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Moving on and moving out: The implications of socio-spatial mobility for union stability.

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ABSTRACT

The term 'leading migrant' was traditionally used to describe a male migrant within a couple, and terms such as 'trailing spouse' or 'tied migrant' were often used to describe their female partners. With the dramatic restructuring of the economy, increased female participation in the labour market and the rise of dual-earner couples, either partner may now be the 'leading migrant'. It is therefore plausible that the effects of family migration may also have altered. In this paper, we ask whether family migration for contemporary dual-earner couples has negative consequences for the stability of their partnership. In particular, we investigate whether any negative changes in partners' employment characteristics following family migration are associated with higher risks of union dissolution. We construct a specialized dataset from the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) to examine migration, employment and union dissolution in Britain. The BHPS is especially well suited to our study because it provides recent, nationally representative data and a wide range of potentially important prospective and retrospective information on households and individuals. We undertake a duration analysis of union dissolution.

Union dissolution is largely explained by partners' socio-demographic characteristics, the characteristics of the union, the presence and age of children, and the labour force characteristics of both partners. However, spatial mobility, and especially frequent migration, is associated with an increase in the risk of union dissolution, especially within five years of a migration event. Short-distance migration is associated with greater union stability while long distance migration increases the risk of union dissolution. Adverse changes in employment for both partners, but especially the male partner, are negatively related to union stability. We did not find any convincing evidence that migration exacerbates the negative effect that changes in employment characteristics have on union stability.

KEYWORDS

EDITORIAL NOTE

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MOVING ON AND MOVING OUT: THE IMPLICATIONS OF SOCIO-SPATIAL MOBILITY FOR UNION STABILITY

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1. INTRODUCTION

Living arrangements are influenced by social and demographic trends and changes in social norms related to marriage, childbearing, educational attainment and women's employment which together have reshaped family life (Bures 2009; Andersson 2002). Cohabitation has become a usual aspect of family life in Britain (Beaujouan and Ní Bhrolcháin 2011). While partner characteristics, attitudes, preferences and expectations are central to union formation, mismatches between partners are a cause of union dissolution. Prior marital history, the presence of children from previous unions, preferences about the type of union (e.g. cohabitation or marriage), differences in the perception of gender roles, and differences in social status are all theorised as contributing factors in union dissolution (Glick 1977, Glick 1988, Goldscheider et al. 2009, Reczek et al. 2009). It is arguable that social and spatial mobility may also have an increasing impact on family life, in particular on union formation, fertility and union dissolution. This might be especially acute within contemporary populations that are more mobile, both socially and geographically, with high levels of social disruption meaning that maintaining stable unions is increasingly challenging.

Within the large inter-disciplinary literature on union dissolution, a wide range of demographic and socioeconomic factors influencing union stability and separation have been identified. These factors include; the type of union and number of previous unions (e.g. Martin and Bumpass 1989, Chan and Halpin 2003, Reczek et al. 2009); the duration of the union; the presence and age of children (Manning 2004, Waite and Lillard 1991, Chan and Halpin 2003); age at union formation; age gap between the partners (Tzeng and Mare 1995); differences in values and attitudes; and differences in education and employment characteristics (e.g. Lehrer and Chiswick 1993, Morgan and Rindfuss 1985, Hoem &Hoem 1992.

Only a few studies have considered the potential impact of migration on union dissolution (e.g. Mincer 1978, Frank and Wildsmith 1988, Muszynska and Kulu 2007, Boyle et al. 2009). Although there are studies that look into the relationship between social and spatial mobility (e.g. Savage 1988, Fielding 1992), there are no previous studies that explore the relationships between spatial and socio-economic mobility and

union dissolution. In this paper we examine the impact of migration for British married and cohabiting couples, along with the accompanying changes in employment for both partners, on the stability of their unions.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: MIGRATION, EMPLOYMENT AND UNION STABILITY

Historically in Britain, the 'male breadwinner' model of the family was prevalent (Kelan 2008). Within this model female employment was seen as subsidiary, with female income regarded as making only a supplementary contribution to the family budget. It was taken for granted that priority would be given to employment opportunities for the male partner. Employment-related changes that resulted in long-distance migration were almost always associated with the male partner's career. The term 'leading migrant' was used to describe the male migrant, whereas terms such as 'trailing spouse' or 'tied migrant' were used to describe their female partners. Theoretically, within the traditional male breadwinner model, it was assumed that any negative post-migration effects on employment for the female partner were countered by the positive effects experienced by their male partner, and that this improved the family's overall prospects. This assumption is more questionable for contemporary dual-earner couples.

Of all the dramatic changes in patterns of employment in Western industrialised economies over the past fifty years, among the most notable has been the significant rise in female labour market participation and the increasing heterogeneity of female work experiences (Fraser 1994, Lewis 2001). The contemporary British labour market is now characterised by dual-earner couples, where both partners engage in employment (Bailey 2004, Bardasi and Gornick 2003, Bures 2009, Gornick and Meyers 2004). In contemporary Britain, the career of the male partner can no longer be automatically assumed to have priority over that of the female partner. In modern dual-earning/dual career couples there is no longer an obvious 'lead migrant' and a 'trailing spouse', therefore when employment opportunities arise that require migration it is reasonable to assume that the decision to migrate will be negotiated rather than being automatically structured by traditional gender roles. This may be especially

challenging, as it is reasonable to expect that migration will have a negative effect on the employment career of the 'tied mover' (Mincer 1978, Boyle and Halfacree 1999).

Previous empirical work has highlighted that migration has a different impact on the careers of male and female partners (e.g. Bailey 2004, Boyle et al. 1999a, Gayle et al. 2008, Kulu and Milewski 2007). Several studies have reported, for example, that male partner employment-related long distance migration has a short-term negative impact on the female partner's labour market participation (Boyle et al. 2001, Boyle et al. 1999b, Gayle et al. 2008). Previous studies have also shown that the unemployment rates of married male migrants are lower at the point of destination than at the point of origin, but that their unemployment rates at the destination are higher than those of non-migrant males at the destination (Mincer 1978). At the same time, although at the point of origin the unemployment rates for married women are not different for migrants and non-migrants, at the destination married migrant women have higher rates of unemployment than non-migrant women (ibid). There is also empirical evidence that, in the short term, migrant females tend to have lower incomes and work shorter hours than non-migrant women with similar characteristics (Mincer 1978, Boyle et al. 2003, Boyle et al. 2001, Boyle et al. 1999a, Cooke and Bailey 1999, Cooke 2001 2004, Clark and Withers 2002, 2006, Gayle et al. 2008).

Union dissolution is a common demographic feature in Western societies. Within the large inter-disciplinary literature on union dissolution, a wide range of demographic and socioeconomic factors influencing union stability and separation have been identified (Boyle et al. 2009).

Socio-demographic factors that affect union stability include the type of union. Married couples are less likely to separate than cohabiting couples (Hoem and Hoem 1992). A higher number of previous unions is positively correlated with union instability (e.g. Martin and Bumpass1989; Reczek et al. 2009). The duration of the union and the presence of younger children are also consequential for union stability: longer unions are more likely to survive and couples with young children are more likely to stay together (Manning 2004; Waite and Lillard, 1991; but also see Chan and Halpin 2003, who found evidence to the contrary for the UK). Forming a union at a younger age is associated with union dissolution (Chan and Halpin 2003). Values and

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attitudes are important and research evidence shows that unions where women hold more egalitarian views are more likely to dissolve (de Graaf and Kalmijn 2006; Lye and Biblarz 1993; but see Bianchi et al. 2000).

Educational and employment characteristics, as well as the differences between partners in these characteristics, have also been identified as consequential for union stability. Increased educational level, labour market participation and occupational attainment of women are generally believed to be contributors to union instability through women's reduced financial dependence on their partners (Becker 1974; Mincer 1978; Chan and Halpin 2003). Yet, the evidence regarding the relationship between female partners the level of education and the stability of the unions is sometimes contradictory. Although there is some evidence that separation has become more common in relationships where the woman is better educated, there is also research evidence that better educated couples are less likely to divorce (Morgan & Rindfuss 1985). This contradiction could be resolved if one bears in mind that better educated female partners are more likely to work than those with lower educational qualifications. Tzeng and Mare (1995) found that the degree to which husbands and wives differ on educational attainment and income does not affect marital stability, but the more that wives work relative to their husbands, the greater the chances of disruption. Indeed, positive changes in wives' socioeconomic and labour-force characteristics over the course of their marriages increase the odds of marital disruption (ibid.).

There is extensive literature showing that migration can be a very stressful event that can put strain on the relationship between partners. Even short distance changes in residence have been found to adversely effect psychological well-being, particularly among women (Magdol 2002; Makowsky et al. 1988; Meyer 1987; Weissman and Paykel 1972). It seems reasonable to suppose, therefore, that migration may impact on union stability and lead to union dissolution, especially when one partner suffers from the event by, for example, becoming unemployed. Unemployment for either partner has been shown to have a negative impact on the quality of marital relationships (e.g. Broman et al. 1990); male unemployment has the potential to increase the family's financial hardship to a greater extent than female unemployment, and financial hardship

is another source of stress that can negatively impact on family stability (Peterson et al. 1999).

These findings lead us to theorise that, although family migration is more likely to have a negative impact on female employment than on male employment, the stability of a couple's union may come under greater pressure when migration impacts negatively on male employment. It could also be that migration itself has an independent effect on union stability irrespective of the employment outcomes for each partner (e.g. McCollum 1990). Yet, among the factors that influence union stability and union dissolution, family migration has not received enough attention. Although some studies have looked at the association between migration and union formation/ dissolution (e.g. Asher and Bloom 1982, Flowerdew and Al-Hamad 2004, Grundy 1985, Feijten 2005) and found a strong relationship between these events, most of these studies did not use event history data and did not differentiate between migration induced by union dissolution and union dissolution induced by migration. There are only a few studies (Frank and Wildsmith 1988; Muszynska and Kulu 2007; Boyle et al. 2009) that model the effect of family migration (short-distance residential move or long-distance internal migration) on subsequent union dissolution and there are no studies, to the best of our knowledge, that have modelled this effect using UK data. Therefore, in this present study we are interested in investigating a range of potential migration-related effects on union dissolution.

2.1.   RESEARCH QUESTION

The overarching research question is - 'does migration have an effect on union dissolution and, if so, under what circumstances?' To answer this question comprehensively, in addition to spatial mobility, we examine the influences of individual, relationship and labour market characteristics on union dissolution.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1.   SURVEY DATA

The British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) is a large-scale panel study which was carried out between 1991 and 2008 (see Taylor et al. 2010) and was then subsumed into

Understanding Society-The UK Household Longitudinal Study (UKHLS). The core data collection instrument is an interview with all adult members of the household. The dataset is especially well suited to the current analyses because it provides a nationally representative sample and allows us to track the residential moves of households. The BHPS also contains appropriate information on employment, as well as suitable measures of family and home life. Due to the sampling design, adults continue to be tracked even after they leave the household. This is especially critical for the study of union dissolution and new household formation.

We created a specialised dataset from the British Household Panel Survey, which allows the joint investigation of partnership history, a couple's migration history and the employment history of both partners. The design of the BHPS facilitates the linking of individual-level information for both partners with household-level information, which is critical for this study. The structure of the BHPS enables the linking of prospective data to retrospective data on partnership, employment and migration histories.

We constructed a migration history dataset from the BHPS waves 1-18 (UK Data Archive Study Number 5151) which was augmented with data from the BHPS Consolidated Marital Cohabitation and Fertility Histories dataset (UK Data Archive Study Number 5629). The primary units of our sample are females aged 26-64 in unions (marriage or cohabitation), living in Britain between 1991 and 2008. The focus of the study is spatial and socio-economic mobility and union dissolution. The outcome variable is union dissolution. We follow couples in unions until either the union dissolves or they are censored at the end of the study period. The primary migration indicator is a change of address between pairs of annual BHPS household interviews.

3.2. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

We selected into our sample women aged 16-64 and who lived with a partner at any time during wave 1-18 of the BHPS (which included both cohabitating and married couples). Those respondents who never had a partner during the lifetime of the BHPS were excluded from the analysis. To every female respondent record we attached information about their partners. For those female respondents who had several

cohabiting partners during the lifetime of the BHPS, we created a record which contained information about their partners in the current or the most recent union. The respondents were asked about the date when their union was dissolved. For married couples, both dates of separation and of divorce were recorded, and we used the date of the separation rather than the divorce date as the end of the union.

The final dataset consists of 2,342 couples, i.e. female respondents and their partners; there are 24,166 union-year observations, and on average 1,375 observations per wave. The variables used in this study are described in Table 1. Small sample sizes meant we were unable to differentiate between heterosexual and same-sex-couples.

The average age of female respondents is 42 years while the average age of their partners is 46 years. Twenty six per cent of female respondents are older than their partners, while 62% of them are younger than their partners.

Twenty eight per cent of the female respondents and 24% of their partners have no educational qualifications, while about 13% of female respondents and 14% of their partners have degree-level academic qualifications. Two per cent of the female respondents are unemployed and 28% are outside the labour force at some point during1991-2009. By contrast, 4% of their spouses are unemployed and 12% are outside the labour market. Socio-economic status is measured using the Cambridge Occupational Scale (see Stewart et al. 1980). The average Cambridge Scale Score[1] for the female respondents is 40 and 36 for their partners.

We investigate a series of background variables that previous studies have indicated to be associated with union dissolution. About 11% of female respondents and 17% of their partners reported that they held traditional views on the gender roles within family. Only 11% of females and 8% of their partners said that they were members of a religious group. Ninety four percent of the female respondents and 97% of their partners are self-classified as white British.

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[1] The Cambridge Scale is a measure of similarity of lifestyle, and therefore generalised advantage/disadvantage. The scale is a continuous measure of social and material advantages. Scale scores represent an occupational unit's relative position within the national order of social interaction and stratification. Separate scales are produced for men and women (Prandy, 1990). It is consistent therefore that the mean for females is higher than the mean for males in this sample.

	Individuals (last episode when union ended or was censored)	Union-years (over the lifetime of the union until it ended or was censored)
Union dissolved	11.6% (259)	1.1% (259)
Censored	88.9% (2083)	98.9% (23907)
Number of unions		
1	54.4%(1273)	56.4%(13626)
2	27.2%(638)	27.1%(6558)
More	18.4%(431)	16.5%(3982)
How previous union ended (if any)		
Ended	66.1.8%(1565)	65.4%(15796)
Marriage (continued)	33.2%(777)	34.6%(8370)
Type of the current union		
Marriage	85.7% (2008)	92.2% (22284)
Cohabitation	14.3% (334)	7.8% (1882)
Average number of children (st.d in parentheses)	1.8(1.3)	
Age of children[1]		
No children	4% (72)	15%(3173)
Under 5	13% (257)	12% (2615)
5-9	12% (237)	15%(3192)
10-14	15% (283)	16%(3293)
15-18	12% (239)	11%(2403)
Over 18	44% (854)	31% (6631)
Partner's sex		
Male	99.6%(2334)	99.4% (24137)
Female	0.4% (9)	0.6% (39)
Female's average age (st.d. in parentheses)		42.3(10.1)
Partner's average age (st.d. in parentheses)		44.4(10.9)
Female older than her partner	26.5%(621)	24%(5847)
Female younger than her partner	62 %(1452)	63.7%(15413)
Age of female at the start of the union		
Under 20	1.5%(36)	
20-29	30.5%(714)	
30-39	31 %(734)	
40-49	28 %(661)	
50 and over	8.4 %(197)	
Female Ethnicity		
White	93.7% (2194)	94.9% (22932)
Black	1.0% (21)	0.5% (123)
Other	4.1% (97)	4.0% (960)
Partner Ethnicity		
White	96.7% (2327)	96.5% (23326)
Black	0.6% (15)	0.5% (123)
Other	2.8% (66)	3.1% (758)

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics.

Notes: [1]Those for whom the information about the child age was available

	Individuals (last episode when union ended or was censored)	Union-years (over the life-time of the union until it ended or was censored)
Labour force characteristics: Female		
Employed		70.5%(17029)
Unemployed		2.0%(381)
Not in labour force		28.0%(6756)
Female Cambridge Scale Score		40.0
Labour force characteristics: Partner		
Employed		84.7%(20472)
Unemployed		3.8%(911)
Not in labour force		11.5%(2783)
Male Cambridge scale score		36.2
Educational qualifications: Female		
No qualifications		28.4%(6872)
Secondary qualifications		59%(14246)
Degree-level qualifications		12.6(3046)
Educational qualifications: Male		
No qualifications		23.7%(5719)
Secondary qualifications		62%(14990)
Degree-level qualifications		14.3%(3457)
Female has traditional gender role attitudes	11.2%(263)	
Partner has traditional gender role attitudes	16.6%(388)	
Female is a member of a religious group	10.6%(249)	
Partner is a member of a religious group	7.5%(175)	

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics (continued).

3.2.1.   DISSOLUTION OF MARRIAGES AND COHABITATING UNIONS

Among our sample of households, union dissolution is relatively rare. Overall 11.6% of unions were dissolved within the lifetime of the panel (259 out of 2,343), and 86% per cent of couples were married at some point during the panel. This latter figure may initially seem high but we are analysing current (or the most recent) unions. For a third of couples, their current marriage is a continuation of a previous cohabitation.

One and a half per cent of female respondents entered their most recent union when under age twenty. Thirty per cent entered their current union between age 20 and 29, 31% began their most recent unions between age 30 and 39, and the remaining 36% entered their current union aged 40 or older.

The average number of children is 1.8 per couple. Over the lifetime of the unions, 15% of couples had no children, 12% of couples had children under age 5, 15% had children aged between 5 and 9, 16% had children aged between 10 and 14, and 11% had children aged between 15 and 18 years old.

3.2.2. MIGRATION-RELATED VARIABLES

The survey collected information on the date of the migration, reasons for the migration and the distance of the migration. We distinguish between short distance (or residential) moves (under 30 miles) and long distance migration within the UK (30 plus miles), and constructed time-changing variables for the number of previous migrations and for the length of time since the last migration. The migration-related variables are presented in Table 2.

In the 24,166 union-years lived in our panel, there were 1878 migration events. Sixty two per cent of geographically mobile couples moved only once, 24% moved twice and the rest of the migrants moved three or more times. Among spatially mobile couples, 28.2 miles was the average distance of a move. Only 22% of migrant couples moved 30 miles or more.

Total number of migration events during the BHPS life-time	1878
Reasons for moving for migrants[1,2]:	
Accommodation-related reasons (e.g. purchased new house)	21.3%(400)
Family-related reasons (being closer to one's family)	13.4%(252)
Environment/Life course reasons (e.g. better environment, moving out of parental home, retirement)	15.1%(284)
Female partner only mentioned job-related reasons	2.2% (41)
Male partner only mentioned job-related reasons	2.6% (48)
Both partners mentioned job-related reasons	10.6%(199)
Reasons were not specified	21.3%(400)
Long distance migration(>=30 mile)[1]	22%(380)
Total number of migrations	
1	62.4% (1172)
2	24.3% (456)
3	8.5% (160)
4	2.9% (54)
5 or more	1.9% (90)

Table 2: Migration-related variables

Notes: [1]See charts 1 and 2 in App 1 for detailed reasons for migration.

[2]See charts 2 and 3 in App 1 for detailed job related reasons for migration.

[3]Those migrants for whom information about the distance of move was available.

3.2.3.   REASONS FOR MIGRATION

The reasons for migration provided in the survey can be broadly categorised as (i) migration for accommodation-related reasons (this includes buying, selling and moving into larger or smaller accommodation), (ii) family-related reasons (e.g. moving in with family members, or moving closer to relatives), (iii) environmental and life course-related reasons (e.g. health, better environment, improved safety, retirement or academic study) and (iv) job-related reasons.

The leading reason for couple/family migration is associated with changes in accommodation. Among all migration events, 21.3% of migrations were for accommodation-related reasons, and about 13% of migrations were for family related reasons. Fifteen per cent of migrations were related to the respondent's life course or to environmental reasons. About 21% of movers specified no reason for migrating.

In the BHPS, respondents were asked to report their reasons for moving and were able to give more than one reason. If a respondent reported that the reason was job-related, they were invited to provide further details (see Appendix 1). From this information, we constructed a new variable 'reasons for moving' by combining responses regarding the reasons for moving for both the female and her partner. When more than one reason for migration was reported, priority was given to job-related reasons for migration.

If the female partner reported a non-job related reason for moving (e.g. accommodation-related), but her male partner reported a job-related reason (e.g. new job) we classified the couple's reason for moving as being related to the male partner's job. It was not always possible to differentiate between the family migrations which were triggered either by the male partner's job reasons or the female partners' job reasons. In 65% of instances where job-related reasons were reported, these reasons were reported by both partners. Overall, job-related reasons for family migration were reported by 288 migrant couples (17 per cent of all migrants). In 240 cases, job-related reasons were stated by female respondents. In 247 cases, job-related reasons for migration were reported by the male partners. In 199 cases (69% of all mobile couples), both partners stated common, job-related, reasons for migration and in these cases it was not possible to identify who initiated the move, and was therefore the 'leading'

migrant, and who was the trailing partner. Overall 41 cases of migration can be identified as female-led (2.2% of all moves) and 46 cases as male-led (2.6% of all moves)'. For the analysis, we differentiate between two categories of couples: first, those who moved for job-related reasons and where both partners stated job-related reasons for migration; second, those where a job-related reason was reported only by one partner.

3.2.4. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN REASONS FOR MIGRATION AND DISTANCE OF MIGRATION

We find a relationship between distance of migration and reasons for migrating. Between 78% and 89% of those who moved for reason not related to a job, moved within less than 30 miles. Half of the couples who moved for one partner's job also moved a distance of less than 30 miles. Long distance migration is clearly associated with moves when both partners are moving for job-related reasons. For 66% of the couples who moved 30 miles or more, both partners gave job-related reasons for the move (see Table 3).

	Distance of migration		
Reasons for couple's migration	up to 30 ml %	30 ml or more %	Total
Accommodation-related	89.3	10.7	654
Family-related	77.8	22.2	252
Environment/lifestyle/life course-related	84.2	15.8	284
Other/unspecified reasons	85.8	14.2	246
Female partner only stated job-related reasons	53.7	46.3	41
Male partner only stated job-related reasons	52.1	47.9	48
Both partners stated job-related reasons	33.7	66.3	199
Total	**78(1344)**	**22(380)**	**1724**

Table 3: Distance of migration by reasons for couple's migration, row percentages.

Note: Includes only migrants for whom information about the distance of move was available.

3.2.5.   DISSOLUTION OF UNIONS BY DIFFERENT CHARACTERISTICS

To investigate the associations between union dissolution and other characteristics of the couple, we examined the survival time of unions over the life time of the BHPS.

Figure 1 presents plots with Kaplan-Meier survival estimates for unions by type of relationship (rates of union survival are higher for married couples); age of the youngest child (survival rates are better for couples without children under 18); number of children (couples with two or three children have the highest rates of survival); ethnicity (unions where the male partner is white British have slightly higher rates of survival); male partner's attitudes to gender roles (little difference in union survival rates where the male partner did/did not hold traditional views on gender roles); female respondent's membership of a religious group (couples where the respondent is a member of a religious group have higher survival rates[2]).

Educational attainment is also related to union stability, with couples where the female has a degree-level qualification having longer relationships. Further, labour force characteristics are important in union stability as we see a noticeable difference between couples where the male partner is unemployed compared to couples where the male partner is employed.

Figure 2 compares the union survival estimates for migrant and non-migrant couples and presents plots with union survival rates for different categories of migrants. Over the life of the unions, those who moved for the reasons of one partner's job have the worse survival rates compared to the rest of the migrant couples; partners who migrated more than once, and in particular those who moved three or more times, are more likely to separate or divorce than those who did not move or moved only once. Those who moved within 30 miles have better survival rates soon after the family migration; however, as time passes the survival rates of both long- and short-distance migrant couples converge.

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[2] A very small proportion of respondents is non-white or stated that they are a member of a religious group (see Table 1).
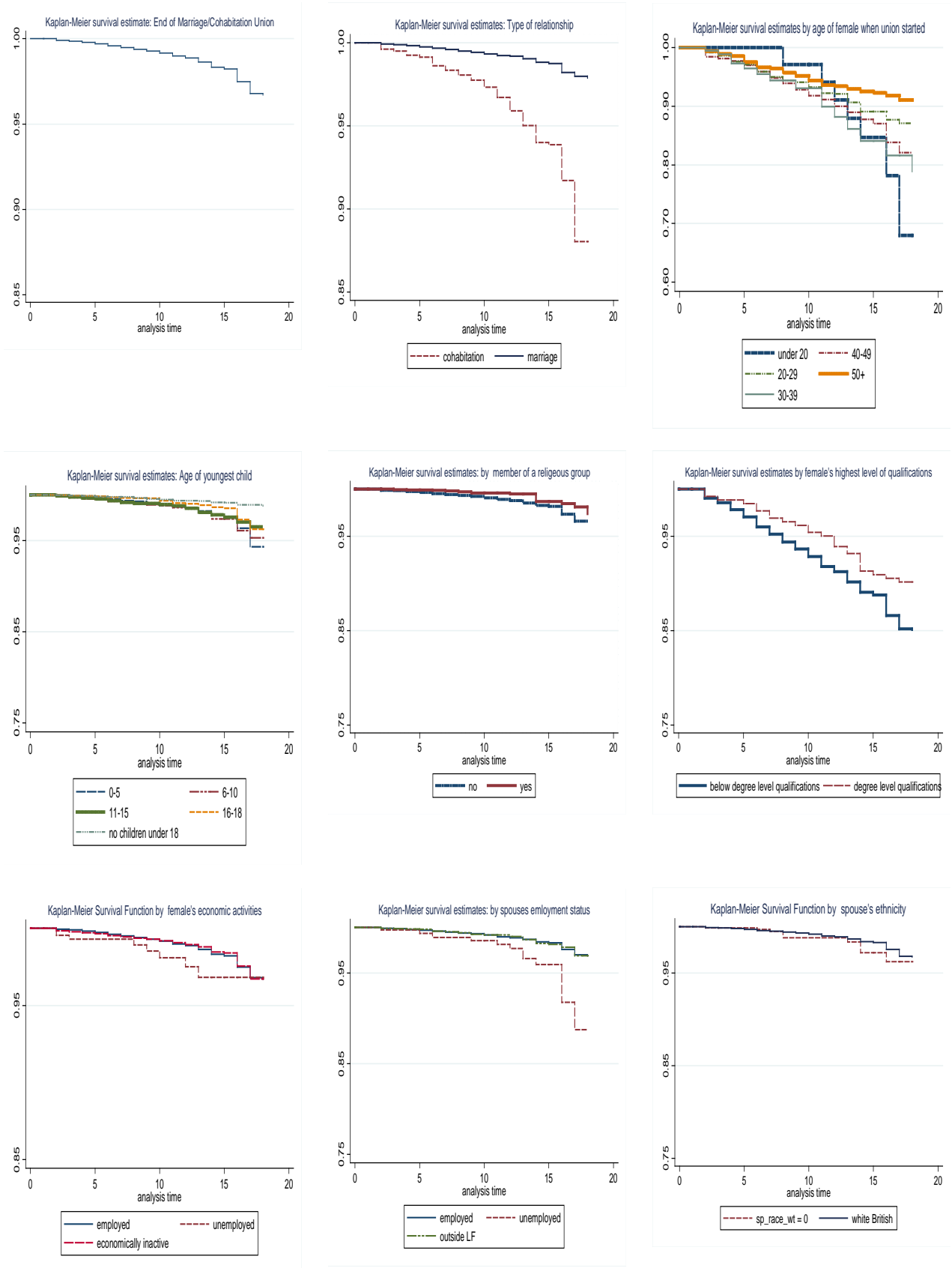
Figure 1: Kaplan-Meier survival estimates for union duration by characteristics of the respondents
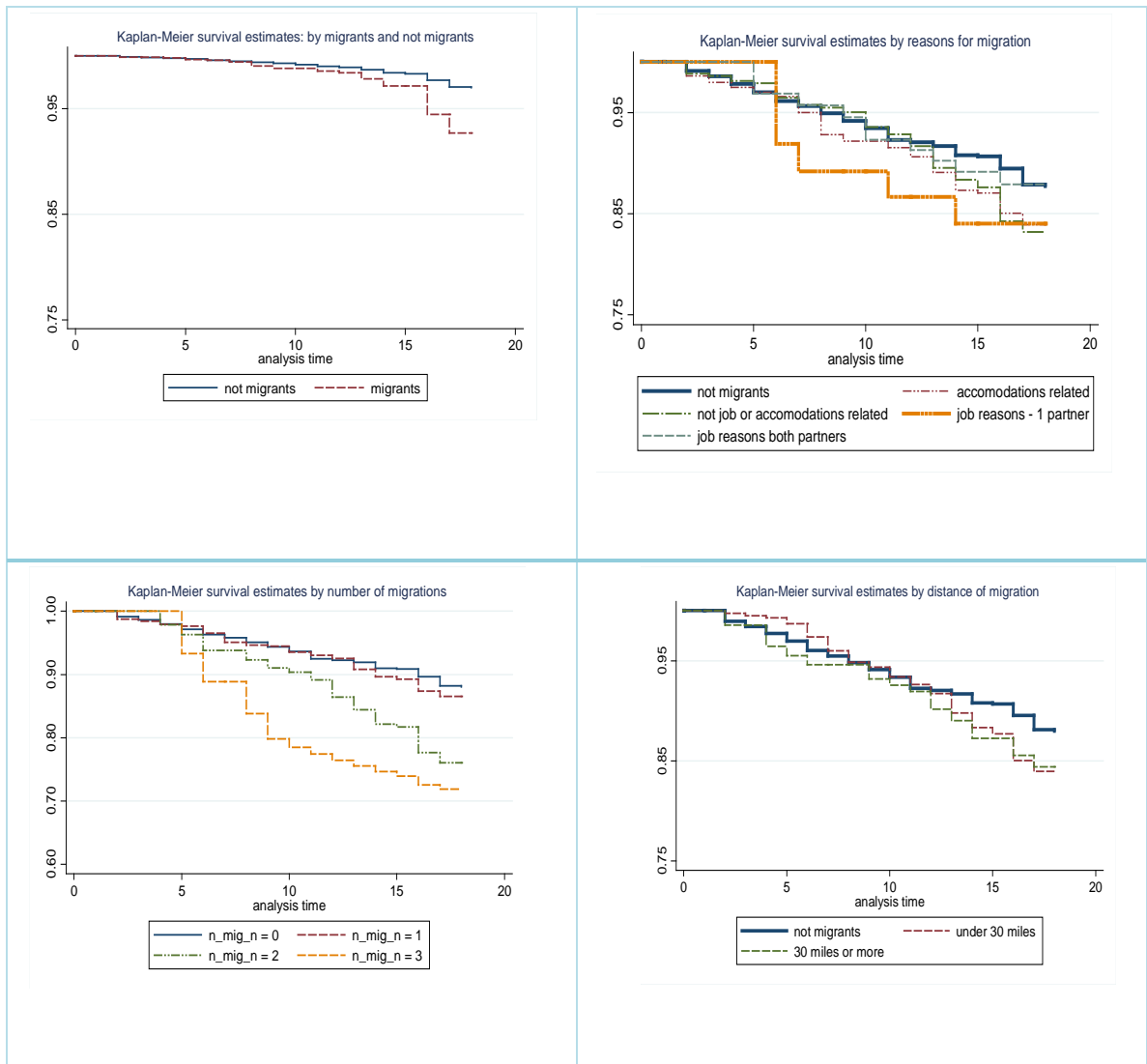
Figure 2: Kaplan-Meier union survival estimates for migrant and non-migrant

3.2.6. IMPACT OF CHANGES IN EMPLOYMENT STATUS AND CHARACTERISTICS ON THE STABILITY OF UNIONS

During the period of analysis female respondents and their partners experienced a number of changes in their employment characteristics. We define as 'negative' an adverse change that took place between any two consecutive waves of BHPS in either the main type of economic activity (i.e. a change from employment to either unemployment or economic inactivity) and/or in socio-economic status (measured by a decrease in the Cambridge Scale score). We are interested in the long-term impact of these negative changes on union stability rather than simply the impact of the changes at the time they occurred. Therefore, we constructed variables which measure not just a single event of negative change in employment characteristics between two consecutive episodes, but instead identify a 'negative spell'. The 'negative spell' could last throughout a sequence of BHPS waves until a positive change happens in the respondent's, or their partner's, economic activities or their socio-economic status (i.e. they return to employment or their socio-economic status increases).

The negative changes in the employment characteristics of respondents and their partners are summarised in Table 4.

	% (number) of spells when negative change in the employment characteristics between two consecutive episodes happened	% (number) of spells when negative change in the employment characteristics between two consecutive episodes once happened, sustained (before improving)	Average number of consecutive 'negative' spells
Negative changes in main economic activities (i.e. from employment to unemployment or economic inactivity): female			
No negative changes	94% (22754)	81% (19582)	
Yes	6% (1412)	19% (4584)	**3.2**
Negative changes in main economic activities (i.e. from employment to unemployment or economic inactivity): spouse			
No negative changes	96.5% (23322)	90% (21642)	
Yes	3.5% (844)	10% (2524)	**3**
Negative changes in socio-economic status (decreases in CSS): female			
No negative changes	83.3% (20130)	64% (15575)	
Yes	16.7% (4036)	36% (8591)	**2.12**
Negative changes in socio-economic status (decrease in CSS): spouse			
No negative changes	81.7% (19747)	62% (15000)	
Yes	18.3% (4419)	38% (9166)	**2.07**

Table 4: Changes in couple's employment characteristics during the life time of the union.

Over 19% of women and 10% of men experience negative changes in their main socio-economic activity (i.e. they become unemployed or economically inactive), with and average duration of the negative spells being approximately three years for both men and women.

Negative changes in socio-economic status are more frequent than negative changes in main economic activity. Over a third (36%) of respondents had a negative change in their socio-economic status that persisted over time, with the average length of the negative spell being two years.

Table 5 offers some insight into the relationships between negative changes in the employment characteristics and socio-economic status of couples and migration events. It shows that the difference in the share of employment episodes with adverse changes is slightly higher among migrants. In particular, migrant women have a higher number of episodes with negative changes in relation to both their employments status and socio-economic status.

		Not migrants	Migrants	Total	
Main economic activity					
Female	No negative change	84%	77%	19582	Chi2=151 p=0.000
	Negative change	16%	23%	4584	
Spouse	No negative change	89%	90%	21642	Chi2=11 p=0.001
	Negative change	11%	10%	2524	
Cambridge Scale Scores (CSS)					
Female	No negative change	67%	61%	15575	Chi2=70 p=0.000
	Negative change	33%	39%	8591	
Spouse	No negative change	63%	60%	15000	Chi2=25 P=0.000
	Negative change	37%	40%	9166	

Table 5: Changes in employment characteristics/socio-economic status of couples by migration status

Figure 3 plots the estimates of union survival between couples who did and did not experience negative changes in employment characteristics. The plots show that, although union survival rates are better for those unions where partners were not affected by negative changes in employment characteristics, negative changes in the employment characteristics of male partners have a stronger adverse impact on union

survival rates. We also examined the union survival rates of spatially mobile couples who experienced negative changes in employment in relation to reasons for migration. We found that couples who moved for accommodation-related reasons, and where females subsequently experienced negative changes in their employment status, had the lowest survival rates.
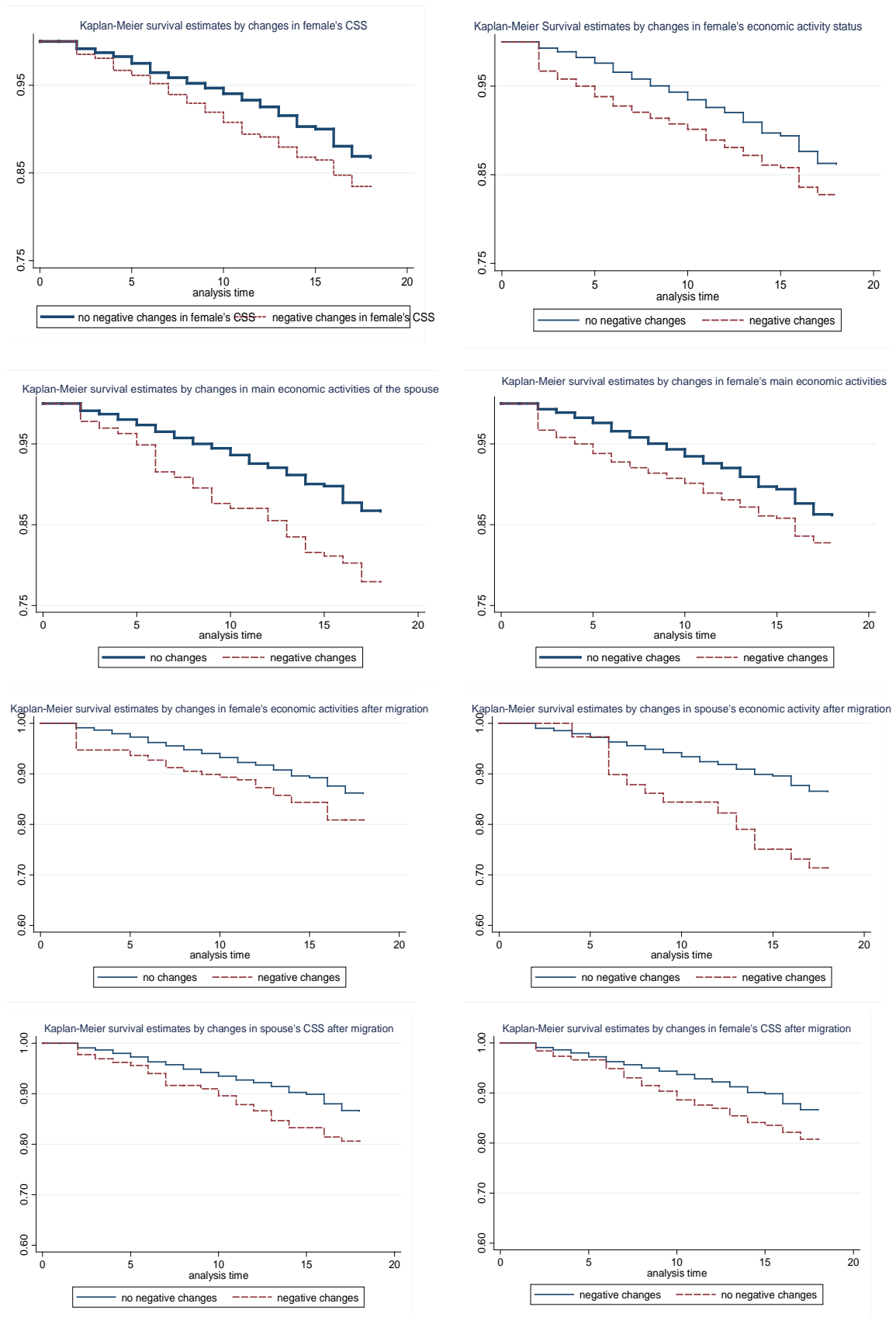
Figure 3: Kaplan-Meier survival estimates for union duration by changes in employment charcteristics.

3.3.   DATA ANALYTICAL METHOD

We estimated Cox proportional hazard models for survival analysis of couples' unions. The method does not assume any particular distribution within the independent variables but it does assume that the effects of the independent variables on survival are constant over time and are additive on one scale (Cox and Oakes, 1984).

The dependent variable in the model is the hazard of union dissolution for a couple. Independent variables captured (1) the impact of the baseline (i.e. the duration of the union over the years of the BHPS); (2) the effects of a time-varying variable that is a continuous function of the duration of the BHPS (e.g. the age of the partners, number of previous migrations/moves, the time passed since the last migration/move, the length of the union in months from the time it started, the age of the couple's children); (3) the effects of time-constant variables (e.g. gender, race, religion, age when union started, age difference in the couple, attitudes to gender roles) and (4) the effects of time-varying variables whose values can change only at discrete times (e.g., level of education, employment status and occupational status and the changes in those). To test the proportional hazard assumption, we fitted models where some covariates (e.g. distance of migration, reasons for migration and changes in both partners' employment and occupational characteristics) have both time-invariant and time-variant components (i.e. the main effect and interaction with the time variable) (Stata 2011; Longhi and Nandi 2015; Boyle et al 2009). To control for the clustering of events within individuals as well as possible unobserved determinants of union dissolution, we fit our models with robust standard errors.

4. RESULTS

We report the results of four Cox proportional hazard regression models. For each independent variable odds ratios and robust standard errors are presented. Model 1 includes only migration-related independent variables. As shown in Table 6 (column 1), there is a lower risk of union dissolution for geographically mobile couples who moved within 30 miles, as well as for couples who moved five or more years ago. Those who migrated more than once are at higher risk of union dissolution, with every subsequent move increasing this risk. Reasons for migration that are accommodation-related or job-related and stated by both partners are associated with lower risks of

union dissolution, while migration for job-related reasons stated by only one of the partners is associated with a higher union dissolution rate, although none of the corresponding odd ratio estimates were statistically significant. Couples who moved for any reason other than job or accommodation are at lower risk of union dissolution. Interestingly, the latter variable also interacts with time (the BHPS waves); i.e. it has a statistically significant coefficient for its time-varying component. The coefficient of the time variant component is greater than one, which means that, although the risk of union dissolution is low for couples soon after migration for other than job- or accommodation related reasons, this risk increases and the survival rates of unions decline over time.

Descriptive statistics presented in the previous sections indicate that, among those who moved over longer distances (more than 30 miles), a job-related reason for migration is more common than among those who moved a shorter distance (see Table 3). We estimated a variant of Model 1 (Table 6 column 1) that included a set of interactions between reasons for migration and distance of move. None of these interaction terms were statistically significant[3].

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[3] Available from authors on request.

Main	Odds ratios (robust standard errors)	Odds ratios (robust standard errors)	Odds ratios (robust standard errors)	Odds ratios (robust standard errors)
	Model 1 (_t)	Model 2 (_t)	Model 3 (_t)	Model 4 (_t)
	Migration variables	Model 1 + Socio-demographic characteristics	Model 2 + Changes in employment characteristics	Model 2 + Changes in employment characteristics after migration[1]
Distance of move				
Under 30 miles	0.96* (.01)	0.97* (.01)	0.97* (.01)	0.97* (.012)
30 miles of more	1.00 (.00)	1.003* (.00)	1.003* (.00)	1.00 (.00)
Time since the last move				
First 12 months	1.00 (.55)	0.91 (.35)	1.06 (.40)	1.05 (.50)
13-60 months	1.00(.00)	1.01** (.00)	1.01* (.00)	1.01* (.00)
More than 60 months	0.99**(.01)	0.99** (.01)	0.99 (.00)	0.99 (.00)
Reasons for move				
Not job- or accommodation- related	0.59 (.27)	0.25** (.12)	0.23** (.11)	0.22** (.11)
Accommodation- related	1.07 (.46)	0.72 (.30)	0.65 (.26)	0.63 (.26)
One partner stated job-related	1.80 (1.09)	1.21 (.66)	0.93 (.44)	0.93 (.45)
Both partners stated job-related	0.88 (.50)	0.82 (.47)	0.67 (.36)	0.68 (.37)
Total number of moves	1.14** (.69)	1.25** (.10)	1.19* (.01)	1.21* (.09)
Type of union: marriage		0.39*** (.06)	0.36*** (.05)	0.36*** (.05)
Female older than male		0.98 (.12)	0.99 (.12)	1.01 (.12)
Female's age at the start of the union		1.01 (.01)	1.00 (.01)	1.00 (.01)
Female white British		1.56 (.52)	1.31 (.42)	1.32 (.43)
Partner white British		0.44 (.19)	0.52 (.18)	0.55 (.24)
Partner has traditional gender attitudes		1.06 (.19)	1.08 (.18)	1.08 (.18)
Female is member of a religious group		0.90 (.22)	0.84 (.21)	0.84 (.21)
Length of the union		0.99*** (.00)	0.99*** (.00)	0.99*** (.00)
Number of children		1.04 (.07)	1.09 (.08)	1.09 (.07)
Age of the youngest child (ref. group: no children under 18)				
Child's age under 5		1.62*(.37)	1.29(.29)	1.27(.29)
Child's age 5-10		1.91**(.42)	1.68*(.37)	1.65*(.37)
Child's age 10-15		1.83**(.40)	1.69*(.37)	1.66*(.36)
Child's age 15-18		2.22**(.56)	2.07**(.51)	2.00**(.50)
Female has degree-level qualifications		0.55**(.12)	0.49**(.11)	0.51**(.11)

Table 6: Cox proportionate hazard discrete time regression (Exponentiated coefficients, Robust Standard errors in parentheses)

Notes: [1]We also ran this model with variables that indicated changes in employment characteristics that happened after migration; however none of these latter variables were found to be statistically significant.

Main economic activity (ref. group: employed)				
Female Unemployed		1.15 (.42)	1.12 (.43)	1.13 (.43)
Female Inactive		0.98 (.16)	0.84 (.18)	0.84 (.18)
Partner Unemployed		1.39 (.37)	0.99 (.32)	0.99 (.32)
Partner Inactive		1.71** (.33)	0.89 (.30)	0.89 (.31)
Female's CSS		1.00 (.001)	1.01 (.00)	1.01 (.01)
Partner's CSS		1.01* (.00)	1.01*** (.00)	1.02*** (.00)
Negative changes in CSS and main economic activities				
Female's economic status worsens (until improved)			1.46 (.35)	2.02* (.59)
Partner's economic status worsens (until improved)			2.74**(.95)	2.39* (.94)
Female's CSS worsens (until improved)			1.63** (.24)	1.63** (.25)
Partner's CSS worsens (until improved)			5.46*** (1.69)	5.34*** (1.65)
Female's economic activity status worsens after migration (until improved)				0.56[1] (0.16)
Partner's economic activity status worsens after migration (until improved)				2.02[2] (0.75)
Time varying components				
Not job- or accommodation-related reason for move	1.07** (.02)	1.11** (.04)	1.11** (.04)	1.13** (.04)
Partner's CSS worsens (until improved)			0.92** (.03)	0.92*** (.02)
Partner's economic activity status worsen after migration for reasons other than job- or accommodation-related reasons				0. (0.03)
Observations	21738	21738	21738	21738
No. of subjects	2275	2275	2275	2275
No. of failures	248	248	248	248
Time at risk	29532	29532	29532	29532
Wald Chi^2	51.1	274.7	338.33	410.7

Table 6: Cox proportionate hazard discrete time regression (Exponentiated coefficients), continued.

Notes: [1]P=0.06 [2]P=0.06

Model 2 (Table 6 column 2) includes both migration variables and measures of the socio-demographic characteristics of the female respondents and their partners, as well as the variables describing the union. This second model is a dramatic improvement on Model 1 (Wald Chi^2-s are 51.1 and 274.7 for Model 1 and Model 2 respectively). Union type, union duration, and age of children are all significant factors predicting union dissolution. Married couples have significantly lower rates of union

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dissolution than cohabiting couples. The risk of union dissolution decreases with the length of the union. Those who have children are at higher risk of union dissolution, and this risk increase with the age of the youngest child. If the female partner is more educated, this reduces the odds of union dissolution and couples where the woman has a degree-level qualification show greater union stability.

Whether the female is working or is economically inactive or unemployed at any given time point (i.e. BHPS wave) does not have a statistically significant impact on union stability. However, the economic inactivity of the male partner at any time point is strongly and positively associated with a higher risk of union dissolution. Rather surprisingly, higher socio-economic status of the partner (measured by the Cambridge Scale Score) at any time point was also found to be negatively associated with union stability. The effects of other covariates such as ethnicity and religious affiliation are not statistically significant.

Controlling for the characteristics of the partners and the type of union had little effect on the associations between the migration-related covariates and the risks of union dissolution estimated by Model 1. In Model 2 and Model 3 long-distance migration (30 miles or more) is associated with higher risks of union dissolution. The association between 'other' (i.e. not job- or accommodation-related) reasons for moving and union dissolution becomes slightly stronger, while couples show a higher predisposition for ending their unions in the period of 13 to 60 months after the most recent migration.

Model 3 (Table 6 column 3) includes all of the previous covariates but also variables that indicate less favourable employment characteristics among the partners. This model shows a further improvement in the proportion of variance explained. Model 3 reveals that negative changes in the employment characteristics of partners are associated with an increased risk of union dissolution. If the female partner's job status worsens or the male partner's employment status and/or job status worsen/s these adversely affect union stability. The worsening of the male partner's job status strongly increases the risks of union dissolution. This latter covariate has also a time variant component, which is smaller than 1. This can be interpreted as indicating that, although

the initial risk of union dissolution after the partner's job status worsens is high, if the couple stayed together this risk declines over time.

The introduction of the covariates that indicate deterioration in the employment characteristics of the partners impacts on two estimates presented in Model 2. First, Model 3 (Table 6 column 3) shows that only the period of 13 to 60 months after migration is associated with greater union instability. Second, a partner's economic inactivity at any single time point ceases to be significantly related to a higher risk of union dissolution in this model. It appears that a change from employment to unemployment or economic inactivity negatively affects the stability of the union.

Finally, Model 4 (Table 6 column 4) includes additionally variables which indicate changes in the employment characteristics of the spatially mobile couples in relation to their reasons for migration. The results show that any negative change in the employment characteristics of either partner increases union instability. The largest increase in the risk of union dissolution is associated with a male partner becoming unemployed or economically inactive. The coefficient of the respective time-varying component of this covariate is negative and statistically significant. This means that the adverse impact of negative changes in the male partner's employment characteristics on union stability is particularly strong soon after these changes happen, but this negative impact declines as time passes even if the partner stays economically inactive or unemployed.

In addition, the estimate of the interaction term between a negative change in the male partner's economic activity and migration is greater than 1 (although the p-value is 0.06). This provides a limited indication that when such a negative change takes place after migration the stability of the union may be at greater risk. Conversely, when the female's economic activity is negatively affected after migration this is related positively to union stability (the estimate of the respective interaction term is smaller than 1, although the p-value is 0.06). Controlling for changes in the employment characteristics of the partners in relation to the reasons for migration does not change the estimates of any other covariates in Model 3.

5. SUMMARY, DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Despite the large multidisciplinary literature on union dissolution, there has been little investigation of the potential relationship between migration, changes in the employment characteristics of partners and union dissolution. To our knowledge there are no other studies that have explored large-scale datasets or undertaken analysis using panel data. Therefore, the results presented here make an original contribution in this area.

Migration is known to be a stressful event and the sources of stress are likely to be multiple. We initially hypothesised that an important source of stress is the potentially negative employment outcomes for one partner, usually the 'trailing spouse', post migration. If family migration has negative consequences for the career of 'trailing' partners then, in contemporary dual-earner families, this may have an impact on union stability, and ultimately increase the likelihood of union dissolution. The British Household Panel Survey offers an appropriate, nationally representative dataset for the study, allowing us to use a range of variables measuring the characteristics of women, their partners and their households, as well as measures of migration, changes in economic activity status and occupational characteristics, to model union dissolution. Nevertheless, this dataset has some limitations[4] which constrained our ability to identify the 'initiator' of family migration and thus the trailing partner. We therefore focused on the post-migration employment characteristics of both partners, and investigated their impact on union stability.

The study offers a number of interesting insights into how union stability is related both to migration histories and to the changes in employment characteristics that both partners experience throughout their life-course. First, the study's results show that the effects of migration on union stability operate in addition to other characteristics of partnerships, such as the length and type of union, the age of children, and the socio-economic characteristics of the partners. In general, married couples have more stable unions than cohabiting ones, and the longer the couple stays together, the higher the

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[4] Although there is a series of variables in the BHPS that identify various job-related reasons for migration, in most of the cases when job-related reasons for migration were reported, they were reported by both partners (67% of all job-related migrations) and therefore it was not possible to decide with any certainty which one of the partners was the initiator of the job-related move, and which one was the 'trailing' migrant.

chances that they will remain together. Couples are less likely to separate when they do not have children or have young children, when the female has a degree-level qualification, and when the male partner is employed.

Examining the relationship between migration and the survival rate of unions shows that, overall, spatially mobile couples are at higher risk of separation. Among movers, however, couples who move a short distance have higher rates of survival, while long distance moves (30 miles and more) are associated with higher rates of union dissolution. Two thirds of long distance moves are job-related, with both partners reporting job-related reasons for the migration. This suggests that job-related moves involving long distance relocation are more often perceived as a joint family venture, while in the case of short distance migration each partner tends to report their own reason for moving.

We found evidence that family migration has a short-term effect (which can be either positive or negative depending on the reasons for the move) on union stability, and that the effect decreases over time. There is a higher risk of union dissolution for couples between one and five years after migration; and, for those who move more frequently, union survival rates are also lower.

The analysis shows that union survival rates are higher for those unions where partners are not affected by negative changes in employment characteristics. Negative changes in the employment characteristics of either partner, such as the worsening of socio-economic status or exit from employment, are associated with higher odds of union dissolution. The multivariate analysis also reveals that negative changes in the employment characteristics of male partners have a stronger adverse impact on union survival rates, suggesting the continuing resonance of the breadwinner family model. The association between negative changes in employment status and union stability is particularly strong soon after these changes take place, but the initially high risk of union dissolution decreases over time.

We found that when the male partner becomes economically inactive after migration, this adds to the risk of union dissolution, whereas when the female partner exits employment after migration, this reduces the risk of the union dissolution. We

also found evidence of gender differences in responses to changes in employment characteristics after migration. When the female partner's job status is negatively affected after migration for accommodation-related reasons, this is associated with lower odds of union dissolution. When the male partner becomes unemployed or economically inactive after migration, the likelihood of union dissolution increases, albeit that this effect decreases with the passage of time. These findings support more general theoretical expectations that negative changes in male partner's employment characteristics have a stronger negative effect on union stability than similar changes in female's partner employment (Peterson et al., 1999).

When reasons for migration are other than job- or accommodation-related, then changes from employment to unemployment or economic inactivity have short-term positive effects on union stability. Since the above reasons often include 'retirement' and 'full–time study', we could assume that in these cases changes from employment to economic inactivity were planned in advance and were not likely to add a strain to the couple's relationship which might contribute to union instability.

In sum, the evidence shows that both migration and negative changes in employment characteristics are associated with a greater instability of marital/cohabitation unions, and that these negative effects are stronger if adverse changes in the employment characteristics of the male partner occur after family migration.

We expected migration to be associated with an increased risk of union dissolution and we found a modest but significant short-term effect. We further expected that migration would contribute indirectly to union instability by increasing the risk of union dissolution through accompanying changes in the employment characteristics of each partner. Whether or not job-related reasons for migration were mentioned by either partner, we find that the impact of the accompanying negative changes in employment characteristics on union stability are mediated by the gender of the partner who experienced these changes. In particular, we find that a deterioration in the male partner's employment characteristics is associated with an increase in the risk of union dissolution soon after these negative changes happen, while a deterioration in the female partner's employment characteristics reduces the risk of union dissolution.

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This study's findings show that, for contemporary dual-earner couples, the idea of a 'leading' male migrant and a 'trailing' female spouse does not capture the complexity of contemporary family migration but that there are still some traces of the traditional family model. In certain circumstances, family migration continues to have gendered effects on union stability. Together, these findings support the idea that the 'male breadwinner' model of the family has not been completely expunged from gendered responses to migration. Interruptions in career trajectories which may follow migration appear to elicit different responses depending on the gender of the partner who suffers these adverse changes, and union stability is most at risk when the male partner suffers adverse employment changes.

The modest and short-term effect of family migration on union stability which was found in this study, as well as the lack of evidence that a worsening in the employment characteristics of the female partner post-migration is linked to greater union instability is in accordance with some previous research. Mincer (1978), for example, defined 'tied person' in the family as the one whose gains from migration were dominated by gains or losses of the spouse, and suggested that the employment status and occupational position of the tied spouse (or the female partner) play an important role in the family's decision about migration. Those women who have a greater degree of labour market attachment and a greater earning power are less like to compromise 'locationally' and agree to move if they think that their personal losses from migration would be larger than the gains (ibid. p. 756). Such couples therefore either remain at their current location, or their union dissolves prior to migration. Those women who agree to move, are ready to compromise on their personal occupational and employment gains, either because their perceived losses are small, or because they had transferable occupations, or because they have been tied spouses. This line of reasoning is supported by our finding showing that in geographically mobile couples the female partner becoming unemployed or economically inactive, decreases the risk of the union dissolution.

It is clear from this study that the mechanisms through which spatial mobility and migration affect the stability of a union are complex and should be investigated further, perhaps using qualitative data. The social survey data used in our analyses could not reveal whether geographically mobile couples were already unhappy with the state of

their relationship prior to a move, and were therefore on the verge separation or divorce regardless of the move, or whether the relationship deteriorated as a result of the geographical move itself. Thus, a mixed method research design could offer further interesting and revealing insight into the relationship between geographical mobility and the stability of a union.

Our results have policy implications. They suggest that the period shortly after a residential move is the period when families experience the biggest strain and therefore this is the period when the union is most likely to dissolve. Providing couples and families moving into an area with help, advice and general support through workplaces, local authorities, and local communities, could considerably reduce stress and contribute to protecting union stability. Such support is often in place for families of international migrants and this study shows that families of internal migrants could also benefit from such support.
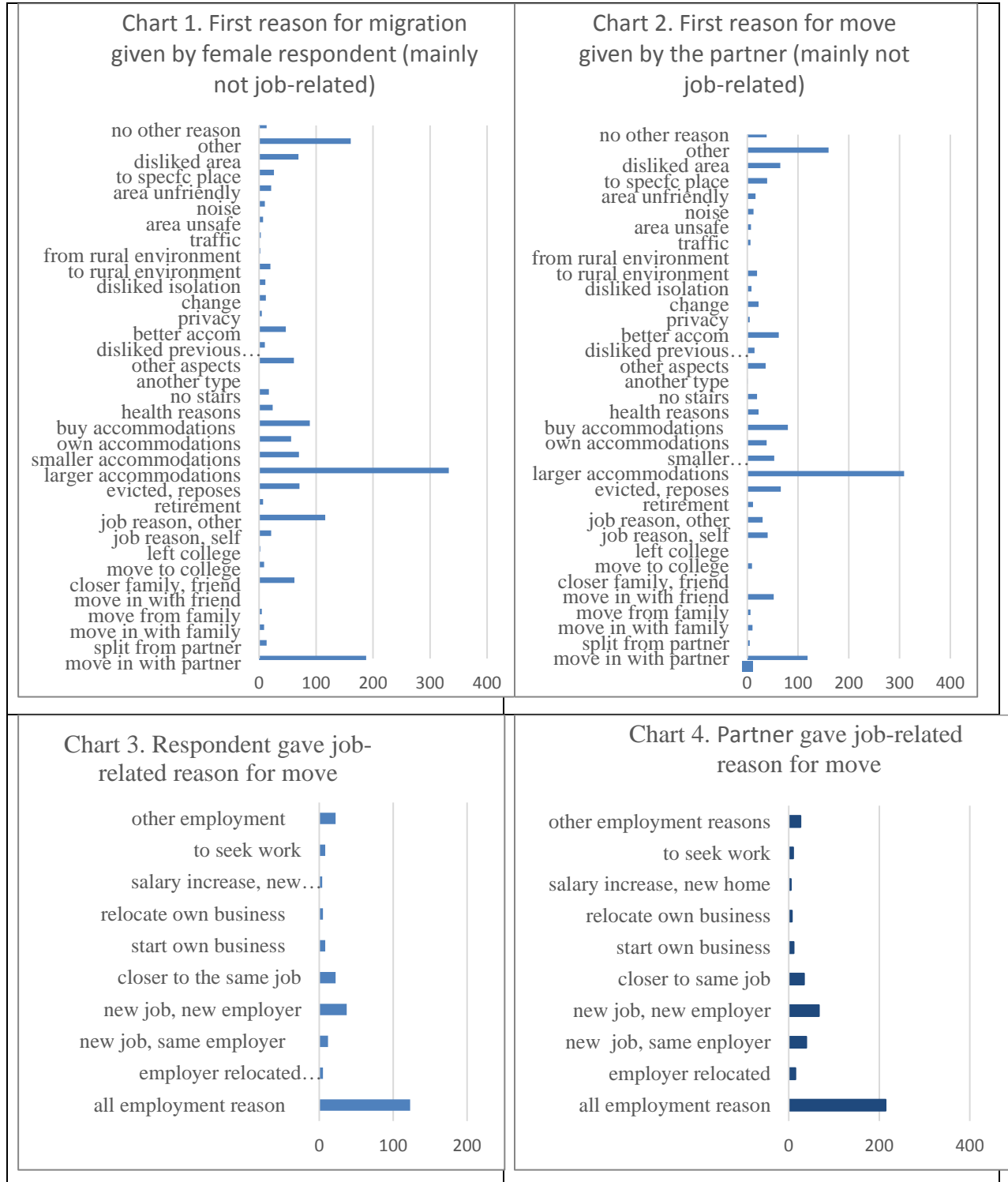
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APPENDIX 1

Below we summarise the categories of variables in BHPS that describe reasons for a residential move.

Chart 1. First reason for migration given by female respondent (mainly not job-related)

Chart 2. First reason for move given by the partner (mainly not job-related)

Chart 3. Respondent gave job-related reason for move

Chart 4. Partner gave job-related reason for move

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