Introduction

In Sub-Saharan Africa, parental death is generally associated with adverse children's outcomes. These outcomes include schooling, health, psychological well-being, sexual behavior, and marriage. Parental divorce, less frequently studied than parental death, can also affect family instability, and consequently, children's outcomes. Studies indicate that some African countries have high rates of divorce as well as increasing divorce rates. Although more marriages end in divorce than widowhood, not much is known about the outcomes of children from divorced marriages.

Research Questions

- 1. What is the relationship between parental divorce and children's schooling outcomes?
- 2. How does mother's remarriage affect these outcomes?

Data

The present study uses data from the 2006, 2008, and 2010 waves of the Malawi Longitudinal Study of Families and Health (MLSFH). Data are collected in three rural districts: Rumphi (Northern), Mchinji (Central), and Balaka (Southern).



My analytic sample is restricted to children of female respondents, children with data for at least two of three survey waves, and children aged 6-16 years. This sample includes 3863 children from both intact and divorced marriages. All other children are excluded.

Methods

Longitudinal data methods, specifically random effects models, are used to examine the relationship between parents' marriage status/parents' marriage-mother's remarriage status and children's schooling outcomes. Due to the multilevel nature of the data, whereby children are nested within mothers, I include random intercepts to control for the contribution of mother-level and child-level characteristics to the overall variance in schooling outcomes. Depending on the distribution of the outcome, I use either three-level linear or logistic random-intercept models.

Schooling outcomes include:

- Current school attendance
- Grades of schooling completed
- Schooling gap (restricted to in-school children aged 7-16 yrs)

Key predictor variables are:

- Parents' marriage status

- --> Still married (ref)
- --> Divorced
- Parents' marriage-Mother's remarriage status
- --> Still married (ref)
- --> Divorced-Remarried
- --> Divorced-Unmarried

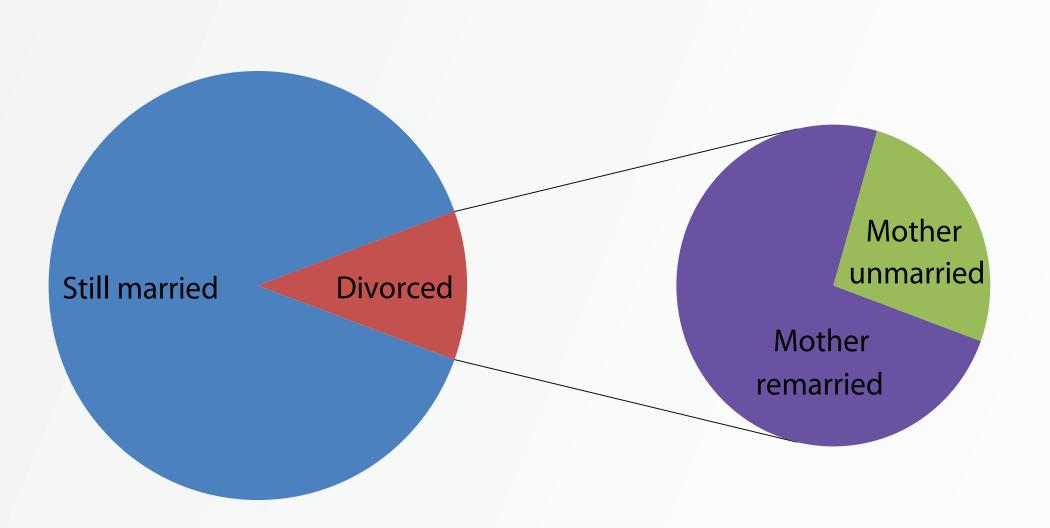
The following control variables are included in all models:

- Child-level: age, male child, ethnicity, general health status, lives with mother

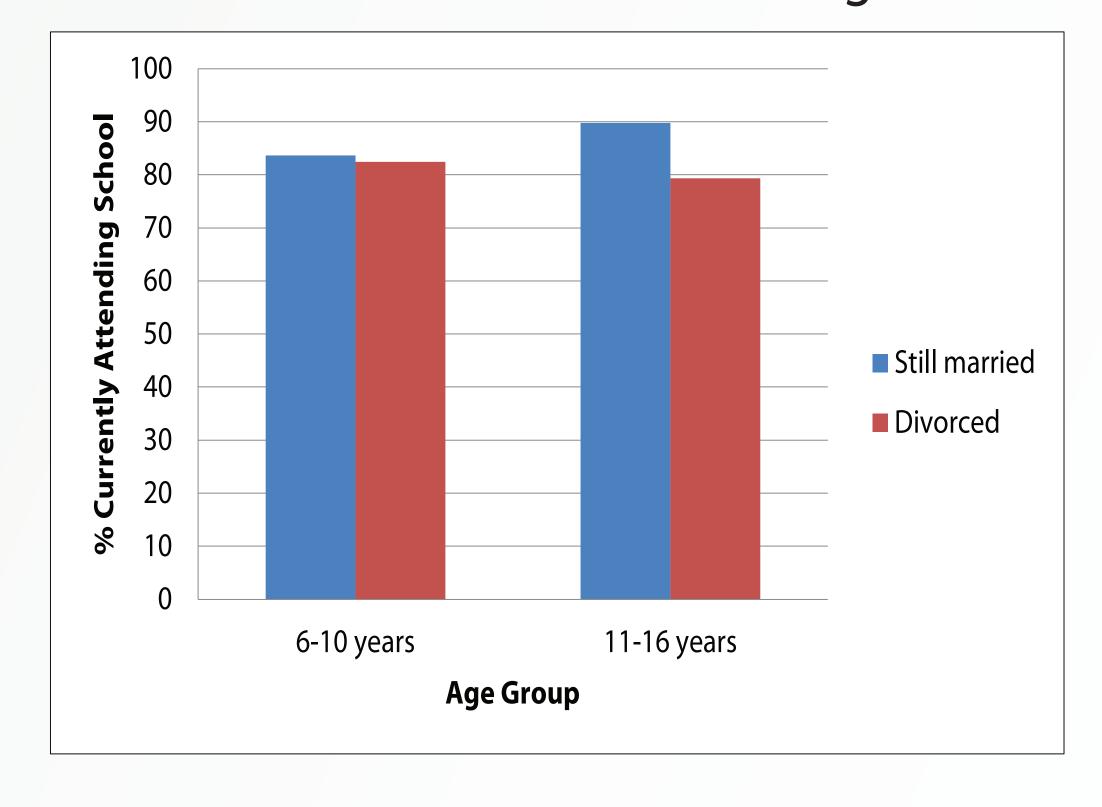
Mother-level: educational attainment, wealth index,
 # children under age 15 living in household,
 knows HIV positive

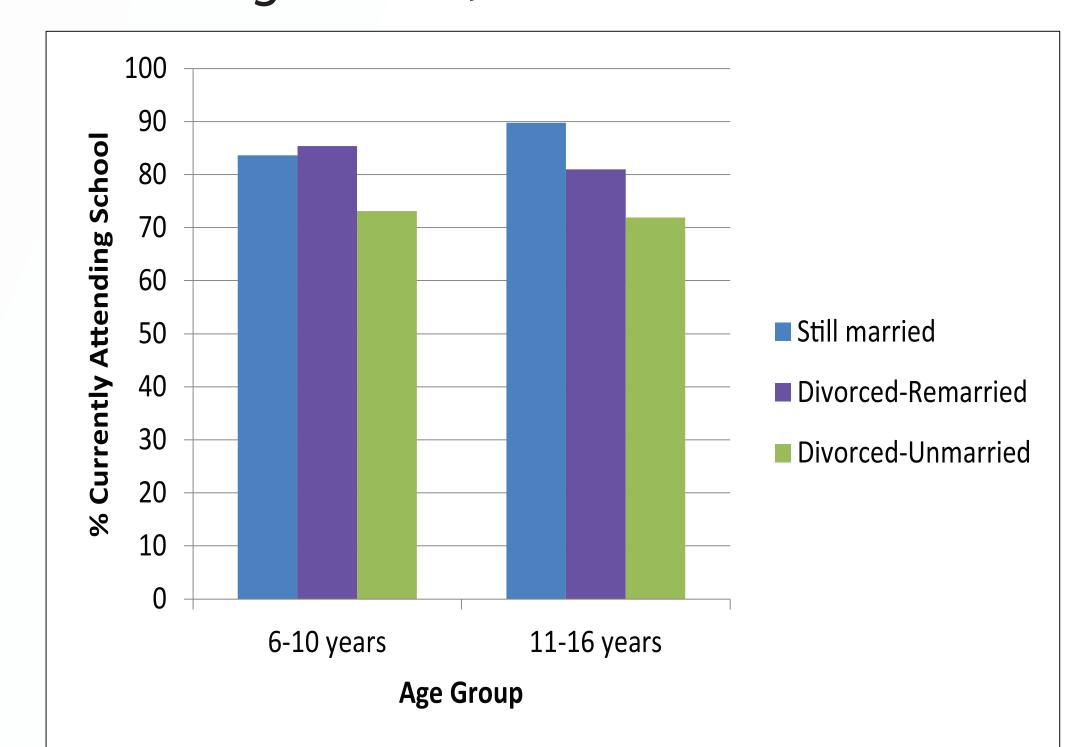
Results

Parents' Marriage & Mother's Remarriage Status in 2008

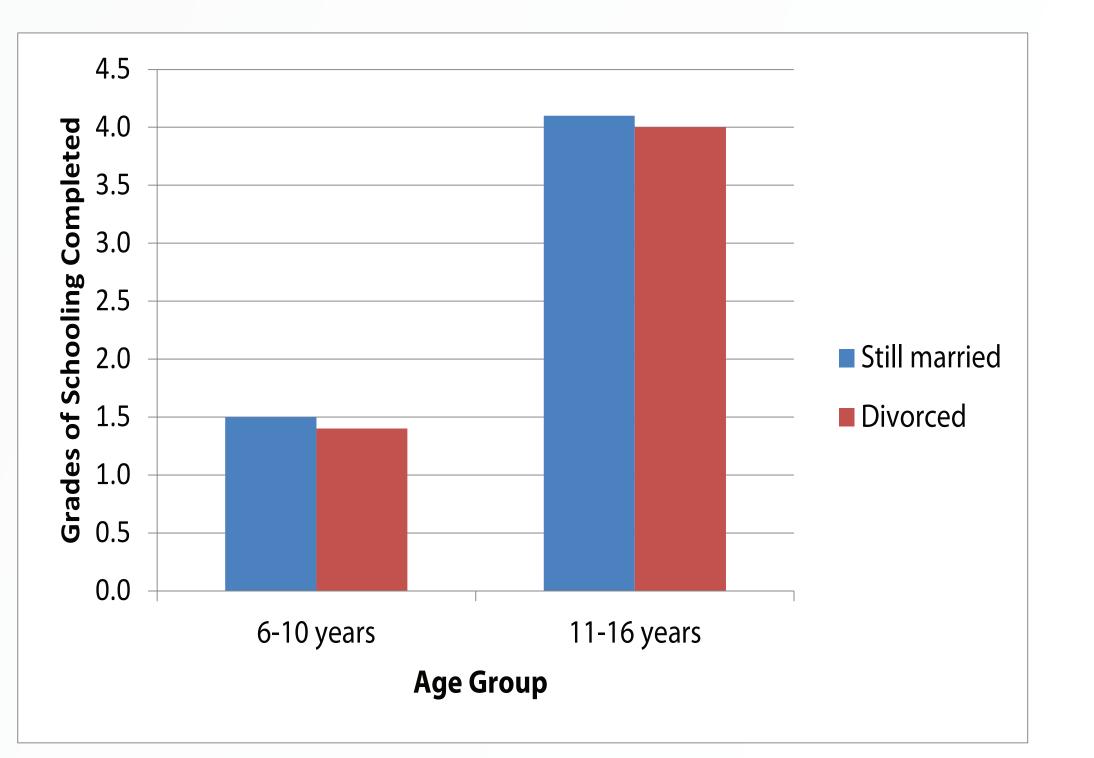


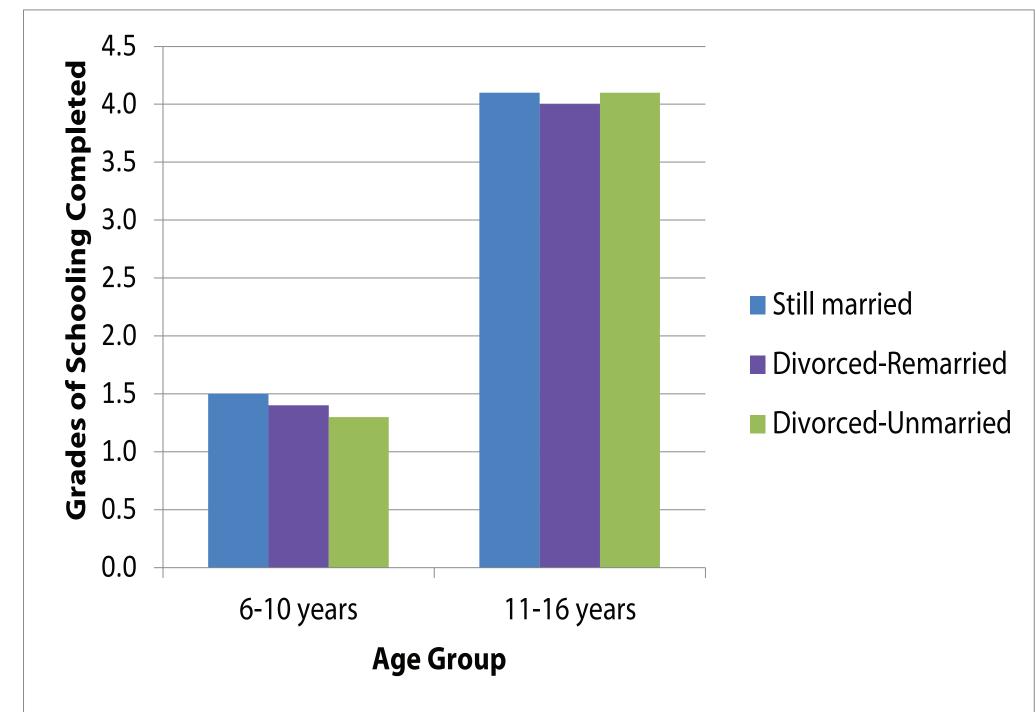
Current School Attendance by Parents' Marriage & Parents' Marriage-Mother's Remarriage Status, 2008



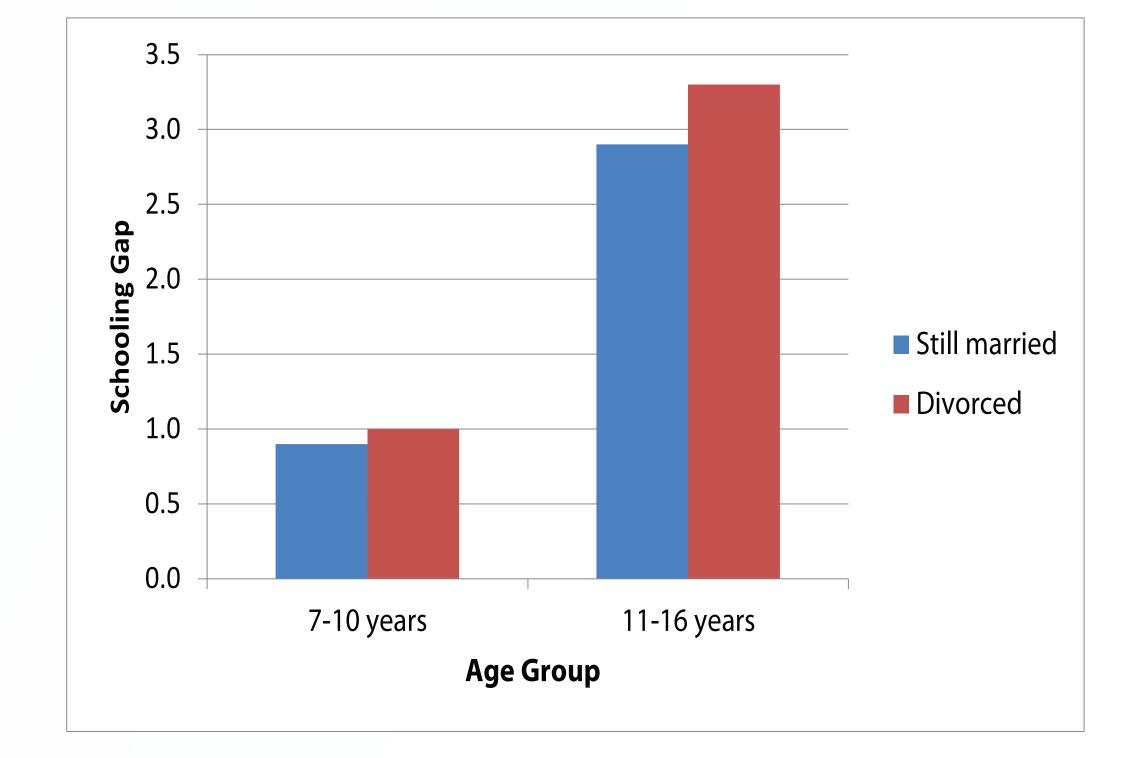


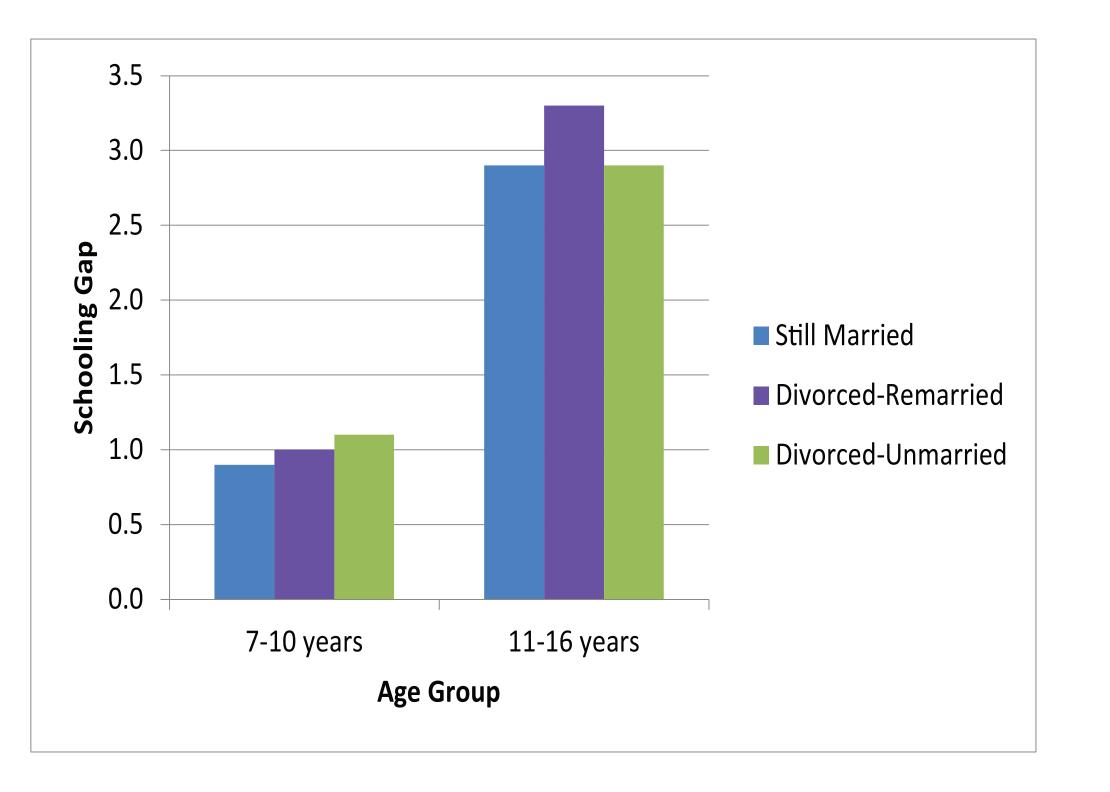
Grades of Schooling Completed by Parents' Marriage & Parents' Marriage-Mother's Remarriage Status, 2008





Schooling Gap by Parents' Marriage & Parents' Marriage-Mother's Remarriage Status, 2008





Random Effects Regression, Schooling Outcomes, by Parents' Marriage Status, 2006-2010

	6-10 years Grades of			11-16 years Grades of		
	Currently in	Schooling	Schooling	Currently in	Schooling	Schooling
	School ^a	Completed ^b	Gap ^b	School ^a	Completed ^b	Gap ^b
Parents are divorced	1.33	-0.14+	0.14*	0.49*	-0.27**	0.19*

** p<0.01, * p<0.05, + p<0.10; Statistical significance is relative to "Parents are still married".

Random Effects Regression, Schooling Outcomes, by Parents' Marriage-Mothers' Remarriage Status, 2006-2010

6-10 years Grades of			11-16 years Grades of			
School ^a	Completed ^b	Gap ^b	School ^a	Completed ^b	Gap ^b	
1.47	-0.21*	0.15*	0.55*	-0.30*	0.17	
1.05	0.02	0.10	0.32*	-0.23	0.25	
	School ^a 1.47	Grades of Currently in Schooling School ^a Completed ^b 1.47 -0.21*	Grades of Currently in Schooling Schooling School ^a Completed ^b Gap ^b 1.47 -0.21* 0.15*	Grades of Currently in Schooling Schooling Currently in School ^a Completed ^b Gap ^b School ^a 1.47 -0.21* 0.15* 0.55*	Grades of Currently in Schooling Schooling Currently in Schooling School ^a Completed ^b Gap ^b School ^a Completed ^b 1.47 -0.21* 0.15* 0.55* -0.30*	

* p<0.05; Statistical significance is relative to "Parents are still married".

Conclusions

Younger children from divorced marriages have similar odds of school attendance as those from intact marriages, but have completed fewer grades of schooling and have a larger schooling gap. When I consider remarriage, children's school performance, as measured by grades of schooling completed and schooling gap, appears to be affected. While children whose mothers remarried completed fewer grades of schooling and have a larger schooling gap, children whose mothers remained unmarried have similar outcomes to those from intact marriages.

Among older children, parental divorce is associated with lower levels of school attendance, fewer grades of schooling completed, and a larger schooling gap. Children from divorced marriages, regardless of whether their mother remarried, have lower odds of school attendance. While children whose mothers remarried have completed, on average, fewer grades of schooling than those from intact marriages, their schooling gap is not significantly different. Children whose mothers did not remarry have completed similar grades of schooling and have a comparable schooling gap to children whose parents are still married.



^a Odds ratios are provided.

^bCoefficients are provided.

^a Odds ratios are provided.

^b Coefficients are provided.