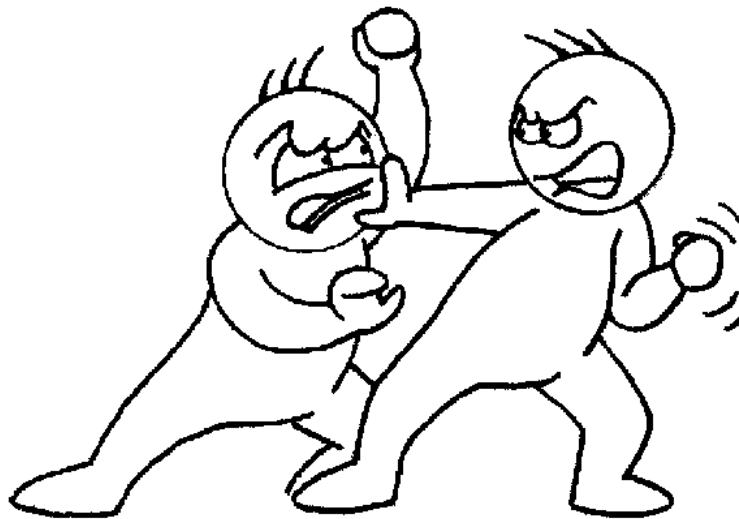


*The effect of divorce on adult well-being:
what about conflict?*



Master thesis submitted as completion of the master in Sociology

Name: Josja Rokven

ANR: 876147

Supervisor: Dr. C.W.S. Monden

Second evaluator: Prof. Dr. P.M de Graaf

Tilburg University

Faculty of social sciences

‘The Netherlands Kinship Panel Study is funded by grant 480-10-009 from the Major Investments Fund of the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO), and by the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI), Utrecht University, the University of Amsterdam and Tilburg University.’

Abstract

This study examined whether the consequences of a divorce or separation depends on the conflicts prior to the disruption and the role that post divorce or separation conflicts play for the well-being of individuals, using two wave longitudinal data from the Netherlands Kinship Panel study. More specifically, it was asked whether the end of a high quality marriage, that is to say without conflict, is more detrimental for the well-being of individuals than the end of relationship or marriage with serious discord. In addition, the consequences of the post divorce or separation levels of conflict for the well-being of divorcees were analyzed. Moreover, the problems people are facing within a marriage or relationship do often not end when the relationship ends. Looking at both the pre-existing levels of conflict and the post divorce/separation levels of conflict was, therefore, one of the key issues under scrutiny. The analysis supported only the weak version of the escape hypothesis, not the strong version of the escape hypothesis. This indicates that the declines in well-being following a divorce or separation are less negative for individuals who experienced high levels of conflict before the disruption than for individuals who did not experience any serious discord. However, even in high conflict marriages or relationship the effect does not become positive. The escape hypothesis was, furthermore, only confirmed for divorcees who did not repartner. Additionally, supporting evidence was found for the negative effect of post divorce or separation conflict, in that the conflict lowers the well-being of individuals. However, again this was only the case for individuals who remained single afterwards. No evidence was found for the interaction effect of the initial levels of conflict and the post divorce levels of conflict.

Preface

I got the idea of studying this subject by the courses of Prof. dr. Kalmijn (Recent advances in sociology) and dr. Monden (Life course analysis). From the moment I started the courses I noticed that I did like the family research. I think an important underlying notion is that the family is a building block for every individual and these family related subjects thus concerns every one. More specifically, I got the idea of studying this subject by an article of Kalmijn & Monden (2006). Actually, I was supposed to read this article in the course of Dr. Monden (Life Course Analysis) and I found out that this was really matching my interests.

Now I finished my own paper and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the people for their support during my study. In particular I want to thank my parents, Lowi and my fellow students, in particular Anouk and Sylvie. Of course, I would also like to thank my supervisor, Christiaan Monden, who helped me all the way through.

Contents

1. Introduction	8
1.1 Scientific relevance	10
1.2 Societal relevance	11
1.3 Literature review on divorce/separation and the initial quality of the relationship	11
1.4 Literature review on divorce/separation and post divorce/separation conflicts	16
1.5 Contribution of this study	20
2. Theoretical background and hypotheses	21
2.1 The stress adjustment perspective	21
2.2 Divorce/separation and the well-being of individuals	21
2.3 Initial conflict, divorce/separation and the well-being of individuals	23
2.4 Divorcing from a high quality marriage versus divorcing from a low quality marriage	25
2.5 Post divorce/relationship conflict and the well-being of individuals	26
2.6 Interaction effect of initial conflicts and post divorce conflicts	28
3. Data & Measures	31
3.1 Data	31
3.2 Research design and selection of cases	32
3.3 Dependent variable: Well-being	33
3.4 Independent variable: relationship transitions	33
3.5 Moderator: Initial conflict	34
3.6 Post divorce or separation conflicts	35
3.6.1 Annoying behaviour	35
3.6.2 Serious violence	36
3.7 Demographic control variables	38
3.8 Descriptive analysis	39
3.9 Analytic strategy	42
4. Results	44
4.1 Bivariate t-tests: testing the differences in means	44
4.1.1. Continuously together versus divorced or separated	44
4.1.2. The role of pre-existing levels of conflict	46
4.1.3. The role of post divorce/separation conflict	49
4.1.4. Examining the role of the pre-existing levels of conflict and post-divorce/ separation levels of conflict	52

4.2 Multivariate regression analysis	55
4.2.1 Heterogeneity in the divorce effects	55
4.2.2 Selection effect.....	56
4.2.3 Divorce/separation effect	57
4.2.4 The conditional effect of conflict.....	59
4.2.5 Post divorce/separation conflicts	61
4.2.6 Interaction of initial conflicts and post divorce or separation conflicts	62
Conclusion.....	68
5.1 Main conclusion.....	68
5.2 Limitations	72
5.3 Future research.....	73
References	75
Appendix	78

Tables and Figures

Tables

<i>Number</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Page</i>
Table 1	Interaction effect of the pre-existing levels of conflict and the post divorce/separation levels of conflict on the change in well-being of individuals	
Table 2	Descriptive information on dependent and independent variables for all respondents, aged 18 to 79	
Table 3	Logistic regression of the likelihood to participate in both wave 1 and wave 2: estimates from the Heckman selection model	
Table 4	OLS regression model of the change in well-being	
Table 5	OLS regression model with main and interaction effects of divorce and initial conflict on change in well-being	
Table 6	OLS regression model of change in well-being on post divorce/separation conflicts	
Table 7	OLS regression model of change in well-being on post divorce/separation conflicts	
Table 8	OLS regression with initial conflict and post divorce/separation annoying behavior of the ex-partner on change in well-being	
Table 9	OLS regression with initial conflict and post divorce/separation violence or threats to use violence by the ex-partner on change in well-being	
Table A1	Frequencies and percentages after selecting cases	
Table A2	Initial conflict frequency at wave 1	
Table A3	Initial conflict frequency at wave 1 (new frequency table)	
Table A4	Frequencies of post divorce or separation annoying behavior on the part of the ex-partner	
Table A5	Frequencies of post divorce or separation violent or threats of violent behavior on the part of the ex-partner	

Figures

<i>Number</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Page</i>
Figure 1	Conceptual model	
Figure 2	Frequency distribution of initial conflict in percentages	
Figure 3	Frequency distribution of post divorce/separation levels of annoying behavior on the part of the ex-partner	
Figure 4	Frequency distribution of post divorce/separation levels of violent or threats of violence on the part of the ex-partner	
Figure 5	The mean in well-being in wave 1 and wave 2 for the continuously married or cohabiting individuals and the divorced or separated individuals	
Figure 6	The mean in well-being in wave 1 and wave 2 for the continuously married or cohabiting individuals, the divorced or separated individuals who remained single afterwards and the divorced or separated individuals who repartnered	
Figure 7	The mean in well-being in wave 1 and wave 2 by the initial levels of conflict for the continuously married or cohabiting individuals and the divorced or separated individuals	
Figure 8	The mean in well-being in wave 1 and wave 2 by the initial levels of conflict for the divorced or separated individuals and by relationship status after the divorce or separation	
Figure 9	The mean in well-being in wave 1 and wave 2 by the levels of annoying behavior on the part of the ex-partner and by the relationship status after the divorce or separation	
Figure 10	The mean in well-being in wave 1 and wave 2 by the levels of violence or threats of violence on the part of the ex-partner and by the relationship status after the divorce or separation	
Figure 11	The mean in well-being in wave 1 and wave 2 by the initial levels of conflict and the levels of annoying behavior of the ex-partner for the divorced or separated individuals	
Figure 12	The mean in well-being in wave 1 and wave 2 by the initial levels of conflict and the levels of violence or threats to use violence on the part of the ex-partner for the divorced or separated individuals	
Figure 13	Changes in well-being between wave 1 and wave 2 for the divorced or separated individuals	
Figure 14	Changes in well-being between wave 1 and wave 2 for those individuals who remained continuously together	
Figure 15	The effects of divorce or separation on the change in well-being by the initial levels of conflict and relationship status	
Figure 16	The effect of annoying behavior by the ex-partner by initial levels of conflict and by relationship status	
Figure 17	The effect of violence or threats to use violence by the ex-partner by initial levels of conflict and by relationship status	
Figure A1	The divorce/separation effect and selection effect	
Figure A2	The quadratic effect of age on the change in well-being	

1. Introduction

Much research has been written on the effect of divorce and separation on adult well-being (Amato, 2000). In fact, numerous studies indicate that the well-being of individuals declines following a divorce or separation (Booth & Amato, 1991; Williams & Dunne-Bryant, 2006; Amato & Hohmann-Marriot, 2007). This is actually not very surprising since being in an intimate relationship is considered to be highly beneficial for the well-being of persons and having a divorce can, therefore, be no less than devastating (Ross et al., 1990). In fact, prior research demonstrated that divorced and separated individuals display higher levels of psychological stress and health problems than do their married counterparts (Booth & Amato, 1991; Amato, 2000). Compared not only to the married but also to never married, the divorced and separated are also generally found to report higher levels of depression, anxiety, and other forms of psychological distress (Ross et al., 1990; Amato, 2000).

Since divorces and separations are considered to be everlasting features of the family scene, it is indeed important to comprehend for which individuals and under what conditions divorces and separations are most detrimental for one's well-being (Williams & Dunne-Bryant, 2006). This is of particular interest since research suggests that there exists substantial heterogeneity in the effect of divorce and separation on individual's well-being, depending on the quality of the relationship prior to the event (Wheaton, 1990; Aseltine & Kessler, 1993; Williams, 2003; Prigerson et al., 1999; Kalmijn & Monden, 2006; Amato & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007; Wait et al., 2009). This study will inform the progressive line of scholarship by replicating these findings for the Netherlands. Therefore, this paper will focus on the question whether the effect of divorce and separation on individual's well-being depends on the initial conflicts.

Furthermore, this study will also focus on the post divorce/separation conflicts between former partners, an issue that has largely remained unnoticed in the divorce and separation literature. Considering that prior research has mainly focused on the impact of initial conflicts on the relationship between divorce/separation and well-being, while ignoring the post-divorce/separation conflicts is actually quite surprising since it has already been recognized that there exists substantial heterogeneity in the divorce and separation effects (Wait et al., 2009). Moreover, it is commonly believed that the effect of divorce and separation on one's well-being depends on the initial quality of the relationship, in that divorcing from a low quality marriage could be considered as an escape rather than a problem

(Kalmijn & Monden, 2006). In this context, scholars even argue that divorcing from a low quality marriage could bring some sort of relief (Wheaton, 1990; Aseltine & Kessler, 1993; Williams, 2003; Kalmijn & Monden, 2006). Despite this recognition, an important issue that they did not pay attention to is the fact that a divorce or separation does not always mean the end of a relationship (Berman & Turk, 1981; Tschann et al., 1989; Masheter, 1991; Fischer, et al., 2005). This in turn, might add complications when it comes to the comprehensive theoretical perspective on the effects of divorce and separation. Moreover, just as the effect of divorce and separation cannot be understood without taking notice of the initial quality of the relationship, one might also argue that the effects of divorce and separation cannot be understood in isolation of the relationship between (former) spouses after the divorce or separation. As a result, this study will indeed focus on the effects of post-divorce/separation levels of conflict for one's well-being.

Considering that both the pre and post divorce/separation levels of conflict could affect the well-being of individuals, it is also important to take notice of the additive effect of the pre-existing levels of conflict and the antagonistic contacts after the divorce or separation. Moreover, the effect of the post divorce/separation levels of conflict might be different for individuals with different levels of conflict prior to the divorce or separation (Kalmijn & Monden, 2006). This is of particular interest since current research that has integrated the two research traditions (e.g. divorce/separation and the quality of the relationship prior to the event) does not simultaneously account for these post-divorce/separation differences which, therefore, could have interfered with their results (Kalmijn & Monden, 2006; Amato & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007; Wait et al, 2009). In fact, it has already been found that the pre divorce/separation levels of conflict are correlated with the post divorce/separation levels of conflict, while both could affect the well-being of adults (Fischer et al., 2005). Therefore, integrating the research literature on initial conflicts and post divorce/separation conflicts offers the possibility to broaden the theoretical scope of divorce and separation literature.

Together this leads to the following research questions:

To what extent are the negative effects of divorce and separation on adult well-being dependent on the initial conflict of the relationship?

And to what extent do the post divorce/separation conflicts between former partners affect the change in adult well-being?

1.1 Scientific relevance

The first reason why investigating this subject is relevant is because it has been noticed that the two research issues (i.e. the dissolution and the quality of the relationship prior to the event) have remained fairly separate (Kalmijn & Monden, 2006). In addition, there is extensive literature on divorce and separation and their effects on one's well-being, though this literature has been poorly integrated with research on the quality of the relationship prior to the event (including conflicts). Consequently, the lack of information on the pre-separation model is rather substantial and, therefore, combining the two research traditions is important in order to inform policy decisions and the progressive line of research (Walker et al., 2004; Kalmijn & Monden, 2006). Kalmijn and Monden (2006) suggest that '*when integrating the two lines of research, important new substantive questions arise*' (pp 1198). One of these questions is whether the effects of divorce/separation on one's well-being depend on the initial conflicts, which indeed will be the focus of this study.

A second reason why integrating the two research traditions is important is because it has been acknowledged that there exists substantial heterogeneity in the effect of divorce/separation on individual's well-being, while research in the past decades has mainly focused on the negative effects of divorce for one's well-being (Kalmijn & Monden, 2006). The fact that this heterogeneity has not frequently been focused on when the focal point is on the adult's themselves is actually quite surprising since these heterogeneous effects are already well identified in studies that have focused on children (Amato & Sobolewski, 2001; Kalmijn & Monden, 2006). Furthermore, the few studies that have tested the interaction hypothesis for adults all focused on the United States, which indicates that the hypothesis has not yet been firmly established for other countries. Therefore, this paper will focus on the Netherlands to test the moderating effect of *conflict* on the relationship between divorce and separation on adult well-being (Kalmijn & Monden, 2006).

Finally, an important point of relevance of this study is that this paper will also focus on the conflicts after the divorce or separation. Although in the research literature the interest in contact between former spouses has increased considerably during the past decades, none of the studies has focused on both the effects of initial conflicts and the post divorce/separation levels of conflict on the well-being of individuals (Fischer, et al., 2005).

1.2 Societal relevance

The societal relevance of this paper is rather straightforward, in that is of obvious practical importance to the (ex-) partners themselves, family members, marriage counselors, policy makers that set family orientated policies, and to researchers who hope to detect and assist the decision making of such groups, to find out why and to what extent divorce and separation affects the well-being of people. Also, for society as a whole it is important to know to what extent divorce and separation affects the well-being of individuals since a lot of individuals will experience a divorce or separation once. According to the CBS (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek), about 34.1% of all marriages in the Netherlands will eventually end up in a divorce (CBS statline, 2009). For unmarried cohabiting couples no recent numbers are available, although in the period from 1990 till 1994 about 51 % of those relationships dissolved within four years (CBS statline, 2009). Given these high rates of divorce and separation in the Netherlands and the profound implications for the well-being of individuals it is indeed important to know more about the effects of divorce and separation.

1.3 Literature review on divorce/separation and the initial quality of the relationship

Overall, about seven studies have tested the interaction effect of the quality of the marriage and divorce so far. One of first the studies that has analyzed the moderating role of the quality of the relationship on the association between divorce and individual's well-being is the study of Wheaton (1990). Wheaton (1990) examined how the "role environment" of individuals influences the impact of a variety of life transitions among which divorce and premarital breakup on the mental health of individuals. More specifically, Wheaton (1990) analyzed whether the possible negative consequences for one's mental health might be moderated, or even reversed, by the presence or absence of chronic stress prior to the event. To study this moderating impact of the context, he analyzed Canadian panel data. The sample consisted of 1065 respondents that were continuously married, 60 respondents that experienced a divorce and 30 respondents that experienced a premarital breakup, over a four year period. The results showed that the relief hypothesis, which stated that the effect of a dissolution will be less harmful for people who experienced initial marital problems, indeed holds for previously divorced (i.e. between 1977 and 1979). Moreover, the effect of divorce on distress becomes less negative when the initial marital problems were high. For recently divorced (i.e. between 1980 and 1981), on the other hand, the relief hypothesis only holds for working wives, in view of the fact that working wives who divorced from a marriage full of conflict displayed

less symptoms of distress than did working wives who divorced from a marriage with no serious discord. Although for working husbands and housewives the hypothesis did not hold, Wheaton (1990) still argued in favor of the relief hypothesis. Also, for pre-marital breakups Wheaton (1990) found evidence in favor of the relief hypothesis, indicating that the effect of the presence of chronic stress prior to the event indeed moderated the impact of relationship dissolution on individual's distress. Despite these interesting findings, a negative aspect of the study of Wheaton (1990) is that the number of cases is relatively low (e.g. 60 divorces and 30 pre-marital breakups). Nonetheless, it is a good starting point for investigating the relief hypothesis because it is one of the first studies that formally tested the interaction hypothesis (Wheaton, 1990; Kalmijn & Monden, 2006).

A second study that formally tested the relief hypothesis and, therefore, replicated the results of Wheaton (1990) is that of Aseltine & Kessler (1993). To test the interaction hypothesis, they based their analysis on a two-wave community survey in the Detroit Metropolitan Area in 1985. Over a 3 year period, as many as 61 respondents divorced or separated, while 1370 respondents stayed continuously married. The results, for both men and women, were in favor of the relief hypothesis in that the impact of divorce on the levels of depression was less pronounced when the initial marital quality was high. However, Aseltine & Kessler (1993) also found some disparity between men and women. For men, the relationship between divorce and depression became positive when taking into account the prior marital quality, supporting the strong version of the relief hypothesis. For women, the interaction effect was found as well, even though the effect did not become positive. Although divorced women from low quality marriages displayed lower levels of depression than women from high quality marriages, in comparison to their continuously married counterparts divorced women from low quality marriages displayed higher levels of depression. Despite these differences between men and women, the results of the study of Aseltine & Kessler (1993) support the relief hypothesis, as advocated by Wheaton (1990). Or to put it in other words, the effect of divorce on depression becomes less, or even positive, when the quality of the relationship is taken into account. Although Aseltine & Kessler (1993) contributed to the usefulness of the relief hypothesis, they neglected to include *“the possibility of specifications of the aggregate separation/divorce effect as a function of baseline differences in age, social class, etc.”* (pp246) (Aseltine & Kessler, 1993) Furthermore, the sample contained, just as in the study of Wheaton (1990), a very small number of respondents that experienced a divorce which might be considered as a drawback of the study. Nevertheless, it succeeded to replicate

the findings of Wheaton (1990) and, therefore, contributed to inform the progressive line of scholarship.

Prigerson, Maciejewski and Rosenheck (1999) examined the relief hypothesis using two-waves (e.g. 1986 and 1989) of the Americans' Changing Lives dataset (ACL). The ACL is a nationally representative sample of individuals living in the United States, even though the study entirely focused on women since the rates of marital breakups are twice as big for women as for men. In total, 927 women participated in their study, from which 20 women got a divorce and 15 separated between the two waves. Again, the results support the relief hypothesis, in that people who reported to have a harmonious marriage prior to the event also were more likely to be hypertensive and have arthritis after the divorce than were people who reported to have an inharmonious marriage. However, an important negative aspect of the study of Prigerson, Maciejewski and Rosenheck (1999) is that they only included women into their study and, therefore, the study does not allow drawing any conclusions on men. Also, just like in the studies of Wheaton (1990) and Aseltine & Kessler (1993), only a small number of respondents that experienced a divorce or separation were included (e.g. 35).

Williams (2003) in her study also took into consideration the undermining effect of marital quality on the relationship between divorce and the well-being of individuals. Again, the theoretical mechanisms that are proposed are in line with the reasoning of Wheaton (1990). Moreover, Williams (2003) argues, corresponding to the social stress literature that: *“stressful life events such as the transition to divorce or widowhood may have positive effects on well-being when they involve exits from stressful roles (e.g., a strained marriage)”* (pp 473). In order to test the hypothesis she uses, just like Prigerson, Maciejewski and Rosenheck (1999), data from three-waves of the Americans' Changing Lives survey. The sample is nationally representative for the United States and consists of 2,348 respondents that participated in all three waves. Of the 2,348 respondents that participated in the study 165 got a divorce, although this is still not very large it is obviously larger than the number of cases in the other studies. Furthermore, Williams (2003) measured the well-being of individuals by both depression and life satisfaction for which the results demonstrated a positive interaction effect of divorce and marital harmony on one's well-being, even though the effect did not become positive for low quality marriages. A contribution of the study of Williams (2003) is that she provides more insight in the differences for men and women when it comes to the effects of divorce and marital quality, even though the results demonstrate that the proposed gender differences do not occur, certainly not on the longer run. Therefore, the author concludes that

the effect of divorce on mental health is for both men and women dependent on the marital quality of the relationship prior to the event, supporting the relief hypothesis.

3 years later of the study of Williams (2003), Kalmijn & Monden (2006) examined the interaction effect and their study is clearly better than studies presented thus far. To test the interaction hypothesis they used data from the NSFH (National Study of Family and Households), which is based on a national probability sample of adults in the United States and consists of 4,526 respondents on who they assess the effect of divorce on well-being. Of the 4,526 cases included, 550 respondents separated or divorced between the first and the second wave, which is clearly better than in the other studies. Also, different from the other studies is that all marital transitions between the first and second wave are recorded. In fact, I believe it is a major contribution to include all marital transitions since it broadens the theoretical scope of the relief hypothesis. Furthermore, they took into account five different indicators of the marital quality, which allows them to discriminate between different aspects of marital quality that moderate with the divorce effect. In contrast to previously done research, the results show only weakest support for the relief hypothesis, in that for only two of the five indicators of marital quality the relief hypothesis is supported. More specifically, the models for marital satisfaction and fairness towards the respondent show positive significant results in favor of the relief hypothesis, regarding that the fairer the marriage and the higher the marital satisfaction, the more depressive symptoms individuals will display after the divorce. Although the effect of divorce on one's well-being is less negative for individuals with an unfair or less satisfactory marriage than for individuals with a fair or satisfactory marriage also for the former groups the results show no improvement in well-being following a divorce. The results for the interaction effect with verbal aggression, physical aggression and conflicts did not demonstrate supporting evidence for the relief hypothesis. Therefore, they conclude that the overall evidence for the relief hypothesis is relatively weak. A possible explanation for this weak support of the relief hypothesis is that relationships often do not end following divorces, the authors argue. This in turn, might affect the adjustment process after the divorce in that the relief effect of escaping from low quality marriages may be resisted by the enduring conflict. I think this is a very reasonable explanation and, therefore, I will indeed focus on this explanation in this study. All together, the study of Kalmijn & Monden (2006) contributed the literature in many ways. I believe that one of the most important contributions of their study is that they also take into account the effect of repartnering and conclude that the escape hypothesis only hold for people who do

not repartner, thereby, stretching the reach of the theory.

Likewise, a more recent study of Amato and Hohmann-Marriot (2007) tested the relief hypothesis. More specifically, they hypothesized that persons from high-distress marriages will improve their life happiness after the divorce, while people from low-distress families will experience declines in life happiness after the divorce. To test the interaction hypothesis they used, like in the study of Kalmijn & Monden (2006), data from the National Survey of Family and Households. The sample contains 4,460 couples, from which 509 individuals had been separated or divorced over the four year period. The results showed an increase in life happiness for persons who divorced from a high-distress marriage and a decrease in life happiness for persons who divorced from a low-distress marriage. So, unlike in the article of Kalmijn & Monden (2006), this study indeed provides support for the *strong version* of the relief hypothesis since the effect on life happiness became positive after divorcing from high-distress marriages. A contribution of this study is that the authors confirmed that there exists heterogeneity in the effects of divorce which contributes to the usefulness of the relief hypothesis. Furthermore, they also estimated multinomial logistic regression models to compare the three groups on quite a lot demographic characteristics since this has not yet been done very elaborately this indeed contributes to the progressive line of scholarship, in that it provides basic information for counselors and marital practitioners who hope to detect and assist the decision making of those individuals.

Finally, also Waite, Luo and Lewin (2009) tested the relief hypothesis. An important contribution of their study is that they distinguish between short term and long term effects of divorce. They used, just like Kalmijn & Monden (2006) and Amato & Hohmann-Marriot (2007), the National Survey of Family and Households and, therefore, the number of respondents that experienced a divorce were also in this study quite large. The results showed that there was no significant improvement in the well-being of people who divorced from an unhappy marriage in comparison to those who stayed continuously married. Also, compared to the happily married, only for three on the six outcomes (e.g. global happiness, depression, and personal mastery), were the negative divorce effects stronger for individuals who were in a happy marriage than for individuals living in an unhappy marriage, indicating only a modest effect of marital happiness. A notable finding is the fact that they, similar to the findings of Kalmijn & Monden (2006), did not find an effect of domestic violence, which indicates the weak role that conflict seems to play. However, the question remains whether this is also true for the Netherlands. Finally, like mentioned earlier on, they also distinguished between short

term and long term effects on the six outcomes. The results support the *crisis effect* for people who lived in an unhappy marriage, in that the negative effects will disappear as time goes by, though, for people who lived in a happy marriage, the results show no improvement over time.

1.4 Literature review on divorce/separation and post divorce/separation conflicts

Next to the pre-existing levels of conflict, one of the primary focuses in this study is the role of post divorce/separation levels of conflict. Post divorce/separation conflict should be taken into account since it has been found that the pre-existing levels of conflict correlate with the post-divorce/separation levels of conflict and both affect the well-being of individuals (Fischer, et al., 2005; Logan et al., 2008). Therefore, understanding separation in the context of conflicts includes evaluating the impact of the possible enduring conflict.

In the prior literature there are several research traditions that have focused on the contact between former partners. First of all, there is psychological research that has examined the contact between former partners and the impact on one's well-being (Fisher et al., 2005). The literature in this tradition mainly focused on the role of continuing attachment, in terms of positive feelings, and highlighted the detrimental and beneficial effects of this attachment for one's well-being (Masheter, 1991). Part of this literature also concerns stalking by a former romantic partner as predictor of the adjustment process of individuals and their well-being after a divorce (Fischer, et. al. 2005; Roberts, 2005). Although the literature on post divorce conflicts is not as extensive as that on attachment, there are few studies within this research tradition that in varying degree examined the effect of post divorce conflicts. However, a general characteristic of these studies is that the sample sizes are relatively small and, therefore, offers no representative picture of the post divorce relationships between former spouses (Fischer et al., 2005). Furthermore, the more recent studies within this tradition that have focused on ongoing conflict and the consequences for the well-being of individuals largely examined the ramifications of more extreme forms of conflict, such as physical conflict (i.e. domestic violence) and emotional abuse. Although these are all situations in which the contact between former spouses continues and simultaneously negatively affects the well-being of individuals, the natures of these contacts differ with respect to the purpose of this study, in that this study will focus on less severe forms of conflict.

A second line of research that has focused on the consequences of post divorce conflicts can be found in the family literature (Fischer et. al., 2005). This literature mainly focuses on the consequences of post divorce contact for children (McLanahan & Sandefur,

1994). Since it has been found that children are negatively affected by conflict between parents, whether they split up or not, authors within this segment have also become interested in studying conflicts between parents after the divorce and its consequences for the children. Although post divorce conflict has been studied extensively within this research tradition, shifting the focus from children on adults' is important because less is known about the consequences for partners' themselves. The few studies that have investigated the consequences for partners' themselves can be found in the psychological research and are outlined below.

One of the first studies that have explicitly addressed the effects of post divorce/separation conflicts on the well-being of individuals is that of Berman and Turk (1981). First, Berman and Turk (1981) investigated the extent to which the divorce related problems (i.e. family, interpersonal, and practical problems) affect the adjustment process of individuals. Second, the roles of specific coping strategies that possibly mediate the adjustment process have been examined. Most important for this study is the role of family problems, in that conflicted involvement between former spouses could possibly interfere with the personal adjustment process of individuals. To examine the effects of divorce related problems and coping strategies on the adjustment process of individuals they used data from the chapter of Parents without Partners, including 65 female and 25 male respondents. They, furthermore, included data from 16 randomly selected female respondents that participated in a separate study. Results from a linear regression showed that both divorce related problems and the various coping strategies after the divorce indeed influenced the adjustment process. In fact, interpersonal problems appear to have the biggest negative impact on both life satisfaction and mood disturbance. Negative involvement of the ex-spouse (e.g. family problems) only contributed to increased mood disturbance, while practical problems were most highly related the life satisfaction of individuals. For coping strategies, the results demonstrated that only a few strategies contributed to the adjustment process of individuals. Moreover, social and personal involvement, and autonomy and independence show positive significant effects for the adjustment of individuals, while expressing feelings, learning activities, and personal understanding do not contribute to the adjustment. All together, the study clearly demonstrated the different effects of divorce related problems and coping strategies on the adjustment process of individuals. In fact, the results support the suggestion that the well-being of individuals tends to decline when the post divorce levels of conflicts are high. However, one must be careful in making strong claims about the results because the

dataset only included divorced parents and, therefore, neglects generalization.

A second study that investigated the adjustment process of individuals is that of Tschann et al. (1989). Tschann et., al. (1989) examined to what extent the Double ABCX model -applied to divorces- could be used to foresee the post divorce adjustment of individuals. More specifically, the model predicts the adjustment process of individuals (xX) by taking into account the accumulation of demands that come along with a divorce (A) (as a results of stressors and strains before and after the event), the number of accessible or developed personal and social resources that congregate the new demands (B), and the perception of the family members towards the experience of the divorce (C) (Tschann, et., al. 1989). Following this model, they hypothesized that more conflicts with the ex-spouse are related with poorer adjustment after the separation or divorce in terms of effective coping, emotional distress, and psychological disturbance. To test this hypothesis they used longitudinal data from 184 divorcing families that were followed for two years and were residing in a San Francisco Bay Area county. For conflict with the ex-spouse, the results demonstrated that less conflict with the ex-spouse is related to better post divorce adjustment. This negative effect can partially be determined by the direct effect and partly by indirect effects, through the increasing negative attachment. All together, these results seem to support the idea that post divorce/separation conflicts exacerbates the effects of the divorce/separation on individual's well-being. Although, the study of Tschann et al. (1989) provides interesting information about the effect of post divorce conflicts, the question remains whether these results can also be found for the Netherlands. Besides, an important negative aspect of this study is that the results cannot be generalized to the whole population of the United States. In addition, the participants in the study established their divorces three years before, the participants that remained in the study were mainly white and generally found to be well-educated, and also the men that remained in the study were of a higher socio-economic class than were the participants that dropped out of the study. Therefore, one must be cautious by making strong claims about these results.

Masheter in her study (1991) focused primarily on the role of attachment and interpersonal conflict for investigating the relationship between former spouses. First of all, Masheter (1990) examined the proportion of divorced individuals that still have contact with their ex-spouses. Second, the nature of these contacts have been specified, in terms of conflict, attachment, and personal well-being. Following earlier research Masheter investigated whether these contacts are actually unhealthy for the well-being of individuals. To test this

hypothesis Masheter (1991) used data from three Connecticut counties from the United States, consisting of a sample of 256 respondents who experienced a divorce over a 2 or 2.5 year period. The results demonstrated that the higher the levels of post divorce conflict between former spouses the lower the well-being of individuals will be, indicating that post divorce conflicts indeed have profound implications for one's well-being. However, again one must be cautious about interpreting these results since the sample is not nationally representative for the whole population of the United States.

Finally, another study of Masheter (1997) also studied the impact of relationships between ex-spouses on the well-being of individuals. The purpose of the study is to *"distinguish between healthy and unhealthy friendship and between healthy and unhealthy hostility toward the ex-spouse"* (pp 463). More specifically, Masheter (1997) examined to what extent preoccupation and hostile contact after a divorce influenced the well-being of individuals. In order to test the hypothesis Masheter (1997) uses two subsamples. First, she uses data from a (mostly) metropolitan county, consisting of 357 couples that granted a divorce. Second, she uses data from six so-called rural mining and farming counties, consisting of 494 couples. Eventually 232 returning surveys were included into the analysis. The results demonstrated that, persons who reported to have a highly friendly relationship (e.g. low hostility) with their ex-spouse and low preoccupation, have a higher well-being than do people with a highly friendly relationship (e.g. low hostility) and a high preoccupation. Furthermore, individuals who reported to have a highly hostile relationship with their former spouse and low preoccupation, have a higher well-being than do people with a highly hostile relationship and high preoccupation. Masheter (1997) suggests this to be the result of the idea that: *'anger can mobilize divorced individuals against depression'* (pp 473) (Masheter, 1997). Finally, Masheter (1997) also compared respondents with different levels of hostility within the relationship with the ex-partner. The results showed that individuals with a highly hostile relationship and low preoccupation to have a higher well-being than do individuals with a low hostile relationship and high preoccupation. This is an important finding, since it demonstrates that the level of preoccupation is *more* important for the well-being of individuals than the level of hostility within the relationship between ex-spouses. Therefore, this study of Masheter (1997) did not found striking evidence for the negative effect of antagonistic contact between former spouses and the well-being of individuals, but rather the degree of preoccupation is an important factor in distinguishing healthy and unhealthy relationships between former spouses.

1.5 Contribution of this study

Summing up the literature review, several striking findings will be evaluated and important points of improvement will be discussed here. With respect to the outcomes for the pre-existing levels of conflicts most studies showed that there exists some heterogeneity in the effects of divorce. In fact, all studies supported the relief hypothesis except for two studies. The results in the study of Kalmijn & Monden (2006) and more recently of that of Wait et al. (2009) indicated only weakest support for the relief hypothesis. These inconsistent findings might be the result of the way in which the quality of the marriage prior to the event has been measured. Moreover, the studies that applied direct measures of conflict as indicator of the quality of the relationship prior to the event provide less support for the relief hypothesis than do studies that used proxies to measure the quality of the relationship. Since only two studies used direct measures, I believe that the interaction hypothesis needs an additional test, applying direct measures of the level of conflict.

Another possible explanation for these inconsistent findings, as being supposed by Kalmijn & Monden (2006), is: *“that the problems that people are facing in their marriage do not end after the divorce” (pp 1210)*. In other words, the relief effect could be diminished by the enduring conflicts. This study will improve on prior research by also taking into account these post divorce/separation levels of conflicts. In doing so, it will broaden the theoretical scope of the divorce and separation effects.

Finally, all studies that have investigated whether the effect of divorce/separation on one's well-being is depending on the quality of the relationship prior to the event based their analysis on data that is only applicable to the United States. This is also the case for the studies that focused mainly on the post divorce conflict. This means that one cannot make strong claims about whether this is also the case in other countries, with different norms, values, and attitudes and, therefore, by testing this hypothesis based on data from the Netherlands this study will improve upon prior studies.

2. Theoretical background and hypotheses

This chapter provides the theoretical mechanisms that have been put forward to explain the effects of divorces and separations for individual's well-being. First, the negative effects of divorce and separations will be outlined, followed by the theoretical mechanisms that explain the differences in the divorce and separation effects for individuals. Second, the difference between divorces/separations from high versus low quality marriage will be explained in order to get a more comprehensive view about why individuals from good quality marriage will divorce or separate. At last, the post divorce/separation conflicts and its effect on the well-being of individuals will be outlined and subsequently, the additive effect of pre-existing levels of conflict and post-divorce/separation levels of conflict.

2.1 The stress adjustment perspective

To explain *how* divorce/separation affects one's well-being, a variety of theories have been employed in prior literature. However, a dominant framework within the divorce research is the stress framework. Moreover, most researchers investigating the effect of divorce/separation on adult well-being link their work to established stress perspectives, like the family stress theory and coping strategy, and the general stress theory (Amato, 2000). As a result, I will also work from the stress framework to explain the effect of divorce/separation on the well-being of adults. More specifically, I will focus on the stress-adjustment perspective, which draws from fundamental tenets of the stress model and integrates the different assumptions found in the research (Amato, 2000; Williams & Dunne-Bryant, 2006).

2.2 Divorce/separation and the well-being of individuals

An important question that should be addressed before turning to the effects of conflicts is why the well-being of individuals tends to decline following a divorce. In fact, previously done research has clearly demonstrated that divorced and separated individuals report higher levels of depression, anxiety, and other forms of psychological distress than do their married and single counterparts. Although the link between divorces/separations and the negative consequences for the well-being of individuals are well-established, there are several explanations of how divorces/separations affect the well-being of individuals. The stress-adjustment perspective argues that the decline in well-being caused by the divorce or separation reflects both primary stressors, induced by the divorce or separation itself, and

secondary stressors, which precipitate more persistent strains (Amato, 2000). These two notions are embedded into two perspectives within the stress-adjustment framework: the crisis model and the chronic strain model.

The first, a *crisis model*, takes into account the primary stressors by focusing on the notion that divorces and separations are stressful life events on their own (Amato, 2000). An important idea within this model is that most people eventually will recover (over time) and return to the pre-divorce/separation levels of functioning (Amato, 2000; Williams & Dunne-Bryant, 2006; Kalmijn & Monden, 2006). Consequently, this effect is often called a crisis effect since the stress can be seen as a reaction towards a crisis; the stress is low before the event, rises just after the divorce/separation, and eventually decreases again (Booth & Amato, 1991; Amato, 2000; Williams & Dunne-Bryant, 2006; Kalmijn & Monden, 2006). Booth and Amato (1991) found supporting evidence for this crisis effect, in that individuals displayed higher levels of stress during the divorce process but within two years these heightened levels of stress declined to comparable levels of their previous state of well-being.

The second explanation, a *chronic strain model*, assumes that the decline in well-being caused by the divorce or separation mainly reflects secondary stressors, by focusing on the notion that divorces and separations induce persistent life strains, such as loneliness, loss of resources, economic hardship, and for people who stay single afterwards, also the new individual responsibilities (Amato, 2000). According to this perspective, not only *getting* divorced is considered to be a stressful situation but also *being* divorced causes a stressful situation, in that divorced or separated people show relatively persistent deficits in their well-being compared to both their previous state of well-being and the well-being of married people. Therefore, in contrast to the crisis model, the chronic strain model assumes that the stress related with the divorce or separation is not a temporary response to a crisis, but instead it may also precipitate more enduring chronic strains (Booth & Amato, 1991). Since these problems do not go away, the declines in well-being related to the divorce or separation might continue for an indefinite period of time and, therefore, create long-lasting negative consequences for one's well-being (Amato, 2000). In line with the chronic strain model Mastekaasa (1995) found that individuals that have been divorced indeed displayed higher levels of distress, both on the short as well as on the long run.

However, the purpose of this study is not to sort out the relative importance of the crisis model and the chronic strain model but what is important here is that both imply a negative relationship between divorce and separation on adult well-being. Moreover, there is

general agreement that the decline in well-being following a divorce or separation could reflect *both* the loss of resources (as has been advocated by the chronic strain model) and the stressors induced by the divorce or separation itself (primary stressors as has been advocated by the crisis model) (Amato, 2000). This means that both models are not by definition contradictory but rather complementary and, therefore, both models predict declines in well-being following a divorce or separation. This leads to the following hypothesis:

Divorce or separation is expected to lower the well-being of adults (H1).

Figure 2.1 shows a schematic overview of the hypothesis presented.

2.3 Initial conflict, divorce/separation and the well-being of individuals

Despite the negative consequences for one's well-being, important of both models is that both predict substantial heterogeneity in adjustment to divorce (Kalmijn & Monden, 2006; Williams & Dunne-Bryant, 2006). Moreover, both models argue that the individuals' susceptibility to either the short term or the long term negative outcomes of divorces or separation depends on the contextual factors that either facilitate or impede the divorce/separation adjustment process of individuals (Williams & Dunne-Bryant, 2006). These contextual factors involves the current life circumstances of individuals and consists of the number of stressors that pile up, the resources available to cope with the problems, and the manner in which individuals perceive the situation (Amato & Booth, 1991).

More specifically, having a lot of resources, in terms of income, education, and social support or exiting a marriage full of stress seems to facilitate the adjustment process of individuals (Williams & Dunne-Bryant, 2006). Income may facilitate the adjustment process because getting a divorce or separation is generally known to decrease the levels of income and, therefore, individuals who have a high level of income prior to the divorce or separation are less likely to experience great economic hardship after the divorce or separation than do people with only modest levels of income (Amato & Booth, 1991). This is turn, might lead to a less severe effect of the more enduring chronic stress after the divorce or separation and, therefore, facilitates the adjustment process of individuals (Amato & Booth, 1991). Furthermore, education may facilitate the divorce adjustment process, in that it a higher level of education provides better a potential of increasing one's income after the divorce, but also are higher educated people generally found to have better coping strategies, a stronger sense of control, and have better social support networks for coping with a divorce or separation in

comparison to people with lower levels of education (Amato & Booth, 1991). Finally, in terms of social support, it has generally been recognized that higher levels of social support facilitate the adjustment process of individuals. Together, one might, therefore, argue that the higher the resources available the less severe the effect of divorce or separation for one's well-being will be.

Most important for this paper is, however, the way in which individuals perceive the divorce or separation. In fact, previous investigation examining the effects of relationship quality on adult well-being indicates that being in a marriage or relationship with a lot of conflict in it will in itself have strong negative effects for one's well-being, while, conversely, marriages or relationships with no serious conflicts will have positive effects for individual's well-being and health (Kalmijn & Monden, 2006). Due to these differences within relationships and marriages and its different effects for one's well-being, research suggests the effect of divorce and separation on the well-being of adults to be heterogeneous as well (Kalmijn & Monden, 2006). Moreover, in the case of divorce or separation, one might argue that people who experience no or low levels of conflict prior to the event to be actually very satisfied with their marriage or relationship and a divorce or separation might, therefore, be an unwelcome change. For people with a marriage full of conflict, on the other hand, getting a divorce or separate might be considered as a solution rather than a problem and individuals escaping from such a marriage might even experience some sort of relief. One might, therefore, expect divorces or separations from the marriages or relationship without serious discord to be more detrimental for the well-being of individuals than divorces from relationships full of conflict. This is actually not very surprising since the meaning of a divorce or separation after a marriage or relationship full of conflict will indubitably be quite different than a divorce or separation after a marriage or relationship with no serious conflicts.

This notion, that a divorce or separation can be beneficial, is not inconsistent with the stress-adjustment perspective. Instead, Amato (2000) argues: "*the divorce stress-adjustment perspective explicitly focuses on the contingencies that lead to negative, positive, or mixed outcomes for individuals*" (pp, 1273). More particularly, for people who are in a marriage with no serious conflict in it a divorce or separation involves both a crisis (crisis model) and a loss in resources (strain model), adding up to a decline in well-being (Kalmijn & Monden, 2006). Conversely, people who have had a marriage or relationship full of conflict will experience both positive as well as negative effects of divorce or separation in that they will experience a decline in resources and experience a so-called crisis effect, but there will also be

some form of relief (Kalmijn & Monden, 2006). All together, this implies that the effect of divorce or separation on the well-being of individuals will be stronger for individuals with less initial conflicts (see figure 2.1 for a schematic overview).

Kalmijn & Monden (2006) in their article proposed a strong and a weak version of this so-called escape hypothesis. The weak version of the escape hypothesis suggests that being in a marriage or relationship full of conflict will diminish the effect of divorce or separation on the change in individual's well-being, so that the effect becomes less negative. The strong version of the escape hypothesis, conversely, argues that the effect of divorce or separation on well-being will become positive after taking into account the pre-existing levels of conflict. In this case, the relief effect is *stronger* than the detrimental effects of both the crisis model and chronic strain model. Because of this argumentation, the following escape hypotheses can be created:

(Weak version): the effect of divorce/separation on the change in adult well-being will be less negative when the initial conflict in the relationship or marriage is high (H2a).

(Strong version): the effect of divorce/separation on the change in adult well-being will be positive when the initial conflict in the relationship or marriage is high (H2b).

An important question that arises, based on the hypotheses presented above, is *why* people divorce or separate when having a high quality marriage or relationship (e.g. in terms of low conflict). One might argue that marriages or relationships with low or no discord do not end because no conflicts within a relationship imply a good relationship. However, in the above presented hypotheses it is expected that persons in marriages or relationships without serious conflicts can experience a divorce or separation, leading to a more severe effect of the divorce or separation. Therefore, I will, in the next section, explain why it is possible that couples with no serious conflict can have a divorce or separation.

2.4 Divorcing from a high quality marriage versus divorcing from a low quality marriage

An important theory that has focused on the question why relationships or marriage dissolve is the theory of Levinger (1965, 1976). Levinger (1965, 1976) argues that marital or relationship dissolution is determined by the *attractions* and *barriers* within a relationship and inverse determined by the perceived *alternatives*. The attractions within a relationship or marriage are the perceived rewards received from the relationship minus the perceived costs

of the relationship. Rewards of a relationship are positive aspects, including factors like, love, sexual enjoyment, emotional support, desire for companionship, and daily assistance (Levinger, 1965; Amato & Hohmann, 2007). Conversely, the costs of a relationship are the negative aspects of the relationship including conflict, aggression, and energy that is necessary to sustain the relationship (Levinger, 1965, 1976). Generally, individuals want to maintain the relationship when this relationship is rewarding. However, as has been presented in the escape hypothesis, this is not always the case. Moreover, some individuals will experience a divorce or separation without experiencing serious discord, while others will sustain in the relationship while experiencing a lot of conflict. Important here are the *barriers* that need to be overcome and the available *alternatives*.

The barriers include norms and values people hold about relationships, obligations to the marital bond, community stigma, economic barriers and interdependencies with the spouse, and moral commitment towards the other spouse (Levinger, 1965, 1976). In fact, people who experience a lot of conflict may sustain the relationship because of the existing barriers. But also people who have a relationship or marriage with no or low serious discord could get a divorce or separation because the perceived barriers are low.

The alternatives are the perceived costs and rewards of the alternative (Levinger, 1965, 1976). If people have better alternatives, the chance of getting a divorce will also be higher for them or, conversely, no alternatives support to sustain within the relationship.

Based on this theory one might argue, like mentioned in the escape hypothesis, that not all marriages or relationships are alike. In fact, two groups of people divorcing or separating can be distinguished; one group divorcing or separation from a marriage or relationship full of conflict and one group that divorce or separate without experiencing serious discord. The first group might divorce or separate just because they experience serious discord. The latter group might divorce or separate not because they have a low quality marriage, but rather because those have, for instance, high expectations about what a marriage or relationship should look like, perceive fewer barriers, or because they suppose to have better alternatives. The question that arises, according to the escape hypothesis, is from which type of marriage or relationship divorcing or separating is most detrimental.

2.5 Post divorce/relationship conflict and the well-being of individuals

An important notion that should be taken into account when considering the divorce or separation effect is the fact that a divorce or separation does not always mean the end of a

relationship. Ex-partners may continue the contact after the divorce or separation by, for instance, visiting each other or calling each other. The reasons for these contacts also vary, in that some contacts exist due to the fact that there are earlier interdependencies, such as arrangements in the field of finances or shared responsibility of parenting children. Other contacts are there because (ex) spouses may want to make things up with each other or because former partners may still feel attached towards each other and cannot finish these attachments immediately (Fisher, et al., 2005). Since not all divorces and separations are alike, the nature of these contacts may also vary. Moreover, in some divorces or separations, the contact may be very sociable and friendly, while in other divorces or separations, the relationship between former partners may be very unfriendly and hostile. How this relationship between former partners develops and whether these contacts are friendly or antagonistic also depends on a variety of factors (Fisher, et al., 2005).

Antagonistic or unfriendly contact may develop due to difficulties related to the divorce or separation itself, such as conflicts about visiting and maintenance allowance, but it might also be the result of earlier conflict between former partners (Fisher, et al., 2006). Earlier research indeed demonstrated that most of the hostile contacts between former partners are mainly the result of unresolved emotional issues related to the marriage or relationship prior to the divorce or separation (Emery, 1994). For instance, persons who had a lot of conflict in their relationship may still feel annoyed, resulting in continuing conflict. Friendly post-divorce/separation contact, on the other hand, may exist because people already had a friendly relationship and separated without any serious conflicts or because people may have become skilled at dealing with the relationship after the divorce or separation in a positive way (Fisher, et al., 2005).

Of course, the natures of these relationships are very important when looking at the adjustment process (e.g. well-being) of individuals. Moreover, due to these disparities in post-divorce/separation contact it is also possible that the effects of divorce and separation on the well-being of individuals might be different for people with different levels conflicts after the divorce or separation. Just as one expects that there is a negative effect of conflict within a relationship on the change on well-being, one would expect the conflicts after the divorce or separation to influence the well-being of individuals negatively as well (Amato, 2000).

Therefore, the following hypothesis is constructed (see figure 2.1 for the schematic overview):

The change in well-being is more negative for people who experience post divorce/separation conflicts (H3)

2.6 Interaction effect of initial conflicts and post divorce conflicts

Next to the effect of post-divorce/separation conflicts on the relationship between divorce and separation on the well-being of individuals, one must also simultaneously take into account the pre-existing levels of conflict. Moreover, there might be an additive effect of both levels of conflict, resulting in 4 possible situations, which all affect the well-being of individuals differently:

- (1) There was no initial conflict and there is no post divorce/separation conflict;*
- (2) there was no initial conflict but there is post divorce/separation conflict;*
- (3) there was initial conflict but there is no post divorce/separation conflict;*
- (4) there was initial conflict and there is post divorce/separation conflict.*

Like outlined in the escape hypothesis, the divorce or separation will most likely be a highly disturbing and emotional experience for people who did not experience initial conflicts in their relationship since experiencing a divorce or separation means for them both a crisis and a loss of resources, adding up to a decline in well-being (Kalmijn & Monden, 2006). However, this effect is likely to be different for people who do experience post-divorce/separation conflicts and those who do not.

People who have an antagonistic relationship after the divorce or separation may have more disadvantages because they experience not only the crisis effect and the lack of resources but also the negative effects of the antagonistic relationship after the event (Fisher, et al., 2005). This, in turn, may lead to a more severe effect of the divorce or separation for the well-being of individuals. Moreover, just as one expects that being in a high quality marriage is better for one's well-being than being in a poor quality marriage (e.g. in terms of high conflict), one would expect conflict after the divorce or separation to be detrimental for one's well-being as well.

Individuals who experienced no initial conflicts and no post divorce or separation conflicts, on the other hand, will experience no such negative effects of the relationship after the divorce or separation, adding up to a less severe effect of the divorce or separation. Moreover, people who divorced or separated from a marriage or relationship without serious conflicts might expect this situation to be continued, when this expectation is met this might lead to a less severe effect for one's well-being in comparison to persons who do experience these post divorce conflicts.

For people with a lot of initial conflict in the relationship, conversely, the escape from

their marriage or relationship might bring some sort of relief, as can be explained by the stress-adjustment perspective and additionally by the escape hypothesis (Wheaton, 1990; Kalmijn & Monden, 2006). An assumption in this reasoning is, however, that the conflicts will end when the relationship ends (Fisher, et al., 2005). However, often this is not the case and, consequently, in many cases also the conflict continues.

I expect this positive correlation between the pre-existing levels of conflict and the post levels of conflict because former partners who are divorced or separated may feel the need to make things up with each other for the reason that they are still upset about the initial conflicts or because the ex partners may want to better understand the divorce (Fisher et al, 2005). Since these relational issues have a high conflict potential, the chance of antagonistic (e.g. aggressive, hostile) post divorce/separation behavior is also quite high (Fischer et al, 2005). This also means that the well-being of people who escaped from a marriage or relationship with a lot of conflict in it, and for whom the divorce or separation was rather a positive experience than a negative one (implying an increase in well-being), the well-being eventually will not increase due to the fact that the conflict continued. Moreover, the continued conflict could compensate for the positive effects of divorce or separation on the well-being of individuals.

In contrast, for people who escaped from a “bad” marriage or relationship and for whom the conflict stopped after the divorce or separation, the divorce or separation indeed might be considered as an escape, as has been outlined in the escape hypothesis, resulting in an improvement of their well-being. Table 1 provides a summary of the expectations and figure 1 presents the conceptual model.

Table 1: *Interaction effect of the pre-existing levels of conflict and the post divorce/separation levels of conflict on the change in well-being of individuals*

	No post conflict	Post conflict
No initial conflict	-	--
Initial conflict	+	-/0

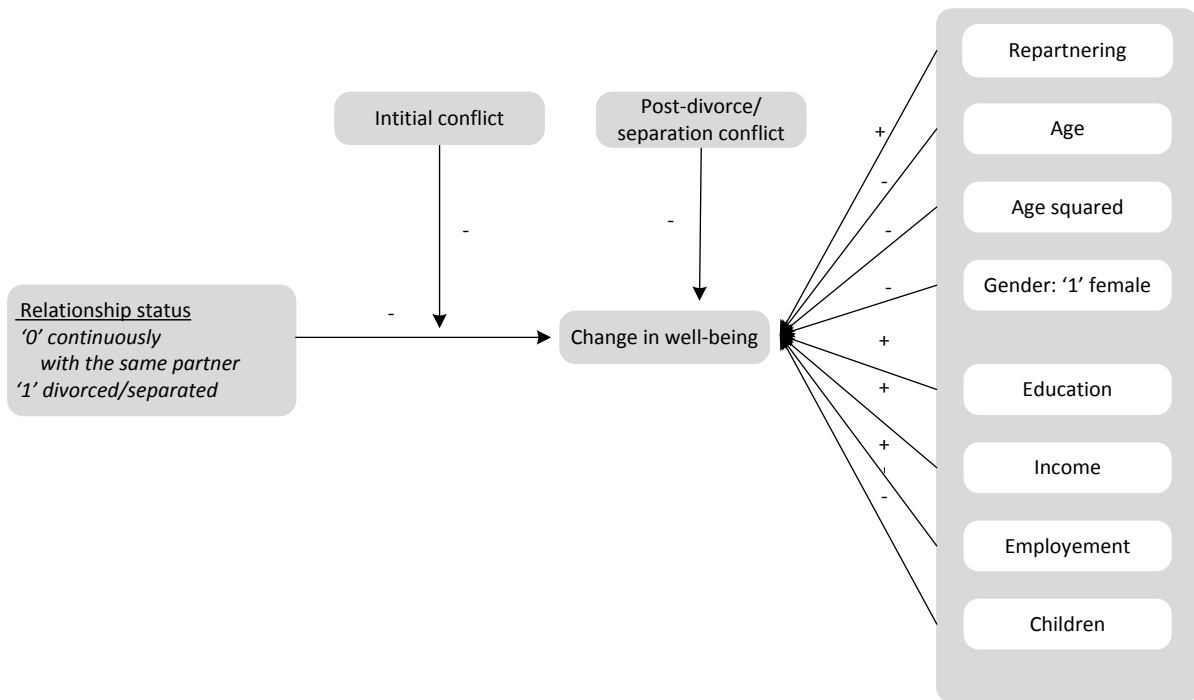


Figure 1: Conceptual model

3. Data & Measures

3.1 Data

In order to provide answers on the research questions this study will use two waves of the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study (NKPS) (Dykstra, Kalmijn, Knijn, Komter, Liefbroer, & Mulder, 2005, 2007). The NKPS is a longitudinal panel study that allows the examination of family and kinship relationships in the Netherlands from a dynamic multi-actor perspective. This means that the data of the NKPS are collected from multiple actors, by multiple methods, and at multiple points in time (panel data), while mainly focusing on solidarity within family relationships. The first wave of this panel study was conducted in between 2002 and 2004 and the second wave between 2006 and 2007. Therefore, the average time between the two waves is about three years. The data of the NKPS consists of two samples, including a main sample and a migrant sample. The first, the main sample, is a random sample of individuals that live in the Netherlands, therefore, covering the general population of the Netherlands between the ages of 18 and 79. Individuals of care-institutions, penitentiaries, homes for the elderly, holiday homes, and individuals that do not have a permanent resident permit are excluded from the sample. Furthermore, the NKPS included a second sample- the migrant sample-, including individuals from the four largest immigrant groups that live in the Netherlands (i.e. Turks, Moroccans, Surinamese and Dutch Antilleans). For the purpose of this paper, this study will only focus on the main sample, therefore, excluding the migrant sample.

To gather the data different data collection forms were used in the NKPS main study. First, computer assisted in depth interviews were conducted by means of face-to-face interviews between 2002 and 2004 and by using Computer Aided Personal Interviewing (CAPI). Second, a supplementation with self-completion questionnaires was conducted in 2004. This resulted in a sample of 8161 respondents at time of the first interview. The final response rate of the NKPS survey in the first wave was 45%, which is about average for the Netherlands. To take notice of the changes that have taken place in the lives of the respondents and their families since the first wave, the same respondents were contacted again between 2006 and 2007. Of the 8161 respondents that participated in the first wave (2002-2004) 74% respondents also participated in the second wave (N=6026). The non-response rate in both waves was rather selective. Women are less likely to be non-respondents than men. Although, men typically are underrepresented in surveys, this is more strongly so in the NKPS. Men have an overall response rate of 43%, while the percentage for women is 57. In the

general population of the Netherlands both percentages lie around 50% (Dykstra et al., 2004). Furthermore, respondents between the ages of 18 and 30 have a higher likelihood of non-response than respondents between the ages of 31 and 45, which indicates the under-representation of the youngest age categories in the NKPS. In wave 2 this under-representation has increased because years have been passed and no new participants have been recruited. For household status, singles are more likely to be non-responsive than are cohabiting individuals, while the latter does not differ significantly from the married people. This means that the NKPS appears to appeal most to those in ‘traditional’ family arrangements. Furthermore, lower educated are more likely to be non-respondents than are the higher educated (Dykstra et al, 2004, 2007).

3.2 Research design and selection of cases

This paper uses a non-equivalent control group design, which has several important characteristics. First of all, the design has pre-test and post-test measures for all respondents included. Second, the design includes two groups; one group experiencing a transition and one which does not (comparison group). Third, the groups included are non-equivalent and, therefore, lacks random assignment of the respondents who divorced or separated and those who do not. As a result, the groups may be different prior to the study (Baker, 1999).

In order to test whether the transition to divorce or separation has an effect on the well-being of individuals, I only select respondents who were married or cohabiting in the first wave. For the purpose of this study I only included respondents that were cohabiting or married since I assume that the transition to divorce or separation affects married people as well as cohabiting people. Respondents whose partner died were excluded from the analysis (N=48). After selecting cases on the basis of the respondent’s relationship history I get a sample of 4054 respondents that were either married or cohabiting in wave 1. Subsequently, I excluded cases with missing information on the dependent and independent variables. After selecting cases on the dependent variable I get a sample of 3631 respondents, which indicates that 10.4% percentage of respondents had a missing value on these questions. In fact, this is because respondents had to answer on both scales in both waves. Additionally all cases with missing information on the independent variables were excluded, yielding a basic sample 3411 respondents (See appendix A1 for the selection procedure).

3.3 Dependent variable: Well-being

To measure the well-being of individuals the Mental Health Inventory scale (MHI-5) will be used. The MHI-5 scale is a commonly used measure and assesses mental health of individuals (Berwick et al., 1991; Ware & Sherman, 1992; Ware et al., 1993). Since I will use the change score method (which will be explained later on), both the well-being in wave 1 and wave 2 are recorded and subsequently the well-being in wave 1 has been subtracted from the well-being in wave 2 so that the dependent variable in this paper indicates the change in well-being between wave 1 and wave 2. The change in well-being applies to a period of 3 years. The MHI-5 scale contains the following 5 questions:

- How often have you felt particularly tense in the past four weeks?
- How often have you felt so down in the dumps in the past four weeks that nothing could cheer you up?
- How often have you feel calm and peaceful in the past four weeks?
- How often have you felt downhearted and miserable in the past four weeks?
- How often have you felt happy in the past four weeks?

The answering categories range from (1) all the time to (6) never. Questions three and five are recoded so that the higher the score on this scale the higher also the well-being of individuals will be. I subsequently summed the answers of all five items and recoded all questions, so that the level of well-being varies between 0 and 25. '0' indicates the lowest level of well-being people could attain and '25' the highest level of well-being people could attain. Cronbach's Alfa of the scale is 0.83 in wave 1 and 0.84 in wave 2, which indicates an excellent reliability. Some respondents were excluded because of the fact their well-being was not recorded in both waves, yielding a sample of 3631 respondents that answered the questions in both waves. After excluding cases with missing information on the independent variables as well, I get a sample of 3411 valid cases.

3.4 Independent variable: relationship transitions

In both waves, respondents were asked about their relationship status and relationship history. First of all, respondents were asked whether they had a partner at the moment of the interview, that is to say, someone with whom the respondent had a relationship for at least three months. In the second wave, the respondent was asked whether he or she was still in this relationship with this partner and if not, whether they divorced or separated. From this information, I

assessed whether a person divorced or separated. A dummy variable was made and coded '1' if the respondent indeed divorced or separated (I will use the word divorced to denote both options in order to keep the presentation well-organized) and coded '0' when the respondent was still together with the same partner as in wave 1 (I use the word married to represent both options). Also a dummy was made indicating whether respondents repartnered or not. This is important since the well-being of individuals could increase after being repartnered. Although, all transitions between the first and the second wave are recorded, I will only take into account the relationship status in the second wave without taking notice of the relationship history between the first and second wave. Therefore, a dummy variable was made and coded '0' if the respondent had not entered a new relationship in wave 2 and '1' if the respondents did have a new partner in wave 2 (I will use the word repartnering for this variable). As can be observed from table 2, of the 151 respondents that divorced or separated between wave 1 and wave 2 about 55 persons repartnered, while 96 did not have a new partner in wave 2.

3.5 Moderator: Initial conflict

To measure the amount of initial conflict I will take into account the conflict in wave 1 (prior to the transition). Conflict is measured by asking respondents whether the following situations have occurred between them and their partners: heated discussions; putting down and blaming the other; did not want to talk to each other for a while; arguments got out of hand. The answer categories range from (1) not at all to (3) several times. Next, respondents were also asked whether he/she had any conflicts, strains or disagreements with the partner in the last three months using a single item measure (wave 1). The answering categories were the same as above: (1) not at all (2) occasionally and (3) several times. Subsequently, the answers on all five items were summed up, so that the higher the score on this scale, the more the respondent reported to have had disagreements. The reliability of the scale that has been constructed is good (Cronbach's Alfa is 0.75). Again, respondents with missing values on this scale (N=53; 1.5% of the total sample) were excluded of the analytic sample. Figure 2 shows the initial conflict frequency of all respondents included. As can be observed from figure 2 (see for numbers appendix A2), most respondents experienced no conflicts at all or only few conflicts. Moreover, about 35% of the respondents experienced conflict on no or only on one domain. Fewer respondents reported to have conflicts over more domains. Especially very high levels of conflict are quite rare, in that less than 10% of the respondents reported to have had a lot of conflicts (a score higher than 4 on a scale from 0 to 10).

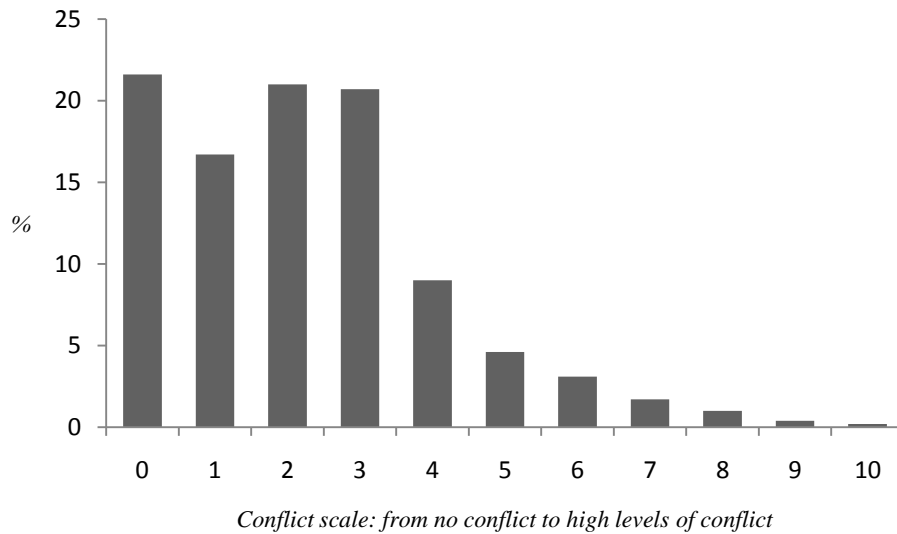


Figure 2: Frequency distribution of initial conflict in percentages

Because responses to this question are highly skewed with few responses in the highest categories, responses that fall in the categories ranging from 4 to 10 are taken together so that the scale is the number of domains over which the couple reported to have disagreements (ranging from 0 to 5). Therefore, a higher score on this variable indicates a higher amount of conflict. The new frequency table that is constructed can be found in appendix A3.

Furthermore, a dummy was made in order to locate the differences in means with bivariate t-tests. The conflict dummy is coded '0' when the respondents reported to experience no conflict at all (score 0) and coded '1' if the respondents reported to experience conflict (score 1, 2, 3 and 4). All together, 78.4 % of the respondents reported to experience conflicts, while 21.6 % of the respondents did not experience conflict.

3.6 Post divorce or separation conflicts

To measure the extent of post divorce/separation conflict two scales are created, one scale indicating post divorce/separation annoying behavior by the ex-partner and one scale indicating more serious violence after the divorce or separation. The operationalisation of both variables will be explained below.

3.6.1 Annoying behaviour

To measure the extent to which the ex-partner annoys the respondent after the divorce or separation, the respondent was asked whether his/her ex-partner has ever done any of the following after the divorce or separation: Giving you the blame for things? Saying Nasty

things about you to other? Unwanted phone calls? Unwanted visits? Making false accusations about you? Saying bad things about the past? The answering categories are (1) did not happen (2) did happen (3) not applicable. All responses that indicate that the annoying behavior did happen are count. From this information, I assess whether a respondent experienced post divorce/separation annoying behavior by the ex-partner. Figure 3 shows the frequencies of the post divorce or separation annoying behavior by the ex-partner in percentages (see appendix A4).

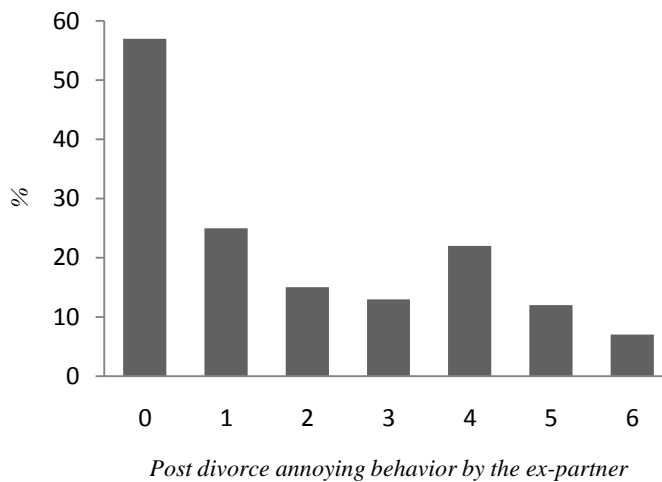


Figure 3: Frequency distribution of post divorce/separation levels of annoying behavior on the part of the ex-partner

Since responses to this question are highly left skewed with few responses in the highest categories, I coded those respondents whose responses fall in the first category (coded 0) and compared them with respondents whose responses fall into other categories (coded 1). Respondents whose responses fall in the first category are those who do not experience post divorce or separation annoying behavior by the ex-partner, while all other respondents experienced annoying behavior by the ex-partner. The final sample, therefore, consists of 57 respondents (37.7%) that reported to experience no annoying behavior by the ex-partner at all and 94 respondents (62.3%) who do experience annoying behavior by the ex-partner.

3.6.2 Serious violence

Furthermore, also a scale was created to measure the extent in which the ex-partner uses violence or threats to use violence against the respondent. The scale consists of four indicators/questions for which the respondent was asked whether the ex-partner ever done any

of the following after the divorce or separation: cursing, serious fights; threatening to use violence against you; threatening to hurt him/herself; using violence. The response categories are: ‘1’ did not happen, ‘2’ did happen and ‘3’ not applicable. Responses that fall into the category indicating that the ex-partner used violence or threats to use violence were count, so that a higher score on this variable indicates a higher amount of post divorce or separation violence or threats to use violence by the ex-partner. Figure 4 provides information about the percentages of frequencies of respondents that experienced violence or threats of violence by the ex-partner (see appendix A5). As can be observed from the figure, more than half of the respondents (60,0 %) did not experience violence or threats of violence on the part of the ex-partner at all (N=91). About 23.8 percent of the respondents reported to experience violence over one domain. Fewer respondents reported to experience violence over more than one domain.

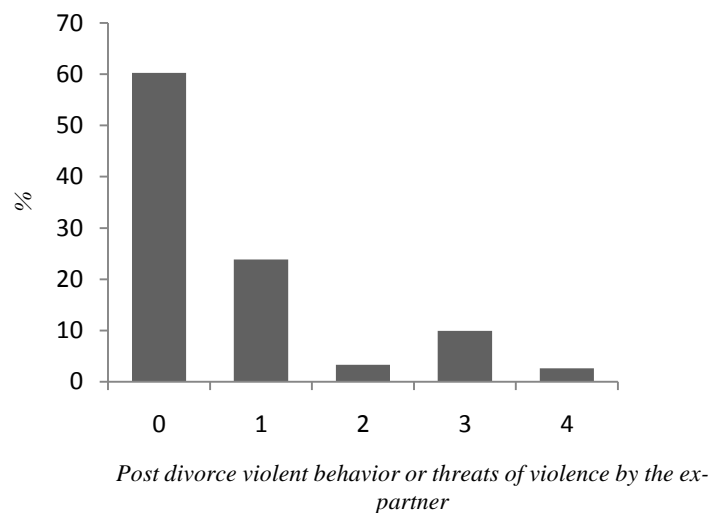


Figure 4: Frequency distribution of post divorce/separation levels of violent or threats of violence on the part of the ex-partner

Since the responses are skewed a dummy variable was made and coded as follows: respondents who reported to experience no violence (or threats of violence) by the ex-partner are coded ‘0’ and respondents who did report to experience violence (or threats of violence) by the ex-partner are coded ‘1’. All together, this leads to a sample of 91 respondents (60.3%) that not experience serious violence (or threats), compared to 60 (39.7%) respondents who do experience serious violence or threats of using violence by the ex-partner after the divorce or separation.

3.7 Demographic control variables

Next to testing the main hypotheses, I also consider control variables at time of the first interview that may affect changes in well-being of individuals. The control variables include a series of demographic variables, which are baseline measures of age, age squared, gender, education, income, whether the respondent is employed or not, and the presence of children in the household. Since all these baseline controls are found to be related to the well-being of individuals it is important to control for them (Kalmijn & Monden, 2006).

The first control variable that will be included in the models is age, since older persons are expected to experience more negative changes in well-being than do younger persons (Kalmijn & Monden, 2006). Age will be included in the analysis as continuous variable, with a higher score indicating an older person. Also the quadratic effect of age will be included since the effect of age may be nonlinear.

Second, the role of gender will be considered. Moreover, recent analysis demonstrated that the experience of a divorce or separation increases women's depression more than men's depression (Kalmijn & Monden, 2006). Also the quality of the marriage or relationship prior to the divorce or separation is generally found to influence women's well-being more than it does men's. Therefore, controlling for this variable is rather important. Gender will be included as a dummy variable, with men as the category of reference (coded: '0' men, '1' female).

Furthermore, the level of education of the respondent will be controlled for. Controlling for education is important since it might be related to the well-being of persons after the divorce or separation. Moreover, education may facilitate the divorce or separation adjustment process of individuals because a higher education provides more potential for increasing one's income after a divorce or separation -which is generally found to decrease after the divorce and could affect the well-being of individuals. Second, higher educated people are found to have a stronger sense of control, a better social support network and better coping strategies to deal with the divorce or separation than do people with low education. Education is measured by the highest level of education a person attained and consist of ten categories: (1) incomplete elementary, (2) elementary school only, (3) lower vocational, (4) lower general, (5) medium general, (6) upper general, (7) intermediate vocational, (8) higher vocational, (9) university, (10) post-graduate. The higher the score on the education variable the higher the education of the respondent is.

Another baseline control variable is the total monthly household income. Also income

may facilitate the adjustment process of individuals because a divorce or separation is generally known to decrease the level of income and, therefore, persons who have a high income are less likely to experience financial hardship after the divorce or separation than do persons with low income (Amato & Booth, 1991). In order to measure the amount of income respondents were asked to indicate their own net monthly income in euro's (from work and social benefits). For respondents that did not know or did not want to say how much the exact amount is, the income could be indicated in fixed categories. This last scale was recoded so that the middle of the scale indicates the amount of income the respondent received. This information was combined with the partner's income in order to calculate the total household income per month. Due to a large number of missing values on the income variable a binary variable is included that indicates whether income was missing or not. Furthermore, cases with missing income are assigned to the mean income. A higher score on this variable indicates, therefore, a higher amount of household income.

Employment is a dichotomous variable and coded '0' if the respondent is not employed and coded '1' if the respondent is employed. It is important to take into account whether the respondent is employed or not because people in less advantaged positions (in terms of no employment) might experience less positive or more negative changes in well-being following a divorce or separation (Kalmijn & Monden, 2006).

The final demographic control variable is the presence of children in the household. This variable is included since these persons are generally found to be more vulnerable after a divorce or separation than are people with no children in the household (Kalmijn & Monden, 2006). The measure whether there are children in the household the respondent was asked whether there are any children living at home. A dichotomous variable was made with respondents that reported to have children living in the household coded as '1' (N=1847) and respondents with no children living in the household coded as '0' (N=1564).

3.8 Descriptive analysis

Table 2 provides information on all variables; included are the number of valid cases, the minimum value, the maximum value, and the standard deviation. As can be seen from table 5, 3260 respondents stayed together continuously (either married or not), while 151 respondents separated or divorced (4.4%) between 2002-2004 and 2006-2007. Of these 151 respondents, about 36 % had a new partner in wave 2, while about 64 % stayed single after the divorce or separation.

Table 2, furthermore, shows that the mean in well-being increased somewhat between wave 1 and wave 2 (i.e. from 19,40 to 19,45). Considering well-being, it seems that most respondents score actually quite high on this variable, indicating that on average respondents have relatively high levels of well-being. Regarding the initial conflicts within relationships or marriages the table shows that on average people experience little conflicts and with respect to the post divorce conflicts, it is clear that accusations more frequently occur than do serious violence; less than half of the respondents experienced serious violence, while more than half of the respondents experienced accusations after the divorce or separation.

Table 2: Descriptive information on Dependent and Independent Variables for all respondents, aged 18 to 79

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation	N
<i>Total sample</i>					
Dependent variables					
Well-being (T1)	0,00	25,00	19,40	3,39	3411
Well-being (T2)	0,00	25,00	19,45	3,47	3411
Marital transitions					
<i>Continuously Married or Cohabiting</i>					3411
<i>Continuously Married</i>					3260
<i>Continuously Cohabiting</i>					2758
<i>Divorced or separated</i>					502
<i>Married/Cohabiting – Divorce/Separated</i>					151
<i>Married – Divorce</i>					96
<i>Married – Separated</i>					45
<i>Cohabiting – Separated</i>					13
<i>Married/Cohabiting – Divorce/Separated - repartnered</i>					38
<i>Married – Divorce – Repartner</i>					55
<i>Married – Separated – Repartner</i>					19
<i>Cohabiting – Separated – Repartner</i>					4
					32
Conflicts					
Initial conflict	0,00	4,00	2,00	1,43	3411
Demographic control variables (T1)					
Age	19,00	79,00	46,01	12,78	3411
Gender: '0' men '1' female	0,00	1,00	0,58	0,49	3411
Education	1,00	10,00	6,26	2,20	3411
Household income	0,00	21000,0	2668,2	1531,0	3411
Employment status	0,00	1,00	0,69	0,46	3411
Presence of children in the household: '0' no '1' yes	0,00	1,00	0,54	0,50	3411
<i>Divorced/separated sample</i>					
Conflicts					
Post divorce accusations	0,00	1,00	0,63	0,49	151
Post divorce violence	0,00	1,00	0,40	0,49	151

Source: NKPS 2002-2004; 2006-2007

3.9 Analytic strategy

The analysis will be conducted in two phases. First of all, the bivariate analysis will be conducted in order to give a simplified overview about the relationship between the variables. Therefore, the averages on well-being will be compared for divorced/separated individuals and the continuously married/cohabiting couples.

Second, also multivariate analysis will be conducted. To test the hypothesis about whether there is an effect of divorce or separation on adult well-being the change score method will be used as has been advocated by Allison (1990) and more recently Johnson (2005); applying ordinary least square regression. More specifically, the change score method is preferable because the focus is on the change in the dependent variable (well-being) caused by the change in the independent variable (i.e. transition, divorce/separation). An important advantage of the change score method is that the estimates are unbiased by unobserved heterogeneity in time-invariant differences between individuals. Moreover, the change score method only makes an estimation of change effects (Johnson, 2005). Factors that are time-invariant, such as personality traits (S), consequently, drop out of the equation (i.e. $S_2 - S_1 = 0$). Despite that the term has dropped out of the equation it is still correctly specified and controlled for, whether or not they are measured (Johnson, 2005). Therefore, the estimates in the change score method are not biased by this so-called unobserved heterogeneity in time-invariant differences between individuals.

Next to the model with the divorce/separation effect and the control variables, the interaction effects will be added in the next model to test the escape hypothesis. Subsequently, a new model will be created with the control variables and the post-divorce conflicts (e.g. annoying behavior of the partner and serious violence after the divorce or separation). Finally, a model will be constructed with both the pre-existing levels of conflict and the post-divorce levels of conflict to see whether there is an interaction effect between pre-divorce/separation levels of conflicts and the post-divorce/separation levels of conflict.

Because some of the respondents were interviewed at the first time but not interviewed at the second time, the estimate of the effect could be biased by selective attrition (Kalmijn & Monden, 2006). To correct for this so-called attrition bias I will apply Heckman's two-stage model of sample selection bias (Heckman, 1979). First of all, a model will be constructed with the probability that the respondent that has been interviewed in wave 1 will also be in the sample in wave 2. Second, a linear regression will be conducted for all individuals that are observed in both the first and the second wave. To account for selective attrition, the risk of

being excluded from the sample as being derived from the first model -the model that estimated the probability of staying in the sample at time two- has been included in the second model. In doing so, a number of variables are included into the regression analysis that affect the response of individuals but not affect the change in well-being. These variables include the following: duration of the interview and the general atmosphere of the interview. Duration of the interview indicates how much time the interview took. The general atmosphere of the interview was evaluated by the interviewer after it has been completed. The answering categories ranged from (1) very unpleasant to (5) very pleasant. The expectation is that the response in the second wave is related to the duration of the interview and the general atmosphere.

4. Results

As a first step, several bivariate analyses were conducted in order to give a simplified overview about the relationship between making the transition to divorce or separation (the word divorce will be used to denote both options) and the change in well-being individuals experience. Therefore, the first section starts with several t-tests in order to see whether the means in well-being differ significantly between divorced individuals and those individuals who remained continuously married as has been proposed in the hypotheses. In doing so, a distinction was made between individuals who repartnered after the divorce and individuals who remained single afterwards. After presenting the bivariate analyses, the multivariate regression analyses are presented in order to provide an answer on the research question and hypotheses.

4.1 Bivariate t-tests: testing the differences in means

4.1.1. Continuously together versus divorced or separated

Initially, the differences in the change in well-being for the continuously married and the divorced people were tested using the independent sample t-test. The changes in mean scores (well-being) are presented in figure 5. On the vertical axis of the figure, the different levels of well-being are presented. On the horizontal axis, the waves are presented, with T1 presenting wave 1 and T2 indicating wave 2.

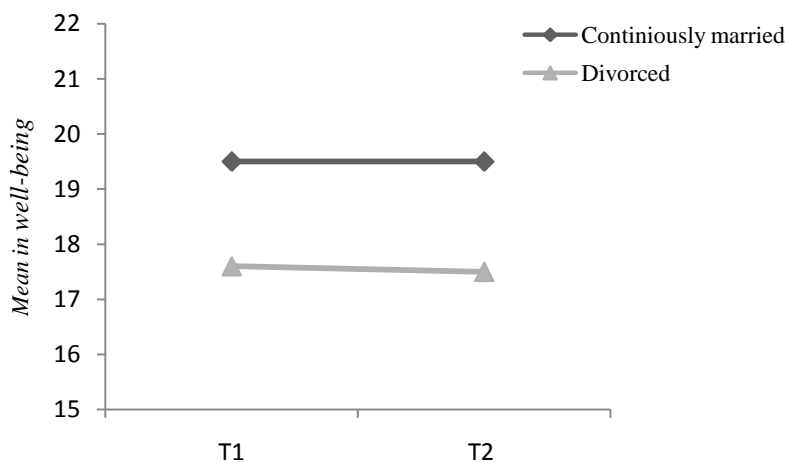


Figure 5: The mean in well-being in wave 1 and wave 2 for the continuously married or cohabiting individuals and the divorced or separated individuals

The figure shows that the mean in well-being among the individuals who remained continuously married is similar in both waves. On average, the well-being in both waves is

19.5 (on a scale from 0 to 25). For the divorced the change in well-being is about equal as well in both waves (i.e., 17.6 versus 17.5). A t-test demonstrates that no statistically significant difference exists between the change in well-being for the continuously married individuals and the divorced individuals. In fact, this refutes the hypothesis since getting a divorce was expected to lower the well-being of adults.

Interestingly, figure 5 illustrates that there is a difference in means at time of the first interview. Moreover, those individuals who remained continuously married between wave 1 and wave 2 had a higher mean in well-being at time of the first interview than those individuals who divorced between the two waves. The observed difference in the T1 means indeed turned out to be significant. In fact, this can be explained by the selection perspective, which argues that individuals with lower levels well-being are more prone to be selected into divorce than individuals with higher levels of well-being. In fact, research suggests that the problematic personal characteristics they possess predispose them to divorce or separate (Amato, 2000). Appendix A1 is presented to make the selection effect more clear.

The fact that the change in well-being between wave 1 and wave 2 for divorcees is not statistically different from the change in well-being for the married people might be the result of some respondents entering a new relationship after the divorce, which could have increased their well-being (i.e., the loss of a resource in terms of ending a supportive relationship is reduced when individuals start to live with a new partner). Figure 6 shows the differences in mean, separately for individuals who repartnered following the divorce and for those who have not.

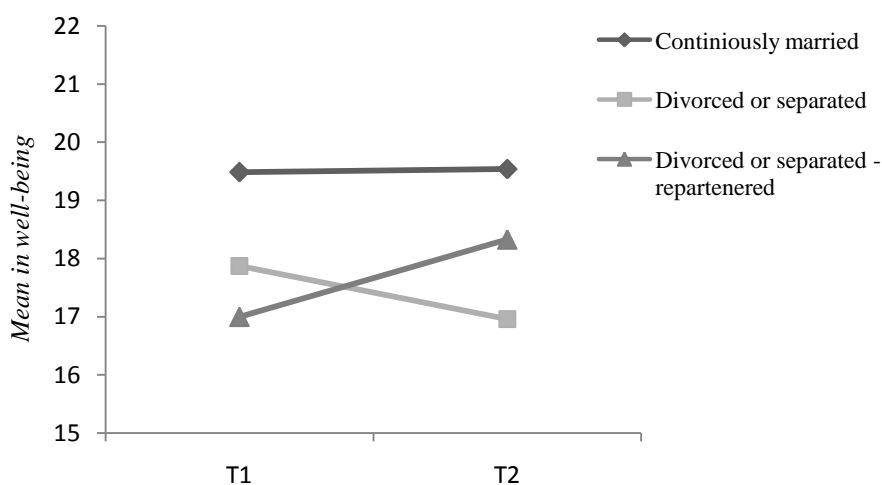


Figure 6: The mean in well-being in wave 1 and wave 2 for the continuously married or cohabiting individuals, the divorced or separated individuals who remained single afterwards and the divorced or separated individuals who repartnered

Figure 6 shows that individuals who divorced without entering a new relationship experienced a decrease in well-being (i.e. from 17.9 to 17.0), while divorcees who did start living with a new partner experienced an increase in well-being (i.e. from 17.0 to 18.3). For both groups, the changes in well-being turned out to be statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

Subsequently, the differences in development in well-being were examined to see whether the change in well-being for respondents who entered a new relationship after divorce is statistically different from the change in well-being of individuals who remained single afterwards. The t-test demonstrated that the differences in changes between those individuals who started living with a new partner and those who have not differ significantly ($p < 0.01$). Compared to the continuously married individuals, the changes in means for both groups also turned out to differ significantly. This means that divorcees experience a larger decrease in well-being compared to the continuously married individuals, but only when they do not repartner.

Lastly, notable is that the mean in well-being of individuals that remained continuously together is higher at time of the first interview than the mean in well-being of individuals that divorced. In fact, the mean in well-being at time of the first interview for both groups differ significantly in comparison to the continuously married people. The differences in averages of well-being at time of the first interview between those individuals who repartnered and those who stayed single afterwards are not statistically different, which indicates that there is no selection effect for divorcees who have repartnered and those who have not.

4.1.2. The role of pre-existing levels of conflict

In this study, a singular point of focus was the influence that conflict has on the change in well-being of individuals. Particularly, it has been expected that the effect of the divorce on the change in adult well-being will be less negative or even become positive when the initial level of conflict in the marriage was high. Therefore, t-tests were conducted separately for individuals who experienced initial conflict before the divorce and individuals who did not experience conflict. Figure 7 provides information on the change in well-being for the divorced individuals and the individuals who remained together by the initial levels of conflict.

At first, figure 7A shows that the mean in well-being declined somewhat between the two waves for those individuals who remained continuously married and did not experience conflict in wave 1, while for those individuals who did experience initial conflict the well-

being increased somewhat. The t-test showed that the change in well-being between those individuals who remained continuously married and did experience conflict before the divorce and those who do not is indeed significant. That there is a significant difference in change is actually very surprising since one would expect the well-being of individuals to decrease when experiencing conflicts. A possible explanation for this increase is that the conflict may be resolved at time of the second interview, or at least became less severe, leading to an increase in well-being.

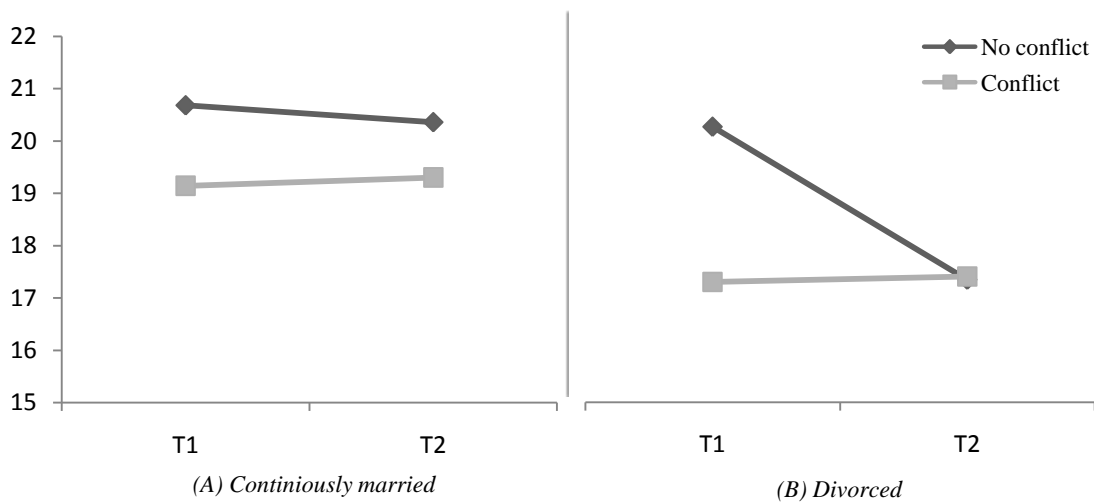


Figure 7: The mean in well-being in wave 1 and wave 2 by the initial levels of conflict for the continuously married or cohabiting individuals and the divorced or separated individuals

Figure 7B shows the well-being for people who divorced between wave 1 and wave 2. For the divorced who did not experience initial conflict, the figure shows a decrease in well-being, while for the divorced who did experience conflict a slight increase in well-being can be observed. This is in line with the strong version of the escape hypothesis since the effect of divorce becomes positive for those individuals who experienced initial conflicts. Although only the change in well-being for people that did not experience initial conflict reaches significance ($p < 0.05$), another t-test showed that the change in well-being for divorced individuals who did and did not experience initial conflict differed significantly which, therefore, is in line with the escape hypothesis ($p < 0.05$).

Subsequently, a t-test was conducted to see whether the divorcees differed from the continuously married individuals. To begin with, it was examined whether the change in well-being for individuals who did experience initial conflict differed significantly between those individuals who remained continuously married and those individuals who divorced. The results showed that there was no significant difference in changes between those two groups.

However, an important difference between the two groups is the well-being at time of the first interview. Moreover, for people who experienced initial conflict, the mean in well-being at time of the first interview was significantly higher for the continuously married individuals than for the divorcees ($p < 0.01$).

Subsequent, the changes in means for those individuals who did not experience initial conflict and remained continuously married were compared to the divorcees who did not experience initial conflict. The results demonstrated that both groups indeed differed significantly ($p < 0.05$). This indicates that when individuals do not experience initial conflict, the change in well-being is more negative for those individuals who divorce in comparison to their married counterparts.

Since prior research demonstrated that the escape hypothesis only holds when people do not repartner –meaning that when people repartner after a divorce or separation, the divorce or separation effect does not depend on the initial conflicts- another t-test was conducted separately for people who had repartnered and those who had not (Kalmijn & Monden, 2006). The changes in well-being are presented in figure 8.

At first, the figure is going to be discussed for divorcees who stayed single afterwards. The figure shows that individuals who divorced from a marriage full of conflict experienced a smaller decrease in well-being than do individuals who experienced no conflict before the divorce. Separate t-tests indicated that the decrease in well-being between wave 1 and wave 2 was significant for individuals who had not experienced any conflict, whereas the positive change in well-being for people escaping from a marriage or relationship full of conflict turned out to be insignificant. The difference in development in well-being between both groups was, however, statistically different ($p < 0.1$). In fact, this corresponds to the weak version of the escape hypothesis which states that the effect of divorce on the change in well-being will be less negative when the initial level of conflict is high.

The changes in well-being for the repartnered are presented in figure 8 as well (B). What can be observed from the figure is that for individuals who did report to experience conflict the change in well-being becomes positive, while for individuals who did not experience conflict a negative change is observable. The differences in development for divorcees who did repartner do not, however, differ significantly from 0. These results, therefore, postulate that the escape hypothesis only holds when individuals do not repartner.

When comparing divorcees who stayed single afterwards with divorcees who did repartner, the t-test showed that the changes in mean differ significantly only when the

respondent experienced initial conflict. No significant differences in changes in well-being occurred for individuals who did not experience initial conflict. The fact that the change in well-being for people who experienced initial conflict becomes positive after taking into account the effect of repartnering ($p < 0.01$) indicates that for those individuals repartnering leads to an improvement in well-being.

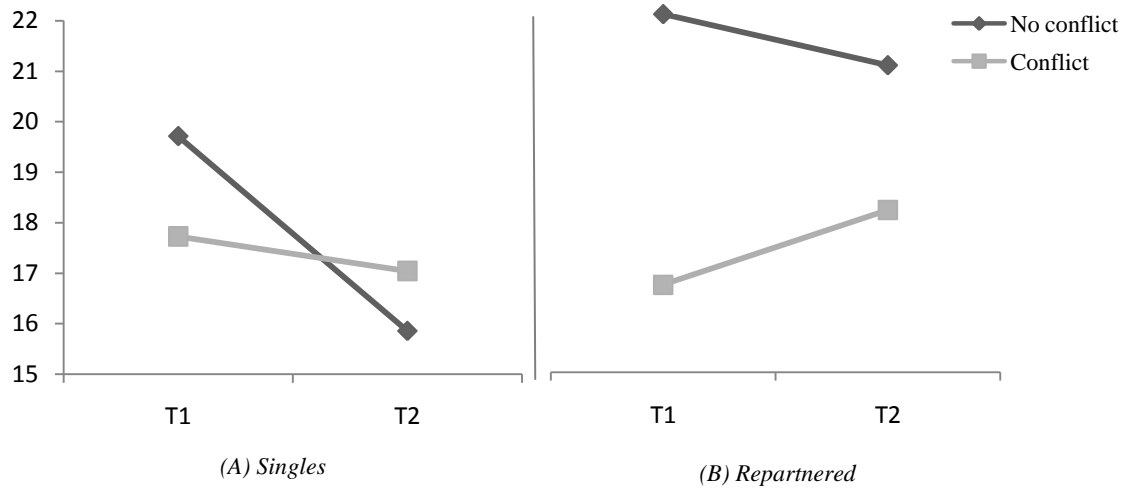


Figure 8: The mean in well-being in wave 1 and wave 2 by the initial levels of conflict for the divorced or separated individuals by relationship status after the divorce or separation

4.1.3. The role of post divorce/separation conflict

In this study one of the key issues under scrutiny was the role of post divorce levels of conflicts. The hypothesis states that the change in well-being will be more negative for divorcees who experience post divorce conflicts than for divorcees who do not experience post divorce conflict. Therefore, bivariate t-tests were conducted to assess whether the mean in well-being was statistically different for divorcees who did experience post divorce conflict in comparison to divorcees who did not experience post divorce conflict. For these t-tests, separate figures are shown for those individuals who entered a new relationship following the divorce and for those individuals who did not since the influence of repartnering could interfere with the results.

Figure 9 illustrates that for divorcees who did not repartner –and either experienced annoying behavior on part of the ex-partner or not- there is a decrease in well-being. However, the change in well-being turned out to be statistically significant only for divorcees who reported to experience post divorce annoying behavior on the part of the ex-partner ($p < 0.1$). This means that individuals who experienced annoying behavior on the part of the ex-partner

following a divorce had a larger decrease in well-being than individuals who did not experience annoying behavior, which is in line with the hypothesis. When comparing the changes in well-being between those groups the t-test, however, demonstrates that the changes do not differ significantly.

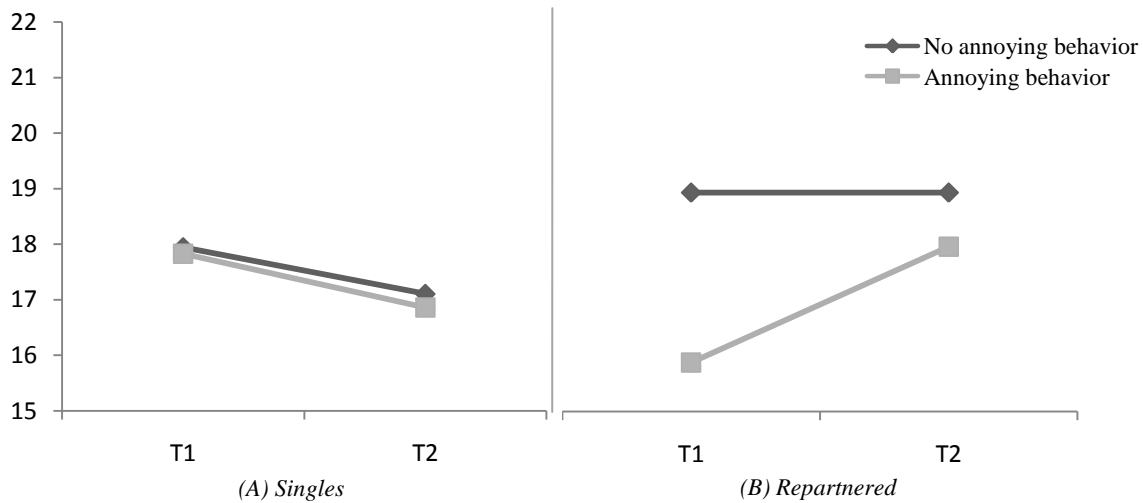


Figure 9: The mean in well-being in wave 1 and wave 2 by the levels of annoying behavior on the part of the ex-partner and by the relationship status after the divorce or separation

For individuals who repartnered the picture shows that the well-being remained equal for individuals who experienced no annoying behavior, while for people who did experience annoying behavior on the part of the ex-partner, the well-being increased between the two waves. Both changes turned out to be not statistically different. Overall, the hypothesis which states that the change in well-being will be more negative when individuals experience post divorce or separation annoying behavior has been rejected thus far.

Furthermore, notable is that for divorcees who experienced annoying behavior on the part of the ex-partner the change in well-being differed significantly between divorcees who repartnered and those who had not. In fact, the positive change in well-being for individuals who experienced annoying behavior by the ex-partner can be due to the effect of repartnering. No difference in change can be observed for individuals who experienced no annoying behavior by the ex-partner.

Subsequently, a t-test was executed for serious violence or threats to use violence on the part of the ex-partner. Figure 10 shows that the well-being declines more strongly among the non-repartnered divorcees who do experience post divorce violence or threats than among those who do not experience post divorce violence or threats. Thus, as was the case with annoying behavior on the part of the ex-partner, the change in well-being reached statistical

significance ($p < 0.05$), though only for those individuals who did experience post divorce violence. This means that the decline in well-being is larger for those individuals who experience post divorce violence in comparison to those individuals who do not experience post divorce violence. To be sure of this interpretation also the changes in well-being were compared and the difference was indeed significant ($p < 0.1$). Therefore, hypothesis 3, which states that the change in well-being will be more negative for people who experience more post divorce conflict, is confirmed.

For individuals who repartnered –and who experienced either violence or threats or not- the picture shows an increase in well-being. In fact, the change in well-being was significant but only for individuals that experienced post divorce violence or threats. The results, furthermore, revealed that there was no significant difference in the development in well-being between wave 1 and wave 2 among the repartnered who have experienced violence or threats and those who have not. Therefore, the changes in well-being are more negative for individuals who experience post divorce violence or threats on the part of the ex-partner, thus confirming the hypothesis, at least to the degree that it involves divorcees who do not repartner.

Furthermore, additional t-tests showed that there is a difference in change in well-being between the repartnered divorcees and the single divorcees when they experience post divorce violence or threats by the ex-partner. This indicates that the negative effect of post divorce violence has been counteracted when individuals repartner. For divorcees who did not experience post divorce conflicts no difference appeared in the change in well-being between the repartnered and the singles.

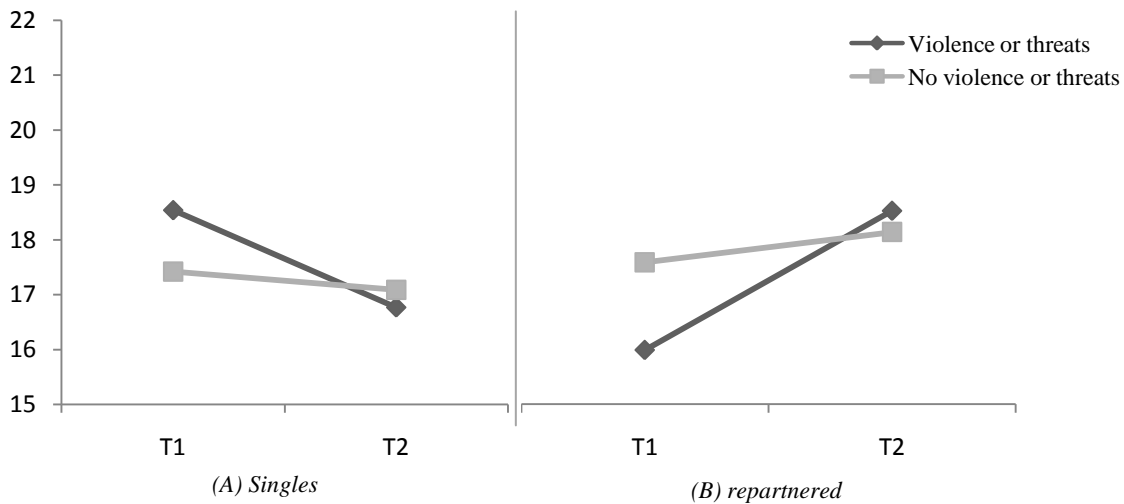


Figure 10: The mean in well-being in wave 1 and wave 2 by the levels of violence or threats of violence on the part of the ex-partner and by the relationship status after the divorce or separation

4.1.4. Examining the role of the pre-existing levels of conflict and post-divorce/ separation levels of conflict

The primary focus in this study is the effect of both the pre-existing levels of conflict and the post divorce/separation levels of conflict. To begin with, the additive effect of the pre-existing levels of conflict and the post divorce levels of annoying behavior on the part of the ex-partner will be outlined. After that, the additive effect of the initial levels of conflict and the levels of violence or threats by the ex-partner will be outlined.

The change in well-being by the pre-existing levels of conflict and the post divorce level of annoying behavior on the part of the ex-partner is presented in figure 11. Observable from figure 11A is that the change in well-being among individuals who experienced no initial conflict is more negative for individuals who experience post divorce or annoying behavior on the part of the ex-partner, which is in line with the hypothesis. Or to put it in other words, the decrease in well-being is stronger for divorcees experiencing post divorce aggravating behavior in comparison to individuals who do not experience any annoying behavior on the part of the ex-partner. The t-test showed that the change in well-being reaches significance ($p < 0.1$) but only for the respondents who experienced post divorce annoying behavior on the part of the ex-partner. Another t-test showed, however, that the developments in well-being do not differ significantly.

Figure B presents the changes in well-being for divorcees who experienced initial conflicts. For divorcees who experienced no annoying behavior on the part of the ex-partner an increase in well-being was predicted, whereas for divorcees who experienced annoying

behavior a decrease was expected. However, it is obvious from the figure that a decline is observable rather than an increase, therefore, disproving the escape hypothesis. Furthermore, an increase rather than a decrease was observed for divorcees who did experience annoying behavior on the part of the ex-partner, following a similar opposite pattern as for those who did not experience any serious discord after the divorce. The t-test did show, however, that the changes in well-being do not differ significantly.

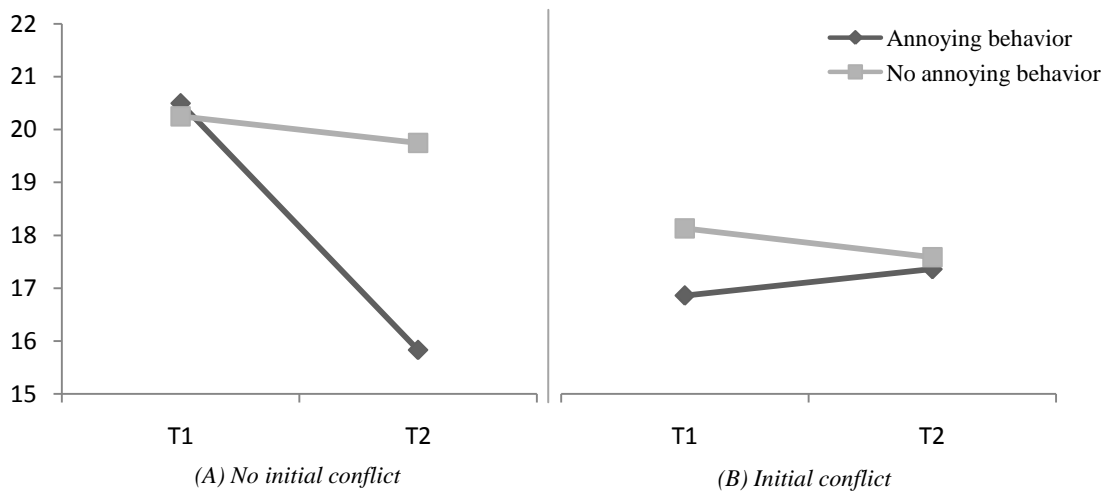


Figure 11: The mean in well-being in wave 1 and wave 2 by the initial levels of conflict and the levels of annoying behavior of the ex-partner for the divorced or separated individuals

In this study, both the annoying behavior of the ex-partner and the role of violence or threats of violence on the part of the ex-partner on the change in well-being were examined. The results of the t-test for violence or threats on the part of the ex-partner can be observed in figure 12.

Figure 12A presents the well-being for divorcees who did not experience initial conflict. The figure demonstrates that the well-being of divorcees who experienced violence or threats on part of the ex-partner declines more strongly than the well-being of divorcees who do not experience violence or threats of violence after the divorce, which is in line with the expectation. An additional t-test showed, however, that both changes in well-being are not statistically different. In fact, this is quite surprising since one would expect stronger decline in well-being for individuals who experienced post divorce violence or threats on the part of the ex-partner.

For individuals who experienced initial conflict the results of the t-tests are partially in line with the expectations. Moreover, for individuals who divorced from a marriage or relationship full of conflict and for whom the conflict stopped after the divorce an increase in

well-being can be observed, which is in line with the strong version escape hypothesis. However, not in line with the expectations is the increase in well-being for divorcees who still experienced post divorce conflict after the divorce. Again, the t-test demonstrates that the changes in well-being for people who experienced initial conflict do not differ significantly.

When comparing both figures (figure 11 and 12) one important similarity and one important difference can be observed. Similar in both figures is the change in well-being for divorcees who did not experience initial conflict. Moreover, the change well-being for those individuals is less negative when they experienced no post divorce or separation conflict in comparison to divorcees who did experience post divorce or separation conflict, although the difference was insignificant. For divorcees who experienced initial conflict in the relationship the figures show different results. In the case of initial conflict and annoying behavior, no post divorce conflict leads to a decrease in well-being, while in the case of serious violence or threats of violence on the part of the ex-partner it leads to an increase in well-being. In other words, the escape effect seems to be hold only in the case of serious violence or threats.

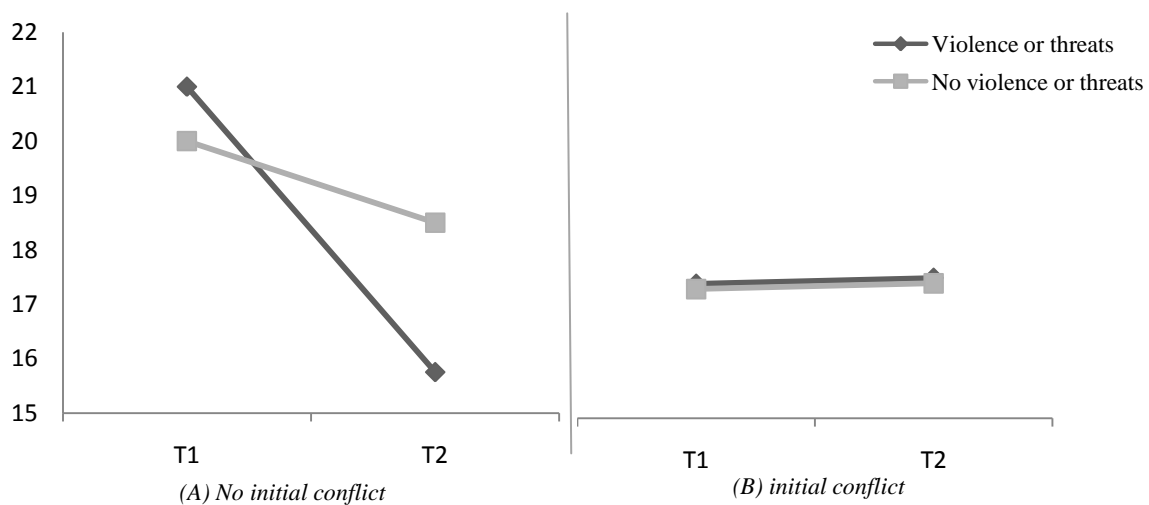


Figure 12: The mean in well-being in wave 1 and wave 2 by the initial levels of conflict and the levels of violence or threats to use violence on the part of the ex-partner for the divorced or separated individuals

4.2 Multivariate regression analysis

4.2.1 Heterogeneity in the divorce effects

Before turning to the regression results, I will first demonstrate that there exists heterogeneity in the effect of divorce as has been proposed in the escape hypothesis. Therefore, the frequency distribution of the change in well-being for divorcees is presented in figure 13. As can be observed from figure 13, there is indeed substantial heterogeneity when it comes to the effect of divorce. Some individuals experience a decrease in well-being while others even experience an increase in well-being. For most individuals the well-being remained equal between wave 1 and wave 2. Nevertheless, the figure supports the expectation that the outcome of a divorce or separation for the well-being of individuals can be negative as well as positive.

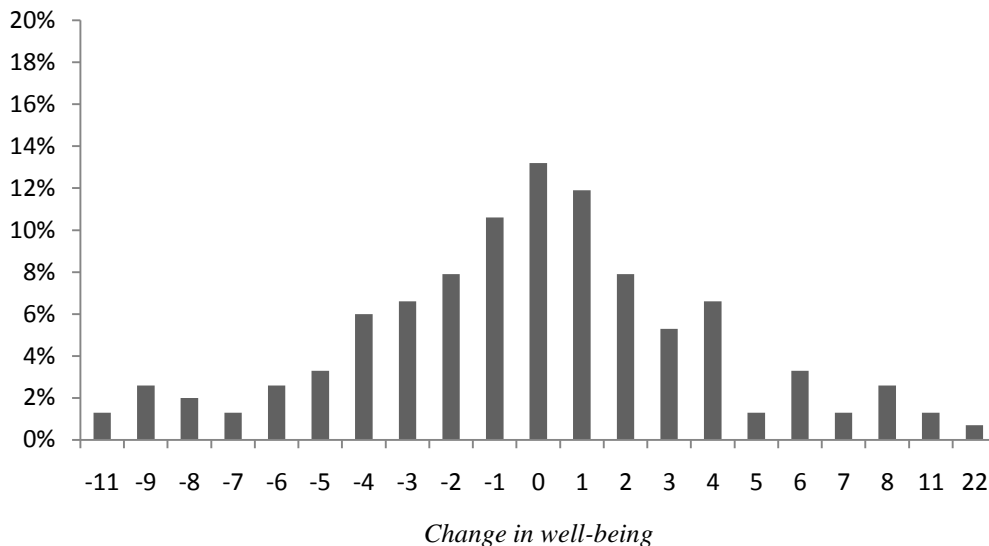


Figure 13: Changes in well-being between wave 1 and wave 2 for the divorced or separated individuals

To be sure of the above presented interpretation also the frequency distribution for those individuals who remained continuously together is presented. Figure 14 shows that the change in well-being for individuals who remained continuously married is heterogeneous as well. However, there are some important differences when it comes to the distribution of the heterogeneity. Obvious from the figures is that the change in well-being is in more cases zero for those individuals who remained continuously married in comparison to the divorcees. In fact, about 18.9 percent of the continuously married people experience no change at all, whereas this percentage for divorcees is 13.2 percent. Furthermore, about 46.4 percent of continuously married people experience a negative change of -1, no change, or a positive

change of +1. For divorcees, on the other hand, this percentage is 34.7 percent which, therefore, indicates that those individuals are more likely to experience either a stronger negative change or a stronger positive change in well-being in comparison to their married counterparts. Overall, the figures indicate that there exists heterogeneity in the change in well-being following a divorce.

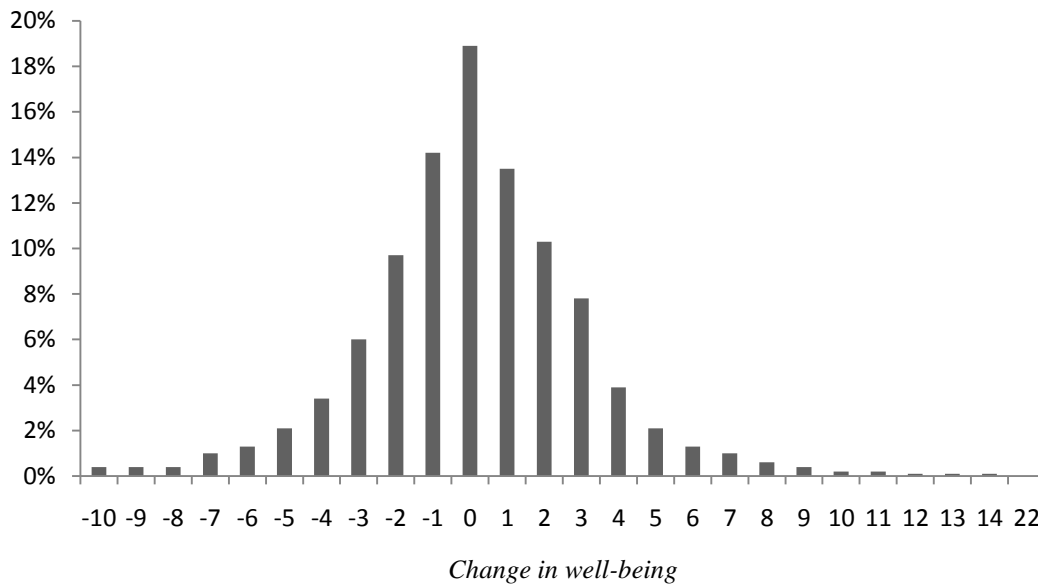


Figure 14: Changes in well-being between wave 1 and wave 2 for those individuals who remained continuously together

4.2.2 Selection effect

The selection model is presented in table 3. The selection equation shows that attrition is selective in a number of respects. Respondents with a higher well-being in wave 1 are more likely to be participants in the second wave than respondents who reported to have a low well-being in the first wave. Furthermore, gender, age, age squared, education, employment status and non-response in the income variable show significant effects. In other words, younger persons, men, lower educated, people who had non-response in the income variable, and unemployed are more likely to be non-respondent in the second wave. There is also a significant effect of the experienced general atmosphere at the time of the first interview. Respondents who experienced the general atmosphere as positive were more likely to participate again.

Table 3: Logistic regression of the likelihood to participate in both wave 1 and wave 2: estimates from the Heckman selection model

	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E</i>
Well-being	0.021*	0.012
Initial conflict	0.012	0.030
Gender '0' men '1' female	0.362***	0.086
Age	0.108***	0.020
Age squared	-0.001***	0.000
Education	0.100***	0.019
Household income	0.000	0.000
Household income missing	-0.364**	0.143
Employed '0' no '1' yes	0.242**	0.109
Children living in the household '0' no '1' yes	0.087	0.095
Duration of the interview	0.000	0.000
General atmosphere of the interview	0.333***	0.063
Constant	-3.776***	0.589

Note: control and selection variables are measured at T1

*Significance level: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$*

Source: NKPS 2002-2004 and 2006-2007

4.2.3 Divorce/separation effect

Table 4 shows the regression model with the effect of divorce on the change in well-being. Applying the Heckman procedure shows that the effect of transition to divorce or separation, conflicts, and their interactions with well-being in models adjusting for attrition are in all models (approximately) identical to the models that do not adjust for attrition. In addition, the divorce effect is only slightly smaller in the model adjusting for attrition ($b = -1.016$ versus $b = -0.998$), which indicates a very small overestimation of the divorce effect when the model does not adjust for attrition. Therefore, only the models without adjusting for attrition are presented here.

The model controls for the effect of repartnering and several demographic characteristics including: age, age squared, gender, education, income, employment status and the presence of children in the household. Table 4 demonstrates that individuals who experienced a divorce have a statistically significant greater decrease in well-being between the two waves than do individuals who remained continuously together. In fact, the effect is -0.989 for divorcees who did not repartner, which accounts for $(-0.989/3.4)$ 29.1% of the standard deviation in well-being, indicating a strong negative effect. Therefore, the first hypothesis which states that a divorce or separation is expected to lower the well-being of

adults is confirmed.

The table, furthermore, reveals a positive significant effect of repartnering. This indicates that divorcees who started to live with a new partner after a divorce experienced a smaller decrease in well-being. In fact, when taking into account the magnitude of the repartnering effect, the table shows that the decrease in well-being for individuals who remained single afterwards is 0.989, while the increase in well-being for divorcees that have repartnered is 1.296 (-0.989 + 2.285). This indicates that the negative effect of a divorce is counteracted when taking into account the effect of repartnering. Consequently, the first hypothesis is only confirmed for individuals that do not repartner.

Finally, beside the main effects the table shows that a number of control variables that are included in the model have a significant effect on the change in well-being between the two waves. Observable from table 4 is that both age and the quadratic effect of age have a significant effect on the change in well-being. A graphical examination shows that the positive effect of age on the change in well-being first increases (up till 49) and then decreases with age (see appendix A2).

Table 4: OLS regression model of the change in well-being

	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E</i>
Divorce '0' no '1' yes	-0.989***	0.337
Repartnering '0' no '1' yes	2.285***	0.549
Age	0.058*	0.032
Age squared	-0.0006*	0.000
Gender: '0' men '1' female	0.129	0.118
Education	-0.020	0.028
Household income	-1.161 ^E -5	0.000
Household income missing	0.135	0.227
Employed '0' no '1' yes	-0.121	0.155
Children living in the household '0' no '1' yes	0.021	0.131
Constant	-1.028	0.744
R ²		0.007
N		3411

Note: control variables are measured at T1
*Significance level: * p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<.01*
Source: NKPS 2002-2004 and 2006-2007

4.2.4 The conditional effect of conflict

Table 5 shows the regression model of the conditional effect of initial conflict. To make the presentation well-organized, the table only shows the main effects of divorce and repartnering as well as their interaction effects with conflict. The interaction effect with initial conflict and divorce relates to divorced individuals who did not repartner. The interaction effect with repartnering signifies whether the effect of divorce is stronger for individuals who repartnered in comparison to those individuals who do not repartner.

The table shows that the interaction effect with initial conflict is positive ($b=0.663$) and significant ($p<0.05$). This indicates that individuals who divorce from a marriage or relationship full of conflict experience a smaller decrease in well-being than do individuals who divorce from a marriage or relationship without serious discord. Or in other words, the decrease in well-being is diminished when individuals divorce from a marriage or relationship full of conflict. In fact, this is in line with the weak version of the escape hypothesis which stated that the effect of divorce on the change in adult well-being will be less negative when the initial level of conflict in the relationship or marriage is high (*H2a*) (see also figure 15).

The interaction effect with repartnering, on the other hand, is negative ($b=-1.077$) and significant ($p<0.01$), which indicates that the decrease in well-being is stronger for individuals who do not repartner. Or to put in other words, the negative change in well-being is less strong when individuals do repartner. Hence, the interaction effect of divorce and initial conflict is reduced when individuals repartner ($0.663-1.077=-0.414$).

Table 5: OLS regression model with main and interaction effects of divorce and initial conflict on change in well-being

	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E</i>
Divorce ‘0’ no ‘1’ yes	-3.004***	0.842
Repartnering ‘0’ no ‘1’ yes	5.414***	1.361
Initial conflict	0.529***	0.139
Interaction effect with divorce	0.663**	0.263
Interaction effect with repartnering	-1.077***	0.432
Constant	-1.280*	0.746
R^2		0.014

Note: the model controls for age, age squared, gender, education, household income, household income missing, employment and children living in the household; all measured at T1.

*Significance level: * $p<0.1$; ** $p<0.05$; *** $p<0.01$*

Source: NKPS 2002-2004 and 2006-2007

Figure 15 demonstrates the interaction effect graphically. On the vertical axis, the divorce effect on the change in well-being is presented, while on the horizontal axis the initial conflict is presented ranging from low levels of conflict through high levels of conflict. The higher the number the more positive the change score is and, therefore, the less negative the effect of divorce on well-being.

Figure 15 shows that those individuals who divorce when experiencing high levels of conflict experience a smaller decrease in well-being than do individuals who experience low levels of initial conflict. Interestingly, the effect does not become positive even when the initial conflict was high, therefore, supporting only the weak version of the escape hypothesis.

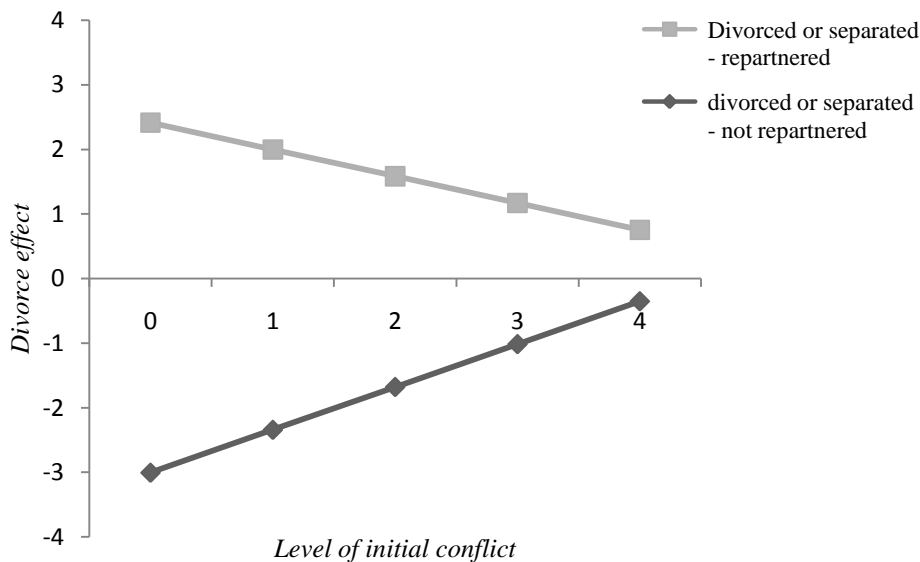


Figure 15: The effects of divorce or separation on the change in well-being by the initial levels of conflict and by relationship status

For the repartnered individuals who experienced no initial conflict a positive change in well-being is observable, whereas the change in well-being for the repartnered who did experience initial conflict is less positive. This indicates that starting to live with a new partner after a divorce can compensate for the negative effects for one's well-being, in particular when the initial levels of conflict were low. A possible explanation for this outcome is that divorcees who leave a marriage full of conflict are still upset because of the conflict they experienced which, therefore, hampers the positive effect of entering a new relationship.

All together, the results confirm the weak version of the escape hypothesis which stated that the effect of divorce on the change in adult well-being will be less negative when the initial conflict in the relationship or marriage is high. The strong version of the escape hypothesis which stated that the effect of divorce on the change in adult well-being will be

positive when the initial level of conflict in the relationship or marriage is high is, however, rejected. Furthermore, the confirmation of the weak version of the escape hypothesis is limited to people that do not repartner. Moreover, when people do repartner they experience a positive change in well-being, especially when the initial levels of conflict in the previous marriage or relationship were low.

4.2.5 Post divorce/separation conflicts

Next to the initial levels of conflict, in this study, a singular point of focus was the post divorce levels of conflict. The hypothesis states that the change in well-being will be more negative for individuals who experienced post divorce conflicts. Table 6 demonstrates that this hypothesis holds. In addition, the effect annoying behavior on the part of the ex-partner is negative ($b=-1.197$) and significant for divorcees who did not repartner. This indicates that the change in well-being is more negative for people who experience post divorce annoying behavior on the part of the ex-partner in comparison to divorcees who do not. The interaction effect with repartnering is positive ($b=3.131$) and significant which indicates that the effect of annoying behavior on the part of the ex-partner is less strong for divorcees who repartnered after the divorce.

Table 6: OLS regression model of change in well-being on post divorce/separation conflicts

	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E</i>
Annoying behavior by the ex-partner	-1.197***	0.428
Initial conflict	0.156***	0.040
Repartnering '0' no '1' yes	-0.035	0.728
Interaction annoying behavior* repartnering	3.131***	1.002
Constant	-1.254**	0.743
R^2		0.012

Note: - the model includes people who are divorced or separated between the two waves.
 - the model controls for age, age squared, gender, education, household income, household income missing, employment and children living in the household; all measured at T1.
 Significance level: * $p<0.1$; ** $p<0.05$; *** $p<0.01$
 Source: NKPS 2002-2004 and 2006-2007

Table 7 shows the effect of violence or threats to use violence on the part of the ex-partner. It can be observed that the effect of violence or threats is negative and significant ($p<0.01$). This means that the change in well-being is negative for single divorcees who experience post divorce violence or threats on the part of the ex-partner. Again this is in line with the

hypothesis. For repartnered divorcees the effect is, just as in the model for annoying behavior, positive and significant ($p < 0.01$). This means that the negative effect of violence or threats on the part of the ex-partner is counteracted when people repartner.

Overall, the hypothesis which stated that the change in well-being is more negative for divorcees who experience post divorce conflict is confirmed but only when divorcees do not repartner.

Table 7: OLS regression model of change in well-being on post divorce/separation conflicts

	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E</i>
Violence or threats on the part of the ex-partner	-1.957***	0.524
Initial conflict	0.157***	0.040
Repartnering '0' no '1' yes	0.451	0.560
Interaction annoying behavior* repartnering	3.891***	1.038
Constant	-1.130**	0.743
R^2		0.014

Note: - the model includes only divorcees.

- the model controls for age, age squared, gender, education, household income, household income missing, employment and children living in the household; all measured at T1.

Significance level: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$

Source: NKPS 2002-2004 and 2006-2007

4.2.6 Interaction of initial conflicts and post divorce or separation conflicts

The question that remains is whether there is an interaction effect of the initial conflicts and the post divorce conflicts. The results are presented in table 8 and table 9. Table 8 presents the interaction with annoying behavior, whereas table 9 provides information about the interaction with violence or threats to use violence on the part of the ex-partner.

As a first step, the interaction with annoying behavior will be discussed. The interaction of the initial experienced conflict before the divorce and the experienced annoying behavior on the part of the ex-partner after the divorce is positive ($b = 1.325$), which means that the negative effect of annoying behavior is less strong for individuals who also experienced initial conflict than for those individuals who did not experience any serious discord before the divorce. Although the effect is in the expected direction it is not statistically significant.

For divorcees who do repartner the interaction effect is negative ($b = -3.297$) and statistically significant. Notable is that the interaction effect with initial conflict and post

divorce annoying behavior on the part of the ex-partner is only statistically significant when divorcees do repartner. More specifically, the negative effect demonstrates that the interaction effect of initial conflict and annoying behavior is less positive when individuals repartner.

Table 8: OLS regression with initial conflict and post divorce/separation annoying behavior of the ex-partner on change in well-being

	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E</i>
Initial conflicts	-0.229	0.669
Annoying behavior by the ex-partner	-4.091	2.503
Repartnering '0' no '1' yes	0.345	2.777
Interaction initial conflict * annoying behavior	1.325	0.792
Interaction initial conflict * repartnering	0.281	0.948
Interaction annoying behavior * repartnering	10.756***	3.843
Interaction initial conflict * annoying behavior * repartnering	-2.808**	1.235
Constant	-1.520	5.097
R^2		0.219

Note: the model controls for age, age squared, gender, education, household income, household income missing, employment and children living in the household; all measured at T1.

*Significance level: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$*

Source: NKPS 2002-2004 and 2006-2007

To illustrate what the interaction effect entail the interaction effects are presented graphically in figure 16. One must be careful by interpreting these results since not all outcomes are statistically significant, as can be observed in table 8. On the vertical axis of the figure the effect of annoying behavior on the part of the ex-partner on the change in well-being is presented. The higher the number, the more positive the change in well-being is. On the horizontal axis of the figure different levels of initial conflict are presented, with (0) indicating no initial conflict and (4) indicating high levels of initial conflict. The lines in the figure shows how the effect of divorce or separation depends on the initial levels of conflict and the post divorce levels of annoying behavior. The lines are presented separately for divorcees who repartnered and divorcees who remained single afterwards.

For individuals who did not repartner and who did experience annoying behavior on the part of the ex-partner the figure illustrates that the changes in well-being do differ by the initial levels of conflict. Hence, the effect of annoying behavior is positive for individuals who experienced initial conflict by the ex-partner, while for individuals who did not experience any discord before the divorce the effect is negative. Actually, the positive effect of annoying behavior is quite surprising since one would expect the change in well-being to be negative

when individuals experience post divorce or separation annoying behavior by the ex-partner. The fact that the effect of annoying behavior on the change in well-being becomes positive for individuals who experienced initial conflict before the divorce or separation, however, can be explained by the role of the initial levels of conflict as well. Moreover, the fact that those individuals already experienced conflict before the divorce may lead to a less harmful effect of the post divorce annoying behavior on the part of the ex-partner since they are already used to the conflict. This in turn, might result in individuals feeling relieved that they escaped from the marriage full of conflict leading to a less negative or even positive effect of the annoying behavior of the ex-partner on the change in well-being after the divorce.

For individuals who experienced no serious discord, on the other hand, the picture shows a negative effect of annoying behavior on the part of the ex-partner on the change in well-being. In fact, this is in line with the expectation which stated that the effect of annoying behavior would be more negative when divorcees did not experience any serious discord before the divorce.

At last, also the repartnered individuals are presented in the figure. For the repartnered individuals the picture demonstrates that higher levels of initial conflict induce a less positive effect of annoying behavior on the part of the ex-partner on the change in well-being in comparison to people who experienced no serious discord before the divorce or separation. Therefore, the positive interaction effect of the initial levels of conflict and annoying behavior by the ex-partner afterwards is counteracted when people repartner, in particular when the initial levels of conflict were low.

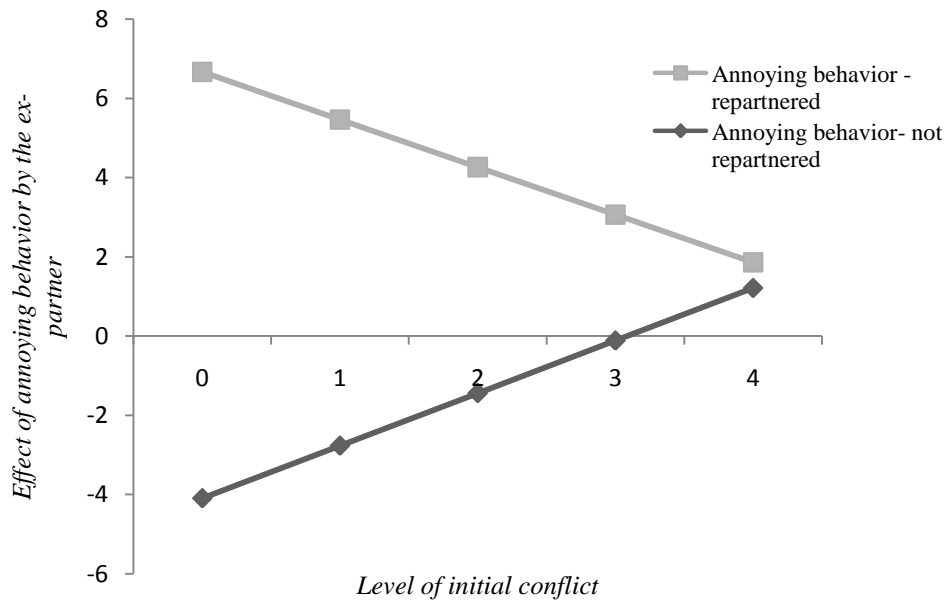


Figure 16: The effect of annoying behavior by the ex-partner by initial levels of conflict and by relationship status

The interaction effect of the initial experienced conflict before the divorce and the experienced violence or threats to use violence on the part of the ex-partner after the divorce is presented in table 9. Observable from the table is that the interaction effect is positive ($b=0.190$), which means that the effect of the violence or threats on the part of the ex-partner on the change in well-being is less harmful when people also experienced initial conflict. Although the effect is in the expected direction, the effect turns out to be insignificant. Therefore, the expectation, which stated that the effect of post divorce violence or threats on the change in well-being is more negative for divorcees who did not experience any serious discord before the divorce in comparison to divorcees who did experience initial conflict, is rejected.

For people who do repartner the interaction effect is, just as in the model with annoying behavior, negative ($b=-2.973$). This indicates that for repartnered divorcees, higher levels of conflict induce a less positive effect of violence or threats to use violence by the ex-partner on the change in well-being.

Table 9: OLS regression with initial conflict and post divorce/separation violence or threats to use violence by the ex-partner on change in well-being

	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E</i>
Initial conflicts	0.559	0.468
Violence or threats to use violence by the ex-partner	-1.919	2.288
Repartnering '0' no '1' yes	1.941	2.383
Interaction initial conflict * violence or threats to use violence	0.190	0.723
Interaction initial conflict * repartnering	-0.231	0.747
Interaction violence or threats * repartnering	9.768**	3.837
Interaction initial conflict * violence (or threats) * repartnering	-2.275*	1.212
Constant	1.169	5.006
R^2		0.213

Note: the model controls for age, age squared, gender, education, household income, household income missing, employment and children living in the household; all measured at T1.

*Significance level: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$*

Source: NKPS 2002-2004 and 2006-2007

The implications of these findings for the well-being of divorcees are shown in Figure 17. First of all, observable from figure 17 is that the effect of violence or threats on the part of the ex-partner is slightly less negative for individuals who experienced initial conflict in comparison to individuals who did not experience initial conflict. This indicates that the effect of violence or threats is less harmful for the well-being of individuals when they experienced initial conflicts, which is in line with the expectation. However, as can be observed from table 9 this effect is insignificant.

For the repartnered individuals, the line follows an opposite trend. In fact, the picture shows that for those individuals who did not experience initial conflict the effect of violence or threats to use violence becomes positive, whereas for individuals who escaped from a marriage or relationship full of conflict the effect of violence or threats to use violence is negative. This means that when individuals repartner, while not have experienced initial conflict, the negative effect of violence or threats on the change in well-being becomes positive, while for individuals who experienced a lot of initial conflict the effect of violence or threats becomes more negative when taking into account the effect of repartnering. In other words, the enduring conflict for people who already experienced initial conflict seems to violate the positive effect of repartnering, while for individuals who did not experience initial conflict the positive effect of repartnering seems to be more powerful for the well-being of individuals than the violence or threats to use violence on the part of the ex-partner. Overall,

the picture suggests that repartnering can compensate for the negative effects on one's well-being, especially when in the previous marriage or relationship no serious discord existed.

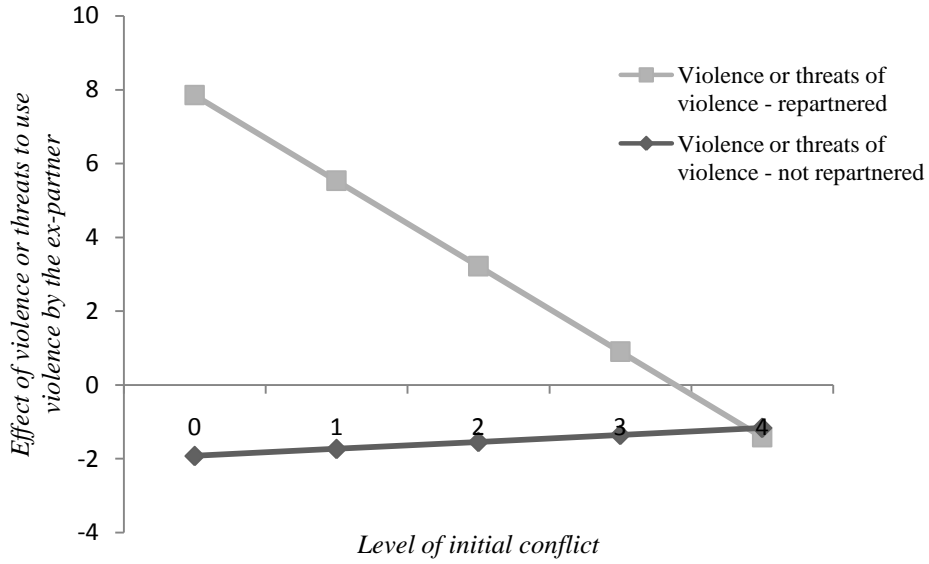


Figure 17: The effect of violence or threats to use violence by the ex-partner by initial levels of conflict and by relationship status

Conclusion

This study set out to investigate whether the consequences of a divorce or separation depends on the conflicts prior to the disruption and the role that post divorce or separation conflicts play for the well-being of individuals, using two wave longitudinal data from the Netherlands Kinship Panel study (Dykstra, Kalmijn, Knijn, Komter, Liefbroer, Mulder, 2005; Dykstra, Kalmijn, Knijn, Komter, Liefbroer, Mulder, 2007). More specifically, it was asked whether the end of a high quality marriage, that is to say without conflict, is more detrimental for the well-being of individuals than the end of relationship or marriage with serious discord. Also, the consequences of the post divorce or separation levels of conflict for the well-being of divorcees were analyzed. Moreover, the problems people are facing within a marriage or relationship do often not end when the relationship ends. Looking at both the pre-existing levels of conflict and the post divorce/separation levels of conflict was, therefore, one of the key issues under scrutiny. This section will start with a general conclusion by answering the research questions and corresponding hypotheses. In sequence, the limitations of this study will be discussed followed by some recommendations for future research.

5.1 Main conclusion

The central questions in this study were:

To what extent are the negative effects of divorce and separation on adult well-being dependent on the initial conflict of the relationship?

And to what extent do the post divorce/separation conflicts between former partners affect the change in adult well-being?

Initially, the consequences of divorce/separation for the well-being of individuals were examined over a three year period between the two waves of the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study. In line with earlier research, general support was found for the hypothesis that a divorce or separation lowers the well-being of individuals. In fact, this outcome corresponds to the stress-adjustment perspective which argues that the decline in well-being caused by the divorce or separation could reflect both primary stressors, induced by the divorce or separation itself, and secondary stressors, which focuses on the notion that divorces and separations induce persistent strains, creating long lasting negative consequences for individual's well-being. Both notions, which are embedded into two perspectives within the

stress adjustment perspective (i.e. the crisis model and the chronic strain model), are, therefore, confirmed, although the relative importance of both notions was not distinguished.

Subsequently, it was examined whether the consequences of a divorce or separation depend on the initial levels of conflict. Moreover, prior research indicated that being in a low quality marriage or relationship, in terms of high levels of conflict, will in itself have strong negative consequences for the well-being of individuals, whereas high quality marriages or relationships (with no serious discord) will have positive effects on the well-being of individuals (Ross et al., 1990; Amato, 2000). For that reason, people who experience no or low levels of conflict prior to the divorce or separation might actually be quite satisfied with their marriage or relationship and getting a divorce or separation can, therefore, be considered as an unwelcome change. Conversely, when people do experience a lot of conflict, the divorce or separation might be considered as a solution rather than a problem and individuals escaping from such a marriage or relationship might even experience some sort of relief (Kalmijn & Monden, 2006). Consequently, it was expected that the largest improvements in well-being would appear among those individuals who ended their marriage or relationship while experiencing high levels of conflict. In line with this reasoning is the explanation of the stress-adjustment perspective. The stress adjustment perspective argues that for people who divorce or separate without experiencing serious discord, the divorce or separation involves both a crisis (crisis model) and a loss in resources (strain model), adding up to a decline in well-being (Kalmijn & Monden, 2006). Conversely, people who divorce or separate from a marriage or relationship without serious discord will experience next to the crisis and the loss of resources also some sort of relief. Corresponding to the stress adjustment perspective this study indeed established that there exists heterogeneity in the effect of divorce or separation. More specifically, the results revealed that the declines in well-being following a divorce or separation are less negative for individuals who experienced initial conflict in comparison to those who do not. Or to put it in other words, the decrease in well-being is diminished when individuals divorce from a marriage or relationship full of conflict. However, even in high conflict marriages or relationship the effect of the divorce or separation does not become positive, showing that individuals do not improve their well-being following a divorce or separation. This result, therefore, only corresponds to the weak version of the escape hypothesis which stated that the effect of divorce or separation on the change in adult well-being will be less negative when the initial levels of conflict were high. Hence, the strong version of the escape hypothesis, which argues that the change in well-being will be positive

when the initial level of conflict is high, is not confirmed. In fact, this result requires some explanation. Moreover, prior research also found weak overall evidence of the strong version of the escape hypothesis especially when considering conflict as moderator effect. Therefore, one might consider whether the strong version of the escape hypothesis offers a good theoretical explanation for the effects of divorce or separation.

Furthermore, the escape hypothesis was only confirmed when individuals do not repartner. Moreover, the results revealed that entering a new relationship can compensate for the negative effects of a divorce or separation, in particular when the initial levels of conflict were low. A possible explanation for this outcome is that divorcees who leave a marriage full of conflict are still upset about the conflict they experienced which hampers the positive effect of entering a new relationship. One must, however, be cautious with interpreting the effect of repartnering since the well-being is only measured after individuals divorced/separated and after they entered a new relationship. Hence, there is no measurement of the well-being of individuals just after they divorced and thus before they entered a new relationship. Therefore, selection may be at work when considering the effect of repartnering on the change in well-being.

Next to the initial levels of conflict a singular point of focus in this study was the post divorce levels of conflict. Just as one expects that there is a negative effect of conflict within a relationship on the change on well-being, one would expect the conflicts after the divorce or separation to influence the well-being of individuals negatively as well (Amato, 2000). The hypothesis states that the change in well-being will be more negative for individuals who experienced post divorce conflicts. In fact, the results confirmed this hypothesis. Moreover, the change in well-being was more negative for individuals experiencing either annoying behavior or violence or threats to use violence on the part of the ex-partner. However, the negative effect of experiencing post divorce or separation conflict was only confirmed for divorcees who remained single afterwards. For divorcees who entered a new relationship following the divorce or separation the hypothesis did not hold. More specifically, the results revealed that repartnering compensates for the negative effect of the post divorce or separation conflict. Although it runs counter to the hypothesis it is, certainly, an interesting observation since this findings defines the comprehensive view on post divorce or separation conflict. In particular, this study contributed to prior research in finding supporting evidence for this hypothesis for divorcees who remained single afterwards.

In this study, one of the key issues under scrutiny was the role of both pre-existing

levels of conflict and post divorce levels of conflicts. Moreover, it was expected that the effect of post divorce or separation levels of conflict would be less pronounced when individuals also experienced initial conflict prior to the event. For both annoying behavior on the part of the ex-partner and violence or threats to use violence on the part of the ex-partner the expectations did not hold. Although the effect was in the expected direction, which means that the negative effect of the post divorce or separation conflict is less strong for individuals who also experience initial conflict than for those individuals who did not experience any serious discord before the divorce or separation, the effect turned out to be insignificant. A possible counterargument could be that the post divorce conflicts have such a predominant effect that the escape effect becomes oppressed and, therefore, of secondary importance for the change in well-being. Consequently, no interaction effect occurs.

For repartnered individuals, the enduring conflict for people who already experienced initial conflict seems to reduce the positive effect of repartnering, while for individuals who did not experience initial conflict the positive effect of repartnering seems to be more influential for the well-being of individuals. Overall, the picture suggests that repartnering can compensate for the negative effects on one's well-being, especially when in the previous marriage or relationship no serious discord existed.

Overall, the results provide support for all hypotheses except for the final expectation. In fact, this does not mean that the post divorce or separation levels of conflict do not matter. Moreover, there is much heterogeneity in the effect of divorce or separation and, as has been outlined in the third hypothesis, post divorce or separation levels of conflict do matter.

In fact, there are some important limitations of this study which may have interfered with the results. Therefore, the following section provides information about the limitations of the study. After doing so, also recommendations for future research will be discussed.

Before doing so, some important contributions will be outlined. Moreover, this study contributed to prior research in many ways. An important finding is the fact that there exists no interaction effect of the initial levels of conflict and the post divorce or separation levels of conflict, which was one of the main issues under scrutiny since it was never been done before. Although this finding is contrary to the hypothesis it provides useful insight in the consequences of a divorce or separation.

Another contribution of this study is that supporting evidence was found for the escape hypothesis as well as for the negative consequences of post divorce or separation conflict in the Netherlands. However, when the hypotheses were confirmed, this was only the case for

individuals who remained single afterwards. For individuals who entered a new relationship the results showed different results.

A final, more practical, contribution of this study are the implications for marriage counselors. Moreover, individuals that seek help because they consider divorce or separation may be there with different issues to solve. On the one hand, there are couples who have conflicts to resolve and interventions that focus on conflict might be most successful. For couples who consider divorce or separation without experiencing any serious discord, on the other hand, other interventions would be more appropriate. Moreover, for them there will be other *reasons* of considering the divorce or separation. Examples are: low levels of commitment, communication problems, discrepancy between the rewards of the relationship and the expectation about how a relationship should look like. Focusing on commitment or interventions to create a more realistic picture about what a marriage or relationship should look like are examples of these interventions.

5.2 Limitations

The first and most obvious limitation of this study is the number of cases included. Although the total sample is relatively large, the number of individuals that experienced either a divorce or separation is rather small ($N=151$), particularly when considering the fact that the effects are frequently analyzed on specific subgroups. Since statistical tests are susceptible to the violation of the statistical assumptions, such as the low number of cases, this could have interfered with the results. Particularly, the fact that no significant effect appeared corresponding to the final expectation might be due to the low number of cases included in each of the subgroups.

Also, the fact that no distinction was made between those individuals who divorced (i.e., the married individuals) and those individuals who separated (i.e. the cohabiting individuals) can be considered as a drawback of this study since the relative importance of the differences between the two groups are already well recognized. However, there were too few cases to study one or both groups separately and, therefore, including the married and cohabiting individuals together was the only option.

Another limitation of the study is that I was not able to control for the level of conflict in wave two for the continuously married or cohabiting individuals when taking into consideration the post divorce levels of conflict for divorcees. This lack of information is problematic since now I was not able to compare the groups.

Furthermore, an interesting finding is that no evidence was found for the strong version of the escape hypothesis likewise as in prior studies. Therefore, one might question the foundations of the theory. Maybe the relief effect is just not as large as researchers thought it was so that the effect of getting a divorce does not become positive but rather less negative.

Finally, no attempt was made in this study to distinguish the selection processes into divorce or separation. Although there is an indication that selection is presented (see findings in the bivariate analysis), most prior research shows that the effect of divorce or separation remains after taking into consideration the selection effect and, therefore, I did not pursue this line of analysis in this study.

5.3 Future research

A first and rather important suggestion for future research is to explore the interaction effect of initial conflict and post divorce conflict with new data collection efforts. Moreover, in this study the number of cases was relatively low which could have interfered with the results. Given the high divorce and separation rates in the Netherlands and the consequences for the well-being of individuals, such efforts are obviously essential.

Furthermore, although research in the divorce literature consistently showed that there is considerable heterogeneity in the effects of a divorce or separation for divorcees who repartnered and for those who remained single afterwards, prior research mainly focused on the effects for those who remained single following a divorce. Actually, this is rather surprising since the effects of a divorce or separation seem to be rather different for both groups and the lack of literature on the repartnered individuals also reflects the lack of the comprehensive theoretical perspective on divorces and separations. Therefore, future research needs to consider that divorcees are not a homogeneous group and put more focus on the repartnered divorcees.

Additionally, future research needs to study other conditional aspects that could interfere with the effects of divorce or separation in order to explain the heterogeneity that exists in the effects of divorce or separation. Evidently, this is rather important since the implications of divorce or separation are well pronounced at this moment.

A final suggestion for future research is to focus more on the reasons for getting a divorce or separation. Moreover, at this moment little is known about the reasons for individuals to divorce or separate. Future research, therefore, should help to clarify the factors

that predispose individuals from low-conflict relationships to divorce or separate. More specifically, this allows for better testing the literature on divorce or separation in general.

References

- Amato, P. R. (2000). The consequences of divorce for adults and children. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 62, pp 1269-1287.
- Amato, P. R., & Hohmann-Marriott, B. (2007). A comparison of high- and low-distress marriages that end in divorce. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 69, pp 621-638.
- Amato, P. R., & Sobolewski, J. M. (2001). The effects of divorce and marital discord on adult children's psychological well-being. *American Sociological Review*, 66, pp 900-921.
- Aseltine, R. H., & Kessler, R. C. (1993). Marital disruption and depression in a community sample. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 34, pp 237-251.
- Baker, L.T. (1999). *Doing social research*. Boston: McGraw-Hill.
- Berman, W. H., & Turk, D.C. (1981). Adaptation to divorce: Problems and Coping Strategies. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 43, pp 179-189.
- Booth, A., & Amato, P. (1991). Divorce and psychological stress. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 32, pp 396-407.
- Dykstra, P.A., Kalmijn M., Knijn, T.C.M., Komter A.E., Liefbroer, A.C., & Mulder, C.H. (2005). Codebook of the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study, a multi-actor, multi method panel study on solidarity in family relationships, Wave 1. *NKPS Working Paper No. 4*. The Hague: Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute.
- Dykstra, P.A., Kalmijn M., Knijn, T.C.M., Komter A.E., Liefbroer, A.C., & Mulder, C.H. (2007). Codebook of the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study, a multi-actor, multi method panel study on solidarity in family relationships, Wave 2. The Hague: Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute.
- Emery, R. E. (1994). *Renegotiating family relationships: Divorce, child custody, and mediation*. New York: Guilford.
- Fischer, T., De Graaf, P. M., & Kalmijn, M. (2005). Friendly and antagonistic contact between former spouses after divorce: Patterns and determinants. *Journal of Family Issues*, 26, pp 1131-1163.
- Johnson, D. (2005). Two wave panel analysis: Comparing statistical methods for studying the effects of transitions. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 67, pp 1061-1075.
- Kalmijn, M., & Monden, C. W.S. (2006). Are the negative effects of divorce on well-being dependent on marital quality? *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 68, pp 1197-1213.
- Levinger, G. (1965). Marital Cohesiveness and Dissolution: An integrative Review. *Journal*

- of Family and Marriage*, 27, 19-28.
- Levinger, G. (1979). A Social Psychology Perspective on Marital Dissolution. *Journal of Social Issues*, 32, 21-47.
- Logan, T., Walker, R., & Shannon, L. (2008). Factors associated with Separation and Ongoing Violence among Women with Civil Protective Orders. *Journal of Family and Violence*, 23, pp 377-385
- Masheter, C. (1991). Postdivorce relationships between ex-spouses: The roles of attachment and interpersonal conflict. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 53, pp 103-110.
- Masheter, C. (1997). Healthy and unhealthy friendship and hostility between ex-spouses. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 59, pp 463-475.
- Mastekaasa, A. (1995). Marital dissolution and subjective distress: panel evidence. *European Sociological Review*, 11, pp 173-185.
- McLanahan, S., & Sandefur, G. (1994). *Growing up with a single parent; what hurts, what helps*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Prigerson, H. G., Maciejewski, P. K., & Rosenheck, R. A. (1999). The effects of marital dissolution and marital quality on health and health service use among women. *Medical Care*, 37, pp 858-873.
- Roberts, K. A. (2005). Women's Experience of Violence During Stalking by Former Romantic Partners: Factors Predictive of Stalking Violence. *Violence against women*, 11, pp 89-114.
- Ross, C. E., Mirowsky, J., & Goldsteen, K. (1990). The impact of the family on health: The Decade Review. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 52, pp 1059-1078.
- Tschann, J. M., Johnston, J. R., & Wallerstein, J. S. (1989). Resources, stressors, and attachment as predictors of adult adjustment after divorce: a longitudinal study. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 51, pp 1033-1046.
- Wait, L. J., Luo, Y., & Lewin, L. C. (2009). Marital happiness and marital stability: Consequences for psychological well-being. *Social Science Research*, 38, pp 201-212.
- Walker, R., Logan, T., Jordan, C. E., & Campbell, J. C. (2004). An Integrative Review of Separation in the Context of Victimization: Consequences and Implications for Women. *Trauma Violence Abuse*, 5, pp 143-193.
- Wheaton, B. (1990). Life transitions, role histories, and mental-health. *American Sociological Review*, 55, pp 209-223.
- Williams, K. (2003). Has the future of marriage arrived? A contemporary examination of

gender, marriage, and psychological well-being. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 44, pp 470-487.

Williams, K., & Dunne-Bryant, A. (2006). Divorce and Adult Psychological Well-Being: Clarifying the Role of Gender and Child Age. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 68, pp 1178-1196.

Electronic references

<http://statline.cbs.nl/StatWeb/publication/?DM=SLNL&PA=37425NED&D1=0-19&D2=46-57&VW=T>. Table: “Huwelijksontbinding; door echtscheiding en door overlijden”. retrieved at 27-01-2009.

[http://statline.cbs.nl/StatWeb/publication/?DM=SLNL&PA=37115&D1=0-7&D2=\(1-11\)-1&VW=T](http://statline.cbs.nl/StatWeb/publication/?DM=SLNL&PA=37115&D1=0-7&D2=(1-11)-1&VW=T). Table: “Relatie-ontbinding na eerste samenwoning/huwelijk (OG'98)”. Retrieved at 27-01-2009.

Appendix

Table A1: Frequencies and percentages after selecting cases

	Frequency	Percentage (Valid)	Percentage (Missing)
Respondents (T1)	8161	100	0
Respondents (T2)	6091	74.6	25.4
Cohabiting/married	4103	67.4	32.6
Partner died between T1 and T2	4054	98.8	1.2
Well being T1 and T2	3631	89.6	10.4
Initial conflict	3578	98.5	1.5
Control: children in the household	3411	95.3	4.7

Source: NKPS 2004-2004 and 2006-2007

Table A2: Initial conflict frequency at wave 1

Frequency of conflict (T1)	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
0 'no conflict'	738	21,6	21,6
1	571	16,7	38,4
2	717	21,0	59,4
3	705	20,7	80,1
4	307	9,0	89,1
5	156	4,6	93,6
6	105	3,1	96,7
7	58	1,7	98,4
8	33	1,0	99,4
9	13	0,4	99,8
10 'high levels of conflict'	8	0,2	100,0
Total	3411	100,0	

Source: NKPS 2002-2004

Table A3: Initial conflict frequency at wave 1 (new frequency table)

Frequency of conflict (T1)	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
0 'no initial conflict'	738	21,6	21,6
1	571	16,7	38,4
2	717	21,0	59,4
3	705	20,7	80,1
4 'high levels of initial conflict'	680	19,9	100,0
Total	3411	100,0	

Source: NKPS 2002-2004

Table A4: Frequencies of post divorce or separation annoying behavior on the part of the ex-partner

Frequencies of annoying behavior by the ex-partner (T2)	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
0 'no annoying behavior'	57	37,7	37,7
1	25	16,6	54,3
2	15	9,9	64,2
3	13	8,6	72,8
4	22	14,6	87,4
5	12	7,9	95,4
6 'high levels of annoying behavior'	7	4,6	100,0
Total	151	100,0	

Source: NKPS 2002-2004 and 2006-2007

Table A5: Frequencies of post divorce or separation violent or threats of violent behavior on the part of the ex-partner

Frequencies of violent behavior by the ex-partner	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percentage
0 'no violent behavior'	91	60,3	60,3
1	36	23,8	84,1
2	5	3,3	87,4
3	15	9,9	97,4
4 'high levels of violent behavior'	4	2,6	100,0
total	151	100,0	

Source: NKPS 2002-2004 and 2006-2007

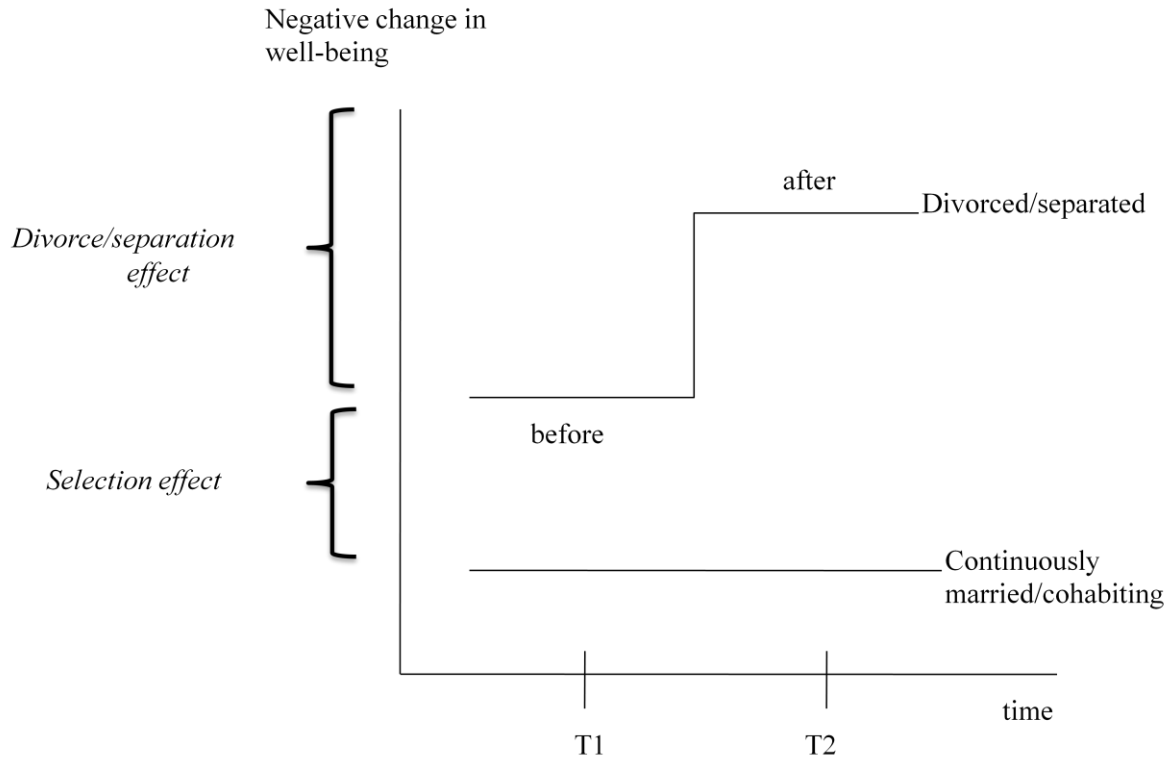


Figure A1: The divorce/separation effect and selection effect

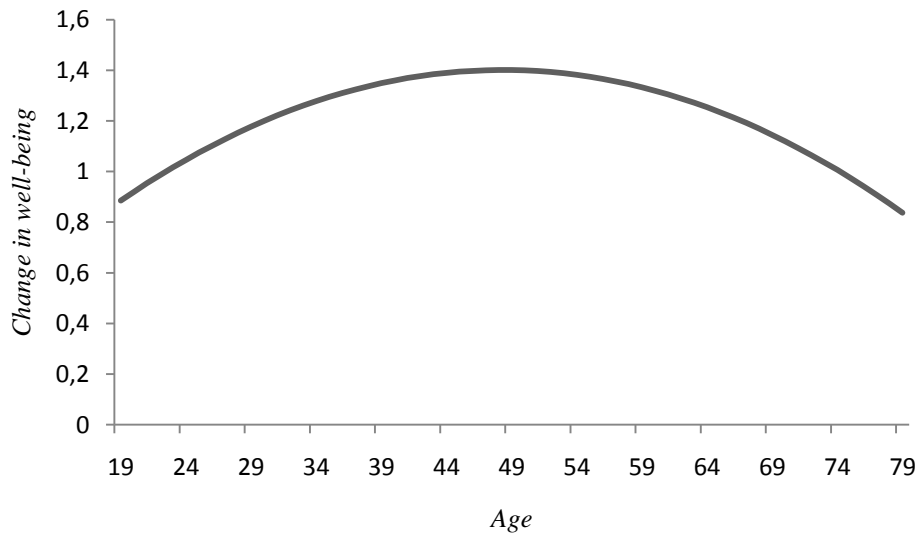


Figure A2: The quadratic effect of age on the change in well-being