# Differential effects of divorce on social integration

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──────────── ABSTRACT ────────────

Disagreement exists about the relationship between divorce and social integration. A liberation hypothesis predicts an increase in integration, however, an isolation hypothesis predicts a decrease in integration. We combine these hypotheses by specifying that liberation will occur for some dimensions of integration, whereas isolation will occur for others. Using cross-sectional survey data from the Netherlands, results generally lend weak support to the liberation hypothesis. Divorcees report more friendship contacts and are more involved in alternative forms of participation ('new age' meetings) compared with the married, but no effects were found for most other liberation indicators. There is more support for the isolation hypotheses at least for some dimensions. We also find that post-divorce resources and constraints play an important intermediating role, especially for women. There is a general negative association between divorce and social integration, but results are nuanced and the effects are not as strong as is often believed.

KEY WORDS: divorce • social integration • social participation

Marriage is often regarded as a fundamental basis for support, a large personal network, and integration in society (Hurlbert & Acock, 1990; Milardo & Duck, 2000; Waite & Gallagher, 2000). What this implies for divorce, however, is not so clear. Does the dissolution of marriage lead to a decline in contacts and social integration, or is this conclusion too simple?

One possible hypothesis is that a divorce leads only to the disappearance of the marital relationship, without consequences for social integration in other life domains. Another possibility is that a divorce is not simply the end of the marital relationship, but also an experience that isolates people from the contexts in which they were embedded when married (Jacobson, 1983). A third option is that divorced people actively respond to their divorce by rebuilding their networks and reorganizing their social life, thereby fully compensating for the loss of the spouse (Gerstel, 1988a).

The relationship between divorce and integration has mostly been studied in the psychological literature on stressful life events. In this literature, social integration has been considered as a way of coping with the negative psychological consequences of divorce (Kitson & Morgan, 1990; Miller, Smerglia, Gaudet, & Kitson, 1998). Although important from a psychological viewpoint and relevant for clinical reasons, this approach has two shortcomings when looking at divorce from a sociological point of view.

A first shortcoming is that integration has been studied in a narrow fashion. Studies have focused on personal networks and in particular on support networks (see reviews by Milardo, 1987 and Smerglia, Miller, & Kort-Butler, 1999). The results of these studies show that divorce has a negative effect on the support network, in part because contacts with mutual friends and relatives of the former spouse diminish (Terhell, Broese van Groenou, & Van Tilburg, 2004). The remaining relationships with kin and personal friends appear to be intensified (Miller et al., 1998). Less is known about the effects of divorce when a broader conceptualization of integration is used, for instance, by including social contacts such as meeting with friends and neighbors, and by looking at social participation, such as memberships in social clubs and church attendance.

A second limitation is that many studies focus on people who were divorced at the time of the study without making comparisons with married individuals (Gerstel, 1988b; Leslie & Grady, 1985; Rands, 1988). Because most authors are concerned with the question of how people cope with the negative consequences of divorce, comparisons with married individuals are not strictly necessary. To establish such negative consequences in the first place, however, a comparative design is needed. A few studies have included comparisons between divorced and married persons (Hurlbert & Acock, 1990; Joung et al., 1997; Umberson, Chen, House, Hopkins, & Slaten, 1996) but these have their drawbacks as well. One unresolved issue lies in the problem of selection. A low level of social integration among the divorced may be a consequence of divorce, but it could also be one of the causes (Amato, 2000; Booth, Edwards, & Johnson, 1991). Hence, the social consequences of divorce may appear too negative if no measures of integration before the divorce are considered.

Finally, there are several studies that examine the impact of divorce on loneliness (Dykstra, 1995; Peters & Liefbroer, 1997). These studies generally use a comparative design and occasionally have prospective data with before-and-after measures of loneliness. Although studies of loneliness provide important insights into the link between demographic transitions

and social integration, they have disadvantages as well. One disadvantage is that the loneliness measures are a mix of the actual degree of integration and people's own preferences and standards regarding their integration. Another disadvantage is that feelings of loneliness among the divorced are also the result of the lack of a spouse. Hence, divorce effects on loneliness do not necessarily inform us about social integration in other domains.

In this article, we reconsider the link between divorce and social integration by using a broader range of indicators of social integration. More specifically, we consider four forms of contact (with friends, neighbors, family members, and colleagues) and six forms of social participation (engaging in outdoor recreational activities, participating in social clubs and sports, doing voluntary work, attending church, going to a theater, bar, or restaurant, and going to 'new age' meetings). What the indicators have in common is that they have a behavioral component, they involve at least a minimum degree of face-to-face interaction with others, and they thereby tell us something about how well a person is integrated in society. Some indicators refer to more superficial forms of integration than others (e.g., attending a theater versus participating in volunteer work), but even superficial forms of integration yield the possibility of interaction with others and provide a connection to the public world. In other words, our conceptualization of integration is general (Putnam, 2000).

To examine the effects of divorce on integration, we use data from a nationally representative sample of 2287 men and women in the Netherlands. Our evidence is obtained from making comparisons between first-married and ever-divorced persons. Although a cross-sectional design has well-known limitations when the aim is to assess causal effects of divorce, we note that before–after comparisons have so far rarely been made in the field of social integration. More importantly, we have retrospective information on several dimensions of integration in the beginning of marriage, and we collected this information from currently divorced and married respondents in a similar way. This information allows us to control for the type and level of integration at an earlier point in time (i.e., before the divorce), and after such controls are added, the selectivity that typically plagues cross-sectional comparisons between divorced and married respondents is to a great extent cancelled out.

## Theoretical background and hypotheses

We start out with three general hypotheses. The first two argue for a direct effect of divorce on integration. The *liberation hypothesis* suggests a positive effect, the *isolation hypothesis* suggests a negative effect. The third hypothesis argues that the effect of divorce is indirect. The *resource hypothesis* predicts that divorce affects integration because it restricts a person's contacts and participation. Later, we develop these hypotheses in more detail and we assess whether they have different implications for different dimensions of integration.

## Direct effects: Liberation or isolation?

To understand why divorce should affect a person's degree of integration in society, we must look at the marital relationship that precedes the divorce. Marriage changes a person's lifestyle in a number of ways. First, the well-known 'dyadic withdrawal' hypothesis suggests that the total network shrinks while the relative share of individual friends declines (Kalmijn, 2003; Milardo, 1982). In other words, married individuals' networks become smaller as the couple becomes more focused on each other. Second, social participation changes when a person marries (Campbell & Lee, 1990). When people are young and single, they are generally outgoing and tend to participate in a broad range of social activities. After marriage, people participate in fewer activities (Wellman, 1992) and they participate more in couple- and family-oriented activities (Munch, Miller McPherson, & Smith-Lovin, 1997). Outdoor recreational activities are a good example, because these are often focused on children and families, but visiting patterns can also be couple oriented. An important element of this change is that if social activities are performed with others, they tend to be done with other married couples (Kalmijn & Bernasco, 2001; Rands, 1988). This change is reinforced by residential relocation, in which married couples move to suburban areas (Magdol, 2000).

If the transition to divorce is simply the reversal of the transition to marriage, one would expect an increase in both social contacts and social participation. The effect of divorce would then simply be an effect of being single again. After divorce, the need to contact others increases because the spouse is no longer an interaction partner. This change may be reinforced by the experience of divorce itself, which may increase the demand for more intimate contact (Albeck & Kaydar, 2002). The demand for social participation may change as well. If spouses limit the number and type of social activities which people engage in, a divorce will remove such restrictions, thereby leading to an increase in social participation (Gerstel, 1988a). Such increases in participation will be reinforced by the search for a new dating or possible marriage partner (Milardo, 1987). In sum, our first hypothesis is that social contacts and social participation will be more frequent among divorced persons than among married persons. We call this the *liberation hypothesis*.

Although the liberation hypothesis seems plausible, there are several reasons to expect that the return to the single lifestyle cannot be made so easily (McKenry & Price, 1991). There is not only an effect of becoming single again, there is also an effect of having been married. One reason for this lies in the loss of the joint social network: common friends tend to be divided after divorce because friends perceive loyalty conflicts which make it difficult for them to maintain contacts with both spouses (Broese van Groenou, 1991). Time constraints aggravate this, because interaction with both former spouses implies a doubling of interaction time. People also run the risk of losing part of the activities they used to engage in while married. Many of the old activities are connected with the former spouse so that it can feel uncomfortable to do them alone after the marriage is dissolved

(Morgan, Carder, & Neal, 1997). More importantly, participation often requires alternative interaction partners, and these may not always be available. Finally, some social settings, such as the church, for example, tend to be relatively closed to divorced persons. In general, we expect that people will lose part of the joint network and will lose some of the social activities they participated in while being married. Because divorced persons also face obstacles in reverting to a new lifestyle, divorced persons will end up with a lower level of social interaction and participation than married persons. We call this the *isolation hypothesis*.

Because there are competing hypotheses about the direct effects of divorce on social integration, we make a distinction between different dimensions of integration. When considering contacts with neighbors, we expect isolation to be operating because such contacts are often directly linked to the former spouse. For contacts with colleagues, we expect a liberation effect because colleagues are weakly linked to the spouse and because it is generally easy to intensify such ties. For contacts with one's own family members, we expect a liberation effect as well. One reason to expect this is that own family members, such as parents, are usually weakly connected to the spouse, except perhaps when there are children in the marriage. In addition, family members will generally be attentive to a person's personal problems after divorce. For contacts with friends, both isolating and liberating tendencies may be observed, depending on the degree of connectedness between the friend and the former spouse. Nonetheless, we expect that the loss of mutual friends after divorce is smaller than the increase in contact with remaining friends, resulting in a positive effect of divorce on contacts with friends.

When considering dimensions of social participation, we expect different effects as well. If we assume that many recreational and outgoing activities are difficult to do alone, we expect isolation to be operating for this dimension. Participation in social clubs and in sports and doing volunteer work, in contrast, will be affected positively because such forms of participation do not require alternative interaction partners. For church attendance, we expect negative effects for other reasons: these settings can be relatively closed to divorced persons, despite the fact that it is easy to do them alone. There are also specific settings that are attractive for the divorced. Clubs that focus on 'new age topics' (e.g., meditation, self-development, new forms of spirituality) are a good example, because these are not only open to single people, they also offer opportunities to discuss personal problems, represent a progressive lifestyle, and are tolerant of divorce.

### Indirect effects: The resource hypothesis

Differences in social integration also depend on the resources that people have, such as sufficient time and money to participate, and access to social networks from which to choose interaction partners (Moore, 1990). Because divorce changes the resources that people have (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994), we need to examine whether such a differential distribution of resources is an explanation for the negative effect of divorce on social integration. We call this the *resource hypothesis*.

It is well known that divorce negatively affects women's household income (Poortman, 2000). Because income is an important factor in social participation – most forms of participation cost money – we would expect that income also plays a role in explaining differences between divorced and married women. More specifically, if there is a negative effect of divorce on women's social participation, this may be explained in part by income differences between divorced and married women. For men, adjusted household income usually increases after divorce, but these income changes are small (Poortman, 2000). For that reason, we do not expect that income plays an important role in the possible divorce effects on integration for men.

Another important resource is labor force participation. Work increases opportunities to meet new people, to make friends at work, and to social-ize outside the home. At the same time, however, paid employment decreases the time to maintain contact outside work, so that no simple effect can be expected (Baruch, Biener, & Barnett, 1987). Employment primarily affects the type of contacts people have: unemployed persons have personal networks that are more comprised of relatives and neigh-bors, whereas people with a job have larger networks with relatively large numbers of friends, acquaintances, and colleagues (Moore, 1990). Employ-ment has effects on social participation as well, but this is primarily because paid work serves as a time restriction. Because divorced women work somewhat more often – and particularly more often full-time – in compari-son with married women (Poortman & Fokkema, 2001), work may also explain the negative divorce effect on women's social contacts with rela-tives and neighbors. For women's social contacts with friends and colleagues, work probably serves as a suppressor variable.

The responsibility to take care of young children living at home is another important factor. Childcare not only limits the amount of time for social contacts, but also provides opportunities for social contacts, especi-ally in the neighborhood and through school. Several researchers have found that children – although primarily young children – lead to a reduc-tion in the size of the social network (Munch et al., 1997; Wellman, 1992). At the same time, however, having children also increases contacts with certain kinds of people, especially neighbors (Moore, 1990). To formulate hypotheses, we focus on men, because there are few differences in having children between divorced and married women. Married men more often have children at home than divorced men, largely because divorced men rarely obtain custody. As a result, we expect that part of the negative effects of divorce on men's neighborhood contacts can be explained by the fact that divorced men less often have children to take care of than married men. It is less clear what the mediating role of children will be for men's other forms of contact and for men's social participation.

Finally, health problems can limit opportunities for social contact and social participation. Better health is found to be related to a larger network, whereas health problems increase the receipt of support from relatives (Van Tilburg & Broese van Groenou, 2002). As many divorcees experience

problems in physical and mental health (Gerstel, Kohler Riessman, & Rosenfield, 1985), we expect that part of the negative effect of divorce on contacts with friends, colleagues and neighbors and on forms of social participation will be explained by the relatively poor health status of the divorced. In addition, controlling for health problems is expected to increase the positive effect of divorce on contact with relatives.

## Methods

### Participants
To test our hypotheses, we use data from the survey Divorce in the Netherlands (Kalmijn & De Graaf, 1998). The sample for this survey was drawn from 19 municipalities which are representative of the Dutch population with respect to region, urbanization, and political party preference. From the population registers of these municipalities, three random samples were drawn: (i) first-married persons, (ii) divorced persons who were not remarried, and (iii) divorced persons who were remarried. Because cohabitation is not registered by municipalities, sample (ii) includes persons who were cohabiting at the time of the survey. It is reasonable to treat cohabitation after divorce as equivalent to remarriage.

Of all respondents reached, 58% agreed to participate in the study ($N = 2,346$). All respondents were interviewed at home using structured questionnaires. The average person in the sample was in his or her late thirties at the time of divorce and about two-thirds of them already had children. The divorces we analyzed occurred between 1949 and 1997. Respondents who were divorced twice or more were left out of the analyses ($N = 59$). The total number of respondents included in the analyses was 2,287; 1,320 women and 967 men.

### Measurement
The interview included four questions about social contacts with: (i) friends, (ii) neighbors, (iii) family members, and (iv) colleagues. For each indicator, the respondent could choose between '*less than yearly*', '*once a year*', '*once a month*', and '*once a week*'. We combined the first two categories in the multivariate analyses (Tables 3 and 4). There were six questions about social participation: (i) outdoor recreation; (ii) participating in social clubs (including sports); (iii) volunteer work; (iv) attending church; (v) going to a theater, bar, or restaurant; and (vi) going to 'new age' type meetings. For each indicator the respondent could choose between '*almost never*', '*sometimes*', and '*often*'. Definitions and descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1 (women) and Table 2 (men).

To control for the possibility of a selection bias, we include a measure indicating how often the respondent participated or had contacts in the first 5 years of his or her marriage, or at the beginning of the marriage for those married less than 5 years. These questions were asked in a different part of the questionnaire and were part of a larger set of questions on the (prior) marriage. To measure resources and constraints after divorce, we include the following characteristics: a scale for having financial difficulties, a scale for poor housing conditions, whether the respondent works for pay, occupational status of the current or most recent job, a dummy variable for having children living at home, and a scale of the use of health services. There are few respondents with

missing values on the various indicators, and they were deleted listwise from the analyses.

## Analyses

In the multivariate models, we compare divorced men and women to men and women who were in their first marriage at the time of the survey. Because our data contain a cross-section of the divorced population, we constructed three groups of divorced respondents: single respondents who were divorced in the past 5 years ($n = 249$) single respondents who were divorced more than 5 years ago ($n = 588$), and married or cohabiting respondents who were previously divorced (labeled as 'remarried', $n = 910$). First-married respondents ($n = 540$) are the reference group. By distinguishing groups of ever-divorced persons, we are able to assess whether integration increases again after some time and whether integration is restored when people repartner. We emphasize that these latter inferences are obtained from a cross-sectional comparison. Note that the controls used for possible selection bias in the effect of divorce also control for the possible selectivity of remarriage.

Because the dependent variables have ordered categories with unknown intervals, we use ordinal logistic regression analysis. This estimation method assumes that the categories are in the order as given but uses no prior information about the magnitude of the intervals. The magnitude of these intervals is estimated by the method itself through the estimation of so-called cutpoints. The model is a generalization of the logistic regression model and its parameters have a similar interpretation (Greene, 1990).

To examine direct and indirect effects, two models are estimated and compared. The baseline model contains the dummy variables for divorce, a set of control variables (age, highest educational level, degree of urbanization of the current residence, and whether the respondent was a church member in the beginning of marriage), and the prior measure of integration. The effect of divorce in this model reflects the total effect, controlled for possible selection.

To evaluate the magnitude of the divorce effects, we use the model to calculate predicted probabilities to be in the highest category (frequent participation or weekly contact) under the assumption that all other variables in the model are at the mean. Subsequently, we compared this probability for divorced and first-married men or women. The outcome of the comparison is presented in terms of a relative probability, expressed in percentages (i.e., the ratio of the two probabilities). These numbers are discussed in the text but not shown in the tables for reason of readability. Only statistically significant probabilities are presented in the text.

The second regression model adds measures of an individual's current resources and constraints. The effect of divorce in this model is the direct effect. If the divorce effect is reduced from the first to the second model, we can say that the divorce effect is explained by resources and constraints (i.e., the divorce effect is indirect). To assess which specific explanatory variables are responsible for explaining a divorce effect, we assess which explanatory variables have an effect on integration and we assess whether there are differences in the explanatory variables between divorced and first-married respondents. In Table 1 (women) and Table 2 (men), the means of the explanatory variables are presented separately for recent and long-term divorced, remarried, and first-married respondents and tests are included indicating whether these differences are significant.

**TABLE 1**
**Means and standard deviations (in parentheses) of independent variables for first-married, divorced, and remarried women ($n = 1320$)**

| | First-married | Divorced (≤ 5 years) | Divorced (> 5 years) | Remarried | Test[a] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Baseline characteristics* | | | | | |
| Age | 47 (12) | 43 (8) | 53 (10) | 46 (9) | 59.1** |
| Years of education (8–19) | 12.9 (2.9) | 13.6 (2.9) | 13.0 (3.1) | 13.3 (2.9) | 3.0* |
| Urbanization (1–5) | 2.9 (1.5) | 3.3 (1.5) | 3.8 (1.4) | 3.5 (1.5) | 21.4** |
| Church member (first year of marriage) | .69 (.46) | .57 (.49) | .52 (.50) | .45 (.50) | 37.2** |
| *Integration in first years of marriage* | | | | | |
| Contact with friends (1–4) | 3.42 (.79) | 3.43 (.86) | 3.34 (.98) | 3.47 (.88) | 1.7 |
| Contact with neighbors (1–4) | 3.22 (1.10) | 3.06 (1.23) | 3.00 (1.27) | 2.88 (1.31) | 4.6** |
| Contact with own family (1–4) | 3.45 (.84) | 3.07 (1.00) | 3.18 (.92) | 3.23 (.97) | 7.0** |
| Contact with colleagues (1–4) | 1.73 (.99) | 1.82 (1.11) | 1.84 (1.08) | 1.96 (1.15) | 2.7* |
| Outdoor recreation (1–3) | 2.25 (.80) | 2.13 (.88) | 2.09 (.82) | 2.00 (.83) | 5.2** |
| Participating in clubs, sports (1–3) | 2.09 (.92) | 2.03 (.92) | 1.97 (.95) | 2.05 (.93) | 1.1 |
| Volunteer work (1–3) | 1.39 (.72) | 1.43 (.75) | 1.33 (.67) | 1.29 (.64) | 2.2 |
| Attending church (1–3) | 1.85 (.88) | 1.53 (.77) | 1.56 (.77) | 1.39 (.68) | 20.7** |
| Going to a theater, a bar, etc. (1–3) | 1.89 (.84) | 1.81 (.81) | 1.81 (.85) | 1.98 (.86) | 3.5* |
| Attending new age meetings (1–3) | 1.09 (.38) | 1.18 (.53) | 1.09 (.35) | 1.13 (.43) | 2.1 |
| *Current resources* | | | | | |
| Financial difficulties (index; $z$-score)[b] | −.21 (0.84) | .37 (1.17) | .25 (1.09) | −.21 (.85) | 28.3** |
| Poor housing (index; $z$-score)[c] | −.41 (0.91) | .24 (1.01) | .52 (.91) | −.29 (.90) | 80.5** |
| Working for pay | .34 (0.48) | .57 (0.50) | .47 (.50) | .51 (.50) | 28.5** |
| Occupational prestige most recent job | 43 (17) | 43 (16) | 42 (18) | 42 (17) | 0.30 |
| Having children living at home | .61 (0.49) | .63 (.48) | .35 (.48) | .54 (.50) | 62.9** |
| Health problems (index; $z$-score)[d] | −.10 (.94) | −.02 (1.03) | .12 (1.06) | −.04 (.97) | 2.95** |
| *n* | 278 | 160 | 404 | 478 | |

[a] Anova *F*-test for continuous variables, chi-squared test for nominal variales (church member, working for pay, children at home).

[b] Count of the following responses applying to the last year: difficulties making ends meet, not being able to renew durable goods, borrowing money to pay the necessary expenses, being behind with paying the rent or other monthly bills, having had a bailiff at the door, received financial support from friends or family members.

[c] Count of the following responses: living in a flat or apartment without garden, having three or fewer rooms (including living room), renting rather than owning the house or apartment.

[d] Count of the following responses in the past 3 months: visited a general practitioner twice or more, visited a medical specialist at least once, visited a psychological therapist at least once.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed tests).

**TABLE 2**
**Means and standard deviations (in parentheses) of independent variables for first-married, divorced, and remarried men ($n = 967$)**

| | First-married | Divorced (≤ 5 years) | Divorced (> 5 years) | Remarried | Test[a] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Baseline characteristics* | | | | | |
| Age | 49 (11) | 42 (9) | 55 (10) | 49 (10) | 37.2** |
| Years of education (8–19) | 13.5 (3.1) | 13.8 (3.3) | 13.9 (3.6) | 14.4 (3.3) | 4.1** |
| Urbanization (1–5) | 2.9 (1.5) | 3.4 (1.5) | 3.6 (1.5) | 3.4 (1.5) | 9.3** |
| Church member (first year of marriage) | .67 (.48) | .49 (.50) | .48 (.50) | .46 (.50) | 29.7** |
| *Integration in first years of marriage* | | | | | |
| Contact with friends (1–4) | 3.39 (.86) | 3.44 (.78) | 3.42 (.92) | 3.55 (.79) | 2.3 |
| Contact with neighbors (1–4) | 3.16 (1.15) | 2.98 (1.23) | 2.97 (1.24) | 3.04 (1.19) | 1.5 |
| Contact with own family (1–4) | 3.26 (.93) | 2.94 (.96) | 3.03 (.94) | 3.03 (1.01) | 4.1** |
| Contact with colleagues (1–4) | 1.82 (1.01) | 1.96 (1.01) | 2.03 (1.16) | 2.16 (1.18) | 5.0** |
| Outdoor recreation (1–3) | 2.14 (.71) | 2.11 (.72) | 2.09 (.77) | 1.96 (.75) | 3.7* |
| Participating in clubs, sports (1–3) | 2.27 (.88) | 2.17 (.88) | 2.12 (.91) | 2.30 (.85) | 2.1 |
| Volunteer work (1–3) | 1.42 (.74) | 1.27 (.60) | 1.30 (.64) | 1.38 (.72) | 1.7 |
| Attending church (1–3) | 1.82 (.84) | 1.44 (.69) | 1.59 (.79) | 1.45 (.70) | 14.3** |
| Going to a theater, a bar, etc. (1–3) | 1.90 (.72) | 2.06 (.76) | 2.07 (.76) | 2.09 (.79) | 3.5* |
| Attending new age meetings (1–3) | 1.05 (.27) | 1.08 (.38) | 1.17 (.50) | 1.09 (.36) | 3.8* |
| *Current resources* | | | | | |
| Financial difficulties (index; $z$-score)[b] | −.15 (.81) | .18 (1.22) | .10 (1.18) | .01 (.96) | 3.6* |
| Poor housing (index; $z$-score)[c] | −.36 (.80) | .56 (1.13) | .54 (1.11) | −.13 (.89) | 47.0** |
| Working for pay | .71 (.45) | .75 (.43) | .53 (.50) | .75 (.43) | 30.3** |
| Occupational prestige most recent job | 48 (19) | 44 (21) | 47 (19) | 51 (20) | 3.6* |
| Having children living at home | .56 (.50) | .19 (.40) | .13 (.34) | .47 (.50) | 109.8** |
| Health problems (index; $z$-score)[d] | −.10 (.90) | −.02 (1.04) | .13 (1.11) | .01 (1.00) | 2.0 |
| *n* | 262 | 89 | 184 | 432 | |

[a] Anova *F*-test for continuous variables, chi-squared test for nominal variales (church member, working for pay, children at home).
[b] Count of the following responses applying to the last year: difficulties making ends meet, not being able to renew durable goods, borrowing money to pay the necessary expenses, being behind with paying the rent or other monthly bills, having had a bailiff at the door, received financial support from friends or family members.
[c] Count of the following responses: living in a flat or apartment without garden, having three or fewer rooms (including living room), renting rather than owning the house or apartment.
[d] Count of the following responses in the past 3 months: visited a general practitioner twice or more, visited a medical specialist at least once, visited a psychological therapist at least once.
* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed tests).

## Results

Before discussing the regression results, we start out with a general comparison of social integration between ever-divorced and first-married persons. To facilitate this comparison, we use a simple sum of the (standardized) items on social contact and social participation. To give the resulting index a meaningful scale, we converted the index into percentile scores. The reliability of the scale is modest (Cronbach's $\alpha = .46$), but we only use the scale to give a first overall impression of the differences.

The results show that there is a negative association between divorce and integration. Ever-divorced persons are less well integrated in society than persons in their first marriage. Differences are significant for both women $(t = 5.3, p < .01)$ and men $(t = 4.1, p < .01)$, but the magnitude of the differences is small. For women, the difference is 10 percentage points on the index $(M_{(\text{divorced})} = 50, M_{(\text{married})} = 60)$, for men the difference is 8 percentage points $(M_{(\text{divorced})} = 45, M_{(\text{married})} = 53)$. Later, where we analyze the items one by one, we show that underlying this modest difference in integration in general, there can be both positive and negative effects of divorce, depending on the integration dimension we look at.

### Social contacts

**Contact with friends.** The first model in Table 3 shows that, when background variables and selection effects are taken into account, divorced women have more frequent contacts with friends than their married counterparts. Calculation of probabilities shows that the long divorced have a 21% higher chance of frequent contacts with friends, and the recently divorced a 31% higher chance compared with the married. The second model shows that taking the temporal, financial, and social constraints into consideration increases the positive effect of divorce on contacts with friends.

Results for men are comparable (Table 4) and the effect of divorce is even stronger. Compared with the married, recently divorced men have a 34% and the long-term divorced have a 50% higher chance of frequent contacts with friends. When the employment status of the men is taken into account, the effects increase. In general, these findings confirm the liberation hypothesis: divorced men and women are, compared with the married, more rather than less strongly integrated in friendship networks.

One aspect of the liberation hypothesis is that divorced people compensate for the loss of their spouse by seeking new intimate contacts, which implies that by remarrying, the contacts with friends should decrease to the marital level. For women we indeed find this similarity in friendship contact between the remarried and the married. For men, however, we see that the remarried still have more contact with friends than those still in their first marriage. The effect is small but significant; the remarried have a 17% higher chance on frequent contact with friends compared with the married. The absence or presence of a spouse is apparently the main underlying mechanism for women, but not for men.

**Neighborhood contact.** The results for neighbors are consistent with the isolation hypothesis. Divorced women, whether remarried or single, have less frequent contact with neighbors than married women. The effects are substantial:

**TABLE 3**
**Effects of divorce and remarriage on social integration for women: Estimates of ordinal logistic regression coefficients in two models (*n* = 1320)**

| Independent variables | Contact with friends | | Contact with neighbors | | Contact with family | | Contact with colleagues[a] | | Outdoor recreation | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Model I | Model II | Model I | Model II | Model I | Model II | Model I | Model II | Model I | Model II |
| *Divorce variables* | | | | | | | | | | |
| Divorced ≤ 5 years (vs. first married) | .75** | .88** | −.69** | −.50* | −.02 | .06 | −.39 | −.44 | −.27 | −.08 |
| Divorced > 5 years (vs. first married) | .49** | .63** | −.33* | −.07 | .11 | .21 | .03 | −.05 | −.40* | −.19 |
| Remarried (vs. first married) | .21 | .25 | −.25† | −.17 | −.31* | −.33* | −.26 | −.29 | .05 | .07 |
| *Baseline controls* | | | | | | | | | | |
| Age | .05 | −.07 | −.05 | −.03 | −.16** | −.12 | .09 | .04 | .07 | −.06 |
| Educational level | .10 | .03 | −.01 | −.01 | −.11* | −.07 | .18* | .26** | .22** | .15* |
| Urbanization of current residence | .05 | .07 | −.05 | .02 | −.04 | .05 | −.01 | −.03 | −.03 | .05 |
| Church member when married | .01 | .04 | .16 | .17 | .10 | .08 | −.26 | −.27† | .18 | .21† |
| *Prior characteristics* | | | | | | | | | | |
| Social integration[b] | .34** | .34** | .51** | .51** | .80** | .79** | .59** | .59** | .53** | .51** |
| *Intermediating variables* | | | | | | | | | | |
| Financial difficulties | | −.05 | | −.04 | | −.07 | | −.12 | | −.20** |
| Poor housing conditions | | −.06 | | −.19** | | −.11 | | .09 | | −.10 |
| Working for pay | | −.30* | | −.44** | | .04 | | | | −.26* |
| Occupational status | | .15* | | .05 | | −.12† | | −.12 | | .09 |
| Having children at home | | −.25† | | .32* | | .18 | | −.26 | | −.26† |
| Health problems | | .02 | | .03 | | .05 | | .07 | | .05 |
| *Model parameters* | | | | | | | | | | |
| Cutpoint (1) | −3.04** | −3.23** | −1.55** | −1.48** | −2.67** | −2.55** | −.58* | −.78** | −1.65** | −1.82** |
| Cutpoint (2) | −1.93** | −2.12** | −1.03** | −.95** | −1.36** | −1.24** | .51* | .32 | .56** | .43* |
| Cutpoint (3) | −.22 | −.40* | .11 | −.01 | .17 | .30* | 2.07** | 1.90** | | |
| Model chi-square | 61** | 74** | 123** | 155** | 230** | 240** | 75** | 83** | 133** | 156** |

**TABLE 3**
**(continued)**

| Independent variables | Participation in clubs | | Volunteer work | | Attending church | | Going to theater, bar | | New age meetings | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Model I | Model II | Model I | Model II | Model I | Model II | Model I | Model II | Model I | Model II |
| *Divorce variables* | | | | | | | | | | |
| Divorced ≤ 5 years (vs. first married) | −.45* | −.41* | −.34 | −.14 | −.79** | −.83** | −.01 | .06 | .73* | .87* |
| Divorced > 5 years (vs. first married) | −.28† | −.22 | −.34† | −.11 | −.80** | −.86** | −.04 | .14 | .76** | .92** |
| Remarried (vs. first married) | −.25† | −.26† | −.46* | −.34† | −.55** | −.48* | .30* | .27† | .34 | .37 |
| *Baseline characteristics* | | | | | | | | | | |
| Age | .19** | .08 | .33** | .23** | −.06 | −.04 | −.12* | −.25** | .02 | −.11 |
| Educational level | .29** | .24** | .19** | .24** | −.11 | −.14 | .39** | .21** | .33** | .26** |
| Urbanization of current residence | −.17** | −.14* | −.06 | −.03 | −.04 | −.08 | .05 | .10 | −.07 | −.04 |
| Church member when married | −.08 | .04 | .14 | .15 | 1.27** | 1.30** | −.11 | −.07 | .03 | .04 |
| *Prior characteristics* | | | | | | | | | | |
| Social integration[b] | .53** | .52** | .57** | .60** | 1.31** | 1.32** | .46** | .44** | .54** | .56** |
| *Intermediating variables* | | | | | | | | | | |
| Financial difficulties | | −.02 | | .03 | | .14† | | −.23** | | −.02 |
| Poor housing conditions | | −.07 | | −.11 | | .09 | | −.15* | | −.15 |
| Working for pay | | −.03 | | −.84** | | −.33* | | .24* | | −.25 |
| Occupational status | | .06 | | .06 | | .18* | | .17** | | .13 |
| Having children at home | | −.40** | | −.02 | | .13 | | −.45** | | −.30 |
| Health problems | | −.13* | | −.03 | | −.02 | | −.03 | | .10 |
| *Model parameters* | | | | | | | | | | |
| Cutpoint (1) | −.90** | −1.08** | .98** | .75** | 1.67** | 1.62** | −.94** | −.99** | 2.65** | 2.49** |
| Cutpoint (2) | −.05 | −.22 | 1.78** | 1.57** | 3.31** | 3.27** | 1.54** | 1.56** | 3.78** | 3.62** |
| Cutpoint (3) | | | | | | | | | | |
| Model chi-square | 155** | 172** | 143** | 175* | 615** | 628* | 174** | 229** | 122** | 129** |

[a] Model for contact with colleagues is limited to persons who work.
[b] Measure of the dependent variable applying to the early period of the former or current marriage.
† $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed tests).

married women have a 14% higher chance on frequent contact with neighbors, and these figures increase to 20% when compared with the long-term divorced and to 50% when compared with the recently divorced. When taking into account current life conditions, however, the divorce effects are reduced again and two of the three effects are no longer significant. The most relevant inter-mediating variables are labor force participation and housing conditions. As the second regression model in Table 3 shows, labor force participation and poor housing conditions have a negative effect on neighborhood contacts for women. In addition, the means in Table 1 indicate that divorced women live in poorer housing conditions and work more often than first-married women. Hence, an important reason why divorced women are less integrated in the neighborhood is that they work more often than married women and because they live in poorer neighborhoods. The direct effect of divorce is weak, although it is still negative and significant for the recently divorced.

For men we also find an isolating effect of divorce on contacts with neighbors, but only for the long-term divorced. Married men have a 34% higher chance of frequent interaction with neighbors than the long-term divorced. This indicates that men shortly after their divorce still rely on their marital neighborhood contacts. In the long-term, their relatively few neighborhood contacts are more likely to be the result of still being single. This conclusion is corroborated by the finding that remarried and married men are not different. After taking into account structural variables, the negative effect of divorce disappears. The most important intermediating variable for men is having children at home. As the second model in Table 4 shows, having children at home fosters integration into neighborhood communities and as shown in Table 2, divorced men less often have children at home. In general, these results suggest that men are primarily involved in neighborhood communities through their spouse and their children. Divorce has an isolating effect on men because it removes these connections to the neighborhood. We note that poorer housing conditions are also an intermediating variable for men: poorer housing conditions are associated with fewer neighborhood contacts and divorced men more often live in poorer housing conditions.

**Family contact.** For contacts with family members, we expected no decline because family members are not part of the joint network that is divided up after divorce. The liberation hypothesis even suggests an increase, since people will have more need to be in contact with others, particularly when these others provide room for discussing personal concerns shortly after the divorce. The regression results do not confirm this. There are no significant differences between divorced and married persons in terms of contacts with family members, and this is true for both men and women. An interesting exception to this pattern is that remarried women have fewer contacts with their own family members than first-married women. The effect remains present and significant in the second model. Thus, remarried women have fewer contacts with their own family members than first-married women, even when we take into account that remarried women have different living conditions than first-married women. In the literature, it has often been found that marriage brings kin together (Moore, 1990). Remarriage apparently has the opposite effect, at least for women.

TABLE 4

**TABLE 4**
**Effects of divorce and remarriage on social integration for men: Estimates of ordinal logistic regression coefficients in two models**
**(*n* = 967)**

| Independent variables | Contact with friends | | Contact with neighbors | | Contact with family | | Contact with colleagues[a] | | Outdoor recreation | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Model I | Model II | Model I | Model II | Model I | Model II | Model I | Model II | Model I | Model II |
| *Divorce variables* | | | | | | | | | | |
| Divorced ≤ 5 years (vs. first married) | .59* | .61* | −.37 | −.09 | .07 | .15 | .35 | .39 | −.84* | −.89** |
| Divorced > 5 years (vs. first married) | .87** | .89** | −.47* | −.23 | .12 | .22 | .15 | .20 | −.31† | −.33 |
| Remarried (vs. first married) | .30† | .31* | .05 | .05 | −.08 | −.06 | .25 | .31† | −.15 | −.15 |
| *Baseline variables* | | | | | | | | | | |
| Age | −.05 | −.09 | .07 | .10 | −.26** | −.34** | −.34** | −.35** | −.07 | −.05 |
| Educational level | −.04 | −.02 | −.08 | −.13† | −.17** | −.19* | .25** | .24* | .22** | .21** |
| Urbanization of current residence | .07 | .06 | −.23** | −.15* | −.15* | −.09 | −.12 | −.13 | −.01 | .04 |
| Church member when married | −.08 | −.08 | .09 | .04 | .04 | .03 | −.09 | −.08 | .21 | .22† |
| *Prior characteristics* | | | | | | | | | | |
| Social integration[b] | .77** | .78** | .69** | .68** | .96** | .94** | .94** | .93** | .57** | .57** |
| *Intermediating variables* | | | | | | | | | | |
| Financial difficulties | | −.07 | | −.05 | | −.07 | | −.22* | | −.04 |
| Poor housing conditions | | .04 | | −.20** | | −.16* | | .08 | | −.03 |
| Working for pay | | −.18 | | −.09 | | −.25 | | | | −.06 |
| Occupational status | | .03 | | .02 | | −.02 | | .01 | | −.03 |
| Having children at home | | .14 | | .33* | | −.06 | | .10 | | −.18 |
| Health problems | | .04 | | .01 | | −.08 | | .03 | | −.06 |
| *Model parameters* | | | | | | | | | | |
| Cutpoint (1) | −2.64** | −2.70** | −1.28** | −1.15** | −2.41** | −2.58** | .14 | −.00 | −1.47** | −1.59** |
| Cutpoint (2) | −1.58** | −1.64** | −.72** | −.58** | −.95** | −1.12** | 1.32** | .93** | .78** | .66** |
| Cutpoint (3) | .25 | .18 | .29* | .44* | .62** | .46* | 2.69** | 2.08** | −.84** | |
| Model chi-square | 153** | 156** | 159** | 173** | 275** | 282** | 173** | 180** | 106** | 109** |

**TABLE 4**
**(continued)**

| Independent variables | Participation in clubs | | Volunteer work | | Attending church | | Going to theater, bar | | New age meetings | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Model I | Model II | Model I | Model II | Model I | Model II | Model I | Model II | Model I | Model II |
| *Divorce variables* | | | | | | | | | | |
| Divorced ≤ 5 years (vs. first married) | .02 | .15 | −.14 | −.01 | −.04 | .07 | .31 | .22 | −.17 | −.20 |
| Divorced > 5 years (vs. first married) | −.06 | .14 | −.18 | −.04 | −.31 | −.21 | .28 | .25 | −.06 | −.07 |
| Remarried (vs. first married) | −.18 | −.09 | −.36$^\dagger$ | −.32 | −.27 | −.25 | .05 | .05 | −.66$^\dagger$ | −.70$^\dagger$ |
| *Baseline variables* | | | | | | | | | | |
| Age | −.00 | −.13 | .26** | .20$^\dagger$ | −.25** | −.37** | −.12$^\dagger$ | −.16$^\dagger$ | −.04 | −.07 |
| Educational level | .31** | .29** | .26** | .20$^\dagger$ | .06 | .14 | .39** | .38** | .57** | .61** |
| Urbanization of current residence | −.13$^\dagger$ | −.02 | .12 | .17$^\dagger$ | −.11 | −.14 | −.02 | .02 | −.00 | −.07 |
| Church member when married | .06 | .04 | .53** | .53** | 1.52** | 1.52** | −.14 | −.12 | .32 | .31 |
| *Prior characteristics* | | | | | | | | | | |
| Social integration[b] | .53** | .53** | .80** | .81** | 1.37** | 1.39** | .60** | .61** | .64** | .63** |
| *Intermediating variables* | | | | | | | | | | |
| Financial difficulties | | −.14* | | −.07 | | .14 | | −.10 | | −.04 |
| Poor housing conditions | | −.22** | | −.12 | | −.15 | | −.06 | | .14 |
| Working for pay | | −.52** | | −.27 | | −.60* | | .07 | | −.23 |
| Occupational status | | −.05 | | .08 | | −.04 | | −.05 | | .26 |
| Having children at home | | −.06 | | .06 | | .20 | | −.37* | | .23 |
| Health problems | | −.19** | | −.03 | | .17$^\dagger$ | | −.14* | | .14 |
| *Model parameters* | | | | | | | | | | |
| Cutpoint (1) | −.68** | −1.01** | 1.53** | 1.43** | 2.40** | 2.13** | −.88** | −1.00** | 2.97** | 2.90** |
| Cutpoint (2) | .20 | −.11 | 2.31** | 2.22** | 4.00** | 3.78** | 1.63** | 1.54** | 4.21** | 4.15** |
| Cutpoint (3) | | | | | | | | | | |
| Model chi-square | 98** | 124** | 169** | 173** | 435** | 451** | 147** | 163** | 79** | 81** |

[a] Model for contact with colleagues is limited to persons who work.
[b] Measure of the dependent variable applying to the early period of the former or current marriage.
$^\dagger$ *p* < .10; * *p* < .05; ** *p* < .01 (two-tailed tests).

**Contact with colleagues.** Popular opinion has it that work is an important source of integration for divorced men. Our results provide only partial confirmation for this idea. We find that among working men, remarried men more often have contact with colleagues outside the work place than married men. This positive effect is only marginally significant ($p < .10$) when controlling for situational restrictions. For women, we find no effect of divorce on contact with colleagues at all. We conclude that a possible liberation or isolation effect of divorce through colleagues is not apparent in our data.

## Social participation

**Recreational activities.** In discussing the results for social participation, we begin by looking at recreational activities. The isolation hypothesis is confirmed here. Compared with married respondents, divorced respondents are less likely to engage in recreational activities. This applies most clearly to men who were recently divorced and to long-term divorced women. Calculation of probabilities reveals that first-married men have an 87% higher chance to engage in recreational activities compared with recently divorced men. First-married women have a 30% higher chance of recreational engagement compared with long-term divorced women. For women, the difference can be explained entirely by structural variables, because the effect disappears in the second model. Financial difficulties and nonemployment are the main culprits here, because divorced women have greater financial problems (Table 1), and because financial difficulties lead to lower levels of recreation (Table 3).

For men, the effect of divorce on recreation remains significant in the full model. We therefore conclude that, for men, there is a direct negative effect of divorce, in line with the isolation hypothesis. This is further confirmed by the observation that remarried men do not participate less often in recreational activities. The presence or absence of an interaction companion appears to be the underlying mechanism for recreational integration.

**Social clubs.** For participation in social clubs and sports, we find negative effects for women only. Divorced women are, both in the short and the long term, less likely to participate in social clubs. Only the effect of a recent divorce is substantial: the first-married have a 28% higher chance to participate in social clubs compared with the recently divorced women. These effects can in part be attributed to health problems. Divorced women have somewhat more health problems (Table 1) and health problems limit participation in clubs. Interestingly, the effect of a recent divorce remains significant in the second model. This provides support for the isolation hypothesis. For men, we do not observe any significant effects of divorce on participation in social clubs and sports.

**Entertainment activities.** Different conclusions are reached when we look at entertainment (i.e., going out to a theater, restaurant, or bar). For women, we find no effect of divorce. We do find a positive effect of remarriage for women, that holds in the second model ($p < .10$). For men, we find no significant effects of divorce on entertainment activities. Our conclusion about entertainment activities is that there are no divorce effects for those who remained single. Both men and women appear to be able to compensate for the fact that they no longer have a spouse to go out with after divorce. They neither decrease nor increase their behavior in this respect. Perhaps new dating partners play an important role here.

**Volunteer work.** The results for volunteer work are comparable with those for participation in social clubs. Long-term divorced and remarried women are less likely to participate in volunteer work. This difference is only marginally significant ($p < .10$) for the long-term single divorced, but substantial for the remarried. The first-married have, compared with the long-term divorced and the remarried, a 34% and 49% higher chance of participating in volunteer work. These effects are in part explained by divorced women's employment status. Long-term divorced and remarried women work for pay more often (Table 1), and because paid work has a negative effect on volunteer work, this is an important reason why divorced women participate less in volunteer work. For men we find no evidence for the isolation hypothesis.

**Church attendance.** When looking at the results for church attendance, we find strong negative effects for women. Divorced women attend church less often than married women, regardless of whether they are remarried and regardless of how long they have been divorced. Calculated probabilities indicate that the first-married are about twice as likely to attend church. Note that this effect is controlled for the effect of church attendance in the beginning of marriage. This takes into account that church attendance also has a negative effect on divorce. When we also take into account structural variables, the effects remain strong and significant, which supports the isolation hypothesis. Religious objections to divorce probably make the church less accessible to divorcees, which is why divorced women attend church less often. For divorced and remarried men, we find no significant negative effects on church attendance. These results suggest that the church is a more closed place for divorced women than for divorced men, but we have no explanation for these gender differences.

**New age activities.** Visiting 'new age' meetings reveals interesting support for the liberation hypothesis, at least for women. Table 3 shows that there is a large divorce effect on 'new age' meetings. Both recent and long-term divorced women are about twice as likely to participate in these types of meetings compared with the first-married. The effects remain significant in the second model, suggesting that divorce has a direct effect. Although the number of women who participate in 'new age' meetings is small (Table 1), the differences are important and in line with the liberation hypothesis. 'New age' settings combine normative tolerance of divorce with concern for personal problems, and may therefore provide a suitable channel of integration for the divorced. For men, we find different results. There is no direct effect of divorce on engagement in 'new age' meetings, but remarried men are less likely to engage in these activities than married men ($p < .10$). There is no explanation for this difference.

## Discussion

We started this article with three hypotheses. In concluding, we summarize what evidence there is for each. The first two hypotheses were the isolation and liberation hypotheses. Because these hypotheses suggest opposite effects, we developed additional hypotheses about differential effects: liberation works for some dimensions, whereas isolation works for others. For social contacts that are loosely connected to the spouse, we expected an

increase in integration, whereas for social contacts that are strongly connected to the spouse, we expected a decrease. When considering social participation, we expected negative effects for dimensions that require an interaction companion, and positive effects for other forms of participation. A final mechanism lies in the positive or negative moral climate towards divorce in specific integration settings.

Translated to the indicators we use, we expected a liberation effect for contacts with family members, friends, and colleagues, for participation in social clubs, doing volunteer work, and attending 'new age' meetings. These types of integration are weakly connected to a spouse or can be done alone relatively easily. The overall evidence for the liberation hypothesis is weak. The best evidence in favor of this hypothesis comes from contacts with friends. Both divorced men and women are more involved with friends than married men and women. Because many of the mutual friends may have been lost after divorce, the gains in friendships seem to exceed the losses. Apparently, it is relatively easy for both men and women to intensify contacts with their own friends and acquaintances after divorce or to develop new friendships. A strong positive effect was also found for 'new age' activities, but only for women. Divorced women are more likely to participate in 'new age' activities than married women, even when current resources and constraints are controlled for. This suggests that for some women (only a few attended 'new age' meetings) the divorce has contributed to a lifestyle in which spirituality and personal growth have become more important.

We expected to find isolation (negative effects) for contacts with neighbors, for couple-oriented activities such as outdoor recreation and going out to a theater or bar, and for church attendance. The effects here are more supportive of the hypothesis. Divorce has a negative direct effect on neighborhood contacts (for both men and women), a negative effect on church attendance (for women only), and a negative effect on outdoor recreation (for men only). These are also direct effects in that they remain statistically significant when resources and constraints are taken into account. Note that there are also isolation effects where we did not expect them. For example, women participate less in social clubs.

The resource hypothesis argued that isolation could, in part, be attributed to different levels of resources and constraints among divorced men and women. To summarize our test of this hypothesis, we look at all the negative and significant effects in the first model. For men, there is only one significant effect reduced when constraints are added: decreased contact with neighbors is explained by the fact that long-term divorced men rarely have children living at home, which removes an important tie to the neighborhood. For women, the resource hypothesis receives more support. Of the negative and significant effects in the first models, some decline when constraints are added (contact with neighbors, participation in clubs, and outdoor recreation). More importantly, these effects are no longer significant in the second model for the long-term divorced. In other words, an important part of the reason why long-term single divorced women are less

integrated is that they have fewer resources after divorce. Important restrictions here are poor neighborhoods, fewer financial resources, and less time.

We also considered differences within groups of divorcees. There is little evidence of a divorce effect that fades over time, but remarrying appears to make an important difference for women. When there are negative effects of divorce, these are generally less negative or non-significant when women remarry or cohabit with a new partner. Although these findings were not the central focus of our study, they are consistent with the notion that remarriage reverses the negative effects of divorce.

We conclude that divorce does not have a clear *general* impact on social integration. In some dimensions of social integration we find evidence of isolation after divorce, but in other dimensions we find evidence of a liberation effect or no effect at all. Moreover, these differences often fit with existing theories. Our findings are consistent with the conclusion recently formulated by Putnam (2000) in his work on social capital in the US. Putnam analyzes divorce as one of the possible culprits for a decline in civic engagement in the US and ends up arguing that divorce does not have consistent negative effects on integration: some effects are negative while others are positive or absent. We have developed a similarly nuanced position for a European society by arguing that the link between divorce and isolation is not as strong as is often believed. If there are effects, they pertain to specific forms of integration, and if divorce does lead to a decline in social integration, this is in part because divorce increases the constraints that people (and in particular women) face in developing their new lifestyles.

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