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THE CONSEQUENCES OF DIVORCE FOR MOTHERS AND FATHERS: UNEQUAL BUT CONVERGING?

DORIAN KESSLER

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Author

Kessler, D.

Abstract

If families adhere to a male breadwinner model, mothers and fathers accumulate different kinds of resources. On one hand, this implies that divorces have different consequences for mothers and fathers. While a divorce translates mothers' low career investments into greater economic consequences for them, fathers suffer more emotionally due to deteriorations of the relationships with their children. On the other hand, the consequences of divorce converge between mothers and fathers over time as gender roles become more egalitarian. For the context of Switzerland, this study tests whether a) divorce leads to greater declines in economic well-being for mothers than for fathers, b) whether mothers report smaller declines in emotional well-being than fathers and c) whether or not these patterns were stable between a cohort of parents who divorced in the 1990s and a cohort of parents who divorced between 2009 and 2013.

The study draws on cross-sectional Swiss surveys that asked respondents about their incomes, emotional well-being and partnership histories. I measured the effects of divorce by comparing parents who recently divorced from their first spouse with balanced samples of parents who are still married in their first marriage. The results suggest that in *both* cohorts, on average, mothers experience greater declines in available incomes as a result of divorce than fathers and that mothers and fathers suffer similar declines in emotional well-being. Hence, confirming the crucial role of the type of resources for the consequences of divorce, divorced fathers have an advantage over divorced mothers in available income but not in emotional well-being. Potential explanations for the historical stability of such results despite divorced mothers' greater labor market participation and the introduction of shared legal custody are mothers' increases in lowly paid part-time work, a stable low share of divorce children living with their fathers and fewer adult alimony orders.

Keywords

divorce | income | happiness | well-being | change

Author's affiliation

Department of Social Work, Bern University of Applied Sciences

Correspondence to

dorian.kessler@bfh.ch

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1. Introduction

Research into the consequences of divorce for adults in Western countries usually depicts women as experiencing larger drops in material well-being than men in the course of a marital separation (Aassve et al. 2009; Andreß et al. 2006; Andreß and Bröckel 2007; Bonnet et al. 2015; Bröckel and Andreß 2015; de Vaus et al. 2017; Leopold and Kalmijn 2016; Poortman 2000) and, on the downside, men as experiencing rather large declines in immaterial domains (Andreß and Bröckel 2007; Blekesaune 2008; Leopold and Kalmijn 2016; Næss et al. 2015). This gendered domain-specificity of divorce effects is essentially linked with the nature of the dominant *family models* underlying the studied populations. Just as the higher engagement on the labor market protects *fathers* from declines in household incomes due to separation, so does the stronger involvement of *mothers* in child rearing soften the declines in personal relationships they experience and help them to keep up well-being in immaterial domains despite loss of a partner (Andreß and Bröckel 2007; Kamp Dush 2013; Leopold and Kalmijn 2016).

Social change has led scholars to question the stability of such inequalities in the distribution of the consequences of divorce (Bröckel and Andreß 2015; Liu and Umberson 2008). On the forefront of their claims stands the notion of the “gender revolution” (Goldscheider et al. 2015): the hypothesis that gender roles have converged. If mothers have increased their labor market participation and fathers their engagement in care and housework, the core drivers of the domain-specificity of divorce effects for mothers and fathers are weakening. While recent cohort comparisons in the US suggest decreasingly gendered economic and health consequences of divorce (Liu and Umberson 2008; Tach and Eads 2015; Tamborini et al. 2015), Bröckel and Andreß (2015) for Germany and Le Bourdais and colleagues (2016) for Canada conclude on stable economic declines for divorcing mothers. This study takes a multidimensional perspective to examine whether in Switzerland, there are *gendered patterns in the consequences of divorce for parents’ economic and emotional well-being and whether or not these patterns were stable across cohorts of divorcees*.

For the relatively rigid traditional gender regime in Switzerland, I see arguments that challenge both the idea of a maternal advantage in the immaterial consequences of divorce and the idea of change in the economic consequences of divorce for mothers and fathers. Given the ongoing low levels of institutional support of maternal employment, increases in mothers’ employment were largely restricted to part-time work (Liechti 2014). Hence, mothers’

economic independence has risen only moderately. Also, it is far from clear that the emotional strain associated with their dual role of being the main earner and caregiver is less pronounced than divorcing fathers' negative emotional experiences, nor that it has lowered between cohorts (cf. Struffolino et al. 2016). Further, changes in maintenance law with the divorce law reform of 2000 were paralleled by sharp declines in the number of divorced mothers that receive spousal support payments (Büchler and Cottier 2012, p. 194; Kessler 2018). This is most likely to have worsened divorced mothers' economic well-being. Also: Switzerland is a laggard in terms of shared child custody. Much later than in most other Western countries -only in 2000- has shared *legal* custody become a legal option. Likewise, figures presented in this study do not suggest substantive declines in gender differences in *physical* custody over the past decades, suggesting that one of the main mechanisms underlying fathers' negative emotional consequences from divorce has remained stable over time.

In sum, for Switzerland, it is of specific interest whether the consequences of divorce have changed between divorce cohorts that separated before the turn of the millennium – i.e. under the old divorce law regime - and divorce cohorts that separated after the turn of the millennium and the introduction of the new divorce law. Because the Swiss Household Panel (SHP) – the usual database for inquiries into the consequences of divorce in Switzerland (Kalmijn 2017; Masia 2016) - was launched only in 1999, this study must rely on a cross-sectional data strategy. I use a conglomerate of five national random sample surveys that were collected between 1994 and 2013 and that included questions on income and emotional well-being as well as on partnership histories. This allows me to ask: *do recently divorced mothers in Switzerland report a) greater disadvantage over continuously married in terms of economic well-being than recently divorced fathers and b) smaller disadvantages in terms of emotional well-being and c) has this pattern of gender differences in divorced parents' disadvantages over continuously married remained stable between divorce cohorts?*

In a first part of the paper, I outline the theoretical arguments underlying the expectation of gender differences in the consequences of divorce for parents' economic and emotional well-being. I then describe the relevant developments with respect to divorcees' composition and the institutional environment and derive expectations on stability and change in gender differences in the consequences of divorce for Swiss parents. In the empirical part, I present the dataset, the measurement of the main variables and the analytical strategy. The presentation of the main results is followed by several robustness checks. This helps to evaluate concerns that can be raised about the validity of the data strategy underlying the main results. On this

backdrop, the last section judges the hypotheses, provides answers to the research questions and derives conclusions for policy making, as well as future research into the subject.

2. Theory and hypotheses

2.1 Differences in the consequences of divorce for mothers and fathers

The main determinant of the extent to which mothers and fathers experience divorce differently is the way couples divide tasks before and after separation (Leopold 2016; Leopold and Kalmijn 2016). In a marital context where women take the bulk of unpaid care- and housework and men invest in work careers, there are several factors that put mothers at a higher risk of a decline in economic well-being than fathers (Andreß et al. 2006). First, they are more likely to cohabit with their children and have primary economic responsibility for them. If this holds, then mothers are disadvantaged on the level of material needs. Second, in consequence of such an unequal work divide, mothers often have lower earnings than fathers in the moment of separation. Divorced mothers must also simultaneously deal with several factors that hinder them in expanding their own earnings. Due to their mostly fragmented work careers after parenthood and the corresponding lower levels of human capital, they often have restricted labor market opportunities (Pedulla 2016). In addition, depending on the accessibility of external child care arrangements, there may be time restrictions that limit the degree to which they are *able* to expand their employment (van Damme et al. 2009). In sum, *I hypothesize that recently divorced mothers have a greater disadvantage in economic well-being in comparison to their continuously married counterparts than recently divorced fathers (H1).*

Differences between divorced mothers' and fathers' disadvantages in emotional well-being are less clear cut. On one hand, following Amato's (2000) divorce-stress-adjustment model, it can be argued that economic difficulties spill-over to other domains of life. Divorced mothers' low financial resources might heighten and prolong the negative emotional experiences of marital separations (Wang and Amato 2000) with negative repercussions on their mental or physical health (Dahl et al. 2015; R. Liu and Chen 2006). Divorced mothers might also be disproportionately affected in their emotional well-being by the stressful condition of a simultaneous management of child care duties and employment (Struffolino et al. 2016; van der Heijden et al. 2016). Also, the presence of children makes re-partnering more difficult (Schnor et al. 2017). Because mothers have their biological children residing with them more often, they may thus less easily cope with separation by re-partnering.

On the other hand, there are reasons to expect that fathers would face particularly steep drops in emotional well-being due to divorce. First, men are less likely to initiate divorces than women (Kalmijn and Poortman 2006). This can be related to gender differences in the timing of emotional strain. While mothers suffer more from the low quality of the marital relationship and thus more actively initiate the separation, fathers might be more surprised by the break-up and therefore suffer more strongly in the immediate aftermath of a divorce (Andreß and Bröckel 2007; Blekesaune 2008; Kalmijn 2017; Leopold and Kalmijn 2016). The second reason refers to the resource model of marriage (Waite and Gallagher 2001). There is evidence that men particularly benefit from spousal control and social support (Bernard 1982; Næss et al. 2015). If this view holds, then fathers should also experience higher losses of health-related resources when becoming single again. Thirdly, child-parent relationships can be significant with respect to the gender disparities concerning the psychological consequences of divorce (Yuan 2016). While they cause financial strain, custodial children could also be a source of parents' emotional well-being. Because fathers less often have their children cohabiting with them after divorce, family break-ups cause much more of a break in parent-child relations for fathers than for mothers (Graaf and Fokkema 2007; Grätz 2017), which spills over to their emotional well-being (Yuan 2016).

There is decreasing divergence over the fact that men – especially young men and fathers – tend to experience stronger divorce-related drops in life satisfaction than women (Andreß and Bröckel 2007; Kalmijn 2017; Leopold 2016; Leopold and Kalmijn 2016). Studies into mental health, however, are yet to agree over such a male disadvantage. Whereas some results suggest stronger increases in mental distress and sickness leave experienced by men than by women (Blekesaune 2008; Blekesaune and Barrett 2005; Kamp Dush 2013; Liu and Umberson 2008), others emphasize that mothers' sickness absence and depression is more severely affected by union dissolution (Dahl et al. 2015; Kalmijn and Monden 2006; Monden et al. 2015; Williams and Dunne-Bryant 2006).

The mechanisms that make divorce a particularly stressful experience for mothers – i.e. work-family strain - are pronounced in contexts of only limited state-support for external child care. Therefore, for Switzerland, *I expect that both, divorced mothers and divorced fathers have significantly lower emotional well-being than continuously married parents and that these differences do not differ between genders (H2).*

2.2 Decreasing gender differences?

Have mothers' and fathers' consequences of divorce converged? As the main source of gender differences are unequal roles within marriage, the answer to this question lies in the extent to which family models have changed. The *gender revolution hypothesis* (Goldscheider et al. 2015) essentially argues that, at least in some countries and certain social groups, fathers' and mothers' roles have become more egalitarian: in one part with respect to the public sphere – i.e. paid employment – and, in another, with respect to the private sphere – i.e. unpaid care and housework.

Marriage and parenthood now causes fewer women to retreat from the labor market and to undergo decreases in earnings (Juhn and McCue 2016). Hence, given mothers' higher average financial contributions to the household, the loss of their partner's resources with the divorce may not mark the same turning point for their economic well-being as it used to. Fathers, on the other hand, might be more strongly affected in their material well-being by a divorce, because they have come to lose greater shares of their pre-disruption household incomes in case of separation. So far, there are no studies investigating the development of divorced men's economic well-being. Yet, data from USA and UK suggest that more recent cohorts of divorced women suffered less dramatic reductions in their household incomes (Jenkins 2008; Tach and Eads 2015), which is in line with the evidenced historical decreases in economic hardship experienced by divorced mothers (McKeever and Wolfinger 2006). Also, the factors that have contributed to married mothers' integration into the labor market are consequential for mothers' ability to react to a divorce. For instance, in contexts where external child care provision is more readily accessible, even mothers that exit from traditional breadwinner marriages are more able to expand their employment and earnings after separation (van Damme et al. 2009; van Damme and Kalmijn 2014). Another source of improvements in divorced mothers' economic well-being could stem from increases in income-targeted social policies, specifically aimed to reduce the poverty risks associated with divorce by parents (Baumgartner et al. 2014; Kohler et al. 2012).

Developments in gender differences in divorced parents' disadvantage in emotional well-being depend upon the relative importance of change in factors that make divorce more wearing for mothers (e.g. work-family conflict) versus change in the factors that make divorce more wearing for fathers (e.g. parent-child relationship). In contexts where divorced mothers are relatively well protected from work-family strain (e.g. due to the availability of affordable

external child care), increasingly egalitarian divisions of labor can be expected to have particularly benefited divorced fathers' well-being. First, more egalitarian divisions of labor make marriage a less important driver of male health gains (Bernard, 1982). If men gain fewer health related resources from marriage, they also lose less in terms of health resources with the divorce. In line with a decreasing male disadvantage in the health penalty from divorce, Liu and Umberson (2008) have shown that the health disadvantage of divorced over married individuals have increased more for women than for men between the 1970s and the 2000s. Second, changes in mothers' employment and fathers' involvement in child-rearing might be particularly beneficial for fathers' well-being in terms of how child custody is allocated after divorce. This argument is supported by evidence showing that mothers' employment after divorce is linked to more frequent and better-quality father-child relationships (Kalmijn 2015) and that child relationships are crucial for fathers' emotional well-being (Yuan 2016). At the same time, mothers' relationships with their children might suffer more from divorce. In summary, while divorce has traditionally led mothers to experience steep drops in economic well-being and fathers to suffer more emotionally from a divorce, together, these arguments suggest that gender differences have lowered when mothers increased their labor market participation and fathers their engagement in care and housework.

For the context of Switzerland, however, I see three arguments that contradict this change hypothesis. First, given the ongoing low institutional support for maternal employment, mothers' entry into the labor market was largely restricted to part-time work (cf. changes in activity level in Table 212) (Liechti 2014). Hence, mothers' economic independence has increased only moderately, while emotional strain from work family-conflict might not have lowered either (Struffolino et al. 2016). Second, Swiss maintenance law practice has seen a paradigm shift towards "clean breaks" (Büchler and Cottier 2012, p. 194). Under this new regime, ex-partners should become economically independent from each other as soon as possible after divorce. This has led to a sharp decline in the share of divorces in which support payments are agreed upon in legal decrees. While in 1995, 69% of divorce decrees foresaw that fathers of minor children paid support payments to their ex-wives, this share has sunken to 45% after the introduction of the new divorce law in 2000 (BFS (Federal Statistical Office) 2018a own calculations). Third, although the introduction of shared legal custody in 2000 has led to more equal divisions of legal responsibilities between divorced parents, physical custody has remained largely on the side of mothers (see Table 2, row "Cohabiting child < 16"). This suggests that the hypothesized improvements in father-child relationships have not yet taken

place. In sum, I expect that *in both cohorts, divorced mothers show greater disadvantage in economic well-being over continuously married than divorced fathers and that there are no gender differences in divorced parents' disadvantage in emotional well-being over continuously married (H3)*. A conclusion of stable gender differences has recently been drawn for the relatively similar context of Germany. German mothers' probability of income loss due to separation has even increased (Bröckel and Andreß 2015).

3. Data, methods and potential sources of bias

3.1 Data strategy

In the words of the Rubin Causal Model (Imbens and Rubin 2015) the consequences of divorce refers to the difference between divorcees' ($D = 1$) observed expected level of the outcome of interest $E[Y_1|D = 1]$ and a counterfactual situation if divorcees had remained married, $E[Y_0|D = 1]$. Conventional studies into the consequences of divorce identify $E[Y_0|D = 1]$ with individuals' situation prior to the divorce and $E[Y_1|D = 1]$ with the situation after the divorce.

Due to the need of observations of divorcees that divorced prior to 2000, this study cannot make use of the longitudinal data structure of the Swiss Household Panel, which would allow for such a research design but was launched only in 1999 (cf. Kalmijn 2017). Instead, my analyses draw on a synthetic dataset based on five cross-sectional national random sample surveys with information on economic and emotional well-being and retrospective partnership histories. The Family and Fertility Survey (henceforth FFS, surveyed in 1994/1995), the Swiss Labor Market Survey (SLMS, 1998) and the first wave of the Swiss Household Panel (SHPI, 1999) represent the cohort of divorcees that divorced in the 1990ies. The 14th wave of the Swiss Household Panel (SHPIII¹, 2013) and the Inquiry on Families and Generations (EFG, 2013) provide data on a cohort of divorcees that divorced between 2009 and 2013 (BFS (Federal Statistical Office) 2018b; Diekmann et al. 1998; FORS 2015; Voorpostel et al. 2016). Due to the cross-sectional nature of the data at hand, the average situation of continuously married ($D = 0$) individuals $E[Y_0|D = 0]$ is taken as a proxy for $E[Y_0|D = 1]$ and compared to divorcees who are observed just after their divorce, which is this study's $E[Y_1|D = 1]$. Hence, in this study, I use continuously married parents as *counterfactuals*: their observed well-being is taken as an approximation of divorcees' well-being in a situation in which they had not divorced.

3.2 Sample and measures

I define divorce by parents as the *divorce of a first marriage when the divorcee reported to have at least one biological child below 18 years of age in the year of separation*. Given the age restriction in the FFS, my sample is limited to subjects aged 49 and younger. Longitudinal studies into the consequences of divorce suggest that average divorcees approach pre-divorce levels of life satisfaction after about 3 to 5 years (Kalmijn 2017; Leopold and Kalmijn 2016). To capture the consequences of divorce, I constrain my sample to divorcees surveyed 0 to 4 years after the household separation. After deletion of cases with missing information on central variables², the remaining analytical pooled sample consists of 480 recent first-marriage divorcees³ (254 divorced in the 1990ies, 226 divorced between 2009 and 2013). The counterfactual group is made up of a total of 7,224 respondents below age 50 who have children and were married in their first marriage at the time they were surveyed.

Divorcees' *economic well-being* is examined with household size equivalized household income (after social security deductions and before paid taxes). Following recent studies into the economic consequences of divorce (cf. Bröckel and Andreß 2015; de Vaus et al. 2017; Tach and Eads 2015) need-adjustment was performed by dividing the total household income by the number of household members to the power of .5, which assumes moderate economies of scale. Participants in the FFS only reported categorical information on household income (monthly CHF 0-2000, 2001-3000, 3001-4000, 4001-5000, 5001-6000, 6001-8000, 8001-10000, above 10000). I took the category middle as the actual value (1000 for category 0-2000, 2500 for category 2001-3000, aso. and 12000 for above 10000) and, for reasons of comparability between surveys, recoded income information from all other surveys into such categories. In all surveys taken together, the variable has 18% missing values. Due to only limited information for income imputation across surveys, these cases were deleted list wise. All incomes are adjusted to purchasing power levels in 1994 to account for changes in price levels and wages between cohorts.

Following the approach chosen by other studies into the emotional effects of marital separation (cf. Kalmijn 2017), emotional well-being is measured with self-reported measures. The lowest value (0) either indicate that the respondent is "completely unhappy" (FFS), "never feels happy" (EFG) or experiences continual "Depression, blues, anxiety" (SHP). The highest value (5) indicate that the respondent is "fully happy" (FFS), "always feels happy" (EFG) or never experiences "Depression, blues, anxiety" (SHP). The SLMS did not include any measure

of emotional well-being. The pooled sample has missing information in 23% of the cases, which were deleted list wise.

For the construction of the counterfactual samples (see next section), the analyses make use of information on *the age of the respondent at the survey, the year of entry into cohabitation with the spouse, the number of children below age 7 and the number of children aged 7 and older, whether the respondent has experienced a parental separation him- or herself and his or her educational attainment*. Education is measured by years of schooling according to a 1997 scale of equivalence (Jann and Engelhardt 2008). The selection of control covariates is based on the criterion of achieving a maximum resemblance between the divorced and married in the observed dimensions that jointly determine the probability of divorce and their economic and emotional well-being.

3.3 Methodology

The quantities of interest to this study are well-being differences between divorcees and counterfactuals and gender differences in divorcee-counterfactual differences. I estimate these quantities with cohort-specific OLS models that include dummy variables indicating whether an individual is a divorcee or a counterfactual and with interaction terms capturing gender differences in the coefficient of the dummy variable. To increase comparability across cohorts, I use logarithmized dependent variables. The reported exponentiated beta coefficients of dummy variables thus express proportional differences between divorcees and counterfactuals (1 means no deviation, values below 1 smaller values for divorcees) and interaction terms the proportion of dummy coefficients between genders (1 means no gender differences, values below 1 a smaller coefficient for mothers).

Before running the models, I preprocess the data for two purposes. First, I use entropy balancing (Hainmueller 2012) to calculate weights⁴ that, for both cohorts of divorcees reweights counterfactuals such that they have covariate distributions of divorcees⁵. Table 1 indicates that compared to divorcees, continuously married have a greater number of pre-school aged children and among them, a smaller share of individuals has themselves experienced a separation of their parents (especially in the later cohort). However, when entropy-balancing generated weights are applied, the two samples have nearly identical means and variances in all covariates. Hence, when weights are applied, estimates on divorcee-

counterfactual differences either express causal effects of divorce for the divorced or unobserved differences between divorcees and counterfactuals (see section “Robustness checks”).

Table 1: Characteristics of divorcees and counterfactuals, using survey weights and entropy balancing generated weights

	Divorce cohort: 1990s					
	Divorcees, survey weights		Counterfactuals, survey weights		Counterfactuals, entropy balance weights	
	mean	variance	mean	variance	mean	variance
Age	37.67	32.94	38.22	42.13	37.67	32.94
Year of formation	83.92	40.32	83.64	60.10	83.91	40.32
Nr. of children < 7	0.55	0.75	0.85	0.96	0.55	0.75
Nr. of children >6	1.58	1.26	1.40	1.50	1.58	1.26
Proportion with parental separation	0.11	0.10	0.08	0.07	0.11	0.10
Education, years	11.64	6.08	11.59	5.66	11.64	6.08

	Divorce cohort: 2009-2013					
	Divorcees, survey weights		Counterfactuals, survey weights		Counterfactuals, entropy balance weights	
	mean	variance	mean	variance	mean	variance
Age	40.00	29.41	40.11	39.39	40.00	29.42
Year of formation	99.93	30.96	101.00	49.71	99.94	30.96
Nr. of children < 7	0.46	0.39	0.80	0.74	0.46	0.39
Nr. of children >6	1.44	0.85	1.22	1.30	1.44	0.86
Proportion with parental separation	0.24	0.18	0.14	0.12	0.24	0.18
Education, years	12.42	9.60	12.61	9.45	12.42	9.60

Second, I use sample preprocessing to increase comparability between cohorts. My theoretical arguments suggest that change in gender differences in the effects of divorce for parents is driven by potential changes in mothers’ labor market participation and in the allocation of child custody. However, observed cohort differences in divorcee-counterfactual differences could as well result from a lowered number of children given declines in fertility and increases in ages at divorce (Brown and Lin 2012) and changed levels of repartnering after separation due to an increased availability of single individuals (Becker and Jann 2017). To link observed changes in divorce-counterfactual differences to changes in employment and custody as closely as possible, changes in divorcees’ composition must be held constant. Therefore, I report additional estimates based on divorcee samples, for which I, prior to balancing with counterfactuals, adjusted the composition between the two cohorts. I use

entropy balancing generated weights that adjust the recent cohorts' gender-specific distributions of age, marital duration, number of children, partner cohabitation, education and the experience of parental separation to match the distribution of the older cohort but allow the two cohorts to differ in employment and cohabiting children.

Table 2 gives an overview of the characteristics and sample sizes of divorced parents in the two cohorts. As expected, employment rates for mothers are significantly greater among the recent cohort. Also, mothers' have significantly greater levels of educational attainment in the recent cohort (more years of schooling). Contrary to expectations, in the recent cohort, significantly fewer divorced mothers are cohabiting with a partner than in the older cohort. Under usage of entropy balance generate weights, all compositional differences are eliminated. Note that because employment and child custody were excluded from the balancing constraint, cohort differences in employment and child custody are nearly identical for the original and composition-adjusted estimates

Table 2: Sample description by gender and cohort

	Divorce cohort: 1990ies		Divorce cohort: 2009-2013		Divorce cohort: 2009 to 2013 at 1990s composition	
	Mothers	Fathers	Mothers	Fathers	Mothers	Fathers
Age, avg.	38**	38***	39	41	38	38
Marital duration, avg.	11	10	11	10	11	10
Years of schooling, avg.	11***	12	13	12	11	12
Parental separation, %	12***	10**	24	25	12	10
Employed, %	62***	96	81	94	78	97
level of employment (if employed), avg.	68	91	63	94	59	96
Partner, cohabiting, %	31***	30	18	30	31	30
Number of children < 7, avg.	0.49	0.62	0.4	0.57	0.49	0.62
Number of children >= 7, avg.	1.64	1.49	1.5	1.32	1.64	1.49
Cohabiting child < 18, %	90**	29	81	30	80	30
Income (equiv.), avg., monthly CHF	3172	5024	3075	4970	2900	5029
Happiness, avg.	3.9***	4.01**	3.61	3.58	3.51	3.78
N	170	84	150	76	150	76

Notes: Tests of statistical significance refer to within gender differences between unadjusted cohort means (first versus second column). *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. Divorcees below age 50, 0 to 4 years after household separation. Level of employment: 100% equals 42 hours per week.

4. Main results

Table 3 presents the estimates of divorcee-counterfactual differences for the cohort of divorcees that divorced in the 1990ies and the cohort of divorcees that divorced between 2009 and 2013. Among the 1990s cohort, there are clear gender differences in household income. Divorced mothers report 19 percent lower incomes ($p < .001$) than their counterfactuals and fathers report 24 percent higher incomes than their counterfactuals ($p < .01$), which is a statistically significant gender difference in coefficients ($p < .001$). In terms of emotional well-being, both, mothers and fathers report significantly ($p < .05$) lower levels (8% and 11%) of happiness than their counterfactuals and there are no significant gender differences in coefficients.

Table 3: Unadjusted and adjusted estimates of divorcee-counterfactual differences from cohort comparisons

Divorce cohort: 1990s				
		Mothers	Fathers	Gender interaction
Equivalentized household income	Beta	0.809***	1.244***	1.539***
	se	(0.0480)	(0.0776)	(0.133)
Happiness/reversed depression	Beta	0.914*	0.894*	0.979
	se	(0.0343)	(0.0424)	(0.0587)
Divorce cohort: 2009 to 2013				
Equivalentized household income	Beta	0.705***	1.097	1.557***
	se	(0.0415)	(0.0856)	(0.151)
Happiness/reversed depression	Beta	0.949+	0.935+	0.984
	se	(0.0270)	(0.0378)	(0.0478)
Divorce cohort: 2009 to 2013 at 1990s composition				
Equivalentized household income	Beta	0.718***	1.264**	1.762***
	se	(0.0511)	(0.0934)	(0.182)
Happiness/reversed depression	Beta	0.921*	1.041	1.131*
	se	(0.0344)	(0.0396)	(0.0611)
Notes: Reported are exponentiated beta coefficients of main effects and interaction terms (standard errors in parentheses) from OLS models with logarithmized dependent variables. Main coefficients express the factors by which divorcees deviate from counterfactuals, gender interactions the ratio of these factors between fathers and mothers (1 means no difference to counterfactuals/no gender difference). All estimates based on subsample of divorcees with age < 50 and observed 0 to 4 years after marital separation. + $p < .10$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$. Table created using esttab (Jann 2007). Source: see section "Data, methods and potential sources of bias".				

The pattern of gender differences in coefficients is identical for the recent cohort. Mothers report lower equivalized household incomes than their counterfactuals. For fathers, the reverse holds: just like in the 1990s cohort, their differences to counterfactuals are 1.5 times more positive ($p < .001$) than for mothers. With respect to divorcee-counterfactual differences in emotional well-being, similarly to the 1990s cohort, there are no statistically significant gender differences. However, divorcee-counterfactual differences only reach a 10%-level of statistical significance⁶.

Under a hypothetical scenario that divorcees had not changed their distributions of age, marital duration, number of children, partner cohabitation, education and the experience of parental separation between cohorts, estimates would differ qualitatively from estimates for the observed sample of the recent cohort. For both, economic and emotional well-being, composition adjustment leads to more favorable outcomes for divorced fathers when compared to their counterfactuals (significantly higher income than counterfactuals, no significant difference in emotional well-being). Contrarily, for mothers, divorcee-counterfactual differences would remain largely unchanged in terms of economic well-being (at around 30 percentage points), but would become more negative for emotional well-being. In the composition-adjusted sample of the later cohort, gender differences in divorcee-counterfactual differences in emotional well-being are statistically significant ($p < .05$).

In sum, the results support my hypotheses. In both cohorts, mothers are economically less well-off than counterfactuals and divorced fathers do not have lower need-adjusted incomes than their counterfactuals. Also, divorcees' emotional well-being is lower than their counterfactual well-being and this disadvantage is similar for mothers and fathers in both cohorts. Yet, the stability in gender differences in divorcee-counterfactual differences in emotional well-being was due to changes in divorcees' composition. These have benefitted divorced mothers' relative emotional well-being when compared to their counterfactuals but had the reverse implication for fathers.

5. Robustness checks

Two types of bias potentially affect the study's conclusions and require robustness checks. The first concern refers to my measures of economic and emotional well-being. Most importantly, due to restrictions imposed by the FFS and SLMS, I use a household income

measure that is reported before deduction of paid monetary and in-kind private transfers (e.g. child support) and taxes. Several studies have pointed to the fact that when using post-tax and post-transfer income measures (Bröckel and Andreß 2015; DiPrete and McManus 2000; McManus and DiPrete 2001) or assess economic well-being directly with indicators of lifestyle deprivation (Aassve et al. 2007), men are found to suffer more economically from divorce.

In order to assess the extent to which my conclusions depend on the measure of economic well-being, I repeat the analyses for the subsample of respondents from the IFG who provided more detailed information on their financial situation. Table 4 (see appendix) compares the estimates for different indicators of economic well-being. The comparison shows that while alimony payments reduce gender differences in divorcee-counterfactual differences in gross equivalized household income, they do not fully eliminate them. Accounting for paid support payments reduces gender differences by about a third.

Other equalizing mechanisms such as in-kind transfers or a differential tax burden for mothers and fathers could further reduce the gender gap in divorcees' economic well-being. Correspondingly, I find that when divorce outcomes are measured with subjective accounts on overall financial well-being (last column in Table 4, appendix) gender differences in divorcee-counterfactual differences become statistically insignificant. However, I cannot judge whether this finding is due to objective equalizing mechanisms other than private support payments (e.g. paid taxes) or whether it is due to differences in the way mothers and fathers evaluate their financial situation. Hence, although the measure used in this study certainly leads to an overestimation of fathers' economic well-being, it rightly suggests that losses in pre-tax incomes are larger for mothers than for fathers.

Conclusions on emotional well-being could be affected by differences in measurement across surveys (see section "Sample and measures"). Therefore, in Table 5 (appendix) I report survey-specific estimates of divorcee-counterfactual differences and gender interactions. Indeed, the results show that in the FFS and in the EFG continuously married fathers tend to report worse levels of emotional well-being as compared to continuously married mothers. Contrarily, divorcee-counterfactual differences are greater for fathers than for mothers in the data from these surveys. In both samples of the SHP, I find an inversed pattern of greater emotional well-being for married fathers and a greater disadvantage for divorced fathers. Hence, results on gender differences in the consequences of divorce could depend on whether

one uses a positively poled measure (such as “Happiness”, as in the FFS and in the EFG) or a negatively poled measure of emotional well-being (such as “Depression, Blues, and Anxiety”). Still, such differences have a limited influence on the judgment of my hypotheses because a) gender differences are not statistically significant with either kind of measurement and b) because I include information from both kinds of measures in both cohorts.

A second type of concern is related to the cross-sectional nature of the data. There is ample evidence that individuals in adverse financial situations as well as health conditions are at a heightened risk of separation (Carr and Springer 2010; Conger et al. 2010; McLanahan et al. 2013). Therefore, despite the use of balancing weights, divorcee-counterfactual differences not only reflect the causal effects of divorce, but also the differences that pre-dated separation. The estimates in the main analysis could thus overestimate the causal effect of divorce. Yet, divorcees’ selectivity is only relevant for my hypotheses if it varies between genders (H1 and H2), or between genders and divorce cohorts (H3).

Because fathers and mothers are drawn from the same population, selectivity *cannot* differ between genders with respect to equivalized household income. However, existing research suggests that the influence of physical health on divorce differs between genders (Karraker and Latham 2015). To assess the extent to which my results are affected by problems of unobserved selectivity, I compare entropy-balancing weighted OLS with individual fixed-effects OLS coefficients. The latter are based on the longitudinal data structure of the SHP (1999-2016). For the fixed-effects estimates, the counterfactual situation is individuals’ level of well-being prior to the separation (see above). Unobserved but constant differences between divorcees and continuously married thus do not bias the results (cf. Brüderl and Ludwig 2015). In order to reduce problems of comparability of measurements, I restrict all analyses to data from the SHP.

The comparison of coefficients (Table 6, appendix) shows that claims of an overestimation of the causal effect of divorce in the main analysis are unjustified. Fixed effects estimates of the effect of divorce are stronger in magnitude than weighted cross-sectional estimates. Also, fixed effect coefficients confirm the qualitative pattern found in the main analysis. Marital separation leads to a significant decrease in emotional well-being (here measured with an increase in “Depression, Blues, Anxiety”), which does not differ significantly in magnitude between mothers and fathers. In terms of economic well-being, marital separation strongly reduces mothers’ gross equivalized household incomes and the

coefficient for fathers is statistically significantly more positive. Furthermore, as found for cross-sectional estimates, transfers to other households (capturing spousal and child support payments) reduce such gender differences by about a third.

6. Discussion of results and conclusions

This study was motivated by research stating that whereas mothers suffer more in economic realms from divorce, fathers pay greater immaterial tolls when they separate from their spouse (Andreß and Bröckel 2007; Leopold and Kalmijn 2016) and by expectations that such gender differences should become lower when parents adhere to more egalitarian family models (Bröckel and Andreß 2015; Liu and Umberson 2008; Tach and Eads 2015). It asked whether a) *recently divorced mothers in Switzerland report greater disadvantage over continuously married in terms of economic well-being than recently divorced fathers*, b) *whether they report smaller disadvantages in terms of emotional well-being and c) whether or not this pattern of gender differences in divorced parents' disadvantages over continuously married remained stable between divorce cohorts*. Because in a context of low state funding of external childcare, simultaneously fulfilling the role of the main earner and care provider can be stressful, I did not expect Swiss mothers to suffer less emotional strain from a divorce than fathers (Struffolino et al. 2016). Also, the ongoing low levels of institutional support for maternal employment and earnings, low rates of paternal physical custody and decreasing spousal support with the revision of divorce law in 2000 led me to expect stability in the consequences of divorce for parents.

The results obtained in this study support these hypotheses. First, gender differences in the consequences of divorce for parents' need-adjusted household incomes are stable across cohorts. Mothers report significantly lower incomes than continuously married in both cohorts, which cannot be observed for fathers. Second, the results suggest that, indeed, divorced mothers and fathers report similarly lower levels of emotional well-being when compared to their continuously married counterparts. This pattern holds for parents who were surveyed after a recent divorce in the 1990s as well as for parents who were surveyed after a recent divorce in 2013.

Due to a lack of longitudinal Swiss data for the study of historical changes in the consequences of divorce, this study had to draw on a synthetic dataset based on five cross-

sectional surveys. This has raised two methodological concerns: a) the requirement of harmonized data limited the quality of well-being indicators and b) the cross-sectional data structure is prone to unobserved selection. Indeed, robustness checks suggested that measuring economic well-being with equivalized household income prior to paid transfers as I did in the main analysis leads to an underestimation of the economic consequences of divorce for fathers. This is in line with conclusions drawn in earlier studies (Aassve et al. 2007; Bröckel and Andreß 2015; McManus and DiPrete 2001). Yet, because transfer payments do not fully eliminate gender differences in the economic consequences of divorce, I conclude that my hypothesis tests were qualitatively unaffected by the negligence of paid support payments in the indicator of economic well-being. Furthermore, fixed effects estimates based on the longitudinal data structure of the SHP confirmed the absence of gender differences in the effects of divorce on emotional well-being. Also, concerns about an overestimation of the effects of divorce with cross-sectional data as suggested by negative health (Carr and Springer 2010) and income (Conger et al. 2010) selection into divorce are unjustified. In sum, cross-sectional estimates of the effects of divorce based on a balanced comparison of recent divorcees and continuously married did not lead to conclusions that qualitatively diverge from longitudinal analyses.

All in all, the study gives confident evidence to conclude that despite increases in divorced mothers' labor market participation of around 20 percentage points within less than 20 years (cf. Table 2), divorce still poses a substantial risk to mothers' economic well-being. The persistence of a strong economic impact of divorce for mothers despite greater labor market participation cannot be explained with a changed composition of divorcees. Rather, it must thus be attributed either a) to the rise in lowly paid part-time work among mothers or b) to the decline in spousal support payments that coincided with the revision of divorce law. Fathers' subjective accounts point to substantial financial strain after divorce. Therefore, rather than policies seeking to reinforce support payments which further increase economic pressure on fathers, this study encourages ongoing efforts that are targeted at increasing married mothers' earnings. However, mere increases in employment at persistent inequalities in child custody - as was simulated with the composition-adjusted cohort comparison - could come at the price of more adverse emotional effects of divorce for mothers (cf. Table 3). Besides measures that facilitate work-family reconciliation such as affordable child care, the advancement of shared custody could bring relief to divorced mothers (van der Heijden et al.

2016). On top of that, by attenuating the shattering of father-child relationships due to family breakup, shared custody could also reduce the emotional consequences of divorce for fathers.

To strengthen such conclusions, future research should prioritize long-term panel data to study change in the consequences of divorce for parents (cf. Tach and Eads 2015; Tamborini et al. 2015). While spanning several decades, such data should comprise well-being instruments that comprehensively measure parents' well-being in economic as well as immaterial domains, such as life satisfaction, emotional well-being and work-family conflict (cf. Kalmijn 2017; Leopold and Kalmijn 2016) and include a large variety of couple arrangements (such as female breadwinner couples). This promises greater insights into the mechanisms which underlie gender differences in the material and immaterial consequences of divorce – such as inequality in economic resources and personal relationships - and would help to assess the social risks linked to couple specialization more reliably.

7. Notes

¹ I use SHP III instead of SHP II because the data are based on the third sample of the SHP. SHP II was sampled in 2004.

² Birthyear, year of marriage, education, parental separation, number and age of children

³ Surveys are distributed as follows: EFG: 35%; FFS: 30%; SHP: 26%, SLMS 9%.

⁴ Divorcees' distributions are estimated using survey weights, which are scaled on each survey's sample size such that observations from smaller surveys have greater weight.

⁵ To preclude the possibility that the observations of divorcees come from different surveys than observations of counterfactuals and that such differences in the representation of different surveys between divorcees and counterfactuals differs between genders, I specify the balance constraint such that gender specific proportions of surveys are identical between divorcees and counterfactuals (not reported in Table 1).

⁶ The coefficients are statistically significant at $p < .05$ when using OLS adjustment of covariates instead of entropy balancing.

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Appendix: The Consequences of Divorce for Mothers and Fathers: Unequal but Converging?

Table 4: Divorcee-counterfactual differences in equivalized household income by measure of economic well-being

	(1) Gross	(2) Net: minus paid support payments	(3) Subjective: easily manage finances
Divorcee- counterfactual difference: mothers	0.657*** (0.0494)	0.654*** (0.0486)	0.770*** (0.0567)
Fathers (counterfactuals)	1.028 (0.0884)	1.027 (0.0874)	1.058 (0.0891)
Divorcee- counterfactual difference: gender interaction	1.613*** (0.192)	1.408** (0.166)	1.179 (0.137)
<i>N</i>	280	280	280

Exponentiated coefficients; Standard errors in parentheses

Support payments are the sum of payments to an ex-partner or children. Source: IFG (see section Data strategy).

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 5: Divorcee-counterfactual differences in emotional well-being by survey

	(1) FFS (1994-1995)	(2) SHP I (1999)	(3) SHP III (2013)	(4) IFG (2013)
Divorcee-counterfactual difference: mothers	0.896*	0.961	0.948	0.970
	(0.0434)	(0.0688)	(0.0561)	(0.0324)
Fathers (ref. mothers, counterfactuals)	0.964	1.113	1.078	0.970
	(0.0499)	(0.0810)	(0.0706)	(0.0355)
Divorcee-counterfactual: gender interaction	1.045	0.894	0.962	0.994
	(0.0765)	(0.0920)	(0.0938)	(0.0526)
<i>N</i>	236	191	166	316

Exponentiated coefficients; Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 6: Divorcee-counterfactual differences in the SHP, cross-sectional versus fixed-effects estimates

	(1) Depression reversed: cross-sectional	(2) Depression reversed: fixed effects	(3) Household income, equivalized: cross-sectional	(4) Household income, equivalized: fixed effects	(5) Household income, equivalized, after transfers to other households: fixed effects
Divorcee- counterfactu al difference: mothers	0.957 (0.0445)	0.914** (0.0301)	0.771*** (0.0544)	0.591*** (0.0199)	0.593*** (0.0200)
Fathers (ref. mothers, counterfactu als)	1.095 (0.0540)		1.088 (0.0815)		
Divorcee- counterfactu al: gender interaction	0.927 (0.0657)	1.005 (0.0369)	1.534*** (0.165)	1.725*** (0.0623)	1.425*** (0.0517)
_cons	3.895*** (0.128)	0.540 (0.382)	3738.2*** (187.2)	6030.1*** (4111.5)	5997.2*** (4098.3)
N	360	1614	386	2207	2199
Individuals		351		397	397

Exponentiated coefficients; Standard errors in parentheses

Cross-sectional estimates: OLS under usage of entropy-balancing generated weights on pooled observations from SHP I and SHP III.

Fixed effects estimates: observations from longitudinal structure of SHP up to four years before and four years after separation, marital separation between 2000 and 2016. All estimates refer to effect of household separation when child below 18 is present and are restricted to individuals age <50.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$