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Consequences of Repartnering for Post-divorce Maternal Well-Being and Risk Behaviors

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Mothers' dating after divorce has been linked to health benefits for mothers (Amato, 2000). However, this association assumes that all repartnering relationships are beneficial for mothers (Symoens et al., 2014). According to the divorce-stress-adaptation perspective (Wang & Amato, 2000), mothers' dating after divorce may be a supportive factor for her adjustment if her relationship is high quality, which can assist mothers with post-divorce stress (Amato, 2000; Wang & Amato, 2000), or can contribute to post-divorce stress through low quality relationships (Hetherington, 2003; Montgomery et al., 1992). However, not all mothers date, and those that do, use different approaches to dating, such as dating only one partner versus multiple partners. Another deficit in the literature is the influence of selection processes during repartnering. As well as examining the impact of relationship quality on maternal well-being, the current study includes the influence of stable traits, such as age and length of marriage, in order to examine the threat of selection across different repartnering histories.

The current study used four repartnering histories that mothers reported after divorce (no dating, dating monogamously, dating multiple partners serially, and dating

multiple partners simultaneously) to examine consequences on maternal well-being (depressive symptoms, life satisfaction, drunkenness, and unprotected sex). Relationship quality is reported for each relationship. Using longitudinal monthly diary data collected over a two-year period beginning with filing for divorce and multi-level models, I examined changes in the intercept and slope of maternal well-being for each repartnering history, as well as the effect of breakup with a particular focus on the interaction of relationship quality. To test for the threat of selection, I used mothers' stable traits as level-2 predictors. Results for this study show that mothers who enter in a high quality relationship report slightly higher levels of maternal well-being. Mothers entering low quality relationships report slightly lower levels of maternal well-being compared to times when mothers are not dating. Maternal well-being was not consistently influenced by maternal breakup. Mothers also reported increases in unprotected sex throughout the study, which may be a better marker of trust than maternal well-being. Only support was found for selection effects. Implications for maternal well-being are discussed.

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Introduction

Repartnering after divorce is linked to better psychological and physical health outcomes for mothers by alleviating the negative effects associated with post-divorce stress (Amato, 2000; Anderson & Greene, 2005; Hetherington, 2003; Skew, Evans, & Gray, 2009; Wang & Amato, 2000). However, this association presumes that *any* repartnering relationship is beneficial for mothers' well-being with the assumption that mothers repartnering relationships are high quality. After divorce, mothers could enter relationships that make them unhappy, which should be more likely to prevent mothers from coping with post-divorce stress. Only recently have researchers sought to understand the role of relationship quality in repartnering relationships (Symoens, Colman, & Bracke, 2014). Also, the positive effects of repartnering are primarily based on research focused on cohabitating relationships and remarriages after divorce (Bray, 1999; Coleman, Ganong, & Fine, 2000; Montgomery, Anderson, Hetherington, & Clingempeel, 1992; Wu & Schimmele, 2005), generally avoiding dating relationships that precede these repartnering transitions. Subsequently, researchers view repartnering as a static variable, rather than capturing the effects of entering and leaving post-divorce dating relationships. Last, many mothers may choose *not* to enter romantic relationships after divorce, especially if the former marriage or the divorce process was physically and mentally draining (Hetherington, 2003), which also has implications for mothers' well-being. For this study, I focus on divorced women with primary residential custody of children, as they arguably face the most difficulty after divorce, particularly in terms of psychological health, due to decreases in family income after divorce, increases in parental responsibilities, and reductions in their social network (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002; Tavares & Aassve, 2013; Symoens, Colman, & Bracke, 2014). The goal of this

investigation is to examine the impact of entering, maintaining, ending, and avoiding dating relationships on mothers' well-being by focusing on relationship quality. To achieve this goal and address the limitations of past research, I designate different repartnering histories: no dating, dating only one partner (monogamous dating), dating multiple partners serially, and dating multiple partners simultaneously to capture the effect of relationship quality on different repartnering transitions.

Although mothers' repartnering histories may influence her psychological well-being, the threat of selection describes the inverse relationship, such that mothers' stable traits may influence her repartnering histories (Amato, 2000). Certain characteristics may predispose mothers to either initiate a dating relationship, such as mothers who are less educated and make less money who could benefit with an additional source of income, or avoid a dating relationship, such as maternal age. Mothers who are older generally have a fewer pool of potential dating partners or these mothers focus on the development and adjustment of her children rather than be distracted by the ups and downs of a romantic relationship (Bzostek, McLanahan, & Carolson, 2012; de Graaf & Kalmijn, 2003). The current investigation tests for the threat of selection by examining the effect of various characteristics of mothers on her repartnering history and psychological well-being. Overall, this study will extend prior research on the consequences of repartnering on post-divorce maternal adjustment by focusing on the quality of mothers' relationships while also addressing the threat of selection (see *Figure 1* for comprehensive list of study variables). In the following review, I begin with a description of the divorce-stress-adaptation perspective, which will provide the conceptual underpinnings for this study. Next, I discuss the demographic trends in repartnering after divorce, followed by a review of literature on the consequences of not repartnering, repartnering, and repartnering with multiple

relationships for mothers' psychological well-being and risk behaviors. After addressing the limitations of prior research, I describe the current study.

Divorce-Stress-Adaptation Perspective

A prominent model of the process of events unfolding after divorce is the divorce-stress-adaptation perspective described by Wang and Amato (2000). According to this perspective, the divorce process leads to different stressors that married families do not experience, such as loss of emotional support from a marital partner, continuing conflict with an ex-spouse and, most commonly for women, having sole responsibility for children. These stressful events can result in psychological and physical health problems, which may influence well-being in the long-term (Amato, 2000).

The divorce-stress-adaptation perspective explains that not everyone who is involved with divorce experiences these negative consequences, at least not for an extended period of time (Wang & Amato, 2000). Within this perspective are two different processes of adaptation that are initiated subsequently with post-divorce stress – the crisis model and the chronic strain model. According to the crisis model, post-divorce stress is relatively short-term, and over time, individuals return to baseline levels of well-being and adjustment after divorce with the help of certain protective factors, such as a steady job (Wang & Amato, 2000). In this sense, divorce is a temporary crisis that only impedes well-being in the short term. One factor that may predict mothers going through this process is the quality of the dating relationship. A high quality romantic relationship may provide mothers the opportunity to return to baseline levels of adjustment, by lowering depressive symptoms and increasing life satisfaction. Whether a mother dates only one partner, multiple partners, or even dates momentarily (such as a brief romantic encounter) could boost confidence and provide an opportunity to disengage from the former

marital relationship. Another factor associated with this process is avoiding romantic relationships after divorce. Although repartnering is associated with positive effects for mothers' mental health, mothers may choose not to become involved with a romantic relationship in order to avoid romantic conflicts or other experiences that may prevent her from returning to baseline levels of adjustment and well-being. In sum, repartnering may serve a role in the crisis model of the divorce-stress-adaptation perspective.

However, if stress from divorce persists or new stressors are introduced, then mothers follow a different process presented in the divorce-stress-adaptation perspective, the chronic strain model. This process describes that the stressors resulting from divorce remain with the potential to compound over time (Wang & Amato, 2000). With the chronic strain model, the emergence of protective factors that prompt the short-term crisis model are not strong enough to surmount the stressors associated with divorce, resulting in chronic stress for parents, their children, and the parent-child relationship (Amato, 2000). One facet of repartnering that may be predictive of this process is the quality of mothers' dating relationships. Mothers who become involved in relationships that don't make them happy may contribute to post-divorce stress associated with the chronic strain model. Also, mothers who are unable to maintain a relationship, which could lead to multiple relationships transitions (Rodgers & Conrad, 1986), could also negatively influence maternal adjustment. Mothers seeking a romantic relationship may lose confidence when they are unable to maintain a relationship after divorce. Therefore, choosing to enter a repartnering relationship as well as the quality of a repartnering relationship has implications for which process mothers experience within the divorce-stress-adaptation perspective.

Trends in Repartnering After Divorce

Repartnering after divorce is common and sometimes occurs before the divorce is final (Amato, 2000; Anderson et al., 2004; Anderson & Greene, 2005; Cavanagh, 2008; Cherlin, 2009; Skew et al., 2009), which is also supported cross culturally (Bumpass, Sweet, & Castro Martin, 1990; Wu & Schimmele, 2005; Symoens et al., 2014). Skew and colleagues (2009) revealed that almost 50% of parents in the UK repartner within five years of divorce. Wu and Schimmele (2005) also reported that 42% of women and 54% of men in Canada repartner within five years of divorce. Other researchers have found similar statistics for repartnering in the United States, with close to half of divorced individuals dating within five years of the divorce (Bumpass et al., 1990). Anderson and colleagues (2004) found that approximately half of their sample of mothers had dating experience prior to divorce filing, and a year after the finalization of the divorce, the average mother had dated between two and three partners during that span. Also, Anderson and Greene (2005) found that one year after divorcing, 80% of parents had some dating experience or had begun to date.

Several scholars consider and provide evidence that dating after divorce is beneficial for mothers' well-being (Bray, 1999; Cartwright, 2010; Hetherington, 1999; Hetherington, 2003; Hughes, 2000; Wang & Amato, 2000). Researchers have described that some mothers are motivated to repartner in order to gain the health and financial benefits of a committed relationship (Cartwright, 2010; Jansen, Mortelmans, & Snoeckx, 2009), which is associated with reductions in divorce-related stress and an enhanced sense of psychological well-being (Cartwright, 2010; Hetherington, 2003). Repartnering after divorce also increases life satisfaction and decreases levels of depression (Anderson & Greene, 2011). In his meta-analysis on divorce and remarriage, Amato (2000) found that a new partner is highly beneficial for mothers' mental health, as many studies showed that adjustment is higher among divorced

individuals who have formed a new romantic relationship compared to those who have not formed a steady relationship. Wang and Amato (2000) found in their sample of divorced individuals that new intimate relationships assisted mental health, where those who began repartnering compared to those who were not repartnering reported more positive appraisals of their life. Mothers experience lower levels of well-being and feelings of loneliness during divorce, which however, dissipate when they initiate a new relationship (de Graaf & Kalmijn, 2003). Hetherington and Kelly (2002) describe that a new intimate relationship can be a powerful buffer against post-divorce stress, which results in fewer mental health complaints, increases in self-esteem, and more declines in depression.

Nevertheless, after divorce, several mothers are uninterested or unable to date (Anderson & Greene, 2011; Hetherington, 2003). There is evidence that shows that many mothers remain single after divorce. Bzostek, McLanahan, and Carolson (2012) argued that many mothers do not date because there are a limited number of eligible partners and mothers with steady jobs have the resources (such as confidence from not having to financially rely on a partner) that are necessary to promote their well-being after divorce. Mothers also have fewer opportunities to repartner due to the breakdowns in their social networks after divorce; plus, parents go out less often compared to individuals without children (de Graaf & Kalmijn, 2003). Many mothers choose not to date because the presence of children alone is enough for some mothers to provide company and support (Skew, Evans, & Gray, 2009). Also, Anderson and Greene (2005) described that a mothers' relationship with her child is sometimes deemed as more important than a romantic relationship, primarily because children were described as more reliable than a romantic partner. Subsequently, mothers become pickier with their mating choices to prevent the chances of a second divorce (Ganong & Coleman, 2004). It has been argued that cross-culturally,

mothers who are more individualistic (mothers who are more self-reliant and independent) are less likely to repartner and remaining single is more common than remarrying (de Graaf & Kalmijn, 2003).

Relationship Quality

If mothers are interested in dating, the underlying assumption in studies of repartnering is being in a repartnered relationship is beneficial for mothers, regardless of quality. Some post-divorce relationships may not make mothers happy, which should lead to negative effects on maternal well-being. Wang and Amato (2000) stated that forming new high quality relationships facilitates adjustment to divorce. By forming a better quality relationship, mothers become less attached to their ex-spouse and report more positive appraisals of life (Wang & Amato, 2000). Although some studies focusing on remarriages examined the relationship quality of the new marriage (Cartwright, 2010; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002), many studies have not examined the quality of past relationships preceding remarriage (Symoens et al., 2014). One exception is a recent study by Symoens and colleagues (2014) examining repartnering effects in a Belgium population. These researchers used levels of conflict as an indicator of relationship quality and compared relationship quality across three domains: the former marital relationship, the current relationship with the ex-spouse, and a new intimate relationship. Although conflict with the ex-spouse is damaging for maternal well-being, Symoens and colleagues (2014) found that new relationships were beneficial for mothers' mental health independent of conflict in the current dating relationship. Even in new relationships that were described as high conflict, maternal well-being remained elevated compared to instances when mothers were not in a relationship. Although this study advances the literature by examining the effects of relationship quality, there were some limitations that the current study can address. First, these results may not represent

the current divorce culture in the United States. In Belgium, the divorce rate is one of the highest in any country in the world at nearly 70% (Engel, 2014) compared to the United States at around 50% (Cherlin, 2009; Perrig-Chiello, Hutchison, & Morselli, 2014). The current culture in Belgium suggests that divorces occur as often as a non-marital breakup; yet, the ceremonial features and celebration encompassing marriages are much more involved in the United States, with extravagant weddings for example, that signal that divorce should not be as common (Cherlin, 2012). The culture of the United States stresses the importance of being in and maintaining a marital union, which doesn't necessarily reflect the values in other countries (Cherlin, 2009; 2012).

Another aspect of the study that could increase understanding of the influence of new relationships is a different approach with relationship quality. Symoens and colleagues (2014) used a retrospective and cross-sectional approach to examine relationship quality, rather than capturing the effect of relationship quality prospectively with the same group of mothers. Subsequently, using a different indicator of relationship quality, such as relationship happiness and permanence, may increase validity for the effect of relationship quality. In the dating and marital literature, many researchers use measures that incorporate positive aspects of the relationship, such as commitment (Le & Agnew, 2003; Surra, Curran, & Williams, 1997), relationship satisfaction (Mark & Herbenick, 2014; Reed, 2007), and relationship permanence (Laursen & Bukowski, 1997). Positive aspects of a relationship have typically been reported to be better predictors of relationship stability than negative indicators of relationship quality. Le and Agnew (2003) found in their meta-analysis of the investment model that the importance of relationship satisfaction, investment in the relationship, and attention to alternative partners were significant indicators of whether a relationship would last. Other researchers continue to use

variables from the investment model, such as relationship satisfaction and commitment, as indicators of relationship quality, rather than conflict, as these variables are stronger predictors of relationship stability (Collins & van Dulmen, 2012; Dailey et al., 2009; Hetherington, 2003; Reed, 2007). Although conflict influences maternal well-being, positive indicators of relationship quality should be stronger indicators of maternal well-being as these variables are more predictive of relationship dissolution (Le & Agnew, 2003).

Relationship quality is important for any romantic relationship and should be examined in studies of repartnering. Bzostek and colleagues (2012) discussed that if mothers formed high-quality, long-lasting relationships with men who are good providers, they should be able to adjust positively to divorce and promote their children's adjustment; although not stated directly, this claim assumes that mothers who date partners who are not good providers, are detrimental for mothers' psychological well-being. In this study, mothers' partners who contribute to the family, either financially or assisting the mother with childcare, are considered higher quality partners (Bzostek et al., 2012). In other words, partners who help ease the stress of a single mother, promote maternal well-being. Alternatively, two indicators of relationship quality that can positively influence mothers during repartnering is relational happiness and relationship permanence. In many romantic contexts, when individuals are happy in their relationships, they are more satisfied with their lives, report higher levels of romantic competence, and describe higher levels of psychological well-being (Coan, Schaefer, & Davison, 2006; Collins & van Dulmen, 2012). When individuals report higher levels of relationship satisfaction with their partner, they tend to have higher levels of mental health (Kiecolt-Glaser et al., 2005). In a study examining married couples where one individual was hospitalized, individuals who reported more positive interactions with their spouse healed faster than those who reported more hostile

interactions (Kiecolt-Glaser et al., 2005). In other words, good relationships (i.e. relationships that are more satisfying) tend to reduce stress and promote well-being.

Next, relationship permanence refers to mothers who want to remain in their relationship for the long haul. In general, individuals who report higher levels of relationship permanence put more effort into the relationship and are more satisfied with their partner (Le & Agnew, 2003; Surra et al., 2009). Individuals who are in a relationship that they know will continue are less stressed compared to those who do not know whether their relationship will end (Arriaga et al., 2006). In a study of dating relationships, individuals whose commitment fluctuated during the relationship (from high to low levels and vice versa) were more likely to report a breakup compared to individuals whose levels of commitment were primarily steady (Arriaga et al., 2006). When individuals, including mothers, become insecure about whether their relationship will continue, these relationships seem more likely to end. However, if mothers are confident in the stability of their relationship, they are less likely to experience this insecurity, which is beneficial for maternal well-being. Examining both relational happiness and relationship permanence should predict maternal well-being after divorce. Broadly, mothers in high quality relationships should be representative of the crisis model of the divorce-stress-adaptation perspective, whereas low quality relationships should be associated with the chronic strain model of the divorce-stress-adaptation perspective. In order to understand the effect of relationship quality on maternal well-being, I next discuss research concerning mothers' psychological well-being and risk behaviors after divorce.

Mothers' Psychological Well-Being and Risk Behaviors after Divorce

Divorce is a difficult experience for mothers (Amato, 2000; Berman, 1988; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002; Wang & Amato, 2000; Zhang & Hayward, 2006). Many mothers experience

distress, depression, loneliness, helplessness, and anger following divorce (Clarke-Stewart et al., 2000; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002; Hetherington, 2003). Mothers who report a marital loss are also more likely to develop cardiovascular disease compared to mothers who remain married (Zhang & Hayward, 2006). Following divorce, mothers commonly report increases in stress (Hetherington, 1999; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002; Wang & Amato, 2000). For example, Wang and Amato (2000) found that 75% of divorced individuals reported a minimum of one major life stressor (such as changing homes, losing up to 20% of family income, or a major loss in their social network). Some studies have failed to find improvements in psychological adjustment following divorce, unless these individuals remarry (Kitson & Holmes, 1992; Wang & Amato, 2000). As previously mentioned, even though divorce is a difficult event for mothers, repartnering may help mothers improve their psychological well-being (Amato, 2000).

Information concerning risk behaviors during repartnering, such as unprotected sex and drunkenness, is limited in the repartnering literature. Generally, drunkenness (i.e. times of being drunk) has consistently been linked to poor adjustment in the context of adulthood, whether divorced or not (Kandel, 1990; Paschall, Freisthler, & Lipton, 2005; Schulenberg & Maggs, 2008). Hetherington and Kelly (2002) differentiated divorced parents into groups based on their behaviors. One group, the "Libertines" (pg. 104), acted like teenagers, by engaging in more alcohol consumption and partying, which tended to be associated with higher levels of depression compared to other groups (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). Individuals who tend to party more report more instances of sexual encounters, including one-night-stands (Claxton & van Dulmen, 2013). Through excessive partying, mothers may engage in unprotected sex, which many researchers describe as a marker of poor adjustment and development (Burger & Finkel, 2002; Fromme, Katz, & Rivet, 1997; Hetherington, 2003; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). Mothers

who tend to behave like teenagers, although they are adults, set themselves up to have more sex (that could be unprotected), which should have negative implications for maternal well-being. Subsequently, mothers' repartnering experiences should be associated with each of these measures of maternal well-being: depression, life satisfaction, drunkenness, and unprotected sex.

Also, mothers choosing not to repartner after divorce may also influence her psychological well-being and risk behaviors. Mothers' who do not repartner avoid relational conflict that typically arises with dating relationships, which could prevent mothers from experiencing further depression after divorce. Some mothers receive health benefits by avoiding relationships and focusing on their relationship with their children (Anderson & Greene, 2011; Skew et al., 2009). Having a positive relationship with children may supplant a positive relationship with a dating partner. However, mothers who are not in a romantic relationship after divorce do not have the opportunity to gain some of the benefits that repartnered mothers have. The choice not to date also impacts risk behaviors. Mothers' who do not adjust well with the divorce may seek to drink more alcohol as a method of coping. Mothers' could also seek sexual comfort by having unprotected sex through a one-night stand. Whether a mother chooses to date or not should influence her psychological well-being after divorce.

Another transition that could also influence these different measures of maternal well-being is the transition out of repartnering relationships. Although not always as stressful as divorce, the experience of breakup in non-marital relationships takes a toll on individuals (Arriaga et al., 2006; Reed, 2007). Adolescents and young adults reporting a breakup report higher levels of depression and experience difficulty reforming their individual identity (Slotter, Gardner, & Finkel, 2010). Focusing on redefining one's self after divorce is emotionally taxing and can increase stress (Reed, 2007; Slotter et al., 2010). Therefore, if mothers report a breakup,

they may be likely to also experience negative effects on their well-being after a repartnering breakup. A repartnering breakup may also add to the stress resulting from the divorce, which could promote the chronic strain model of the divorce-stress-adaptation perspective. The current study explores the possible negative effects of a post-divorce repartnering breakup.

Threat of Selection

Although the literature provides abundant information regarding repartnering, there are some limitations that prevent researchers from fully understanding this process. First, the main alternative to the divorce-stress-adjustment perspective is the notion that poorly adjusted people are selected out of marriage, which is not typically accounted for in the repartnering literature (Amato, 2000; Wang & Amato, 2000). Wang and Amato (2000) describe that mothers who divorce are bad at relationships – that mothers get divorced because they possess characteristics that make them unable to maintain steady relationships (Wang & Amato, 2000). Amato (2000) states, "Whereas the divorce-stress-adjustment perspective assumes that marital disruption causes adjustment problems, the selection perspective assumes that adjustment problems lead to marital disruption" (pg. 1273). Repartnering may appear to have positive benefits only because mothers who are less depressed appear more attractive as partners (Amato, 2000). Although repartnering influences maternal well-being, some mothers may continue to have difficulties after divorce because of certain stable characteristics preventing mothers from benefitting from relationships, such as their age or income.

Some studies have investigated variables that provide support for the selection perspective. These variables include age (Bzostek et al., 2012), race (Bumpass et al., 1990; Bzostek et al., 2012; Ganong & Coleman, 2004), income (Cartwright, 2010; Hughes, 2000), education (Coleman et al., 2000; Hughes, 2000; Khoo, 1989), age of oldest child (Ganong &

Coleman, 2004; Hetherington, 2003), number of children (Ganong & Coleman, 2004; Hetherington, 2003), length of marriage (Bumpass et al., 1990; Wu & Schimmele, 2005), and length of separation (Skew et al., 2009). First, younger mothers are more likely to repartner rather than older mothers (Bumpass et al., 1990; Bzostek et al., 2012; de Graaf & Kalmijn, 2003; Hughes, 2000; Koo & Suchindran, 1980; Skew et al., 2009; Wang & Amato, 2000). Older mothers have fewer potential partners to choose from (Bzostek et al., 2012; Cherlin, 2009). Also, mothers' age varies with other factors when examined with maternal well-being; for example, older mothers report lower levels of psychological well-being when they report lower incomes (Amato, 2010). Concerning race, both Hispanics and Blacks are less likely to repartner compared to whites (Bzostek et al., 2012; Ganong & Coleman, 2004). Also, since the divorce rate is higher for Blacks, this population may report lower levels of well-being compared to other ethnic groups (Amato, 2010; Ganong & Coleman, 2004).

Also, mothers with lower socioeconomic status have lower rates of repartnering (Bzostek et al., 2012; Cartwright, 2010; Clarke-Stewart et al., 2000; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002; Hughes, 2000). Greater financial independence provides mothers the opportunity to take their time when searching for new partners who meet their standards. These mothers also don't need to rely on a partner to help make up for lost income resulting from the divorce (Hughes, 2000). Next, mothers with higher levels of education repartner at lower rates than mothers with less education, as they have the resources needed to support themselves and their family, such as a stable occupation or the education to find a job (Bumpass et al., 1990; Bzostek et al., 2012; Ganong & Coleman, 2004; Kitson & Holmes, 1992). Mothers with more education are prone to spend more time with their children than spend time focusing on a new relationship shortly after divorce (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). Also, highly educated mothers have a smaller pool of potential

partners to choose from as there is a low supply of highly educated men for divorced mothers (Cherlin, 2009; Wu & Schimmele, 2005). Consequently, mothers with lower income and education report more difficulties after divorce, which negatively influences maternal well-being (Amato, 2010; Hetherington, 1999; Hetherington, 2003). The number and age of children also influences mothers' dating prospects. Generally, mothers with more children appear less attractive to potential partners (Bzostek et al., 2012; Koo & Suchindran, 1980). Also, mothers with more children generally report higher stress levels, which could negatively influence her psychological well-being (Hetherington, 1999).

Information on the former marital relationship also influences repartnering, specifically the length of marriage and months separated prior to divorce. One study conducted in Australia found that length of courtship was not significant in predicting whether or not a participant repartnered (Skew et al., 2009). However, Hobart (1990) conducted a study in the United States and found that the duration of a remarriage was inversely related to the quality of the marital relationship. Symoens and colleagues (2014) stated that the quality of the marital relationship, rather than the length of the marriage predicted repartnering outcomes. Duration of marriage also had a positive effect on repartnering, where mothers who were married longer were more likely to date after divorce (de Graaf & Kalmijn, 2003). The difference in these findings could be reflected in the quality of the former marital relationship and the repartnering relationships (Amato, 2010; Anderson et al., 2005). It is crucial to understand the effects of selection on maternal well-being. If these selection variables are more significant than the effects of the repartnering relationship, then research and interventions should focus on assisting mothers who are predisposed to lower levels of well-being rather than focus on aspects of mothers' repartnering. In summary, each of these stable characteristics could influence maternal well-

being, and possibly influence well-being beyond the effects of being in a relationship and the quality of a relationship.

Limitations to Past Research

Aside from the threat of selection, other limitations exist concerning past studies on repartnering. First, the process of repartnering has mainly referred to remarriage (Ganong & Coleman, 1989; Hetherington, 1999; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002) and more currently cohabitation (Cartwright, 2010; Ganong & Coleman, 2004), but have not included non-cohabiting romantic relationships. Next, some researchers infer that repartnering is a static event, meaning that mothers only date one person after divorce, when most mothers date multiple partners after divorce (Anderson & Greene, 2005; 2011). Last, research on repartnering has focused on a single relationship as a result of retrospective research techniques (Coleman et al., 2000; Hughes, 2000). Mothers who are already remarried are asked to recall experiences pertaining to the courtship of the remarried relationship, even though mothers may have had other relationship experiences before remarriage.

Conceptualizing repartnering as remarriage and cohabitation. Repartnering has been described as the transition into and out of remarriage and cohabitation (Coleman et al., 2004). However, mothers experience additional relationship transitions besides remarriage and cohabitation, such as transitions into and out of dating relationships (Anderson et al., 2004; Anderson & Greene, 2005). Skew and colleagues (2009) reported that mothers who cohabited before their first marriage were more likely to cohabit after divorce with a new partner; yet, they also noted that the number of previous, non-cohabiting relationships has rarely been considered by past researchers. Cartwright (2010) also stated that little is known concerning the courtship period of mothers prior to stepfamily formation. Mothers' dating that precedes cohabitation and

remarriage can be a long process. When mothers are dating, they are learning more about their partner, how to deal with conflict situations, and finding a balance between their roles in the relationship (Anderson & Greene, 2011; Hetherington, 1999; 2003). Mothers who are cohabiting or are already remarried, are more likely to be in stable relationships, which should be beneficial for maternal well-being. By studying repartnering in the context of dating, I will be able to capture the effect of being in a relationship and the quality of that relationship prospectively before the relationship becomes a more stable relationship, such as a remarriage or a cohabiting relationship. With many dating relationships never reaching the stage of cohabitation or remarriage, but still influencing mothers' adjustment, it is important to understand the impact of dating relationships on maternal well-being. By considering mothers' dating relationships and subsequent transitions as part of the repartnering process, I can address this deficit in the literature.

Conceptualizing repartnering as a static variable. Also, repartnering experiences after divorce vary because dating is a dynamic process, meaning that repartnering involves more than one relationship, and these relationships change over time. Some mothers date one partner after divorce, others date multiple partners, some do not date at all, and many do a mixture of these repartnering strategies (Anderson et al., 2004; Montgomery et al., 1992). In order to examine the effect of repartnering, it is important to examine all the relationships that contribute to this process. There has been a consistent call for researchers to examine the period in between divorce and remarriage (Cartwright, 2010; Coleman et al., 2000; Fogel, 2000; Hetherington, 2003; Montgomery et al., 1992; Rodgers & Conrad, 1986; Skew et al., 2009) in order to understand the influence of multiple relationships during repartnering. Mothers do not usually marry the first person they date after divorce and few repartnering relationships end up in

remarriage (Anderson & Greene, 2005; Montgomery et al., 1992). Few researchers have examined the length of repartnered relationships and how relationship length influences maternal well-being after divorce (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002; Hughes, 2000; Montgomery et al., 1992). In order to address this limitation, I will focus on *how* mothers date after divorce by characterizing mothers into different repartnering histories, including mothers who do not date, and examine the influence of time before, during, and after each dating relationship.

Focus on single relationships. Commonly, Researchers investigate dating after divorce retrospectively with populations of remarried couples rather than prospectively after divorce (Cartwright, 2010; de Graaf & Kalmijn, 2003; Ganong & Coleman, 1989; Montgomery et al., 1992; Skew et al., 2009). Despite the extensive benefits that these studies have provided in helping understand repartnering, the deficits prompt researchers to investigate the period of dating that occurs between divorce and remarriage *prospectively*. Skew and colleagues (2009) discussed the minimal research on the "relationship career" (pg. 3) of mothers after divorce and explained that the number of partners prior to remarriage had not been properly examined. Fogel (2000) called for a description of the various pathways of relationship formation in order to promote theory and research concerning repartnering relationships. The current study seeks to address the limitation of retrospective data by using prospective, longitudinal data consisting of mothers who recently filed for divorce.

Repartnering Consequences

In general, there are quite a few limitations concerning past studies of repartnering. Primarily, the literature on variability of dating relationships and the quality of these relationships after divorce is scarce. In order to address each of the mentioned limitations, I will first describe and define different repartnering histories that mothers report after divorce.

Although, past studies have described stages for repartnering (see Montgomery et al., 1992 and Anderson et al., 2004 for descriptions of linear transitions involved with repartnering[1]), it may be easier to categorize mothers by how they date after divorce. Mothers may abstain from dating in order to focus on their children and their own well-being and development. Mothers may date only one partner after divorce, possibly a relationship that the mother desired during her marriage. Last, mothers may date multiple partners to test potential dating partners for compatibility. In this instance, mothers can take one of two approaches concerning dating multiple partners. The first approach, serial dating, refers to mothers who date one partner at a time. The second approach, simultaneous dating, refers to mothers that date multiple partners at the same time. Each of these approaches – not dating, dating one partner monogamously, dating serially, and dating simultaneously – represents a different repartnering history that mothers experience after divorce, and should have different consequences for mothers' psychological well-being and risk behaviors.

The Current Study

Prior literature has indicated that repartnering after divorce is good for mothers' well-being; yet, these findings are hampered by the assumption that repartnering relationships are of high quality (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002; Rodgers & Conrad, 1986). The focus of the current

[1] I would like to differentiate between repartnering histories and transitions for the current project. In Montgomery et al. (1992), the researchers measured relationship transitions in a stage-like manner, beginning with knowing the partner, dating but living apart, living together several days a week, lived together almost every day but maintain separate residences, and lived together and combined possessions in one home. Anderson et al. (2004) extended these stages by including children in new, subsequent stages, such as mother introducing partner to child, partner spending the night, and mother and partner begin cohabiting. However, I see two issues with these transitions. First, they are described retrospectively with mothers who have already remarried. Second, these transitions are described and reflected as linear trends. When I discuss repartnering histories, I expand the ideas presented in Anderson et al. (2004) who presented the following different transitions during repartnering: interested in dating someone but haven't met anyone yet; interested in someone, but not romantically involved; casually dating; in a serious relationship; and breakup. In the current context of repartnering, mothers can waver in between these stages rather than proceed from stage to stage (the assumption of linearity). Therefore, this project measures these variations through different repartnering histories rather than transitions.

study is on the consequences for maternal well-being for different repartnering histories and the quality of these relationships in order to address this assumption and the limitations in the literature. In order to achieve these goals, I will use longitudinal, prospective data of mothers dating after divorce to address the previously mentioned methodological considerations. By including different repartnering histories, I will examine multiple, different relationships at the same time as well as measure repartnering as a process, rather than an event, that distinguishes from cohabitation and remarriage. First, I begin by discussing the potential consequences of having a monogamous dating relationship after divorce in concurrence with analytical models that will be used to test my hypotheses. Next, I discuss the impact that breakup may have on a repartnering relationship along with an extension of previous analytical models. Then I introduce the potential consequences of dating serially and simultaneously, and continue to build on past analytical structures. Within each of these sections, I discuss the influence of time and relationship quality for each repartnering history. Last, I test for the threat of selection by discussing mothers' stable characteristics and how I will measure these threats analytically.

Before discussing the different repartnering histories, it is important to examine changes over time concerning mothers' psychological well-being and risk behaviors independent of repartnering strategy (see equations 1 – 3 for this multi-level model). By establishing baseline changes, I can compare the average trajectory of mothers' psychological well-being over time independent of repartnering history and quality. The advantage of including an analytical framework in the following sections is the ability to illustrate what my hypotheses are and how I will test each one. The information for this project is based on discontinuous data and by presenting my hypotheses using time-varying predictors, I can display how I will calculate the

effect on intercept and slope for each repartnering history. Furthermore, by comparing mothers' stable characteristics through between-person comparisons, I can test for the threat of selection.

(1) $WB_{ij} = B_{0i} + B_{1i}(TIME_{ij}) + e_{ij}$

(2) $B_{0i} = B_{00} + \mu_{0i}$

(3) $B_{1i} = B_{10} + \mu_{1i}$

According to this equation, WB_{ij} refers to the variable of mothers' well-being that is being measured (mothers' depressive symptoms, life satisfaction, drunkenness, and unprotected sex) for mother *i* at time *j*. The variable $TIME_{ij}$ represents the time since filing for divorce for mother *i* at time *j*. The term B_{01} is the effect on the intercept; and the term B_{1i} is the effect on the slope. The residual components are represented by e_{ik}, μ_{0i}, and μ_{1i}. This model provides a depiction of the intercept and slope for each measure of maternal well-being independent of my hypothesized predictors.

Hypothesis 1: Consequences of repartnering.

Tests for elevation and slope. As mentioned previously, several studies have revealed that forming a new relationship is beneficial for mothers after divorce (Amato, 2000; Anderson et al., 2004; Anderson & Green, 2005; 2011; Bray, 1999; Hetherington, 2003; Hughes, 2000; Montgomery et al., 1992). Prior to testing the influence of relationship quality, it is important to examine the independent effects of entering in a repartnering relationship to verify results from the repartnering literature. Past studies have described the influence of forming and maintaining relationships after divorce; as in, mothers not only need to form a relationship after divorce, but should maintain the relationship in order to retain any positive effects with the relationship, such

as financial and emotional support from a partner (Rodgers & Conrad, 1986; Skew et al., 2009). By remaining in a relationship, some of the benefits that mothers describe, such as extra income, additional parenting assistance, and emotional support, should continue to positively influence maternal well-being. Therefore, not only should a repartnering relationship benefit mothers' well-being and reduce risk behaviors at the onset of the relationship, but also over the course of the relationship.

Continuing with the baseline model described previously (equations 1 – 3), mothers who begin a relationship after divorce, could receive a boost in their initial levels of well-being. For example, mothers entering a dating relationship may report more life satisfaction compared to mothers not in a dating relationship, because they feel less lonely and less depressed (Bzostek et al., 2012; Hughes, 2000). Mothers may also gain additional benefits when maintaining a relationship. For instance, mothers in a dating relationship report steeper declines in depressive symptoms over time compared to mothers who are not in a dating relationship. According to this rationale, I propose the following hypotheses and multi-level model (see equations 4 – 6):

Hypothesis 1.A: Mothers who repartner will show a significantly positive change in her well-being on the intercept compared to when they are not dating (lower depressive symptoms, higher life satisfaction, less unprotected sex, and lower drunkenness; effect on the intercept).

Hypothesis 1.B: Compared to times when she is not dating, the time that mothers remain in a relationship will result in positive changes over time for maternal well-being (effect on slope).

(4) $WB_{ij} = B_{0i} + B_{1i}(TIME_{ij}) + B_{2i}(PARTNERED_{ij}) + B_{3i}(PARTNEREDTIME_{ij}) + e_{ij}$

(5) $B_{0i} = B_{00} + \mu_{0i}$

(6) $B_{1i} = B_{10} + \mu_{1i}$

According to this model, the variables concerning time and well-being have the same interpretation as the baseline model. The variable *PARTNERED* refers to the beginning of a relationship for mother *i* at time *j*. If this variable is significant, then the start of their relationship will have an effect on maternal well-being compared to mothers who do not start a relationship. The variable *PARTNEREDTIME* references the length of time in the dating relationship and captures the effect on slope during times when mothers are in a relationship versus when they are not. The residual components are represented by e_{ik}, μ_{0i}, and μ_{1i}. All other level-2 equations are fixed and, therefore, not displayed.

Hypothesis 2: Consequences of relationship quality.

Test of interaction between relationship quality and being in a relationship. One of the goals of this study is to examine the effect of relationship quality on maternal well-being in order to test the assumption that all repartnering relationships are beneficial for mothers. Although there are positive effects from being in and maintaining a relationship after divorce for mothers, it may only be beneficial when these relationships are high quality. Also, mothers who become involved in relationships that are low quality could negatively influence mothers' well-being. Low quality relationships may be worse than not dating at all. However, mothers can only report measures of relationship quality when they are in a repartnering relationship, resulting in an

interaction[2]. Including measures of relationship quality for each relationship could be a stronger predictor for mothers' well-being, beyond the effects of repartnering. Taking this information into consideration, I propose the following hypothesis and multi-level model (see equations 7 – 9):

Hypothesis 2: Relationship quality will have more significant effects on maternal well-being compared to the effects of being in and maintaining a relationship.

(7) $WB_{ij} = B_{0i} + B_{1i}(TIME_{ij}) + B_{2i}(PARTNERED_{ij}) + B_{3i}(PARTNEREDTIME_{ij}) + B_{4i}(RELQUAL_{ij}) + e_{ij}$

(8) $B_{0i} = B_{00} + \mu_{0i}$

(9) $B_{1i} = B_{10} + \mu_{1i}$

This model contains the same four variables from Hypothesis 1.A and 1.B with the addition of one within-person predictor. The variable *RELQUAL* describes the reported relationship quality for mother *i* at time *j*. If this variable is significant, than an interaction exists between relationship quality and being in a relationship. The residual components are represented by e_{ik}, μ_{0i}, and μ_{1i}. As before, all level-2 equations are fixed and not displayed.

Hypothesis 3: Consequences of repartnering dissolution.

Tests for elevation and slope. Whereas beginning and maintaining a relationship is beneficial for mothers, particularly if the relationship is high quality, ending a relationship may be detrimental for mothers. Mothers who end a high quality repartnering relationship may

[2] Mothers who are not dating are still included in the analyses despite not having relationship quality scores because they have measures for the other variables in this model. Mothers are only dropped if they are missing data at the second level. For this and all analyses, no mothers were dropped due to missing data at the second level.

experience lower levels of well-being after a breakup. However, mothers who end a relationship that is low quality could have the opposite effects. Generally, repartnering dissolutions are associated with lower self-concept and higher levels of depression (Anderson & Greene, 2011; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). While stress results from divorce, subsequent stress should also result from a repartnering breakup. This stress distracts mothers from attending to her own needs as well as the needs of her children (Amato, 2000; Hughes, 2000). By not focusing on their own development, mothers can't adjust to post-divorce stress. Consequently, I predict that the effects of a repartnering breakup will be negative for mothers and especially negative during breakups of high quality relationships (see equations 10 – 12 for multi-level model).

Hypothesis 3.A: Mothers who report a post-divorce breakup will report poorer well-being at the time of breakup compared to mothers who do not report a breakup when the relationship is high quality (effect on intercept).

Hypothesis 3.B: Mothers who report a post-divorce breakup will report poorer changes over time (declines) in well-being compared to mothers who do not report a breakup when the relationship is high quality (effect on slope).

(10) $$WB_{ij} = B_{0i} + B_{1i}(TIME_{ij}) + B_{2i}(PARTNERED_{ij}) + B_{3i}(PARTNEREDTIME_{ij}) + B_{4i}(RELQUAL_{ij}) + B_{5i}(POSTPARTNER_{ij}) + B_{6i}(POSTPARTNERTIME_{ij}) + e_{ij}$$

(11) $$B_{0i} = B_{00} + \mu_{0i}$$

(12) $$B_{1i} = B_{10} + \mu_{1i}$$

According to this equation and extending the last model, two new level-1 variables are included to examine the effect of breakup. The variable *POSTPARTNER* describes the event of a breakup for mother *i* at time *j* (0 = no breakup, 1 = breakup). The variable *POSTPARTNERTIME* describes the length of time *j* reported being single after breaking up for mother *i.* The residual components are represented by e_{ik}, μ_{0i}, and μ_{1i}. For this analyses, mothers who are not in a relationship are the reference group, because they would not have anything larger than a zero for each of the variables in this model. If a breakup influences maternal well-being, than *POSTPARTNER* should be significant; if maternal well-being improves or declines over time after breakup, than *POSTPARTNERTIME* should be significant.

Hypothesis 4: Consequences of serial repartnering.

Tests for elevation and slope. Arguably, one of the main goals of repartnering is to find a steady romantic relationship. However, some mothers date multiple partners in order to test different relationships, with few marrying the first person they date after divorce (Anderson & Greene, 2005; Anderson et al., 2004). One approach that mothers take with dating is by dating multiple partners in a serial fashion, allowing them to focus on a single relationship; and if this relationship is not one that the mother likes, she can end the relationship and start a new, hopefully better relationship. When mothers date serially, they commit to one relationship in order to test whether that relationship is beneficial for her and her children (Amato, 2000). There are some drawbacks to dating multiple partners serially. Mainly, by dating serially, mothers are exposed to the negative effects of dating transitions. The introduction and removal of different partners to the family does not allow the mother to establish constancy in the family, which prevents adjustment and well-being from returning to pre-divorce levels (Montgomery et al., 1992; Rodgers & Conrad, 1986).

Although there are negative consequences for dating serially, some researchers describe that dating different partners provides the opportunity to explore and test out different romantic relationships (Davies & Windle, 2000; de Graaf & Kalmijn, 2003). Although not mentioned directly, some researchers imply that dating serially gives mothers the opportunity to control her relationship destiny by ending relationships that she no longer wants to remain in (Amato, 2000; de Graaf & Kalmijn, 2003; Symoens et al., 2014). If a relationship is not a good fit, mothers end the relationship in favor of better relational opportunities. Although focusing on adolescents rather than parents, Davies and Windle (2000) reported that dating multiple partners is beneficial for development, as different relationship experiences tempered levels of depression, alcohol use, and problem behaviors. These researchers described that there is excitement associated with dating multiple partners because an individual feels attractive through the attention they receive from many suitors and in order to remain attractive, individuals refrain from engaging in negative behaviors. (Davies & Windle, 2000). de Graaf and colleagues (2003) described that mothers choose to date multiple partners because subsequent relationships offer the opportunity to upgrade on the current dating relationship, which provides emotional, financial, and social benefits. In other words, mothers should aim to end low quality relationships and enter in high quality relationships, emphasizing the importance of relationship quality over the independent effect of being in a relationship. Based on the evidence, beginning a new, subsequent dating relationship (serial dating) may result in benefits for maternal well-being. Therefore, I propose the following hypotheses and multi-level models (see equations 13 – 15) concerning serial dating:

Hypothesis 4.A: When mothers being to date serially, they will report positive changes in their well-being when they enter a higher quality relationship (effect on the intercept).

Hypothesis 4.B: The length of time spent serial dating will be positively associated with maternal well-being when mothers enter a higher quality relationship (effect on slope).

(13) $$WB_{ij} = B_{0i} + B_{1i}(TIME_{ij}) + B_{2i}(PARTNERED_{ij}) + B_{3i}(PARTNEREDTIME_{ij}) + B_{4i}(RELQUAL_{ij}) + B_{5i}(POSTPARTNER_{ij}) + B_{6i}(POSTPARTNERTIME_{ij}) + B_{7i}(SERIAL_{j}) + B_{8i}(SERIALTIME_{ij}) + e_{ij}$$

(14) $$B_{0i} = B_{00} + \mu_{0i}$$

(15) $$B_{1i} = B_{10} + \mu_{1i}$$

In this model, the variable *SERIAL* represents instances when mothers begin dating their second partner (qualifying them as a serial dater) and this variable increases linearly with each new dating partner (providing a measure of cumulative partners). To see a sample dataset, see *Figure 3*, portraying three different mothers. For this figure, *DP* represents when a mother is in a relationship (value = 1) versus not (value = 0). *SERIAL* represents when a mother is in a serial dating relationship (0 = not serially dating; 1 = serially dating). The first mother, ID 101, represents a mother who dates only one partner, and never receives a value for *SERIAL*. The next mother, ID 102, describes that she was with a partner, broke up, but then returned to the same relationship. Since this is not a new relationship, she still does not receive a score for *SERIAL*. However, the third mother, ID 103, begins a dating relationship, and ends at Month 6. She starts a new relationship at Month 7, resulting in *SERIAL* = 1, for her first serial relationship. This relationship ends, and another begins for the last month with a new partner, resulting in *SERIAL*

= 2. The variable *SERIALTIME*, describes the length of time for each serial relationship. As with past models, the reference group is a mother who hypothetically doesn't date over the course of the study (all other variables besides time equals zero). Also, mothers report relationship quality for each individual relationship when she serially dates, which allows me to capture the effect of mothers upgrading or downgrading between relationships. All other level-2 equations are fixed, and therefore not presented in the above equation. Support for the effects of serial dating corresponds with significant results of either of these two new variables.

Hypothesis 5: Consequences of simultaneous repartnering.

Tests for elevation and slope. According to the literature, dating multiple partners leads to negative consequences for the mother by preventing familial stability (Bray, 1999; Capaldi & Patterson, 1991; Hughes, 2000; Rodgers & Conrad, 1986). There is empirical support for the link between multiple relationship transitions and lower self-esteem during repartnering (Capaldi & Patterson, 1991; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). Anderson and colleagues (1999) examined mothers in the Longitudinal Study of Remarriage (LSR) and found that mothers who dated extensively after divorce, reported poorer adjustment and lower quality relationships with their children. These authors argued that the focus on dating did not allow time or mental effort to cope with the divorce or allow mothers to spend a significant amount of time with their children (Anderson, Greene, Hetherington, & Clingempeel, 1999; Hetherington, 1999). Also, women who date casually after divorce, rather than staying single or dating steadily, use sex to achieve intimacy, which often leaves mothers feeling lonelier, more depressed, and having lower self-esteem (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). Other studies foreshadowed that mothers who date more

casually report higher rates of drinking and using drugs (Hetherington, 2003; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002).

However, dating simultaneously could be beneficial for maternal well-being as mothers use this approach to test compatibility with potential partners or to receive the positive effects of repartnering from multiple relationships (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). Some mothers attempt to quickly resolve their relationship status after divorce by dating multiple partners at the same time to decrease feelings of loneliness after divorce (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). Also, mothers who date simultaneously may have more passionate relationships with one partner, while dating another partner who provides more compassionate love (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002), which could assist with maternal well-being. Mothers may date multiple partners because not one specific relationship makes a mother completely happy. In sum, when mothers begin to date simultaneously, they may feel desirable when receiving attention from partners from multiple relationships; but over time, these benefits could dissipate as mothers lose confidence when confronted with higher amounts of repartnering transitions and varying levels of relationship quality. According to this rationale, I propose the following hypotheses and multi-level model (equations 16 – 18).

> Hypothesis 5.A: When mothers date simultaneously, they will report positive changes in well-being on the intercept compared to instances when these mothers are not simultaneously dating specifically when the relationships are high quality (effect on the intercept).

Hypothesis 5.B: The longer the time spent simultaneously dating, mothers will report steeper declines in well-being over time compared to when they are not simultaneously dating specifically when the relationships are high quality (effect on slope).

(16) $WB_{ij} = B_{0i} + B_{1i}(TIME_{ij}) + B_{2i}(PARTNERED_{ij}) + B_{3i}(PARTNEREDTIME_{ij}) + B_{4i}(RELQUAL_{ij}) + B_{5i}(POSTPARTNER_{ij}) + B_{6i}(POSTPARTNERTIME_{ij}) + B_{7i}(SIMUL_{ij}) + B_{8i}(SIMULTIME_{ij}) + e_{ij}$

(17) $B_{0i} = B_{00} + \mu_{0i}$

(18) $B_{1i} = B_{10} + \mu_{1i}$

This equation builds off of previous models by including two new variables: *SIMUL*, which represents dating simultaneously (0 for no simultaneous dating and 1 for simultaneous dating) for mother *i* at time *j*; and *SIMULTIME*, which describes the length of time mothers continue to date simultaneously. The reference group is a mother who hypothetically doesn't have any dating experiences since all other repartnering variables would equal zero. At times when mothers are reporting multiple relationships at the same time, the quality of these relationships are averaged in order to have a single measure of relationship quality for that month of the study.

Hypothesis 6: Tests of selection

One of the key tenets of the selection perspective is that mothers who are poorly adjusted choose not to date or are unable to maintain relationships (Amato, 2000; Wang & Amato, 2000). In other words, the stable characteristics of mothers predict their repartnering history and

relationship quality rather than vice versa. These characteristics are mothers' age, length of marriage, length of separation, race, income, education, number of children, and age of oldest child. For example, mothers who make less money and are less educated may be more likely to repartner in order to gain the benefits of an additional income (Bzostek et al., 2012; Coleman et al., 2000; Hughes, 2000). If the threat of selection is present, then not only would these stable characteristics be predictive of mothers' repartnering history, but these characteristics would also be predictive of maternal well-being beyond the repartnering variables. Therefore, I proffer the following hypothesis and multi-level model (see equations 19 – 21).

Hypothesis 6: If the threat of selection is true, mother's stable characteristics will predict her psychological well-being and risk behaviors more than her repartnering history and relationship quality.

(19) $$WB_{ij} = B_{0i} + B_{1i}(TIME_{ij}) + B_{2i}(PARTNERED_{ij}) + B_{3i}(PARTNEREDTIME_{ij}) + B_{4i}(RELQUAL_{ij}) + B_{5i}(POSTPARTNER_{ij}) + B_{6i}(POSTPARTNERTIME_{ij}) + B_{7i}(SERIAL_{j}) + B_{8i}(SERIALTIME_{ij}) + B_{9i}(SIMUL_{ij}) + B_{10i}(SIMULTIME_{ij}) + e_{ij}$$

(20) $$B_{0i} = B_{00} + B_{01}(AGE_i) + B_{02}(RACE_i) + B_{03}(MARRLENGTH_i) + B_{04}(SEPLENGTH_i) + B_{05}(NUMCHILD_i) + B_{06}(AGEOFOLD_i) + B_{07}(EDUCATION_i) + B_{08}(INCOME_i) + B_{09}(BLPART_i) + \mu_{0i}$$

(21) $$B_{1i} = B_{10}$$

In order to test for threats of selection, eight characteristics of mothers are included in this analysis. Mothers' age (*AGE*), race (*RACE*), education (*EDUCATION*), income (*INCOME*),

number of children (*NUMCHILD*), age of oldest child (*AGEOFOLD*), numbers of romantic partners during the separation period (*BLPART*), length of marriage (*MARRLENGTH*), and length of separation (*SEPLENGTH*) were included in the level-2 equation for the intercept. Although some of these variables do have the possibility to change over time (such as income, education, and number of children), mothers only reported on each of these variables at baseline. Many researchers who examine selection threats use a similar approach using only the baseline measure of these variables (Bzostek et al., 2012; Ganong & Coleman, 2004; Wu & Schimmele, 2005). Since each of these traits is stable for the current study, the influence on maternal well-being should be consistent over the course of the study. Therefore, these variables are only tested on the intercept of the equation, rather than on the slope of change on maternal well-being or on each measure of repartnering in the model. If these level-2 variables are more significant than the effect of repartnering history and relationship quality, than threats of selection are present. In addition, in order to isolate the effects of partnering per se from the possible confounding variables of partnering due to cohabitation, remarriage, or pregnancy, dummy variables indicating each of these contexts will be included as level-2 predictors of intercept and slope.

Summary

There is a contradiction in the literature concerning repartnering. Repartnering is described as both beneficial and harmful for mothers' psychological well-being and risk behaviors. According to the divorce-stress-adaptation perspective, mother's repartnering can lead to the crisis model, resulting in temporary difficulties in well-being for both mothers; or to the chronic strain model, which leads to continuous difficulties in adjustment for mothers (Amato, 2000; Wang & Amato, 2000). One variable that has been generally neglected in the literature

until recently is relationship quality, which can predict mothers' well-being in terms of this perspective. Yet, not all mothers repartner the same way. Some mothers date monogamously, whereas others date multiple partners (either serially or simultaneously), and some mothers do not date at all after divorce. Also, the selection perspective states that poorly adjusted mothers are unable to initiate or maintain relationships after divorce. The current study seeks to address the implications of mothers' repartnering history, quality of relationships, and the threat of selection concerning mothers' dating after divorce in order to more fully understand the consequences for maternal well-being. Next, I will discuss the method for the current study.

Method

Participants

Data for this study stems from a longitudinal study of parental repartnering after divorce and its influence on child and family outcomes. Participants were obtained through divorce court records from a metropolitan area in the Southern Central United States. Eligible families were those that had an elementary-school aged child (i.e., kindergarten through 5th grade) who resided with their mother at least 50% of each week. Within 120 days of filing for divorce, both mothers and children were interviewed in their homes. At the baseline assessment, legal divorce had occurred for 25% of the families (in the data collection, the waiting period before a divorce could be legally granted was 60 days). This was the first divorce for 77% of mothers, the second divorce for 15% of mothers, and 8% of the mothers had more than two divorces. The average length of marriage was 122.26 months (range 8 months to 321 months) and the average length of separation from their former spouse was 14.56 months (range 0 to 103 months). All children who participated in the study were the biological or adoptive children of the parents who were ending the current marriage. The children were almost evenly split by gender (52% female) and the mean number of children living in the household was 2.07 (*SD* = .90). The average age of the participating child was 7.77 (*SD* = 2.0). Median age of mothers was 36.8 (range 21-53) and the majority were non-Hispanic white (64%), whereas the rest of the sample was Hispanic (27%) and African American (9%). Level of mother's education varied from less than high school (9.4%) to doctoral degree (1.3%) with the median education being a two year Associate's degree. Although 82% of the mothers were working in a paid position at least part time, 23% of mothers received some means of governmental assistance.

There were no eligibility criteria in regards to repartnering status at the baseline assessment, nor was there a requirement for the child to know whether their parent was dating. With regard to repartnering status, almost half of mothers were in a new relationship after divorce at baseline (44.5%), whereas 26.5% reported interest in dating and 29% reported no interest in dating. By the two year follow-up, 86% had reported being in a serious relationship with an additional 24% reporting a breakup of a serious relationship. For the repartnering histories used for this study, 49 mothers did not date, 145 dated only one partner, 65 mothers dated multiple partners serially, and 60 mothers dated multiple partners simultaneously ($N = 319$ mothers). *Table 1* presents demographic characteristics for these repartnering histories.

Procedures

From divorce court records, brochures for recruitment were mailed to the most recent address, and a follow-up phone call ensued to verify a family's eligibility. Subsequently, eligible families were invited to participate in a get-acquainted visit in the family's home to answer questions about participation. Eighty-eight percent of families who agreed to the get-acquainted visit accepted participation in the study. Baseline, 12-month, and 24-month follow-up assessment interviews took place in the families' homes. Mothers completed self-report questionnaires during breaks in the interview process. In addition, mothers also completed monthly diary assessments, either online or through the mail, in-between the standard assessments over the duration of the study. Loss of participants over time occurred due to various factors, including: ineligibility (primarily reconciliation or changes in custody), temporary loss of contact (participants completed the 24-month assessment but not the 12-month assessment), and drop-out. Data used for this study come from mothers' monthly diaries (see Appendix A).

Monthly diary. Mothers were asked to complete a monthly diary in between the standard assessments over the course of the study (up to 28 months). Mothers were given the option of completing the diaries on-line through a password-protected website, or through the mail. Mothers' reported on the well-being of their children as well as their own well-being. Mothers also reported detailed information for one or multiple different relationships per diary, such as the length of the relationship, seriousness, relationship quality, and feelings between the partner and her children. Mothers, who did not date, did not fill out this section as they did not have a relationship to report. The mean number of diaries completed was 14.58 (out of 24 possible; Median = 13; *SD* = 9.71; Range = 1-28), and 91% of mothers completed at least 3 diary assessments.

Measures

Repartnering history. Mother's reported their relationship status on their monthly diaries for each partner they dated during the month of assessment. Mothers first indicated whether they were currently or interested in dating someone each month. Mothers who indicated that they were dating or were interested in dating were asked to indicate the response that best described their *current involvement* with the person they were interested in/dating: "Interested but *not yet* romantically involved" (*1*), "Never romantically involved, and now no longer interested" (*2*), "In a *casual* romantic relationship" (*3*), "In a *serious* romantic relationship" (*4*), and "Romantic relationship *was* casual or serious, but has ended" (*5*). Mothers responded to this question for each partner that she was either dating or interested in dating. From these responses, mothers were categorized into four possible repartnering histories. The first repartnering history is mothers who did not date over the course of the study ("No Dating"). These mothers never reported anything higher than a "2" in any of the monthly diaries. The second repartnering

history is referred to as "Monogamous Dating", where mothers only listed one partner over the course of the study. This relationship may have started at any point over the study (responded with a "2", "3", and/or a "4" for any month), but no other partners were listed by the mother. This pattern also includes mothers who reported temporary breakups with their partner (alternating to a "5" and back to a "3" or a "4" during the study[3]).

Two other repartnering histories were formed based off of mothers' responses to this item, which involved mothers who reported multiple partners. "Serial Daters" includes mothers who dated multiple partners, but these relationships did not overlap with each other (see *Figure 2a*). In this example, this mother dates four different partners, but none of the relationships occurred at the same time. This mother dated one partner, the relationship ended, and the mother dated someone new after a few months of being single. The other repartnering history, "Simultaneous Daters" refers to mothers who dated multiple partners and the relationships overlapped (see *Figure 2b*). In this example, this mother dated multiple partners during the first four months of the study. During month 2, she dated four different partners at the same time. Even if a mother reported one month of simultaneous dating, she was assigned with the repartnering history of simultaneous dating.

For each repartnering history, a dichotomous variable signaled whether or not a mother was in the relationship (onset of repartnering) and another variable measured the time spent in each relationship (time since repartnering). For example, a mother who started a monogamous repartnering history would receive a "1" indicating that she went from not dating to forming a relationship. This variable (*PARTNERED*) remained a "1" as long as the relationship was intact. After the first month, a time variable (*PARTNERTIME*) measured the length of time since

[3] There were no statistically significant differences with mothers reporting a temporary breakup versus those who did not in each of the analyses.

mothers' first started this relationship. A similar dichotomous variable was used with the other repartnering histories (*SERIAL* and *SIMUL*) as well as a variable signaling the length of time serially or simultaneously dating (*SERIALTIME* and *SIMULTIME*).

Mothers' breakup. Mothers who broke up responded with a "5" to the question previously described from the diary ("…relationship has ended"). The date that the breakup occurred triggered a variable (*POSTPARTNER*) to alternate from a zero to a one. This variable also included temporary breakups (value = 1). The following months, if mothers had not formed a new relationship, a time variable measuring time since breakup was recorded until the mother entered a new relationship or reached the end of the study (*POSTPARTNERTIME*).

Mothers' depressive symptoms. Mothers' reported their level of depressive symptoms in the monthly diary using a scale based on Anderson and Greene's (2011) study of repartnering. This scale included 13 items, such as "In the PAST MONTH how often have you experienced trouble focusing on household chores" and "In the PAST MONTH how often have you experienced feelings of helplessness". Response choices for this scale ranged from 0 (*Not at all*) to 4 (*Most or all the time*) and also displayed adequate internal consistency (Chronbach's alpha = .78). Mother's average depression score per diary assessment was 1.55 (*SD* = .63).

Mothers' life satisfaction. Mothers' life satisfaction was measured using the monthly diaries and was based on a previous study by Anderson and Greene (2011). This scale was comprised of 8 items, which included examples such as, "In the PAST MONTH how often have you experienced satisfaction with your life" and "In the PAST MONTH how often have you experienced optimism or hopefulness". Response choices for this scale ranged from 0 (*Not at all*) to 4 (*Most or all the time*). The items investigating life satisfaction showed acceptable internal

consistency (Chronbach's alpha = .81). Mother's average life satisfaction score per diary assessment was 2.68 (*SD* = .62).

Mothers' drunkenness. Mothers' drunkenness was measured using a single item from Anderson and Greene (2011). This item stated, "In the PAST MONTH how often have you been drunk on alcohol". The response choices for this question ranged from 0 (*None or not at all*) to 4 (*More than once a week*). Mother's monthly average for drunkenness was .49 (*SD* = .73) per diary assessment.

Mothers' unprotected sex. This variable was measured using a single item used in a past study by Anderson and Greene (2011). The item asked mothers, "In the PAST MONTH how often have you had sex that was unprotected from either disease or pregnancy". The response choices for this item was 0 (*None or not at all*) to 4 (*More than once a week*). The average number of instances that mother's reported experiencing unprotected sex is .43 (*SD* = .76) per diary assessment.

Mothers' relationship quality. Mothers reported their level of relational happiness and relational permanence with each of their romantic partners during their monthly diary assessments. Mothers responded to the following question considering happiness with her repartnering relationship, "All things considered, how happy or unhappy has the relationship with this person been this past month?" Response choices ranged from 1 (*Very Happy*) to 6 (*Very Unhappy*) and was reverse-scored for ease of interpretation. Mother's reported an average score of 3.35 (*SD* = 2.52) for this item at each diary assessment. Mothers who did not date did not have a score of relational happiness. Mothers also reported their level of relationship permanence by responding to the item, "How likely is it that you will have a long-lasting or permanent, romantic relationship with this person?" with response choices ranging from 1 (*Very Likely*) to 5 (*Very*

Unlikely). This item was also reverse-scored for ease of interpretation. Mothers reported an average commitment score of 2.63 (*SD* = 1.58) per diary assessment for this study. Mothers who did not date did not have a score for relational commitment. Because these measures were highly correlated, $r(4228) = .94$, $p < .01$, they were summed together to provide a measure of relationship quality (Range 0 – 11; Mean = 5.98; *SD* = 4.10).

Mothers' demographics. At the baseline assessment, mothers reported on various demographic variables, including age, length of marriage, length of separation, race, income, education, number of children, age of their children, and employment. Mothers designated their race as white, Black, or Hispanic, which was dichotomized for analyses (0 = white; 1 = non-white). Concerning education, mothers were asked, "What is the highest grade in school you completed or the highest degree you received?" Mothers responses ranged from 1 (*8th grade or less*) to 13 (*Advanced college degree, Doctoral*), with the middle, 7, representing "Some college, less than 2 years." Regarding income, mothers were asked, "Thinking about the income you will receive during the current year from ALL sources, like wages or salary, child support, alimony, income from your own business, unemployment, anything like that, what is your best guess what your income before taxes will be:" Mothers responses ranged from 1 (*Less than $5,000 per year*) to 17 (*$80,000 or more*), where subsequent responses represented a $5,000 boost from a previous response (i.e. 2 = *$5,000 to $9,999*). Mothers also identified how many partners they dated either casually or seriously during the separation process prior to legal divorce, with the total number of partners used for analyses. Mothers also reported whether they began to cohabit with a new partner during the study, as well as whether they became pregnant or remarried during the study. Each variable was dichotomized (1 = Yes; 0 = No).

Data Analytic Plan

The current project incorporated the use of multi-level modeling using hierarchical modeling techniques (HLM; Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). This approach captures between- and within-person effects of the different repartnering histories on mothers' psychological well-being and risk behaviors as well as account for discontinuous time as mothers started and ended their relationships at different times in the study. In addition, although HLM accounts for missing data using Full Maximum Likelihood, the program will delete cases for which there is missing data at level-2 (between-person). In this data, however, no data was missing at the between-person level. Also, for this data, all diaries that are available for analyses have complete information. Thus, the missing data for this study occurs only when mothers fail to complete a diary for a given month or when a mother isn't able to report on the quality of a relationship when she is not dating. I will use the multi-level models described in order to answer the hypotheses of this study. Also, ANOVAs will be used to compare mean differences across each of the repartnering histories to characterize mothers' dating after divorce.

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Mean Differences

Mothers in this study were differentiated into four different repartnering histories: No dating (n = 49), monogamous dating (n = 145), serial dating (n = 65), and simultaneous dating (n = 60). *Table 1* displays the mean differences across each of these repartnering histories. Mothers on average completed 14.58 diaries (SD = 9.71), with mothers who dated multiple partners simultaneously reporting significantly more diary entries[4]. Mothers who dated one person after divorce had shorter marriages (111.70 months) compared to mothers who did not date (132.00 months), who dated serially (129.01 months), and who dated simultaneously (132.52 months), but this difference was not statistically significant. Mothers who dated only one partner also reported longer time separated from their ex-spouse (20.13 months) compared to mothers who did not date during the study (14.33 months), mothers who dated multiple partners serially (9.78 months), and mothers who dated multiple partners simultaneously (6.47 months), with the difference being statistically significant, $F(2, 318) = 8.31$, $p < .001$. Mothers who did not date were significantly older (39.14 years) than mothers who dated multiple partners (serial daters: 36.88 years; simultaneous daters: 37.37 years), and significantly older than mothers who dated only one partner (35.71 years), $F(2, 318) = 3.61$, $p < .05$. Mothers who dated simultaneously represented the lowest proportion of racial minorities (22%) compared to the other repartnering histories (no dating: 39%; monogamous daters: 41%; and serial daters: 37%), but this difference was not statistically different. Mothers who dated multiple partners both serially and simultaneously reported higher levels of education (8.58 and 8.28, respectively) compared to mothers who did not date (8.16) and who reported a monogamous relationship (7.63), who

[4] Mothers filled out a new diary for each additional partner, so although the difference is statistically significant, the difference is expected due to the nature of data collection.

reported the lowest levels, although not statistically significant. Mothers who also dated multiple partners both serially and simultaneously reported making significantly more money (11.88 and 12.63, respectively) than mothers who dated monogamously (9.37), where mothers who did not date showed no differences in income from mothers reporting any other repartnering history, $F(2, 318) = 6.88$, $p < .001$.

Concerning age and number of children, there were few differences across repartnering histories. The number of children ranged from 1.94 (serial daters) to 2.16 (monogamous daters). The age of the oldest child ranged from 9.58 (simultaneous daters) to 10.39 (no dating). Mothers who were in a dating relationship, whether monogamous, serial, or simultaneous, were significantly more likely to begin cohabiting over the course of the study, $F(2, 318) = 12.38$, $p < .001$, as well as report a remarriage $F(2, 318) = 3.07$, $p < .05$, but the rates are considerably low. Very few mothers reported becoming pregnant over the course of the study, ranging from 0% (no dating) to 9% (serial daters). Concerning romantic involvement during the separation period, there were some significant differences across repartnering histories. Mothers reporting no dating experience over the course of the study reported significantly lower total number of romantic partners during the separation period (.57 partners) compared to mothers who dated monogamously (1.53 partners) and serially (1.77 partners), but were not different compared to mothers who dated simultaneously (1.52 partners), $F(2, 318) = 3.73$, $p < .05$. Serial daters reported significantly more casual partners during the separation period (1.40 partners) compared to mothers who did not date (.49 partners), but did not differ from other repartnering histories (monogamous daters: .92 partners; simultaneous daters: 1.25 partners), $F(2, 318) = 3.17$, $p < .05$. Mothers who were in a monogamous relationship reported significantly more serious relationships (.61 partners) during the separation period compared to mothers who did not date

during the study (.08 partners), but not different from serial daters (.37 partners) or simultaneous daters (.27 partners), $F(2, 318) = 12.71$, $p < .001$.

Table 2 describes the differences in relational variables for mothers reporting at least one dating relationship. First, simultaneous daters reported significantly more partners (4.25) than serial daters (2.48), $F(2, 269) = 28.90$, $p < .001$. The length of the longest relationship between each of the different repartnering histories was not statistically significant, but mothers dating simultaneously averaged the longest (410.13 days), monogamous daters reported the next longest (384.52 days), and serial daters reported the shortest (335.38 days). As can be expected, the occurrence of a breakup was significantly higher for mothers who dated serially and simultaneously compared to mothers who dated only one partner[5], $F(2, 269) = 78.23$, $p < .001$. The maximum level of happiness was higher for mothers dating multiple partners (serial daters: 5.75; simultaneous daters: 5.71) compared to mothers in a monogamous relationship (5.28), and these differences were statistically significant, $F(2, 269) = 5.38$, $p < .01$. No significant differences were found with the maximum level of relationship permanence (range from 4.19 for monogamous daters to 4.47 for simultaneous daters) or maximum level of relationship quality (range from 9.46 for monogamous daters to 10.15 for serial daters).

Table 3 presents differences in each of the four dependent variables across each repartnering history. Mothers who dated simultaneously, reported the highest levels of depressive symptoms than the other three repartnering histories (1.72), followed by not dating (1.62), monogamous dating (1.49), and serial dating (1.47), and these mean differences were not statistically different. Also, mothers who did not date reported lower scores of life satisfaction

[5] There were eight serial daters and ten simultaneous daters who did not report a breakup. These mothers were more likely miss a diary assessment, which would have included the transition to breaking up. If a mother missed a few monthly diaries in a row she only focused on her new relationship as information about the past relationship wouldn't be considered prospective.

(2.50) versus other repartnering histories (2.67 for simultaneous daters; 2.72 for both monogamous and serial daters), and this difference was not statistically significant. Concerning drunkenness, simultaneous daters reported significantly higher levels (.72) compared to monogamous daters (.37); whereas serial daters (.52) and mothers not dating (.49) were not different from other repartnering histories, $F(2, 318) = 4.43$, $p < .01$. Not surprising, mothers who did not date reported significantly lower levels of unprotected sex (.00) compared to the other repartnering histories, which ranged from .46 (monogamous daters) to .62 (simultaneous daters).

Consequences of Repartnering

Before discussing the results of my hypotheses, it is important to describe the trends in mothers' psychological well-being and risk behaviors during the course of the study. *Table 4* displays the results for the baseline models for each measure of maternal well-being. According to this table, depressive symptoms and drunkenness decreased significantly over time (B = -.07, $p < .001$; B = -.06, $p < .01$, respectively). Life satisfaction and unprotected sex did not change significantly over time.

The first hypothesis examined the effect of beginning and maintaining a relationship in order to verify that repartnering is beneficial for mothers' well-being. Results from the multi-level model associated with this hypothesis are presented in *Table 5*. For hypothesis 1.A, I predicted that mothers would have higher levels of well-being at the onset of a repartnering relationship compared to when they are not dating. I found partial support for this hypothesis as each measure of maternal well-being was significant on the intercept for mothers' repartnering, but not all in the expected direction: depressive symptoms (B = -.07, $p < .01$); life satisfaction (B = .16, $p < .001$); drunkenness (B = .12, $p < .01$); and unprotected sex (B = .38, $p < .001$). In other

words, when mothers began a repartnering relationship, they reported lower initial levels of depressive symptoms and higher levels of life satisfaction, drunkenness, and unprotected sex. For hypothesis 1.B, I predicted changes in the slope of maternal well-being when she remained in a repartnering relationship; however, I did not find support for this hypothesis as none of the effects of repartnering slopes were significant. There was a significant effect of slope for time in the study, where depressive symptoms (B = -.05, $p < .01$) and drunkenness (B = -.05, $p < .05$) declined over time. A graphical presentation of these results is shown in *Figure 4*. In this figure, there are four graphs, each displaying three prototypical (predicted) trajectories of mothers: mothers who do not date, mothers who begin a dating relationship at one year, and mothers who begin a dating relationship at two years. For depressive symptoms, shown in the top left graph, at the time when mothers initiate a relationship, they experience a drop in depressive symptoms compared to if they do not date. Examining the other three graphs, mothers receive a boost in life satisfaction, drunkenness, and unprotected sex at the onset of a relationship.

Consequences of Relationship Quality

The second hypothesis of the study examined the effect of relationship quality for maternal well-being to test the assumption that all repartnering relationships are beneficial for mothers. For this analysis, the intercept and slope of monogamous dating, as well as the measures of relationship quality were included as level-1 predictors. In other words, I tested the interaction of relationship quality when mothers reported being in a relationship. Results for this hypothesis are presented in *Table 6*. In support of my hypothesis, the interaction significantly predicted all four measures of maternal well-being. The effects of relationship quality significantly predicted depressive symptoms (B = -.03, $p < .001$), drunkenness (B = -.02, $p < .001$), life satisfaction (B = .04, $p < .001$), and unprotected sex (B = .03, $p < .001$) and the effect

of being in a relationship also significantly influenced maternal well-being: depressive symptoms (B = .19, $p < .001$), life satisfaction (B = -.16, $p < .01$), drunkenness (B = .27, $p < .001$), and unprotected sex (B = .17, $p < .05$). Because the effects alternated from positive to negative, the interaction is significant. In other words, mothers in higher quality relationships reported higher levels of well-being (compared to not dating), whereas mothers in lower quality relationships reported lower levels of well-being (compared to not dating). The effects of relationship quality strongly influenced maternal well-being as the standard deviations of these coefficients remained significantly small, with some almost zero. The slope for time in the study also remained significant for mothers' depressive symptoms (B = -.04, $p < .05$) and drunkenness (B = -.05, $p < .05$). *Figures 5a* and *5b* graphically display these results. For *Figure 5a*, I provide a bar graph for the interaction between relationship quality and maternal well-being for a prototypical mother. When mothers were in a low quality relationship, they reported more depressive symptoms and less life satisfaction compared to mothers in high quality relationships. The predicted levels of depressive symptoms and life satisfaction for low quality relationships were worse compared to when mothers do not date. *Figure 5b* displays the interaction of drunkenness and unprotected sex based on mothers' relationship quality. Mother's drunkenness is significantly lower when she was in a high quality relationship based on the predicted values from the multi-level models. Also, unprotected sex is significantly higher for mothers in high quality relationships compared to low quality relationships and periods of not dating.

Consequences of Breakup

The goal of the third hypothesis was to examine the influence of the end of a repartnering relationship. If being in a relationship is positive for maternal well-being, than ending these relationships should be detrimental for mothers. Results for this hypothesis are presented in

Table 7. For this hypothesis, I did not find any significant findings on the intercept or slope of ending a repartnering relationship. In other words, mothers who were in a relationship that ended were not different in terms of well-being compared to mothers who do not date over the course of the study. The positive effects associated with relationship quality remained significant for all four measures of maternal well-being: depressive symptoms (B = -.03, $p < .001$), life satisfaction (B = .04, $p < .001$), drunkenness (B = -.02, $p < .001$), and unprotected sex (B = .03, $p < .001$). The intercept of repartnering also remained significant for all four measures of maternal well-being: depressive symptoms (B = .15, $p < .001$), life satisfaction (B = -.13, $p < .01$), drunkenness (B = .25, $p < .001$), and unprotected sex (B = .22, $p < .01$). There were no significant effects of time in the study for this analysis.

Consequences of Serial Dating

The fourth hypothesis predicted that mothers who serially date may also show improvements in well-being when starting new, subsequent, higher quality relationships. Results for this hypothesis are presented in *Table 8*. When mothers began to serially date, mothers reported increases in life satisfaction (B = .08, $p < .05$), compared to mothers who do not date serially. However, mothers did not receive any benefits for the length of time serially dating. The effect of intercept and slope of relationship dissolution remained insignificant for this analysis. As predicted, for mothers who date (either serially or monogamously compared to instances when mothers report no dating), relationship quality remained significant for maternal well-being through decreases in depressive symptoms (B = -.03, $p < .001$) and drunkenness (B = -.02, $p < .001$), and increases in life satisfaction (B = .04, $p < .001$) and unprotected sex (B = .03, $p < .001$). The intercept of repartnering also remained significant for all four measures of maternal well-being: depressive symptoms (B = .15, $p < .001$), life satisfaction (B = -.13, $p < .01$),

drunkenness (B = .24, $p < .001$), and unprotected sex (B = .22, $p < .001$). In this case the interaction between relationship quality and being in a relationship remained significant, with mothers who report higher levels of relationship quality also reporting higher levels of well-being and vice-versa for mothers in low quality relationships. Different from past analyses, the slope of maintaining a repartnering relationship was significant in predicting decreases in mothers' depressive symptoms (B = -.05, $p < .05$). There were no significant effects of time in the study. *Figure 6* provides a graphical representation for changes in life satisfaction as a function of relationship quality, which takes into account the first dating relationship and the average subsequent dating relationship. In this figure, the predicted trajectory shows increases in life satisfaction for the first and subsequent repartnering relationship when the relationship is high quality. In this prototypical trajectory, mothers who enter in low quality relationships, whether initially or subsequently, report significantly lower levels of life satisfaction. During a breakup, mothers increase their life satisfaction when ending a low quality relationship, but decrease their life satisfaction when ending a high quality relationship.

Consequences of Simultaneous Dating

The fifth hypothesis predicted that when mothers begin and continue to date multiple partners simultaneously of low quality, maternal well-being would be negatively impacted. The results of this hypothesis are presented in *Table 9*. I found partial support for this hypothesis. First, when mothers began to simultaneously date (compared to times when mothers were not dating, dating monogamously, or dating serially), they reported higher initial levels of life satisfaction (B = .13, $p < .01$), drunkenness (B = .23, $p < .001$), and unprotected sex (B = .18, $p < .05$). Both drunkenness (B = -.36, $p < .05$) and unprotected sex (B = -.77, $p < .01$) significantly declined when mothers continued to simultaneously date (versus times when they were not

continuing to simultaneously date). As with past analyses, the intercept and slope of ending a repartnering relationship was not significant in predicting maternal well-being. Again, relationship quality was a significant predictor for all four measure of maternal well-being: depressive symptoms (B = -.04, $p < .001$), life satisfaction (B = .04, $p < .001$), drunkenness (B = -.02, $p < .01$), and unprotected sex (B = .03, $p < .001$). Also, the effect of being in a relationship was significant at the intercept for maternal well-being: depressive symptoms (B = .16, $p < .001$), life satisfaction (B = -.16, $p < .01$), drunkenness (B = .20, $p < .001$), and unprotected sex (B = .19, $p < .05$). Because both relationship quality and the effect of being in a relationship remained significant, the previously described interaction remained significant compared to mothers who do not date, where mothers who reported higher quality relationships reported higher well-being and vice versa. Also, maintaining a relationship also remained significant in predicting depressive symptoms (B = -.05, $p < .05$). The slope of time in the study was not significant in predicting maternal well-being. *Figure 7a-c* displays the significant effects of slope of simultaneous dating for life satisfaction (*7a*), drunkenness (*7b*), and unprotected sex, (*7c*). *Figure 7a* compares a prototypical mother who is dating simultaneously to a prototypical mother who is dating, but not simultaneously (i.e. monogamously or serially). Based on the predicted trajectory of life satisfaction, mothers dating simultaneously report higher initial levels of life satisfaction compared to mothers dating, but not simultaneously. This difference is short lived as simultaneous mothers appear to experience steeper declines in life satisfaction over the course of her simultaneously dating. Across each predicted measure of life satisfaction, mothers in low quality relationships, whether simultaneous or not, report lower levels of life satisfaction. *Figure 7b* displays changes in drunkenness for mothers who date both simultaneously and not simultaneously. A trend similar to *Figure 7a* is present as mothers report significantly higher

levels of drunkenness at the onset of simultaneous dating, independent of relationship quality, but steeper declines in drunkenness during the course of simultaneously dating. *Figure 7c* displays an interaction between relationship quality and repartnering history for unprotected sex. Mothers who are in low quality, non-simultaneous relationships report higher levels of unprotected sex compared to high quality simultaneous relationships. However, mothers in high quality simultaneous dating relationships report higher levels of unprotected sex compared to mothers in low quality simultaneous dating relationships. Also, mothers in simultaneous relationships report significantly higher levels of unprotected sex at the onset of simultaneous dating, but report steeper declines in unprotected sex over the course of the study, independent of relationship quality.

Threat of Selection

The sixth hypothesis predicted that if the threat of selection was present, mothers' stable characteristics would influence her well-being beyond the effects of a repartnering relationship and the quality of these relationships. The results of this analysis are presented in *Table 10*. There were some significant effects of mothers' stable characteristics in predicting her well-being. First, mothers who were non-white reported significantly less depressive symptoms (B = -.28, $p < .001$) and drunkenness (B = -.22, $p < .05$). Second, length of marriage predicted mothers' depressive symptoms (B = -.02, $p < .05$) and unprotected sex (B = -.02, $p < .05$). Mothers' education was positively associated with life satisfaction (B = .04, $p < .05$). Next, mothers who had higher incomes typically reported higher levels of drunkenness and unprotected sex (B = .02, $p < .05$; B = .02, $p < .05$, respectively). Last, the number of romantic partners during the separation period significantly predicted mothers' unprotected sex (B = .06, $p < .01$). Other between level variables, maternal age, length of separation, number of children, and age of oldest

child did not significantly predict maternal well-being. Also, there were no significant effects of time in the study.

Despite controlling for each of these threats of selection, the effects of repartnering and the quality of these relationships remained significant. Beginning a relationship (compared to not being in a relationship) significantly predicted all four measures of maternal well-being: depressive symptoms (B = .16, $p < .001$), life satisfaction (B = -.16, $p < .01$), drunkenness (B = .18, $p < .01$), and unprotected sex (B = .17, $p < .05$). Maintaining a relationship significantly predicted declines in depressive symptoms (B = -.05, $p < .05$). The quality of mothers' relationships significantly predicted each of the four measures of maternal well-being: depressive symptoms (B = -.03, $p < .001$), life satisfaction (B = .04, $p < .001$), drunkenness (B = -.02, $p < .01$), and unprotected sex (B = .03, $p < .001$). When mothers ended a relationship, mothers were more likely to report declines in depressive symptoms (B = -.08, $p < .05$) and increases in life satisfaction (B = .08, $p < .05$), but no effects on the slope of breakup. Mothers' beginning a serial relationship were more likely to report increases in life satisfaction (B = .08, $p < .01$). Continuing to date serially was predictive of declines in drunkenness (B = -.20, $p < .05$). Mothers who initiated simultaneous dating relationships commonly reported higher levels of life satisfaction (B = .14, $p < .01$), drunkenness (B = .24, $p < .001$), and unprotected sex (B = .18, $p < .05$). Maintaining the repartnering history of simultaneous dating was associated with lower levels of drunkenness (B = -.37, $p < .05$) and unprotected sex (B = -.76, $p < .01$). Although there were some significant effects of selection, the interaction of quality of mothers' relationships and repartnering did not drastically change, providing support that repartnering histories and relationship quality predict maternal well-being beyond selection effects.

Last, I conducted a test controlling for three other relationship transitions that could have occurred during the first two years after divorce – pregnancy, cohabitation, and remarriage in order to isolate the effects of repartnering. The results of this analysis are presented in *Table 11*. Through controlling for each of these relationship contexts, the interaction between relationship quality and repartnering relationship (higher quality relationships are predictive of higher maternal well-being compared to not dating and vice versa) remained almost the same as all prior analyses, and remained significant. Also, the results for serial and simultaneous dating also remained similarly significant from past analyses. Only two significant findings from the repartnering contexts showed significance. First, mothers reporting higher levels of life satisfaction were more likely to report a remarriage. Second, mothers reporting higher levels of unprotected sex were also more likely to report cohabitation. In short, findings remained robust after isolating different contexts of repartnering.

Discussion

The goal of this study was to address the assumption that repartnering is beneficial for mothers independent of relationship quality, an assumption that is only recently receiving attention in the literature (Symoens et al., 2014). The results of this study provide strong support that relationship quality plays an important role for maternal well-being during repartnering. Mothers in high quality relationships exhibit higher levels of psychological well-being compared to instances when she is not dating. Mothers in low quality relationships appear to have lower levels of well-being compared to mothers who do not date over the first two years after divorce. When examining the threat of selection, only minor effects were found, while the main effects of repartnering and relationship quality remained significant.

For this study, about 46% of mothers dated only one partner after divorce, 21% reported dating serially, 18% reported dating simultaneously, and 15% chose not to date during the study. Most relationships were high quality, with many mothers reporting that their relationship(s) made them at least somewhat happy and reporting that there was a somewhat likely chance that the relationship would be considered permanent. Mothers' dating relationships lasted on average, a little over a year, with an average of two breakups occurring for serial daters and four breakups for simultaneous daters across the study. Also, while unprotected sex can be considered a risk factor for teenagers or young adults, in the context of repartnering, mothers are more aware of the consequences of unprotected sex, which decreases the notion that unprotected sex is a risk behavior for mothers after divorce. In order to discuss the implications of these results, I will first characterize each of the repartnering histories based on the results of the mean differences tests. Next, I will describe the implications for theory and maternal well-being from the main analyses

of my study. Last, I will describe the influence of breaking up, the threat of selection, and the limitations associated with this study.

Mothers' Dating After Divorce

After divorce, mothers reported four different repartnering histories that represented her approach to dating. The first repartnering history included mothers who chose not to date after divorce. These mothers were older, came from longer marriages, had an average education level and income, reported lower levels of life satisfaction and fewer instances of unprotected sex. Referring back to the introduction, older mothers have a smaller pool of potential partners to date and are more likely to focus on their children's adjustment than their own romantic development (Anderson & Greene, 2011; Bzostek et al., 2012; Skew et al., 2009). Older mothers are also more likely to come from longer marriages. These mothers do not seem to be interested in romantic relationships or hooking up. These mothers also reported the lowest levels of life satisfaction compared to the other repartnering histories, yet the size of the difference is small. Dating after divorce is typically beneficial for mothers' well-being (Amato, 2000; Anderson & Greene, 2005; 2011; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002), so when mothers do not date, they do not receive the small boost associated with repartnering. Asides from being older and less interested in relationships, these mothers are average across other variables, such as education, depressive symptoms, and length of separation. Being older and coming from longer marriages reflects the key characteristics of this repartnering history.

Monogamous daters can also be differentiated from the other repartnering histories. These mothers come from shorter marriages, longer separation periods, report the least amount of drunkenness and unprotected sex, are the youngest, least educated, and make less money compared to the other repartnering histories. These mothers have been separated longer, which

gives them more time to see who they want to date. At the time of the divorce filing, these mothers had, on average, 20 months of being single (length of separation) before the divorce filing to figure out when and who they may want to date. With almost two years of not being in a marital relationship, these mothers had more time to find a partner that they could potentially commit to. Although these mothers reported lower levels of risk behaviors compared to other repartnering histories, the size of the difference is quite small, as few mothers in this study reported high levels of drunkenness or unprotected sex. Next, since these mothers are less educated and make the least amount of money, they appear to benefit the most practically from a consistent romantic relationship. Mothers receive help from a dating partner by providing extra income and helping with watching children (Amato, 2010; Ganong & Coleman, 2004). In order to maintain these financial and economic benefits, mothers are encouraged to maintain this relationship, and are dissuaded from dating other partners. In general, monogamous daters are characterized by less education, less income, and longer separation periods.

Mothers who experience a repartnering history of serial dating are also distinguished from the other repartnering histories. These mothers report the highest levels of relationship quality, report average levels of psychological well-being and risk behaviors, are average in age, and slightly above average for education and income. These mothers are characterized by their decision to date a new partner after the end of a previous relationship. Although reporting the highest levels of relationship quality, the difference in relationship quality across each repartnering history was less than one. Yet, these mothers may perceive subsequent relationships to be better than their last relationship as a means to help them feel better with their choice of entering a new relationship. These mothers display little differences from other repartnering histories regarding well-being, age, or length of marriage. These mothers also report the highest

number of partners during the separation period, but again, the difference is not large. Next, these mothers are also more educated compared to mothers who do not date and monogamous daters. Educated mothers may have more confidence in ending a relationship or coping with a repartnering breakup. Also, by having a (slightly) higher income, these mothers may not have to rely on a relationship as much for supplemental income. Overall, these mothers are average on many domains, but are slightly more educated than other mothers, and value the quality of a relationship.

The last repartnering history is simultaneous mothers. These mothers display more risk behaviors, as they reported the highest levels of drunkenness and unprotected sex, but also higher levels of depressive symptoms and income compared to other repartnering histories. Although the size of the difference is small, mothers who go on several dates have more opportunities to consume alcohol and to have sex. These mothers reported slightly higher levels of depressive symptoms compared to all other repartnering histories, which may be due to them not being able to hold onto one focal relationship. Yet, these mothers probably seek attention from multiple partners to assist in coping with their depressive symptoms. Receiving attention from several partners helps mothers feel less lonely (Hetherington, 2003). Also, mothers who make more money have more resources to go on multiple dates, as they can afford meals, drinks, and other items associated with the context of dating. Next, these mothers reported the shortest period of separation, with an average of six months. With only six months, the divorce process seemed to occur quickly. Hasty divorces commonly involve two partners where neither wants to continue to work on the marriage (Hetherington, 1999). When both partners want to divorce, the separation and divorce process tend to go much faster. The want to get out of the marriage may encourage a mother to seek refuge in other relationships so that she may feel better about her own qualities.

Receiving attention from others is one method that helps deal with a breakup and divorce (Reed, 2007). In general, these mothers exhibit slightly more risk behaviors and income, and go through the divorce process quickly compared to the other repartnering histories. Next, I describe the theoretical implications involved with these repartnering histories by focusing on relationship quality.

Divorce-Stress-Adaptation Perspective

The results of this study have implications for the divorce-stress-adaptation perspective (Amato, 2000; Wang & Amato, 2000). This perspective describes two central processes: the crisis model and the chronic strain model. According to this perspective, protective factors predict which process mothers' experience (Wang & Amato, 2000). The results of the current study demonstrate that the quality of mothers' dating relationships can be a factor that predicts which process mothers experience after divorce. Although being in a relationship seems to be beneficial for mothers depending on the quality, simply not being in a relationship is not bad for mothers. If a mother enjoys the benefits of a high quality relationship, her well-being is more likely to increase over time (compared to when she is not dating), which is representative of the crisis model. A mother in a low-quality relationship, which appears to be worse than not dating, leads to additional stress. If mothers are not happy in their relationships due to conflict or economic strain, such as the dating partner not having a job for example, would maintain or increase mothers' post-divorce stress.

The quality of a mothers' relationship assists their well-being after divorce. Despite which repartnering history a mother reports, fewer depressive symptoms and higher levels of life satisfaction are described when mothers are in high quality relationships. This increase in well-being should help mothers cope with the negative effects of divorce. When a mother is happy in

her relationship and satisfied with her life, she begins to feel less lonely and is more likely to be proud of her relationship and her choice to enter it. This experience is beneficial for mothers and appears to reduce the damaging effects associated with the divorce. Mothers in low quality relationships, on the other hand, describe lower levels of well-being. Although the variability in relationship quality is small, mothers may be more likely to report more depression when they are in a low quality relationship. Some of these mothers remain in a low quality relationship because their partner might be good for her children or the partner provides financial assistance to the family. Yet, low quality partners may be disrespectful to the mother or abstain from showing intimacy, both of which tend to be negative for maternal well-being (Bzostek et al., 2012; Hetherington, 1999; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002; Symoens et al., 2014). Stress is more likely to increase when mothers are in low quality relationships (Amato, 2000; Hughes, 2000; Symoens et al., 2014). Also, mothers may feel regretful that they were unable to maintain their marriage and are now involved with a relationship that they may not maintain, resulting in feelings of hopelessness with romantic relationships. Mothers may also view their repartnering relationship as a downgrade from the marital relationship, which can also induce stress. Overall, the quality of mothers' relationships is protective factor in predicting which process mothers experience within the divorce-stress-adaptation perspective.

Consequences of Repartnering

Up to this point in the discussion, two points have been described – the characteristics of the different repartnering histories and the importance of relationship quality. Combining these concepts with the results of my multi-level models provide information on the consequences of each repartnering history. For this section, I will discuss the consequences of each repartnering history in terms of maternal well-being and risk behaviors. I will begin by talking about mothers

who do not date, followed by mothers who date monogamously. Next, I will discuss the implications for dating serially and simultaneously.

Mothers who do not date report positive trends in well-being. In general, mothers who are not dating are reporting average levels of depressive symptoms and drunkenness, which tend to decline over time. Also, although these mothers report slightly lower levels of life satisfaction, the slope of change is minimal, meaning that mothers are not experiencing any stronger declines in life satisfaction as a result of not repartnering. In other words, these mothers appear to be doing fine without a relationship – they just aren't receiving the added boost that a relationship brings, assuming the relationship is high quality. Not surprising, these mothers report the lowest levels of unprotected sex. It may be safe to assume that mothers who are not looking to date are also not looking to hook up. These mothers may be looking to avoid intimacy altogether, either because the availability of a partner is low (Bzostek et al., 2012; Wu & Schimmele, 2005) or they want to focus on the development of their children rather than the development of a romantic relationship (Anderson & Green, 2011). In general the consequences for not dating are not negative for maternal well-being – they just aren't as good compared to mothers who are repartnering in a high quality relationship.

Mothers who monogamously date, report improvements in their psychological well-being over time if they are in a high quality relationship. Also, these mothers report increases in drunkenness and unprotected sex at the onset of dating. First, mothers who begin a relationship report less depressive symptoms that decline over time, especially when the relationship was high quality. Mothers in low quality, monogamous relationships reported the opposite effect. Mothers' depressive symptoms were lower compared to times when they were not dating and these mothers also reported a boost in life satisfaction at the start of the relationship and the

relationship was high quality. These mothers were able to cope with the divorce by becoming involved with only one partner that made them happy. However, monogamous daters reported an increase in risk behaviors at the time of relationship initiation. Yet, in the context of dating, these variables may not represent "risk behaviors" per se. Drunkenness is a risk behavior that mothers should avoid (Hetherington, 1999; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002), but the consumption of alcohol occurs when mothers go on dates. When mothers increase the time they spend with their partner, they may feel more comfortable drinking in front of their partner and as well as getting drunk in front of their partner. Despite this potential scenario, increasing the instances of being drunk is negative for mothers' physical and emotional health (Barnes, Farrell, & Bannerjee, 1994; Holmila, Raitasalo, & Kosola, 2013). On the other hand, the increase in frequency of unprotected sex may not be a sign of risk behaviors, but rather, a feeling of trust between a mother and her dating partner. Unlike teenagers and young adults, mothers are usually aware of the consequences of unprotected sex. By engaging in this behavior, a mother is showing that she trusts that her partner does not have an STI and that the partner will not get her pregnant. In some circumstances, a mother may engage in unprotected sex in encouragement of having a child with the dating partner, especially since these mothers are monogamously dating. In general, these mothers report benefits for their well-being when their relationship is high quality.

Serial daters were fairly similar to monogamous daters. These mothers showed improvement in psychological well-being when they entered into a high quality relationship, particularly for life satisfaction. When mothers experienced an end to a repartnering relationship and entered a new, higher quality relationship, they reported slightly higher levels of well-being. Mothers may feel better when they control their relationship destiny. In other words, if mothers get out of a relationship, and enter a new, subsequent relationship, they may feel more confident

with their choice of the new partner. Mothers may perceive that this new relationship will be better than the previous relationship, which can positively influence life satisfaction. When mothers leave a high quality relationship for a lower quality relationship, maternal well-being slightly declines. Although mothers have control over their relationship destiny, they would probably regret a relationship downgrade. Serial dating mothers decrease their drunkenness over time, but increase their rate of unprotected sex. Mothers who are serially dating may not feel comfortable drinking to the point of intoxication until they get to know their partner more. When mothers are leaving and entering new relationships, they want to make a good impression, which could involve fewer instances of getting drunk. Serial daters, however, may participate in unprotected sex as they are also familiar with the consequences compared to other age groups. For serial daters unprotected sex may be a behavior that a mother uses to test sexual compatibility.

Mothers who report simultaneous dating report more risk behaviors, but positive well-being when they are involved in high quality relationships. Mothers dating multiple partners tend to report slightly higher levels of life satisfaction compared to mothers reporting other repartnering histories. However, life satisfaction declines at a steeper rate compared to mothers not simultaneously dating. Mothers may feel happy after divorce when they receive positive attention from several different suitors, but these positive feelings subside relatively soon after simultaneous dating starts. Mothers may believe that although they lost their husband, they are still able to attract several other men when they simultaneously date. Mothers report slightly higher levels of life satisfaction when they are in high quality relationships. In other words, mothers who date several partners who make her happy will result in increases in her psychological well-being. Mothers feel better about themselves when they can form several

positive relationships with multiple dating partners. Concerning risk behaviors, mothers report higher levels of drunkenness and unprotected sex at the onset of simultaneous dating, but these levels decrease over time. These mothers cope with divorce by forming several romantic relationships at the same time. This group coincides with Hetherington and Kelly's (2002) "Libertines" (pg. 104) who cope with divorce by drinking and partying. Although this group reports slightly higher levels of risk behaviors, mothers who go on more dates with multiple partners have more opportunities to abuse alcohol. These mothers also have more opportunities to have unprotected sex. In this sense, mothers who are going on dates with multiple partners at the same time may result in more risk behaviors. This negative association between dating multiple partners and risk behaviors should be further delineated by method of dating – specifically mothers who meet people online and go on dates versus mothers who meet other partners in public, such as at a bar. Mothers who date multiple partners using online dating sites are provided a profile of their partner. Through this profile, a mother tends to know more information compared to mothers who meet someone in public for the first time. Although not the focus of this study, the method of dating was not examined. Future studies are encouraged to control for mothers who date multiple partners through dating sites versus in different public forums. Although not a large effect, mothers in this study, when dating multiple partners may have sought alcohol as way to help them relax, have a good time, and to show their dating partner that they are fun to be with. Similar to serial daters, these mothers may have participated in unprotected sex to test sexual compatibility. Over time, these mothers abuse less alcohol and have less unprotected sex, as they might think more about the importance of establishing only one relationship. The positive feelings from receiving attention from multiple partners may begin to dwindle over time as mothers become aware that dating multiple partners simultaneously is

not fair to all her dating partners. If mothers seek to focus on one relationship, they are more likely to decrease their participation with alcohol and unprotected sex.

Relationship Transitions

In most of my analyses, I did not find a significant effect for breaking up or staying single after breakup with any of the repartnering histories. Only when controlling for the threat of selection did I find that mothers reported less depressive symptoms and more life satisfaction when a breakup occurred, where the size of the coefficient was relatively small. In this instance, mothers reported slightly higher levels of psychological well-being when a breakup occurred. Mothers may be happier when they exit a relationship, especially if the relationship is low quality. After dealing with a divorce, when a mother leaves a low quality relationship whether being dumped or doing the dumping, she feels better about getting out of the relationship before it got worse. If mothers were broken up with, they may report better psychological well-being because they will have more time with their children and to focus on themselves.

Overall, though, over the course of the analyses for this study, mothers were unaffected by the breakup process. This insignificant finding may be because mothers may be more immune to the negative effects of the breakup process because the divorce process was more stressful. Presumably, ending a marriage in which children are involved would be more difficult to deal with then ending a dating relationship. The negative effects of breaking up as mentioned in the literature (Amato, 2000; Hetherington, 2003; Reed, 2007) may not have been present because both the positive and negative effects of the process cancel each other out. Breakups are typically difficult (Reed, 2007; Sbarra, 2006; Slotter, Gardner, & Finkel, 2010), so mothers may experience some depressive symptoms. But if there was anything wrong with the partner, such that the partner was not a good role model for the child, did not provide any resources for the

family, or did not make the mother happy, ending the relationship could have displaced the negative effects of breakup. Therefore, accumulating all the variables associated with breakup, post-relationship experiences may not have influenced maternal well-being or risk behaviors.

Threat of Selection

This study revealed a few threats of selection in predicting maternal well-being after divorce. Some of these effects are race, length of marriage, education, income, and the number of partners a mother dated during the separation period. Each of these variables has influenced repartnering in the literature (Bzostek et al., 2012; Ganong & Coleman, 2004; Skew et al., 2009). First, mothers from racial minorities reported slightly lower levels of depressive symptoms and drunkenness. Mothers in ethnic minorities are commonly less depressed compared to their white counterparts, which may have coincided with ethnic pride – the positive feeling associated with being in a minority group (Cherlin, 2012). Also, although ethnic minorities tend to abuse alcohol more compared to the population of whites, this effect is extenuated by the male and teenage populations (Lipsky & Caetano, 2009) rather than mothers. Mothers of minorities may be less likely to get drunk in order to be a role model for their children. Next, mothers in shorter marriages were slightly more depressed and participated in more unprotected sex compared to mothers who were in longer marriages. Mothers coming from longer marriages are less depressed possibly because they left a bad marriage. In other words, mothers could have maintained their poor marital relationship to provide stability to their children, but once the children are older, ending a bad marriage that lasted much longer may allow mothers to report higher life satisfaction (Hetherington, 1999). On the other hand, mothers ending shorter marriages may be negatively viewed by their peers, since getting divorced over a shorter period is sometimes perceived as a couple giving up too quickly on their marriage (de Graaf & Kalmijn,

2003; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). Also in this study, mothers dating more partners during the separation process were slightly more likely to report unprotected sex. These mothers could be more interested in sexual behaviors in general compared to mothers who are not dating as much during the separation period. These mothers may seek refuge in the comfort of a sexual relationship rather than an emotional or practical relationship. Also, hooking up may be a way to help mothers cope with the separation process (Reid, Elliot, & Webber, 2011).

The influence of education and income were significant in predicted maternal well-being independent of repartnering variables. More highly educated mothers reported slightly higher levels of life satisfaction and mothers making more money reported slightly higher levels of drunkenness and unprotected sex. Mothers who have succeeded academically may have done so because they are happier with their lives. This confidence could have taken over their education, as people who are happier with their lives are able to succeed academically versus individuals who are down on themselves (Cherlin, 2009; 2012). Also, mothers with higher education levels could feel happier with their lives, because they are more likely to have a steady job, a higher income, and are more likely to provide more for their children compared to less educated mothers. Concerning drunkenness, mothers who make more money can afford to consume more alcohol and go to bars, which offer them more opportunities to get drunk. Mothers who make more money may be less likely to use protection during sex because they can afford the consequences of these actions. If these mothers were to get pregnant or contract an STI, they are more likely to afford to get medicine or to have another child. As mentioned earlier, mothers are more aware of the consequences of unprotected sex compared to other populations.

Also, when controlling for other repartnering contexts – remarriage, pregnancy, and cohabitation – the results of my analyses remained consistent. Mothers who entered into any of

these repartnering transitions were not different from mothers who did not experience these transitions. One small difference was that mothers who were more likely to participate in unprotected sex were slightly more likely to report a period of cohabitation for this study. Living with a romantic partner offers more opportunities to have sex compared to mothers who do not live with their partners. In sum, after controlling for threats of selection, the significance of relationship quality and repartnering remained significant, where mothers in higher quality relationships reported better well-being compared to not repartnering over the course of the study.

Limitations and Conclusions

Although this study extends research on repartnering, it is not without limitations. First, this study focused on the first two years after divorce filing. Some mothers began dating during the separation period (Montgomery et al., 1992); yet, due to the nature of data collection, I was unable to examine the quality or length of these relationships. Rather, this study captured the effect of time since the divorce filing. Despite this limitation, this study is one of the first studies to capture mothers' dating after divorce prospectively. Another issue is that many past studies have examined the transition into and out of cohabitation as a measure of repartnering (Coleman et al., 2000; Skew et al., 2009), whereas this study focused on the transition into and out of dating relationships. Cohabitation may provide a stronger measure of relationship quality as the decision to share a home together is a strong indicator of commitment to the relationship. However, measuring cohabitation may be difficult as children are not always aware that their mother is dating. Some romantic partners cohabit only when children are with the other custodial partner, making it difficult to capture this effect for mothers dating after divorce (Anderson & Greene, 2011). In order to avoid compromising the relationship between children and the

romantic partner, the transition into cohabitation was not included in this investigation. Next, although significant, the size of the coefficients for this study was quite small in describing the changes in intercept and slope during mothers' repartnering. Despite this limitation, this study describes the trends for maternal adjustment that correspond to time when mothers begin, maintain, and end various types of relationship approaches.

Some researchers argue that the relationship with the ex-spouse influences mothers' post-divorce dating relationships (Berman, 1988). If mothers have a positive relationship with their ex-spouse, they may feel more comfortable dating other partners; if the mother has a negative relationship with an ex-spouse, dating may exacerbate conflict, which prohibits mothers' well-being. Unfortunately, this study was unable to measure the relationship with the ex-spouse. However, this study extended past research by capturing effects of relationship quality on mothers' dating relationships using diary methods, which may not have been possible if former spouses were included in the study. Future studies are encouraged to creatively incorporate both spouses in a divorced relationship to capture differences in adjustment and influences on each others' adjustment by continuing to incorporate mothers' repartnering histories and relationship quality. Next, the measures used for relationship quality were based on single items. It would have been better to use more precise measures of relationship quality in order to increase precision of the influence of relationship quality with the repartnering histories. However, this study was able to capture a glimpse of the level of happiness and permanence for each relationship that a mother experienced over the course of two years, a method that, to my knowledge, has not been applied to studies of mothers' dating after divorce. Also, even though only single-item measures were used, the results for this study were consistent and robust across different multi-level models. Subsequently, the measure of unprotected sex was not a measure of

mothers' risk behaviors. In this context, mothers already know the consequences of unprotected sex, and may participate in this activity to show trust in the relationship. Future studies are encouraged to use other variables that better resemble risk behaviors for mothers after divorce.

Last, the variable of social support has been found to assist in increasing adjustment during times of breakup and divorce (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002; Zimmer-Gembeck, 2002). Social support was not measured in this study, but could have provided an additional boost for maternal well-being after divorce. Zimmer-Gembeck (2002) found that close peer relationships assisted in recreating an individual's identity after relationship dissolution. Future studies are encouraged to study the effects of social support during repartnering to further understand the consequences for maternal well-being.

Conclusion

In sum, this study achieved its central goals. The main goal of this study was to address the assumption that all repartnering experiences are beneficial for mothers after divorce. This investigation found that mothers' well-being was singificantly influenced by the quality of her romantic relationships rather than the effect of repartnering alone. Mothers reporting multiple relationships were able to gain some benefits when they upgraded from a low quality relationship to a high quality relationship. Although some selection effects were found, the main effects of repartnering and relationship quality remained significant. Although there were some limitations to this study, the findings, implications, and contributions increase understanding for mothers' dating after divorce.

Outcomes

Psychological Well-Being

Depressive Symptoms

Life Satisfaction

Risk Behaviors

Drunkenness

Unprotected Sex

Predictors

Testing for discontinuity in elevation

Onset of Repartnering

Onset of Breakup

Onset of Serial Relationship

Onset of Simultaneous Relationship

Testing for discontinuity in slope

Time since Repartnering

Time since Breakup

Time since Serial Dating

Time since Simultaneous Dating

Time-varying covariate

Relationship Quality

Control Variables

Maternal Age

Race

Length of Marriage

Length of Separation

Number of Children

Age of Oldest Child

Education

Income

Number of Partners at Baseline

Figure 1. List of dependent, independent, and control variables for the current investigation.

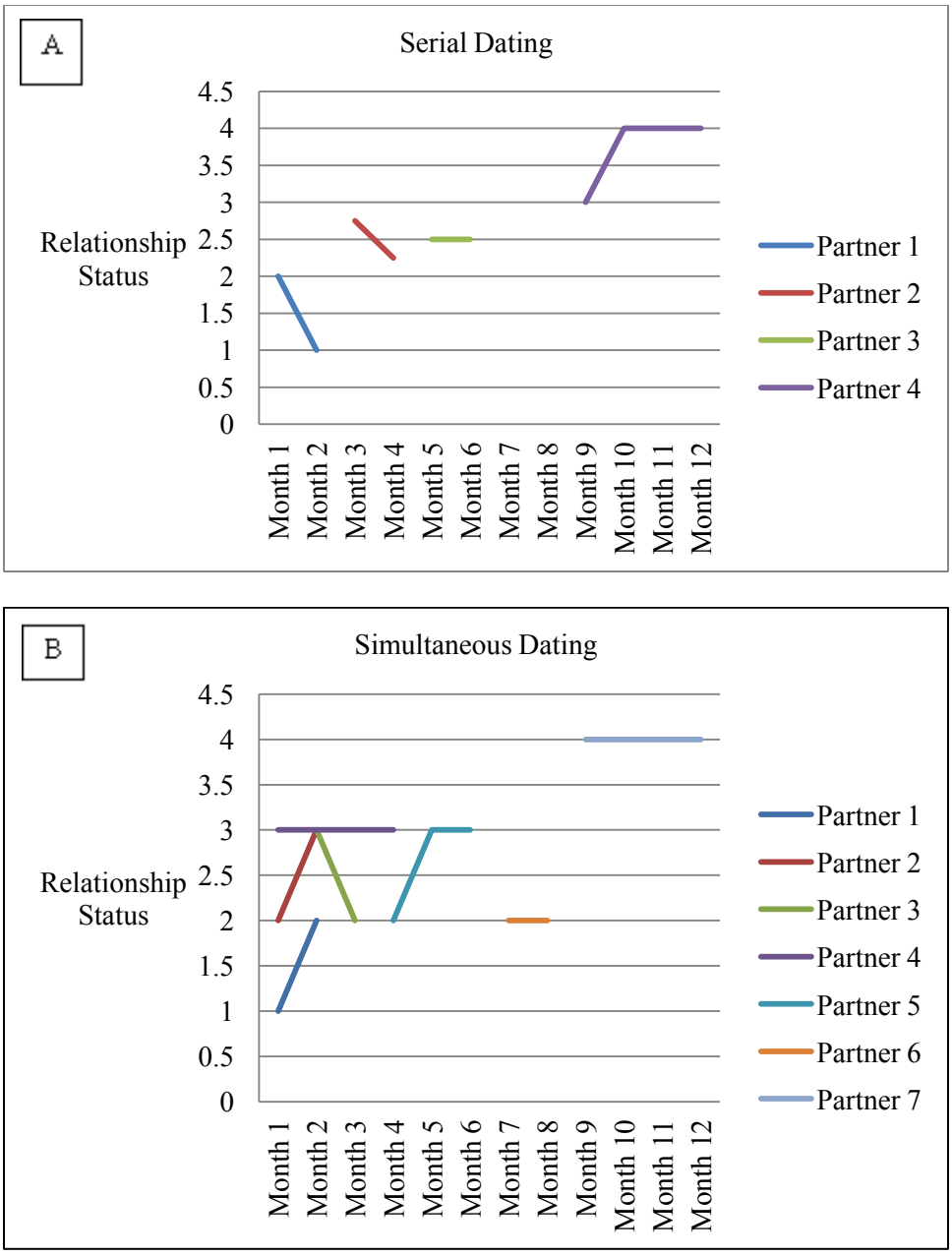

Figure 2. Graphical and hypothetical depiction of mothers' dating multiple partners serially (A) and simultaneously (B).

ID:	101		102		103	
VAR:	DP	SERIAL	DP	SERIAL	DP	SERIAL
Month 1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Month 2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Month 3	1	0	1	0	0	0
Month 4	1	0	1	0	1	0
Month 5	1	0	1	0	1	0
Month 6	1	0	1	0	1	0
Month 7	1	0	0	0	1	1
Month 8	1	0	1	1	1	1
Month 9	1	0	1	1	0	0
Month 10	1	0	1	1	1	2

Figure 3. Hypothetical dataset investigating differences between mothers who date one partner to mothers who serially date. This dataset displays three different mothers (101, 102, and 103) over a ten month period. *DP* designates when a mother is in a relationship. *SERIAL* identifies both when a serial relationship begins and the cumulative number of serial relationships.

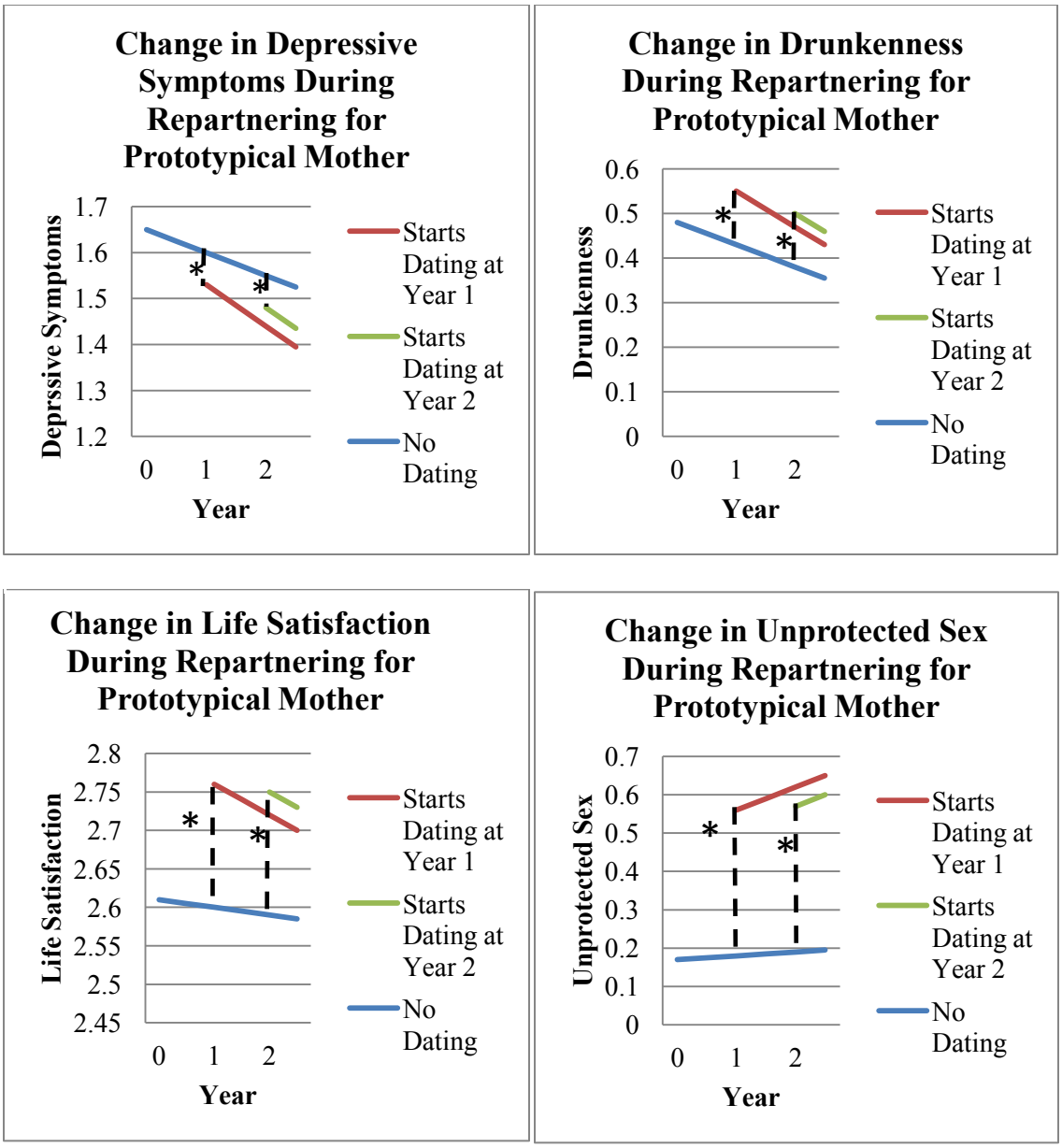

Figure 4. Changes in maternal well-being for a prototypical mother who doesn't date, begins dating after one year, and who begins dating after two years since divorce filing. Clockwise from top left: graphical depiction of significant changes at the intercept of mother's dating for depressive symptoms; display of increases in drunkenness at the onset of a repartnering relationship; graphical display of increases in unprotected sex when mothers begin a repartnering relationship; and representation of increases in life satisfaction at the onset of a repartnering relationship.

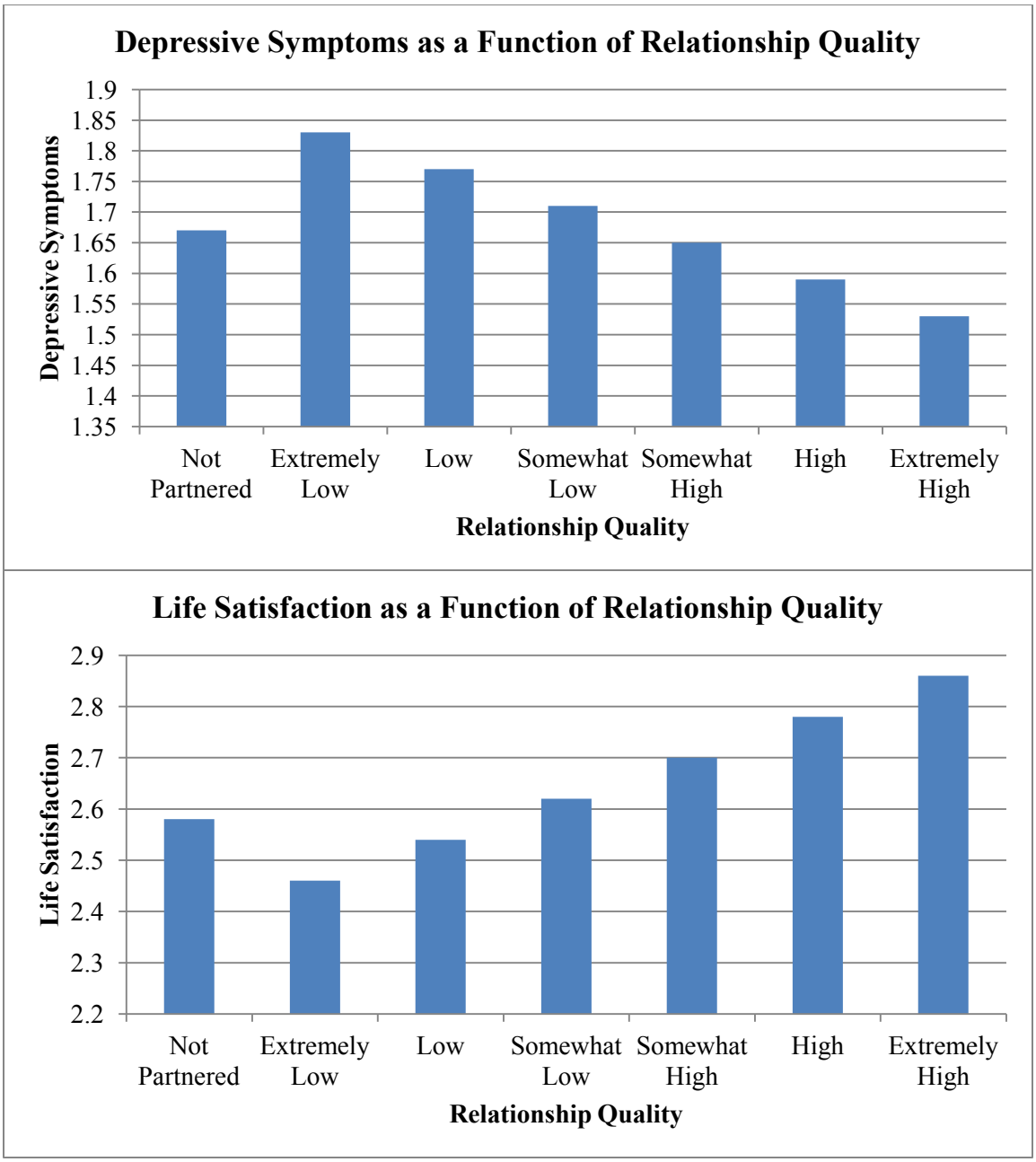

Figure 5a. Top: Comparison of the effect of varying levels of relationship quality on mothers' depressive symptoms for a prototypical mother. Bottom: Comparison of the effect of varying levels of relationship quality on mothers' life satisfaction for a prototypical mother.

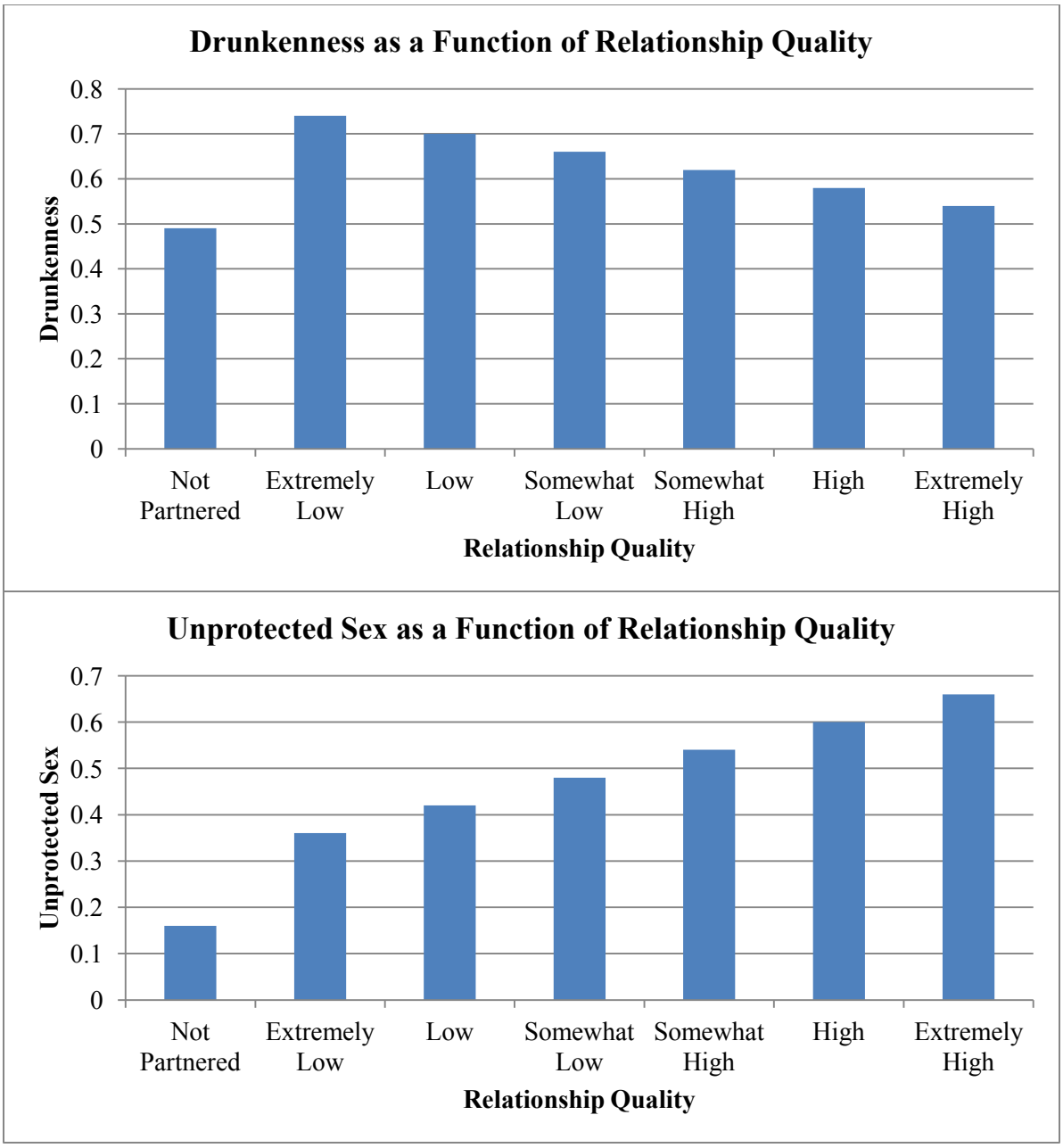

Figure 5b. Top: Comparison of the effect of varying levels of relationship quality on mothers' drunkenness for a prototypical mother. Bottom: Comparison of the effect of varying levels of relationship quality on mothers' unprotected sex for a prototypical mother.

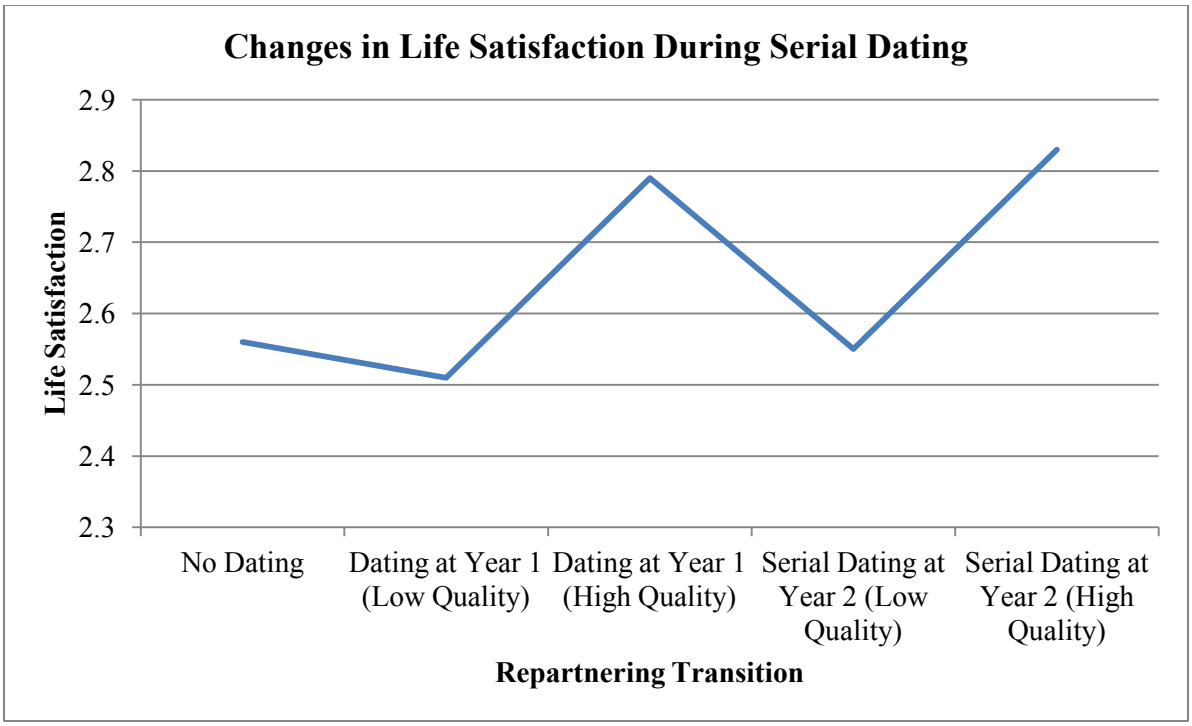

Figure 6. Graphical representation of a prototypical mothers' change in life satisfaction, which varies as a function of repartnering transition and relationship quality. Mothers reported higher life satisfaction over time only when they entered into higher quality relationships, both initially and serially.

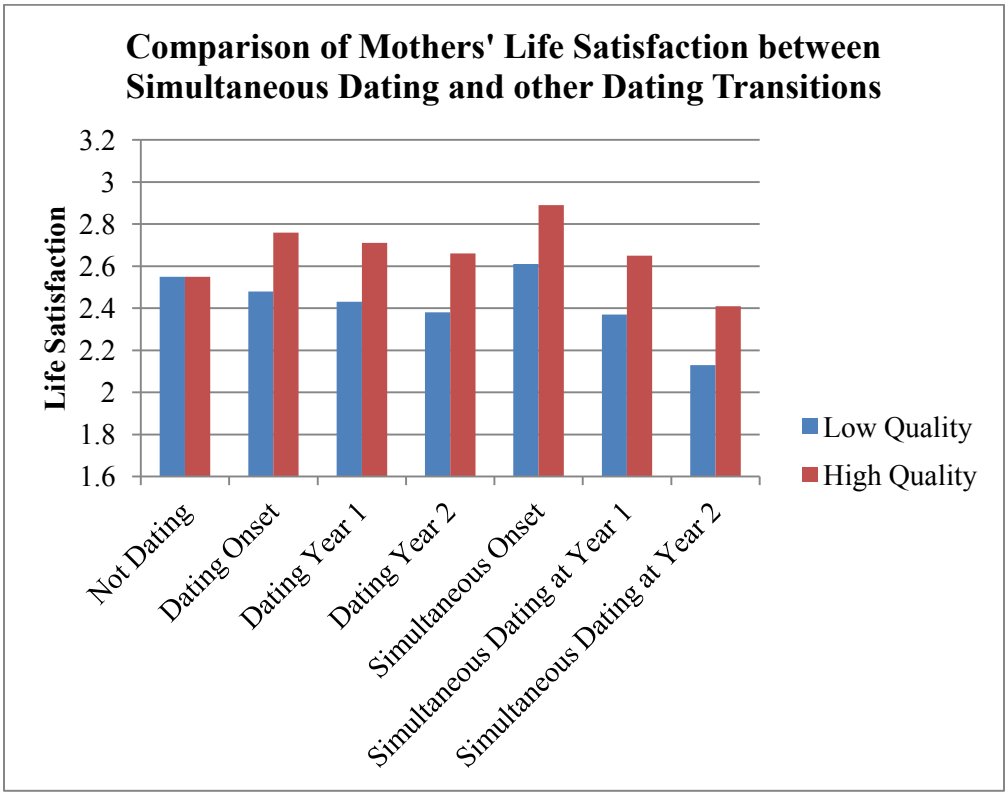

Figure 7a. Relationship quality influences life satisfaction for mothers dating simultaneously. Mothers who date simultaneous or not, if the relationship is low quality, life satisfaction is lower compared to when she is not dating. Mothers' life satisfaction also declines more steeply over time if she dates simultaneously.

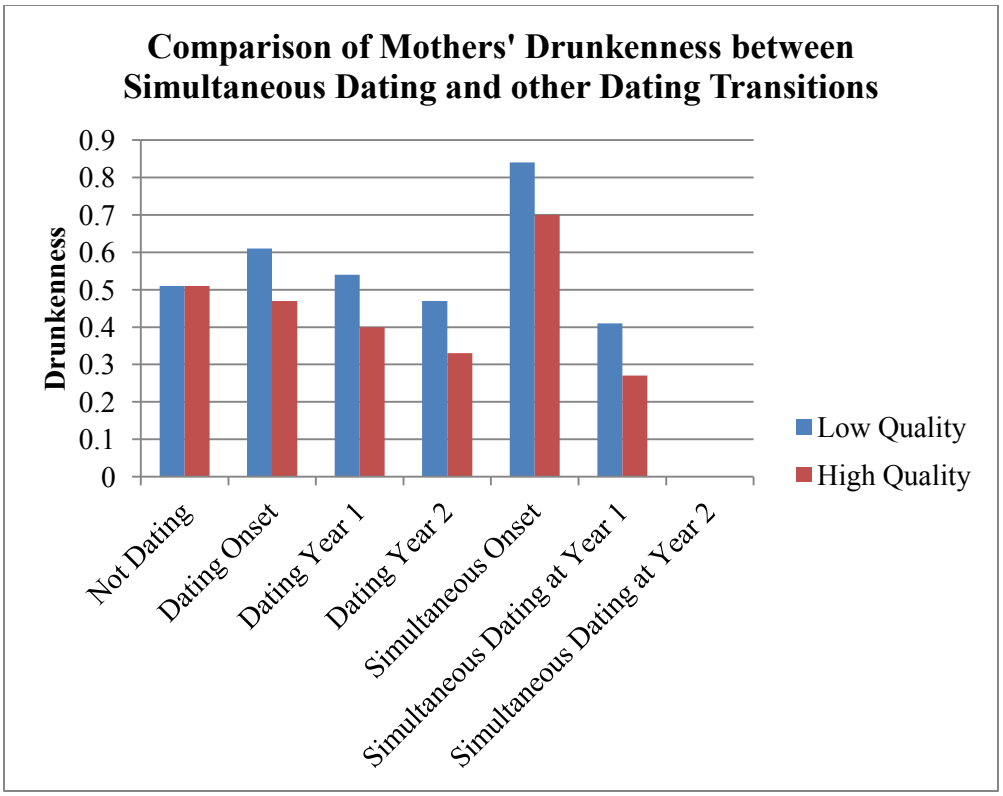

Figure 7b. Relationship quality influences drunkenness for mothers dating simultaneously. Mothers' dating simultaneously report significantly higher levels of drunkenness at the beginning of dating, but decline more steeply compared to mothers who are not simultaneously dating. Mothers in lower quality relationships are reporting higher levels of drunkenness across each repartnering history.

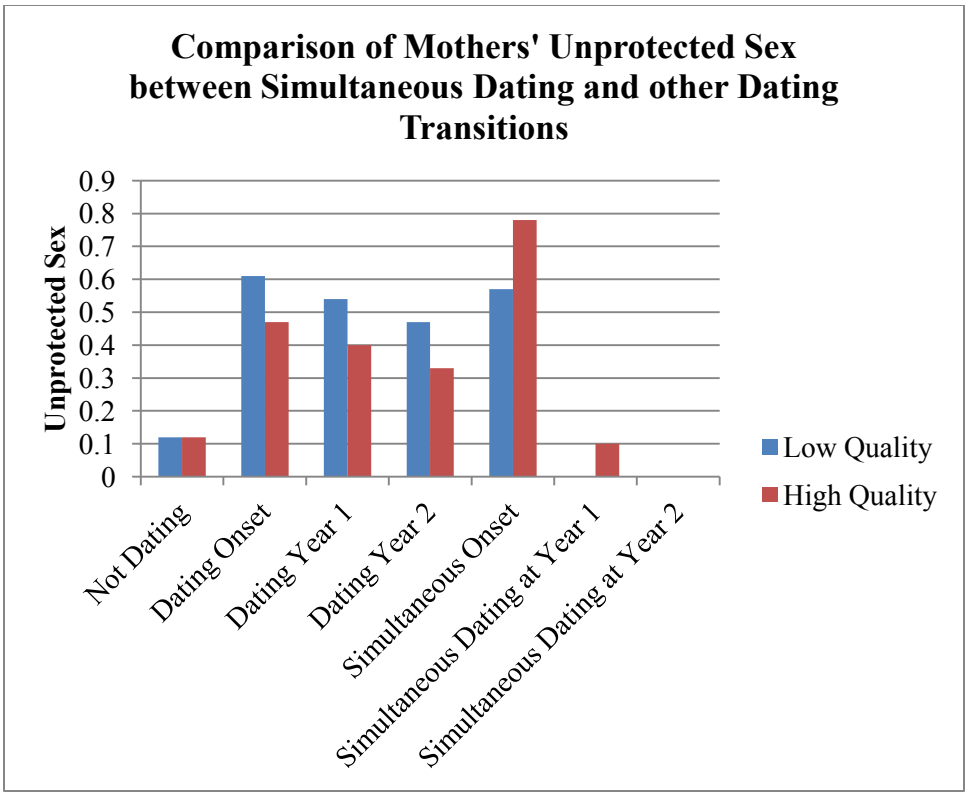

Figure 7c. Relationship quality influences unprotected sex for mothers dating simultaneously. Mothers who simultaneously date report significantly higher levels of unprotected sex when they are in high quality relationships; however, the decline in unprotected sex is steeper compared to mothers not dating simultaneously. Mothers who are dating, but not simultaneously, report more unprotected sex when they are in low quality relationships.

Table 1. Comparisons of sample characteristics across different repartnering histories ($N = 319$).

	No Dating ($n = 49$)		Monogamous Daters ($n = 145$)		Serial Daters ($n = 65$)		Simultaneous Daters ($n = 60$)		Total		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	$F(2,318)$
Number of Diary Entries	12.33_{a}	9.25	12.38_{a}	7.95	14.98_{a}	7.79	21.32_{b}	12.49	14.58	9.71	14.72***
Length of Marriage[a]	132.00	72.94	111.70	63.53	129.01	61.74	132.52	63.99	122.26	65.21	2.39
Length of Separation[a]	$14.33_{a,b}$	22.34	20.13_{a}	24.70	9.78_{b}	12.88	6.47_{b}	7.01	14.56	20.62	8.31***
Mother's Age	39.14_{a}	7.06	35.71_{b}	6.42	$36.88_{a,b}$	6.48	$37.37_{a,b}$	6.27	36.79	6.59	3.61*
Percent Non-white	.39	.49	.41	.49	.37	.49	.22	.42	.36	.48	2.33
Education[b]	8.16	2.74	7.63	2.81	8.58	2.41	8.28	2.46	8.03	2.67	2.24
Income[c]	$11.02_{a,b}$	5.42	9.37_{a}	5.41	11.88_{b}	4.96	12.63_{b}	5.18	10.75	5.42	6.88***
Number of Children	2.00	.82	2.16	.96	1.94	.88	2.05	.79	2.07	.89	.37
Age of Oldest Child	10.39	3.85	10.07	3.81	9.74	4.11	9.58	4.18	9.96	3.94	.48
Begin Cohabitation[d]	$.02_{a}$	.14	$.47_{b}$	.50	$.29_{b}$	.46	$.35_{b}$	.48	.34	.48	12.38***
Remarriage[d]	.02	.14	.13	.34	.03	.17	.08	.28	.08	.28	3.07*
Pregnancy[d]	.00	.00	.06	.24	.09	.29	.02	.13	.05	.22	2.31
Partners at Baseline[e]	$.57_{a}$	1.26	1.53_{b}	2.08	1.77_{b}	2.48	$1.52_{a,b}$	1.79	1.43	2.04	3.73*
Casual Partners[e]	$.49_{a}$	1.06	$.92_{a,b}$	1.68	1.40_{b}	2.18	$1.25_{a,b}$	1.61	1.02	1.72	3.17*
Serious Partners[e]	$.08_{a}$	.28	$.61_{b}$	.66	$.37_{c}$	.60	$.27_{a,c}$	.45	.41	.60	12.71***

Note. Means with no subscript in common differ at $p < .05$ using Bonferroni post hoc comparisons.

[a] Measured in months.

[b] Measured on a scale of 1 (*8th grade or less*) to 13 (*Advanced college degree, Doctoral*).

[c] Measured on a scale of 1 (*Less than $5,000 per year*) to 17 (*$80,000 or more*).

[d] Percentage of mothers reporting this transition during the study period.

[e] Number of partners mothers dated during separation, prior to legal divorce.
* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 2. Comparisons of dyadic characteristics across dating groups (n = 270).

	Monogamous Daters (n = 145)		Serial Daters (n = 65)		Simultaneous Daters (n = 60)		Total		
Dyadic Variables	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	F(2,269)
Number of Partners[a]			2.48	.79	4.25	2.53	3.33	2.04	28.90***
Relationship Length (Max)[b]	384.52	304.45	335.38	218.13	410.13	220.85	378.38	268.94	1.29
Occurrence of Breakup[c]	$.25_a$	.43	$.88_b$	.33	$.83_b$	.38	.53	.50	78.23***
Max Relationship Happiness	5.28_a	1.47	5.75_b	.50	5.71_b	.52	5.49	1.15	5.38**
Max Relationship Permanence	4.19	1.31	4.47	.82	4.44	.88	4.31	1.13	1.93
Max Relationship Quality	9.46	2.66	10.15	1.26	10.01	1.39	9.74	2.17	2.90

Note. Means with no subscript in common differ at $p < .05$ using Bonferroni post hoc comparisons.

[a] Mothers who were monogamous daters only had 1 partner over the course of the study; degrees of freedom for this row is 224.

[b] Relationship length refers to longest repartnered relationship and is measured in days.

[c] Occurrence of breakup refers to percentage of mothers reporting a breakup.

** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 3. Comparisons of well-being variables across different repartnering histories ($N = 319$).

	No Dating ($n = 49$)		Monogamous Daters ($n = 145$)		Serial Daters ($n = 65$)		Simultaneous Daters ($n = 60$)		Total		
Dependent Variables	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	$F(2,318)$
Depressive Symptoms	1.62	.73	1.49	.64	1.47	.54	1.72	.59	1.55	.63	2.52
Life Satisfaction	2.50	.63	2.72	.65	2.72	.60	2.67	.57	2.68	.62	1.59
Drunkenness	$.49_{a,b}$	.91	$.37_{a}$	.62	$.52_{a,b}$	.64	$.77_{b}$	.84	.49	.73	4.43**
Unprotected Sex	$.00_{a}$	.02	$.46_{b}$	.85	$.47_{b}$	.73	$.62_{b}$	.74	.43	.76	6.63***

Note. Means with no subscript in common differ at $p < .05$ using Bonferroni post hoc comparisons.
** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 4. Changes in mothers' well-being as a function of time (N = 319).

	Mothers' Well-Being Variables			
	Depressive Symptoms	Life Satisfaction	Drunkenness	Unprotected Sex
Intercept	1.60 (.04)***	2.69 (.04)***	.54 (.05)***	.40 (.05)***
Slope	-.07 (.02)***	-.01 (.02)	-.06 (.02)**	.04 (.04)

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

Note: Statistics are standardized beta coefficients and presented as $B(SD)$.

Table 5. Consequences of repartnering on mothers' well-being ($N = 319$).

	Mothers' Well-Being Variables			
	Depressive Symptoms	Life Satisfaction	Drunkenness	Unprotected Sex
Intercept	1.65 (.04)***	2.61 (.04)***	.48 (.05)***	.17 (.05)***
Slope	-.05 (.02)**	-.01 (.02)	-.05 (.02)*	.01 (.04)
Partnering Intercept	-.07 (.02)**	.16 (.02)***	.12 (.03)***	.38 (.04)***
Partnering Slope	-.04 (.02)	-.03 (.03)	-.03 (.03)	.05 (.04)

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

Note: Statistics are standardized beta coefficients and presented as $B(SD)$.

Table 6. Consequences of repartnering and relationship quality on mothers' well-being ($N = 319$).

	Mothers' Well-Being Variables			
	Depressive Symptoms	Life Satisfaction	Drunkenness	Unprotected Sex
Intercept	1.67 (.04)***	2.58 (.04)***	.49 (.05)***	.16 (.05)**
Slope	-.04 (.02)*	-.02 (.02)	-.05 (.02)*	.00 (.04)
Partnering Intercept	.19 (.04)***	-.16 (.05)**	.27 (.05)***	.17 (.07)*
Partnering Slope	-.04 (.02)	-.03 (.03)	-.03 (.03)	.05 (.04)
Relationship Quality	-.03 (.00)***	.04 (.01)***	-.02 (.01)***	.03 (.01)***

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

Note: Statistics are standardized beta coefficients and presented as $B(SD)$.

Table 7. Consequences of repartnering, relationship quality, and post-relationship on mothers' well-being ($N = 319$).

	Mothers' Well-Being Variables			
	Depressive Symptoms	Life Satisfaction	Drunkenness	Unprotected Sex
Intercept	1.70 (.04)***	2.56 (.04)***	.51 (.05)***	.12 (.06)*
Slope	-.03 (.02)	-.03 (.02)	-.04 (.02)	-.01 (.04)
Partnering Intercept	.15 (.04)***	-.13 (.05)**	.25 (.06)***	.22 (.08)**
Partnering Slope	-.05 (.02)*	-.02 (.03)	-.03 (.03)	.06 (.04)
Relationship Quality	-.03 (.00)***	.04 (.00)***	-.02 (.01)***	.03 (.01)***
Post-partner Intercept	-.06 (.04)	.06 (.04)	-.04 (.05)	.08 (.07)
Post-partner Slope	-.02 (.06)	.02 (.06)	.02 (.07)	.00 (.11)

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

Note: Statistics are standardized beta coefficients and presented as $B(SD)$.

Table 8. Examination of the additive effects of serial dating on mothers' well-being ($N = 319$).

	Mothers' Well-Being Variables			
	Depressive Symptoms	Life Satisfaction	Drunkenness	Unprotected Sex
Intercept	1.70 (.04)***	2.56 (.04)***	.51 (.05)***	.13 (.06)*
Slope	-.02 (.02)	-.04 (.02)	-.04 (.02)	-.02 (.05)
Partnering Intercept	.15 (.04)***	-.13 (.05)**	.24 (.06)***	.22 (.08)**
Partnering Slope	-.05 (.02)*	-.01 (.03)	-.02 (.03)	.06 (.04)
Relationship Quality	-.03 (.00)***	.04 (.00)***	-.02 (.01)***	.03 (.01)***
Post-partner Intercept	-.07 (.04)	.08 (.04)	-.03 (.05)	.09 (.07)
Post-partner Slope	-.04 (.06)	.03 (.06)	.02 (.07)	.01 (.11)
Serial Dating Intercept	-.06 (.03)	.08 (.03)*	.06 (.04)	.04 (.05)
Serial Dating Slope	.01 (.09)	-.04 (.09)	-.19 (.10)	.07 (.16)

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

Note: Statistics are standardized beta coefficients and presented as *B*(*SD*).

Table 9. Examination of the additive effects of simultaneous dating on mothers' well-being ($N = 319$).

	Mothers' Well-Being Variables			
	Depressive Symptoms	Life Satisfaction	Drunkenness	Unprotected Sex
Intercept	1.70 (.04)***	2.55 (.04)***	.51 (.05)***	.12 (.06)*
Slope	-.03 (.02)	-.03 (.02)	-.04 (.02)	-.01 (.04)
Partnering Intercept	.16 (.05)***	-.16 (.05)**	.20 (.06)***	.19 (.08)*
Partnering Slope	-.05 (.02)*	-.02 (.03)	-.03 (.03)	.07 (.04)
Relationship Quality	-.04 (.00)***	.04 (.00)***	-.02 (.01)**	.03 (.01)***
Post-partner Intercept	-.06 (.04)	.06 (.04)	-.04 (.05)	.08 (.07)
Post-partner Slope	-.02 (.06)	.01 (.06)	.01 (.07)	-.01 (.11)
Simultaneous Dating Intercept	-.02 (.04)	.13 (.04)**	.23 (.05)***	.18 (.07)*
Simultaneous Dating Slope	-.12 (.14)	-.19 (.16)	-.36 (.18)*	-.77 (.26)**

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

Note: Statistics are standardized beta coefficients and presented as *B*(*SD*).

Table 10. Testing for the threat of selection on repartnering histories and relationship quality ($N = 319$).

	Mothers' Well-Being Variables			
	Depressive Symptoms	Life Satisfaction	Drunkenness	Unprotected Sex
Intercept	1.92 (.15)***	2.23 (.14)***	.72 (.17)***	.35 (.17)*
Maternal Age	.00 (.01)	.00 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.00 (.01)
Race	-.28 (.07)***	.11 (.07)	-.22 (.09)*	.01 (.09)
Length of Marriage (years)	-.02 (.01)*	.02 (.01)	-.01 (.01)	-.02 (.01)*
Length of Separation (years)	.01 (.02)	.02 (.02)	.02 (.03)	.00 (.03)
Number of Children	.03 (.04)	.06 (.04)	-.03 (.05)	-.04 (.05)
Age of Oldest Child	.01 (.01)	.00 (.01)	.00 (.01)	.02 (.01)
Education	.01 (.02)	.04 (.02)*	.00 (.02)	.02 (.02)
Income	.01 (.01)	.00 (.01)	.02 (.01)*	.02 (.01)*
Number of Partners at Baseline	.01 (.02)	-.01 (.02)	.03 (.02)	.06 (.02)**
Slope	-.02 (.02)	-.04 (.02)	-.05 (.02)	-.01 (.05)
Partnering Intercept	.16 (.05)***	-.16 (.05)**	.18 (.06)**	.17 (.08)*
Partnering Slope	-.05 (.02)*	.00 (.03)	.00 (.03)	.06 (.04)
Relationship Quality	-.03 (.00)***	.04 (.00)***	-.02 (.01)**	.03 (.01)***
Post-partner Intercept	-.08 (.04)*	.08 (.04)*	-.03 (.05)	.07 (.07)
Post-partner Slope	-.04 (.06)	.03 (.06)	.02 (.07)	.01 (.10)
Serial Dating Intercept	-.06 (.03)	.08 (.03)**	.07 (.04)	.04 (.05)
Serial Dating Slope	.02 (.09)	-.06 (.09)	-.20 (.10)*	.04 (.17)
Simultaneous Dating Intercept	-.03 (.04)	.14 (.04)**	.24 (.05)***	.18 (.07)*
Simultaneous Dating Slope	-.12 (.14)	-.20 (.16)	-.37 (.18)*	-.76 (.26)**

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

[a] Dichotomized (0 = *white*; 1 = *non-white*).

[b] Measured on a scale of 1 (*8th grade or less*) to 13 (*Advanced college degree, Doctoral*).

[c] Measured on a scale of 1 (*Less than $5,000 per year*) to 17 (*$80,000 or more*).

Note: Statistics are standardized beta coefficients and presented as *B*(*SD*).

Table 11. Examining the effect of repartnering by controlling for different repartnering contexts ($N = 319$).

	Mothers' Well-Being Variables			
	Depression	Life Satisfaction	Drunkenness	Unprotected Sex
Intercept	1.68 (.05)***	2.58 (.05)***	.55 (.06)***	.06 (.06)
Pregnancy[a]	.07 (.17)	-.20 (.16)	-.31 (.21)	.23 (.21)
Cohabitation	.09 (.09)	-.15 (.09)	.12 (.11)	.24 (.11)*
Remarriage	-.12 (.14)	.30 (.14)*	.02 (.18)	-.02 (.18)
Slope	-.02 (.03)	-.05 (.03)	-.03 (.03)	-.01 (.05)
Pregnancy	-.09 (.09)	.03 (.09)	.09 (.09)	.19 (.19)
Cohabitation	.05 (.05)	-.01 (.05)	-.08 (.05)	-.09 (.10)
Remarriage	-.12 (.08)	.10 (.08)	-.03 (.08)	.27 (.16)
Partnering Intercept	.16 (.05)***	-.15 (.05)**	.18 (.06)**	.19 (.08)*
Partnering Slope	-.05 (.03)*	-.01 (.03)	.02 (.03)	.03 (.04)
Relationship Quality	-.04 (.00)***	.04 (.00)***	-.02 (.01)**	.03 (.01)***
Post-partner Intercept	-.08 (.04)*	.08 (.04)	-.02 (.05)	.07 (.07)
Post-partner Slope	-.04 (.06)	.03 (.06)	.00 (.07)	.01 (.11)
Serial Dating Intercept	-.06 (.03)	.08 (.03)*	.07 (.04)	.04 (.05)
Serial Dating Slope	.01 (.09)	-.05 (.09)	-.20 (.09)*	.08 (.07)
Simultaneous Dating Intercept	-.03 (.04)	.14 (.04)**	.24 (.05)***	.18 (.07)**
Simultaneous Dating Slope	-.11 (.14)	-.19 (.16)	-.39 (.18)*	-.74 (.26)**

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

[a] Mothers' pregnancy, cohabitation, and remarriage were dichotomized for this analysis

Note: Statistics are standardized beta coefficients and presented as *B*(*SD*).

Monthly Diary for / / to / / **TEXAS FAMILIES PROJECT** Family ID Page 1

Tell us about how things have been recently for your child who is in our study. For each item below, circle the number that best describes how he/she has felt or acted during the past 24 hours.

1 = Yes
2 = No

In the PAST 24 HOURS has your child:	**Yes**	**No**
Seemed to be happy or in a good mood?	1	2
Helped someone?	1	2
Acted destructively towards objects or pets (broken objects or treated pets or objects roughly)?	1	2
Been disobedient or refused to do something?	1	2
Sulked, pouted, or seemed irritable?	1	2
Shared with someone?	1	2
Had a fit or temper tantrum?	1	2
Done constructive activities by him/herself such as reading or hobbies?	1	2
Been physically aggressive (e.g., hitting, pushing, biting and fighting)?	1	2
Praised or complimented someone?	1	2
Been withdrawn and solitary and/or avoided people?	1	2
Shown physical affection towards someone?	1	2
Been verbally aggressive (e.g., arguing, name-calling)?	1	2
Been depressed or sad?	1	2
Shown sympathy towards someone (e.g., said he/she was sorry someone was hurt or felt bad)?	1	2
Been afraid or worried about something?	1	2
Felt or complained about being lonely?	1	2
Had physical problems such as stomachaches, pains, headaches, throwing up, constipation, dizziness, or diarrhea?	1	2
Had trouble falling or staying asleep?	1	2
Had nightmares?	1	2

Tell us about your relationship with this child during the past week. For each item below, circle the number that best describes your experience.

1 = Yes
2 = No

In the PAST WEEK have you:	**Yes**	**No**
Spent time alone with your child?	1	2
Hugged and/or kissed each other?	1	2
Felt your child was uncooperative towards you?	1	2
Participated in a game or activity together, such as video or board games, sports, bike riding?	1	2
Worked together around the house?	1	2
Had difficulty getting your child to school or activities on time?	1	2
Watched TV or a movie together?	1	2
Argued or fought with one another?	1	2
Had your child confide in you about something?	1	2
Had to discipline or punish your child?	1	2
Become impatient with your child?	1	2
Felt emotionally close to your child?	1	2
Laughed together about something?	1	2
Had problems getting your child to bed on time at least two nights?	1	2
Experienced enjoyment from being a parent?	1	2

During the past month, how many nights did your child who is in our study sleep at her/his father's house? (Check one)

_____ No nights
_____ 1 night this month
_____ 2-4 nights this month
_____ 5-8 nights this month
_____ More than 8 nights this month

During the past month, how many daytime or evening visits did this child have with her/his father? Exclude any visits that were part of an overnight stay. (Check one)

_____ No visits
_____ 1 visit this month
_____ 2-4 visits this month
_____ 5-8 visits this month
_____ More than 8 visits this month

How much child support did you receive this past month? Include total for all children in the household. $_____

How much child support were you supposed to receive? $_____

Thinking about your child who is in our study, circle the number that best describes his/her current reaction toward the idea of your dating and romantic involvement with other people.

1 2 3 4 5

Very Negative/ Resistant — Very Positive/ Supportive

Now circle the number that best describes his/her current reaction toward the idea of her/his father's dating and romantic involvement with other people.

1 2 3 4 5

Very Negative/ Resistant — Very Positive/ Supportive

Satisfaction with your life	0	1	2	3	4
Feeling overwhelmed or stressed	0	1	2	3	4
Enthusiasm or interest	0	1	2	3	4
Disruptions in sleeping patterns	0	1	2	3	4
Trouble focusing on household responsibilities	0	1	2	3	4
Feelings of confidence	0	1	2	3	4
Physical problems or illness	0	1	2	3	4
Feelings of happiness from doing things you enjoy	0	1	2	3	4
Trouble focusing on your child	0	1	2	3	4
Loneliness	0	1	2	3	4
Feeling in control of your life	0	1	2	3	4
A loss of interest or withdrawal from regular activities	0	1	2	3	4
Changes in eating habits or appetite (overeating or not eating enough)	0	1	2	3	4
Feelings of helplessness	0	1	2	3	4
Feeling relaxed or calm	0	1	2	3	4
Irritability	0	1	2	3	4
Pleasure from conversations with friends	0	1	2	3	4
Anxiety or worry	0	1	2	3	4
Optimism or hopefulness	0	1	2	3	4
Feeling distracted while driving	0	1	2	3	4
Feeling your household was chaotic or untidy	0	1	2	3	4

We'd like to know how things have been going for you during the past month. For each item below, circle the number that best describes your experience. Use these answer categories:

0 = Not at all
1 = Rarely
2 = Somewhat or occasionally
3 = Frequently
4 = Most or all the time

In the PAST MONTH have you experienced:

Browsed an online dating service	0	1	2	3	4
Paid bills late or bounced checks	0	1	2	3	4
Asked your ex-husband for a change in contact or visitation for the child in our study	0	1	2	3	4
Had your ex-husband ask you for a change in contact or visitation for the child in our study	0	1	2	3	4
Gone out with friends	0	1	2	3	4
Had sex that was unprotected from either disease or pregnancy	0	1	2	3	4
Worked 5+ hours of overtime	0	1	2	3	4
Been late for work	0	1	2	3	4
Had a fight with your ex-husband	0	1	2	3	4
Started a new class/activity	0	1	2	3	4
Made efforts to meet new people	0	1	2	3	4
Been drunk on alcohol	0	1	2	3	4
Used marijuana	0	1	2	3	4

For each item below, circle the number that best describes your experience. Use these answer categories:

0 = None or not at all
1 = Once a month
2 = 2-3 times a month
3 = About once a week
4 = More than once a week

In the PAST MONTH how often have you:

In the **PAST WEEK** how many cigarettes have you consumed on average? (Check one)

_____ None
_____ Less than 1 pack per day
_____ 1 pack per day
_____ Between 1-2 packs per day
_____ More than 2 packs per day

In the **PAST WEEK** how many alcoholic drinks have you had? A drink = 1 beer, 4 oz. of wine, or 1 oz. hard liquor. (Check one)

_____ None
_____ 1 or 2
_____ Between 3 and 5
_____ About 1 per day (6 to 8)
_____ More than 9

For each item below, circle the number that best describes your experience.

1 = Yes
2 = No

In the PAST MONTH have you:	**Yes**	**No**
Made a new friend	1	2
Become engaged to be married	1	2
Remarried	1	2
Had sex with someone the first time you met them	1	2
Found out you were/are pregnant	1	2
Experienced a flare-up of a chronic disease or illness, including STDs	1	2

Thank You!

Please circle the number below that best describes your current dating or romantic situation:

4 = I ***was*** involved with or interested in at least one person last month, but I am not currently
3 = I am involved with or interested in at least one person, whether this means an actual romantic relationship or the possibility that a future relationship might develop
2 = I ***am*** interested in dating, but have not yet met anyone I would consider dating
1 = I am ***not*** interested in dating at this time

If you circled #1 or #2: Your Monthly Diary is complete! Please return it in the enclosed envelope, and call us at 471-4700 if you have any questions. Thank you!

If you circled #3 or #4: Below, please tell us about the people that you are or were romantically involved with or interested in. For each person, list the first name and the initial of the last name, and then answer questions 1-11. We have enclosed enough additional pages for you to describe a maximum of three people. Should you be currently interested in or involved with more than three people, please tell us about the three for whom you have the greatest interest or involvement. Remember to circle only ONE number in each box, also, when we ask about "your child," we mean the child who is in the study. Please return your completed Monthly Diary in the return envelope. Thank you!

First Name	**Last Name Initial**	1) Circle the number that best describes your **current involvement** with this person: 1 = Interested but ***not yet*** romantically involved 2 = Never romantically involved, and now no longer interested 3 = In a ***casual*** romantic relationship 4 = In a ***serious*** romantic relationship 5 = Romantic relationship ***was*** casual or serious, but has ended	2) Has your child met this person **for the first time** during the past month? 1 = Yes 2 = No 3 = Doesn't apply (met previously)	3) During the past month, have you and this person spent the night together **for the first time** while your child was with you in the same house, apartment, or other setting? 1 = Yes, and child was aware of this 2 = Yes, and child was unaware of this 3 = No 4 = Doesn't apply (happened previously)	4) Have you and this person combined households so that you are now living together in ONE home? 1 = Yes 2 = No	5) Did you and this person break up and get back together this past month? 1 = Yes 2 = No

6) All things considered, how happy or unhappy has the relationship with this person been this past month? 1 = Very Happy 2 = Happy 3 = Somewhat Happy 4 = Somewhat Unhappy 5 = Unhappy 6 = Very Unhappy	7) How likely is it that you will have a long-lasting or permanent, romantic relationship with this person? 1 = Very Likely 2 = Somewhat Likely 3 = Uncertain 4 = Somewhat Unlikely 5 = Very Unlikely	8) On average in the past month, how often did you and your child spend time with this person? 1 = At least daily 2 = Several times per week 3 = 1 time per week 4 = 1 time every 2 weeks 5 = 1 time this past month 6 = 0 times this past month	9) How does your child feel about this person? 1 = Likes very much 2 = Likes somewhat 3 = Neutral 4 = Dislikes somewhat 5 = Dislikes very much 6 = Child has not met this person	10) How does this person feel about your child? 1 = Likes very much 2 = Likes somewhat 3 = Neutral 4 = Dislikes somewhat 5 = Dislikes very much 6 = Child has not met this person	11) In the past month, how much have you worked on helping your child and this person get along, like helping to start conversations, stop arguments, suggest joint activities, or explain their behaviors to one another to help them understand? 1 = A great deal 2 = Some 3 = A little 4 = Not at all 5 = Child has not met this person

Please list any *new* people for whom you have become romantically involved with or interested in since your last update. Then answer questions 1-11 for each person. Should you be currently interested in or involved with more than three people, please tell us about the three for whom you have the greatest interest or involvement.

First Name	**Last Name Initial**	1) Circle the number that best describes your **current involvement** with this person: 1 = Interested but ***not yet*** romantically involved 2 = Never romantically involved, and now no longer interested 3 = In a ***casual*** romantic relationship 4 = In a ***serious*** romantic relationship 5 = Romantic relationship ***was*** casual or serious, but has ended	2) Has your child met this person **for the first time** during the past month? 1 = Yes 2 = No 3 = Doesn't apply (met previously)	3) During the past month, have you and this person spent the night together **for the first time** while your child was with you in the same house, apartment, or other setting? 1 = Yes, and child was aware of this 2 = Yes, and child was unaware of this 3 = No 4 = Doesn't apply (happened previously)	4) Have you and this person combined households so that you are now living together in ONE home? 1 = Yes 2 = No	5) Did you and this person break up and get back together this past month? 1 = Yes 2 = No

6) All things considered, how happy or unhappy has the relationship with this person been this past month? 1 = Very Happy 2 = Happy 3 = Somewhat Happy 4 = Somewhat Unhappy 5 = Unhappy 6 = Very Unhappy	7) How likely is it that you will have a long-lasting or permanent, romantic relationship with this person? 1 = Very Likely 2 = Somewhat Likely 3 = Uncertain 4 = Somewhat Unlikely 5 = Very Unlikely	8) On average in the past month, how often did you and your child spend time with this person? 1 = At least daily 2 = Several times per week 3 = 1 time per week 4 = 1 time every 2 weeks 5 = 1 time this past month 6 = 0 times this past month	9) How does your child feel about this person? 1 = Likes very much 2 = Likes somewhat 3 = Neutral 4 = Dislikes somewhat 5 = Dislikes very much 6 = Child has not met this person	10) How does this person feel about your child? 1 = Likes very much 2 = Likes somewhat 3 = Neutral 4 = Dislikes somewhat 5 = Dislikes very much 6 = Child has not met this person	11) In the past month, how much have you worked on helping your child and this person get along, like helping to start conversations, stop arguments, suggest joint activities, or explain their behaviors to one another to help them understand? 1 = A great deal 2 = Some 3 = A little 4 = Not at all 5 = Child has not met this person

Please list any *new* people for whom you have become romantically involved with or interested in since your last update. Then answer questions 1-11 for each person. Should you be currently interested in or involved with more than three people, please tell us about the three for whom you have the greatest interest or involvement.

First Name	**Last Name Initial**	1) Circle the number that best describes your **current involvement** with this person: 1 = Interested but ***not yet*** romantically involved 2 = Never romantically involved, and now no longer interested 3 = In a ***casual*** romantic relationship 4 = In a ***serious*** romantic relationship 5 = Romantic relationship ***was*** casual or serious, but has ended	2) Has your child met this person **for the first time** during the past month? 1 = Yes 2 = No 3 = Doesn't apply (met previously)	3) During the past month, have you and this person spent the night together **for the first time** while your child was with you in the same house, apartment, or other setting? 1 = Yes, and child was aware of this 2 = Yes, and child was unaware of this 3 = No 4 = Doesn't apply (happened previously)	4) Have you and this person combined households so that you are now living together in ONE home? 1 = Yes 2 = No	5) Did you and this person break up and get back together this past month? 1 = Yes 2 = No

6) All things considered, how happy or unhappy has the relationship with this person been this past month? 1 = Very Happy 2 = Happy 3 = Somewhat Happy 4 = Somewhat Unhappy 5 = Unhappy 6 = Very Unhappy	7) How likely is it that you will have a long-lasting or permanent, romantic relationship with this person? 1 = Very Likely 2 = Somewhat Likely 3 = Uncertain 4 = Somewhat Unlikely 5 = Very Unlikely	8) On average in the past month, how often did you and your child spend time with this person? 1 = At least daily 2 = Several times per week 3 = 1 time per week 4 = 1 time every 2 weeks 5 = 1 time this past month 6 = 0 times this past month	9) How does your child feel about this person? 1 = Likes very much 2 = Likes somewhat 3 = Neutral 4 = Dislikes somewhat 5 = Dislikes very much 6 = Child has not met this person	10) How does this person feel about your child? 1 = Likes very much 2 = Likes somewhat 3 = Neutral 4 = Dislikes somewhat 5 = Dislikes very much 6 = Child has not met this person	11) In the past month, how much have you worked on helping your child and this person get along, like helping to start conversations, stop arguments, suggest joint activities, or explain their behaviors to one another to help them understand? 1 = A great deal 2 = Some 3 = A little 4 = Not at all 5 = Child has not met this person

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