

FAMILY BREAKDOWN IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY NETHERLANDS: Divorcing Couples in The Hague

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ABSTRACT: *As in other European countries, divorce became a social issue in the Netherlands from the beginning of the 1880s on. At the same time, divorce rates rose considerably. To examine whether the public debates were reflected in the behavior of Dutch couples, an empirical study was conducted of divorce in the second half of the nineteenth century. Use was made of a case-control research design in which the social characteristics of all marriages which ended in divorce were compared with those of a random sample from the marriages which ended in widowhood. The author analyzed a group of 2,300 marriages contracted in The Hague from their inception until their dissolution by death or divorce. All migrants were followed to their new place of residence. Multivariate (proportional hazards) analysis showed that the highest probability of divorce was found among persons who had already gone through a divorce before. Other factors related to divorce were high mobility, low ages at marriage, and large age and religious differences between spouses. Higher social classes had relatively high divorce risks.*

INTRODUCTION

“A vital transitional period in the history of divorce in Western society”—with these words Phillips (1988) described the half century that started around 1865 and ended with World War I. It was during this period that most countries either legalized or liberalized divorce, divorce rates began to rise, and divorce was recognized as a major social and moral issue (Phillips 1988, p. 516). The Netherlands was no exception to this rule. As in other European countries, divorce in the Netherlands became the subject of a lively debate from the

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beginning of the 1880s on (Huussen 1995) and divorce rates followed the European pattern as well. Earlier, until the cohorts that married in the 1830s, less than three out of every 1000 marriages had ended in divorce. This figure reached four per 1000 in the cohort that married in 1850, six per 1000 in cohort 1860, nine per 1000 in cohort 1870 and fourteen per 1000 in marriages contracted in 1880. The increase continued to 23 per 1000 in 1890, and in cohorts marrying in the first decade of the twentieth century more than forty per 1000 marriages ended in divorce (Van Poppel 1992, pp. 614–615).

Apart from those studies which dealt with the evolution of divorce legislation or with aggregated national statistics, only limited research has been done on this period, crucial though the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were. To be true, several attempts have been made to study the circumstances that enhanced the likelihood of divorce among couples married in this period (Bos and IJzerraad 1985; Van Baalen 1983; Griswold 1982; May 1980; Phillips 1981; Wintein 1983), but in all these studies the data as well as the approach have in fact the same shortcomings. The main question that these studies try to answer is: what were the personal and social characteristics of couples that during this crucial period chose divorce as a solution for their marital problems? For this purpose, they analyzed personal and social characteristics of the divorced, such as the age of the spouses at marriage, premarital pregnancy and labor force employment of women, based on divorce certificates from the vital registration system or dossiers of each divorce. The problem with such an enumeration of factors correlating with divorce is that, given only this information, it is impossible to state whether the characteristics of the divorcing couples are distinctive traits of the divorcees—and thus can be used to identify factors related to divorce—or whether these characteristics are as frequent among the divorced as among the non-divorcing couples. Furthermore, it is often not clear in which direction the causal influence runs. The labor force participation of women is a clear example: the fact that divorced women have a higher labor force participation might indicate that they were employed when married but it might also be that they entered the labor market after divorce. Finally, many of the characteristics of the divorced are highly correlated which makes it difficult to isolate the importance of the different factors that seem to be related to divorce.

In this article we take these shortcomings into account and follow a different approach. We will try to identify the circumstances of couples that enhanced or decreased the likelihood of divorce by following the life course of a cohort of marriages. By determining what differentiated couples who divorced from those who remained together and by applying multivariate techniques of analysis to these data, we will try to disentangle the effects of strongly related causal factors. To do this, we employ a case study in The Hague, Netherlands, based on marriages contracted in the period 1850–1882. Before discussing our data and methods, however, we offer some remarks on the legal availability of and social attitudes towards divorce during the period investigated.

THE JUDICIAL CONTEXT OF DIVORCE IN THE NETHERLANDS

With the introduction of the *Burgerlijk Wetboek* on October 1, 1838, the French Civil Code ceased to have force of law in the Netherlands. Henceforth, divorce could be sought on the grounds of adultery, desertion lasting at least five years, conviction to a degrading sentence, and serious injuries or physical harm committed by one spouse against the other.

Legal separation, known as divorce *a mensa et thoro* ('from bed and board'), could be applied for on the same grounds as divorce, as well as on the grounds of "extravagances, physical harm, and gross offenses committed against the other." In addition, legal separation was available "at a request, made by the spouses jointly, without them being obliged to state a certain ground." When the spouses were legally separated, and the separation had lasted more than five years, either of the two parties was free to "sue the other party and to demand that the marriage be dissolved." Although the law explicitly stipulated that divorce could never be "available by mutual consent," the judiciary soon had found an escape in practice which was sanctioned by the Dutch High Court in 1883. This practice, known as the "big lie practice," meant that in case the petitioner alleged adultery, the other spouse confessed to this fact or by default did not contradict the allegation. In conformity with the regulations of the law of proof in civil proceedings, the court had to accept this confession or the non-contradicted allegation as a fact.

This legal practice was rejected by many on judicial as well as on moral grounds, and people within as well as outside parliament called for a modification of the existing legal practice. In addition to that, the divorce *grounds* were scrutinized. Liberal jurists, socialists, feminists, and supporters of the sexual reform movement, favoring the liberalization of divorce law, argued that the indissolubility of marriage caused persons to be very hesitant when deciding to get married, thus going against the natural law which dictated early marriage. Freedom to get a divorce was seen as beneficial for the children because divorce could take place sooner in marriage, at a time when the family was not yet so large. Freedom of divorce would help to stop prostitution which had been induced by the enforced union of couples who no longer loved each other. Those who proposed greater freedom of divorce were thus inspired by the conviction that this freedom might reinforce the status of marriage (Van Poppel 1992, pp. 432–445).

The opponents pointed out the dangers of liberalization. If divorce were easier, marriages would be taken even less seriously than was already the case. Uncertainty about a couple's staying together would have an adverse effect on the relationship between spouses and could affect attempts to adjust to each other's character. Children could no longer be raised harmoniously. The financial status of the family would also be affected so that care of the children would be more difficult. Moreover, separation from bed and board already created ample provisions for those couples for whom cohabitation had become unbearable (Van Poppel 1992, pp. 447–451).

In 1880, a Royal Committee was set up to investigate the necessity of a reform of the Civil Code. The first part of a new draft was published in 1886 (Ontwerp 1886). The draft proposed an extension of the divorce grounds and mentioned as such unnatural vice committed during marriage, continuous bad conduct against the spouse, habitual drunkenness or other dissolute conduct, and refusal of cohabitation.

Due to the changing political situation, the draft of the new Civil Code was not accepted. Political parties with religion-based programs had been formed by Orthodox Protestants and Catholics, and this made possible a conservative opposition against the proposal. For the members of this opposition, liberalizing divorce was equivalent to undermining the foundation of State and Society. For both Catholics and Protestants, marriage, once entered, was sacred and could therefore not be dissolved by man. When, after some time, thanks to the extension of the right to vote, the majority of the population, who clung to the old Christian sexual morals, achieved greater political power, and liberal hegemony came

to an end, the Catholic and Protestant views on divorce started to determine the tone of the debate. Many Calvinists and Catholics even wished a stricter observance of the law, which explicitly forbade divorce by mutual consent. As both groups did not agree on the specific grounds for divorce and were partly counterbalanced by those who desired a radical change and by those who did not wish any substantial alteration of the existing practice, the existing law and practice remained unchanged. Nevertheless, divorce was strongly disapproved of by a large majority of the Dutch population well into the second half of the twentieth century. New divorce legislation was not enacted until 1971, when a bill was accepted which became effective on October 1, 1971.

RESEARCH DESIGN, SOURCES AND SELECTION OF THE STUDY AREA

STUDYING DIVORCE; GENERALITIES

Given only information on the characteristics of individuals who underwent a divorce, it is impossible to conclude whether the characteristics of divorced couples differ from those of the married population. Only by following a cohort of marriages and studying divorce among the members of that cohort is it possible to ascertain whether certain socio-economic or demographic characteristics of the divorcing couples are distinctive traits of the divorcees—and thus can be used to identify factors related to divorce—or are as frequent among the divorced as among the non-divorcing couples.

In following such a longitudinal approach, one has to take into account that marriages are not dissolved by divorce only. Marital dissolution is a process of “competing risks,” and when the risk of death declines, the proportion succumbing to the risk of divorce must rise even though that risk remains unchanged at each marital duration. The circumstance that the union is dissolved on the death of either spouse could even mean that couple mortality is almost twice as high as individual mortality (Preston and McDonald 1979). Thus, a research design has to be followed that allows continuous registration of the number of marriages which, at different durations since marriage, are dissolved by death or divorce and the number which are still together. Such an approach has to make use of data sources in which couples can indeed be followed continuously. In the Netherlands, population registers offer such an opportunity for the period which is of interest here.

Continuous population registers were prescribed in the Netherlands by the Royal Decree of December 22, 1849. The registers had to record the population residing within the municipality. In the registers, all members of a household are mentioned, with date and place of birth, relation to the head of the household, sex, marital status, occupation, and religion recorded for each individual. New household members arriving after the registration had started were added to the list of individuals already recorded, and those moving out because of death or migration were deleted, with place and date of migration or date of death noted. In most municipalities, registers cover a time span of ten years between the censuses and remained in use until 1910 or 1920. After this date a new form of continuous registration was introduced, consisting of loose sheets—so-called “family cards.” The registration unit was then no longer the household but the family. In the 1930s, the population register was replaced by the personal card, containing nearly the same information as the population register; from that date on, the individual person became the registration

unit in all municipalities. At the moment of death, the personal card is removed from the files and after some time sent to the *Centraal Bureau voor Genealogie* (CBG: Central Genealogical Office).

SELECTION OF THE PERIOD AND THE STUDY AREA

The frequency of divorce increased especially in the cohorts married after the mid-1850s. Because the population register was only available from 1850 on, and the restrictions on access to marriage and divorce certificates for the years 1912 and later made it difficult to collect information on divorces taking place after 1920, we restricted our study to divorces among people who had married in the period 1850–1882. Further, because divorce was really an urban phenomenon in absolute numbers as well as in relative frequencies, research into nineteenth-century divorce, as a matter of fact, can only be done in a large city.¹ For reasons of accessibility of the archival sources, we chose the city of The Hague for our study.

During the period 1850–1910, The Hague became the political and administrative center of the Netherlands and evolved from a provincial capital and a quiet residential city into a large modern one. In 1850 the city had about 72,200 inhabitants, which number increased to 90,300 in 1870. With increasing prosperity after 1870 due to the start of industrial development, the population continued to grow and reached 206,000 at the turn of the century. The presence of the Royal Court, the Parliament, foreign diplomats, government bodies, leading civil servants, higher military, and courts of law attracted a great number of domestic servants and artisans, service firms, theaters, and the like. In 1850, around 42 percent of the labor force was employed in the service sector, mainly in domestic (22 percent) and public service (11 percent). Thirty-four percent of the labor force was employed in industry (construction sector, clothing, and shoe industries). Four to five percent of the labor force worked in the primary sector; within this sector, the fishing industry, located within the municipal boundaries in the somewhat closed community of Scheveningen, was by far the most important. Due to labor legislation, the proportion of women in the labor force had decreased from 23 percent in 1850 to nineteen percent in 1890. Married women constituted only 22 percent of the total female labor force in 1889.

Almost 60 percent of the population of The Hague in 1850 belonged to the Dutch Reformed Church. Both in the 1830s and in the 1880s, a number of ministers broke away from the Reformed Church and returned to the stricter orthodoxy of an earlier period; the *Gereformeerde Kerken*, the Calvinists, emerged from these secessions. The Calvinists made up only one percent of the population until 1880, but in later years their share increased to four percent (1900). In spite of this, the Dutch Reformed churches continued to include both fundamentalists (among whom the same tendencies prevailed as among Calvinists) and liberals. In the Dutch Reformed Church in The Hague the orthodox tendency dominated and modernist ministers were rarely appointed. In various ways the local Reformed Church tried to strengthen religious life through the formation of community centers, Sunday schools, and nurseries for the sick. About 31 percent of the population belonged to the Roman Catholic Church. After the re-establishment of the Roman Catholic episcopal hierarchy in 1853, Catholic parishes were founded, each covering a well-defined district. This rigid and hierarchical church organization gave the priest direct and strong control over the religious practices of the church members. At the end of the nineteenth century, the Catholics also developed their specific religiously inspired social organiza-

tions (primary schools, labor unions, political parties, convents, patronage buildings, clubhouses) in which they became more and more ensconced (Stokvis 1987).

THE CASE-CONTROL APPROACH

Studies in which a group of people defined by a common characteristic is followed through time (so-called cohort, longitudinal or prospective studies) have traditionally been extremely popular in epidemiology. In epidemiological cohort studies, a group of persons is followed from the moment they enter the group until the date of exit or death. By gathering information on (length of) exposure to specific risk factors, and on incidence of morbidity and mortality, hypotheses regarding cause-effect relationships can be evaluated. Compared with other forms of research, longitudinal studies are usually very expensive and time-consuming. This is especially the case when one is studying a very rare disease or a very infrequent event. Partly as a consequence of this, during the past decades, another research design has become the dominant form of research in epidemiology—the case-control study. A case-control study is defined by Breslow and Day (1980, pp. 14–15) as “an investigation into the extent to which persons selected because they have a specific disease (the cases) and comparable persons who do not have the disease (the controls) have been exposed to the disease’s possible risk factors in order to evaluate the hypothesis that one or more of these is a cause of the disease.” The principal objective of a case-control study is to provide a valid, and reasonably precise, estimate of the strength of a hypothesized cause-effect relationship.

In a case-control study, first, a group of individuals is selected who have the disease in question (cases). Then subjects who do not have the disease of interest are selected (controls). They are assumed to represent a random sample of the subjects who are disease-free, though otherwise at risk. For all selected individuals, information is collected on potential risk factors. In a final step, factors are identified which are associated with risk for the disease. Our approach is based on these case-control studies. Marriages ending in divorce are considered as cases, whereas the controls are a random sample from the marriages which were dissolved by the death of a spouse. The selection of the cases was possible because of the fact that in the margin of each marriage certificate the registration officer had to note that a marriage had ended in divorce.

Compared with traditional longitudinal studies, case-control studies have several advantages. In our situation, the major strength of this kind of research is its highly informative nature. In a longitudinal study, usually only a few subjects develop the “illness” (i.e. divorce) in which one is interested. In a case-control study, the number of marriages ending in divorce is much larger.

The case-control design also has limitations. One is that it is highly susceptible to selection bias, which results when cases or controls are included in (or excluded from) a study because of some characteristic they exhibit which is related to exposure to the risk factor under evaluation. A further limitation of case-control studies is that they generally only contain information on the status as case or control and not the time elapsed until the individual became a case. Time to response can thus not be used as a dependent variable. However, our data set lacks both these disadvantages because *all* cases that take place are selected and because the information on the time of exposure to “risk factors” leading to divorce is comparable for cases and controls.

DATA-COLLECTION STRATEGY

The Dutch Civil Code prescribed that the spouse on whose request divorce had been legally pronounced had to see to it that mention was made of the divorce in the margin of the original marriage certificate. This implied that for marriages ending in divorce, the date at which and the court district where the divorce decree was granted, and the date at which and the municipality in which the divorce decree was registered in the marriage register, were given in the margin of the marriage certificate. It was this marginal note in the marriage certificate that offered the starting-point for our research.

First, a data set was compiled consisting of all those couples who had married in The Hague in the period 1850–1882 and whose marriages had ended in divorce. To select these marriages, about 25,000 marriage certificates were studied; each certificate in the margin of which the registration officer had marked that the marriage had ended in divorce was included in our data set. For each of these 546 marriages dissolved by divorce, four (after 1864: three) “controls”—marriages ending by the death of one of the spouses—were selected; two of them chronologically preceding the selected one and two directly following the selected case.² The total number of controls was 1748, making the total number of marriages in our data set equal to 2294.

From the marriage certificate, we took the date of marriage, the first names and surname of the spouses, their age at the time of marriage, their previous marital status and occupation, and their municipality of birth and place of residence. For the parents of bride and groom, the survival status, occupation, and place of residence was recorded. Information was also collected on dispensations given by the Crown from the minimum legal age of marriage (eighteen years for males, sixteen for females), and on dispensations granted for marriages between persons related by marriage. Adults aged between 23 (the age of majority) and 30 also had to ask the consent of their parents when contracting a marriage; when parents refused permission it could be replaced by the permission of a judge, at the request of the future spouses. This information was also given on the marriage certificate and included in our data base. The same applied to information regarding legitimization of children born before marriage.

Divorce certificates had to be entered in the marriage register of the place of residence of the spouses.³ The certificate had to contain information on the occupation and the place of residence of the spouses at the moment of divorce. In addition to that, the judicial decree in which the divorce was granted had to be mentioned in the divorce certificate. That also applied to the court clerk’s testimony, which acted as legal proof of the fact that the decree had become peremptory. A copy of the divorce decree had to be attached to the divorce certificate. In the period under study, the contents of the copy of the divorce decree that was presented to the vital registration officer varied considerably. In the beginning of the period, the decree included all kinds of information on the behavior of the spouses that had led to the marital breakdown. At the end of the nineteenth century, only names and places of residence of the spouses, the place and date when and where the decree was passed, and the grounds for divorce were given.

In the next stage of our research we tried to reconstruct the life history of all the selected 2,294 marriages, using the population registers as a source. We noted the date of birth, marital status, and changes in marital status during the period to which the register referred, religion, occupation, date of arrival or departure, place of arrival or departure, and date of

death.⁴ For married couples, we checked whether husband and wife belonged to the same household; in case they did not, we tried to determine from which time on they had started to live separately. For several reasons, we decided not to collect information on the household situation, and the number of children. For those couples who were still alive in 1939, information on their life course after 1939 was taken from the vital registration system (marriage, divorce, and death certificates) and the personal cards.

One of the main advantages of our approach was that in case a couple or a widow(er) or divorcee migrated, the search procedure could be repeated in the population register of the municipality to which the person(s) in question had migrated. Even for people who left for Belgium, the USA, Germany, France, and the United Kingdom, a letter asking for information was sent to the municipality concerned. A relatively large number of migrants went to the Dutch East Indies: the vital registration of this area over the period 1850–1922 was consulted at the Central Genealogical Office in The Hague. For persons who were lost in the registers, other genealogical sources, such as personal announcements and military registers, were consulted.

It has to be stressed that following migrants to their new destination is a time-consuming but indispensable research strategy when studying divorce. Biased estimates of the divorce frequency and of the interval between marriage and marital breakdown might result from neglecting information on migration of husband and/or wife. Divorcing couples were characterized by a very high degree of mobility. Marital dissolution often took place in a community other than the one in which the marriage was contracted. It is also quite probable that the intervals between marriage and dissolution of those who remained in the community were atypical of those who left.

SOME OVERALL RESULTS

As was stated earlier, all marriages from the period 1850–1882 dissolved by divorce were included in our sample. Of all those marriages dissolved by the death of one of the spouses,

TABLE 1
The Total Number of Marriages Contracted and the Number of Marriages Included in the Sample by Period of Marriage

<i>Period</i>	<i>Total Number of Marriages (A)</i>	<i>Of Which in the Sample</i>		
		<i>Of Which Contracted (B)</i>	<i>Of Which Divorced (C)</i>	<i>(B) as % of (A) (D)</i>
1850–1854	3142	170	34	5.4
1855–1859	2973	210	42	7.1
1860–1864	3336	230	46	6.9
1865–1869	3665	276	69	7.5
1870–1874	4186	416	105	9.9
1875–1879	4597	528	133	11.5
1880–1982	3020	464	117	15.4
Total	24919	2294	546	9.2

only a small fraction was included. This fraction depended on the number of divorces in the marriage cohort and varied between 2–6 percent in cohort 1850–1854, 4–9 percent in cohort 1855–1859, to 11–13 percent in cohort 1880–82 (Table 1). Marriages contracted during the 1850s and not dissolved by divorce were thus underrepresented in the sample, and marriages contracted during the period 1870–1882 overrepresented.

To make sure that the results of our analysis were not biased by this over- or underrepresentation, our sample had to be re-weighted according to the size of the marriage cohort.⁵ In the following sections, only re-weighted data are used, unless stated otherwise.⁶

TABLE 2

The Number of Persons of Which the Date of Remarriage or Death is Not Known, per 100 Marriages with that Characteristic (N=2294)

<i>A. By Period of Marriage and Kind of Dissolution of the Marriage</i>				
<i>Period of Marriage</i>	<i>Divorce</i>		<i>Widowed</i>	
	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
1850–1859	11.8	6.6	5.3	3.6
1860–1869	9.6	4.3	3.1	2.3
1870–1879	9.7	7.1	3.0	3.0
1880–1882	9.4	2.6	3.7	4.9
Total	9.9	5.5	3.5	3.3
<i>B. By Duration Between Marriage and the Last-Known Date at Which the Marriage Still Survived</i>				
<i>Duration in Years</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>		
Less Than 1 Year	32.7	25.0		
1–2 year	10.0	6.0		
2–5 year	6.5	7.2		
5–10 year	6.5	5.7		
10–15 year	7.5	2.4		
15–25 year	5.8	5.0		
25 Year or More	1.8	1.6		
Total	5.1	3.8		
<i>C. By Socio-Economic Group of the Husband</i>				
	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>		
Higher Military	6.4	6.4		
Other Upper Class	9.0	10.0		
Petty Bourgeoisie	3.9	4.1		
Lower Level Prof./Lower Civil Servants	6.9	6.6		
Farmers	0.0	0.0		
Fishermen	8.6	1.7		
Skilled Manual Workers	4.5	2.2		
Casual and Unskilled Laborers	2.2	8.9		
Without Occupation	5.2	4.1		
Total	5.1	3.8		

Out of the 2294 selected marriages, 546 were dissolved by divorce. In the re-weighted sample 40 percent of marriages was dissolved by the death of the wife, 53.5 percent by the death of the husband, and 2.2 percent by divorce. Of the remaining 4.4 percent of the marriages, it was unknown which spouse had died first.

For all couples, those divorced as well as those who lost their spouse by death, we tried to analyze the whole marital history. It was not always possible, however, to reconstruct this part of life: several men and women were lost before a marital breakdown took place. For the unweighted sample of 2294 marriages, Table 2 gives an overview of a number of characteristics of the 116 men and 88 women for whom eventually the date of death or remarriage could not be determined. The numbers of people with an unknown final destination are given per 100 marriages with the same characteristics. For a number of them, it is known that they remarried or died in widowhood; but as the exact date of this event was unknown, the men and women concerned were nevertheless classified in the category "unknown."

In general, it can be stated that among men a somewhat higher percentage was lost (5.1 percent) than among women (3.8 percent). For some groups, the loss was clearly higher. That was, for example, the case among divorced people: for about ten percent of the divorced males, it was impossible to determine whether the person concerned had remarried after divorce or had died as a divorcee. The same was true for marriages contracted



FIGURE 1
The Number of Divorces per 100 Contracted Marriages, Marriage Cohorts 1850-1882, The Hague and The Netherlands

before 1860. During that period, the population register did not yet function optimally and other sources were somewhat less available. The failure to locate the whole life history of the individuals was also more frequent among fishermen and among the upper classes, among marriages which were dissolved soon after marriage, and among couples which very soon after marriage departed from The Hague. Around 54 of the 204 men and women of whom the date of remarriage or death could not be found had emigrated to other European countries, and nineteen to countries outside Europe. Seventy-eight of them had departed to unknown destinations.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the proportion of marriages that ended in divorce in The Hague moved steadily upwards, as it did among Dutch marriages in general. Figure 1 shows that the incidence of divorce among marriages contracted around 1850 was only around one percent. From the beginning of the 1860s on, the proportion divorcing increased continuously; as a consequence, at the end of the 1870s and the beginning of the 1880s, around four percent of all couples divorced. The figures for The Hague were much higher than for Dutch cohorts as a whole.

Before a marriage was permanently dissolved by divorce, the marital relationship had of course started to break down. It is impossible to indicate at which moment the problems that husband and wife experienced in their relationship were seen as insoluble and when

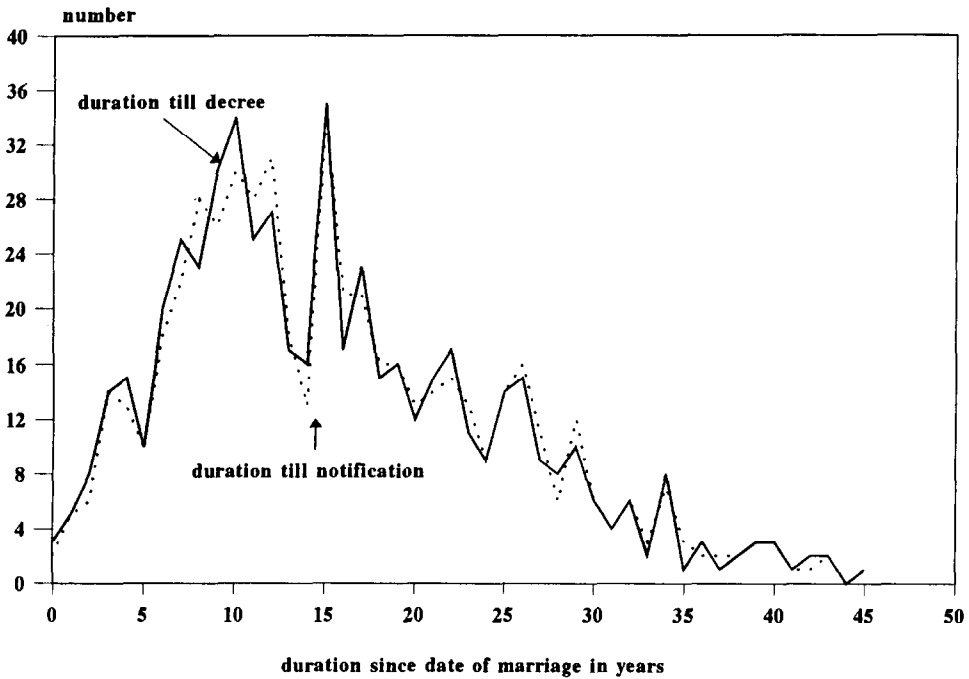


FIGURE 2
 The Number of Divorces According to the Number of Years Elapsed Between the Date of Marriage and the Date of the Divorce Decree, Respectively the Date of the Notification of the Divorce Certificate

they considered it wise to present a petition for divorce to the court. Even after this was done, time elapsed before a decision was reached. It was only after several attempts at reconciliation by the president of the court and appearance before the court that the magistrate passed judgment. After the judgment, appeal was possible, and it was only after the judgment was final and no longer open to appeal that the divorce decree could be entered in the marriage register. This had to be done within six months after the judgment was final; if not, the judgment expired. For this reason, the date of entry of the divorce certificate in the register is considered the most relevant date.

Almost without exception, in 95 percent of all cases, married men and women who did not divorce stayed together from the moment they married until death parted them. Those men and women who divorced, however, only rarely stayed together until the formal end of their union. Very often a large number of years had passed during which the spouses lived apart before a divorce took place.

As is clear from Figure 2, there was a large amount of variation in the duration between the date of marriage and the date of entry of the divorce certificate. Three marriages were already dissolved within one year after marriage, and, given the normal length of the judicial procedure, this surely is remarkable. Six years after marriage, already ten percent of the total number of marriages ending in divorce was dissolved. After fifteen years, half the total number of divorces had already taken place.

Sometimes very soon after marriage the first signs of problems were already visible. Albertus M., for example, had left his bride only six weeks after his marriage in May 1881 and started to live with Carolina P., a woman whom he had been seeing before his marriage and with whom he already had a child. In the case of Jacoba W., married in May 1870, witnesses stated that already several weeks after her marriage she "had come around to them covered in blood, saying she had been violated by her husband."

The duration between marriage and divorce decreased in the more recent marriage cohorts. Marriages contracted in the period 1850–1854 existed on average 19.5 years

TABLE 3
The First-mentioned Grounds for Divorce Among Marriages,
Contracted in The Hague in the Period 1850-1882

<i>Ground</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Adultery Husband	187	34.2
Adultery Wife	154	28.2
Willful Desertion Husband	85	15.6
Willful Desertion Wife	51	9.3
Conviction to degrading Sentence of Husband	4	0.7
Conviction to Degrading Sentence of Wife	1	0.2
Serious Injuries Committed by Husband	4	0.7
Serious Injuries Committed by Wife	1	0.2
After Judicial Separation	28	5.1
Other	1	0.2
Unknown	30	5.5
Total	546	100.0

before the moment of divorce; later cohorts divorced after an average duration of marriage of 15.1 years, 17.6 years, 16.7 years, 16.9 years, 16.3 years, 16.2 years, and 15.9 years.

As can be judged from Table 3, adultery was by far the most important ground for divorce. Differences between men and women in this respect were very small—in 34 percent of all cases, adultery of the husband was the first-mentioned ground for divorce, and in 28 percent of the cases adultery of the wife. Desertion by the husband (sixteen percent) and by the wife (nine percent) also had an important share. Divorces for which the ground was unknown nearly all dated from the period 1910 and later.

In the course of time, a slight increase took place in the proportion of marriages dissolved on the ground of adultery by the husband. The percentage of divorces for which adultery of the wife was the ground was more or less stable during this period. Desertion by either one of the two parties decreased in importance, as did divorce after marital separation of more than five years. It appeared that the distribution of the grounds for divorce did not vary across religion: even among Roman Catholic marriages, marital separation did not precede divorce more often than among other religions.

Adultery of the husband (and desertion) took place more often in marriages in which the wife was older than her husband; where the wife was younger, adultery by the wife was a relatively more frequent ground for divorce. Quite remarkable was the difference in divorce grounds according to the age of husband and wife at the time of divorce. Adultery of the husband decreased in importance to the same degree that his age increased. Among marriages in which the husband was 25 or younger at the time of divorce, 60 percent were dissolved on the ground of adultery by the husband; among marriages in which the husband was older than 60, that percentage was only sixteen. For adultery of the wife, almost the same relation was observed between her age and the relative frequency in which female adultery was mentioned as ground for divorce. At higher ages of the husband, desertion by either husband or wife was much more important.

One-third of all divorce suits were filed by women and one quarter by men, whereas in one-third of all cases it was unknown which party had petitioned for divorce. That women were overrepresented among the petitioners may be explained by the fact that in case of marital conflicts, women were in a position of legal, economic, social, and physical inferiority, and thus were more likely to be the victims of violence and oppression and were therefore more likely to take the decision to divorce (Phillips 1988, pp. 263–264). But male gallantry and convenience had something to do with it: it was easier to get a divorce if the woman filed suit, and it was socially more acceptable for a woman to be the plaintiff rather than the defendant (O'Neill 1967, p. 25).

MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS OF FACTORS INFLUENCING DIVORCE

A FRAMEWORK FOR THE ANALYSIS

In the past decades an enormous quantity of literature on divorce has resulted in the reporting of a large set of factors predisposing marriages to break down (Raschke 1987; White 1990). Theorists seeking to integrate these individual correlates of divorce have most commonly relied on exchange-oriented or rational choice models of social behavior (Esterberg, Moen, and Dempster-McCain 1994). Central in these theories is the proposition that it is the experiences that couples have in the marriage market that determine their

likelihood of divorce: the gains they have from the current marriage, the barriers to divorce they observe, and the alternatives available to the current marriage. From the perspective of exchange-oriented models of divorce, individuals choose marriage partners in order to maximize their self-interest. They continue in any particular marriage as long as their "investments" into the marriage are less costly than their returns. If returns decrease below investments, then individuals will choose to end the relationship provided there is an alternative. Although exchange-oriented models of human behavior have come under much criticism in recent years, many empirical findings provide support for exchange-oriented models of divorce. The model that Phillips (1988) has developed to integrate the various sets of factors thought to be responsible for the variations and changes in divorce rates over time in a coherent framework is also clearly inspired by exchange-oriented approaches. His explanatory model contained two main elements. The first one is the discrepancy between the expectations of the spouses regarding marriage, and their actual economic, social, legal, and cultural situation which determined the possibilities to fulfil these expectations. The second factor is the availability and evaluation of divorce and of alternatives for divorce (Phillips 1988, p. 632). Spouses had *expectations* concerning, for example, their standard of living, sexuality, affection, and domestic obligations, and on all these areas incongruencies between expectations and practice could exist (Phillips 1988, pp. 322–323). But the parties concerned realized that the practical consequences of breaking up a marriage that did not fulfil the expectations were usually far-reaching. The actual effect of starting life as a solitary depended on the economic interdependence that had existed between husband and wife (property, finding work outside the family, habitation), on the social, familial, and community pressures against separation, on the status and degree of discrimination that in particular solitary women faced, and on the affective bond existing between husband, wife, and children. Divorce could imply advantages and disadvantages that did not accrue from informal or judicial separation or other means of dissolving marriages: important elements in the decision to apply for a divorce might be the stigma attached to divorce; the grounds for divorce; the expenses of suing for divorce; the possibility of distributing matrimonial property, of receiving alimony, of making arrangements for the custody of children; and the possibility of remarriage (Phillips 1988, pp. 600–602). Most couples realized that the consequences of breaking up a marriage would have made life so difficult that they adopted a pragmatic attitude toward their marriage: their expectations were low and flexible, and there was a high degree of tolerance of negative aspects of marital behavior.

It stands to reason that, in historical research, data on all these mentioned factors are seldom available. We had to restrict ourselves to those aspects for which indicators could be found in the vital registration system and the population register.

In several ways we tried to measure the prospect of a discrepancy between expectations of spouses and their actual situation. We assumed that the degree in which couples were able to make a realistic assessment of what marriage and family life might bring depended among other things on their age at marriage. The presence of potential conflicting expectations between spouses was measured by the religious heterogamy and the age differences between spouses. The chances that the actual social and economic situation fell short of expectations are assumed to be higher where couples faced serious structural constraints early in marriage. To indicate this, we used information on legitimization of children born before marriage, on previous divorce, and on judicial intervention with marriage.

The availability and evaluation of divorce were assumed to be dependent on several factors. Religion, the presence of the parents of the couple, urban/rural background, and spatial immobility all could act as barriers to divorce, through increased social integration, stronger ties to a kin network and the community, and a higher degree of social control. One might further expect that the effects of ending a marriage and the advantages and disadvantages implied by divorce above all depended of the socio-economic position of husband and wife. Labor force participation of women and the socioeconomic class of the husband were used to measure this. In addition, the period of marriage is used as an indicator of the passage of time.

PROPORTIONAL HAZARD ANALYSIS

As was stressed in the introduction, when analyzing divorce in a cohort of marriages, some form of analysis is needed which takes into account that the couple is subjected to competing risks: to dissolution by death of one of the spouses and to dissolution by divorce. In addition, one or both spouses could leave their place of residence without their final destination or the exact date of death being known. It has to be realized that the incidence of divorce will be very different even in populations with the same duration-specific probabilities of divorce, when the chances to survive to that duration are not the same. Changes in mortality over time may also contribute to a difference in the speed of divorce.

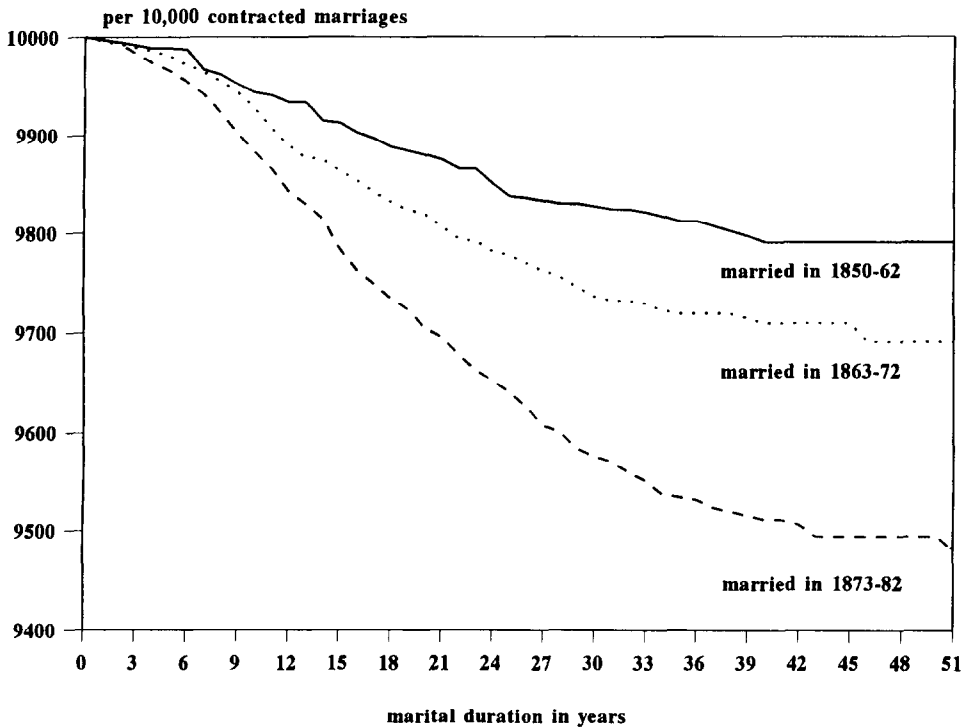


FIGURE 3
The Number of Marriages not Ending in Divorce According to Marital Duration, by Period of Marriage

If a substantial proportion of the couples was to die before divorcing, the distribution of duration to divorce will be biased downwards. If mortality were then to improve, the distribution would shift upwards, not because of a change in the real speed of divorce but because the chance of survival had improved. Marriages which are dissolved by death and couples whose life history can no longer be followed due to migration are referred to as *censored* or *truncated* observations. Censoring bias caused by mortality or migration to unknown destinations could be taken into account by estimating the probabilities of divorce with life table techniques where the couple is at risk of divorce only to the time of death of husband or wife, or to the moment when one or both of them can no longer be located.

Simple life tables describing the probabilities of marital dissolution by divorce for three marriage cohorts were calculated. Figure 3 shows, for each marital duration, which proportion of the original marriage cohort did not experience a divorce. Even after eliminating the changes in mortality taking place in the nineteenth century, a clear increase in the incidence of divorce is visible. Especially after a marital duration of 10–12 years, the most recent cohort, married during the period 1870–1882, had a much higher level of marital dissolution than the first one.

To disentangle the strongly related effects of all the selected variables that might have an effect on the incidence of divorce some form of multivariate analysis is needed. We used a multivariate form of the life table technique, 'proportional hazards analysis', that makes it possible to measure the effects of different variables that may have influenced the frequency of divorce. This method combines the strength of life table and regression analysis and allows the formulation of equations, relating independent variables to the hazard function (the risk of divorce) analogous to conventional least-squares regression (Teachman 1982; Allison 1984). We estimate the risk of divorce for couples with a given characteristic, relatively to that of a reference group without that characteristic, controlling for the effect of other independent variables. The analysis is based on the weighted sample of marriages. Marriages that were not dissolved by divorce were treated as *censored* observations. For these marriages, the censoring time was the time elapsed between marriage and the date of death of the first deceased spouse, or the time between marriage and the date of the last known migration of the couple.

RESULTS

Table 4 shows the results of the multivariate analysis, based on a proportional hazards model, using maximum likelihood estimation techniques. The effect of each variable on the risk of divorce is indicated by the value of the relative risks: values greater than 1.0 indicate that couples with this characteristic are more likely to experience a divorce than couples belonging to a reference group (relative risk=1.0); values less than 1.0 have the opposite effect. The quantitative importance of one variable relative to another may be judged by the relative sizes of the largest differences between the relative risks of the categories within a variable. The statistical significance of these relative risks is determined by a *t* test, whereas the test for the overall significance of the model is done using likelihood ratio statistics. All variables have been coded as dummy variables, making it possible to take into account non-monotonous trends in the effects of the variables.

The three groups of variables which measured aspects of the discrepancy between expectations of spouses and their actual situation appeared indeed all to play a role. The

TABLE 4
 Proportional Hazards Coefficients for Marital Dissolution by Divorce,
 Saturated Model (N-24,949)

<i>Variable c.q. Category</i>	<i>Relative Risk</i>	
<i>Period of Marriage</i>		
1850–1862	1.00	
1863–1873	1.56	***
1874–1882	2.27	***
<i>Religion Husband</i>		
Dutch Reformed	1.00	
Roman Catholic	0.80	*
Other	0.29	***
<i>Religious Homogamy</i>		
Homogamous	1.00	
Heterogamous	1.58	***
<i>Marital Status</i>		
Both Spouses Never-Married	1.00	
One or Both Divorced	4.29	***
Other	1.57	***
<i>Age at Marriage Husband</i>		
Less than 25	1.70	***
25-34	1.00	
35 and Older	0.34	***
<i>Age Difference Spouses</i>		
Husband 5 or More Years Younger	1.05	
Husband and Wife Same Age Group	1.00	
Husband 5 or More Years Older	2.11	***
<i>Socio-Economic Group Husband</i>		
Upper Class	1.15	
Petty Bourgeoisie	1.16	
Lower Level Professionals/Lower Civil Servants	1.22	
Fishermen	0.70	
Skilled Manual Workers	1.00	
Casual and Unskilled Laborers	1.10	
<i>Wife Worked Before Marriage</i>		
Yes	1.21	*
No	1.00	
<i>Number of Parents and In-Laws Alive</i>		
Less than 3	0.97	
3-4	1.00	
<i>Intervention Judge</i>		
Yes	1.33	
No	1.00	
<i>Premarital Birth</i>		
Yes	1.07	
No	1.00	

(continued)

TABLE 4
(Continued)

<i>Variable c.q. Category</i>	<i>Relative Risk</i>	
<i>Background Husband</i>		
Large City	1.00	
Scheveningen or Rural Area	0.55	***
Other	0.92	
<i>Mobility Husband</i>		
0 Migrations	1.00	
1 or More Migrations	3.09	***
<i>Notes:</i> *Significant at 0.05 level; **Significant at 0.01 level; ***Significant at 0.001 level.		
Model Chi-square	292.24	
Significant at 0.0001 level		

degree of realism in couples' expectations regarding marriage and family life, indicated by the *age at marriage*, more precisely that of the *husband*, was a very important factor for the risk of marital dissolution. The hazard rate for men marrying at younger ages was five times as high as for those marrying at ages 35 or higher. The presence of potential conflicting expectations between spouses was as important as the first-mentioned factor. In particular *age difference between the spouses* showed a striking influence. Husbands much older as well as husbands much younger than their wife had much higher risks of marital dissolution. Hardly less important was the effect of *religious homogamy*. When the spouses had a different religious background, the risk of marital dissolution was 59 percent higher than in marriages characterized by the absence of differences in religion between husband and wife. Of the structural constraints which might face couples in marriage, only the *previous marital status* of the couple had a large effect on the risk of marital dissolution. When one or both spouses had earlier experienced a divorce, the risk that the next marriage would again be dissolved by divorce was extremely high; four times as high as in a marriage between previously never-married spouses. The other events which might be considered as stressful factors, the presence of a child born before marriage, and judicial intervention with marriage, indeed led to somewhat higher divorce frequencies, but the effects were not statistically significant.

Factors indicating the availability and evaluation of divorce also correlated strongly with the likelihood of divorce. First of all, mention has to be made of the barriers to divorce. The strength of the ties to the local community, as measured by the *degree of spatial mobility* of the spouses, was highly correlated with divorce. In those cases in which the husband, after the conclusion of the marriage, had migrated once or more frequently, the risk of divorce was more than three times higher than for immobile couples. It has to be stressed that it is difficult to determine whether this high mobility was a cause rather than a consequence of a marriage which was breaking down. The problem is that the relation between migration and divorce could also be caused by another factor, for example, economic problems, that was the cause of frequent migration as well as of marital breakdown. Religious prescriptions have traditionally been considered a strong barrier to divorce. It indeed appeared that the *religion of the husband* had a strong effect on the incidence of divorce. This effect went partly in the expected direction: the highest risks were found among Dutch

Reformed husbands and Roman Catholics had somewhat lower risks of divorce. Surprisingly enough, and clearly contrary to our expectations, the lowest probabilities of divorce were found among other religious groups (Jews and smaller Protestant sects). The attitudes of the smaller Protestant sects – such as Lutherans, Mennonites, and Remonstrants—were assumed to diverge in a liberal way from Calvin's divorce doctrines which represented the attitude of mainstream Protestants in the Netherlands. They tended to reject hierarchical structures within the church itself; this should have led to a more tolerant attitude than among Roman Catholics, or the Dutch Reformed. The way in which divorce was evaluated by the couple as a solution to marital problems was also dependent on the presence of the parents of the couple. As long as parents were alive, they could try to influence the behaviour of their children. Parents had control over courtship and could try to stop marriages with spouses which they considered unsuitable marriage partners, be it for moral, financial, or social reasons. After the marriage was contracted, parents could still exert influence; children owed respect to their parents, and wanted to avoid disinheritance or family bitterness. So the parents could hold together many moderately unsatisfactory marriages. It appeared however that the correlation between the *number of parents still alive* at the time of marriage and the incidence of divorce went in an unexpected direction. Divorce frequencies were lower when fewer than three parents had survived than when only one or not a single parent had died. The effect was not statistically significant. On the other hand, the urban/rural background of the spouses had a clear effect; people *born in Scheveningen or in a rural area* had divorce risks which were clearly lower than those couples born in large cities.

A final set of factors was considered indicative of the effects of ending a marriage and the advantages and disadvantages implied by divorce. This included first of all the socio-economic position of husband. It appeared that the *socio-economic group* to which the husband belonged had only a slight effect on divorce frequencies. Nevertheless, a certain class divide was visible: higher socio-economic groups (upper class, lower level professionals/ civil servants and petty bourgeoisie) in general had higher divorce risks than the members of the working class and fishermen.⁷ Labor force participation of women was introduced as indicating the access to resources and alternatives outside marriage. *Women who had entered the labor force* had higher divorce risks than women who were not employed.

A very important result was the passage of time. It is clear from our analysis that, during the second half of the nineteenth century, a very strong increase in divorce frequencies took place. In cohorts married in the period 1874–1882, more than twice as many divorces took place as among marriages contracted during the 1850s.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this article we have tried to throw new light on the social history of divorce in the Netherlands. We did so not by illuminating the intimate aspects of married life like conjugal adultery, incompatibility, and marital violence that resulted in marriage breakdown and eventually in divorce but by concentrating on those social and economic characteristics of divorcing couples that distinguished them from couples who did not come before the divorce courts. In our study we followed an approach that is methodologically superior to the earlier historical studies of this subject. First of all, we continuously followed the life

course of a cohort of marriages and compared couples who divorced with those who remained together. Secondly, we applied multivariate analysis to isolate the effects on the incidence of divorce of strongly related characteristics of couples.

Many of the factors that according to our analysis influenced the probability of divorce among nineteenth century couples could be encompassed within a framework in which two groups of factors were crucial: on the one hand, the discrepancy between the expectations of the spouses regarding marriage, and their actual economic, social, legal, and cultural situation determining the possibilities to fulfil these expectations; and on the other hand, the availability and evaluation of divorce and of alternatives for divorce.

Low ages at marriage, for example, played an important role in the incongruence between the expectations of marriage and the actual situation. One might expect that in this situation the expectations were less realistic than in marriages where the newly-weds were older, and that these marriages also experienced more economic and emotional instability during the first years of their marriage. Younger men and women were emotionally less mature and were more likely to develop in different directions after marriage (Raschke 1987, pp. 604–605). Conflicting expectations, such as the importance attached to religion and regarding baptism and the religious education of the children, together with the disadvantaged social and cultural situation of mixed marriages (partly caused by the rigorous rejection and opposition by the clergy, the family, and the community), might explain the effects of religious heterogamy as well (Van Leeuwen 1959, pp. 410–415). The same is true for age differences between spouses, high mobility, and earlier marital dissolution. In this last case, adaptation to a new bride or groom, or the presence of children from an earlier marriage could easily cause emotional, pedagogical, and/or financial problems among remarrying persons. Perhaps these marriages were contracted after a shorter period of courtship so that the future spouses had less time to get acquainted with the character and way of life of the new spouse (Vandenbroeke 1986, pp. 52–53). The independence that widows had regained after the loss of their earlier spouse could make a new marriage in which male authority was the rule again less easy to bear. Furthermore, familiarity with divorce would reduce the deterrent posed by social stigma. High mobility could also act as a factor stimulating conflicting expectations. Frequent migration required continuous adaptation to a new family situation and to each other. It could lead to isolation in a new and strange environment. The urban/rural background could also exert an influence on the discrepancy between expectations and practice. Couples who originated from the countryside, or from a closed community like Scheveningen, knew each other, the family, and the way of life of the future spouse much better before the marriage took place. Here, marriage was supervised much more strictly by parents and by the community.

The implications of ending a marriage and starting life as a solitary were also important. Mobility could influence divorce via this factor as well (Wintein 1983, pp. 237–240). People could try to escape from the neighborhood in which they lived and were known because they were afraid of the shame connected with marital breakdown and divorce. When husband or wife were frequently away from the city where they lived, chances were higher that one of them started a relationship with someone else. Strong ties to friends, neighbors, and other associations which might provide a buffer against marital strains could not develop.⁸ The urban/regional background also influenced the practical consequences of living as a divorced or deserted man or woman. The imperatives of the family economy were weaker in towns than in the countryside (Phillips 1988, pp. 372–373). Wage

labor was more common there, providing alternatives to work within the family, and finding accommodation and care (in private houses, pensions, and inns) was much easier. Social control and the pressure of public opinion in cities was much less; people knew each other less well, were less dependent on each other, and did not meet each other time and again at all kinds of occasions. By moving to a house in a different neighborhood, one could escape from the negative judgement of family and neighbor and start a new life.

Religious prescriptions also acted as a barrier to divorce, especially among Roman Catholics. Divorce for them had many negative effects: agony of conscience, fear of social banishment, a ban on the reception of the sacraments of confession and Holy Communion, refusal of a Christian burial or the membership of an ecclesiastical organization, or the loss of assistance from charitable institutions set up by the Churches—all these factors in principle ensured a strong degree of control on the religious practices of the members of the church (Bos and IJzerraad 1985, p. 59). The Protestant churches attached much more importance to the ideal of individual responsibility and were much more decentralized than the Catholic church. This could lead to a greater variability in reactions to the official doctrines.

The practical implications of divorce for women were strongly dependent on their economic situation. A certain sense of financial security derived from a job might have encouraged unhappily married working wives to seek a divorce. Some may even have taken the job in anticipation of being on their own. Others may have enjoyed the sense of independence that employment provided. The role of paid worker could even have come into conflict with women's other family commitments and thereby have increased marital instability (May 1980, p. 120; Esterberg, Moen, and Dempster-McCain 1994, p. 293). It is more probable, however, that a large part of these working women were deserted by their husband before the divorce decree was passed and had to work for financial reasons.⁹

One would expect that the effects of ending a marriage and the advantages and disadvantages implied by divorce above all depended of the socio-economic position of husband and wife. According to Stone, "the working poor could not afford divorces until legal aid became available after about 1920. Consequently, the first stage of the revolution was restricted to the middle and upper classes" (Stone 1989, p. 15). Our research showed that for the Netherlands, this interpretation is not plausible. The social profile of divorced men and women was roughly congruent with the social distribution of the population at large and suggests that there were no important social or economic deterrents to divorce affecting one social class more than another. There was only a small overrepresentation of the better-off in divorce. One should realize that the direct financial costs of the divorce procedure were in general not very high; legal aid in the case of divorce was free for most people. Indirect and opportunity costs, like the time to travel to court and to have a day off, and problems in getting copies of all the necessary certificates were often more important.

The presence of the parents of the couple did not act as a barrier to divorce: the support system which might have held together many moderately unsatisfactory marriages thus did not function as one would expect (Stone 1990, pp. 414–415).

Finally, the results of our study indicated that during the second half of the nineteenth century a clear increase in divorce frequency took place. Stone (1977, p. 56) has argued that modern divorce is little more than a functional substitute for death. The decline of adult mortality after the late eighteenth century, by prolonging the expected duration of marriage to unprecedented lengths, eventually forced Western society to adopt the institu-

tional escape-hatch of divorce. Our life table analysis showed that divorce was *not* a surrogate of marital dissolution by death. Even when changing mortality was taken into account there still was a clear rise over time in the divorce rate. Particularly after ten to twelve years of marriage, divorce took place much more frequently in the most recent cohort than in the oldest one.

We did not explicitly study the reasons for the growth in the divorce rate that became visible from the second half of the nineteenth century. We might assume that it was related, on the one hand, to an increase in the expectations regarding marriage, and on the other hand to a loosening of the ties by which men and women were bound to that marital state. Opting for divorce rather than continuing an unsatisfactory relationship became easier over time: legal improvements took place with respect to the division of goods, to the right to alimony and the opportunities for custody of the children. That made divorce a more tempting alternative especially for women with children (Phillips 1988, pp. 596–605; O'Neill 1967, p. 25; De Regt 1984, pp. 50–64, 69–70, 90–96).

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NOTES

1. Between 1850 and 1890, 56 percent of all Dutch divorces was registered in the three large cities Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and The Hague. Census figures on the number of currently divorced people also showed large urban/rural differences. Around 1860, 33 percent of all divorced people lived in the three largest cities; in 1889 this was even 50 percent and in the beginning of the twentieth century more than 55 percent.

2. There are no firm criteria for the designation of the type, number, and size of the control group nor for the selection of individual control subjects. In general, a random sample of the population from which the cases are selected will prove to be a suitable control series. As far as the size of the control group is concerned, when only a small number of cases is available for study, it is recommended to use a selection ratio of 2, 3, or 4 controls per case.

3. According to the dominant view of the law, this implied that the decree had to be registered in the husband's place of residence, as the wife was obliged to live with him in the domicile he chose.

4. To indicate the occupation of women in our analysis we used the occupation mentioned in the population register. This refers to the situation some time after the marriage was contracted. It indicates that thirteen percent of the women who eventually divorced later in life had a job; for those not divorcing this was ten percent. At the time of marriage, the proportion working women among those divorcing was the same as among those not divorcing: 58.2 percent, respectively, 57.5 percent did not have a job. New entries in the population register make it possible to check whether a re-entry into the labor market took place during marriage. If one looks at the second entry in the population register, which refers to a time that the marriage existed for some time, it appears that among divorcing women working wives were overrepresented even more. Whereas around 29 percent of eventually divorcing women had a job, less than twelve percent of the other married women was employed.

5. Each single year of marriage received a sample weight, equal to the reciprocal of the fraction that marriages not dissolved by divorce constituted of the total number of marriages contracted in

that year. This weight was applied to marriages not ending in divorce. The total number of marriages was derived from published statistical data.

6. For two characteristics it was possible to check whether the sample was indeed representative of all marriages contracted in The Hague during the period concerned. Data were available on the distribution of marriages according to the marital status of bride and groom during the periods 1850–1865 and 1866–1880, and on the distribution of marriages by age at marriage in the period 1850–1865. In both cases, the re-weighted sample results hardly deviated from the data for the population as a whole.

7. The high incidence of divorce among lower-level professionals was mainly caused by artists and actors, that of the upper class by the higher military. The high rates of the first-mentioned group might be explained by the fact that many of them were continuously on tour, in mixed company, and lived in a libertarian atmosphere, surrounded by admirers; their work took place in a setting which aimed at amusement and distraction, and in which sexual stimuli often abounded (Dessertine 1981, pp. 133–135). That higher military were overrepresented could be related to the fact that military duties could separate husband and wife for long periods. This not only offered ample opportunities for adulterous relations, the many postings could also cause instable relationships, and rendered social control by family and neighbourhood much less effective (Phillips 1988, pp. 235–236).

8. Many couples who divorced left the city in a relatively short period of time. In most cases, and much more frequently than widowers and widows, divorcing couples migrated between the three big cities Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and The Hague.

9. It is known that these women started working before getting a divorce, but it is generally not known whether they reentered the labor force after or before they were left by their husband.

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