when a man marries a more educated woman, his marital quality declines, whereas when a woman marries a more educated man, her marital quality increases. Gong (2007) also finds that differences between men and women in

evaluations of marital quality are more common in heterogamous marriages. She suggests that when wives have higher levels of education than husbands, the husbands report more positive evaluations of marital quality, whereas wives report more negative ones. Nevertheless, both studies base their conclusions on different samples of wives and husbands that do not belong to the same couples. In contrast, Tynes's study (1990) is based on both the husband's and wife's reports of marital quality within the same couple. It supports the idea that similar views of spouses' marital quality are more likely in heterogamous marriages. When husbands are more educated than wives, both partners report less happy marriages whereas when wives are more educated than husbands, both partners report happier marriages. Therefore, evidence for the case that educational heterogamy is associated with larger differences in evaluations of marital quality between husbands and wives is inconclusive. Some findings seem to suggest that there is an association between educational homogamy and spouses' similarly positive evaluations of marital quality, perhaps because educational homogamy contributes to partners having similar worldviews. However, other studies that use couple data suggest quite the opposite.

Regarding income, Rogers and DeBoer (2001) find that husbands and wives – not in the same couples – are affected differently by wives' labour income. Increases in wives' income, whether in absolute or in relative terms, are positively associated with wives' marital satisfaction and well-being but negatively related to husbands' well-being. Brennan et al. (2001) find partly

complementary results using couple data. They show that male-led heterogamy increases the husband's marital quality, while the wife's marital quality does not change when the husband has higher earnings. Hence, husbands and wives appear to respond differently to a situation of economic subordination relative to their partners. However, Gong (2007) finds that increases in wives' income relative to their husbands' are not related to either spouse's marital quality (the study does not use couple data). Lee and Ono (2008), similarly lacking couple data, conclude that husbands are happier when they are either the breadwinners or fully dependent on their wives. Thus, these results are inconclusive regarding the existence of an unequivocal relationship between heterogamy and marital quality. Some findings seem to point towards the case that female-led heterogamy results in the spouse with fewer resources being more dissatisfied with the marriage than male-led heterogamy, but other findings do not support this.

As for occupational status, Hornung and McCollough (1981) find that married, career-oriented men and women are dissatisfied with their marriage when their spouses' occupational prestige is higher. They explain that the spouse's higher occupational prestige acts as a source of stress and a reminder to the person that he or she is expected to move upwards in the occupational structure. Simpson and England's study (1981) finds that when the two spouses have related occupations, men and women are more likely to show similar levels of marital quality than when they have different levels of occupational status. Gong (2007), who, like the previous studies, relies on evaluations from men and women belonging to different

couples, finds that when wives have a higher occupational status than their husbands, they report more marital dissatisfaction than husbands. The only study, to my knowledge, that assesses differences between spouses within the same couples regarding the impact of occupational status on marital quality is Blair's (1993). Blair does not find any statistically significant differences in husbands' and wives' perceived marital quality when the spouses have the same or different levels of occupational status. The findings are thus inconclusive. Some results suggest that when wives have a higher status than husbands, women show lower levels of marital satisfaction, but others support different associations between occupational status heterogamy and marital quality.

Making sense of the association between homogamy/heterogamy and spouses' evaluation of marital quality

As argued in previous sections, very few studies take a comprehensive approach to explaining the relationship between homogamy/heterogamy and marital quality. A comprehensive approach should define homogamy in relation to all three main types of resources – education, income, and occupational status. It ought to distinguish heterogamy according to whether it is male- or female-led, and it ought to explore all possible outcomes in relation to marital quality: spouses' similar views of happy or unhappy marriages as well as different views, with husbands being happier than wives and vice versa. This paper aims to provide such a comprehensive view of the relationship between homogamy/heterogamy and spouses' evaluation of marital quality.

To facilitate the exploration of this relationship, I next present some alternative sets of predictions about the relationship between the distribution of socioeconomic resources and the marital quality of husbands and wives. These sets of alternative predictions are directly derived from the three theoretical approaches presented above – propinquity, complementarity, and status inconsistency theories. For simplicity, I assume that each predicts the same outcome for all three resources, though, as noted above, each tends to focus on only some of them. I take it as an exploratory question whether this is indeed the case or if differences between homogamous and heterogamous marriages in marital quality vary for each resource instead.

Moreover, while the three theoretical approaches do not explicitly address gender differences in marital quality and how these may vary according to the distribution of resources between partners, I argue that each approach has value when connected to particular findings and arguments in the literature. These are: wives are generally more affected by relational issues than husbands; husbands are more dissatisfied than wives in female-breadwinner unions; and when one partner has more resources than the other, the spouse with higher resources is less satisfied than the spouse with lower resources.

Thus, the argument that wives give more importance than husbands to the content of the relationship when evaluating their marriages (i.e. that they value better communication and higher empathy with their spouse) (Kitson, 1992, Amato and Rogers, 1997; Amato et al., 2003) shares with propinquity theory an emphasis on

common understandings as the source of marital quality, although it qualifies propinquity theory by suggesting that this element is more important for women. Two predictions could consequently be made: first, that homogamous marriages should display higher levels of marital satisfaction than heterogamous ones; and second, that in heterogamous marriages – regardless of who leads the marriage – wives should show lower levels of satisfaction than husbands.

Similarly, the (inconclusive) finding that husbands' marital dissatisfaction in female-led heterogamous marriages is stronger than wives' dissatisfaction in male-led-heterogamous ones is compatible with status inconsistency theory. Insofar as this theory emphasizes how challenges to the traditionally superior status of husbands negatively impacts marital quality, it could help support the predictions that wives and husbands should be more satisfied in male-led marriages but more dissatisfied in marriages in which the wife has more resources than the husband. However, in the latter the husband should be even more dissatisfied, since in patriarchal societies social pressures to succeed are stronger on men than on women. This may not necessarily extend to homogamous marriages, because having the same resources as the wife does not as clearly imply that the husband has failed to comply with his traditional role as family head. Consistent with the postulates of status inconsistency theory, it may well be that in these homogamous marriages men seek to underscore their social superiority by imposing an unfair division of labour within the household. Wives' 'double burden' – so often documented in the literature

(Hoschschild, 1989; Coltrane, 2000; Sayer, 2005) – should lead in this case to wives showing higher levels of dissatisfaction than husbands in homogamous marriages.

Finally, there are some (also inconclusive) symmetric findings on husbands being more dissatisfied than wives in male-breadwinner unions and vice versa, i.e. wives being more dissatisfied than husbands in female-breadwinner unions (e.g. Hornung and McCollough, 1981). These findings are consistent with complementarity theory that stresses two factors: spouses are more satisfied in heterogamous than homogamous marriages, and the spouse with higher resources within a heterogamous couple has the lower satisfaction of the two given their less advantageous position vis-à-vis the marital exchange.

Table 1 summarizes the predictions derived from each theory of husbands’ and wives’ marital quality in homogamous marriages and male- and female-led heterogamous marriages. These predictions are tested in the second part of this paper.

Table 1. Predictions of husbands’ and wives’ marital quality in heterogamous marriages of either type (in relation to the distribution of education, income, and occupational status between spouses), as compared to homogamous marriages, by theoretical approach

		Male-led heterogamy (ref. homogamy)		Female-led heterogamy (ref. homogamy)	
		Husband	Wife	Husband	Wife
T₁: Propinquity Theory	Education	-	--	-	--
	Income				
	Status				

Table 1. (Continued)

		Male-led heterogamy (ref. homogamy)		Female-led heterogamy (ref. homogamy)	
		Husband	Wife	Husband	Wife
T₂: Complementarity Theory	Education				
	Income	+	++	++	+
	Status				
T₃: Status Inconsistency Theory	Education				
	Income	+	+	--	-
	Status				

Note: + Satisfied; ++ Very Satisfied; - Dissatisfied; -- Very dissatisfied.

Methodology

I use data from the first wave (1987–1988) of the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH). The survey asked adult American individuals and their spouses or partners, if present, a variety of questions related to family living conditions, such as living arrangements, education, fertility, or employment. The first wave of the NSFH was addressed to 13007 individuals, who were successfully interviewed and then asked to complete a self-administered questionnaire concerning personal issues. This represents 74.3% of the individuals who were attempted to be interviewed (Sweet et al., 1988). From these, the proportion of individuals who were married at the time is 52.1%. The response rate for the married respondent questionnaire, which consisted of a self-administered questionnaire due to budget constraints and in order to increase the likelihood that the spouse would agree to participate in the survey, was 83.2% (Sweet et al., 1988). This

results in 5476 couples, from which both members of the couple provided information.

From the available data, this study uses only marriages² in which each spouse reported the marital quality on every single item and all the personal information about socioeconomic resources (i.e. number of years in education, labour income, occupation). In this regard, one of the concerns of this study is the sole selection of dual-earner marriages in which both members of the couple reported a current occupation. The resource measure of status relies on the occupation of each spouse, which provides a position in the social scale only if the individual works for pay. As a consequence, marriages in which only one member of the couple is employed cannot be accounted for, as is also the case with marriages in which only one partner reported the years of education or the personal labour income. As for the other variables, I try to be as conservative as possible and include a missing category for every categorical variable of the study. In sum, the restriction to marriages with complete information regarding socioeconomic resources and marital quality reduces the number of marriages to 1632 marriages, or 3264 spouses.

Although the data appear to be outdated and problems of generalizability might arise, the results obtained with this data should provide insights relevant to current discussions among marital researchers. The NSFH is still one of the best datasets for the assessment of marital issues (e.g. Kornrich et al. 2013; Schwartz

² The possibility of also including cohabiting unions was considered. However, the small number of cohabitants at the time of the survey (1987–1988) resulted in small counts in the sample and discouraged their inclusion.

and Han, 2014). It also contains a wide-ranging and extensive questionnaire on marital quality issues compared to other more recent datasets. In addition, one of the strongest points of this dataset is the availability of couple-level data, which makes the individual marital quality of both the wife and the husband perfectly comparable with each other. As shown above, one of the shortcomings of some previous studies that do not use couple-level data (e.g. Hornung and McCollough, 1981; Lee and Ono, 2008) is that wives are more prone than husbands to report marital problems if they experience tension and dissatisfaction with their marriages (Amato and Rogers, 1997), which may result in gender biased estimates (Jackson et al., 2014).

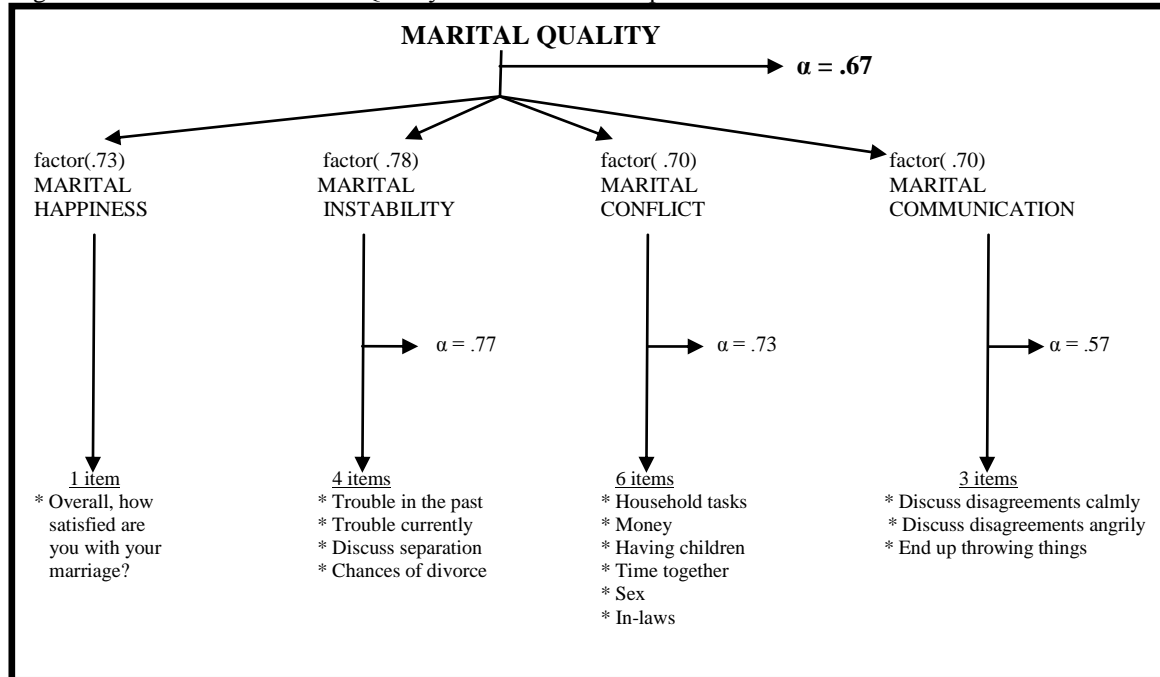
Measuring marital quality

Despite Fincham and Rogge's (2010) recommendation to use two-dimensional measures for evaluating the quality of marriages, the empirical tests carried out and the intra-correlation indexes used in this research suggest that the construction of a comprehensive indicator of marital quality is feasible and convenient. Therefore, the dependent variable of the study is each spouse's subjective perception of the quality of the marriage, which is obtained from the husband's and wife's individual responses to the marital quality items. More precisely, marital quality is the result of a principal component analysis (PCA) of the four dimensions: Marital Happiness, Marital Instability, Marital Conflict, and Marital Communication. Marital Happiness is elicited by a question in which spouses are asked to report their overall

happiness with their marriages on a seven-point scale, with 1 representing very dissatisfied and 7 very satisfied. Marital instability is a four-item index measuring spouses' problems with their marriage. In this dimension, spouses are asked to answer affirmatively or negatively to the existence of marital problems in the past, present marital problems, discussions about separation, and the chances of divorce. Marital Conflict is a six-item index measuring the frequency of arguments in the previous month, ranging from 1 for Never to 5 for Always, about household tasks, money, time together, sex, in-laws and having children. The last dimension is Marital Communication, a three-item index from questions about the frequency, from 1 for Never to 5 for Always, with which the marriage partners discuss disagreements calmly, angrily or heatedly, or highly animatedly – including throwing things around.

Figure 1 shows the marital quality index with its different dimensions and items. In addition, the factor loadings and the intra-correlation index (Crombach alpha) for each variable are shown.

Figure 1. Dimensions of Marital Quality and Crombach's alphas



Source: National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH) (1987–1988).

As explained above, PCA is used to construct the indexes. PCA is a statistical technique that uses orthogonal transformation to convert a set of variables, possibly correlated, into a set of independent variables, called ‘principal components’, which take the variability of the original variables into account as much as possible. This procedure is usually employed when the aim is to reduce the data to a construct, possibly underlying a theoretical concept, which might be used in subsequent studies. Hence, in order to perform PCA for marital quality, different dimensions associated with marital quality are built, considering previous studies and other possibilities offered by the dataset. First, with regard to dimensions used in previous studies, one principal component analysis is run for Marital Conflict and one for the Marital Instability category. Second, another principal component analysis is run for the new dimension of Marital Communication. Lastly, Marital Happiness refers to a single question and, as a consequence, no data reduction is needed.

The above-mentioned techniques allow for the construction of a comprehensive indicator of marital quality. This indicator considers both the relationship level (i.e. interactions between partners, including marital communication, marital conflict, and marital instability), and the individual level (i.e. subjective evaluation of the marriage with marital happiness) (Fincham and Rogge, 2010). Before creating the indexes, each item is transformed, if necessary, so that higher values indicate both higher levels of marital satisfaction and communication as well as lower levels of conflict and instability. Moreover, a further index is

created using PCA to obtain a single construct of marital quality encompassing all four standardized dimensions – i.e. marital happiness, marital instability, marital conflict, and marital communication. The result is a single measure of marital quality with a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one. Higher values of this new variable indicate higher levels of marital quality and vice versa. The Cronbach alpha of 0.67 for this variable indicates that it is reasonably reliable.

Measuring socioeconomic homogamy/heterogamy

The independent variables of interest are related to the degree of homogamy/heterogamy in couples' socioeconomic resources. To measure educational homogamy, first the number of completed years in education of each spouse is used to construct three large groups³: 1) low education, less than high school; 2) medium education, high school or associate degree; and 3) higher education, bachelor degree or higher. Then, the husband's level of education is subtracted from that of the wife, resulting in three possibilities: homogamy, i.e. a situation in which both spouses have similar levels of education, which comprises nearly 67% of marriages in the sample; male-led heterogamy, i.e. a situation in which the husband has a higher level of education than the wife, which represents 17% of marriages; and female-led heterogamy, i.e.

³ I also considered other cut-off points dividing the sample into four and five groups and the results were not substantially altered. Nevertheless, given that the article aims at testing the effect on marital quality of one spouse potentially having higher, similar, or lower levels of a particular resource relative to the other spouse, it was decided to derive these relative levels from a simple high, medium, and low coding of the absolute levels of each resource for each spouse.

a situation in which the wife has a higher level of education than the husband, with 16% of marriages falling in this group. Moreover, the first of these groups (homogamy) is set as the reference category. This group comprises the largest amount of couples. In this way, I am able to assess if the two types of marriages in which one of the spouses has higher levels of resources than the other differ significantly from homogamous marriages.

A similar procedure to the one used for education is followed to measure income homogamy. The only distinction between the two resources is that instead of using levels of education, I use thirtiles of labour income to define levels of income for each spouse and to calculate differences between husbands and wives. The reference category is homogamy with 35% of marriages. In this case ‘male-led heterogamy’ is the largest category, with approximately 57% of marriages. The smallest is ‘female-led heterogamy’, which comprises only 8% of marriages.

The same formula is then followed to construct the variable capturing the distribution of occupational status between the spouses. Here, homogamous marriages – the reference category – represent 43% of all marriages, while female-led heterogamous and male-led heterogamous marriages represent, 31% and 25% respectively. It should be noted that the measure to account for the status of spouses is CAMSIS (Cambridge Social Interaction and Stratification) scale. This measure takes into account the occupation and expresses the importance of a person and his or her occupation. CAMSIS operates on social space in which workers are located depending on their likelihood of interacting with other employees

(Stewart et al., 1980). Workers who are socially close to each other with slightly different occupations in terms of level of prestige are expected to have similar distributions of marriage partners (Prandy and Lambert, 2003). Thus, the distance between them should be very narrow (e.g. the husband is a doctor and the wife is a nurse or the husband is a farmer and the wife is a crop farmer) compared to other workers with spouses very distant from each other and with very different distributions (e.g. the husband is a physiotherapist and the wife is a cook or the husband is a truck driver and the wife is a higher education professor). In sum, CAMSIS evaluates the rank or status of an occupation in terms of social interactions.

Furthermore, CAMSIS offers a distinctive approach that might enrich the literature on marital quality. First, it allows an assessment of whether inconsistent marriages, understood as marriages in which the spouses are unlikely to end up together because of distant social positions, are more likely to be worse quality marriages. Second, CAMSIS avoids problems of correlation and multicollinearity that may arise with variables such as income or education. In fact, in studies that relate socioeconomic status with marital outcomes, problems of correlation and multicollinearity between education, income, and occupation may arise as they are used to build the same indicator of status⁴. Third, CAMSIS reflects the social positions of women and men differently by giving different scores to the same occupation depending on gender and by

⁴ CAMSIS allows this to be avoided. For instance, a teacher in higher education might have studied more than a physician, but the physician might have more prestige than the teacher. Similarly, a self-employed person might make more money over a long period of time than a lawyer, but the lawyer might be considered more prestigious.

reflecting the actual position of the occupation within society relative to other occupations.

Finally, some control variables that have been shown to have an effect on marital quality are included (e.g. Glenn, 1990; Karney and Bradbury, 1995; Bradbury et al., 2000; Amato et al., 2003; Whitton et al., 2008). They are *education*, a couple's mean years of education; *income*, a couple's mean labour income; *occupational status*, a couple's mean CAMSIS score; *biological parents*, whether either spouse lived with both biological parents until he or she was 14 years old; *religiosity*, whether either spouse attends religious services at least once a week; *remarriage*, whether it is a second or higher order marriage; *age at marriage*, age of either spouse when the marital relationship started; *duration* of the marriage; *duration squared*; *sex*, whether the respondent is a husband or a wife; and '*child under four years present in household*', whether there is or is not one child who is under four years of age in the household.

Table 2 presents the main descriptive statistics for the independent and control variables of interest.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for married unions

Variables	N = (1632 couples/3264 individuals)	
	Mean	SD
<i>Education (in levels of education)</i>		
(ref. homogamy – same level of education)	.6654	.4719
Male-led heterogamy – husband higher level of education	.1728	.3781
Female-led heterogamy – wife higher level of education	.1618	.3683
<i>Income (in thirtiles of labour income)</i>		
(ref. homogamy – similar amount of income)	.3523	.4778
Male-led heterogamy – husband higher income	.5699	.4952
Female-led heterogamy – wife higher income	.0778	.2679
<i>Occupational status (in thirtiles of CAMSIS scores)</i>		
(ref. homogamy – similar occupational status)	.4332	.4956
Male-led heterogamy – husband higher occupational status	.2506	.4334
Female-led heterogamy – wife higher occupational status	.3162	.4650
<i>Controls</i>		
Education – couple’s mean years of education	13.35	2.073
Income – couple’s mean labour income	21630	16103
Occupational status – couple’s mean CAMSIS score	52.62	12.56
Live with both biological parents until 14 years (ref. No)	.2264	.4186
Live with both biological parents until 14 years (Yes)	.7531	.4313
Live with both biological parents until 14 years (missing information)	.0205	.1418
Religiosity – attend to religious services (ref. less than weekly)	.7141	.4519
Religiosity – attend to religious services (at least weekly)	.2776	.4479
Religiosity – attend to religious services (missing information)	.0083	.0906

Table 2. (Continued)

Variables	N = (1632couples/3264 individuals)	
	Mean	SD
Remarriage (ref. No: first order marriage)	.6716	.4697
Remarriage (Yes: second or higher order marriage)	.3211	.4670
Remarriage (missing information)	.0073	.0854
Age of spouse at the start of marriage in century months	304.1	78.88
Duration of marriage in century months	130.4	113.5
Sex (ref: husband)	.5	.5000
Sex (wife)	.5	.5000
Child under four years present in household (ref. No)	.7114	.4532
Child under four years present in household (Yes)	.2886	.4532

Source: National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH) (1987–1988).

Analytical strategy

In this study, GLMMs (Generalized Linear Mixed Models) are employed to regress the dependent variable of marital quality on the explanatory variables of interest. GLMM is a class of multilevel variable models that allows for a random effect to be included at the couple level. As a result of husbands and wives sharing a common life, we expect individuals within households to have similar evaluations of marital quality compared to other individuals from different households (Berrington et al. 2005). This affects standard errors, making them smaller than they should be. By considering the couple-specific random effect, GLMM accounts for autocorrelations within couples and corrects standard errors. Hence, the GLMM (Skrondal and Rabe-Hesketh, 2003) for Marital Quality, considering the random effect for the couple level is:

$$v_{ij} = x'_{ij}\beta + \eta_{0j},$$

where i represents the individual level and j the couple level. $x'_{ij}\beta$ is the fixed part with the explanatory variables or covariates (e.g. distribution of socioeconomic resources between spouses, religiosity, duration of marriage), and η_{0j} is the random coefficient representing couple-specific random deviations from the mean effect.

Using this equation, similarities or differences in the individual perceptions of husbands' and wives' marital quality can be tested by including an interaction effect between gender and a couple's degree of heterogamy – male- or female-led – for each of the three socioeconomic resources analysed. This is done while also controlling for other covariates that have been used in similar

studies on this subject. Two kinds of controls are used, the first constituting individual variables, such as whether the spouse lived with their biological parents until 14 years of age, whether he or she had a previous marriage, age at marriage, or religiosity. The second set of covariates relates to a couple's shared characteristics, i.e. household characteristics: absolute level of resources available to the couple, duration of marriage, duration squared, and whether there is a child under four years of age in the household. No interaction effects with gender are considered for these individual and couple level variables, because they are not of substantive interest in this research.

Results

Table 3 presents two multilevel models for dual-earner American marriages. In both I distinguish between two levels: the individual level with 3264 individuals and the couple level with 1632 marriages. The two models display estimates for the same variables' effects on marital quality, but the first one does it for wives and the second one for husbands. The third column of Table 3 displays the difference between wives and husbands in how, for each resource, heterogamy of either type versus homogamy affects marital quality. Differences between wives and husbands in the estimates for other variables are not considered. These variables are only used as controls. Some of them are couple-level variables and their effects on marital quality cannot change across spouses. The rest are 'forced' to have the same effect for husbands and wives, because they are not of substantive interest. The large majority of

these controls are statistically significant and in line with previous findings in the literature. Thus, attending religious services more than once a week, having grown up with both biological parents, or marrying at an older age all correlate positively with spouses' marital quality. In contrast, being in a long-lasting marriage, having one child under four years of age in the household, or being in a second or higher order marriage all decrease the quality of a marriage (Booth and Edwards, 1992; Guzmán, 2000). The absolute levels of the resources available to the couple – as measured by the average level across wife and husband – do not seem to affect marital quality, except for the case of income, which raises it significantly (Amato et al., 2007).

Interesting as they are, I do not comment on these results, since the focus of this study is whether the distribution of socioeconomic resources leads spouses in male- and female-led heterogamous marriages to have higher or lower levels of marital quality compared to homogamous marriages, and whether these differences are constant across husbands and wives. To better visualize the effect on marital quality of homogamy versus heterogamy of either type and how this may differ for husbands and wives, I present three figures, one for each type of resource (education in Figure 2; income in Figure 3; and occupational status in Figure 4). The figures plot wives' and husbands' predicted levels of marital quality in homogamous and heterogamous marriages, as estimated in Table 3.

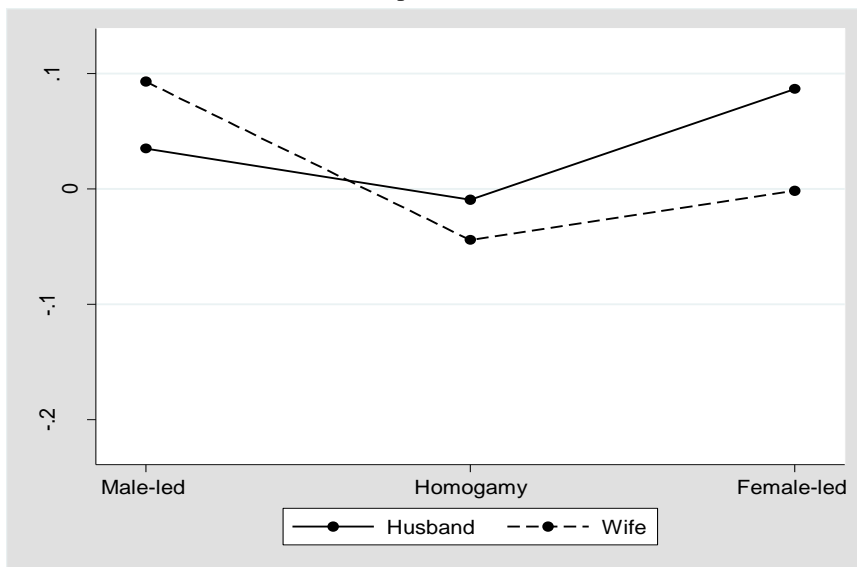
Tabla 3. GLMM Gaussian regression results for estimating marital quality

Variables	Wife	Husband	Difference wife and husband
Constant	-.3545** (.1147)	-.2281† (.1189)	
Sex (0: Husband; 1: Wife)			-.1264** (.0474)
<i>Education (ref. homogamy)</i>			
Male-led heterogamy	.1373* (.0630)	.0442 (.0636)	.0931† (.0548)
Female-led heterogamy	.0426 (.0715)	.0959 (.0636)	-.0532 (.0583)
<i>Income (ref. homogamy)</i>			
Male-led heterogamy	.0799 (.0549)	-.0441 (.0501)	.1240** (.0459)
Female-led heterogamy	-.0507 (.1052)	-.2120* (.0977)	.1613* (.0763)
<i>Occupational status (ref. homogamy)</i>			
Male-led heterogamy	.0330 (.0622)	-.0432 (.0586)	.0762 (.0515)
Female-led heterogamy	.0035 (.0602)	.0380 (.0563)	-.0346 (.0503)
<i>Controls</i>			
Education (Couple's mean years of education, standardized)		.0230 (.0308)	
Income (Couple's mean labour income, standardized)		.0611** (.0180)	
Occupational status (Couple's mean status, standardized)		.0184 (.0300)	
Duration of relationship in years		-.0028*** (.0006)	
Duration of relationship squared		.0001*** (.0002)	
Mean age at the start of present marriage		.0009** (.0003)	
Lived with biological parents until 14 (0: No; 1: Yes)		.0979** (.0348)	
Religiosity (0: Less than weekly; 1: At least weekly)		.1637*** (.0348)	
Remarriage (0: No; 1: Yes)		-.0085 (.0577)	
Child under four years (0: No; 1: Yes)		-.1302** (.0517)	
Variance individual level		.3592 (.0172)	
Variance couple level		.5826 (.0371)	
N (Individual level)		3264 spouses	
(Couple level)		1632 marriages	

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses; †p<.1; * p<.05; ** p<.01; ***p<.001.
Source: National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH) (1987–1988).

Figure 2 analyses the relationship between educational homogamy/heterogamy in the couple and the resulting marital quality of each of the spouses. It can be seen that homogamy in education is associated with husbands and wives making more similar evaluations of the marriage than their counterparts in heterogamous couples. However this is only true in relative terms, and only slightly and non-significantly – since in homogamous marriages wives report significantly less marital quality than their husbands. Both types of heterogamous couples report higher marital quality than educationally homogamous couples. This is true for both husbands and wives, although only among wives is heterogamy significantly associated with higher marital quality, and only when it is male-led – see column 1 in Table 3. In both heterogamous couples, the spouse with a lower level of education is more satisfied than the spouse with a higher level of education.

Figure 2. Wives' and husbands' predicted marital quality in marriages defined by the relative education of the partners



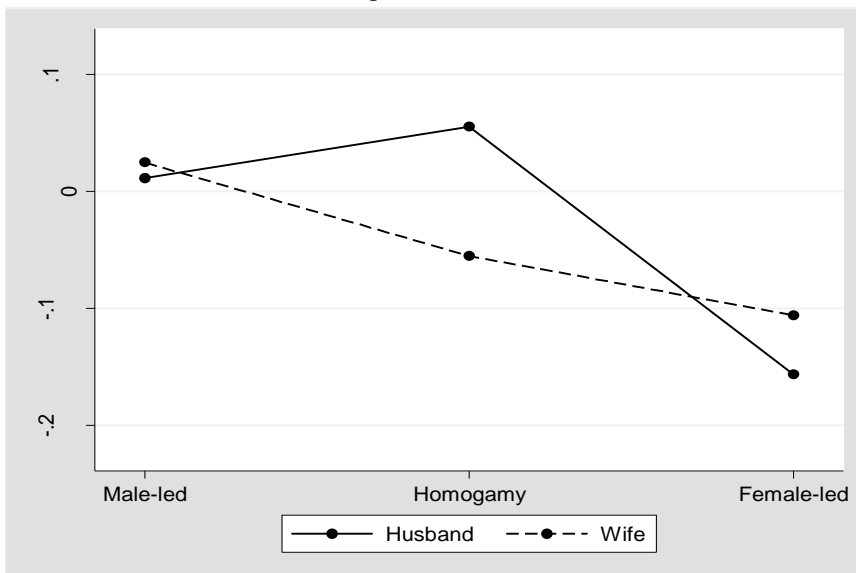
Source: National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH) (1987–1988).

Whilst most of the results are not statistically significant, they are somewhat in line with the predictions of complementarity theory. On the one hand, homogamy in education appears to lead to more similar and less positive evaluations of spouses' marital quality compared to educationally heterogamous couples. In the latter, the spouse with less education evaluates the marriage more favourably than the other spouse, most likely because, following complementarity theory's expectations, it is the member with lower resources that gains the most in exchanging the resource (see Table 1). Complementarity theory expects that this exchange will also be positive for the spouse with a higher level of education, if less markedly so, perhaps because the other partner has higher levels of other resources that complement the first partner's own resource portfolio. Unfortunately, I do not have a large enough sample to test three-way interaction effects between gender and all possible combinations of spouses' educational, economic, and social resources – all these effects have very large standard errors.

Figure 3 plots wives' and husbands' marital quality in couples with different distributions of income between spouses. Relative to an average couple, male-led income heterogamy is associated with the two spouses making similarly neutral (neither higher nor lower than the average) evaluations of marital quality, while female-led income heterogamy is associated with negative evaluations of marital quality, especially among husbands. In homogamous couples, husbands and wives differ the most in their evaluations of marital quality, with husbands being satisfied and wives being dissatisfied with their marriages (the difference is

significant). Wives' dissatisfaction in homogamous marriages might be related to the second burden they often carry in the household (Hoschschild, 1989; Coltrane, 2000; Sayer, 2005). In general, the results tend to support the predictions of status inconsistency theory. The theory predicts that female-led heterogamy usually leads to both spouses being dissatisfied, especially husbands, due to inconsistencies with the traditional superior status of men in patriarchal societies. Another prediction is that male-led heterogamy would generate happier marriages for both spouses compared to homogamous marriages because of the strength of patriarchal values in society. Finally, according to my interpretation of status inconsistency theory, wives should display lower levels of marital satisfaction than husbands in homogamous marriages due to their double burden. This is roughly what we observe for couples differentiated by their relative incomes in Table 3 and Figure 3.

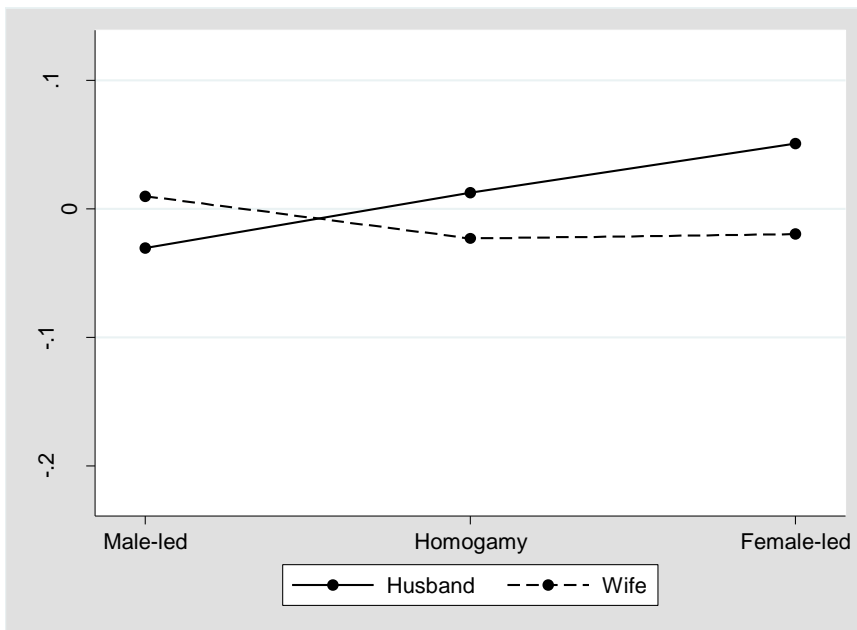
Figure 3. Wives' and husbands' predicted marital quality in marriages defined by the relative income of the partners



Source: National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH) (1987–1988).

Finally, Figure 4 plots the relationship between the distribution of occupational status among the husband and wife and their assessments of marital quality. None of the differences displayed in the figure between types of marriages and between husbands and wives are statistically significant (see Table 3). Only in female-led heterogamous marriages do husbands show markedly higher levels of satisfaction, although the difference is not statistically significant. Thus, none of the three theoretical approaches considered in this study appears to apply to explaining the impact that the distribution of occupational status has on wives' and husbands' evaluations of marital quality.

Figure 4. Wives' and husbands' predicted marital quality in marriages defined by the relative occupational status of the partners



Source: National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH) (1987–1988).

Discussion

In family studies, the relationship between the distribution of socioeconomic resources and marital dissolution has been analysed extensively, with some conclusive findings (e.g. Jalovaara, 2003; Kalmijn, 2003). However, this relationship remains understudied in marital quality studies (for an exception, see Gong, 2007). This is unfortunate, because the traditional focus on family dissolution makes it more difficult to evaluate whether heterogamous marriages – either male- or female-led – enjoy higher or lower levels of marital quality compared to homogamous marriages; and whether husbands and wives have similar or different perceptions of the quality of their partnership.

Many previous studies exploring gender differences between husbands and wives in marital quality had compared the perceptions of men and women from different couples (e.g. Amato and Rogers, 1997; Rogers and DeBoer, 2001; Gong, 2007). By relying on the responses of only one member of the union, these studies could not discern if differences between men and women in perceptions of marital quality – like those reported by the literature in which women are less satisfied with the marriage (Jackson et al., 2014) – are more common in homogamous or in heterogamous marriages of various types. Using data from the US's National Survey of Families and Households in its first wave (1987–1988), this article has done just that. First, it has compared wives' and husbands' subjective views of the quality of their marriage within the same couples. Second, it has investigated the extent to which similarly or dissimilarly positive or negative evaluations of the marriage are

more common in female- or male-led heterogamous couples than in homogamous couples. Finally, and unlike most previous research, homogamy and heterogamy have been defined in relation to the distribution of three types of resources – education, income, and occupational status – within the same couples.

To help explain the association between homogamy and heterogamy and spouses' evaluations of marital quality, three theoretical approaches have been considered. The first approach is propinquity theory (Festinger et al., 1950), which expects spouses in homogamous marriages to have similarly positive perceptions of marital quality and be satisfied with their marriage due to their shared worldviews or common socio-cultural references. Conversely, it expects male- or female-led heterogamous marriages to display similarly negative evaluations of the marriage. Insofar as women have been shown to be more negatively affected by relational problems linked to poor understanding (e.g. Amato and Rogers, 1997), this theory also predicts that wives in heterogamous marriages will report lower levels of marital quality. The second theoretical approach is complementarity theory (e.g. Levinger, 1965; 1976; Becker, 1981), which hypothesizes that male- or female-led heterogamy in resources should be positively associated with happiness, especially for the member with the lowest resources, who would gain the most from the exchange in resources that occurs among spouses who complement each other. Conversely, it expects homogamy to lead to unhappy marriages. Finally, the third approach is status inconsistency theory (Lenski, 1954; Sampson, 1963; Brandon, 1965), which predicts that female-

led heterogamy will be associated with lower quality marriages for either spouse, but especially for husbands, due to inconsistencies with the patriarchal order that still permeates society. In contrast, it expects male-led heterogamy to lead to both spouses experiencing happier marriages than their counterparts in homogamous marriages.

The results of this paper show that none of these approaches can comprehensively account for how spouses' perceptions of marital quality vary depending on how education, income, and occupational status are distributed among them. Nevertheless, some of the theories – i.e. complementarity theory and status inconsistency theory – appear to do a better job especially in what regards to explaining differences in perceptions of marital quality in couples where spouses differ in levels of education and income — but not occupational status. In the latter, no statistically significant findings could be observed (Blair, 1993).

On the one hand, in line with complementarity theory, educationally homogamous couples tend to evaluate their marriages more negatively than heterogamous couples (although non-significantly so, and with wives expressing more dissatisfaction than husbands). In heterogamous couples the spouse who has less education tends to make higher evaluations of his or her marriage than the other spouse, possibly because he or she benefits the most from having access to their partners' higher socio-cultural resources. On the other hand, status inconsistency theory best seems to account for similarities and differences in spouses' evaluations of marital quality across economically heterogamous couples. In line

with previous findings in the literature (e.g. Rogers and DeBoer, 2001; Brennan et al., 2001), either spouse, but especially the husband, is likely to make unhappy evaluations when the wife earns more than her husband, i.e., when there is an inconsistency with men's traditionally superior position in patriarchal societies (Brines, 1994; Amato and Booth, 1995). Moreover, as expected by this theory, husbands in these types of marriages are more dissatisfied than wives.

It is not apparent why the association between spouses' homogamy/heterogamy and their evaluations of marital quality changes for different types of resources. One possibility is that it depends on the characteristics of the resource. When resources are transferable, as in the case of most economic resources, including income, they can be appropriated privately and can confer their holders with higher leverage to change the balance of power in a couple. When this is the case, the workings of a patriarchal society may show themselves more clearly and manifest in husbands demanding more intensely their wives' respect for their superior status. In contrast, educational resources cannot be as easily monopolized as other resources, and their benefits can spill over to the other spouse. Rather than wives' enjoyment of higher levels of these resources posing a challenge to husbands' superior status in patriarchal societies, educational resources could provide an opportunity for the spouse with the lower resources – to access other and higher groups' cultural and social resources that complement and enrich his or her own. More research is necessary

to assess if this interpretation is correct and can be generalized to other contexts and times.

One of the limitations of this study is indeed that it analyses data from the 1990s, a time when the patriarchal character of American society was more clearly at work. Partly to solve this problem, and partly to be able to estimate the effect of income and occupational homogamy and heterogamy on spouses' evaluations of marital quality, in this study I only analysed dual-earner married unions. This select sample is probably more representative of today's society, but nothing guarantees that what was relevant for the survival of dual-earner families in the '90s might be the same nowadays (Karney and Bradbury, 1995; South, 2001; Poortman and Kalmijn, 2002). Another limitation relates to the fact that in this paper only one type of union has been considered, namely married couples, while I ignored cohabiting partnerships. In the late '80s and early '90s, the number of cohabiting unions was scarce and they probably were a more selective group than today's cohabitants (e.g. Willets, 2006). In this sense, the exclusion of cohabiting unions might facilitate rather than hinder the extrapolation of the results to our times.

In future research it might also be interesting to measure spouses' resources at the time they married, and not only at the time of the interview. This would allow one to separate the impact of homogamy on finding a suitable match from its impact on the quality of the union. Similarly, it would be interesting to explore the extent to which, or under which conditions, poor marital quality leads to union dissolution. For example, it might well be that when

the two partners are not satisfied with the marriage, marital dissolution is more likely than when there is discordance in spouses' marital quality with one spouse being more satisfied than the other. This could be done by analysing the subsequent waves of the National Survey of Families and Households. It may be worthwhile to explore different dimensions of marital quality. In this article, I only considered one such dimension and justified it based on the results of factor analyses. However, other authors (Fincham and Rogge 2010) argue that marital quality is multi-dimensional. In future, we should explore if the effects of educational, economic, and occupational homogamy/heterogamy on marital quality differ depending on the dimension analysed. For instance, it might be that heterogamy in education increases marital happiness, but that it also promotes marital conflict.

Despite these obvious limitations, I think that this chapter has contributed to a better understanding of how variations in the distribution of resources among spouses may affect their perceptions of marital quality. Furthermore, it has drawn attention to the importance of social factors and, in particular, to the patriarchal social order, to better account for varying perceptions of marital quality.

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CHAPTER 2

DISTRIBUTION OF WORK AND UNION DISSOLUTION FOR COHABITING AND MARRIED COUPLES IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

Abstract

This study assesses whether the distribution of work, understood as the way in which time spent in unpaid and paid employment is distributed between two partners, has an impact on union dissolution. This is done using data from the British Household Panel Survey (1992–2008), with separate analyses carried out for married and cohabiting partnerships. These two types of union have different distributions of work patterns and risks of dissolution. While the results for married partnerships are not found to be statistically significant, cohabiting relationships are found to be more stable when both partners distribute their time between paid and unpaid work in a similar way. At the same time, such couples are found to be less stable if the woman has a heavier workload.

Introduction

No so long ago, it was common for married unions to decide to specialize by having one spouse working for pay in the labour market while the other was devoted to housework. Becker (1981) described this as a way to maximize the utility of a marriage. According to this author, this allocation of paid and unpaid work between spouses fostered the stability of marriages and facilitated the distribution of tasks between married partners (Becker et al., 1977). Nonetheless, the gains expected from specialization have lately been questioned with the overall increase in the share of

female partners' income and new living arrangements, notably cohabitation (Brines and Joyner, 1999; Kalmijn et al., 2007).

Today, a great proportion of couples are likely to be dual-earner, with both members of the union working for pay in the labour market (Blossfeld and Drobnic, 2001). As a consequence, the negotiation of housework on the basis of the amount of paid work performed by each partner seems challenging. This distribution of paid work influences the way in which partners allocate unpaid work (Baxter, 2005) and the future stability of the union (Schober, 2013; Oláh and Gähler, 2014). Additionally, it can even become a source of dispute if the two partners disagree on how unpaid work should be divided between them (Frisco and Williams, 2003). Therefore, the time availability of each partner and the ways in which partners distribute their workloads might help understanding of whether some types of union are more stable than others.

Although marriage remains the most widespread type of union, cohabitation is becoming a normalised living arrangement and a more widespread phenomenon across advanced countries (Liefbroer and Dourleijn, 2006; Lesthaeghe, 2011). However, the two types of partnership are somewhat different from each other. Marriage is understood as a long-lasting partnership in which two spouses are committed to each other, and hence the risk of rupture is low. Cohabitation, instead, is considered to be a short-term arrangement with a relatively high probability of it leading to either marriage or dissolution of the partnership within a few years (Smock, 2000). One important difference between the two types of union is that the risk of dissolution in cohabiting relationships is

higher compared to married unions (Beaujouan and Bhrolcháin, 2011; Jalovaara, 2013; Tach and Edin, 2013). Furthermore, cohabitation and marriage have different distributions of paid and unpaid work, with the former group allocating the time spent on paid work and housework more equally between partners (Baxter, 2005; Domínguez-Folgueras, 2012).

Previous studies on family dynamics have tended to explore the relationship between the distribution of paid work within marriages and divorce. In general, where wives are in paid work or when wives work for long hours there is a higher risk of dissolution (Becker et al., 1977; Cherlin, 1979; Booth et al., 1984; South, 2001; Poortman and Kalmijn, 2002; Jalovaara, 2003). Likewise, the potential disruptive effect of women's relative income on married and cohabiting couples has also been tested (Brines and Joyner, 1999 for the US; Kalmijn et al., 2007 for the Netherlands) and it has been shown that the higher the wife's income, the higher the risk of divorce, while different effects are found for cohabiting couples. Chan and Halpin (2002) suggest that the combination of a wife having a high level of pay and a heavy load of housework is likely to translate into an elevated risk of divorce. On the contrary, an increase in the amount of paid work or labour income contributed by the husband may decrease the risk of dissolution (White and Rogers, 2000; Poortman, 2005; Lyngstad and Jalovaara, 2010). A smaller number of studies consider the role of unpaid work in family dissolution, but those that do find that a wife being dissatisfied with the division of housework increases the risk of divorce (Frisco and Williams, 2003), as does a deviation from the

model of distribution of work promoted by the policy context (Cooke, 2006), or a combination of a traditional division of work with gender egalitarian role attitudes (Oláh and Gähler, 2014).

By using sixteen waves from the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) (1992–2008) and carrying out analyses at the level of couples, this study explores the link between the distribution of work and union dissolution in married and cohabiting unions. In doing so, it contributes to the existing literature in several ways. First, it addresses a relatively unexplored research question (except by Cooke, 2006) by analysing the interconnections between housework (i.e. unpaid work done to maintain family members and/or a home (Shelton and John, 1996)) and the paid work carried out by each member of the couple and the risk of dissolution. Second, it measures the distribution of paid and unpaid work between partners along two dimensions: whether the woman does more unpaid work or not, and whether the division is ‘fair’ or ‘unfair’ in terms of time invested by the partners. Third, the information is provided by the two partners. A key feature of the current study is that, unlike some previous ones (e.g. Oláh and Gähler, 2014), the information on the time spent on paid and unpaid work as well as the information on income and education is given by both the members of the partnership.

Theoretical Background

Over the last decades there has been a decline in gender work specialization (Blossfeld and Drobnic, 2001). Until recently, husbands tended to easily avoid household labour, letting their

wives do the lion's share of housework (Sayer, 2005). Married men usually enjoyed better economic positions within the marriage and were able to perpetuate the male-breadwinner model (Brines, 1994; Bittman et al., 2003; Cooke, 2006). Indeed, if spouses evaluated the time they spent working in economic terms, the spouse with the better-paid position would tend to assert their preference and use their resources in negotiations over who does household tasks (Bianchi et al., 2000; Fuwa, 2004). It was, therefore, not unexpected for marriages to follow a traditional division of labour in which the husband was in charge of paid work and the wife of housework. Home Economics (Becker et al., 1977; Becker, 1981) describes such an arrangement as a way to maximize the utility of a marriage and make the union stable over time. A comparative study between European countries reveals that traditional specialization arrangements in marriages, whereby the husband is the main income earner and the wife is responsible for housework, decrease the risk of marital dissolution (Kalmijn, 2007).

Nonetheless, the male breadwinner no longer seems an advantageous option for all unions. Wives are entering the labour market, and as a result their relative and absolute economic resources are gradually increasing. Thus, an extensive line of research has studied the impact of female employment on union stability. Although the findings are not fully conclusive (for a review, see Özcan and Breen, 2012), many studies find that the risk of dissolution increases when the wife works for pay and when she works for long hours (e.g. Becker et al., 1977; Cherlin, 1979; Booth et al., 1984; South, 2001; Poortman and Kalmijn, 2002; Jalovaara,

2003). Other studies, instead, signal that wives doing paid work can also be positive for the family as this produces more economic resources. As wives' relative labour income increases, couples are better protected against unexpected events such as illness or unemployment. Hence, this should strengthen the stability of a marriage (Oppenheimer, 1997; Sayer and Bianchi, 2000; White and Rogers, 2000). Moreover, the higher the wives' absolute resources, the more autonomous and independent wives become. Gupta (2007) and Sullivan and Gershuny (2012) find that when wives' economic resources are high they can better negotiate parity in the allocation of household labour compared to less autonomous wives (Breen and Cooke, 2005). The former are able to get divorced if they are not satisfied with their marriage (Schoen et al., 2002; Sayer et al., 2011) or if they perform most of the housework (Chan and Halpin, 2002).

In recent times, other forms of partnerships than marriage (i.e. cohabiting unions) have been becoming widespread and socially accepted across advanced societies (Liefbroer and Dourleijn, 2006; Lesthaeghe, 2011). Bumpass and Lu (2000) suggest that most individuals will cohabit during their lifetimes. As a consequence, an increasing number of studies focus on the differences between these two types of partnership regarding union dissolution. Nevertheless, they mainly explore whether the share of female labour income increases the risk of dissolution. Brines and Joyner (1999) investigate the ties that bind American married and cohabiting couples, and find weak support for a stabilizing effect of specialization arrangements within marriages and strong evidence that equal-power arrangements lower the risk of cohabitation

dissolution. In a similar study on the Netherlands, Kalmijn et al. (2007) find that the higher the level of the wife's income share, the higher the risk of separation, while the effect for cohabiting couples depends on the level of female income share. Either higher or lower levels of female income share increase the risk of cohabitation dissolution. Finally, Oláh and Gähler (2014) address a new issue: whether the combination of the household work division and individual gender role attitudes has an impact on the risk of separation among Swedish couples. They suggest that the combination of attitudes and behaviour has an effect on the likelihood of dissolution. Indeed, an uneven distribution of household work increases the risk of separation if partners mention a preference for gender equality.

In sum, it appears that specialization arrangements protect the stability of married unions but not that of cohabiting unions. One of the reasons may have to do with the level of commitment and satisfaction with the partnership. In general, married individuals are more committed and satisfied with their spouses, while cohabiting individuals tend to show less commitment and satisfaction (Brines and Joyner, 1999; Wiik et al., 2009; Tai et al., 2014). In addition, in a Swedish study, Moors and Bernhardt (2009) show that satisfaction with and commitment to the cohabiting partner increase the probability of marrying. However, the lower commitment and satisfaction of cohabitants relative to spouses might be one of the reasons for the difference in the risks of dissolution between the two types of union (Lewis, 2001; Beaujouan and Bhrolcháin, 2011).

Being committed in a married union might be more straightforward than in a cohabiting union. Both the wife and the husband know what is socially accepted and expected: both spouses respect clear gender norms (Brines, 1994; Nock, 1995). As a result, a married woman ends up doing the housework (Coltrane, 2000; Sayer, 2005; Poortman and Van der Lippe, 2009), while a married man is expected to be in charge of paid work (Baxter, 2005). On the other hand, cohabitants are less inclined to invest in their relationship, being less committed than married individuals (Brines and Joyner, 1999). Individuals in a cohabiting union are found to be more egalitarian in the amount and type of housework performed by each partner (Dominguez-Folgueras, 2012; Bianchi et al., 2014), actively negotiating the division of housework from a position of equality, and achieving fair distributions of work (Batalova and Cohen, 2002; Van der Lippe et al., 2014). That is, cohabitants appear to have more egalitarian gender norms which lead them to search for more equitable labour arrangements between partners when dividing workloads. Consequently, one might expect that cohabiting unions should be more sensitive to unequal distributions of work between partners relative to married unions. If this is so, fairness criteria in the distribution of work could make these unions stable over time.

Until recently, the literature has mainly focused on whether the division of workloads between partners leads to specialization arrangements (Becker, 1981) and it has barely taken into account other factors, such as fairness. In this line, it is found that women in dual-earner unions are more likely to perceive the traditional

division of housework – i.e. women being responsible for housework regardless of the amount of time they spend on paid work – as unfair (Lennon and Rosenfield, 1994; Wilcox and Nock, 2006). These particular women are expected to suffer a decline in marital satisfaction as well as an increase in psychological distress. However, this criterion has previously only rarely been addressed in union dissolution studies (Frisco and Williams, 2003; DeMaris, 2007).

According to the relative deprivation theory, whether partners perceive that the division of housework is fair depends on who the partners' referents are (Greenstein, 2009). In this theory, women compare themselves with other women in approximately similar contexts rather than with men (Major, 1987). Thus, women may not perceive that the amount of housework they do is unfair when they do more housework than men. Instead, they might feel that their amount of housework is unfair when they realise that other women with similar life circumstances are doing less housework than them (Fuwa and Tsutsui, 2010; Nakamura and Akiyoshi, 2015).

Across advanced societies, married women continue to do the majority of the household work and the majority of them consider it fair (Gager, 1998; Fuwa and Tsutsui, 2010; Nakamura and Akiyoshi, 2015). For instance, in countries such as the US or Australia it is usual for wives who earn a similar to or higher income than their partners to perform more housework than their husbands (Brines, 1994; Bittman et al, 2003). Nevertheless, wives declare themselves more satisfied when the division of housework

is fairer and husbands increase their participation in housework (Amato et al., 2003).

In contrast, cohabiting relationships are more gender neutral. Davis et al. (2007), in a comparative study of 22 countries, signal that cohabiting relationships foster men's participation in housework, while they somehow disincentivize cohabiting women from household labour. Furthermore, cohabiting women are more likely to be employed than their married counterparts, while cohabiting men are less likely to be employed than married men (Bianchi et al., 2014). These facts might lead cohabiting partners to negotiate the distribution of household labour from an equal position (Batalova and Cohen, 2002; Van der Lippe et al., 2014). Consequently, it may be expected that the sense of fairness in the distribution of who does what, based on the amount of time each partner spends on paid and unpaid work, might turn out to be decisive for the survival of the cohabiting union.

The current study adds to the literature on the differences between cohabiting and married unions in their propensity for separation by addressing a relatively unexplored research question. It investigates combinations of paid and unpaid work with fairness criteria in a 'new' research context: the United Kingdom. To date, the distribution of work within the couple based on the available time each partner has to spend either on housework or paid employment continues to be neglected. Thus, the different possible ways in which the two types of work can be allocated between partners might lead to a better understanding of why some couples remain more stable than others, and whether certain changes to this

distribution might lead to an increase in the risk of dissolution over time.

Hypotheses

In this study, I propose a different measure for the distribution of housework and paid work between partners. This measure is constructed along two main dimensions: traditionalism and fairness in the allocation of work between partners. On the one hand, traditionalism covers couples in which the woman is the one responsible for housework, while non-traditionalism is related to couples in which men do a similar to or higher amount of housework relative to women. On the other hand, fairness, for which I do not have specific information in the dataset, is approximated with equity, by considering the way in which the total amount of paid and unpaid work is allocated between partners. Therefore, equity as a proxy for fairness includes couples in which the two partners spend a similar amount of time working, whereas inequity as a proxy for unfairness refers to couples in which one partner does more work – either unpaid or paid – than the other partner.

In light of previous evidence, one might expect that a specialization arrangement, with the husband being in charge of paid work and the wife taking care of the household, should make the marriage stable. Married partners appear to rely on traditional gender norms, whereby the husband should work for pay, while the wife should be responsible for housework (e.g. Kalmijn, 2007). This labour arrangement is defined as a *traditional equitable*

distribution of work, which ought to decrease the risk of marital dissolution. Furthermore, in Table 4.a. it can be observed that this distribution of work should experience the lowest risk of marital dissolution out of all the possible combinations of non-traditionalism and unfairness. Nevertheless, if the wife has to do a second shift, working for pay for a similar to or greater amount of time than the husband, while continuing to perform the lion's share of the housework (Hoschschild, 1989) – a *traditional inequitable* distribution of work – the risk of dissolution may increase, though this would not be the worst possible scenario. In this regard, it should be remembered that marriage is a gendered institution, in which husbands and wives behave according to what married women and men are supposed to do, regardless of the amount of work undertaken by the wife (Brines, 1994; Nock, 1995). Finally, the worst possible scenario for the survival of a marriage should result from a *non-traditional inequitable* distribution of work (Table 4.a.), whereby the husband does as much housework as or more housework than the wife and either the same amount as or more paid work than the wife – couples in which the two spouses do similar housework and paid work are excluded. This setting would meet neither of the two criteria – i.e. traditionalism or fairness – for the survival of a married union.

Cohabiting couples, instead, more often rely on equitable distributions of work between partners as a consequence of cohabitants' egalitarian gender norms (e.g. Nock, 1995). This should result in more stable cohabiting unions for partners with equitable labour arrangements and less stable unions for partners

with inequitable arrangements (Olah and Gähler, 2014). Therefore, the lowest risk of dissolution should be expected for couples in which the woman and the man share a similar amount of paid work and a similar amount of unpaid work – a *non-traditional equitable* distribution of work (Table 4.b.). Furthermore, if the share of total work (household labour plus paid work) is not equally distributed between the partners, the union should be more unstable and likely to be dissolved. Indeed, if cohabiting women feel that their share of housework is ‘unfair’, their satisfaction with their partner should decrease (Baxter et al., 2010). As a consequence, one may expect the cohabiting couple with the highest risk of dissolution to be the *traditional inequitable* couple, in which the woman works either the same or more time in paid work than the man, while being the one who spends more time doing housework (Table 4.b.). The outcomes of this labour arrangement should be opposite of the outcomes of the fair distribution of paid and unpaid work between cohabiting partners arrangement.

Table 4. Predicted relationship between the distribution of work in terms of unfairness and non-traditionalism and dissolution risk

Table 4.a. Predictions for married couples

		Dissolution Risk based on <i>unfairness</i>	
		Low	High
Dissolution Risk based on non-traditionalism	Low	Traditional <i>equitable</i>	Traditional <i>inequitable</i>
	High	Non-traditional <i>equitable</i>	Non-traditional <i>inequitable</i>

Table 4.b. Predictions for cohabiting couples

		Dissolution Risk based on <i>unfairness</i>	
		Low	High
Dissolution Risk based on non-traditionalism	Low	Non-traditional <i>equitable</i>	Non-traditional <i>inequitable</i>
	High	Traditional <i>equitable</i>	Traditional <i>inequitable</i>

Context

As in most advanced countries, the number of marriages in Britain is gradually declining due to couples marrying later and to an increase in the number of couples who opt for cohabitation but not marriage (Wilson and Smallwood, 2007). Indeed, cohabitation is the fastest-growing type of union in this country. The number of couples in such a union doubled between 1996 and 2012. Whereas in 1996 there were 3 million people cohabiting, this increased to 5.9 million in 2012 (Office for National Statistics [ONS], 2012).

Furthermore, the people entering the two types of union are different from each other. Married individuals tend to be older, more educated and more traditional than cohabiting individuals, who tend to be younger, less educated, or working class (Kiernan, 2004; Beaujouan and Bhrolcháin, 2011). Moreover, it is noteworthy that although unmarried cohabitation in the UK was pioneered by individuals with high levels of education in the '70s and '80s, individuals with lower levels of education are starting to catch up

(Beaujouan and Bhrolcháin, 2011). Today, the proportion of couples cohabiting surpasses that of those who are married among the lesser-educated population. British women consider cohabitation as a way to avoid either single motherhood or marrying men they are not certain they want to marry (Smart and Stevens, 2000). Although the British population that chooses cohabitation sees it as either a prelude to or substitute for marriage (Berrington, 2001), cohabitation is increasingly seen as an alternative to marriage among the working class and those enrolled in education (Kiernan, 2004).

In addition, in spite of a growing social acceptance of cohabitation as a type of union, conservative attitudes that see cohabitation as driven by selfishness and individualism, which are distant from traditional family values, still exist (Lewis, 2001). Similarly, there is not yet a 'common law marriage' that puts both marriage and cohabitation in the same legal status (Barlow et al., 2008). This might account for some of the different levels of union dissolution in married and cohabiting couples. Whereas the risk of marriage dissolution after 5 years is around 8%, and close to 21% after 10 years (ONS, 2013), about one in three cohabiting relationships end by the 5th year, and about 40% by the 10th year (ONS, 2012; 2013).

Methodology

This study uses panel data from the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) covering the period between 1992⁵ and 2008. The BHPS is an annual household-based panel aiming to collect data to understand social and economic change at the individual and household level in the United Kingdom. It includes data on a broad range of social issues such as household composition, income, health, socio-economic values, education, housework, and labour market behaviour. Originally, the BHPS covered 5538 households and 9912 individuals drawn from 250 areas of Great Britain. The individuals included in sample respondent households in the first wave were considered original sample members and attempts were made to re-interview them annually even if they decided to move out to another household. Likewise, for each successive year of the panel survey, every adult member of a household in which an original sample member lived, either in the same household or in one different from the one recorded in the previous wave, was accordingly interviewed. As for the quality of the data (Lynn, 2006) the BHPS enjoys high levels of response rates (e.g. over 85% completion for individual interviews in almost every wave) and low levels of item non-response. The mean level for item non-response at the individual level in the first 13 waves is about 1.7%, and about 3.2% at the household level (Lynn, 2006).

In this article, I analyse a sample of unions over time. More concretely, I include all the couples that started their relationship

⁵ 1992 because, although the British Household Panel Survey starts in 1991, there is no information about the time spent on housework by either partner in the first year of the survey.

within the panel and whose relationship lasted for at least one year. In this way, I can follow couples from the moment in which they start their relationship until they dissolve the partnership or are censored, and analyse their work distribution for the whole period of observation. I have decided not to include couples that started their relationship before the panel because separation is more likely in the first years of a partnership and their work distribution patterns for those years are missing. I then classify the eligible couples into two different groups: married and cohabiting couples. The dependent variable is the same for the two groups: union dissolution, understood as the moment of separation. This takes the value of 0 if the partners continue together in any given year provided they were together the previous year and value 1 if they separate during that year. For the sake of simplicity, cohabiting individuals who subsequently marry are right censored in the cohabitation sample in the year they marry, and hence count as married thereafter. Indeed, premarital cohabitation is becoming the most widespread path into marriage (Berrington, 2001). However, in order to keep such couples identified, I introduce a variable – premarital cohabitation with the same partner – in the marriage model. The data analysed includes 1528 marriages and 1774 cohabiting couples. These final samples are reached after excluding 210 married couples and 432 cohabiting couples with missing information for all the independent variables of interest – i.e. distribution of work, income, and education.

The main independent variable concerns the way in which unpaid and paid work is distributed between partners. I take into

account the answers provided to three questions in the survey. These are: “About how many hours do you spend on housework in an average week, such as time spent cooking, cleaning and doing the laundry?”; “Thinking about your (main) job, how many hours, excluding overtime and meal breaks, are you expected to work in a normal week?”; and “How many hours overtime do you usually work in a normal week?”. These questions are answered individually by each member of the couple and from the responses I create two separate variables for unpaid and paid work, for women and for men.

I then combine the unpaid and paid work individual variables into a new variable to summarize the distribution of the total work between partners. I consider that one partner does more unpaid or paid work than the other when the difference between the time she or he spends on either type of work is more than half a standard deviation. The resulting variable has four possible categories. The first of these is the reference category. It incorporates couples in which the woman spends more time on housework than the man, while the man spends more time on paid work than the woman (traditional equitable). These couples have equitable arrangements to divide housework and paid work, with women doing more housework than men. The second category is for couples in which women have to do a second shift (traditional inequitable). It comprises couples that are traditional in the division of work but inequitable in the allocation of who does what. Women in this category either spend more time doing housework and on paid employment than their male partner, or do more housework

and spend a similar number of hours on paid employment than their male partner does. The third category (non-traditional equitable) consists of couples in which both partners dedicate similar amounts of time to paid and unpaid work, but also couples in which the man does more housework than the woman and where the woman does more paid work than the man. The fourth category is composed of couples in which the man does the same amount or more housework than the woman and which are not included in any of the other three categories (non-traditional inequitable). It therefore reflects a non-traditional inequitable share of work between the partners.

I also include one variable that has been shown to have an effect on the risk of dissolution for cohabiting and married couples, namely female income share (Brines and Joiner, 1999; Kalmijn et al., 2007), which may be related to differences in the distribution of work between cohabiting and married individuals. Following Kalmijn et al. (2007), I include an absolute measure for the household total income and then a relative categorical variable for the female labour income share, which ranges from 0 to 1 and is divided into three categories. The first category includes couples in which the female share of labour income is below 0.4; the second category, which is the reference category, contains couples in which the female share is between 0.4 and 0.6; and the third category is for women whose labour income share is above 0.6. Using the above two variables, I can test whether higher levels of household income have a stabilizing effect on either type of union, whether married women have a higher risk of dissolution if they earn more money

than their husbands, and whether deviations from equal power arrangements increase the risk of cohabitation dissolution.

Finally, I take into account other control variables that are expected to have an impact on union disruption. This includes, on the one hand, some variables that reduce the likelihood of separation, such as having a mortgage or being educated to degree level or above. When one or both partners have attended university the risk of dissolution should be lower than for couples in which neither partner has attended university. Couples with a mortgage refers to couples that do not own their property outright but have an outstanding loan or mortgage with an institution. Partners with a mortgage are expected to be more attached to each other than partners that own their property. The fact that they have to continue paying for the house they live in, at least for a period of time, is expected to lower the risk of dissolution. The duration of the partnership in years is also expected to be negatively related to the likelihood of separation, as is the mean age of partners at the start of the relationship and having one child under four years of age in the household. On the other hand, a positive association is expected between differences in age between partners and union dissolution. Finally, although in many studies the number of children is expected to reduce the likelihood of union dissolution, in the BHPS a positive effect of the number of children on union dissolution is found (e.g. Chan and Halpin, 2002).

Table 5 presents the main descriptive statistics for the independent and control variables⁶. Note that there are more traditional arrangements in married partnerships and hence wives seem to be more responsible for housework than cohabiting women. Moreover, over one in four cohabiting couples allocate paid and unpaid work in an equitable way. Married couples enjoy a higher total income compared to cohabiting relationships. Among the marriages there is also a higher proportion of men who earn more money than women. As for the other covariates, married couples tend to be more educated, enter marriage at a later age, and are more likely to have a mortgage. On the other hand, cohabiting partners are shown to be in a relationship for a shorter period of time, and are less likely to have children than married partners.

⁶ To keep in the model the highest possible number of couples, a missing category for all the categorical variables has been included.

Table 5. Descriptive statistics for married and cohabiting unions

Variables	Cohabitation (N=5062)		Marriage (N=8421)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
<i>Distribution of Unpaid and Paid work</i>				
(ref. Traditional equitable distribution of work)	.2574	.4372	.3782	.4850
Traditional inequitable distribution of work	.1956	.3967	.2061	.4046
Non-traditional equitable distribution of work	.2787	.4484	.1879	.3906
Non-traditional inequitable distribution of work	.2100	.4073	.1804	.3845
Distribution of unpaid and paid work (missing information)	.0583	.2343	.0474	.2125
<i>Controls</i>				
Income				
Ln (household total annual income)	10.08	.7600	10.31	.6472
Female partner's labour income share (ref. 0.4 to 0.6)	.2495	.4328	.2637	.4407
Female partner's labour income share below 0.4	.7096	.4540	.7003	.4581
Female partner's labour income share above 0.6	.0397	.1953	.0318	.1755
Female partner's labour income (missing information)	.0012	.0344	.0042	.0643
Education				
(ref. neither has tertiary education)	.4625	.4986	.3837	.4863
Woman has tertiary education	.1628	.3692	.1626	.3691
Man has tertiary education	.1395	.3465	.1526	.3596
Both have tertiary education	.1703	.3759	.2441	.4296
Level of education (missing information)	.0650	.2465	.0570	.2318
Cohabitation before marriage (ref. no cohabit)	.0000	.0000	.4735	.4993
Cohabitation before marriage	.0000	.0000	.5265	.4993
Duration of relationship in years	7.483	4.158	10.18	3.975

Table 5. (Continued)

Variables	Cohabitation (N=5062)		Marriage (N=8421)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Mean age of partners at the start of relationship	28.67	7.956	30.87	8.487
Difference in age between partners	2.060	5.912	2.003	5.745
Number of children in household	.7467	1.014	1.043	1.083
Child under four years present in household (ref. No)	.9287	.2590	.9063	.2914
Child under four years present in household (Yes)	.0723	.2590	.0937	.2914
Mortgage (ref. partners do not have a mortgage)	.4479	.4973	.2835	.4507
Partners have a mortgage	.5482	.4977	.7165	.4507
Mortgage (missing information)	.0039	.0627	.0000	.0000

Notes: The cohabiting couples that decide to marry are also included in the marriage sample.

The total number of cohabitation and marriage refers to N-time observations for each variable.

Source: British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) (1992–1998).

Analytical strategy

I use event history modelling (Yamaguchi, 1991) to study how the distribution of work within the couple affects the risk of dissolution between 1992 and 2008. I run separate analyses for cohabiting and married individuals. The risk of dissolution for each type of couple is different, as are the characteristics of the individuals who opt for cohabitation instead of marriage. I use duration data to test whether two partners with a set of a specific distribution of housework and working hours who were living together in a given time interval separate in the following time interval. In order to do so, I employ a discrete-time logistic model. Respondents contribute observations to each wave of the BHPS on an annual basis, which supports the choice of a discrete approach as opposed to a continuous one. They continue to do so until they experience dissolution, or they are censored if they remain in a relationship or if they drop out of the survey. The dependent variable is dichotomous (0=continue together/censored, 1=dissolution), making the duration of episodes⁷ follow a log-logistic distribution. Therefore, once the data are organized into a couple-year form, the results are estimated from the following equation:

$$\log \left[\frac{P_{it}}{1 - P_{it}} \right] = \alpha + \beta_1 (\text{distribution of work})_{it} + \beta_2 t_{it} + \beta_k X_{i(t)} + \beta_l X_{i(t-1)} + \varepsilon_{it},$$

⁷ Episode: the time between the start of the risk period and the occurrence of an event or censoring.

where P_{it} is the conditional probability of partnership i experiencing a separation in year t (from one to sixteen), given that they have not yet dissolved or been censored prior to wave t . The *distribution of work* specifies the way in which the partners allocate the time spent on paid and unpaid work. t is relationship duration, k refers to time-constant socio-demographic variables measured when the couple enters the survey (e.g. age at the beginning of the relationship), and l are the time-varying predictors (e.g. household total income), measured at $t-1$, the wave prior to the potential separation.

Results

From Table 6 it can be observed that the two types of union are affected differently by the way in which partners allocate time spent on paid and unpaid work. For marriages, no statistically significant results are observed between the different types of distribution of work. In this regard, I tested all contrasts and none of the four categories of the distribution of work appeared to be statistically significant when compared to the others for married partnerships. For cohabiting unions, by contrast, some statistically significant results are observed. For these, a traditional inequitable arrangement increases the risk of cohabitation dissolution when compared to a traditional equitable arrangement. In other words, cohabiting couples that go from distributing their workloads in such a way that the man does the paid work and the woman does the housework to arrangements in which the woman effectively doubles her work (either housework or paid work) experience a 40.6%

higher risk of dissolution. It also appears that cohabitants with inequitable arrangements – i.e. men do about as much as or more housework than women (cohabitants who equally divide paid and unpaid work are not included) – experience a higher risk of dissolution relative to cohabitants with specialized arrangements – i.e. women are responsible for housework and men for paid work. Therefore, the results are consistent with the predictions for cohabiting couples (Table 4.b.). Whereas traditional inequitable cohabiting couples have the highest propensity to separate based on non-traditionalism and unfairness, traditional equitable cohabiting couples have a lower likelihood of breaking up. Furthermore, as with married unions, I tested all contrasts and it is noteworthy that when the reference category was changed to non-traditional equitable – i.e. cohabitants with similar amounts of paid and unpaid work – the category non-traditional inequitable was no longer statistically significant. Likewise, the category traditional inequitable continued being statistically significant, though only at $<.1$.

With regard to the other covariates that should affect the risk of dissolution, a higher level of household total income is related to a lower propensity to separate in married unions, and to a higher probability of disruption in cohabiting relationships (p-value $<.1$). The finding for marriages is in line with previous studies which associate lower levels of household income with marital distress and economic hardship (Voydanoff, 1990; Kalmijn et al., 2007). In relative terms, the results are similar to those of Brines and Joyner (1999) and Kalmijn et al. (2007), though the effects are only

Table 6. Discrete-time event history logit models of the transition to union dissolution

Variables	Cohabitations	Marriages
Duration of relationship in years	-.8077*** (.0564)	-.3625*** (.0902)
Duration of relationship squared	.0306*** (.0038)	.0002 (.0054)
<i>Distribution of work</i> (ref. traditional equitable)		
Traditional inequitable	.4057* (.1766)	.1555 (.2289)
Non-traditional equitable	.1091 (.1768)	-.1137 (.2712)
Non-traditional inequitable	.2885† (.1749)	-.2141 (.2588)
<i>Income</i>		
Ln (Household Total Income)	.1355† (.0817)	-.3255** (.1098)
<i>Female income share</i> (ref. between 0.4-0.6)		
Female partner's income share below 0.4	.3467* (.1452)	-.2235 (.2219)
Female partner's income share above 0.6	-.1536 (.2753)	.6082 (.3758)
Female partner's income share (missing)	1.840** (.6502)	.0488 (1.127)
<i>Education</i> (ref. neither tertiary education)		
Woman tertiary education	-.1886 (.1737)	-.5369* (.2581)
Man tertiary education	.2212 (.1455)	-.0106 (.2244)
Both tertiary education	-.1452 (.1710)	-.8886** (.2908)
Cohabitation before marriage (0: No; 1: Yes)		.6719*** (.1878)
Mean age at the start of union	-.0368*** (.0081)	-.0354** (.0108)
Difference in age	.0174† (.0091)	-.0180 (.0165)
Number of children	.3203*** (.0829)	.3964*** (.1052)
Child under four years (0: No; 1:Yes)	-.4794 (.3030)	-.8312* (.3870)
Mortgage (0: No; 1: Yes)	-.3365** (.1178)	.0435 (.1841)
Constant	.1537 (.8126)	2.818* (1.155)
Number of events	434	156
Number of couples	1774	1528
Number of couple-years	5062	8421

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses; †p<.1; * p<.05; ** p<.01; ***p<.001.

Source: British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) (1992–2008).

statistically significant for cohabiting unions. These unions are more likely to be dissolved if the woman earns less money than the man relative to cohabiting relationships in which the man and woman have similar wages. It is also worth noting that the missing information on female income share for cohabiting partners is statistically significant and positively related to union dissolution. Hence, cohabitants with missing information in terms of female income share are more likely to end their unions when compared to cohabitants with similar labour incomes.

It can also be seen that the longer the duration of the union, the lower the risk of dissolution. This applies to both marriages and cohabitations. Similarly, entering a union at a later age is negatively related to an eventual separation for both union types. On the other hand, in line with what previous studies for the United Kingdom have suggested (e.g. Chan and Halpin, 2002), the presence of more children within the household is accompanied by a higher risk of dissolution. For marriages, when the wife is educated to university level or above, or when both partners have attended university, the likelihood of marital dissolution is lower than for marriages in which neither spouse has attended university. For cohabitations, having a mortgage reduces the probability of separation, while having a child under four years of age in the household does so for married unions.

Discussion

Some decades ago, family life was based upon a clear division of work between spouses (Becker, 1981). Nevertheless, the

progressive incorporation of women into the labour market and the increase in the number of cohabiting unions is making the division of work more challenging for families. Furthermore, marriage and cohabitation are somewhat different from each other in several family domains, but particularly in the way housework and paid work are divided between men and women, and in the risk of dissolution (Oláh and Gähler, 2014). Marriage is the institution that supports partner specialization, while cohabiting unions foster equal power arrangements between partners (Brines and Joyner, 1999; Kalmijn et al., 2007). Moreover, whereas marriages tend to be long-lasting relationships with a low probability of dissolution, cohabiting unions are shorter and more unstable (ONS, 2012; 2013).

This study is among the first to provide evidence on whether the distribution of paid and unpaid work between partners is related to union dissolution (Cooke, 2006; Oláh and Gähler, 2014). The measure used to analyse this distribution is also quite innovative and more detailed than previous ones, which mainly focused on the partner responsible for housework or paid work. Here, I have explored the distribution of work between partners based on the time each partner has to spend either on housework or paid work, while taking into consideration fairness criteria in the allocation of this time. Unlike previous studies (e.g. Oláh and Gähler, 2014), I have conducted the analyses using the responses of both partners in the couple. When only one member of the couple gives the information for both partners, there is a risk that the responses for

one of the two partners might be socially biased and influenced by the subjective perceptions of the partner providing the information.

The study has aimed to explore the extent to which the way partners allocate paid and unpaid work influences the risk of dissolution. To do this, I have carried out separate analyses for British married and cohabiting unions. Although I have not found evidence that traditional equitable allocations of work lead to a lower likelihood of divorce, there is evidence to suggest that certain traditional distributions of unpaid and paid work increase the risk of cohabitation dissolution. For instance, if cohabiting women spend at least the same amount of time on paid work as their partners but also do most of the housework, the risk of dissolution is higher than that of cohabiting unions in which men do most of the paid work and women do most of the housework. This result supports the predictions for cohabiting unions (Table 4.b.), according to which the risk of dissolution is lower in those relationships in which the partners attend to fairness criteria for dividing paid and unpaid work compared to unions in which the partners do not equally allocate paid and unpaid work.

In sum, the article shows that the distribution of work between partners is less relevant to the stability of the union for marriages than for cohabiting couples. When a cohabiting woman is left to do most of the housework without her partner's help, the risk of dissolution increases. This finding suggests that the nature of marriage may be different from that of cohabitation. Even today, when two partners decide to marry the union is reinforced and becomes more stable, understood as having a lower risk of

dissolution. This is probably due to the rooted gender norms associated with marriage, by which many wives still believe that it is fair if they do most of the housework, even if they also perform paid work in amounts similar to or greater than men (e.g. Bittman et al., 2003; Fuwa and Tsutsui, 2010). As a result, the way in which spouses allocate paid and unpaid work is not a decisive factor in an eventual divorce. This implies that marriage stability relies on other elements (e.g. gender norms) and not the way in which partners organize their time to perform paid and unpaid work.

This is not the case for cohabiting couples. For them, the distribution of work seems to be crucial to the survival of the union. It appears that they have more egalitarian gender norms. More importantly, women – although it could also apply to men – expect the distribution of paid and unpaid work between partners to be equal, and when this pattern is not followed, the union is at risk.

Despite these conclusions, my study has important limitations that should be noted. For instance, I have not been able to measure fairness directly. In the dataset there is not a specific question across waves about fairness in which the two partners express their opinion about the extent to which the allocation of housework and paid work is fair. Although I approximate fairness with equity, which is a more objective measure, equity might not be fully related to partners' subjective perceptions of fairness. Furthermore, the data do not allow for the construction of detailed biographies, and hence factors that might have an influence on the stability of the partnership may be lost. For instance, although I know that most of the partnerships are first-order partnerships (I

have only included unions formed within the panel), missing information at the couple-level does not allow for the inclusion of some well-known covariates in divorce studies (e.g. remarriage – whether a union is a first or higher order partnership).

Based on this study, it would be interesting for future research to consider in detail the interconnections between the distribution of work and gender role attitudes (Oláh and Gähler, 2014). This might help to analyse the extent to which the explanation for the differences in how paid and unpaid work relate to union dissolution are more connected to fairness criteria in the distribution of work between the two partners or to a difference in the gender norms of the two unions. Moreover, it would be worthwhile to explore the differences between types of couples regarding fairness. Finally, it might be revealing to analyse different longitudinal datasets to test the results in other contexts, particularly those for cohabiting couples. Indeed, the degree to which cohabitation is institutionalised might play a role in how work is distributed between partners and in the subsequent risk of dissolution.

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CHAPTER 3

WORKING CONDITIONS AND UNION DISSOLUTION FOR COHABITING AND MARRIED COUPLES IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

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Abstract

This study uses panel data to assess whether working conditions have any effect on union dissolution. Since cohabiting couples are believed to behave differently from married couples, we distinguish between these two types of unions. While previous studies focus on labour income and measures related to working time, we address three new working conditions of the 24/7 economy, namely temporary employment, promotion opportunities, and job responsibility. The results suggest that the nature of marriage is different from the nature of cohabitation. In general, married partners seem more committed to the relationship, with specialization arrangements, job security, high income, and lack of job responsibility protecting the marriage. In contrast, cohabiting unions appear to be especially susceptible to demanding working conditions when these are experienced by both partners. It is observed that part-time employment and irregular work schedules put cohabitation at risk.

Introduction

Some thirty and forty years ago, family life was quite specialized. Marriage was the main living arrangement, and in it men tended to work full time while women stayed home. With the male-breadwinner model dominating, husbands' working conditions

were characterized by a high degree of stability and an income that in most cases provided sufficient resources for the upkeep of the entire family (Becker, 1981). This allocation of work between spouses maximized the utility of unions and decreased the risk of dissolution (Becker et al., 1977). But now this specialization is being questioned as has also occurred with the expected stability of such unions (Sweeny, 2002). The majority of families across advanced societies are now dual-earner couples in which both members work for pay (Blossfeld and Drobnic, 2001).

Consequently, most research has focused on studying the relationship between working conditions and union dissolution, testing whether deviations from specialization arrangements to a distribution of work between partners in which women work for pay and have a prominent role both in the labour market and at home increase the risk of dissolution (for recent reviews: Amato and James, 2010; Lyngstad and Jalovaara, 2010; Özcan and Breen, 2012). These studies have been particularly interested in particular working conditions, namely working hours and labour income. In general, it has been found that when wives work for pay or when wives work for long hours, the risk of dissolution increases (Becker et al., 1977; Cherlin, 1979; Booth et al., 1984; South 2001; Poortman and Kalmijn, 2002; Jalovaara, 2003), while when husbands work for long hours the risk of dissolution decreases (Poortman, 2005; Lyngstad and Jalovaara, 2010; Amato, 2010). Other studies have also analysed in more detail the effect of temporal aspects of work (e.g. non-standard work schedules such as working more than half the hours outside the 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. period

[Hedges and Sekcenski, 1979]) on work–family conflict. They look either at relationship satisfaction (Mills and Täht, 2010; Maume and Sebastian, 2012) or union dissolution (Presser, 2003; Kalil et al., 2012). The findings indicate that the effects differ by gender and duration of marriage.

Nevertheless, other working conditions such as temporary employment, promotion opportunities, and job responsibility have barely been taken into account. These however seem especially relevant in the 24/7 economy, in which partners are expected to be available for 24 hours, 7 days a week (Presser, 2003). Indeed, the traditional employment type characterized by high levels of predictability and a secure income is being challenged, with many families finding it increasingly difficult to balance work and family (Scherer, 2009; Grotti and Scherer, 2014). The labour market is placing ever higher demands on workers, the number of permanent contracts is falling, and temporary jobs with irregular working hours are becoming the norm (Kivimäki et al., 2003; Brockwood, 2007; Robone et al., 2011).

Furthermore, most research has focused on marriage, leaving cohabitation not thoroughly addressed. In the last decades, cohabitation has rapidly increased and, as a result, marriage is no longer the only acceptable living arrangement (Seltzer, 2000; Liefbroer and Dourleijn, 2006). In addition, the two types of unions are legally distinct from each other (Barlow et al., 2008) and last for different durations (Smock, 2000; Beaujouan and Bhrolcháin, 2011). Married unions last for longer and see a lower risk of dissolution relative to cohabiting unions (Brines and Joyner, 1999;

Kalmijn et al., 2007; Oláh and Gähler, 2014). Yet, to date, few studies have tested the differences in the risk of dissolution between married and cohabiting unions regarding working conditions. These studies mainly evaluate the potential disruptive effect of female labour income share – i.e. the proportion of the couple's labour income earned by the woman (Brines and Joyner, 1999; Kalmijn et al., 2007). It appears that wives' relative income is positively related to marital dissolution, while cohabiting women's relative income reduces the risk of dissolution in couples in which partners earn a similar amount of money.

Therefore, using data from the British Household Panel Survey (1991–2008), we analyse the extent to which partners' working conditions have an impact on the risk of dissolution for married and cohabiting couples. This study expands on previous research about working conditions and union disruption, which mainly focused on labour income and working hours, by addressing other working conditions present in the new economy. Specifically, we focus on temporary employment, promotion opportunities, and job responsibility. Moreover, the current study distinguishes between union types by differentiating between cohabitation and marriage. Previous studies have found that cohabiting individuals have more equitable household labour arrangements (Baxter, 2005; Domínguez-Folgueras, 2012; Oláh and Gähler, 2014) and similar labour income distributions compared to that of married individuals (Brines and Joyner, 1999; Kalmijn et al. 2007). However, it is still not known to what extent cohabiting partners have more similar work characteristics than married individuals. Another feature of

the present study is that we focus on a different context, the United Kingdom. Previous studies focused mostly on the United States (Brines and Joyner, 1999), Australia (Baxter, 2005), the Netherlands (Kalmijn et al., 2007), and Sweden (Oláh and Gähler, 2014). Lastly, we rely on information provided by the two members of the union. Union dissolution is a couple event for which the working conditions of either partner may be decisive. In other words, when evaluating a partnership's risk of dissolution, it is important to consider the working conditions of each partner while also taking into account the working conditions of the other partner. Furthermore, information provided by both members of a union diminishes potential problems of socially influenced responses of either partner, which may occur when only one member of the union gives information for both partners (e.g. Oláh and Gähler, 2014).

Theoretical Background

Since women started attaining similar qualifications to men's (Blossfeld and Timm, 2003) and entering the labour market in higher proportions (Blossfeld and Drobnic, 2001), the assumed stability of the male-breadwinner married union (Becker et al., 1977; Becker, 1981) has been questioned (Sweeny, 2002). The dual-earner family, in which both members of the couple work for pay, today is the most widespread family type across advanced societies (Blossfeld and Drobnic, 2001). At the same time, cohabitation is becoming a normative living arrangement across many advanced societies (Liefbroer and Dourleijn, 2006;

Lesthaeghe, 2011). It is increasingly seen as either a prelude to or a substitute for marriage (Berrington, 2001), and most individuals are expected to cohabit during their lifetime (Bumpass and Lu, 2000). Regardless of the well-known differences between married and cohabiting unions, both legally (Barlow et al., 2008) and in their time horizons (Smock, 2000; Beaujouan and Bhrolcháin, 2011), one of the main distinctions between these two types of unions concerns the level of commitment and satisfaction with the partnership (Brines and Joyner, 1999; Wiik et al., 2009; Tai et al., 2014). Married partners are usually more committed to and satisfied with their spouses compared to cohabiting partners (Brines and Joyner, 1999; Wiik et al., 2009; Tai et al., 2014). Indeed, marriage is more likely to happen for those cohabiting relationships in which partners are satisfied with and committed to each other (Moors and Bernhardt, 2009). Therefore, we could hypothesize that married partners are better prepared than cohabitants to cope with situations of stress and pressures such as the ones exercised by the labour market with its increasing working demands for dual-earner couples. Indeed, the working conditions of partnered men and women may have an influence on the different risks of dissolution for the two types of partnership.

Until now, few studies have analysed possible differences in the risks of cohabitation and marital dissolution in terms of working conditions (Brines and Joyner, 1999; Kalmijn et al, 2007). Past studies mainly dealt with the effect of the relative female labour income share on the risk of dissolution, but they ignored most working conditions. On the one hand, Brines and Joyner (1999)

explore the ties that bind American married and cohabiting couples. They find weak support for stabilizing effects of specialization arrangements within marriages and strong evidence for equal power income arrangements within cohabiting unions. In other words, when cohabiting partners earn similar amounts, the risk of dissolution declines. However, Kalmijn et al. (2007) in a study for the Netherlands find that higher levels of the wife's relative share increase the risk of separation. They also find that the effect for cohabiting couples depends on the level of female income share, with equal power arrangements decreasing the risk of cohabitation dissolution, and higher or lower contributions of women increasing it.

In Table 7 we summarize the theoretical predictions that have emerged from the literature on the effects of working conditions on union dissolution for different types of unions; specifically, we report whether a particular working condition has been found to increase/decrease the risk of dissolution or if the effect is ambiguous.

As for predictions about income and union dissolution, previous studies have underscored that economic deprivation leads to marital distress and economic hardship, which is associated with a higher risk of dissolution (Voydanoff, 1990; Kalmijn et al., 2007). Consequently, one may expect that household income would be negatively related to union dissolution, and this would be so either in married or cohabiting relationships. In other words, it would be expected that the higher the household total income is, the lower the risk of dissolution is (Table 7). Nevertheless, partners' relative

labour income is expected to have a different impact on marital and cohabitation dissolution. On the one hand, married partnerships have clear gender role expectations about what it is socially accepted and expected for each spouse, with the male-breadwinner family as the clearest paradigm of stability (Brines, 1994; Nock, 1995). On the other hand, cohabiting relationships foster equal power arrangements in which the two partners contribute similarly to the union (Brines and Joyner, 1999; Kalmijn et al., 2007). Therefore, when compared to a married union in which the two spouses contribute similarly to the household, it is to be expected that the risk of marital dissolution should decrease as husbands earn more than their wives, while it ought to increase as wives earn more than their husbands, (Table 7). In cohabiting relationships, by contrast, any deviation from an equal power arrangement in which partners earn similar amounts towards a male- or female-breadwinner arrangement should increase the risk of cohabitation dissolution (Table 7).

Working hours have been studied more intensively in the literature on union dissolution. It has been found that although a husband's increase in working hours decreases the risk of dissolution (Poortman 2005; Amato, 2010; Lyngstad and Jalovaara, 2010), either wives' participation in the labour market or wives' increase in working hours increases union disruption (Becker et al., 1977; Cherlin, 1979; Booth et al., 1984; South 2001; Poortman and Kalmijn, 2002; Jalovaara, 2003). Nevertheless, the relationship between wives' increasing time spent doing paid work and union dissolution is less clear compared to husbands'. Some authors

underscore that as wives work for pay they become more financially independent, which may lead them to dissolve the partnership if they are dissatisfied with their partners (Cherlin, 1979; Schoen et al., 2002; Sayer et al., 2011). In contrast, other studies highlight that when wives work for pay, families have greater consumption potential as both the husband and the wife are expected to be working in the labour market (Oppenheimer, 1997; Sayer and Bianchi, 2000; White and Rogers, 2000; Ermisch, 2003). This should lend itself to greater relationship stability and better mitigate potential disruptions from unexpected events such as illness or unemployment.

As a result, and in spite of the potential disruptive effect on union dissolution of dissatisfied working women, one might expect that a scenario in which both partners work full-time should be positive for the stability of any type of union due to the higher consumption potential and resources of such unions. Nevertheless, if either partner or both partners work part-time, the expected effects for married and cohabiting partnerships should be different from each other. If the traditional division of work is the norm in marriages, we should expect a lower risk of dissolution in marriages in which husbands work full-time and wives work part-time relative to marriages in which both spouses work full-time (Table 7). The former arrangement facilitates specialization between partners, with husbands being mainly responsible for paid work and wives for housework (Brines, 1994; Nock, 1995). Moreover, either marriages in which wives work full-time and the husbands work part-time or marriages in which both spouses work part-time should experience

a higher risk of dissolution compared to marriages in which both spouses work full-time (Table 7). These allocations of working hours between spouses are opposite to the expected gender role attitudes for married men and women. Conversely, in cohabiting unions, the most stable partnership should be the one in which the two cohabitants work full-time. This arrangement not only relates to a stabilizing effect on equal power arrangements between partners and an increase in the amount of resources for cohabitants (Brines and Joyner, 1999), but it also reduces potential problems which may arise if either partner, despite working part-time, wanted to work full-time. Therefore, either cohabiting unions in which either of the two partners works part-time or in which both partners work part-time should experience higher risks of dissolution compared to cohabiting unions in which both partners work full-time (Table 7).

Another issue is working overtime, which may be performed by the man, by the woman, or by both partners. Although working overtime is usually associated with extra labour income, which has to be taken into account when evaluating the impact of these hours on union dissolution, these hours might be considered a source of additional stress, which reduce the amount of time the two partners can spend together. In this regard, it would be expected that the lack of overtime hours should be beneficial for either type of union. In other words, the absence of extra working hours should lead to a lower risk of dissolution for married or cohabiting unions in which neither partner has overtime working hours. Nevertheless, if either the man, the woman, or both partners work overtime, the risks of marital and cohabitation dissolution should increase (Table 7).

Although most studies have looked at the impact of working hours on union dissolution, few researchers have taken a closer look at other temporal aspects of work. Some researchers have analysed the relationship between irregular working hours and marital stability, mainly in the US context, and they found that the results vary by gender and duration of marriage. Women who are married for more than five years and work either at night or shifts on a rotating basis are more likely to break up compared to women who have been married for shorter periods of time (Presser 2003; Kalil et al., 2012). For married men, working night shifts reduces marital satisfaction (Maume and Sebastian, 2012) and increases the likelihood of union dissolution if they have been married for less than five years (Presser, 2003). In a study of the Netherlands, Mills and Thät (2010) find similar results for women, suggesting that marital satisfaction decreases when wives work a non-standard schedule, and thus opposite of the results obtained by Maume and Sebastian (2012) for husbands. Moreover, Gareis et al. (2003) find that wives with better work-schedule fit are more likely to report higher levels of marital satisfaction, while the results for husbands are not statistically significant. In most previous studies, having a child increases the likelihood of separation for both husbands and wives if either spouse works non-standard hours.

The previous results seem to indicate that unions suffer when work timetables limit the amount of time partners can spend together. Both wives (Presser, 2003; Kalil et al., 2012) and husbands (Presser, 2003) have been found to experience lower levels of marital stability when they work irregular work schedules.

And although there seems to be no evidence for cohabiting couples of whether irregular working timetables influence the risk of dissolution, it should be expected that regardless of the type of union, if either partner has an irregular work schedule the risk of dissolution will increase (Table 7). Moreover, one may expect that the effect would be especially deleterious if the two partners work irregular hours (Table 7). Therefore, married or cohabiting unions in which either the man, the woman, or both partners have irregular working hours should experience a higher risk of dissolution compared to unions in which neither partner has irregular working hours (Table 7). If either or both of the partners have irregular working hours, the time spent with the partner should be seriously compromised, as would the survival of the partnership.

Employed partners live in a 24/7 economy, which is putting pressure on the stability and predictability of traditional employment (Presser, 2003; Brockwood, 2007). This new setting is likely to affect many other job conditions, which may in turn have an impact on individuals' and their work–family interactions (Brockwood, 2007). Today, many employees are likely to have lower wages, temporary employment, and challenging working conditions (Datta Gupta and Kristensen, 2008; Robone et al., 2011). Specifically, working in shifts, performing complex and intensive tasks, and having little job autonomy increase the probability of experiencing mental stress (Cottini and Lucifora, 2013). Yet, although poor working conditions tend to be concentrated among the lower social classes (Borg and Kristensen, 2000), workers with greater job responsibilities also tend to see more psychological

problems and conflicts at work. Consequently, there is a need to expand on previously addressed working conditions – i.e. labour income and working time – and evaluate other working conditions that may have an impact on union stability. Specifically, the focus here is on whether temporary employment, promotion opportunities, and job responsibility are related to the risk of dissolution.

To begin, it is likely that permanent employment fosters union stability in married and cohabiting unions because partners are assumed to be safe in their employment with jobs that last over time; temporary employment, by contrast, should be associated with a higher risk of dissolution. Partners with temporary jobs are uncertain about the continuity of their jobs because of a set expiry date, and it is likely that such uncertainty will spill over into their partnership stability. Therefore, one may expect that when the two partners have temporary employment, the risk of dissolution in either type of union would be higher compared to the risk of dissolution in unions in which both partners have permanent employment (Table 7). Furthermore, in marriages, the effect of temporary employment on marital dissolution should be particularly strong in partnerships in which the husband has temporary employment and the wife has a permanent appointment. As noted above, both the husband and the wife understand the clear gender roles dictating what is expected of each spouse (Brines, 1994; Nock, 1995). If the husband were the one temporarily employed, he would not be satisfying his role as the primary breadwinner, and thus the risk of marital dissolution would be expected to rise (Table 7). On

the contrary, when the husband is the only one with permanent employment, the increase in the risk of dissolution should also be positive, though more subtle compared to a marriage in which both spouses have permanent employment. The rooted gender role attitudes of married partners facilitate the assignment of concrete tasks to husbands (paid work) and wives (unpaid work). In cohabiting relationships, by contrast, it would be predicted that when one partner has temporary employment and the other a permanent appointment, regardless of who has what, the risk of dissolution is higher compared to unions in which both cohabitants have permanent employment (Table 7). In such a case, the equal power arrangement would not be met and the uncertainty and stress associated with a more precarious situation for the couple should become visible, increasing the likelihood of disruption.

To continue, differences between married and cohabiting unions should be expected in terms of promotion opportunities. In marriages, there should be a lower risk of dissolution when the husband and not the wife has promotion opportunities relative to marriages in which both spouses enjoy promotion opportunities. If married partners have more traditional norms concerning gender, this may lead them to believe that the husband's promotion opportunities are a sign of success, while promotion opportunities on the wife's side may imply a risk of her becoming more centred on her career. This would decrease the level of specialization within the marriage and raise the risk of dissolution. In the end, the husband is the one who is expected to be more specialized than the wife in the labour market (Kalmijn, 2007). As a result, if the

husband is the only one with promotion opportunities, the risk of dissolution should decrease compared to a union in which both spouses have promotion opportunities (Table 7). Using the same reasoning, if the wife is the only one with promotion opportunities, the risk of dissolution should increase (Table 7). Conversely, in cohabiting unions, stability should be promoted if both partners have promotion opportunities (Table 7). In this way, the two cohabiting partners should both have opportunities at work, which might be indicative of chances to improve their possibilities for ascending in their careers, while simultaneously raising equal power arrangements and interdependence between them (Brines and Joyner, 1999). Furthermore, although the risk of cohabitation dissolution should increase when only the man or the woman has promotion opportunities (Table 7) compared to a cohabiting couple in which both cohabitants have promotion opportunities, such increases might not be important. Cohabiting partners are usually young people with an uncertain situation in the labour market (Smock, 2000; Beaujouan and Bhrolcháin, 2011). Therefore, having at least one partner with promotion opportunities might help them to improve their financial situation and presumably their union stability (e.g. Oppenheimer, 1997) Finally, in either type of union the expected effect of neither of the partners having promotion opportunities is unclear relative to partnerships in which both partners have promotion opportunities. On the one hand, the fact that neither partner has promotion opportunities may be beneficial for the relationship, since partners can focus more on their union. On the other hand, if they are not satisfied with their employment

and would like to move up in their workplaces, they might experience higher apathy with their employment, which, in the end, might spill over into the household.

We also take into consideration the job responsibility of supervising work done by others. Individuals doing this may experience more psychological problems and conflicts at work (Borg and Kristensen, 2000), which may translate into a higher risk of dissolution if partners take home the problems they encounter at work. Thus, in either type of partnership, when both partners have job responsibilities, the risk of dissolution should be particularly high due to the stress and pressures they face at work. As a consequence, if only one member of the couple has job responsibilities, the risk of dissolution should be lower than in couples in which both partners have job responsibilities (Table 7). However, in marriage, there would not be a special reduction in the risk of dissolution when the husband is the only one with job responsibilities due to the stabilizing effects of a specialization arrangement. Furthermore, the risk of dissolution should be especially low in cohabiting and married unions in which neither partner has job responsibilities (Table 7), because they will not experience the tension and stress associated with managerial posts.

Table 7. Predicted relationship between working conditions and dissolution risk

	Marriage	Cohabitation
Income measures		
<i>Household Total Income</i>	(-)	(-)
<i>Relative labour income</i> (ref. Similar labour income)		
Man earns more income	(-)	(+)
Woman earns more income	(+)	(+)

Table 7. (Continued)

	Marriage	Cohabitation
Working time measures		
<u>Working hours</u> (ref. both partners work full-time)		
Man works part-time, woman full-time	+	+
Woman works part-time, man full-time	-	+
Both partners work part-time	+	+
<u>Extra time</u> (ref. neither with overtime working hours)		
Man works overtime, woman not	+	+
Woman works overtime, man not	+	+
Both partners work overtime	+	+
<u>Work schedule</u> (ref. both partners have regular working hours)		
Man has irregular working hours, woman not	+	+
Woman has irregular working hours, man not	+	+
Both partners have irregular working hours	+	+
<u>Temporary vs permanent employment</u> (ref. both partners have permanent employment)		
Man has temporary employment, woman permanent	+	+
Woman has temporary employment, man permanent	+	+
Both partners have temporary employment	+	+
<u>Promotion opportunities</u> (ref. both partners have promotion opportunities)		
Man has promotion opportunities, woman not	-	+
Woman has promotion opportunities, man not	+	+
Neither with promotion opportunities	?	?
<u>Job responsibility</u> (ref. both partners have managerial duties)		
Man has managerial duties, woman not	-	-
Woman has managerial duties, man not	-	-
Neither with managerial duties	-	-

Note: “+” refers to a higher risk of dissolution; “-” refers to a lower risk; “?” indicates ambiguous effects.

In brackets the predicted effects found in the literature.

Context

In the United Kingdom the number of marriages is declining (Wilson and Smallwood, 2007). Partners are marrying at a later age and increasingly couples opt for other living arrangements such as cohabitation, which has doubled its numbers in the period from 1996 to 2012. In 1996, there were 3 million people cohabiting, and

16 years later there were 5.9 million (Office for National Statistics [ONS], 2012). Moreover, although cohabitation is socially accepted as a type of union, public opinion is still conservative and sees cohabitation as driven by selfishness, individualism, and greater distance from traditional family values (Lewis, 2001). More importantly, the two types of unions are legally distinct from each other and reflect different risks of dissolution. There is not yet a 'common law marriage' that offers marriage and cohabitation the same legal status (Barlow et al., 2008). The risk of marital dissolution after 5 years is around 8%, and close to 21% after 10 years (ONS, 2013); about one in three cohabiting relationships are expected to end by the 5th year, and about a 40% of cohabitations are expected to end by the 10th year (ONS, 2012; 2013).

Although unmarried cohabitation was experienced by highly educated individuals in the 1970s and 1980s, less-educated individuals are beginning to catch up (Beaujouan and Bhrolcháin, 2011). Today, the proportion of couples cohabiting surpasses those that are married among the lesser-educated population. Furthermore, despite being considered either a prelude to or substitute for marriage in the United Kingdom (Berrington, 2001), cohabitation is seen more as an alternative to marriage among the working class and those enrolled in education (Kiernan, 2004). For instance, British women see cohabitation as a way to avoid either single motherhood or marrying men they are not certain they want to marry (Smart and Stevens, 2000). Taken together, married individuals tend to be older, more educated, and have more traditional gender role attitudes than cohabiting individuals, who

tend to be younger, less educated, and from working-class backgrounds (Kiernan, 2004; Beaujouan and Bhrolcháin, 2011).

Methodology

This study uses panel data from the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) covering the period between 1991 and 2008. The BHPS is an annual household-based panel aimed at collecting data to understand social and economic change at the individual and household levels in the United Kingdom. It includes data on a broad range of social issues such as household composition, income, health, socio-economic values, education, housework, and labour market behaviour. In 1991, the BHPS covered 5538 households and 9912 individuals drawn from 250 areas of Great Britain. The individuals enumerated in respondent sample households in the first wave were considered original sample members and were attempted to be re-interviewed annually, even if they decided to move to other household. Likewise, for each successive year of the panel survey, every adult member of a household in which an original sample member lived, either in the same or distinct household from the one recorded in previous wave, was accordingly interviewed. As for the quality of the data (Lynn, 2006), the BHPS has a high response rate (e.g. more than 85% completion for individual interviews in almost every wave) and low levels of item non-response. The mean level for item non-response at the individual level in the first 13 waves is about 1.7, while the mean level for item non-response at the household level is 3.2 (Lynn, 2006).

One of the main reasons for selecting the BHPS is that it includes the information from both members of the couple. Furthermore, a distinctive feature of the BHPS is that both the man and the woman are separately interviewed. In many datasets, either due to budget constraints or to reduce potential problems of attrition or item non-response, only one member of the couple is interviewed. In such a case, the partner interviewed also provides the information for the other partner, which may be potentially influenced by socially desirable responses or subjective perceptions about the partner (e.g. Oláh and Gähler, 2014). Therefore, we are able to take into account the joint working conditions of both partners in the couple's propensity for disruption, and thus we only consider dual-earner couples in which both partners report their specific working conditions⁸

For our study, we include all couples that began their relationships once they entered the panel and that last at least one year. These are classified into two different groups: married and cohabiting couples. The dependent variable is the same for the two groups – union dissolution. This is understood as the moment of separation. It takes the value 0 if partners continue together in any given year, given that they were together in the previous year, and the value 1 if partners no longer live together. For the sake of simplicity, cohabiting individuals who decide to marry instead of continue cohabiting or separate from their partners are right-censored in the cohabitation sample in the year they make the

⁸ Note that the possibility of including unions in which only the man was in paid employment was evaluated, but due to the focus of the paper on the joint working conditions of both partners, it was decided against.

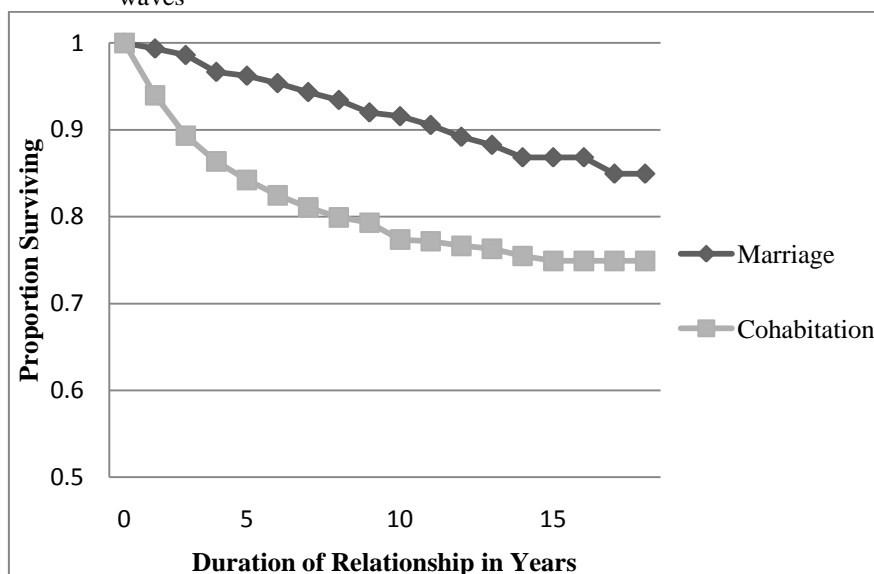
transition to marriage. Hence they count as married individuals⁹. However, in order to have these particular couples identified, we introduce a variable – premarital cohabitation with the same partner – in our marriage models. Furthermore, this study takes into account only the working conditions of dual-earner couples, who despite being an important source of selection bias represent up to a 70% of couples.

Hence, the samples analysed include 1374 dual-earner marriages and 1440 dual-earner cohabiting couples. These final samples were reached after excluding 183 marriages and 324 cohabiting couples in which the two partners declared themselves to be working for pay in the labour market, but have missing information in all independent variables of interest (e.g. working conditions, education). Moreover, since this study consists of a selected sample of dual-earner couples, the levels of union dissolution may differ from the levels of union dissolution reported by the ONS (2012; 2013). In this regard, Figure 5 represents the survival rates of dual-earner married and cohabiting couples sampled, which are indeed different from the overall rates of dissolution for the United Kingdom presented above (ONS, 2012; 2013). It is clear that about 8% of marriages are expected to dissolve by the 10th year; this is about 20% for cohabiting couples. Moreover, while the proportion of marriages that survive the entire period under study (i.e. 17 years) is more than 85%, about 75% of

⁹ In the United Kingdom, premarital cohabitation is becoming the most widespread form of entry into marriage (Berrington, 2001). In the early 1990s, the percentage of individuals cohabiting prior to their first marriage was higher than 60%, but it has risen to close to 75% a decade later (Beaujouan and Bhrolcháin, 2011).

cohabiting couples are actually expected to continue together after 15 years.

Figure 5. Proportion of Marriages and Cohabiting Couples surviving in the 18 waves



Source: British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) (1991–2008).

Measuring working conditions

The main independent variables of this study include an absolute and a relative measure of income. The absolute measure is the logarithm of the household annual total income, which addresses the level of economic resources a couple has. The rationale behind the use of this measure is that couples with higher levels of total income are expected to experience lower levels of union dissolution. The relative variable, which is the female labour income share with a range from 0 to 1, is divided into three categories. The first category, which is the reference category, includes couples in which the female share of labour income is

within half a standard deviation from the overall mean level of female income share (from 0.43 to 0.53). The second category includes couples with a female income share above those in which partners earn similar amounts of money (above 0.53). In other words, couples in which women earn more money than men. And the third category comprises couples with a female income share below those in which partners earn similar amounts of money (below 0.43). That is, couples in which men are the main breadwinners. With this variable we can test whether married women had a higher risk of dissolution if they earned more money than their husbands, and whether deviations from equal power arrangements increased the risk of cohabitation dissolution.

Regarding working time variables, we construct three relative variables that take into account regular working hours, overtime working hours, and work schedule to establish the patterns of working hours resulting in the highest levels of union dissolution. The first relative variable considers whether partners work full-time or part-time. This is obtained from the total number of working hours worked in a normal week. This variable has four categories: 1) reference: both partners work full-time (more than 30 hours a week); 2) the man works part-time (fewer than 30 hours a week) and the woman works full-time; 3) the woman works part-time and the man works full-time; 4) both partners work part-time. The second relative variable is related to the presence of overtime work (i.e. any additional hour worked over and above regular working hours), which might result in stress for the individuals and tensions for the union. This includes four categories: 1) reference: neither

partner works overtime¹⁰; 2) the man works overtime but not the woman; 3) the woman works overtime but not the man; 4) both partners work overtime. Finally, the third categorical variable concerns the work schedule of partners. Respondents are asked to select a category on a card that best describes the times of day they usually work (i.e. mornings only, afternoons only, during the day, evenings only, at night, both lunches/evenings, other times/day, rotating shifts, varies/no pattern, other). While this variable is not available for every wave of the survey, we treat it as unchanged between subsequent observations if partners continue in the same job from the previous wave. This variable has four categories: 1) reference: both partners work regular hours – i.e. partners work in the mornings only, afternoons only, or during the day; 2) the man works irregular hours – i.e. he works evenings only, at night, both lunches/evenings, other times/day, rotating shifts, varies/no pattern, or other – and the woman works regular hours; 3) the woman works irregular hours and the man works regular hours; 4) both partners have irregular work timetables. This variable should shed light on whether partners who work irregular hours are more likely to become separated.

Furthermore, this study accounts for three working conditions of the 24/7 economy that one might expect to have an impact on union dissolution. To start, a variable for temporary versus permanent employment is constructed. Where permanent

¹⁰ There is no overtime for self-employed workers. For full-time self-employed workers, we assign them the median number of overtime hours worked by full-time employees working for someone else. Similarly, self-employed workers who work only part-time are assigned the median number of overtime hours worked by part-time employees working for someone else.

jobs are decreasing, temporary employment is on the rise, generating uncertainty in partners' lives. This variable has four categories: 1) reference: both partners have a permanent contract; 2) the man has a temporary contract and the woman a permanent one; 3) the woman has a temporary contract and the man a permanent one; 4) both partners have a temporary contract. To continue, a second categorical variable is constructed to capture the opportunities for promotion that each partner has. Employed partners are asked to respond affirmatively or negatively to the following question: "In your current job do you have opportunities for promotion?". From this question we derive a variable with four categories: 1) reference: both partners have promotion opportunities; 2) the man has promotion opportunities but not the woman; 3) the woman has promotion opportunities but not the man; 4) neither partner has promotion opportunities. Finally, we consider a job responsibility variable related to the working conditions of managerial jobs. The employed partnered men and women are asked: "Do you have any managerial duties or do you supervise any other employees?" They have to respond whether they are managers, foremen/supervisors, or whether they are not managers/supervisors. If they respond that they are managers or foremen/supervisors, we consider them to have job responsibilities. If not, we consider them as without job responsibilities. Thereafter, we construct a categorical variable capturing whether partners have managerial duties or supervise work done by others. It consists of four categories: 1) reference: both partners have managerial duties; 2) the man has managerial duties but not the woman; 3) the woman

has managerial duties but not the man; 4) neither partner has managerial duties. With this variable we test whether job responsibility fosters union dissolution as it is associated with psychological problems and conflicts at work. It is noteworthy that both the variables about promotion opportunities and managerial duties are not asked to self-employed partners, which account for 17.8% of the married sample and a 15.4% of the cohabiting sample.

In this study we also include covariates that have already been shown to affect the stability of the union. These are: duration of the relationship (in years), duration squared, homogamy with the low- and medium-educated – i.e. whether both partners have ISCED levels 1, 2, or ISCED levels 3-4 – and the more-educated – i.e. whether both partners have ISCED levels of 5, 6, or 7 –, mean age of partners at the beginning of the relationship, difference in age between partners, number of children, whether there is one child who is under four years of age in the household, and whether couples have a mortgage – i.e. whether couples do not own their property outright but have an outstanding loan or mortgage with an institution. Lastly, and only for married couples, the variable premarital cohabitation is added to account for married couples that were formerly classed as cohabiting unions.

In Table 8, the descriptive statistics for married and cohabiting couples for all independent variables are presented¹¹. Overall, married partners are more likely to be employed with permanent jobs, have greater managerial duties, higher incomes,

¹¹ To keep in the model the highest possible number of couples, a missing category for all the categorical variables has been included.

Table 8. Descriptive statistics for married and cohabiting unions

Variables	Cohabitation (N=3801)		Marriage (N=6691)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
<i>Income measures</i>				
Ln (household total annual income)	10.26	.5449	10.46	.5083
Female partner's labour income share (ref. 0.43 to 0.53)	.8555	.3516	.8662	.3404
Female partner's labour income share below 0.43	.0616	.2404	.0755	.2642
Female partner's labour income share above 0.53	.0413	.1990	.0263	.1601
Female partner's labour income share (missing information)	.0416	.1996	.0320	.1760
<i>Working Time</i>				
Working hours (ref. both full-time)	.7348	.4415	.5996	.4900
Man part-time, woman full-time	.0229	.1496	.0214	.1446
Woman part-time, man full-time	.2044	.4033	.3445	.4752
Both partners part-time	.0118	.1082	.0161	.1269
Full-time vs. part-time (missing information)	.0261	.1592	.0184	.1343
Extra time (ref. neither overtime working hours)	.2334	.4230	.2527	.4346
Man overtime, woman not	.3196	.4664	.3544	.4783
Woman overtime, man not	.1229	.3283	.1096	.3123
Both partners overtime	.2560	.4365	.2391	.4266
Extra time (missing information)	.0681	.2520	.0442	.2056
Work schedule (ref. both regular working hours)	.5264	.4994	.5554	.4970
Man irregular, woman regular	.1413	.3483	.1329	.3394
Woman irregular, man regular	.1329	.3395	.1236	.3291
Both partners irregular	.0718	.2582	.0550	.2280
Work schedule (missing information)	.1276	.3336	.1331	.3398

Table 8. (Continued)

Variables	Cohabitation (N=3801)		Marriage (N=6691)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
<i>Temporary vs. permanent</i> (ref. both permanent employment)	.8453	.3616	.8854	.3186
Man temporary employment, woman permanent	.0484	.2147	.0304	.1719
Woman temporary employment, man permanent	.0573	.2325	.0504	.2187
Both partners temporary employment	.0097	.0982	.0054	.0731
Temporary vs. permanent (missing information)	.0392	.1941	.0284	.1661
<i>Promotion opportunities</i> (ref. both promotion opportunities)	.2641	.4409	.2453	.4303
Man promotion opportunities, woman not	.1794	.3837	.1908	.3930
Woman promotion opportunities, man not	.1547	.3617	.1495	.3566
Neither with promotion opportunities	.1671	.3731	.1775	.3822
Promotion opportunities (missing information)	.2347*	.4238	.2369**	.4252
<i>Job responsibility</i>				
Managerial duties (ref. both managerial duties)	.1329	.3395	.1554	.3623
Man managerial duties, woman not	.1952	.3964	.2535	.4350
Woman managerial duties, man not	.1360	.3428	.1209	.3260
Neither with managerial duties	.3791	.4852	.2877	.4527
Managerial duties (missing information)	.1568*	.3636	.1825**	.3863
<i>Controls</i>				
Cohabitation before marriage (ref. no cohabit)	.0000	.0000	.4656	.4988
Cohabitation before marriage	.0000	.0000	.5344	.4988
Match in education (ref. no match)	.4522	.4978	.4255	.4944
Match in Low-Medium education	.2918	.4546	.2680	.4429
Match in High Education	.2026	.4020	.2692	.4435
Match in education (missing information)	.0534	.2249	.0373	.1897

Table 8. (Continued)

Variables	Cohabitation (N=3801)		Marriage (N=6691)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Duration of relationship in years	7.928	4.384	10.72	4.237
Mean age of partners at the start of relationship	29.02	7.660	29.77	7.019
Difference in age between partners	1.726	5.569	1.643	5.355
Number of children in household	.4859	.8287	.9303	1.014
Child under four years present in household (ref. No)	.8582	.3489	.6859	.4642
Child under four years present in household (Yes)	.1418	.3489	.3141	.4642
Mortgage (ref. partners do not have a mortgage)	.3249	.4684	.1808	.3849
Partners have a mortgage	.6751	.4684	.8192	.3849

Note: The cohabiting couples that decide to marry are also included in the marriage sample.

The total number of cohabitation and marriage refers to N-time observations for each variable.

* This question is not asked of self-employed cohabiting partners, who represent the 15.4% of the sample.

** This question is not asked of self-employed married partners, who represent the 17.8% of the sample.

Source: British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) (1991–2008).

and better working time patterns compared to cohabiting partners, who fair better than their married counterparts in only one dimension – promotion opportunities. Cohabitants, however, have a more similar income distribution to married individuals, although the proportion of women who earn more than their partner is higher for cohabiting unions. Thus, married couples do experience better working conditions compared to cohabiting couples.

Analytical Strategy

We use event history modelling (Yamaguchi, 1991) to study how working conditions affect the risk of dissolution for the data between 1991 and 2008. Specifically, we use duration data to test whether two partners with given job conditions living together at a given time cease to live together in the following interval. In order to do so, discrete-time logit models are employed. This is because on the one hand, respondents contribute observations to each wave of the BHPS on an annual basis, hence a discrete approach is more appropriate than a continuous approach. They continue doing so until they experience dissolution, or are censored if they remain in a relationship or if they drop out of the survey. On the other hand, the dependent variable is dichotomous (0=continue together/censored, 1=dissolution), making the duration of episodes¹² follow a log-logistic distribution. Therefore, once data are organized into couple-year form, the results are estimated based on the following equation:

¹² By episode, we mean the time between the start of the risk period and an event occurring or being censored.

$$\log \left[\frac{P_{it}}{1-P_{it}} \right] = \alpha + \beta_1(\text{working conditions})_{it} + \beta_2 t_{it} + \beta_k X_{it} + \beta_l X_{i(t-1)} + \varepsilon_{it},$$

where P_{it} is the conditional probability of experiencing a separation for partnership i at year t (from one to seventeen), given that they have not dissolved or been censored prior to wave t . *Working conditions* comprises a set of indicators that describes the working characteristics of partners. These indicators are related to income from paid employment (including absolute and relative levels of income); time spent working (which includes the number of hours worked, working any overtime, and the work schedule), temporary employment, promotion opportunities, and job responsibility; t is relationship duration; k refers to time-constant control variables measured when a couple enters the survey (e.g. mean age at the beginning of the relationship); and l are the time-varying predictors measured at $t-1$ (e.g. number of children in household), the wave prior to the potential separation. The objective of this model is to test the several predictions about the effects of working conditions on union dissolution presented in Table 7. This model is run separately for married and cohabiting partners due to the expected differences in working conditions and risks of dissolution between those who opt for cohabitation and those who opt for marriage.

Results

Table 9 shows the survival of couples from the beginning of their relationship until their dissolution or censoring, distinguishing

between married and cohabiting couples. Note that in either union, duration is negatively related to the risk of dissolution. In other words, the more years partners spend with each other, the lower the likelihood of separation. Moreover, in line with predictions, the higher the household total income, the lower the risk of marital dissolution (Table 7), though the wife's labour income share is not statistically significant. In cohabiting relationships, no income effect is found at the household level, but at the relative level it is shown that when cohabiting partners deviate from earning similar amounts to a distribution of income in which men earn more money than women, the risk of dissolution increases in a 44.7% (p-value <.1). With regard to working time measures, marriages in which the man works part-time and the woman works full-time experience, as expected, higher levels of union disruption than marriages in which both spouses work full-time. However, when married men work overtime and married women do not, the risk of dissolution decreases compared to marriages in which neither spouse works overtime (p-value <.1). This finding is contrary to the predictions of Table 7. In cohabiting relationships, by contrast, the results are different, though the statistically significant results are in line with the expectations. For these relationships, when both partners work part-time, the risk of separation is higher relative to couples in which both members work full-time. Moreover, the risk of break-up for couples where both cohabiting partners have irregular work schedules is 51.8% higher than the risk of dissolution for cohabiting couples in which both partners have regular work schedules. This confirms the hypothesis that a cohabiting couple in which the two

partners have irregular working hours (e.g. evenings, nights, schedules that vary from day to day) experiences a higher risk of dissolution relative to another couple in which the two partners have regular working hours (e.g. mornings, afternoons, during the day) (Table 7).

As for the new working conditions addressed in this study, it is observed that when the two spouses have temporary contracts, the risk of marital dissolution is higher compared to marriages in which both partners have permanent contracts. This result supports the hypothesis that when the two partners have temporary employment, the risk of dissolution increases (Table 7). Regarding promotion opportunities, we found, as expected, that when the husband has promotion opportunities but the wife does not, the risk of dissolution declines relative to marriages in which both partners have promotion opportunities (Table 7). No effect is observed in cohabiting relationships for either temporary jobs or promotion opportunities. Moreover, the lack of job responsibility, measured as the absence of managerial duties by the two spouses, increases marital stability relative to marriages in which both partners have responsibility in their workplaces as it was predicted in Table 7. Finally, when cohabiting men alone have managerial duties, the risk of dissolution declines compared to cohabiting couples in which both partners have managerial duties (p-value <.1).

The results for the control variables are in line with the findings of the existing literature. Duration, homogamy in higher education (only for marriages), higher mean age at the start of a relationship, and having a child who is under four years of age (only

Table 9. Discrete-time event history logit models of the transition to union dissolution

Variables	Cohabitations	Marriages
Duration of relationship in years	-.8142*** (.0694)	-.4347*** (.0993)
Duration of relationship squared	.0294*** (.0044)	.0050 (.0056)
Ln (household total income)	.2073 (.1635)	-.4126* (.1931)
<i>Female income share</i> (ref: between 0.43-0.53)		
Female partner's income share below 0.43	.4468† (.2619)	-.3925 (.4461)
Female partner's income share above 0.53	.0589 (.3568)	.3089 (.5772)
Female partner's income share (missing)	1.325† (.7730)	.2630 (.8330)
<i>Working hours</i> (ref. both full-time)		
Man part-time, woman full-time	-.0071 (.4847)	1.058* (.5008)
Woman part-time, man full-time	.2191 (.2010)	.1917 (.2647)
Both partners part-time	1.025** (.3704)	-1.043 (1.094)
<i>Extra time</i> (ref. neither overtime working hours)		
Man overtime, woman not	-.1308 (.2015)	-.4655† (.2542)
Woman overtime, man not	.2837 (.2375)	-.5417 (.3801)
Both partners overtime	.0552 (.2009)	-.5308 (.3159)
<i>Work schedule</i> (ref. both regular working hours)		
Man irregular, woman regular	.1717 (.2165)	-.0177 (.3105)
Woman irregular, man regular	.2638 (.2078)	-.2087 (.3242)
Both partners irregular	.5183* (.2392)	.0921 (.4076)
<i>Temporary vs. permanent employment</i> (ref. both permanent employment)		
Man temporary, woman permanent	.3601 (.3095)	.5726 (.4179)
Woman temporary, man permanent	-.2416 (.2825)	.1075 (.5386)
Both partners temporary employment	-.3710 (.5891)	1.917** (.6224)
<i>Promotion opportunities</i> (ref. both promotion opportunities)		
Man promotion opportunities, woman not	.0067 (.2216)	-.7027* (.3502)

Table 9. (Continued)

Variables	Cohabitations	Marriages
Woman promotion opportunities, man not	.0628 (.2243)	-.0217 (.3176)
Neither with promotion opportunities	.0485 (.2301)	-.0765 (.3160)
<i>Job responsibility</i> (ref. both managerial duties)		
Man managerial duties, woman not	-.5000† (.2587)	-.3472 (.3242)
Woman managerial duties, man not	-.1030 (.2561)	-.6057 (.3950)
Neither with managerial duties	-.2683 (.2178)	-.7442* (.3262)
<i>Match in Education</i> (ref. no match in education)		
Match in Low-Medium education	.0093 (.1526)	.1878 (.2259)
Match in High education	-.3349 (.2095)	-.6578* (.3010)
Match in Education (missing)	-1.422* (.5495)	.4255 (.6187)
Cohabitation before marriage (0: No; 1: Yes)		.6864** (.2302)
Mean age at the start of union	-.0427** (.0128)	-.0646*** (.0176)
Difference in age	.0200 (.0129)	.0048 (.0219)
Number of children	.3968*** (.1034)	.5007*** (.0996)
Child under four years (0: No; 1: Yes)	-.2441 (.2504)	-.4811† (.2620)
Mortgage (0: No; 1: Yes)	-.2457† (.1422)	.3520 (.2682)
Constant	-.4808 (.1422)	5.149* (2.135)
Number of events	269	113
Number of couples	1440	1374
Number of couple-years	3801	6691

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses; †p<.1; * p<.05; ** p<.01; ***p<.001.
Source: British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) (1991–2008).

for marriages) decrease the risk of dissolution, while the number of children in the household increases the likelihood of separation (see Chan and Halpin, 2002). Having a mortgage reduces union dissolution in cohabiting relationships but not in marriages (p-value

<.1). The difference in age between partners is not statistically significant and thus it does not show whether the risk of dissolution increases as the age difference between partners widens. Moreover, cohabitation before marriage is positively associated with marital dissolution. This may be due to the fact that individuals who marry without first having cohabited with their partners are more committed to the institution of marriage (Brines and Joyner, 1999). Lastly, missing information in education is associated with a decrease in the risk of cohabitation dissolution, while missing information in female income share is expected to increase the risk of cohabitation dissolution (p-value <.1).

Discussion

Recently, the increase in the number of women who are educated to degree level and entering into the labour market has revealed that specialization arrangements within partnerships (Becker, 1981) are difficult to achieve. Today, most couples are dual-earner couples in which the two members work for pay (Blossfeld and Drobnic, 2001). In parallel, more individuals opt for other living arrangements, notably cohabitation, which is different from marriage not only legally and in the time horizon, but also in terms of partners' level of commitment to the union (Brines and Joyner, 1999). Married unions last for longer and show higher levels of commitment, which might reflect a higher tolerance to stressful situations involving spouses' demanding working conditions relative to cohabitants.

Previous studies on family look at the effect of female labour market participation in cohabiting and married couples, but focus primarily on female income share (Brines and Joyner, 1999; Kalmijn et al., 2007). Other working characteristics related to union dissolution include male and female working hours and irregular work schedules, but only for married unions (e.g. Cherlin, 1979; Presser, 2003; Lyngstad and Jalovaara, 2010). Nevertheless, in the new 24/7 economy, working partners are more likely to suffer from more demanding working conditions, which make the work–life balance difficult (Scherer, 2009). As a result, one might expect other features of jobs, such as temporary employment, promotion opportunity, and job responsibility to influence the risk of dissolution.

This study differs from previous work (e.g. Oláh and Gähler, 2014) in that the information comes from both partners as both the man and the woman answer their own information. Moreover, it combines previously used working characteristics (i.e. labour income, working hours) with unexplored ones (i.e. temporary employment, promotion opportunities, and job responsibility – whether partners supervise the work done by others –) to examine the effect of job conditions on union dissolution. It runs separate discrete time event history logit regressions covering the period 1991–2008 for married and cohabiting unions to reflect their different demographic and working characteristics (Beaujouan and Bholcháin, 2011). As expected, married partners are more educated and employed in better posts with higher incomes, better work schedules, more permanent contracts, and more job responsibility

than cohabiting partners. The findings suggest that additional measures of working conditions should be included in family studies rather than restricting this work to working hours and labour income. Indeed, partners' labour arrangements may be crucial in determining whether two partners continue together or are likely to end their union at some point in time.

With regard to the hypotheses, we find that some of the results are statistically significant and in line with the predictions for married and cohabiting couples (Table 7). As in previous studies, we find that household total income is negatively related to marital disruption (e.g. Voydanoff, 1990; Kalmijn et al., 2007). This may be associated with the economic hardship and marital distress suffered by low-earning couples and it suggests that marriages are better protected from marital dissolution when family income is high. Moreover, it appears that when the two cohabiting partners earn similar amounts, cohabiting couples are more stable over time than male-breadwinner cohabiting couples. It might be that the commitment and interdependence between partners are raised in cohabiting unions in which partners contribute equally to the union but not in unions in which one of the partners, especially the man, provides more economic resources than the other (Brines and Joyner, 1999). As for working time measures, in marriages, in line with the expectations, when the wife works full-time and the husband works part-time, the risk of marital dissolution increases relative to marriages in which both spouses work full-time. This finding appears to partially support the specialization argument of a gendered marriage in which both the husband and wife expect the

husband to work at least the same amount as or more working hours than the woman. When this is not so, the marriage is at risk. Moreover, and although it was not expected, it seems that when the husband is the only one who works overtime, the risk of dissolution decreases relative to a marriage in which neither spouse works overtime. It might be that overtime on the husbands' side does not cause them stress or that it does not create difficulties for the work-family balance. In cohabiting relationships, by contrast, when the two partners work part-time, the risk of dissolution increases relative to cohabiting couples in which both partners work full-time. Likewise, in line with the US literature, when cohabiting partners work irregular schedules, disruption is more likely than when partners work regular work schedules. In other words, when the two partners do not work during the day but on another time schedule that does not include either mornings or afternoons, the risk of cohabitation dissolution increases. Thus, the results for cohabiting partners show that cohabiting partners are especially vulnerable if they work a low number of hours, possibly suggesting a precarious situation within the labour market and irregular work schedules, which limit the amount of time partners can spend together.

With regard to the new working conditions included in the current study, we find that husbands and wives who work in temporary employment are more likely to become separated than couples in which husbands and wives have permanent contracts (Table 7). It appears that married partners need to be certain about their job security in order for the relationship to survive over time (e.g. Cherlin, 1979). Moreover, it is observed that if the husband has

promotion opportunities and the wife does not, the risk of dissolution decreases compared to marriages in which both spouses enjoy promotion opportunities. Such an arrangement promotes the specialization of husbands in the labour market and their role as breadwinners (Brines, 1994; Nock, 1995) (Table 7). Finally, we find that when neither spouse has job responsibilities or supervises the work of others, the risk of dissolution declines relative to marriages in which both spouses have managerial duties. This may be due to the psychological problems and stress at work that spouses suffer when both have job responsibilities that may spill over into the union. As for cohabiting unions, we find, as expected, that only when cohabiting men supervise work done by others the risk of dissolution decreases.

This study has various limitations that should be kept in mind when interpreting the results. First, it is possible that we have not fully captured less educated couples in which either one or both partners have less favourable working conditions. This is because we rely on individuals' own evaluations and people that meet these criteria may be less likely to report their less favourable working conditions. Second, the number of cases in some of the categories (e.g. .0054 of both spouses with temporary employment) suggest that the results should be read with caution. Similarly, there are only a small number of events (113) in the marriage model. Indeed, our prospective design has some advantages, such as having all employment information for every year partners continue in the sample, but at the same time it reduces the sample to cover only couples who began their relationship within the panel's time period.

Third, the couple-level analysis increases the amount of missing information, impeding the inclusion of some covariates (e.g. remarriage – whether it is a first or higher-order marriage). Missing information in one variable at the individual level is automatically translated into missing information at the couple level, regardless of whether there is actually information missing for just one or both of the partners. Further studies could build on the findings provided in this study by testing whether the differences in the working characteristics and union stability between married and cohabiting couples found here apply to other datasets and countries as well.

To summarize, in this study we show that British married and cohabiting couples are different from each other not only in partners' demographic characteristics but also in how their working conditions relate to union dissolution. Indeed, the results obtained in this study appear to indicate that the nature of marriage is different from the nature of cohabitation. In line with previous studies, we find that married partners tend to adhere to traditional gender norms and in general they prefer specialization, as observed in the results pertaining to working hours and promotion opportunities. These partnerships would also survive longer under conditions of long-lasting employment, a relatively high household income, and no job responsibilities. Conversely, cohabiting individuals appear to cope worse with the stressful and demanding working conditions of the 24/7 economy, especially when both partners are subjected to them. This is evidenced by the higher risk of dissolution for cohabiting unions in which both partners work part-time or have irregular work schedules. Indeed, cohabitants are likely to be younger, less

committed to their partners, and they are more likely to end up in more precarious jobs, all of which puts the relationship at risk. The only noteworthy exception to this examination is when both cohabiting partners have temporary work contracts – although temporary employment is generally considered a more precarious and unfavourable situation, when it befalls both partners we do not find negative effects on the relationship.

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CONCLUSION

In the last decades of the 20th century, couple life was highly specialized, with husbands being the main providers of resources to the family while wives remained at home taking care of the household. This allocation of tasks was expected to maximize the utility of marriages and make marriages stable over time (Becker, 1981). Nonetheless, in the early 21st century, this specialization has been increasingly questioned (Sweeny, 2002). Women have achieved similar levels of education as men (Blossfeld and Timm, 2003), and they have entered the labour market in huge proportion. As a result, today, the dual-earner couple – i.e. the man and the woman work for pay – is the main family type across advanced societies (Blossfeld and Drobnic, 2001).

However, it is not yet clear whether the dual-earner couple is more stable and enjoys a higher quality union than the male-breadwinner couple – i.e. only the man works for pay. Some authors underscore the potential independence effect of wives' employment due to the fact that they earn an income with which they can get divorced from their husbands, especially if they are not satisfied with the marriage (e.g. Cherlin, 1979; Schoen et al., 2002; Sayer et al., 2011). However, another line of research points out that wives' employment might also be beneficial for the union as it should lead to more stable marriages and better protection against unexpected events such as illness or unemployment (Oppenheimer, 1997; Sayer and Bianchi, 2000; White and Rogers, 2000). Consequently, whether spouses work for pay and bring resources into the union should be associated with the reported levels of marital quality of

husbands and wives and with a potential dissolution of the marriage.

In evaluating the relationship between quality and stability of the union, marriage is not the sole type of union that needs to be accounted for. In recent times, other forms of partnerships different from marriage have been emerging, notably cohabitation. This type of partnership is becoming socially acceptable (Lesthaeghe, 2011), and more people are opting for this living arrangement either as a prelude to or a substitute for marriage, though the speed at which it is diffusing varies from country to country (Heuveline and Timberlake, 2004; Liefbroer and Dourleijn, 2006). Moreover, marriage is different from cohabitation, not only in the expected duration and level of commitment, with married unions lasting longer and being more committed (Brines and Joyner, 1999; Smock, 2000), but also in the features of married and cohabiting individuals. Spouses are found to be older and more educated and traditional than cohabitants (Smock, 2000; Kiernan, 2004; Beaujouan and Bhrolcháin, 2011).

To sum up, not so long ago, partners were expected to marry and specialize within clear gender role expectations for both husbands and wives; the likelihood of divorce was low (Härkönen, 2014). Today, unions appear to be more unstable. Partners are now free to decide whether they opt for a cohabiting or married union, in which the woman and the man negotiate from a position of equality how housework and paid work are divided. It seems plausible that these changes in the distribution of resources and workloads within the couple may have had an effect on partners' levels of satisfaction

with the union and the risk of dissolution, and that these effects may differ for cohabitation and marriage.

Accordingly, this thesis evaluated whether the changes in employment and division of work within couples, as a result of women's higher socioeconomic resources, are related to the quality and stability of relationships. On the one hand, each partner's satisfaction with the union was analysed to test if there are any differences between men and women in their individual perceptions of the quality of the partnership. On the other hand, relationship instability was assessed by analysing the risk of dissolution over time.

Summary and contributions

This thesis consists of three independent chapters. Chapter 1 analysed whether being in a heterogamous marriage, in which the socioeconomic resources of education, income, and occupational status are unevenly distributed between spouses, is related to how spouses evaluate the quality of their marriage and whether these evaluations differ between husbands and wives. In doing so, three theoretical approaches were tested. The first approach was propinquity theory (Festinger et al., 1950), which expects spouses with similar levels of resources to have positive evaluations of marital quality and be satisfied with the marriage. The second was complementarity theory (e.g. Levinger, 1965; 1976; Becker, 1981), which expects the same outcomes when spouses have different levels of resources – heterogamy. And, finally, status inconsistency theory (Lenski, 1954; Sampson, 1963; Brandon, 1965) was tested,

an approach which predicts higher levels of satisfaction in marriages in which husbands have higher resources than wives – male-led heterogamy. Using data from the first wave (1987–1988) of the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH), the findings indicated that some theories better explained how the distribution of some types of resources within the couple relates to spouses’ evaluations of marital quality. In particular, complementarity theory was better suited to explain spouses’ marital quality in terms of educational resources, though very few results were statistically significant. Status inconsistency theory appeared to hold for most of the predictions of economic resources.

‘Chapter 2’ explored the extent to which how partners allocated paid and unpaid work influenced the risk of dissolution, while also controlling for partners’ labour income (Brines and Joyner, 1999; Kalmijn et al., 2007). The hypotheses predicted higher levels of marital dissolution in marriages with non-traditional inequitable arrangements, while higher levels of cohabitation dissolution were expected in couples with traditional inequitable arrangements. Using data from the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) (1992–2008) and conducting separate analyses for married and cohabiting relationships, the findings were not statistically significant for married unions, though they supported the predictions for cohabiting relationships and their preference for equal power arrangements.

‘Chapter 3’ looked into the effect of working conditions on union dissolution. More concretely, it considered the interconnections between the job characteristics of partners and the

union type (i.e. cohabitation, marriage). Differently from similar previous studies, it took into account not only labour income and measures related to working time, but also three new working conditions of the 24/7 economy – namely temporary employment, promotion opportunities, and job responsibility. Data from the BHPS, covering the period 1991–2008 was used. The results suggested that the nature of marriage is different from the nature of cohabitation. Married partners tended to adhere to traditional gender norms and were better off in secure long-lasting employment. Cohabitants, by contrast, appeared to struggle with the stressful and demanding working conditions of the 24/7 economy.

The previous three chapters have contributed to the literature in several ways. First, the analyses in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 included both married and cohabiting unions. Previous studies rarely took into account these different unions to evaluate the risks of dissolution, although exceptions include: Brines and Joyner (1999) for the United States, Kalmijn et al. (2007) for the Netherlands, and Oláh and Gähler (2014) for Sweden. In this thesis I have extended these studies to the United Kingdom.

Second, while this thesis considered many of the internal conditions (i.e. distribution of socioeconomic resources and household labour) and external conditions (i.e. working conditions) that affect marital quality and the risks of union dissolution, it did so more comprehensively and in more detail than in most of the studies mentioned above. Among the internal conditions, previous studies examined the effects of homogamy/heterogamy on marital quality (e.g. Willets, 2006; Gong, 2007), though they rarely

simultaneously accounted for all the main types of socioeconomic resources and for all possible outcomes in their distribution. Moreover, I considered more variables than previous researchers to assess the outcome brought on by the distribution of housework among the partners. Previous research typically relied on information on who was responsible for housework and paid work and on the amount of time spent on housework (e.g. Cooke, 2006). Besides taking these factors into account, this thesis also considered fairness criteria in the allocation of housework. In terms of external conditions, the working features of the two partners were considered. In contrast to existing studies, which restricted their focus to studying the effect of working time and labour income on union dissolution, this thesis also included other working conditions of the 24/7 economy such as temporary employment, promotion opportunities, and job responsibility.

Third, this thesis tried to provide a more balanced view of couple dynamics by focusing on both men and women from the same couples. Many studies have focused on one member of the couple, usually the woman, who provided information for herself and her partner. However, lately it has been put forward that these studies might suffer from gender biased estimates due to women having a higher propensity than men to report marital problems if they are dissatisfied with the marriage (Jackson et al., 2014). Moreover, if only one member was asked, his or her responses might be influenced by socially desirable responses or subjective perceptions of the partner (e.g. Oláh and Gähler, 2014). Thus, throughout the thesis, I endeavoured to take into account the

information provided by both members of the couple. The inclusion of this information increases the reliability of the responses from men and women, because each individual answered the information related to him or herself. In addition, this also permitted analyses to be carried out at both the individual and the couple level, hence assessing if overall and individual perceptions of the quality of a union differed. Finally, having information provided separately by each partner allowed for the evaluation of the internal and external conditions of men and women and how they relate to each other.

Implications

The results obtained from this study have some interesting implications. First, the results of this thesis suggest that homogamy does not correlate with higher quality marriages. While previous research indicated that in seeking their partners individuals increasingly search for shared values, culture, and worldviews (Kalmijn, 1994; 1998; Blossfeld and Timm, 2003), this thesis has shown that this does not necessarily translate into more satisfying unions. In Chapter 1 it was observed that, regardless of the resources being analysed, homogamy (i.e. the two spouses having similar levels of resources) was related to spouses having lower levels of marital quality. This was especially the case for wives. Wives appeared to be more satisfied in marriages in which husbands had higher levels of education – i.e. male-led heterogamy – relative to wives in homogamous marriages. Likewise, wives were happier than their husbands when they were in a male-breadwinner union or when they earned more economic resources

than their husbands. These results partially indicate that married women prefer specialization, with the husband generally being the main provider of resources. This can be observed, for instance, by wives being happier when husbands have higher levels of education or income (e.g. Hornung and McCollough, 1981; Brines, 1994).

Second, although divorce is less stigmatized and costly than in the past (Härkönen, 2014), marriage continues to be a long-lasting partnership with a low risk of dissolution. In these unions, spouses continue to hold traditional gender role expectations within and outside the household (Brines, 1994; Nock, 1995), and they are satisfied with traditional arrangements whereby the husband is the main provider of economic resources (Amato and Booth, 1995). In Chapter 2, I observed that the specific way in which spouses allocated paid and unpaid work did not correlate with marital dissolution. More importantly, it did not appear to be the case that marriages had to attend to an equitable distribution of work to lower the likelihood of disruption over time – as one might expect due to the increasing amount of dual-earner couples. These results were in line with previous studies, which found that housework was perceived by couples more as a responsibility of wives than of husbands (Coltrane, 2000; Sayer, 2005). Moreover, the risk of marital dissolution was shown to increase when spouses adopted labour arrangements that are in opposition to the traditional gender role behaviours in the labour market, as was shown by some of the results of Chapter 3. For instance, the risk of dissolution increased when husbands worked part-time and wives worked full-time compared to when both spouses worked full-time. Similarly, the

risk of marital dissolution decreased when husbands enjoyed promotion opportunities and wives did not as compared to couples in which both members had promotion opportunities. Such arrangements were examples that promoted the specialization of husbands in the labour market and their role as breadwinners, which, I showed in Chapter 1, led to either spouse, though wives more so, reporting higher rather than lower levels of marital quality. However, it is worth noting that in order to have a stable marital union over time, married partners seem to prefer long-lasting secure employment, high family income, and few or no job responsibilities.

Third, cohabiting partners appear less committed to the union and the union appears more susceptible to the internal and external conditions that affect the partners. Similar to the findings of previous studies, I found that cohabiting unions more often than married couples rely on equal power arrangements to divide paid and unpaid work (Baxter, 2005; Domínguez-Folgueras, 2012). In Chapter 2, it was observed that when cohabiting women (although it could be either partner) spent a larger amount of time on housework and either a similar amount of time or more time on paid work than men, the risk of dissolution increased compared to cohabiting unions in which men worked for pay and women were responsible for housework. The results of this chapter indicate that cohabitants who more equally allocate paid and unpaid work between partners are more likely to have a relationship that lasts over time. This finding was not corroborated for married unions. Moreover, cohabitants appear to suffer from demanding working conditions

that limit their resources and the time partners can spend together. In Chapter 3, it was shown that cohabiting partners who worked either part-time or irregular working hours (e.g. evenings, nights, in shifts) reported higher levels of union dissolution compared to cohabiting partners who worked full-time or regular working hours (i.e. mornings, afternoons, or during the day). All in all, it seems that cohabitants prefer more equal arrangements, especially in the distribution of work between partners. Moreover, cohabiting unions appear to be especially susceptible to an uneven distribution of work and demanding work conditions. This might be related to cohabitants generally being younger, less committed to their partners, and – probably – in more precarious jobs than married partners.

Limitations and future lines of research

This thesis has various limitations that are worth noting when analysing the results. The first article analyses relatively outdated data (1987–1988) and hence caution should be exercised when extrapolating the results to current times. Although the survey is from the United States, which had high proportions of dual-earner couples at the time, family life is in constant flux. As a consequence, it could be that what helped make a union stable in the '90s might not do so today (Karney and Bradbury, 1995; South, 2001; Poortman and Kalmijn, 2002). At the time the survey was carried out, married unions had a prominent role in American society and cohabiting unions were scarce. Hence, the first article only evaluated relationship quality within marriages.

The limitations of the second and third articles of the thesis are related to the level of analysis and sample selection. On the one hand, the couple-level analyses did not allow for the inclusion of certain key variables (e.g. remarriage), which have been found to have an effect on union dissolution (Rodrigues et al., 2006). The reason was the substantial numbers of missing cases in this variable. Missing information in one variable at the individual level was automatically translated into missing information at the couple level, regardless of whether there was information missing for one or both of the partners. On the other hand, although the prospective designs of these articles had advantages, such as allowing for the observation of internal and external conditions of partners over the entire duration of their partnership, they also had disadvantages, such as that the number of couples for the analyses was often low. The period of observation of couples had date limits set in the study, and so the probability of starting and ending a partnership could be calculated only for a restricted period. This could have an influence on the number of disruptions observed for some of the models and hence on the statistical test performed for the main coefficients estimated (e.g. number of marital dissolutions in Chapter 3).

Nevertheless, the results of this thesis also provide clear guidelines for future research. In terms of marital quality, it would be interesting to re-evaluate the quality of the relationships by considering separate marital quality dimensions, instead of using a single construct comprising various dimensions. In this regard, Fincham and Rogge (2010) promote two-dimensional measures of

marital quality. In addition, the analyses carried out in the first article could be re-run using other, more recent datasets. Although it is difficult to find datasets with such widespread information in terms of relationship quality as the NSFH, there are studies that suggest that relationship quality can be also measured with a single question about a person's satisfaction with their relationship (e.g. Brockwood, 2007). Using more recent datasets will also allow for the analysis of cohabiting couples' satisfaction with their unions (e.g. Wiik et al., 2009; Tai et al., 2014), since, as noted above, these unions are now considered normative living arrangements in most advanced countries (Lesthaeghe, 2011).

Regarding union dissolution, it would be interesting to further explore the interconnections and congruency between the distribution of work and gender role attitudes (e.g. Oláh and Gähler, 2014). In this way, it would be possible to better understand the extent to which the differences in how cohabiting and married partnerships distribute work are more related to the rooted gender norms of the two types of partnerships or to the way partners allocate paid and unpaid work. In this regard, future research could also more deeply analyse the risk of dissolution for different types of couples based on the specific distributions of work and gender role attitudes. Furthermore, if data were available, a promising line of research could be to evaluate the impact of other work variables, different from income and working time, in other contexts and with other datasets. It might be that work–family policies in a given country affect the work–family balance to the point that they lower the risk of dissolution. Indeed, it would be interesting to study

whether the risk of dissolution for workers with specific job conditions is lower in countries with family-friendly work policies. Likewise, it would be interesting to test the effects of internal and external conditions of partnerships on union dissolution, restricting the analyses to married and cohabiting individuals with similar socio-demographic characteristics – e.g. same cohort or level of education. This would allow us to test if the risks of dissolution for married and cohabiting couples differ because of the alternative nature of their partnership or because of the different characteristics of the individuals who enter those unions.

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