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Linked lives: Gender, family relations and recurrent care proceedings in England

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ABSTRACT

In the wake of a "national care crisis" in England, an increasing number of parents return to the family court as repeat respondents in care proceedings and lose successive children from their care. Despite considerable progress in understanding the trends and patterns of mothers' (re)appearances in care proceedings, knowledge of fathers and of parents' family relationships in recurrent care proceedings remains very limited. Whilst such relationships are fundamentally at stake in care proceedings, they remain largely unexplored. Analyzing population-level administrative data from the family courts in England (2007/08–2017/18, N = 25,457 recurrent parents), we have, for the first time, uncovered a five-fold typology of family relations between mothers, fathers and children as they navigated repeated sets of care proceedings. We show that each identified profile is characterized by parents' gender as well as distinctive life-course positions of the parents and children. Our findings show that a substantial number of fathers are 'visible' in care proceedings, and that the majority of those that return to court do so with the same partners and children, as part of either a recurrent family or recurrent couple. Mothers' recurrence is characterized by their re-partnering experiences and lone appearances before the court. The results underscore the value of applying a relational approach in social work research and practice, to build a fuller picture of recurrent care proceedings. This research provides new evidence to inform the development of holistic, gender-sensitive and father-inclusive services in the English family justice system.

1. Introduction

Local authorities issue care proceedings under Section 31 of the England and Wales Children Act 1989 when children are deemed to be suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm, in which case the family courts can make orders to remove children from their parents' care. In England, since 2010, there has been a rise in the numbers of child protection referrals, substantiated child maltreatment cases, and in particular, a rise in the numbers of children in out of home care (Department for Education, 2018a; National Audit Office, 2019). This increased "demand" alongside successive funding cuts to child and family services have produced what has been termed a "national care crisis" (Family Rights Group, 2018).

Previous research has shown that a sizeable proportion of this demand is generated by local authorities bringing the same mothers back into the family court (Broadhurst et al., 2015; Broadhurst et al., 2017). Between 2008 and 2018, an estimated 29% of mothers entered a recurrent set of care proceedings after their previous appearances before the family courts (Philip et al., 2018), typically with a child under the age of one (Broadhurst et al., 2018). The rise and prevalence of mothers' recurrence in care proceedings is not particular to England, but is reported in a number of international contexts, such as the USA and Australia (Grant et al., 2011; Grant, Graham, Ernst, Peavy, & Brown, 2014; Larrieu, Heller, Smyke, & Zeanah, 2008; Ryan, Choi, Hong, Hernandez, & Larrison, 2008; Taplin & Mattick, 2015; Wulczyn & Zimmerman, 2005).

Despite its significance, the existing individual-centered, gender-specific focus on recurrent mothers leaves a number of important questions unanswered, which we aim to address in this paper. First, it is crucial and timely to ask how fathers reappear in care proceedings. Secondly, given that both "entry" into and "exit" from children's services is gendered – with fathers tending to be overlooked by social workers (Philip, Clifton, & Brandon, 2018; Scourfield, 2014), it is pertinent to explore gender differences in the recurrence of mothers and fathers in care proceedings. Thirdly, drawing on the concept of "linked lives" (Elder & Giele, 2009), we consider the importance of

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relationships in understanding the problem of recurrence. Specifically, we ask how, or with whom, parents and children reappear before the court.

Based on the analysis of population-level administrative data, our findings provide a representative typology of changes and continuity in family relations as parents appear and reappear before the court. We reveal the high rate of families that reappear together, as opposed to separately as individual mothers or fathers, in the English family court. For the first time, we uncover the otherwise hidden patterns of family relations in the English family justice system. We further uncover the roles played by gender and life course positions in configuring the relationship dynamics of parents' reappearance before the court.

Our findings provide new insights into the development of more effective children's services. There are a number of programs targeting recurrent mothers and mothers at risk of losing children to care. However, the interest in understanding fathers' participation in or need for services has not yet sufficiently extended to fathers' involvement in care proceedings (Philip, Bedston, et al., 2018). Our evidence underlines the need to consider recurrence as a potentially *couple* or *family experience*, as well as illuminating its gendered and life course dimensions. It reinforces the value of whole-family approaches to addressing the high human and financial costs of recurrent families in the English family justice system.

2. Background and theoretical considerations

2.1. Family relations: From individuals to "linked lives"

A key debate cutting across practice and policy relating to care proceedings is that of how best to explain, respond to, and prevent child maltreatment and neglect, which is often encapsulated in terms of how to manage "risk". Against the backdrop of increased child protection surveillance in the UK and high numbers of children subject to care proceedings (Department for Education, 2018a, 2018b), the practice and policy landscape appears to be characterized by certain tensions. On the one hand, there has been a long-term focus on parents' individual circumstances, such as adverse childhood experience and substance abuse (Bellis, Hughes, Leckenby, Perkins, & Lowey, 2014). However, this individual-centered approach is challenged by those who argue that it pathologizes individual parents, ignores the structural conditions in which families exist, and disproportionately burdens already marginalized groups (Bywaters, 2015; Edwards, Gillies, & Horsley, 2015). On the other hand, there is a renewed interest in relationship-based, whole-family approaches (Howe, 2014), which prioritize working inclusively with families and facilitating change via the family network. Approaches such as "Signs of Safety" (Turnell & Murphy, 2017) have recently received financial support from the Department for Education in the UK. Whilst this apparent commitment to a relational approach is important to note, there remains a particular tension between an individual-centered "risk-management" approach and a relational approach that places whole families at its center and is potentially more inclusive of fathers (Featherstone, Gupta, Morris, & Warner, 2018).

A relational lens requires us to focus on underlying family connections as parents undergo (repeated) care proceedings. Particularly, it requires attention to the question of with whom mothers and fathers return to the English family courts in recurrent care proceedings. The theoretical importance of a relational approach has long been emphasized in the study of families and human development (Elder & Giele, 2009). From a life course perspective, the concept of "linked lives" indicates that individuals' life-course trajectories do not evolve on their own, but are configured by individuals' ties, relationships, obligations and exchanges with important others such as partners and children. However, the concept of "linked lives" has been less applied in social work research. Familial roles and responsiblities between the mother and the father and between parents and children are relationally constructed and entacted in social interactions between family members. As dynamics of family relations such as fertility and (de)coupling behaviors vary with family members' life stages (Elder & Giele, 2009), it is also imperative to understand "linked lives" in relation to people's life-course constellations.

To date, the concept of "linked lives" has not yet shaped theoretical and empirical research regarding care proceedings, despite the fact that it is relationships that are fundamentally at stake in care proceedings. Moreover, the family courts play a pivotal role in the making and breaking of family ties. Experiences as drastic as recurrent care proceedings and repeated child removals mark pivotal life-course transitions for both parents and children and wider family networks (Brandon, Sorensen, Thoburn, Bailey, & Connolly, 2015; Broadhurst & Mason, 2017). Therefore, this article makes an important contribution to the literature by examining how mothers, fathers and children appear in recurrent care proceedings together or alone and by examining the life-course correlates of continuity and change in family relations between repeated sets of proceedings.

2.2. Gender differences in "linked lives"

A relational focus on "linked lives" requires us to also consider gender differences in the life-course of mothers and fathers (Elder & Giele, 2009). Partnership between the mother and the father and intergenerational relations between parents and children are crucial to the gendered construction of motherhood vis-à-vis fatherhood. Over the past decades, there is both continuity and change in the organization and ideals of parenting. An enduring gendered model of care which places mothers as "primary" parents remains both structurally and culturally embedded (J. Scott, Crompton, & Lyonette, 2010). Although recent evidence of fathers' contribution to children's wellbeing (Goisis, Sigle-Rushton, & Keizer, 2013; Lamb & Lewis, 2013; Shwalb, Shwalb, & Lamb, 2013) suggests a cultural shift toward "involved fatherhood" (Dermott & Miller, 2015; Norman, 2017), it is notable that the conditions and expectations for "involved fatherhood" are further shaped by social class, economic, cultural and social capital (Edwards et al., 2015; Morris et al., 2018).

Wider literature on children's services and father engagement indicates that such gendered conceptions of parenting are equally enduring in practice (Brown, Callahan, Strega, Walmsley, & Dominelli, 2009; Parton & Parton, 1988). At most levels of intervention there is a longstanding tendency to focus on mothers, while fathers are yet to become the "core business" of child welfare services (Ashley et al., 2013; Scourfield, Smail, & Butler, 2015; Zanoni, Warburton, Bussey, & McMaugh, 2013). Although there is a growing literature on the barriers to involving men in social work practice, this has mostly been concerned with service delivery, and investigated from the viewpoint of professionals (Ewart-Boyle, Manktelow, & McColgan, 2015; Maxwell, Scourfield, Featherstone, Holland, & Tolman, 2012; Skramstad & Skivenes, 2017). When fathers do receive attention from the authorities, they tend to be excluded from the family as a potential source of "risks" (Scott & Crooks, 2004; Scourfield, 2006), and their needs or potential strengths remain under-explored (Forrester, Westlake, & Glynn, 2012; Rivett, 2010).

What is often missing from policy and practice is a gender-sensitive approach to service design, delivery, and evaluation, which challenges the inadvertent reproduction of gender inequality manifest in holding women to account for the safe care of children and overlooking the role that men play in children's lives (Baum, 2016; Clapton, 2009; Featherstone & Peckover, 2007; Philip, Clifton, & Brandon, 2018). Limited engagement with fathers constitutes both a failure to hold fathers accountable for their parenting but also a failure to value men as parents and support their fathering roles (Brandon, Philip, & Clifton, 2017). A lack of attention to gender difference not only has consequences for families involved in child protection services and care proceedings, but also for agencies seeking to design, deliver and

monitor interventions. In this article, we therefore probe the gendered patterns of family relations as mothers and fathers undergo repeated sets of care proceedings.

3. Methods

3.1. Study design

This paper forms part of the first stage of a mixed-methods project examining the scale, pattern and dynamics of birth fathers' appearances in recurrent care proceedings in England. One aim of the first stage is to harness population-level administrative data to establish the prevalence and profile of recurrent fathers vis-à-vis mothers in care proceedings in England. Instead of treating mothers and fathers separately as individual clients in the family justice system, we adopt an essential relational, whole-family approach that focuses on the relationships between mothers, fathers and children as well as gender difference in such relations.

3.2. Data and sample

Our data were extracted from administrative records produced by the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Services (hereafter Cafcass), covering care proceedings in England initiated under S.31 of the Children Act 1989, between the fiscal years ending March 31st 2008 to 2018 (for a fuller account of this data c.f. Broadhurst, Alrouh, et al., 2015). Cafcass records basic demographic information for all children in a case and adults who are automatically parties to the case because they hold parental responsibility (PR) for a child who is subject to care proceedings, or who have successfully applied to the courts for party status (e.g., unmarried fathers without PR). The Cafcass dataset also contains basic information on the adult members in care proceedings (e.g., age, gender, relationships to a given child), and information on the case (e.g., time of initiation and completion). With a record on every child who has entered care proceedings since 2007/08, the data provides a unique opportunity to examine full-service population-level patterns regarding parents, children and their family relations in the English family justice system.

One approved researcher was granted access to the Cafcass data management system. Preparing the data extract for analysis involved correcting documentation errors and pseudo-anonymizing potentially identifiable information. The resultant data extract contained 178,784 adults identified as birth parents with 181,252 children in care proceedings initiated between 2007/08 and 2017/18. We focused on birth parents in part because information on non-birth parents was often incompletely recorded, and birth parents constituted the majority (93.2%) of recorded adults. Considering any broader range of non-biological parent figures or partners also creates a challenge of clearly defining how non-biological parent figures are recorded (or not) in administrative data.

To construct our analytical sample, we imposed three selection criteria. First, as our focus is on recurrent care proceedings, we limited our sample to parents who appeared in at least two different sets of proceedings in our observation window (N = 25,694). However, it is possible that some parents who only appeared once in this window had experienced a set of care proceedings previously, and some others may experience recurrence after our observation window. Secondly, we eliminated 109 parents aged under 16 years at their index proceedings (N = 25,585). Thirdly, we removed 87 parents who did not have at least one child aged under 16 years at the start of either the index or recurrent proceedings (N = 25,498). The second and third criteria was imposed to eliminate cases with data recording errors (e.g., children being older than their parents) and cases in which the non-adult parent was both party and subject to the same case. The final sample contained 25,498 *recurrent birth* parents, 37.7% of whom were fathers. Hereafter, the terms "fathers" and "mothers" refer to recurrent birth fathers and

Table 1
Descriptive statistics for recurrent fathers and mothers.

Variable	Recurrent father	Recurrent mother
Dependent variables[a]		
Partner indicators		
Same partner (ref. = no)	79.0	41.6
New partner (ref. = no)	12.2	32.3
Previous partner (ref. = no)	7.8	4.3
Unknown partner (ref. = no)	2.2	24.7
Child indicators		
At least one new younger child (ref. = no)	53.0	71.4
At least one new previous child (ref. = no)	12.0	7.9
At least one child is the same (ref. = no)	41.0	26.5
Individual attributes[b]		
Parent named only in proceedings (ref. = party status)	7.7	0.1
Parent age at start of proceedings		
16–19	6.0	16.2
20–24	20.3	29.2
25–29	20.7	22.9
30–34	18.0	17.0
35–39	13.5	8.7
40 or older	17.3	4.4
(Missing)	4.1	1.6
Partner attributes[b]		
Partner unidentified (ref. = identified)	1.9	22.7
Parent–partner age gap		
11+ younger	1.3	11.3
6–10 younger	3.8	12.4
3–5 younger	6.5	14.2
0–2 difference	32.8	23.4
3–5 older	18.6	3.2
6–10 older	16.1	1.6
11+ older	13.9	0.5
(Missing)	7.0	33.3
Child attributes[b]		
Number of children in proceedings		
1	66.9	57.2
2	20.2	22.0
3+	13.0	20.9
Age of youngest child in proceedings		
< 4 weeks	27.1	25.1
4–51 weeks	26.0	27.6
1–4 years	29.3	33.0
5–9 years	11.7	10.0
10–15 years	5.9	4.3
Control variables[b]		
Legal outcome for youngest child in proceedings		
Dismissed/Order of No Order	5.6	4.7
Family Assistance/Supervision Order	15.9	10.8
Residence/Special Guardianship/Child Arrangements Order	17.7	18.2
Care/Secure Accommodation Order	20.1	22.3
Placement Order	25.0	29.4
(Missing)	15.6	14.5
Fiscal year index proceedings started		
2007/08	8.9	9.4
2008/09	9.3	10.1
2009/10	11.3	12.2
2010/11	10.4	11.7
2011/12	10.6	11.3
2012/13	10.8	10.7
2013/14	10.6	9.3
2014/15	9.9	9.0
2015/16	9.7	8.6
2016/17	6.9	6.3
2017/18	1.5	1.4
N	9619	15,893

Note: ref. = reference category. Chi-squared tests comparing mother–father differences were statistically significant at the 0.1% level for all variables.

[a] Measured at recurrent proceedings, relative to index proceedings.

[b] Measured at index proceedings. Column percentages reported, which may

not add up to 100% due to rounding.

mothers. Table 1 presents the sample characteristics, which we describe in detail as we introduce the variables used in our analysis below.

3.3. Family-relation measures

3.3.1. Partnership status

A series of dummy variables were used to capture the partnership status of mothers and fathers, from the index to a subsequent set of care proceedings, distinguishing whether a parent returns to the court with: (1) the same partner as in the index proceedings; (2) a new partner who was parent to a new child born after the index proceedings; (3) a new partner who was only parent to an older child born before the index proceedings; or (4) a child for whom the other parent was unidentified. As shown in Table 1, recurrent parents were most likely to return to the court with the same partner as in their index proceedings, and fathers (79.0%) were nearly twice more likely than mothers (41.7%) to return with the same partner. By contrast, mothers (36.7%) were 1.6 times more likely than fathers (20.0%) to return with a new partner. In line with the gendered pattern of lone parenthood in the UK (Sigle-Rushton, Hobcraft, & Kiernan, 2005), 24.7% of the mothers, as opposed to 2.2% of the fathers, returned to the court on their own.

3.3.2. Intergenerational relations

As parents reappeared before the court, we also used dummy variables to capture the status of their children who appeared with them, in terms of whether there was at least (1) one new child in recurrent proceedings who had not previously appeared before the court and who was younger than the children who had appeared in index proceedings, (2) one new child in recurrent proceedings who was older than the youngest child in index proceedings, and (3) one same child who previously appeared in index proceedings and then reappeared in the subsequent proceedings. The data show that 41% of the fathers reappeared before the court with at least one child from their index proceedings, while only 26.5% of the mothers did so. As many as 71.4% of mothers returned with at least one new child who was younger than the children involved in their index proceedings. By contrast, 53% of fathers returned with a new, younger child. In a small number of cases (i.e., 12% of fathers and 7.9% of mothers), the parents returned to the court with an older child who had not been included in the index proceedings.

3.4. Life-course measures

In order to understand how family relations are embedded in parents' and children's life-course positions (Elder & Giele, 2009), we included in our analysis variables that capture the life course positions of the parents and their children in *index* proceedings.

3.4.1. Parents' age

We distinguished the focal parents' age at the start of index proceedings, using categories specified by the UK Office of National Statistics (Office for National Statistics, 2019): 16–19, 20–24, 25–29, 30–34, 35–39, and 40 years or older. To minimize sample loss, we also controlled for the small number of cases with missing information on the parents' age as a separate category (4.1% of the fathers and 1.6% of the mothers). The recurrent mothers have a younger age profile ($M = 26.4$) than recurrent fathers ($M = 31.2$).

3.4.2. Parent–partner age gap

Although it is important to also consider the partner's age, the close correlation between parents' and partners' ages ($r = 0.6$) means the two cannot be simultaneously included in the same model due to multicollinearity as it may inflate standard errors (Mason & Perreault, 1991). Instead we measured the relative age gap between parents and their partners, using a categorical variable (Hu & Qian, 2018): parents younger than their partners by 11 years or more, 6–10 years and 3–5 years, parents between 2 years younger and 2 years older than their partners, and parents older than their partner by 3–5 years, 6–10 years and 11 years or more, respectively. As shown in Table 1, the mothers were most likely to be similarly aged or slightly younger than the fathers. In < 12% of cases did recurrent mothers have a partner who was 11 or more years older or younger than themselves. The corresponding rate was 15.2% among recurrent fathers. A separate "missing" category was created for the variable to take account of cases in which the partner's age was not recorded or a parent appeared before the court without a partner.

3.4.3. Children's age

We distinguished the age of the youngest child in index proceedings, using a categorical variable (Broadhurst et al., 2018): less than four weeks (newborns), four to 51 weeks (infants), 1–4 years (toddlers), 5–9 years (school children), and 10–15 years (adolescents). Recurrent parents tended to have appeared in their index proceedings with younger rather than older children. While 82.4% of fathers and 85.7% of mothers had previously appeared with children under 4 years old — more or less evenly spread across the categories of newborns, infants and toddlers, only 5.9% of fathers and 4.4% of mothers had previously appeared before the court with adolescents aged 10–15 years.

3.4.4. Number of children in index proceedings

We also distinguished the number of children who appeared with a parent in index proceedings, using a categorical variable: one, two, three, and four or more. The majority of recurrent fathers (87.1%) and mothers (79.2%) had previously appeared before the court with one or two children.

3.5. Control variables

We also controlled for a number of confounding variables, which may affect parents' family relations throughout their recurrent court appearances. We distinguished, using a dummy variable, whether a parent was party to the index proceedings (92.3% of fathers and 99.9% of mothers), as opposed to being named only. We also took account of whether a parent's partner was identified by the court in the index proceedings, and found that it was 12 times more likely for a mother than a father to have appeared in index proceedings on their own.

At a case level, we controlled for the fiscal year in which the parents' index proceedings were initiated, as well as the legal outcome for the youngest child. Legal outcomes were grouped to imply whether or not the child was placed away from home or returned home, and the level of potential contact between parent and child, using a categorical variable: "returned home" (dismissed or Order of No Order), "placed at home" (Family Assistance Order or Supervision Order), "placed out of home with family" (Residence Order, Special Guardianship Order or Child Arrangements Order), "placed in local authority out of home care" (Care Order or Secure Accommodation Order), "placed for adoption" (Placement Order).

3.6. Analytic strategy

3.6.1. Constructing a typology of recurrent parents' family relations

Our first objective was to identify the latent family relations between fathers, mothers and children as they moved from index to recurrent proceedings. Using separate indicators, our family-relation measures captured parents' co-appearance before the court with their partners and children, respectively. However, in light of our focus on "linked lives", our analysis focused on potential interconnections between partnership status and intergenerational relations. Broadhurst, Alrouh, et al. (2015), for example, found that as some mothers develop new intimate partnerships, they are also likely to have new children

Table 2
Summary of latent class analysis model fit indices for one-class to seven-class models (N = 25,512 recurrent parents).

Number of classes	LL	L^2	df	Error	BIC	ΔBIC
1	−89,251	75,549	120	0.0000	178,573	
2	−74,866	46,779	112	0.0166	149,884	−28,689
3	−66,594	30,235	104	0.0066	133,421	−16,463
4	−60,320	17,688	96	0.0024	120,955	−12,466
5	−55,255	7557	88	0.0022	110,905	−10,049
6	−53,791	4630	80	0.0013	108,059	−2846
7	−53,127	3301	72	0.0045	106,812	−1247

Note: LL = Log likelihood. L^2 = Likelihood squared. df = Degrees of freedom. Error = Classification error based on modal assignment. BIC = Bayesian information criterion. ΔBIC = Change in BIC from previous model.

subject to care proceedings. We therefore took a more holistic view of recurrent parents' family relationships. To do this, we used the technique of latent class analysis (LCA) (Nylund, Asparouhov, & Muthén, 2007). Unlike traditional methods that treat parents' relationship with partners and children separately, LCA identifies distinct combinations of family relations, across repeated sets of care proceedings. Identifying typologies of family relations is an important step in building policy and practice relevant knowledge about recurrent care proceedings.

Table 2 presents the model fit indices for the LCA, which informs the classification and number of typologies we construct. A variety of indices were obtained: deviance statistic (L^2), Bayesian information criterion (BIC), and log-likelihood ratio. Instead of fitting separate LCA models for mothers and fathers, the LCA was conducted based on the pooled sample. This then allowed us to test for gender differences in the probabilities of mothers and fathers having a given combination of family relations by including gender as a covariate in predicting the typologies.

Model selection is key to LCA. The aim is to find a parsimonious specification that succinctly summarizes changes and continuity in parents' family relations between recurrent care proceedings and deviates as little as possible from the pattern observed in the data. A better fitting LCA model has a smaller (more negative) Bayesian-information-criterion (BIC) and a smaller deviance statistic (L^2). However, it is equally important to note that LCA model selection should also be informed by substantive considerations such as the interpretive meaning of latent typologies and the size of latent groups.

In a stepwise process, we fitted LCA models containing one to seven latent classes. A larger number of classes was also attempted. However, the small degrees of freedom and increasing rate of classification error clearly indicated the poor fit of these models. As shown in Table 2, the model fit improved as the number of latent classes increased. However, a closer comparison between the six-class and seven-class models indicates that, although the latter has a lower BIC and L^2, the latter has a higher level of classification error. As far as fit indices are concerned, the six-class model provides the best-fitting solution to the data, followed by the five-class model. In choosing between the five-class and six-class models, further examination of the typologies indicated that the six-class typology yielded extremely small (i.e., < 3% of the sample) and uninterpretable categories. Thus, in this article, we report the results based on the five-class solution, which is a fine balance between statistical robustness and conceptual relevance.

3.6.2. Modeling the life-course correlates of recurrent parents' family-relation typologies

Building on the LCA, the typology of family relations was taken as the dependent variable in our second step of analysis. Given the multinomial nature of the typology (comprising five categories), multinomial logistic regression was used to examine the life-course correlates of recurrent parents' family-relation typologies. Separate models were fitted for mothers and fathers. Additionally, we estimated robust standard errors to control for potential heteroscedasticity (White, 1980), as well as standard errors controlling for clustering at the levels of local authorities and Designated Family Judge areas to account for the hierarchical organization of the Cafcass dataset (Williams, 2000). Although it is a routine to report coefficients and log-odds ratios from logistic regression models, multinomial regression requires further attention to the interpretation of results. Unlike in binomial logistic regression, the fact that a predictor has a positive/negative coefficient on a log-odds ratio for a non-reference category does not necessarily imply a monotonic positive/negative trend in the corresponding conditional probability of being in that category, which is contingent on how the other log-odds ratios are changing with the same predictor (Mood, 2010). To provide an intuitive illustration of the results, we also predicted and plotted the conditional probabilities of latent class membership against the key life-course variables.

We adopted a forward stepwise approach to model building, which allowed us to assess the contribution of each set of life-course measures to predicting the family relations of mothers and fathers in recurrent care proceedings. Table 3 presents the model fit indices. The results show that further to the control variables, the addition of the parents' own life-course position substantially improved the model fit in terms of both BIC and log-likelihood, for both fathers and mothers. The inclusion of partners' life-course position (i.e., parent–partner age gap) further improved the model fit, and so has the addition of children's life-course stage and the number of children involved in the parents' index proceedings. However, as shown in Table 3, the inclusion of interaction terms between parents' and children's life-course stages did not improve the model fit, as the BICs increased rather than decreased in value; nor were the interaction terms statistically significant. Informed by the model fit indices, we report results from the best fitting full model (Model 4 in Table 3), which includes the main effects of the life-course variables of parents, their partners and children, as well as all control variables.

The results reported in this article were supported by a number of robustness checks. First, a variance inflation factor (VIF) test confirmed that the predictors were not affected by multicollinearity, as the average VIF values were below the conservative threshold of 2.5.

Table 3
Summary of multinomial fit indices at each stage of forward stepwise model selection, for recurrent fathers (N = 9564) and mothers (N = 15,893), respectively.

Step	Recurrent father					Recurrent mother				
	LL	df	AIC	BIC	R^2	LL	df	AIC	BIC	R^2
0: Null	−11,708	0	23,421	23,443	0.00	−24,206	0	48,421	48,451	0.00
1: + Controls	−9920	18	19,882	20,032	0.15	−21,855	24	43,766	43,981	0.10
2: + Individual measures	−9655	39	19,394	19,695	0.18	−21,187	52	42,485	42,915	0.13
3: + Partner measures	−9543	63	19,218	19,691	0.19	−20,680	84	41,536	42,212	0.15
4: + Child measures	**−9209**	**81**	**18,586**	**19,188**	**0.21**	**−20,142**	**108**	**40,508**	**41,367**	**0.17**
5: + Parent age × child age	−9175	144	18,644	19,697	0.22	−20,084	192	40,560	42,064	0.17

Note: LL = Log likelihood. df = Degrees of freedom. AIC = Akaike information criterion, BIC = Bayesian information criterion. R^2 = McFadden's pseudo R-squared. Final model used in this article highlighted in bold. Sample size for fathers does not include the small number of "lone fathers" excluded from the models.

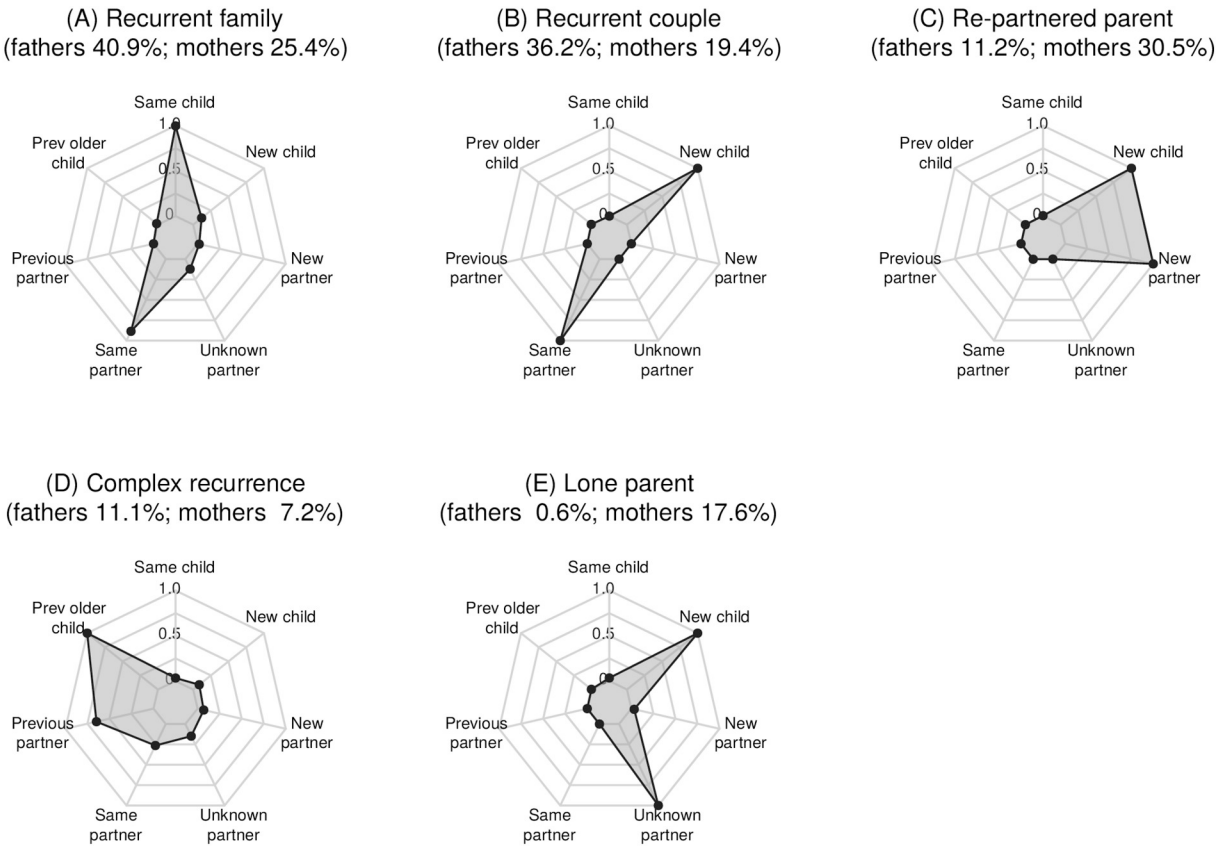

Fig. 1. A five-fold typology of parents' family relations in recurrent care proceedings.
Note: See Table 2 for latent class analysis model fit indices. Percentages of class membership percentages for fathers (N = 9619) and mothers (N = 15,893) in parenthesis.

Second, the independence of irrelevant alternatives (IIA) assumption was met.

4. Findings

In this section we present the distinct typologies of family relations and their life-course correlates, as mothers and fathers navigate repeated sets of care proceedings in the English family justice system. We present the results from the LCA and the multinomial regression models side by side to enable a fuller understanding of recurrent parents' family relationships as embedded in their life course constellations.

Based on the LCA, Fig. 1 depicts the five-fold typology of recurrent parents' family relations, which are representative of the ways in which fathers and mothers experience changes and continuity in their relationships with partners and children as they moved from index to recurrent care proceedings. In Fig. 2, we graph how the probabilities of a parent having each typology of family relations varied with parents' own life-course stage, parent–partner age-difference, life stage of the youngest child, and number of children in index proceedings. Full results of the multinomial logistic regression models examining the roles played by life-course constellations as well as control variables (e.g., legal decisions on the parents' index proceedings) in configuring the five distinct profiles of family relations are presented in Appendix Table A1. Below, we report each of the five typologies and discuss their implications for the development of targeted and effective children and family services.

4.1. Recurrent families: same partner, same child

As depicted in Fig. 1A, "recurrent families" refers to cases in which a birth parent reappeared before the court with the same partner and at least one same child as in their index proceedings. This typology accounted for 40.9% of recurrent fathers and 25.9% of recurrent mothers. The high recurrence rate of whole families means that recurrent care proceedings cannot be understood fully as an individual-level phenomenon. Furthermore, the finding that 40.9% of fathers reappear before the court with the same set of family members indicates the need for practice and policy to more adequately response to this sizable proportion of fathers.

The life-course characteristics of "recurrent families" are reported in Panel A of Fig. 2. Parents' age in index proceedings played a crucial role in shaping their likelihood of returning as recurrent families. Both recurrent mothers and fathers were more likely to return with the same partners and children if they entered index proceedings at an older, rather than a younger, age. Compared with fathers aged between 16 and 19 years old in their index proceedings, fathers aged 40 or older were found to be 1.6 times more likely to return as a recurrent family. A similar pattern was observed among mothers; compared with mothers who entered their index proceedings aged 16–19, mothers aged 40 and above were found to be 4.5 times more likely to return with the same partners and children.

There were also some subtle gender differences in the association between parents' age and their probability of being recurrent as part of a whole family through the court. Whereas the pace of increase in the probability of fathers returning to the court in a recurrent family was more or less even over their life course, we found a sharp increase in the probability of mothers returning in a recurrent family as they exceeded the 40-year age mark in index proceedings. This is not surprising; as women approach the end of their fertility window, they become less likely to give birth to new children, whilst the same fertility restriction is less applicable to men. Moreover, the prospects or opportunities for new partnership and fertility may change, in different ways, for women

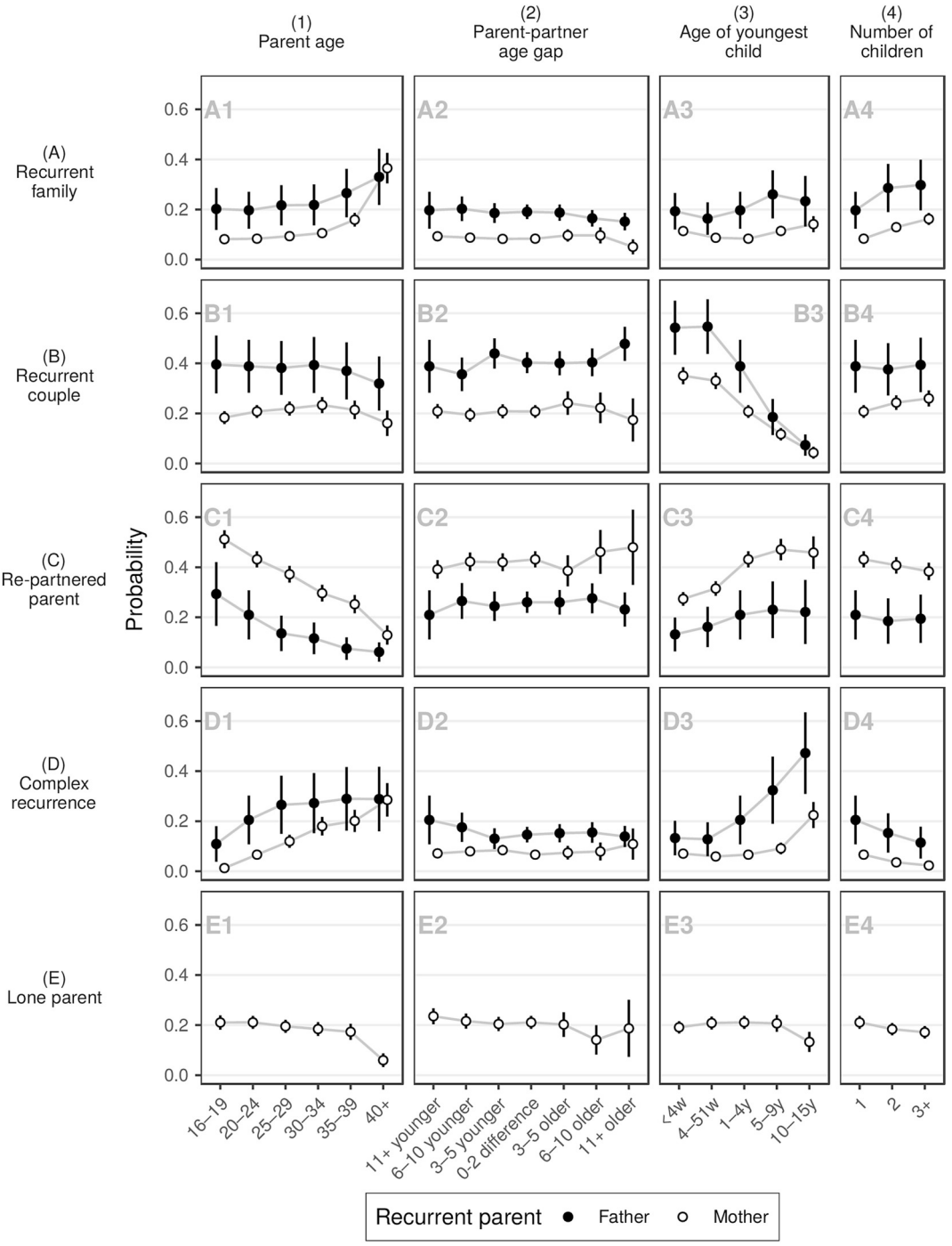

Fig. 2. Life-course correlates of mothers' and fathers' family-relation profiles in recurrent care proceedings.
Note: Predictive marginal probabilities with 95% confidence intervals, for fathers (N = 9564) and mothers (N = 15,893), separately, holding all other variables at their means or baseline categories. See Table A.1 for full model results, based on which the predictions were calculated. Sample size for fathers does not include the small number of "lone fathers" excluded from the models.

and men as they age (Hu & Qian, 2018; Schwartz, 2013).

The likelihood of recurrent families is also shaped by children's life course, as depicted in Panel A3 of Fig. 2. Both fathers and mothers were more likely to return to the court with the same partners and children as the age of the youngest child in their index proceedings increased. Compared with recurrent parents who previously appeared with a newborn infant, parents who appeared with an adolescent were 1.2 times more likely to return to the court with the same partners and children. A similar positive association was found between the number of children in index proceedings and the likelihood of parents returning as recurrent families. Compared to those whose index proceedings only concerned one child, fathers and mothers who previously appeared with three or more children were 1.5 times and 1.9 times more likely to return with the same partners and same children.

Recurrent parents who had their children returned to or placed at home were far more likely to return as "recurrent families" than parents whose children were removed from their care. Compared with fathers whose children were placed in out-of-home care (Care Order or Secure Accommodation Order) at the conclusion of index proceedings, fathers whose children returned home due the case being dismissed (dismissed

or Order of No Order) or under local authority supervision (Family Assistance Order or Supervision Order) were 2.6 and 4.0 times more likely to return as recurrent families. A similar pattern was found among recurrent mothers. Although our data and analysis cannot identify the exact reasons for the same families to reappear before the court, it seems likely that recurrent families may return to court due to persisting or indeed recurring issues in the family. The prevalence of recurrent families demonstrates, for the first time, the endurance of family relations – between partners and between parents and children – in the English family justice system, irrespective of whether these relations are deemed positive or problematic for children.

4.2. Recurrent couples: same partner, new child

As depicted in Fig. 1B, 36.2% of fathers and 19.3% of mothers returned to the court with a new child born with the same partner as in their index proceedings. As in the case of "recurrent families", there seems to be an enduring partnership between the parents, which led to the birth of a new child. However, it is likely that the birth of the new child is what brought these recurrent couples to the attention of local authorities.

As shown in Panel B1 of Fig. 2, for fathers and mothers alike, the probability of returning to the court as the same couple with a new child did not seem to vary considerably over the parents' life course up to the age of 40 years old. Comparing parents aged 20–24 with those aged 40 or above in their index proceedings, mothers were 1.3 times and fathers were 1.2 times more likely to return with the same partners and new children. Since a woman's fertility window is more closely constrained by her age than that of a man, it is not surprising that the reduction in the probability of returning to the court with the same partners and new children is more pronounced over the life course of mothers than of fathers. Furthermore, in Panel B2 of Fig. 2, we have not found a systematic and statistically significant association between partner age gap and the probability of parents returning as recurrent couples with new children.

In Panel B3 of Fig. 2, our results show that children's age profile in index proceedings made a notable difference to the probability of parents reappearing before the court with the same partner and a new child. Both fathers and mothers who previously appeared with older rather than younger children were less likely to return to the court with a new child born with the same partner. For example, compared with parents who previously appeared with a child aged 5–9, fathers and mothers who appeared with infants in index proceedings were both 2.9 times more likely to return with a new child born with the same partner. This is not surprising as previous research showed that the removal of infants can often encourage mothers to give birth to new children who are then subject to a further set of care proceedings (Broadhurst et al., 2018). What our findings add is that the phenomenon is also relevant for fathers and indeed for couples. This is confirmed by our results that recurrent fathers who experienced child removal through care order or placement order were 2.2 and 3.0 times more likely, respectively, to return with a new child born with the same partner, compared to fathers whose children were returned home at the conclusion of index proceeding. For mothers, the corresponding rates were lower, at 1.5 times and 1.8 times respectively.

4.3. Re-partnered parents: new partner, new child

In Fig. 1C, our findings show that 30.5% of mothers and 11.2% of fathers returned to the family court with a new partner and, as a result, a new child. Recurrent mothers are nearly 3 times more likely than recurrent fathers to appear in this group.

As depicted in Panel C1 of Fig. 2, the probability of parents returning to the court with a new partner and a new child decreased over the life course as they entered index proceedings at an older rather than younger age. This is understandable in that both parents' mating and fertility prospects decline over the life course, which constrains them from developing new partnerships and giving birth to new children. Comparing parents who entered index proceedings as emerging adults aged 16–19 years and those who were aged 40 years or older in index proceedings, fathers and mothers in the former group were 4.8 times and 4.0 times more likely to return with a new partner and a new child, respectively. As shown in Panel C2 of Fig. 2, the probability of parents returning to the court with a new partner and a new child does not seem to vary with parent–partner age difference.

Panel C3 of Fig. 2 shows that the likelihood of parents returning to the court with a new partner and a new child increased as older, rather than younger children, were subject to index proceedings. Compared with those who previously appeared before the court with children aged under 1, fathers and mothers who appeared with children aged 1–4 years were 1.4 times and 1.5 times more likely to return to the court with a new partners and new children, respectively.

In Panel C4 of Fig. 2, we have not found a statistically significant association between the number of children subject to index proceedings and the risk of parents returning with a new partner and a new child. The results provide new evidence of a vicious cycle of repeated removals of children from mothers (cf. Broadhurst et al., 2015; Broadhurst & Mason, 2017): recurrent mothers who had previously experienced child removal were 1.5 times more likely to return with a new child born with a new partner, compared with mothers who received their children back to their care at the end of index proceedings. For the first time, our results also reveal a similar issue of removal-led re-partnering and new birth among fathers. Fathers who had lost children to care orders and placement orders were 1.2 and 1.4 times more likely, respectively, to return with a new partner and new child, compared with fathers whose index proceedings concluded with their children returning home.

4.4. Complex recurrence: recurrent parents with older pre-existing children

As shown in Fig. 1D, in a relatively small proportion of cases – 11.1% of fathers and 7.2% of mothers – parents' reappearances before the court brought to light pre-existing children who had not been included by the local authority in parents' index proceedings. These children were older than the youngest child subject to the index proceedings, and they were usually born from a previous relationship that preceded the index proceedings.

Panel D1 of Fig. 2 shows how the probability of both fathers and mothers falling in the typology of "complex recurrence" increased with their age in index proceedings. Compared with fathers and mothers aged 20–24 years in index proceedings, fathers and mothers aged 40 years or older in index proceedings were 1.4 and 4.3 times more likely to return with an older child born prior to the youngest child involved in their index proceedings, respectively. This is not surprising as it takes time for parents in "complex recurrence" cases to accumulate a relationship history, and for children's services to build a picture of complex family networks. Again, as shown in Panel D2 of Fig. 2, we have not found a statistically significant association between partner age-gap in index proceedings and the probability of complex recurrence. However, as complex recurrence usually involves multiple partners, it is worth noting that we were not able to capture the age of the parents' previous partners who were not involved in the index proceedings.

The probability of complex recurrence increased with the age of the youngest child at index proceedings. As depicted in Panel D3 of Fig. 2, the increase was more substantial among fathers than mothers. Compared with fathers who previously appeared with a youngest child under the age of 1, fathers who appeared with a youngest child aged 1–4 years and adolescents aged 10–15 years were 1.6 times and 3.7 times more likely to reappear before the court in a complex recurrence case. The probability of mothers being in the complex recurrence group was relatively stable as they previously appeared with children between

0 and 9 years old, ranging between 6% and 9%. By contrast, complex recurrence was 2.5 times more likely among mothers who appeared with adolescents (10–15 years old) than those who returned with 5–9 year-olds (22%).

As depicted in Panel D4 of Fig. 2, for both fathers and mothers, the likelihood of returning in a complex recurrence case decreased as the number of children in index proceedings increased. This may in part be because having a larger number of children subject to index proceedings is indicative of local authorities playing safe by including all children in a set of care proceedings. Such an approach may render it less likely that there were any other children not included in the index proceedings. Compared with parents who previously appeared with three or more children, mothers and fathers who appeared with only one child were 2.9 times and 1.8 times more likely to reappear before the court with a child not previously included, respectively.

Recurrent fathers who previously experienced child removal through care orders (20%) or placement orders (17%) were 1.6 and 1.3 times more likely, respectively, to return in a complex recurrence case, compared with fathers who received their children back to their care at the end of index proceedings (13%). By contrast, the likelihood of mothers' reappearances in a complex recurrence case varied to a lesser extent with the legal outcome of their index proceedings between 3% and 7%.

4.5. Lone parents: unidentified partner, new child

Fig. 1F delineates the profile of “lone parents”. The most prominent feature of this group is the absence of fathers (0.6%) and the prevalence of mothers (17.6%) who returned to the court on their own with a new child, hence this group can effectively be renamed “lone mothers”. “Lone mothers” are defined from the perspective of the court to reflect the observation that mothers returned to the court with children born to a father who was unidentified. Fathers may indeed be unknown or out of contact with the mother. The fathers may also be hidden from the sight of the family justice system in part because mothers often act as “gatekeepers” to fathers, allowing fathers to avoid being involved or else creating a barrier that hinders fathers from engaging in care proceedings (Brandon et al., 2017). The small number of fathers in this group means stable estimation of their life-course correlates was not statistically attainable. Therefore, our analysis focuses on “lone mothers”.

As shown in Panel E1 of Fig. 2, the probability of mothers returning to the court with a new child and an unidentified father varied little as the mothers' age in index proceedings spanned between 16 and 39 years, at around 17–21%. Notably, however, mothers who previously appeared before the court at the age of 40 or older were considerably less likely to return with a new child born with a hidden partner, in part due to their fertility constraints. Compared with mothers who previously appeared at the age of 40 or older, mothers aged 35–39 in index proceedings were 2.9 times more likely to return as “lone mothers” with new children. The absence of a statistically significant association between partner age-gap and the probability of returning as lone mothers counterbalances certain stereotypes that problematize large age-gap unions (Panel E2 of Fig. 2).

In Panel E3 of Fig. 2, the results show that the probability of returning as lone mothers decreased with children's age in index proceedings. The likelihood of reappearing as lone mothers (19–21%) varied little as children's age in index proceedings ranged between 0 and 9 years, although mothers who previously appeared with adolescents aged 10–15 years were less likely to return on their own with a new child (13%). We also find mothers who already had multiple children subject to index proceedings were less likely to return as “lone mothers” with new children, as shown in Panel E4 of Fig. 2. Compared with mothers who previously appeared with two or more children, mothers who appeared with one child were 1.2 times more likely to return on their own with a new child.

Child removal at the conclusion of index proceedings also played a significant role. Recurrent mothers who experienced child removal through a care order (21%) or placement order (23%) were 1.3 and 1.4 times more likely, respectively, to return as lone mothers with new children than mothers whose index proceedings ended with their children returning home (16%).

5. Discussion and conclusions

Taking advantage of population-level administrative data from the family courts, this article, for the first time, uncovers previously hidden family relations as parents appeared and reappeared in repeated sets of S.31 care proceedings in England. For the first time, we also reveal the gendered life-course configurations of changes and continuity in such family relations as parents moved from index to recurrent proceedings. Previous understandings of recurrent care proceedings have focused on two broad groupings, suggesting that mothers or fathers are brought back to the attention of local authorities and the family courts by the birth of a new child or a previous child in a situation of partnership break-down. Expanding on this literature, our new evidence contributes to building a fuller picture of recurrent care proceedings by providing a balanced view of fathers' recurrent appearances vis-à-vis that of mothers before the family court. Cautioning against simplistic generalizations, we also shed new light on the complex ways in which family relations – horizontally between partners and intergenerationally between parents and children – are experienced between repeated sets of care proceedings by parents and children at distinct stages of their life course.

A key overall finding is the sizeable population of recurrent whole families and couples in the English family justice system over the past decade. We found that fathers were significantly more likely than mothers to reappear before the court with the same partner. Taken together, fathers who returned with the same partner, with either the same child or a new child, made up over three quarters of recurrent fathers. These findings are important because they highlight the prominence of couplehood as a key feature of recurrence, and the presence of these recurrent fathers means that they are at the very least visible to the English family justice system rather than, as is often assumed, hidden. Our findings also showed that, in relation to “lone mothers” returning to the family courts, a substantial but comparatively small proportion of fathers do remain unidentified. Taken together these findings demonstrate that whilst the phenomenon of “hidden” or unknown fathers exists, it forms only one part of the picture.

It is beyond the scope of our analysis to explain the complex reasons for the recurrence of some parents and children through the family court. However, existing research has underlined the relevance of structural and temporal factors that may play a part (Bywaters, 2015). Families may find themselves out of time in terms of attempts to change, or up against barriers to sustain improvement in order to be deemed fit to care for their children. The reappearances of families and couples before the family courts may be partly due to the recurrence of underlying problems such as substance misuse, mental health and poverty. However, as our evidence has shown that a large proportion of families experience recurrent care proceedings and potentially the underlying issues together, the vicious cycle of recurrence cannot be addressed by targeting individual parents alone. Rather, it is essential to adopt a whole-family approach and acknowledge the enduring nature or re-establishment of partnership and intergenerational relations as families navigate their *shared* experiences in the family justice system.

Our analysis of the associations between life course factors and with whom recurrent parents return to the courts both add to and challenge current thinking around policy and practice in England. For instance, we have found that older recurrent mothers were significantly less likely to return with new partners and new children, but we did not find a similar reduction in the return of mothers with the same partner but a new child. In fact, returning with same partner and new child remains

relatively stable over a mother's life course. Younger recurrent parents were more likely to return with a new partner and new child or as a lone parent. Gender is also significant here, in that mothers are far more likely than fathers to re-partner and give birth to a new child between repeated sets of care proceedings. Mothers are also more likely to return to the court alone without an identified partner. Despite certain perceptions and practice concerns around large age gaps between partners – as a potential dimension of young mothers' vulnerability to abuse or exploitation, our analysis did not find a statistically significant association between partner age-gap and the likelihood of returning to court, for any of the five groups. However, the results about age-gap need to be interpreted with caution, given the presence of missing data for the age of unidentified fathers in the "lone mother" group. Our findings demonstrate the relevance of tailored policy and practice developments that take account of the life-course configurations of recurrence.

Our findings in relation to children's age also contribute to a more nuanced picture of recurrence. Our analysis confirms the significance of children's age at the time of index care proceedings in determining the family-relation configurations of fathers' and mothers' recurrent appearances before the court. Previous research has established the risk for some mothers to enter a repeat cycle of infant removal (Broadhurst et al., 2018). Our findings add to this knowledge by uncovering the linked life course dynamics of fathers, mothers and children. Specifically, we found that the older the age profile of children subject to index proceedings the more likely that fathers and mothers return to the court as part of a recurrent couple or family, and the less likely that they return with a new child born with the same partner.

Focusing on the "linked lives" of family members (Elder & Giele, 2009), our relational approach makes visible ongoing and changing ties between fathers and mothers, parents and children, which are not necessarily attended to in current policy and practice responses to recurrence. We demonstrate that an understanding of parents' relationship characteristics in initial court appearances enables a more accurate and nuanced understanding of how recurrent parents return to the family court. Secondly, a relational approach highlights the significance, vulnerability, and in some ways, endurance, of relationships in families undergoing recurrent care proceedings. Although couple and family relationships are variously considered to be "risk" or "protective" factors within practice settings, the value of using relationship characteristics as part of a theoretical and analytical model to explain recurrence is yet to be fully recognized. The focus on "linked lives" requires us to pay attention to the intertwined life course dynamics of family members and the different effects that relationship types and life course factors may have on the likelihood of fathers and mothers becoming recurrent.

The limitations of this study suggest a few important directions for future research. Firstly, the Cafcass data are collected from parents who are identified in S.31, Children Act 1989, care proceedings, and we know this is not the full picture of the families involved. For instance, in our typology, we can see that there is missing data on the unidentified fathers of "lone mothers". This could also include understanding the role of men as father figures who are not biologically related to the children subject to care proceedings. Secondly, while we focused on parents and families undergoing care proceedings, future research could usefully extend the focus to examine parents' relationship configurations in the pre-proceedings (Public Law Outline), and post-proceedings processes. Thirdly, although analysis of the Cafcass data allowed us to have built the first population-level picture of underlying family relations in the English family justice system, the depth of the structured administrative data is necessarily limited. To provide a more nuanced understanding of the lives of the families involved in care proceedings, data linkage needs to be undertaken with other population-level micro-social datasets. Lastly, as a large number of recurrent cases are still inconclusive at the time of our data analysis, and given the limited space and scope, we did not examine how parents' relational dynamics may shape the legal outcome of recurrent proceedings. However, it should be an important task for future research to explore, for example, how the family courts respond to what seems to be "failed family reunifications" or "persisting issues" among recurrent couples and families.

Despite its limitations, this study showcases the value of a relational approach and a focus on gender in building our understanding of families and family relations in the family justice system. Taken together, our findings caution against a simplistic conceptualization of recurrence, including stigmatization of "prolific parents" who are assumed to repeatedly return to court as they change partners and give birth to new children. They also indicate the need for further research and service development in order to respond more comprehensively to families at risk of losing children to public care. To date, existing interventions have predominantly followed an individual-centered, mother-focused approach, commonly involving a bespoke, holistic service through a trusted key-worker model (McCracken et al., 2017). Whilst this work is hard-won and highly valuable, our findings support the need for whole-family, couple-focused and father-inclusive work, that may well incorporate or adapt elements of existing interventions aimed at mothers. In the wake of a national "care crisis" in England (Family Rights Group, 2018), an expanded, more gender-sensitive response to recurrence may also help alleviate the accruing burden on the family courts across England.

Declaration of Competing Interests

None.

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Appendix A

Table A.1
Multinomial logistic regression models predicting family-relation typology membership, for recurrent fathers (N = 9564) and mothers (N = 15,893).

Index predictors	(A) Recurrent family		(C) Re-partnered parent		(D) Complex recurrence		(E) Lone parent	
	RRR	S.E.	RRR	S.E.	RRR	S.E.	RRR	S.E.
Recurrent father								
Party to proceedings (ref. = yes)	1.84***	(0.12)	1.34	(0.16)	1.72***	(0.14)	–	–

(*continued on next page*)

Table A.1 (*continued*)

Index predictors	(A) Recurrent family		(C) Re-partnered parent		(D) Complex recurrence		(E) Lone parent	
	RRR	S.E.	RRR	S.E.	RRR	S.E.	RRR	S.E.
Parent age (ref. = 20–24 years)								
16–19	1.01	(0.14)	1.38*	(0.13)	0.52**	(0.25)	–	–
25–29	1.12	(0.09)	0.66***	(0.11)	1.32*	(0.12)	–	–
30–34	1.09	(0.10)	0.54***	(0.12)	1.31*	(0.13)	–	–
25–29	1.42**	(0.11)	0.38***	(0.16)	1.48**	(0.15)	–	–
40+	2.03***	(0.13)	0.36***	(0.18)	1.72**	(0.16)	–	–
(Missing)	2.80**	(0.36)	0.10***	(0.40)	0.18***	(0.41)	–	–
Partner status (ref. = identified)	1.22	(0.40)	1.51	(0.39)	0.95	(0.40)	–	–
Parent–partner age gap (ref. = parent aged between 2 years younger and 2 years older)								
11+ younger	1.07	(0.25)	0.84	(0.31)	1.46	(0.32)	–	–
6–10 younger	1.20	(0.15)	1.15	(0.18)	1.36	(0.20)	–	–
3–5 younger	0.90	(0.12)	0.86	(0.15)	0.82	(0.17)	–	–
3–5 older	0.99	(0.09)	1.00	(0.10)	1.05	(0.11)	–	–
6–10 older	0.86	(0.10)	1.06	(0.12)	1.06	(0.12)	–	–
11+ older	0.67***	(0.12)	0.75	(0.18)	0.80	(0.15)	–	–
(Missing)	1.12	(0.33)	3.63***	(0.31)	4.22***	(0.31)	–	–
Number of children in proceedings (ref. = 1)								
2	1.51***	(0.08)	0.91	(0.10)	0.77*	(0.10)	–	–
3+	1.49***	(0.09)	0.91	(0.12)	0.55***	(0.13)	–	–
Age of youngest child in proceedings (ref. = 1–4 years)								
< 4 weeks	0.70***	(0.08)	0.45***	(0.10)	0.46***	(0.11)	–	–
4–52 weeks	0.59***	(0.08)	0.55***	(0.09)	0.44***	(0.11)	–	–
5–9 years	2.77***	(0.12)	2.29***	(0.15)	3.32***	(0.13)	–	–
10–15 years	6.23***	(0.23)	5.58***	(0.28)	12.18***	(0.23)	–	–
Legal outcome for youngest child in proceedings (ref. = Care/Secure Accommodation Order)								
Dismissed/Order of No Order	5.64***	(0.14)	1.82**	(0.19)	1.36	(0.19)	–	–
Family Assistance/ Supervision Order	24.53***	(0.13)	2.29***	(0.19)	2.20***	(0.17)	–	–
Residence/Special Guardianship/Child Arrangements Order	2.53***	(0.09)	0.93	(0.12)	0.73**	(0.12)	–	–
Placement Order	0.17***	(0.11)	0.85	(0.10)	0.60***	(0.10)	–	–
(Missing)	3.19***	(0.09)	1.06	(0.12)	0.86	(0.13)	–	–
Fiscal year proceedings started	0.96***	(0.01)	0.86***	(0.01)	1.02	(0.01)	–	–
Constant	0.56***	(0.11)	1.16	(0.13)	0.33***	(0.15)	–	–
Recurrent mother								
Party to proceedings (ref. = yes)	2.69	(1.16)	1.39	(1.20)	0.00	(428.38)	0.84	(1.45)
Parent age (ref. = 20–24 years)								
16–19	1.11	(0.09)	1.35***	(0.07)	0.22***	(0.23)	1.13	(0.08)
25–29	1.06	(0.08)	0.82**	(0.07)	1.70***	(0.11)	0.88	(0.07)
30–34	1.13	(0.09)	0.61***	(0.08)	2.41***	(0.12)	0.78**	(0.09)
25–29	1.84***	(0.11)	0.57***	(0.11)	2.94***	(0.14)	0.79	(0.12)
40+	5.64***	(0.19)	0.39***	(0.23)	5.53***	(0.22)	0.36***	(0.28)
(Missing)	1.60	(0.25)	0.29***	(0.25)	1.36	(0.31)	0.73	(0.25)
Partner status (ref. = identified)	2.01***	(0.13)	1.77***	(0.11)	1.77***	(0.15)	1.99***	(0.12)
Parent–partner age gap (ref. = parent aged between 2 years younger and 2 years older)								
11+ younger	1.11	(0.09)	0.90	(0.08)	1.07	(0.14)	1.12	(0.09)
6–10 younger	1.12	(0.09)	1.04	(0.08)	1.28	(0.13)	1.09	(0.09)
3–5 younger	0.99	(0.09)	0.97	(0.08)	1.27	(0.13)	0.96	(0.09)
3–5 older	1.00	(0.15)	0.77	(0.14)	0.96	(0.20)	0.83	(0.16)
6–10 older	1.08	(0.20)	1.00	(0.20)	1.12	(0.26)	0.63	(0.26)
11+ older	0.73	(0.36)	1.32	(0.36)	1.95	(0.36)	1.06	(0.42)
(Missing)	1.54***	(0.12)	3.29***	(0.10)	2.66***	(0.15)	3.06***	(0.11)
Number of children in proceedings (ref. = 1)								
2	1.32***	(0.07)	0.81***	(0.06)	0.46***	(0.10)	0.75***	(0.07)
3+	1.55***	(0.07)	0.71***	(0.07)	0.28***	(0.11)	0.65***	(0.08)
Age of youngest child in proceedings (ref. = 1–4 years)								
< 4 weeks	0.81**	(0.08)	0.38***	(0.07)	0.63***	(0.11)	0.54***	(0.07)
4–52 weeks	0.66***	(0.07)	0.46***	(0.06)	0.56***	(0.11)	0.62***	(0.07)
5–9 years	2.44***	(0.12)	1.93***	(0.12)	2.44***	(0.14)	1.73***	(0.13)
10–15 years	8.17***	(0.30)	5.10***	(0.30)	16.28***	(0.30)	3.03***	(0.33)
Legal outcome for youngest child in proceedings (ref. = Care/Secure Accommodation Order)								
Dismissed/Order of No Order	5.93***	(0.14)	1.07	(0.15)	1.48*	(0.19)	1.14	(0.16)
Family Assistance/Supervision Order	30.57***	(0.14)	1.45*	(0.16)	3.10***	(0.18)	1.42*	(0.18)
Residence/Special Guardianship/Child Arrangements Order	2.61***	(0.09)	1.28**	(0.08)	0.62***	(0.12)	1.15	(0.09)
Placement Order	0.21***	(0.11)	0.92	(0.07)	0.46***	(0.11)	0.92	(0.07)
(Missing)	3.29***	(0.09)	1.03	(0.09)	0.86	(0.12)	0.90	(0.10)
Fiscal year proceedings started	0.95***	(0.01)	0.93***	(0.01)	1.01	(0.01)	0.98*	(0.01)
Constant	0.50***	(0.11)	2.80***	(0.09)	0.31***	(0.15)	1.12	(0.11)

Note: Baseline category = profile (B) recurrent couple in Fig. 1. RRR = Relative risk ratio. S.E. = Asymptotic standard error. ref. = Reference category. Sample size for fathers does not include the small number of "lone fathers" excluded from the models.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

Appendix B. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2019.104392.

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