

Oliver Lipps - Ivett Szalma
A study of living apart together in Switzerland
(Extended abstract)

Introduction

More and more research shows that a substantial proportion of the adult population is living in a form of partnership known as ‘living-apart-together’ (LAT) (Gierveld, 2004; Levin 2004; Regnier et. al., 2009). Persons in a LAT-relationship identify themselves as being in a relationship but not living together with the partner. Since LAT has attracted interest in the literature during the last two decades only it is difficult to assess whether there is an increase in the prevalence of LAT relationships (Ermisch & Siedler, 2008). However it is likely that LAT relationships are growing. If prevalence and/or duration of such relationships increase, there are various consequences conceivable, for example on the housing market, on fertility behavior and on caring of relatives (Turcotte 2013).

Characterization of LAT relationships

Research which has investigated LAT relationships finds that people who live in a LAT relationship are not a homogeneous group. It appears to be at least two dominant forms of LAT partnerships. The first is a ‘transitory’ type arrangement, where people engage in a LAT partnership only for a short duration because they find themselves between two life course stages, such as between singlehood and cohabitation or singlehood and marriage, or divorced and cohabitation/remarriage. The second type is a more permanent type of arrangement, where people live in a LAT relationship for a longer period because of either personal choice or constraints (Trost, 1998; Reimondos et al., 2011, Turcotte 2013).

Other analyses show that LAT is even more complex. Beaujouan et al. (2009) described four types of LAT relationships based on the Gender and Generation Survey conducted in France: (1) “young adults”, a relatively homogenous group with no children, no previous history of marriage, and few cases of cohabitation. (2) “out of family” people, consisting of adults aged 25–34, who are mainly childless and had some cohabitation experiences. (3) “single parents”, consisting mainly of people over the age of 30, many of whom had been married and had at least one resident child. (4) “seniors”, a fairly homogeneous group, consisting mainly of people aged 45 and over who often had previously been married. Reimondos et al. (2011) also found the same four groups of people in LAT relationship using panel data conducted in Australia.

As for quality of life of people in a LAT relationship, previous research shows that they have a better general and mental health than singles (Gray et al., 2012). However, they do not differ significantly from those who live in a cohabitation.

Our focus

As yet, little is known about LAT relationships in Switzerland. In this research we mainly focus on describing socio-demographic, attitudinal, health and well-being profiles of people who live in a LAT relationship compared to those who do not have a partner or who have a resident partner. Most importantly, we like to explore whether there are the same types of LAT relationships as in the previous studies. Additionally, we want to compare well-being and health of those living in a LAT relationship with other groups.

Data

We will use data from the Swiss Household Panel (SHP) which was conducted every year since 1999. For the purpose of this paper we define people who claim to have a partner but do not live together with this partner as being in a LAT relationship. One advantage of this data

is that we can analyse partnership duration and transitions between different forms of living, based on a large representative sample of Swiss residents.

References

- Beaujouan, E., Regnier-Loilier, A., Villeneuve-Gokalp, C., (2009). Neither single, nor in a couple: A study of Living Apart Together in France. *Demographic Research*, 21(4), 75–108.
- Ermisch, J., Siedler, T., (2008) Living Apart Together. In Brynin, M & J. Ermisch (eds.), *Changing Relationships* (pp. 29–43). New York, London: Routledge.
- Gierveld, J., (2004). Remarriage, unmarried cohabitation, Living Apart Together: Partner relationship following bereavement or divorce. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 66, 236-243.
- Gray, E., Evans, A., Reimondos A., (2012) [Living apart together: comparing older adults in different relationship types](#). Paper presented at the European Population Conference, 13-16 June. Stockholm University, Sweden.
- Régnier-Loilier A., Beaujouan E., Villeneuve-Gokalp C., (2009) Neither single, nor in a couple: A study of living apart together in France. *Demographic Research*, 21 (49): 75-108.
- Levin, I. (2004) Living Apart Together: A New Family Form. *Current Sociology*, March, Vol. 52(2): 223–240.
- Reimondos, A., Evans, A. & Gray, E. (2011). Living-apart-together (LAT) relationships in Australia. *Family Matters*, 87, 43–55.
- Trost, J. (1998) LAT relationship now and in the future. In K. Matthijs (Ed.), *The Family: Contemporary Perspectives and Challenges* (pp 209–222). Louvain, Belgium: Leuven University Press.
- Turcotte, M., (2013) Living apart together. In.: *Insights on Canadian Society 2013/1: 1-9*. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-006-x/2013001/article/11771-eng.pdf>