

**INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON  
UNION BREAKDOWN AND REPARTNERING AROUND THE WORLD**

4–6 May 2015

Centre Urbanisation Culture Société  
Institut national de la recherche scientifique  
385, rue Sherbrooke Est  
Montréal, Canada

**REPORTS**

## **FINAL PROGRAMME**

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*Programme*

**MONDAY 4 MAY**

- 11h30        **Registration**
- 12h-13h     **Lunch**
- 13h-14h     **Opening**  
**Yves BÉGIN**, vice-recteur, Institut national de la recherche scientifique  
**Claire POITRAS**, directrice, Centre Urbanisation Culture Société  
**Thomas K. LEGRAND**, vice-president, IUSSP  
**Julieta QUILODRÁN SALGADO**, chair of the IUSSP Panel on Nuptiality  
**Benoît LAPLANTE**, local organiser
- 14h-16h     **First session. Longitudinal and cross-sectional perspective on union  
breakdown**  
Chair : **Évelyne LAPIERRE-ADAMCYK**. Discussant **Véronique HERTRICH**  
*Trends in union instability in the United States, 1980s-2010s*, **Sheela KENNEDY**,  
Minnesota Population Center, USA.  
*Marital disruption in Ouagadougou and Lomé, two West African cities: trends and factors*,  
**Bilampo GNOUMOU THIOMBIANO**, Institut Supérieur des Sciences de la  
Population (ISSP), Burkina Faso  
*Divorce and separation in sub-Saharan Africa: Life table estimates and contexts*, **Lorretta  
Favour Chizomam NTOIMO**, Federal University Oye-Ekiti, Nigeria; Clifford O.  
ODIMEGWU, Nicole DE WET and Olajumoke Kiito OLAREWAJU, University of the  
Witwatersrand, South Africa  
*Marital dissolution in South Africa: Analysis of Census 2011 data*, **Leonard Ahuejere**,  
University of Witwatersrand, South Africa
- 16h-16h30   **Break**
- 16h30-  
17h30        **Special conference**  
*The diverse patterns and consequences of marital dissolution in the United States*, **Neil G.  
BENNETT**, CUNY Institute for Demographic Research, USA.
- 18h15-  
19h30        **COCKTAIL**  
**Université de Montréal**. Transport provided from INRS and back to the hotel.

## TUESDAY 5 MAY

- 9h-10h30     **Second session. Micro and macro consequences of union breakdown**  
Chair: **Julieta QUILODRÁN SALGADO**. Discussant **Évelyne LAPIERRE-ADAMCYK**.  
*Fertility after separation: Second births in higher order unions in Western Europe*, Michaela KREYENFELD, **Esther GEISLER** et al., Max-Planck-Institut für demografische Forschung, Germany.  
*The link between the divorce revolution and the cohabitation boom*, Brienna PERELLI-HARRIS, Paulina GALEZEWSKA, Ann BERRINGTON, **Nora SÁNCHEZ GASSEN** and Jennifer HOLLAND, University of Southampton, United Kingdom.  
*Some data about breakdown and repartnering in Latin America* . **Julieta QUILODRÁN**, Rossana Hernández and Jair Morales, El Colegio de México, Mexico.
- 10h30-11h    **Break**
- 11h-13h      **Third session. Cultural perspective on union breakdown**  
Chair: **Clara CORTINA**. Discussant **Neil G. BENNETT**,  
*Family instability and the diffusion of cohabitation*, **David PELLETIER**, Université de Montréal, Canada  
*Marital dissolution in the Philippines: Changing character and attitudes*, **Jeofrey ABALOS**, Australian National University, Australia  
*Inter-generational pattern and social dynamics of marital dissolution due to separation or divorce among ethno-endogamy marriages in contemporary Yoruba society, Nigeria*, **Lekan OYEFARA**, University of Lagos, Nigeria  
*Family background, religion and generational change in the diffusion of union breakdown among French-speaking Quebecers*, **Benoît LAPLANTE**, Institut national de la recherche scientifique (INRS), Canada
- 13h-14h      **Lunch**
- 14h-15h30    **Fourth session. Socioeconomic perspective on union breakdown**  
Chair : **Ana Laura FOSTIK SÁNCHEZ**. Discussant: **Julieta QUILODRÁN SALGADO**.  
*Déterminants socioéconomiques de la primo-divortialité au Maroc*, **Btissam BENKERROUM**, Haut-commissariat au plan, Morocco  
*Labor migration and marital dissolution in rural Mozambique*, **Victor AGADJANIAN** and Sarah HAYFORD, Arizona State University, USA.  
*Modernisation professionnelle et désinstitutionnalisation du mariage : impacts sur le risque de dissolution volontaire des premières unions conjugales chez trois générations de Mexicains (1950-2011)*, **Nicolás BRUNET**, El Colegio de México, Mexico
- 15h30-16h    **Break**
- 16h-17h      **Special conference**  
*Economic consequences of separation among previously married and cohabiting women in Québec and elsewhere in Canada*, **Céline LE BOURDAIS**, McGill University, Canada, Sung Hee JEON, Statistics Canada, Shelley CLARK, McGill University and Évelyne LAPIERRE-ADAMCYK, Université de Montréal.
- 19h30         **RECEPTION**  
**Restaurant de l'Institut, 3535, rue Saint-Denis.**

## WEDNESDAY 6 MAY

- 9h-11h **Fifth session. Repartnering**  
Chair: **Véronique HERTRICH**. Discussant **Clara CORTINA**.  
*Cross-national differences in repartnering in Europe: The role of individual demographic characteristics*, **Paulina GALEZEWSKA**, Brienna PERELLI-HARRIS and Ann BERRINGTON, University of Southampton, United Kingdom  
*The socio-economic determinants of repartnering after dissolving a marriage or cohabitation*, Inge PASTEELS and **Dimitri MORTELMANS**, Universiteit Antwerpen, Belgium.  
*Repartnering after union dissolution in later life*, **Zheng WU** and Christoph M. SCHIMMELE, University of Victoria, Canada  
*Approche ethnique de l'évolution des modèles familiaux au Sénégal : Transition des premières unions en divorces et remise en couple chez les Lebou, Peul, Serer, Toucouleur et Wolof*, **Justin DANSOU**, University of Ibadan, Nigeria
- 11h-11h30 **Break**
- 11h30-13h **Sixth session. Family structure and family relationships after breakdown**  
Chair: **Claudia MASFERRER LEÓN**. Discussant: **Ana Laura FOSTIK SANCHÉZ**  
*Social fathers? Characteristics, parenting quality, and family stability*, **Lawrence BERGER**, Marcia Carlson, University of Wisconsin, USA; Sharon Bzostek, Rutgers University, USA  
*Diversity of children's family structures in Spain: Exploring educational differences in the impact of divorce*, Anna GARRIGA and **Clara CORTINA**, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Spain  
*Stepfamily prevalence in northern Sweden 1750-2007*, **Jani TURUNEN** and Martin KOLK, Stockholm University, Sweden
- 13h-14h **Lunch**
- 14h-15h30 **Seventh session. Women and divorce**  
Chair **Bilampoa GNOUMOU THIOMBIANO**. Discussant: **Claudia MASFERRER LEÓN**  
*The changing profile of marital discord and divorce in India: A study of Mumbai*, **Ajay SINGH**, John Snow India Pvt. Ltd., India  
*Divorced women in Nigeria: Empowered or disempowered?*, **Tolulope Monisola OLA**, Minnesota Population Center; Foluso Florence AKANLE, Ekiti State University, Nigeria; Richard B. ONI, Progressive Individual Resources, Inc, USA  
*Long term trends in divorce and gender in rural Mali. Family control or women's autonomy: what's the issue? Tendances longues du divorce et rapports de genre en milieu rural au Mali. Une question d'autonomie féminine ?*, **Véronique HERTRICH**, Institut National d'Études Démographiques (INED), France
- 15h30-16h **Break**
- 16h-17h **Closing conference.**  
*What did we learn over the last three days?* **Andrew CHERLIN**, Johns Hopkins University
- 17h-17h15 **Closing**

## **LIST OF PARTICIPANTS AND OBSERVERS**

**INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON UNION BREAKDOWN AND REPARTNERING AROUND THE WORLD**

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**List of participants and observers**

Jeofrey	ABALOS	Australian National University	Australia	jfrybls@yahoo.com	Speaker
Victor	AGADJANIAN	Arizona State University	USA	vag@asu.edu	Speaker
Leonard	AHUEJERE	University of Witwatersrand	South Africa	leonarda@statssa.gov.za	Speaker
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Lawrence	BERGER	University of Wisconsin	USA	lberger@wisc.edu	Speaker (cancelled)
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Clara	CORTINA	Universitat Pompeu Fabra	Spain	clara.cortina@upf.edu	Speaker and member of the Panel
Justin	DANSOU	University of Ibadan	Nigeria	djustino87@yahoo.com	Speaker
Ana Laura	FOSTIK	McGill University	Canada	Ana.Fostik@mail.mcgill.ca	Junior demographer and discussant
Paulina	GALEZEWSKA	University of Southampton	United Kingdom	pbg1e11@soton.ac.uk	Speaker
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Véronique	HERTRICH	Institut National d'Études Démographiques	France	hertrich@ined.fr	Speaker
Dick	HOKENSON	Global Demographics	USA	Dick.Hokenson@evercoreisi.com	Observer
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Claudia	MASFERRER	Institut national de la recherche scientifique	Canada	Claudia.Masferrer@ucs.inrs.ca	Junior demographer and discussant
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Tolulope Monisola	OLA	Minnesota Population Center	USA	tolulopeola2003@yahoo.co.uk	Speaker
Lekan	OYEFARA	University of Lagos	Nigeria	oyefara@yahoo.com	Speaker
David	PELLETIER	Université de Montréal	Canada	pelletier_da@yahoo.ca	Speaker
Christine	PROULX	Institut national de la recherche scientifique	Canada	Christine.Proulx@ucs.inrs.ca	Junior demographer and reporter
Julieta	QUILODRÁN	El Colegio de México	Mexico	jquilo@colmex.mx	Speaker and Chair of the Panel
Héloïse	ROY	Institut national de la recherche scientifique	Canada	Heloise.Roy@ucs.inrs.ca	Student staff
Nora	SÁNCHEZ GASSEN	University of Southampton	United Kingdom	N.Sanchez-Gassen@soton.ac.uk	Speaker
Ajay	SINGH	John Snow India Pvt. Ltd	India	krsajay@yahoo.co.in	Speaker
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Zheng	WU	University of Victoria	Canada	zhengwu@uvic.ca	Speaker

# SCIENTIFIC REPORT

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4–6 May 2015

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385, rue Sherbrooke Est  
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**IUSSP Scientific Panel on Nuptiality**

**Chair:** Julieta Quilodrán (Mexico)

**Members :** Narayanaswamy Audinarayana (India)  
Andrew Cherlin (USA)  
Clara Cortina (Spain);  
Bilampo Gnoumou Thiombiano (Burkina Faso)  
Benoît Laplante (Canada)

**Council Liaison:** Sajeda Amin

*Authors of the final report: Benoît Laplante and Christine Proulx*

**SCIENTIFIC REPORT**

Around the world, there is a great variation in levels of union dissolution. Increasing rates of separation and divorce appear related to the increase in cohabiting unions witnessed at varying degrees in different regions of the world. These trends in informal unions, separation and divorce may lead to the formation of new conjugal unions and the creation of new family forms which, in turn, has implications for individual life courses, family responsibilities, gender relations and the well-being of women, men and children. In this context, the Nuptiality Panel has adopted as one of its central activities the study of separation, divorce, repartnering and remarriage as well as how they vary in timing and intensity, and according to location (country, regions, rural/urban), cultural and ideational aspects, and socio-economic characteristics (education, occupation, gender, etc.). The call for papers for the Seminar on Separation, Divorce, Repartnering and Remarriage around the World looked forward to addressing these issues by inviting papers concerned with three main topics: *Stability and breakdown of union; Repartnering and remarriage; Family policies and civil law*. Members of the Panel received eighty-five papers from which twenty-five were selected and twenty-four accepted the invitation. One participant had to cancel his presentation at the last minute, leaving twenty-three papers for the regular sessions.

The Seminar was held at the Institut national de la recherche scientifique in Montreal (Canada) from 4 to 6 May 2015 with the financial support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research

Council of Canada, the Fonds de recherche du Québec – Société et Culture, the Population Change and Lifecourse Strategic Knowledge Cluster, the Institut national de la recherche scientifique, the Partenariat Familles en mouvance and the Wellcome Trust. Thirty-three researchers from fifteen countries attended the Seminar as speakers, discussants, special guests and panel members. The vast majority of participants were demographers studying at or working in a university or research institute. The authors used various data sources (census, administrative data, surveys and interviews) and methods, depending upon the availability of data in their country/region of interest. They focused in large part on separation and divorce, a smaller number of papers were on repartnering and remarriage and a few were on the consequences of union breakdown. Three papers more specifically addressed the relationship between women's autonomy and divorce. In addition to the regular sessions, there were three special conferences.

The organisers designed the program by grouping together papers similar by their method or specific topic. This allowed more fruitful comments and discussion.

#### **LONGITUDINAL AND CROSS-SECTIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON UNION BREAKDOWN**

Four papers were presented during the first session. The first drew a portrait of the trends in union dissolution in the United States over the last three decades while the other three addressed this topic for African populations. Education and the degree of formalization of the union were considered important factors in each study.

Using four cycles of the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG), the first paper sought to move beyond the conventional measures of marital dissolution by including cohabiting unions in its assessment of the trends in union dissolution. The stability of marriages remained the same across four cohorts of women who entered a first union before age 35 (1980-1987, 1987-1994, 1998-2005, 2003-2012), with one in five ending in separation within five years. However, nearly half of cohabiting unions dissolved within the first five years, with only a small significant increase in the proportion between the last two cohorts. Since an increasing share of first unions starts as a cohabiting union, first unions as a whole have become significantly and substantially more unstable over the last three decades. As expected, proportional hazards models showed that a younger age at the start of union increased the risk of union dissolution, a pattern more clearly discerned for marriages than for cohabiting unions. The educational gradient found in past studies on divorce was supported. Married women with a high school diploma or less were exposed to a greater risk of divorce than their more educated counterparts, but this finding did not hold among cohabiting women. The educational differences in the risk of divorce grew over time.

The second paper brought us on the other side of the Atlantic to Lomé and Ouagadougou. Marital disruption from the first union was studied using marital history data collected in 2012 as part of the Economic Activities, Resource Sharing and Management of Spending in Urban Households survey of the Family, Gender and Activities in Sub-Saharan Africa research project. The probabilities of first union dissolution were relatively low in both cities. For example, 11% of women in Lomé were separated or divorced fifteen years after the start of the union. Informal unions and unions formalized by only one ceremony were associated with higher risks of union dissolution than unions that were formalized by two or three ceremonies in both cities. The latter probably receive greater acceptance from families, which then play a role in promoting the cohesion of the union. Other factors associated with increased risk among women living in Ouagadougou only included having primary education, urban (Ouagadougou) or foreign place of residence as a child, being of the same ethnicity as the partner, and engaging in work after the start of the union. In Lomé, the opposite effect was found for this factor.

The proportion of separated and divorced women among the 15–49 age group who ever married varied tremendously across the four countries studied with cross-sectional data from the Demographic Health Surveys (DHS). It represented 3% in Nigeria (2013), 13% in Madagascar (2008–09), 12% in Mozambique (2011) and 19% in Congo Brazzaville (2011–12). Logistic regressions revealed that most community-level factors remained significant after controlling for individual factors. In this sense, women's marital trajectories could be affected as much by the diffusion of norms in their communities than by their personal characteristics. For example, residing in a wealthier community was associated with marital dissolution in all countries except Mozambique. The majority of women who were employed held low-wage jobs, which perhaps explained why female employment did not increase the probability to be divorced. Generally, living in an urban setting and in communities where non-traditional unions and premarital births are more prevalent increased the likelihood of being separated or divorced in all countries, as did education, except in Madagascar.

Logistic regressions using the 2011 South African Census suggested that women aged 15–19 and aged 20–34 years were respectively the most and the least likely to be separated or divorced of women 15–54 years old. Having primary or secondary education in comparison to no schooling, higher income levels and living in an urban area were all associated with higher odds of marital dissolution. The study showed that spouses sharing the same residence were less likely to dissolve their marriage than those living apart.

## MICRO AND MACRO CONSEQUENCES OF UNION BREAKDOWN

In addition to the two papers part of this session, the chair of the session, Julieta Quilodrán, presented an overview of the trends in union breakdown and repartnering in Latin America. She showed that separation and divorce increased in almost all Latin American countries over the past 40 years, but that there is some variation across countries. Mexico had low union dissolution rates compared to the Dominican Republic, which had the highest rates. Her overview took a comparative perspective, just as did the other two papers with European countries.

The first paper examined how a separation after the birth of a first child affects the timing of the second birth in seven countries of Western Europe. When the second child was from the same partner as the first child, the mean duration between the two births was approximately three years with some variation between countries, but it doubled when the second child was with a new parent. The probability of having a second child with a different partner was low in Belgium and France and negligible in Spain and Italy, but the highest in Finland, where almost 20% of second births were with a new partner. Competing risk models for Finland, Germany and the UK showed a strong negative educational gradient for the transition to the second child with a new partner.

The second paper explored the causal mechanisms linking the parallel increases in divorce and cohabitation. A mixed method approach was used to examine the effect of macro-, meso- and micro-level factors on cohabitation. Participants of focus groups in nine European cities highlighted the increase in divorce rates as an important reason for cohabiting. In a complementary quantitative analysis, total divorce rates calculated with official statistics along with the percentages of ever-divorced women among all ever-married women (aged 30–49) and of female cohabitators among all women in partnerships (aged 20–49) derived from Harmonized Histories, a standardized database of fertility and union histories from several European surveys, suggested that, for most of the 14 countries analyzed, the increase in divorce preceded or paralleled the increase in cohabitation, thus lending some, but limited, support to the macro-level explanation. The meso-level indicator, the experience of parental separation, was clearly emphasized in both qualitative and quantitative analyses in all countries studied. Finally, although the experience of divorce was stated in focus groups as a reason to cohabit in subsequent unions, the time series of the proportions of never married, divorced and widowed women aged 20-49 among all those cohabiting illustrated that the never-married consisted the majority of cohabitators as far back as the data available for each country allowed to observe. This micro-level factor thus appeared to be less important in driving the overall increase in cohabitation.

## CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE ON UNION BREAKDOWN

The four papers in this session attested to differing levels of diffusion of divorce and/or cohabitation as they pertain to the specific cultural settings under study. First, the diffusion of cohabitation hypothesis was tested with Canadian data by taking the perspective of children born into married or cohabiting unions. Data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY) along with other indicators calculated with censuses and tax-files were used to analyze the risk of children to experience parental separation before their sixth birthday depending upon the level of diffusion of cohabitation in their province for each year observed. Some findings were in line with previous research, such as the fact that mother's age and education level were negatively associated with family dissolution risks. However, results diverged from the U-shaped pattern between the diffusion of cohabitation and the marriage-cohabitation stability gap identified in earlier research. As a greater proportion of children were born into cohabiting unions across provinces and birth cohorts, the gap in the hazard ratios of family dissolution between children born to cohabiting and to married parents continued to narrow. Earlier in the diffusion process, the decreasing hazards of dissolution in cohabiting unions in large part accounted for the narrowing of the gap whereas the increasing instability of marriages later in diffusion of cohabitation process explained the pattern observed. This suggests that individuals who married since the early 2000s in Quebec were no longer becoming more selective on characteristics associated with union stability.

Second, marital dissolution trends were examined in the context of the Philippines. Five waves of the Philippines DHS conducted between 1993 and 2013 showed an increase over time in divorced and separated women, from 2% to 4% of the female population aged 15 to 49, although divorce laws have still not been enacted in the country. Between 2005 and 2011, divorce has become more acceptable for a larger share of the population, especially in the situation where already separated couples would like to marry again and would need to divorce in order to do so. In the absence of a divorce law, couples sometimes undergo procedures to nullify the marriage. Logistic regressions indicated that women's education, age at marriage and rural residence were negatively associated with marital dissolution. Women born in the 1980s or 1990s had higher odds of being separated or divorced than women born between 1943 and 1959. Interestingly, although divorce is legal for Muslim Filipinos, they were less likely to be separated or divorced than Catholic Filipinos.

Women's age and place of residence had the same effect in Nigeria. The third paper, which examined the issue of marital dissolution among women of childbearing age (15–49 years) in Yoruba society, Nigeria, also showed that being in a polygynous union, not residing with the husband and the parental experience of marital dissolution were all positively linked to being separated or divorced.

Additional information from qualitative interviews highlighted reasons given to dissolve a marriage, notably the inability to have children, physical abuse, infidelity, family disapproval of the marriage and growing incompatibility between spouses or with in-laws.

Lastly, using the 2011 Canadian General Social Survey, the fourth paper investigated whether the increasing likelihood across birth cohorts of growing up with unmarried parents and not living with both parents until age 15 as well as the downward trend in religious attendance have been key factors in the diffusion of union breakdown or were simply consequences along with the increase in conjugal instability of normative changes in Quebec over time. Royston-Parmar's proportional hazard models showed that religious attendance continued to have an effect on separation and divorce despite decreasing proportions of individuals with high levels of attendance across cohorts. Having lived with unmarried parents as a child had no effect whereas not living with both parents until age 15 increased the risk of separation among men. The effect was more complex for women. As in previous research, cohabitators had much higher hazards of dissolving their union than those who married after cohabiting and both were more likely to separate than those who married directly.

#### **SOCIOECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE ON UNION BREAKDOWN**

The fourth session comprised three presentations that provided an overview of the breadth of research on union breakdown, from the study of individual factors in Morocco to that of the impact of male migration in Mozambique and of macro-level factors in Mexico. The first paper represented an attempt to understand the trends in divorce with survey data in Morocco, a country without official statistics on the topic. Findings pointed to a decrease in divorce over three generations of women, which seemed to go against popular beliefs about divorce. The likelihood of divorce was higher when the marriage was contracted at a young age, early in the marriage and for women living in urban areas.

The second paper addressed the relationship between husbands' labour out-migration and marriage stability in rural southern Mozambique. Among 1568 partnered women aged 18–40 surveyed in 2006, 13% were separated or divorced at follow-up in 2009. There was no overall effect of husbands' migration on union dissolution, but the degree of migration success perceived by women was influential. Wives perceiving the household as better off since the migration were less likely to separate or divorce than wives of non-migrants, but the opposite effect was found when expectations about migration economic success were not met. The study also revealed that women's ability to take decisions about the household independently from their husband or in-laws affected marital stability differently depending upon the husband's migration status.

Macro-level indicators associated with the modernization (educational and occupational upgrade) and the deinstitutionalization of marriage (dissolution, cohabitation, singlehood, births outside of marriage) hypotheses affected Mexican women's risks of marital dissolution. To account for regional disparities in dissolution rates, multilevel discrete-time event history analyses incorporated measures of these macro-level factors for rural and urban areas for each of the 32 Mexican federal states at different points in time. Although the positive effects of macro-level factors have diminished across cohorts of women from the 1950s to the late 1970s, the level of marital dissolution among mothers (15–49 years) as well as the proportion of single or unmarried women aged 25–29 with high school education or more at the regional level (“modern” single/unmarried) continued to exert a substantial impact on the dissolution of first marriages.

## **REPARTNERING**

A great diversity of papers and data sources were presented in the fifth session of the seminar focusing on repartnering. Despite this diversity, some findings were common across many European countries, Canada and Senegal. Repartnering was less likely with increasing age at union dissolution and with the presence of children in the household for women only. Moreover, the first paper revealed that the lower probability of repartnering in some countries of Eastern and Southern Europe than in France among women born in 1950-69 who entered a first union by age 40 and subsequently dissolved it could not be explained totally by the micro-level variables accounted for in the hazard models. Thus, future research is needed to better capture macro-level factors such as the repartnering market and the stigma attached to divorce.

Because of their detailed annual information on income, Belgian register data were used to examine the impact of socio-economic characteristics on the likelihood to repartner, defined as the presence of a new partner in the household. Different mechanisms appeared to link income and repartnering for men and women. Women might repartner out of economic need as suggested a higher risk of repartnering among low-income quintiles. The risk of men was heightened in the highest income quintiles, which in turn suggested men who were better off were more attractive. However, both work earnings and social assistance benefits increased repartnering chances regardless of gender whereas receiving unemployment benefits negatively affected men's probability to repartner.

The age at union dissolution might be the most significant factor in explaining repartnering, even more so at older ages. This is one of the conclusions drawn from Canadian General Social Survey data. In addition, women who experienced a union dissolution at age 45 or later were much less likely to repartner than their male counterparts and the presence of children in the household affected their

likelihood to repartner negatively, even at those ages. Contrary to what other studies have reported, the former cohabitators were less likely to repartner than the previously married. However, residing in Quebec, where cohabitation rates are much higher than in the rest of Canada, increased the risk of cohabiting after a union dissolution, but decreased that of marrying.

The last article noted ethnic differences in divorce and repartnering in Senegal. Marriages among the Lebou were more prone to divorce than those of the Wolof, Toucouleur, Peul and Serere. However, Toucouleur individuals were more likely to remarry after the dissolution of the first marriage than individuals from other groups. If other factors had variable impact on union dissolutions, having no live births increased the risk of divorce for all ethnic groups. Younger generations and individuals living in urban areas were also more likely to separate in most groups. These last two variables had no effect on the risk of first remarriage, but individuals without children were more likely to remarry than those who had at least one live birth.

#### **FAMILY STRUCTURE AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS AFTER BREAKDOWN**

Two papers taking quite different perspectives on family structure were presented in the sixth session, the first on contemporary Spain and the other going as far back as 18<sup>th</sup> century Sweden.

Spanish census data for 2001 and 2011 showed an increase in stepparent and single parent families. The hypothesis according to which the educational gradient of divorce becomes negative once divorce has diffused in a society was supported by the analyses of this paper. Indeed, a negative relationship was found between mother's education and the likelihood of living in a single mother or stepparent family which was more pronounced in 2011 than in 2001, which could be linked to the drastic increase in divorces since new legislation made it more accessible in 2005.

The historical sibling structure was studied using church records and modern administrative Swedish data covering the period 1730-2007 in the Skellefteå region. Over this entire period, the average number of half-sibling a child had was relatively stable, around 0.7, but their prevalence relative to full-siblings increased rapidly after 1950, from 10% to 40%. Maternal death and remarriage patterns may explain why paternal half-siblings were more common before the 1940s.

#### **WOMEN AND DIVORCE**

The last session brought together papers on divorce in three developing countries, India, Nigeria and Mali. Women were often the ones initiating divorce procedures and had to deal with major life changes

following divorce. In Mumbai, India and Ekiti State, Nigeria, the main reasons women reported for filing for divorce revolved around domestic violence and infidelity issues.

According to data from the Family court of Mumbai, there was an important increase in the number of divorce filed, from 1839 cases in 1991 to 6541 in 2012. There was a relatively slow increase until 2001, but the number more than doubled in the last decade under study. Most petitioners were highly educated, Hindu and were living in an extended family setting. Men usually held a job, but many women did not. Divorces were usually filed within the first three years of marriage, and many had already been separated for some years at the time of the petition, which explains why many couples did not have children yet. However, among those who had children, the wife usually obtained full custodial rights.

Findings from focus groups and in-depth interviews with 52 divorced women living in urban and rural communities in Ekiti State revealed that women felt both empowered and disempowered following divorce. The disempowerment came mostly from the social stigma attached to divorce. Some also experienced financial difficulties, but overall, for those who left abusive marriages, their children's and their own safety were more important than the difficulties encountered while divorced. There is some evidence suggesting that these women's children do not wish to marry or could be more likely to divorce themselves.

The last paper echoes the conclusions of the second presentation of the session. In southeast Mali, women consider divorce a vested right and very often refuse to register their marriage since it would limit their autonomy in seeking divorce. Men do not tend to use divorce as much as women to end a union since, with polygamy, they can contract multiple unions. Even if women voice this right to end a union and use it as a threat to gain power within their marriage, an actual divorce carries its weight of consequences, including leaving their children behind in the ex-husband's household and remarrying in another village, often in a polygamous union. Divorce probabilities are quite high in this region (30% before 10 years in union), but appear to be decreasing since the mid-1990s, a trend noticed alongside a rising age at marriage and a greater proportion of informal unions, which could also be linked to the migratory experience of young women.

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The seminar ended on a conference by Andrew Cherlin who highlighted the main conclusions drawn from all the presentations. The concluding remarks of this report borrow in large part from his reflections, from common themes of the presentations and the introductory comment by Thomas Le Grand.

Cherlin set out to compare William J. Goode's hypotheses put forth in his 1993 book "World Changes in Divorce Patterns" with findings from the seminar. Goode hypothesized that when divorce is still rare and difficult to get in a society, only the wealthier classes can get it. As divorce becomes more freely available, it becomes negatively correlated with social class. The findings from the presentations confirmed this statement. For instance, in the Philippines and in the Yoruba society, divorce is not obtained easily and it is concentrated among the higher socio-economic classes. In many other countries, a weakening, elimination or sometimes reversal of the positive correlation between divorce and class can be witnessed, for example in Spain, Quebec and the United States.

Goode also hypothesized in his earlier book "World Revolution and Family Patterns" that we would witness a convergence towards the nuclear family around the world. Clearly, the trends in family patterns did not take that route. Rather, there was an increasing diversity in family forms, notably through an increase in cohabitation and, along with it, in union instability, which gave rise to an increase in stepparent families. There is greater heterogeneity in levels of commitment in cohabitating unions than in marriages and in societies where a rising proportion of couples choose to cohabit, the overall rate of union dissolution has increased. Le Grand suggested that the differences between marriage and consensual union may be more profound for some than for others and that this could change the meaning of breakup as well. Despite this variation, some of the determinants of divorce also apply for the dissolution of cohabiting unions. Generally, an early age at the start of the union, the experience of parental divorce and shorter union durations are associated with union breakup.

The increased diversity in family forms also originates from the possibility to repartner after a union breakdown. As suggested historical data from Sweden, the share of half-siblings within the sibling structure of families has increased dramatically since the 1950s and half-siblings increasingly share the same mother. The face of stepfamilies has changed when and where divorce replaced widowhood as the most frequent form of union disruption. Union breakdown and repartnering processes are gendered. In many countries, women were more likely to file for divorce and they were also more likely, with the exception of Mali, to have the custody of their children after divorce. Women repartnered less often than men and the presence of children in their household decreased their chances of repartnering. In many countries, women encounter an uneven market for repartnering as they age because they outnumber men.

Some presentations encouraged a reflection upon the consequences of union breakdown for women. They often have fewer opportunities in the labour market than men and are more involved in the care of children. In Belgium, market income seemed to affect repartnering behaviours differently for men and women, which suggested women might repartner out of economic need. However, knowledge

is still scarce concerning their economic well-being following union breakdown and repartnering and how it compares to men's. In many countries, cohabiting couples do not have the same legal rights over the separation of assets and spousal alimony than married couples. Céline Le Bourdais' special conference showed that there are some differences between previously cohabiting and married women's income after separation. In 2002, previously married women living in Quebec had a slightly higher income than former cohabitants five years after separation, but the latter were better off than their previously married counterparts elsewhere in Canada. Different legal and policy contexts may partly explain the smaller gap found in Quebec than in the other provinces.

In some countries, divorced women were socially stigmatized, which led some researchers to question their level of empowerment. Sometimes, the degree of empowerment and autonomy helped women to leave unsatisfactory unions, but the ability of women to take decisions on their own increased the stability of the union in the case of wives of non-migrants in rural Mozambique and the threat of separation increased the negotiation power of Malian women within their couple.

Cherlin noted that there is a great variation in levels of union dissolution between regions of the world, but also within regions and countries. However, dissolution rates are increasing in what Goode called low-divorce systems, for instance the Philippines, Mumbai, Spain and Yoruba society, and are levelling off or decreasing in high-divorce systems such as Morocco. This led Cherlin to hypothesize that we may be seeing the beginning of a convergence in dissolution patterns towards moderate to high dissolution rates around the world.

Demographers need to remain cautious and investigate the meaning behind the data they use as well as try to capture the complexity of couple formation, breakdown and repartnering processes. Some of the research presented tried to go beyond the usual data by asking about perceptions and motivations. Others attempted to disentangle factors from different levels of analysis to provide a more complete picture of trends and their determinants. Oftentimes, the data we use is limited in time, tries to equate lengthy processes with an event happening at a precise point in time or fails to grasp relationships that transcend the confines of the household. Those are some of the challenges we encounter in researching conjugal trajectories.

## **RESEARCH GAPS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

**INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON  
UNION BREAKDOWN AND REPARTNERING AROUND THE WORLD**

4–6 May 2015

Centre Urbanisation Culture Société  
Institut national de la recherche scientifique  
385, rue Sherbrooke Est  
Montréal, Canada

**RESEARCH GAPS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- It becomes increasingly difficult to study conjugal transitions in sub-Saharan Africa because of fewer and fewer surveys that collect marital histories.
- With the increase of cohabiting unions in North America and Europe, it is necessary to include both types of unions, cohabitation and marriage, in the study of union breakdown and repartnering. However, the meaning and the levels of commitment of these two types of unions differ. When collecting union histories, we need to be aware that we may be missing short unions or capturing unions that are in fact dating relationships. Since cohabiting unions are more unstable than marriages, union dissolution rates increased dramatically in the last few decades, mostly not because of the increased instability of marriages, but because a greater proportion of unions are cohabiting unions.
- The study of family trajectories need to transcend the household, which is sometimes difficult for instance with census data. This is important to better understand LAT relationships, but also the presence of children, whether they are in the household of the respondent or not in the case of separated parents, and how this influences union trajectories.
- Research on the risk of entry into first unions and repartnering often neglects to account for market of potential partners. The market is probably often concentrated geographically, but the rise of modern communication technologies might have provided opportunities to meet and form relationships at a distance that we may not easily capture in surveys.
- In countries where dissolution rates were low, but are now increasing, it would be interesting to know more about whether gender roles are changing or not and how this is related with the increase in union dissolution.
- We need to have a better understanding of how contextual- and individual-level characteristics play out on union dissolution and repartnering rates and risks.

- In societies where divorce is common, governments have enacted laws that regulate the process of divorce and the rights and obligations of ex-spouses towards one another and towards their children. In some countries, cohabiting unions evolved outside the law and are considered as unions without contract. Therefore, there are sometimes no legal dispositions concerning the division of assets or maintenance payments to the ex-spouse. The rise of cohabitation and of the breakdown of those unions thus challenges legal systems.
- Knowledge is still scarce concerning women's economic well-being following union breakdown and repartnering and how it compares to men's.
- The formation and dissolution of unions are often processes that unfold over time. Demographers tend to think of unions as having precise start and end dates, but the reality or how people think about their relationships may be different. We have to be aware that by trying to set particular events in time, we may be distorting reality.