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KADRI ROOTALU

Antecedents and consequences of divorce in Estonia from longitudinal and multigenerational perspectives

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Institute of Social Studies, University of Tartu, Estonia

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LIST OF ORIGINAL STUDIES

This dissertation is based on original publications that will be referred to in the dissertation by their respective Roman numbers.

STUDY I: Rootalu, K. (2010). The effect of education on divorce risk in Estonia. *Trames: Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences, 14*, 1, 21–33.

STUDY II: Rootalu, K., Kasearu, K., Tooding, L.-M. (2016). Life Plans of Estonian Young Adults and Their Realization: The Impact of Parental Divorce in the Context of Late Socialism and the Post-Socialist Transition. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies, 47*, 1, 111–131.

STUDY III: Rootalu, K., Kasearu, K. (2016). Adolescents' Attitudes Toward Divorce: Does Parental Influence Matter in a Changing Society? *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage, 57*, 3, 195–211.

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AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION

The author of this dissertation made a major contribution to the three studies listed below:

Study I: The author is the sole author of the study and was fully responsible for all parts of the article. In addition the author also contributed to the questionnaire design and data collection.

Study II: The author had a major role in formulating research questions and was fully responsible for the data analysis. In addition the author was the main contributor to the theoretical framework and write-up of the article. In addition the author also contributed to the questionnaire design and data collection.

Study III: The author had a major role in formulating research questions and was fully responsible for the data analysis. The author was the main contributor to the theoretical framework and write-up of the article. In addition the author also contributed to the questionnaire design and data collection.

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1. INTRODUCTION: THE AIM AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The question whether and how family life and family values have changed in the last decades is a heated topic in academic, as well as in policy, circles all over the world. The possible changes are interpreted in terms of the second demographic transition (Lesthaeghe, 1995; Van De Kaa, 1987), the processes of individualisation (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002) and the de-standardisation of the life course (Brückner & Mayer, 2005), and in Eastern Europe more narrowly as societal transformation (Raudsepp, Tart, & Heinla, 2013). Studies trying to integrate the individual perspective with general demographic processes and trends in gender relations (Esping-Andersen & Billari, 2015; Goldscheider, Bernhardt, & Lappegård, 2015) are provoking interest and providing a wider picture of many parts of the world, but often do not include Central and Eastern European transitional countries, or they concentrate only on fertility trends, which are easier to compare across countries than other family life events or the transformation of family values.

The current dissertation concentrates on a family sociology topic that is not so straightforward to analyse, namely relationship dissolution. It looks at both registered divorces (of officially registered marriages) as well as unregistered separations of marriages and cohabitation unions. The tradition of family studies, including the topics of family quality and divorce, at the University of Tartu is a long one, reaching back to the 1970s when an interdisciplinary family studies research group was founded. An elaborate description of the results from the Soviet period can be found in Kutsar (1995). The data used for the studies in the 1970s and 1980s were of a cross-sectional nature, including various scales of relationship quality, balance of family function and the socio-economic status of the respondents. The current thesis builds on these previous results adding a longitudinal and multigenerational perspective.

The thesis takes a quantitative approach to the topic of relationship dissolution. The data come from two different Estonian studies covering, between them, the 1983–2009 period. The first is a longitudinal study titled the Paths of a Generation, starting in 1983 and following the life course of secondary school graduates until 2005 (Titma & Tuma, 1995). The second study dates from 2009 and is part of the Value of Children project looking at families from the viewpoint of different generations: children, mothers and grandmothers (Kasearu & Rootalu, 2011).

The ambition of the dissertation is to look at relationship dissolution in the context of changing societal conditions in Estonia from both sides: the antecedents of divorce and the effects of parental divorce on children. The thesis seeks an answer to the following research questions:

1. How do the events of educational and family life course influence the risk of relationship dissolution.
2. How does parental divorce influence children's life plans and life events.
3. How are children's attitudes toward divorce influenced by their family of origin.

The dissertation relies on three original studies and the present introductory cover article. All the studies share the following basic assumption from the life course paradigm (Elder, Johnson & Crosnoe, 2003). First of all, that different life course processes are interrelated and happen at the same time. **Study I** looks at the processes of education attainment, family formation and family dissolution and concentrates on the educational effect on divorces. The next two studies concentrate on cumulative inequalities in the life course connected to the effect of (parental) divorce or single motherhood. **Study II** looks at the pathways into adult life of children of divorce compared to children of two-parent families. **Study III** concentrates more on the effect of parental divorce on the family values of the children: a possible mechanism that could lead to inequalities in later life. Therefore the studies also acknowledge the role of the value climate in the family process. Multigenerational and longitudinal data are used for the analyses as they are in the best possible way suitable to the chosen main theoretical framing of the current thesis.

The aim of the **Introductory article** is to provide a systematic framework for the three independent studies which present the causes and consequences of divorce from the life course perspective.

The structure of the introductory article takes the following format: the theoretical section presents selected explanations of the divorce process that have been used in preparing the original studies also giving an overview of the context of the demographic trends connected to union dissolution in the 20th and 21st centuries in Estonia and general trends in the changes in family values. The methodological section describes the data collection and data analysis procedures used in the studies. The results section presents main findings of the studies, and in the discussion section the results are explored further. The introductory article ends with a conclusion and a summary in Estonian.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Theoretical frameworks explaining marital instability

Marriage and divorce as social phenomena have been studied since the early years of sociology. This section gives some insights into the study of marital instability and the main lines of thought, both historically, and thematically. It starts with an elaboration of the research field. First, the discussion of conjugal family and the family roles from the functionalist viewpoint are presented. The section is extended with the predictions concerning the changes in world family patterns and its implications for the socio-demographic trends in divorces. Secondly family roles are discussed from the viewpoint of the new home economics approach elaborating more closely the specialisation and trading framework and its critics. Thirdly an alternative to the economic approach is given by introducing the ideas of family relations according to the Chicago school. These ideas are discussed further in the context of (social) change and the responses of families to it. Lastly the life course approach is discussed with special focus on the family life course.

2.1.1. The functionalist approach

One of the first sociologists analysing divorce more explicitly was Durkheim in his lectures of the sociology of family and his writings about the conjugal family (Simpson, 1921). Durkheim was worried about the rise of divorce during his life and argued against divorce by mutual consent, because it reduces the role of the state so that there is no external control over the family (Bynder, 1969). He analyses the interests of individuals and the institution of marriage and concludes that marriage outweighs the individual, because "there are reasons to believe that divorce by mutual consent has a very destructive influence upon marriage and upon its normal functioning" (Durkheim, 1906:549 in Bynder, 1969). The stability of the institution of the marriage was therefore more important than the interests of individuals.

Building on the ideas of Durkheim, the main interest in the works of Talcott Parsons and William J. Goode lies in the norms, values and roles connected with marriage. Separation is viewed as the failure to perform the role obligations in the family (Goode, 1966). However, Parsons and Goode also admit that divorce has its function as an "escape valve for the tension which inevitably arises from the fact that two people must live together" (Goode, 1970:81).

Parsons and Goode differentiate the conjugal family unit from the larger kinship system. The conjugal couple can be seen to be in structural isolation from the kinship (Parsons, 1943:30). Wagner (1997) outlines two consequences of the structural isolations of the marriage for its stability, which result from the emotionalisation of the marriage and from the lack of external support to the partners in the situation when the marriage is in the crisis:

> First, in small units the segregation of the kinship system means that affective connections are built up between members of a household. The structural isolation of the conjugal family frees the couple from a range of restrictive affairs, and from further kinship. In this way the marriage takes on a more and more voluntary character.
>
> Second, for the couple the structural isolation of the marriage has negative consequences during marital crises. For a couple in a marital crisis there are no coercive norms (for the friends and relatives) to provide emotional or material support (Wagner, 1997:61).

In classical sociology deviation from the gendered differentiation of occupational and familial roles is seen as a possible source for divorce or marital conflict. According to Parsons (1942:605), and building on the US example, spouses have an asymmetrical relationship with the occupational structure. The main source of the family's prestige is the social status of the husband, which can be derived from his occupation. At the same time the majority of wives were not employed or not in occupations that are in status competition with the husband. This may create conflict because the role of the wife is unstable and less desirable. However, some positive consequences can also be seen from the division of labour. If only the husband is working outside the home there is no competition for status between husband and wife, a competition that could be disruptive of the solidarity of marriage (Parsons, 1943:35). And a solidary family unit "has functional significance of the highest order, especially in relation to the socialization of individuals and to the deeper aspects of their psychological security" (Parsons, 1943:34). Change in gender roles is, according to Parsons (1964:24f), a reason for the rise in divorce. Together with the aspects given above as reasons for increased divorce, Goode (1970:81) also gives changes in value system and new alternatives to marriage, for example the increased economic activity of the wife. In addition, since there are many other divorcees, both husband and wife can expect to remarry and the social stigma attached to divorce is lessened (Goode, 1970:85).

The changes in marital relations and incidence of divorce are not independent of social class. Goode says that the upper strata at least in the United States is more tolerant towards divorce, which could lead to a higher propensity to divorce, although there are also some factors that could point at a lower propensity to divorce (Goode, 1966). First, the network of social relations and of kin relations is more extended, more tightly organised, and exercises greater control over the individual. Second, the income differentials between the wife and husband in the upper strata are greater than in the lower strata; consequently the wife has more reason to maintain the marriage if she can. Third, toward the upper strata, far more of the husband's income is committed to long-term expenditure, from which he cannot easily withdraw to support an independent existence. Fourth, the husband in the lower strata can more easily escape child-support payments and other post-divorce expenditure because his life is more anonymous and legal controls less effective. And fifth, the strains internal to the marriage are greater toward the lower strata: marital satisfaction scores are

lower, romantic attachment between spouses is less common, the husband is less willing to share household tasks when the wife is working (Goode, 1966).

Goode (1966) also points out that in a well-developed stratification system the lower class does not count on the stability of marriage and therefore also invests less in the marriage. However, one has to keep in mind the restrictions of this relationship in time and space. Therefore we should look at family changes in the context of change in the society. Over time there is a change in the class distribution of divorce (Goode, 1970:85). Because the legislators who make the family law have always typically been from the middle and upper strata in Western countries, divorce was more common in these strata. During periods of strict divorce laws only the prosperous could afford to divorce, the less well-to-do could not obtain them. But as divorce procedures were liberalised and made economically available to all, the divorce rate increased among lower class families. Finally the lower strata have higher divorce numbers because they experience more family strain. Therefore in Western countries a shift in the class distribution of divorce should have happened: where the correlation between class position with divorce rate was positive before, it should have become negative as divorce became more common (Goode, 1970:86).

The ideas of the functionalist school have been a fruitful basis for researchers from different fields. Studies have yielded different results when analysing the change in the socio-economic gradient of divorce. Some studies from Eastern European countries find some support for the idea of divorce spreading to lower strata (Puur, Rahnu, Maslauskaitė, & Stankūnienė, 2016), while others give mixed results (Härkönen & Dronkers, 2006). Therefore the functionalistic approach was one of the theoretical frameworks for the development of research questions in study I.

At the same time Goode's general ideas about the spread of specialized marriage have been heavily criticised, as the general prediction has not proven correct (Cherlin, 2012). The main arguments for the critique are the oversimplification of historical family patterns and the inability to foresee (or account for) the gender revolution (Stanfors & Goldscheider, 2017).

2.1.2. The new home economics approach

The increase in divorce can also be explained in terms of the new home economics approach. This also emphasises the household division of labour as a possible mechanism that explains the divorce process, but adds an economic cost-benefit aspect to family relations and investments made by partners in different spheres of life. According to this explanation, women invest more in household-specific human capital because they expect to spend a significantly long time at home bearing and rearing children (Becker, 1991). Men on the other hand would invest in market capital because they spend their working time outside the home. This means that women have a comparative advantage

in the household sector and that "an efficient household with both sexes would allocate the time of women mainly to the household sector and the time of men mainly to the market sector" (Becker, 1991:38).

When women start to spend more time outside the home and increasingly participate in the market sector, this increases their earning power and their independence from their husbands. At the same time the gain from marriage (and from the division of labour) is reduced, which brings with it a higher attractiveness of divorce and higher divorce rates overall. The labour force participation of women also raises the value of time spent at home taking care of the children, which causes a lower number of children in families. It can even be said that the labour force participation of women is interdependent with fertility and divorce rates. When working outside the home is common, the number of children is reduced. But children are important in the analysis of the family, because they form a kind of marriage-specific capital that is not as valuable for parents living separately, therefore discouraging marital dissolution (Becker, Landes & Michael, 1977:1152). The cause can also be seen in the other direction. When divorce is seen as likely, it discourages the accumulation of marriage-specific capital because this kind of capital is not so readily valuable after divorce. So if divorce is likely, fertility is reduced because children can be seen as marriage-specific capital and rearing children is more difficult after a divorce. And when divorce is likely women may also decide to participate more in the labour force as protection against the poor financial situation after divorce. The presence of large number of divorces in society, prospects of a shorter time spent at home taking care of children and the greater expectance of participation in the labour force makes girls and young women invest more in market human capital.

According to Becker (1991) divorce occurs because of imperfect information about the partner and the possible marriage. A longer and more intense search for marital partners could improve the quality of marital choices, but is also more costly and delays gains from marriage. Therefore people have to find a sufficiently good partner in a sufficiently short time (Becker et al., 1977:1143). The importance of information and possible unexpected outcomes also explains why most of marriages end in divorce in the first years of marriage as these are the years when the largest amount of information about the partner is obtained. This period of search for information also explains why the risk of divorce is higher for couples who marry very young.

At the same time Becker does not say that divorce is intrinsically bad or that people who have found out something unsuitable about their partner should not divorce. Would it not be possible, the search for information about the partner would take much longer and because of the fear of a mismatch marriages were delayed much longer (Becker et al., 1977:1151–1152).

Looking more closely into the divorce process it can be anticipated that husband and wife divorce when their combined gain from divorce is greater than the gain from marriage (Becker et al., 1977). If only one of the partners is willing to divorce, he or she will compensate the partner for any loss. Or, on the

other hand, the partner who wishes to stay in the marriage could compensate the partner who wishes to leave. Therefore the decision to divorce is also dependent on the divorce laws and the welfare regime. When there is a generous system of support for lone parents, it is easier to find an acceptable mechanism of compensation for divorce (Becker, 1991:356–361).

Oppenheimer (1997) criticises the specialisation and trading model by Becker (1991). She raises several problems concerning the hypothesis that increasing women's employment levels increased their economic independence and therefore reduced the gains from marriage and increased divorce rates. Many of the problems Oppenheimer raises are of a methodological nature, one of which is that the causal direction of the wife's employment on marital dissolution might not be clear. In this case the chronology of events may not reflect the causal ordering, because women who anticipate divorce might start to increase their work effort to be able to cope after divorce.

Oppenheimer (1997) also points out that gender role specialization is a high risk family strategy for independent nuclear families and is also inflexible towards the life cycle changes in the needs of the families. The risks may include for example the loss, health problems or unemployment of the only provider in the family (the husband) which could drive the family to poverty. But the risks may also be seen when something happens to the wife. No substitute for the household tasks can be found inside the family in occasion of her death or serious health problems when she has been the only person specializing to the household tasks. A two-earner family that has come to a social standard nowadays provides a solution for the potential loss of the husband's income. Therefore it becomes increasingly more difficult for one-earner families to achieve the same standard of living and the gain from marriage for couples with a specialised division of labour may decrease.

2.1.3. The Chicago School

An alternative description of family processes can be seen in the works of the scholars of the Chicago school. Their aim was to study the family as behaviour or as a social phenomenon (Burgess, 1926). They studied marriage and the family not in the context of its normative elements but rather in terms of the actual behaviour and interaction of members of the family. In the process of interaction the family develops a conception of itself. When this conception is accepted by the community, the family "acquires an institutional character" and we can talk about the family as a social institution (Burgess, 1926:5).

Every person in the family also has a conception of his or her role in the family and of the roles of other family members, a conception of what family life should be (Burgess, 1926:5). In stable and homogeneous societies these conceptions are relatively fixed. In a changing or heterogeneous society familial attitudes go through processes of change and there is much variation. This change can cause problems for individuals because they struggle to realise what

they perceive to be their roles in the changing environment (Burgess, 1926:9). People have many contacts to different groups with divergent family traditions, and they might also perceive these traditions by the means of communication (the media). This is especially important for children, who see not only the family pattern of their own parents but also those of many others. The consequence can be that they fail to work out a "definite and consistent system of family mores and ideals" (Mowrer, 1927:21) for themselves. Or, if they idealise the family relationships of their family of origin, they find them little use when they enter into their own marriages, because the conditions of life have changed. The situation of confusion (caused by the presentation of different family mores) leads to experimentation with new family forms and relations. When this kind of experimentation is presented in the media, an experimental attitude is formed. However, there is no guidance available about the results of these experiments (Mowrer, 1927:23) and "experimental alliances, however, mean also tentative alliances" (Mowrer, 1927:6).

Mowrer states that the family disorganisation, a process in which the family complex breaks down and the wishes of its members become differentiated, in the twentieth century was part of the movement toward individualisation (Mowrer, 1927:5). The main factors were the growing economic independence of women, and city life. City life was significant because it provided more opportunities for mobility and impersonal relations and thereby freed the individual from the stabilising influence of the local (rural) community (Mowrer, 1927:6). So in opposition to the explanations of the structuralist theories Mowrer sees smaller nuclear families as beneficial for family stability.

Another important aspect of the Chicago school was that it was first to study the conditions of marriage success. Burgess studied the patterns of personal relationships in the family pointing out two contrasting patterns of relationships in the family (Burgess, 1926:4). First, the highly integrated family, which possesses at least some of the following traits: elaborate ritual, rigorous discipline, sentimental interdependence, stimulating co-operative activities or objectives. Second, the unintegrated or loosely integrated family, which has little or no ritual, exerts control through discipline or sentimental attachment and has few common family aims. Therefore one can conclude that common aims and feelings as well as common rituals and co-operation should be present to form a stable family.

Two main conclusions with possible relevance to today can be drawn from the works of the Chicago school (Wagner, 1997):

1) The stability of a marriage is dependent on how the partners construct the marriage.
2) The importance of individual characteristics in this stability is increasing because of the deinstitutionalisation of marriage (Wagner, 1997:80).

Both conclusions are of interest in the Estonian context of the increasing popularity of cohabitations and high divorce rates.

2.1.4. Life course perspective

Researchers using longitudinal data for analysis of family often rely on the life course perspective (Aldous, 1990, Bengtson & Allen, 1993). This approach "emphasizes the importance of time, context, process, and meaning on human development and family life" (Bengtson & Allen, 1993:471). Specifically, the life course paradigm in the family sphere looks at "how individuals in connection with their participation in other groups orchestrate family event sequences" (Aldous, 1990:574). From this perspective the main focus is not just on certain life events, such as marriage or divorce, but on their sequences and trajectories. This means that in addition to looking at the roles or states of individuals, the transition to this roles and their change over time also forms a significant part of the picture. Researchers are trying to understand the social pathways in the society. Social pathways are defined as "trajectories of education and work, family and residences that are followed by individuals and groups through society" (Elder et al., 2003:8). Single pathways are constructed both by individuals from different life events, and by the institutional and historical context individuals live in; these in turn are influenced by the life course decision of other individuals.

Following on from the above, Elder et al. (2003) propose five paradigmatic principles in the life course theory that should be followed in the study of life events.

First, the *principle of life-span development* stresses that "human development and aging are lifelong processes" (Elder et al., 2003:11). Although the years of childhood and adolescence are often called formative years, the individual's development does not end with the arrival of adulthood at the age of 16, 18 or 21. By taking a longer-term view we can understand more deeply the interplay between individual decisions, value orientations and contextual change. This principle is very important when looking at family formation and dissolution in the context of the increasing ages of marriage and childbirth in Estonia.

Second, the *principle of agency* states that, "individuals construct their own life course through the choices and actions they take within the opportunities and constraints of history and social circumstance" (Elder et al., 2003:11). The person constructing the life course is not passive, they do not simply react to social influence, incentives or outside constraints. One makes choices, comparing the different alternatives that one perceives to exist. Research has shown that the "planful competence" of adolescents affects their future life trajectories in a positive way (Clausen, 1995). At the same time one should also consider that feelings of agency can have an impact of different magnitudes for people in different social contexts and of different ages. Being "high on agency" could lead to different outcomes when a person is married with several children or when a person is single.

Third, the *principle of time and place* states that "the life course of individuals is embedded and shaped by the historical times and places they

experience over their lifetime" (Elder et al., 2003:12). The time and place individuals are born in influences their later life course outcomes. Concerning 'place', one can look at the geographical location (a certain room, city or country for example), the material form (for example place as a compilation of objects at a particular location, investments in the location), and at investments in meaning and value (for example representations, value given to the built environment) (Gieryn, 2000). In the context of family research one could think about the family life courses of people in the cities compared to family life courses in rural areas, about the effect of home ownership on divorce, or about the discussions that occur when two people are establishing a common household. The problematic that relates to growing up with a single parent could also belong here. Concerning 'time', we can look at the impact of historical events, such as the fall of the Soviet Union, on individual life course. In addition we can observe the effect of broader socio-historical processes and contexts such as demographic change, economic cycles, social policy and policy change, advances in technology and media use (Settersten, McClelland, & Miao, 2014). In the context of family life course institutionalisation or deinstitutionalisation can be taken into account (Brückner & Mayer, 2005). Again, the effect of the same historical event can vary in different geographical locations.

Fourth, *the principle of timing* stresses the importance of looking at "the developmental antecedents and consequences of life transitions, events, and behavioural patterns [that] vary according to their timing in a person's life" (Elder et al., 2003:12). When we look at the life course as a sequence of age-linked transitions (Settersten, 2003) it can be argued that the choice of when and how a person can have a certain life is not entirely free. There is a "socially-prescribed timetable for the ordering of major life events" (Neugarten, 1969) to which most people in society adhere (Neugarten, Moore, & Lowe, 1965). Some of the expectations this creates are formal, based on laws and policies (Settersten, 2003). Others are based on the general patterns we can observe in society. We compare the events and sequences in our own or others' lives with the normative life cycle and might decide whether the events are "on time" or "off time" (Settersten, 2003). People share this view as a group and therefore this too can be seen as an instrument of social control (Neugarten, 1969). The same life events can also be experienced differently depending on the age at which they are experienced (George, 1993), for example some roles are held to be inappropriate for some stages of the life course. In addition, one should bear in mind that constraints on behaviour (such as economic realities) can and will create violations of the norms of life course (Furstenberg, 2003).

Fifth, the principle of *linked lives* states that "lives are lived interdependently and socio-historical influences are expressed through this network of shared relationships" (Elder et al., 2003:13). Individuals are also affected by changes that have an influence on their social networks. Parents are influenced by the changes in their children's lives, and vice versa. Lives are linked, lived interdependently – what affects your parents' lives may also have an indirect effect on your life.

In the current thesis the main line of hypothesis formation for the planning of studies was set up according to the ideas of the life course approach, which allows us to take into account personal, parental and societal factors in the divorce process. Ideas from the functionalist and home economic approaches are mainly used in the Study I as hypotheses concerning divorce risk factors. Principles from the Chicago School that relate to interaction in the family are taken as the basis to gauge attitudes of parents and children to divorce in Study III. Therefore the study looks at how the conception of divorce within a family is constructed in the course of the interaction of different family members.

2.2. Review of studies on antecedents and consequences of divorce

When looking at relationship dissolution, or more specifically divorce, the topics that are studied vary a lot in different areas of research. The current thesis looks more specifically at two aspects of divorce. First, the marital and premarital risk factors of divorce, and second the consequences of parental divorce for children. The thesis does not look into the psychological antecedents of divorce and family relations, an extensive overview of these in the Soviet Estonian context can be found for example in Tiit, Tavit, Kutsar & Keerberg (1982).

2.2.1. Divorce risk factors

The literature on possible divorce risk factors is vast and extends over different academic fields. In the next section studies that look more closely at demographic and sociological factors are reviewed. First, factors concerning the educational and occupational life course are discussed, followed by factors arising from family life course. Finally, factors connected with the structure of the parental family are examined, along with ethnicity.

Education. There is no general agreement among researchers concerning the influence of education level on the risk of divorce. Different theories and studies provide different results and give different explanations for the role of education in divorce. The following section gives an overview of the possible mechanisms in differentials of divorce risks by education and the results found in different studies of divorce risk factors. At the end of the section changes in the effect of education over time are discussed.

The economic theory of the family states that the higher educational level of the husband is connected with lower risk of divorce, while the higher educational level of the wife is connected with a higher risk of divorce because the gain from marriage is lower for those women (Becker et al., 1977). At the same time, from the viewpoint of optimal sorting (Becker 1973; Becker et al., 1977), when education is seen by both partners as a complementary trait the influence of education is not so straightforward.

Another explanation for people with higher education having a higher risk of divorce could be that these people might hold more liberal values concerning divorce and accordingly may more easily decide to end an unsatisfactory union (Levinger, 1979).

An important aspect of education is also the potential to earn more in the professions where higher education is needed. This means that, for example, people with higher education could have more resources to cope with the costs connected with divorce and therefore decide to divorce more easily.

From the other perspective it can also be argued that higher education could lower the risk of divorce because partners with higher education levels might have better communication skills and therefore be better able to solve conflict in the family (Amato, 1996; Faust & McKibben, 1999). The higher education of partners could also mean that as they earn more the family experiences fewer economic problems, a factor that could also lower the risk of divorce (Jalovaara, 2003; Ono, 1998; Oppenheimer, 1997). However, the risk of divorce increases when the wife is a high earner, especially when her income is higher than that of her husband (Jalovaara, 2003).

The husband's education is in almost all the studies related to lowered divorce risk (Lyngstad & Jalovaara, 2010). The empirical evidence on the influence of the wife's education on divorce is mixed. Härkönen and Dronkers (2006), analysing data from the Fertility and Family Surveys, do not find a relationship between education and divorce in most of the countries from Eastern and Northern Europe, including Estonia. The exceptions are Poland, where women's higher education increases the divorce risk, and Lithuania, where the relationship is the opposite. Some German studies show no effect of female education on divorce risk (Babka von Gostomski, Hartmann, & Kopp, 1998; Diekmann & Klein, 1991). Muszynska (2008) and Muszynzka and Kulu (2007) show that there is no remarkable difference in the divorce risk by female education in Russia.

A higher risk of divorce in families where the wife has the higher education has been found in the Netherlands (Poortman & Kalmijn, 2002) and Italy (de Rose, 1992; Vignoli & Ferro, 2009).

Studies of divorce in the Nordic countries mainly find that higher education levels reduce the risk of divorce (Hoem, 1997; Jalovaara, 2003; Liu & Vikat, 2004; Lyngstad, 2004). The same effect has been found in US studies (Martin, 2006; Ono, 1998).

There are also analyses of how the impact of education level on divorce may change over time, stemming from the propositions by Goode (1970, 1993). Martin and Bumpass (1989) found that the impact of female education on divorce has become increasingly negative in the US; concurrently Teachman (2002) does not find a significant change by historical period. In Europe, Chan and Halpin (2005) have shown that the impact of female education on divorce is becoming increasingly negative, meaning that today we should no longer see women with higher education having a higher risk of divorce. The same tendency has also been identified in Sweden by Hoem (1997), who found that

the increase in divorce has been greater for women with a lower level of education. Support for the Goode hypothesis has also been provided by de Graaf and Kalmijn (2006), Härkönen and Dronkers (2006) and Puur et al. (2016) for Estonia. Additionally, Esteve et al. (2016) conclude that as educational hypergamy decreases and wives increasingly have more education than their husbands, the association of female education with divorce declines to the point where it is no longer statistically significant.

There might also be changes in the impact of education level or change in the education level within the couple over time. South (2001) has shown that the negative influence of education level on divorce risk declines through the marriage, ultimately becoming positive. Jalovaara (2002) has found that the effects of education should be at their strongest early in the marriage, with the same effect being shown in the US (Morgan and Rindfuss, 1985; South, 2001).

Parental education. In addition to the education level of the partners, their own parents' education can be taken into account when studying divorce. Michael and Tuma (1985) have found that the resources of the family of origin may influence the family formation process of the children. Studies suggest that the impact of parental education level should therefore also be included in the current analysis. For example Lyngstad (2006; 2004) has found that higher parental education is connected with higher divorce risk for children in Norway. Hoem and Hoem (1992) in Sweden, Klijzing (1992) (for social origin) in the Netherlands, and Bumpass, Martin, and Sweet (1991) in the United States found the same. Possible explanations for this could be the more liberal upbringing of children from families with better educated parents or more resources in the family of origin that can be used in the case of divorce.

Employment, income. As with education, the explanations and results of different studies on the effects of the economic position of the partners on divorce differ greatly. In the vast majority of studies the effects of employment and income are explained in the context of the specialisation model (Becker, 1973; Becker et al., 1977). Almost all studies show that the husband's employment and higher income decrease the risk of divorce (Lyngstad & Jalovaara, 2010), while household economic problems increase it (Conger et al., 1990; Lewin, 2005). Concerning the effect of the wife's employment, the results are not that clear. Two explanations are commonly presented to explain the effect of the wife's employment on divorce risk. First the independence explanation, which states that the wife's greater resources promote divorce because her employment can be seen as an alternative to the home-maker role. In contrast the income explanation states that the wife's resources add to the total household income and therefore should decrease the risk of divorce.

The specialisation model has been criticised by Oppenheimer (1997) and Sayer and Bianchi (2000) as not appropriate in the current conditions, although in Europe and the US there are still many studies that provide support for the independence explanation (Lyngstad & Jalovaara, 2010). At the same time

several studies show that the impact of wife's employment on divorce risk decreases over time (Beck & Hartmann, 1999; Bracher et al., 1993).

The support for the income explanation has been provided by Kalmijn, Loeve and Manting (2007) and Dribe and Sandfors (2010) with the exception that when a larger share of a couple incomes is earned by the woman, the divorce risk increases. The importance of the wife's share of income has been showed also by Liu and Vikat (2004): the proportion of wife's income is positively related to the divorce risk. This suggests that there is a nonlinear correlation between wife's income and divorce risk: very low and very high levels of income bring a higher divorce risk with it (Heckert, Nowak, & Snyder, 1998; Ono, 1998; Rogers, 2004).

Some researchers argue that the impact of employment on divorce risk depends on the type of union (Brines & Joyner 1999; Kalmijn et al., 2007). They have found that in cohabiting couples similarity in income and employment decreases the risk of separation. However, with registered marriages the traditional division of labour (specialisation) decreases the risk of divorce.

According to the economic theory of marriage and divorce one could also expect that sudden changes in the status or contributions of the partners over the course of the marriage could increase the risk of divorce (Becker et al., 1977). Concerning the economic contributions of the partners this effect has been supported in studies by Tzeng and Mare (1995) and Böheim and Ermisch (2001). So we could also expect changes in the influence of female employment during the transitional period in Estonia. However, a study in Russia, somewhat similar in context, showed that there were no important differences in the divorce risk according to the wife's employment in both the socialist period and the transitional period (Muszynska, 2008). The only difference was that in the post-socialist period there was a higher risk of divorce in employees of private companies than in other groups.

So it can be concluded that the wife's employment has a negative as well as positive influence on the stability of the marriage. Amato et al. (2007) argue that because of these contradictory effects researchers often do not find a net effect of the wife's employment on divorce. But although there is no negative effect on divorce risk the wife's employment and income make it easier for the partners to leave unhappy marriages. Schoen et al. (2002) also found that wives' employment increased the risk of divorce in unhappy marriages, but not in happy marriages. And in the end we should also considered that when women in unhappy families anticipate divorce they probably increase their labour supply. Shifting into full-time employment is more likely for unhappily married, than for happily married, wives (Schoen, Rogers, & Amato, 2006) so the causal direction of the effect is not always clear.

Other aspects in the analysis of the effect of wives' employment on the stability of marriage are the household division of labour and gender equity. The most stable unions are found among couples with the highest gender equity (Cooke, 2006) and when the perceived fairness of the division of household tasks is high (Frisco & Williams, 2003). Because wives' employment could

potentially generate tension about the household division of labour, this aspect should be considered in this kind of analysis. Some studies show that the positive relationship between the wife's employment and divorce risk is diminishing when gender ideology controlled within the study (Sayer & Bianchi, 2000).

So, the primary mechanism contributing to the independence explanation is the gain from specialisation. The mechanisms contributing to the negative effect of female employment on divorce risk are higher income, sharing of common interests, value similarity and higher gender equity (Dribe & Stanfors, 2010).

Age at the start of marriage. Concerning family formation, the results found in previous studies generally agree with the hypothesis that the marriages in which partners are very young are at the highest risk of ending in divorce (Lyngstad & Jalovaara, 2010). Researchers highlight different mechanisms to elaborate this relationship. First, people who marry young may be not sufficiently mature to make complex decisions about their own lives, or the lives of their partners or children (Booth & Edwards, 1985; Martin & Bumpass, 1989). Second, partners who marry young could develop in different directions during the period of the marriage (Morgan & Rindfuss, 1985). Third, the time spent searching for a suitable partner could have been insufficient and the decision to marry could have been too hasty (Becker et al., 1977). The last explanation would also make clear why the divorce risk is highest in the first years of the marriage. Fourth, the choice of alternatives might be wider for young people (Lyngstad & Jalovaara 2010), i.e. other partners or activities. Fifth, people who marry early may not have had adequate marital role models (Berrington & Diamond, 1999). It is also possible that the relationship between the age at the start of the union and the divorce risk exists partly because of some confounding factors from the family of origin, like education attainment or parental divorce (Kiernan, 1986).

On the other hand, very late marriages for women are also shown to be less stable because older women find less than optimal partners (Lehrer, 2008) – they have fewer potential partners and their peers are less likely to be single (Lyngstad & Jalovaara, 2010)

Type of union. Most studies show that cohabitations, or marriages that began as cohabitations, have a higher risk of separation than registered unions (Lyngstad & Jalovaara, 2010). However, here there are a couple of methodological issues that have to be taken into account: the duration of the union and selection.

Concerning the duration of the union before marriage Bennett, Blanc, and Bloom (1988) and Thomson and Colella (1992) show that long periods of cohabitation increase the divorce risk of the subsequent marriage. In contrast, Bracher et al. (1993) found that only a short period of cohabitation (less than six months) raised the risk of marital dissolution in Australia. The suggestion from this research is that one should look at the duration of the whole union, not only the marriage, and when this is done no differences in divorce risk were found by

Teachman and Polonko (1990). Lillard, Brien, and Waite (1995) also state that duration is not important.

The explanation for why cohabitants are at higher risk of separation could be that people who cohabit are less committed to the marriage (Axinn & Thornton, 1992), have lower investments in the relationship (Bennett et al., 1988) and therefore separate with a higher probability than people who are in registered marriages (Bennett et al., 1988; Smock, 2000). The effect of self-selection can also be said to produce this connection. Selection means that people who cohabit before marriage might have some unobserved characteristics that also make them more prone to divorce (Bennett et al., 1988; Hall, 1996; Manning, Smock, & Majumdar, 2004; Smock, 2000; Thomson & Colella, 1992). For example they may hold more liberal values towards family and therefore may also divorce more easily; they may have different attitudes and expectations towards the registered marriage; they may have different relationship skills than people who do not cohabit before the marriage. Lillard et al., (1995) found that although people who cohabit before marriage have a higher risk of dissolution, the effect is due to the self-selection of more dissolution-prone individuals in cohabitation before marriage. Many of the following studies, which attempted to control for self-selection, demonstrate that there is selection into cohabitation by the propensity to divorce (Brüderl, Diekmann, & Engelhardt, 1997; Kulu & Boyle, 2010; Steele, Kallis, & Joshi, 2006; Svarer, 2004; Woods & Emery, 2002).

Once a cohabiting union is founded this might also change the attitudes of couple towards the marriage as an institution (Axinn & Barber, 1997; Axinn & Thornton, 1992; Demaris & Leslie, 1984; Hall & Zhao, 1995; Thomson & Colella, 1992). It may show that the relationship can be of temporary nature and so for long-term cohabitants the preference for marriage may weaken over time (Thomson & Colella, 1992).

On the other hand, one could also argue in favour of the search theory: in cohabitations before marriage, partners gain more information about their spouse (Brüderl & Kalter, 2001). So the couple can decide whether or not the relationship is worth preserving and converting to marriage or if they should find new partners. A number of studies have provided support for this proposition. Kulu and Boyle (2010), Brüderl et al. (1997) and Svarer (2004) found that when modelled correctly premarital cohabitation actually decreases the risk of divorce.

A relatively new aspect of the research into the influence of premarital cohabitations on marital quality is the possibility of inertia. For example Stanley, Rhoades, and Markman (2006) found that some couples who otherwise would not have married end up married because of the inertia of cohabitation. This would suggest that this kind of marriage could be less stable, although from the other perspective the inertia might also hold these marriages together for longer. The marriage ritual itself and social support or pressure from outside of the marriage could play a role here too.

Some researchers have argued that the effect of cohabitation on subsequent divorce could also change over time. It has been shown that this effect weakened in recent birth cohorts (Reinhold, 2010; Schoen, 1992), although there are also studies that do not find this kind of change (Dush, Cohan, & Amato, 2003) or demonstrate any negative affect of cohabitation on divorce in recent cohorts (Hewitt & De Vaus, 2009). The effect may depend on how prevalent cohabitation is in a particular society (Liefbroer & Dourleijn, 2006). When cohabitation is rare, cohabitants have higher divorce risks in their subsequent marriages because they are a select group. When cohabitation is common, the couples who marry directly are a select group and have lower divorce risks than cohabitants (Hoem & Hoem, 1992). Therefore cohabitants should be more likely to divorce in countries where cohabitation is either very rare or very common.

Children. The presence of children is generally considered a stabilising factor in marriage (Lyngstad & Jalovaara, 2010). The economic theory of the family states that children are a relationship-specific investment that one does not want to lose (Becker et al., 1977) and that this increases the partners' commitment to the marriage (Brines & Joyner, 1999). Levinger (1979) sees feelings towards dependent children as a barrier to leaving the union. At the same time premarital births are shown to increase the divorce risk (Andersson, 1997; Liu, 2002; Martin & Bumpass, 1989; Waite & Lillard, 1991). However, Morgan and Rindfuss (1985) and Waite and Lillard (1991) also found that the impact of premarital children is present only in the first years of marriage, and Cherlin (1977) reports no impact of premarital births on the stability of marriage.

Andersson (1997), using Swedish data, studied the influence of the number of children and the influence of the age of the youngest child on the stability of union and found that both indicators have an independent effect on divorce risk. At the same time, different studies show different effects of the number of children on the risk of dissolution. Lillard and Waite (1993) show that the birth of the first child lowers the risk of divorce, but subsequent children increase it. In contrast, Coppola and Di Cesare (2008) show that only the second and later births reduce the risk of divorce in Italy and Spain.

Other studies confirm that not only the presence of children but also the timing of childbirth matters (Morgan & Rindfuss, 1985; Murphy, 1985; Waite & Lillard, 1991). Young children especially lower the divorce risk (Liu, 2002; Steele et al., 2005). At the same time Bracher et al. (1993) found that the presence of young children in the family lowered the risk of dissolution, but that this effect was mediated by the wife's employment.

Some researchers have reported that the number of children in the family could also influence the divorce risk, something that has been shown for example by Böheim and Ermisch (2001) and Chan and Halpin (2005) using British data for the 1990s, and Svarer and Verner (2008) in Denmark. Although it is plausible that involuntary childlessness destabilises marriage, selection effects should also be considered when analysing the effect of children on

divorce risk: when partners expect their marriage to end, they are less likely to have children.

Parental divorce. It has been shown by some of the studies in Europe, and many of the studies in North America, that parental divorce during childhood may increase the risk of divorce risk in the children (Lyngstad & Jalovaara, 2010). However, for example Wolfinger (1999) states that this influence has diminished over the course of time as divorce has become more common. Teachman (2002) reports no such decline.

One also has to consider that other variables, such as age at marriage, type of marriage (cohabitation or registered marriage), choice of partner, education level of partner, could meditate the intergenerational transmission of divorce. A more recent study by Gähler, Hong, and Bernhardt (2009) has demonstrated that the transmission effect disappears after commitment, family attitudes, behaviour and life course, and socioeconomic factors are controlled for.

Nationality, migration. There are not many studies of the influence of nationality on divorce in Europe, rather the main focus has been on ethnically mixed marriages. Some of the few studies there have been report that ethnically mixed marriages are at higher risk in the Netherlands (Kalmijn, de Graaf, & Janssen, 2005), while for example Finnäs (1997) has shown that the Swedish-speaking couples in Finland have a lower risk of divorce. At the same time, mobility and migrant status may increase the risk of dissolution (Boyle et al., 2008; Frank & Wildsmith, 2005; Muszynska & Kulu, 2007). Concerning the situation in Estonia, Rahnu, Puur, Sakkeus & Klesment (2015) found no large differences in union dissolution between native and migrant populations; what effects there were show that dissolution rates differ by gender, migrant status and generation. While migrant populations tended to have somewhat lower divorce risks than native populations, the effect reverses in second-generation descendants of migrants. In addition, there is evidence that ethnically mixed partnerships might be at a higher risk of divorce (Rahnu et al., 2015, Milewski & Kulu, 2014).

In conclusion, different studies of divorce risk factors in different countries provide evidence that the results tend to be more mixed concerning of socio-economic factors like education and social status than demographic factors.

2.2.2. Consequences of divorce on children

Parental divorce has been found to have negative consequences on various aspects of the child's psychological wellbeing, health situation and academic performance (Amato, 2000, 2010; Amato & James, 2010; Gähler, 1998; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). The following section first gives an overview of the research into the consequences of parental divorce on the children's life courses. Thereafter possible mechanisms to explain these effects are discussed with special attention to the formation of family values at the end of the section.

Research has shown that children from broken families tend to leave home earlier (Aquilino, 1991; Bernhardt, Gähler, & Goldscheider, 2005; Bhrolcháin, Chappell, Diamond, & Jameson, 2000; Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1998; Kiernan & Hobcraft, 1997; Mencarini, Meroni, & Pronzato, 2012), especially because of friction (Cherlin, Kiernan, & Chase-Lansdale, 1995; Kiernan, 1992) or to start work (Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1998; Kiernan, 1992). This is linked to a risk of not continuing education (Amato & Keith, 1991a; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Sandefur, Mclanahan, & Wojtkiewicz, 1992) and overall with more difficult transitions to successful adult roles (Aquilino, 1991; Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1998). Living independently from the parents but not in a romantic relationship tends to erode family values among young adults and promotes less conventional attitudes to marriage and family (Waite, Goldscheider, & Witsberger, 1986). Therefore children of divorce have been found to have a lower commitment to the norm of lifelong marriage (Amato & DeBoer, 2001) and more positive attitudes toward divorce (Cui, Fincham, & Durtschi, 2011). Children from families with divorced parents have been found to leave home earlier to cohabit or have a child outside of marriage (Bhrolcháin et al., 2000; Cherlin et al., 1995; Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1998) or in some studies also to marry early (Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1998; Kiernan, 1992; Wolfinger, 2003, 2005).

There are several ways to explain the differences in the family behaviour of children from divorced families in contrast to children who grew up with both parents. The first mechanism may be strain connected with the parental divorce (Bernhardt et al., 2005). Children of divorce may experience unpleasant home environments and move out in order to get away from these circumstances. From one perspective it may be the conflict between or with the parents that creates an unhappy home environment (Amato, 1993; Amato & Keith, 1991b), while from another, single parent families often experience considerable economic hardship. In most cases, after divorce the children stay with their mother and are affected by the gender wage gap. Divorce leads to a decline in the standard of living in single parent families, which again affects health, leads to the lower availability of goods that facilitate academic success, forces families to move to poorer neighbourhoods, and encourages children to take the responsibility of contributing economically to the family budget (Amato, 1993; Bernhardt et al., 2005; Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1998; Kiernan, 1992; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; McLeod & Shanahan, 1993; Ponnet, Wouters,

Goedeme & Mortelmans, 2016; Thomson, Hanson, & McLanahan, 1994). The consequences can be dropping out from the school and exposure to deviant subcultures. At the same time, economic difficulty may under certain circumstances also lengthen the stay in the parental home for young adults, especially when there are few siblings or the person leaving is the last child in the household (Mencarini et al., 2012). This is potentially case because children may not have (in their first jobs) enough resources to set up their own households and their parents may not be able to support them. Strain could also be caused by life changes after divorce. The stressors connected to life changes after divorce can be multiple, including moving to another place, changing school, remarriage of parents and loss of social capital connected to moves (Amato, 1993, 2000; Sigle-Rushton & McLanahan, 2004).

A second category of mechanisms is connected with the loss of the non-custodial parent. Children of divorce may lack an adequate role model for socialisation (Amato, 1993; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Sigle-Rushton & McLanahan, 2004), which can lead to hastened decisions in their own family behaviour. But the children of divorce might also feel a deficit of close relationships and therefore start looking for a partner earlier. It has also been shown that children from divorced families become sexually active earlier (Kiernan & Hobcraft, 1997; Thornton & Camburn, 1987). On the other hand the deficit of close relationships can also decrease the attractiveness of staying home (Bernhard et al., 2005). Connected with the loss of the parent, absence brings reduced social control over the activities of children (Amato, 1993; Amato & Keith, 1991b). Single parents have been found to have less restrictive rules in the family (Thomson, McLanahan, & Curtin, 1992). When psychological and material strain produce incentives to leave home, reduced control produces the possibility to do so (Bernhardt et al., 2005). Both of these encourage children to search for adolescent role exits in order to start an adult life. However, if the reduced control hypothesis was right, we should also see children whose parents have died leaving home earlier.

When arguing about the impact of parental divorce on children the issue of the direction of the effect arises. There is strong evidence that the differences between children from divorced versus intact families are not entirely attributable to causation. It has been shown that some of the differences between these groups are products of selection into divorce, different conflict levels in the families or the differing values of divorced children. It has been found in the field of education that children of divorce perform worse in tests even before divorce takes place (Sanz-de-Galdeano & Vuri, 2007), and that when pre-divorce conditions are accounted for the effects of parental divorce on behavioural problems and academic achievement is reduced (Cherlin et al., 1991). So the problems may already be present before separation (Cherlin, 1999). Divorce as a process starts before the event of the divorce and ends long afterwards (Amato, 2000). Therefore, the selection perspective implies that certain individuals possess characteristics that make them more prone to divorce and also to the negative consequences after divorce (Amato, 2000), and that

these characteristics can be transmitted to the children. However, although selection is an important aspect, studies that account for it usually also find an effect net of selection (Amato, 2000, 2010).

Another aspect of divorce research in terms of the effects on children is the attitude of parents and children to family in general. Some analyses show that children of divorce have a more negative view of marriage than children from intact families, possibly resulting in the postponement of marriage (Axinn & Thornton, 1996) and making children of divorce more prone to cohabitation (Axinn & Thornton, 1996; Wolfinger, 2003) and non-marital fertility (Cherlin et al., 1995; Wolfinger, 2005). The idea, though, has not been universally accepted as other studies failed to find these negative attitudes towards marriage (Amato, 1988; Cunningham & Skillingstead 2015, Trent & South, 1992). It may well be that the children of divorce still value marriage but are also aware of its limitations and of the alternatives to registered marriage (Amato, 1988). So we could expect that children of divorce might not value the family as an institution less, but that they might have a lower commitment to the norm of lifelong marriage (Amato & DeBoer, 2001) or be more open to alternative forms of family in general (Axinn & Thornton, 1996; Halman, 1996; Thornton & Young-DeMarco, 2001).

Children of divorcees tend to have a more tolerant attitude towards divorce (Amato, 1988; Axinn & Thornton, 1996; Jennings, Salts, & Smith, 1992; Kapinus, 2004; Trent & South, 1992). This might put them at a higher risk divorce later on because people with positive divorce attitudes are more likely to get divorced (Amato, 1996). Therefore, attitude formation in childhood might be a mechanism in the intergenerational transmission of divorce (Diekmann & Engelhardt, 1999; Lyngstad & Engelhardt, 2009; McLanahan & Bumpass, 1988). As Cui et al. (2011) pointed out, the effect of parental divorce on the dissolution of young adults' unions is mediated by their attitudes toward divorce and relationship commitment. This applies more to daughters, who are likely to adopt the attitudes of their mothers (Kapinus, 2004). It has also been stated that the attitudes of parents towards divorce mediate the impact of divorce on children's attitudes (Axinn & Thornton, 1996). So, if possible, all kinds of interaction should be examined in this context.

2.3. Divorce legislation in Estonia

As the review of divorce risk factors demonstrated, the risk factors and consequences of divorce are often strongly dependent on the geographical and judicial context. Therefore it is important to give an overview of divorce legislations in Estonia.

Divorce has been permitted in Estonia for more than a century. In the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century divorce was granted and registered by the church (Göttig, Hallik, & Uusen-Nacke, 2006; Tammik, 2014). The first marriage law act of the Estonian Republic that introduced civil

marriage and divorce was passed in 1922. It was followed by the marital status law act of 1925. In the context of European divorce law the marriage law was relatively innovative. It allowed people to divorce in a relatively short time period and the grounds for divorce were relatively wide. It was possible to divorce by mutual consent and, in certain conditions, on the request of one spouse only (Abielu seadus, 1922). Cases of divorce were heard in the courts. The principle of divorce by mutual consent was retained in the Marriage, Family and Custody Code of the Russian SSR, which was enforced in Estonia for a short period during 1940 and later in 1944 (Göttig et al., 2006).

In 1969 the Marriage and Family Code (Eesti NSV abielu- ja perekonnakoodeks, 1969) permitted divorce through the family office when the couple had no minor children or economic disagreements. Otherwise, if the spouses could not agree, the divorce went to court to establish if it was possible to salvage the marriage, and, if not, to decide on the break-up of the family.

During this period, i.e. the first half of the 20th century, the predominant model of divorce in other European countries was "divorce by sanction", which presumed violation of conjugal obligations and assigned blame to one of the partners (Ronfani, 2003:121–122). No-fault divorce laws did exist in Scandinavian countries, but in the rest of Europe divorce by mutual consent was generally uncommon. It was gradually accepted in the majority of Europe by the 1980s (Ronfani, 2003:143), although still not in all countries.

After regaining independence the 1994 Family Law Act (Perekonnaseadus, 1994) introduced changes in the process of divorce registration. Before, divorce granted in court also had to be registered with the vital statistics office. Otherwise they would not appear in the published divorce numbers of Statistics Estonia. From 1995 there was no need for double registration, a change of regulation that also partly explains the peak in divorce numbers for that year.

The current 2009 Family Law Act (Perekonnaseadus, 2009) also allows two possible ways to register a divorce. First, by common agreement between the spouses in the vital statistics office on the basis of a joint written application. If there are disagreements about the divorce or the circumstances of the divorce then the case is to be heard in court. These disagreements may include for example the division of property or parental responsibility. In most cases, after divorce both parents retain custody rights, although shared residential custody is uncommon.

Therefore, one can say that in last decades there have been no radical changes in the divorce law in Estonia and that the law as it stands is in concordance with the Principles of European Family Law regarding Divorce and Maintenance between Former Spouses (Boele-Woelki et al., 2004). Divorce is permitted by mutual consent as well as without the consent of one spouse, and no (minimum) duration of marriage is required for divorce.

2.4. The family as an institution in Estonia since the second half of the 20th century

In addition to the judicial context the general demographic context in Estonia should also be taken into account when looking at the incidence of divorce.

With some reservations (especially in fertility) Estonia has been identified as one of the forerunners of the 2nd demographic transition in Europe (Katus, Puur, & Põldma, 2002). The trends in the spread of the cohabitation and relationship dissolution were similar to those in the Nordic countries. Studies show that in the 1970s half of families began as cohabitations (Puur, Põldma, & Sakkeus, 2009). However, due to the economic constraints of Soviet society cohabitations were mainly seen as the antecedents of registered marriage. The growth of unregistered cohabitation as an alternative to registered marriage started in the last years of the 1980s together with the influx of Western values (Kasearu, 2010). In terms of education and family life course this period can be described in terms of de-standardisation (Brückner & Mayer, 2005). At the same time trends in the age of family formation were, typically to Eastern European transitional countries, relatively low (Tiit, 2003).

The prevailing model of family for almost all of the last century has been the dual-earner family. Similarly to Northern Europe the education levels of women and their participation in the workforce have been, and are, high. While included in the Soviet Union, Estonia did not experience the post-war increase in the male-breadwinner family model that could be seen in the US and was expected to spread all over the world, for example as presented in the works of Goode (1970). The dominant family type was still the nuclear family, with multi-family households uncommon (Tiit, 2003). Therefore this family system has also been labelled "quasi-nordic" (Therborn, 2004).

Studies show that Estonia has been the forerunner in terms of the spread of divorce in Europe (Tammik, 2014). The divorce rates[1] in Estonia were comparatively high already in the 1920s and 1930s, rising from 0.4 to 0.9 divorces per 1000 population in the 1923–1935 period (Statistics Estonia, 2017; Tammik, 2014). This is higher than in most European countries.

In the context of the current dissertation marriage and divorce rates during the Soviet period and later years are of most importance. One can see that marriage rates in Estonia were already in the 1950s (Figure 1). After some fluctuations they stabilised at the level of about 9 marriages per 1000 population for more than 20 years in the mid-1960s (Statistics Estonia, 2017). This was followed by a sharp decrease at the beginning of the 1990s (after Estonia regained independence from the Soviet Union) and ended up at the level of about 4 marriages per 1000 population in 1996. A small increase in the numbers of marriages occurred between 2004 and 2007 and between 2012 and 2016, but during the years of economic crisis marriage numbers went back down again.

[1] The divorce rates given in this section are the Crude Divorce Rates measuring the number of registered divorces per 1000 in population in the current year.

When looking at both registered marriages and cohabitations one can see that the vast majority of people had still entered a partnership by the age of 40: the number was 94.1% for women and 91.8% for men in the 1929–33 birth cohort, and 93.8% for the women and 93.5% for the men in the 1965–68 birth cohort (Katus, Puur, & Põldma, 2008).

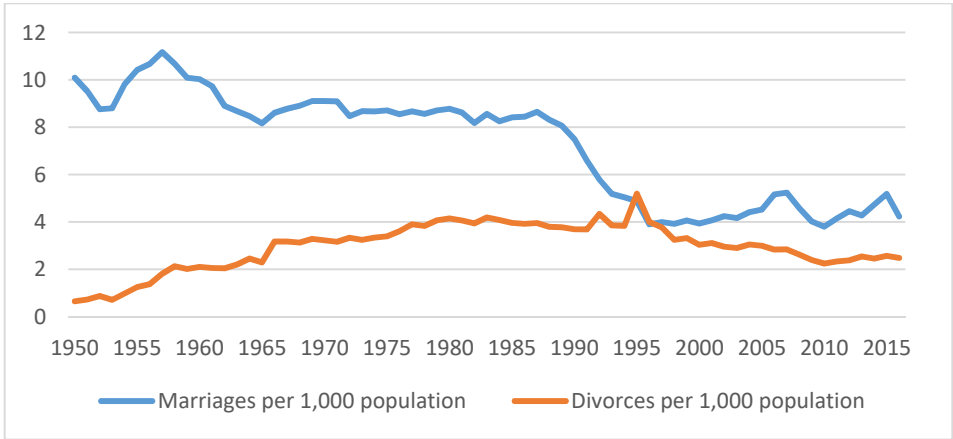

Figure 1. Marriage and divorce rates 1950–2016. Data: Statistics Estonia

At the same time we can see a clear trend in the increase in divorce from 1950 onwards (Figure 1). The total divorce rate reached 4.2 in 1980 and remained high for the next 15 years. The rate was high compared to Western European countries, although on the same level as Latvia and Romania (Table 1). In 1995 an effect of the change in the divorce law can be seen, after which divorce numbers show a small decrease. In this respect Estonia is different from other European countries, except Scandinavia which experienced an increase in divorce in the 1990s and 2000s. The years during and after the 2008–2010 economic recession show low divorce rates, followed by a small increase from 2013 onwards. This was possibly because some couples waited until after the years of economic recession to divorce. Similar patterns have been observed in for example in the USA (Cohen, 2014). So when looking at the official divorce rates in the 2010s in Europe, Estonia no longer stands out as a high divorce country.

Table 1. Divorces per 1,000 population in Europe

	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
Estonia	2.1	3.2	4.1	3.7	3.0	2.2
Ireland					0.7	0.7
Italy			0.2	0.5	0.7	0.9
Greece	0.3	0.4	0.7	0.6	1.0	1.2
Slovenia	1.0	1.1	1.2	0.9	1.1	1.2
Poland	0.5	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.6
Romania	2.0	0.4	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.6
Netherlands	0.5	0.8	1.8	1.9	2.2	2.0
Norway	0.7	0.9	1.6	2.4	2.2	2.1
France	0.7	0.8	1.5	1.9	1.9	2.1
Austria	1.1	1.4	1.8	2.1	2.4	2.1
United Kingdom		1.0	2.6	2.7	2.6	2.1
Slovakia	0.6	0.8	1.3	1.7	1.7	2.2
Spain				0.6	0.9	2.2
Germany				1.9	2.4	2.3
Latvia	2.4	4.6	5.0	4.0	2.6	2.4
Hungary	1.7	2.2	2.6	2.4	2.3	2.4
Finland	0.8	1.3	2.0	2.6	2.7	2.5
Sweden	1.2	1.6	2.4	2.3	2.4	2.5
Denmark	1.5	1.9	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.6
Portugal	0.1	0.1	0.6	0.9	1.9	2.6
Denmark	1.5	1.9	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.6
Belgium	0.5	0.7	1.5	2.0	2.6	2.7
Switzerland	0.9	1.0	1.7	2.0	1.5	2.8
Czech Republic	1.4	2.2	2.6	3.1	2.9	2.9
Lithuania	0.9	2.2	3.2	3.4	3.1	3.2

Data: Eurostat

Following on from the trends in rates of marriage and divorce, divorcees in 2016 are in many respects different from those of the 1980s and 90s. The proportion of divorces of marriages lasting 20 years or more has almost doubled: it was 15% in 1992, and 27% in 2016. In addition the percentage of divorce for those who had remarried has also increased. In 2016 about a fifth of divorces occurred in repeated marriages. At the same time the number of children affected by the divorce of their married parents has decreased. In 1992 64% of divorcing couples had children under the age of 18 in common, in 2015 this figure was 53% (Statistics Estonia, 2017).

Although the divorce rate in Estonia has decreased in recent years, it does not necessarily follow that partnerships today are more stable than the

partnerships of the 1990s. To look at family stability one should look at the proportion of marriages and/or unmarried partnerships that remain intact after a certain number of years. In the databases of Statistics Estonia it is possible to follow marriage cohorts since 1994. This information shows that the proportion of marriages ending in divorce up to the seventh year of marriage has somewhat increased over time: it was about 18% for the 1994 marriage cohort and about 22% for the 2000 marriage cohort (Valgma & Rootalu, 2007). Even more interesting would be the same number for all partnerships, not only registered marriages. One possible way to do that would be to look at the survey data from the second round of the Estonian Family and Fertility Survey of 2004–2005 (Katus, Puur, & Põldma, 2008). In this data one can see that the proportion of first partnerships that dissolve by the 20th year of marriage has increased from about a quarter in the 1920s' birth cohorts to about 40% in the 1954–58 birth cohort; in the 1959–63 birth cohort the proportion is more than half (data from Katus, Puur, & Põldma, 2008). Therefore, it can be concluded that although the divorce rate in Estonia has fallen in recent years the partnerships are not more stable than they were in the past.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Using the life course approach conceptual framework to measure causes and consequences of divorce

To make the best use of the data and to take into account the changing context of family life in the last decades in Estonia, the current study uses the life course approach as a conceptual framework to measure causes and consequences of divorce. From one point of view this approach assesses the social pathways (Elder et al., 2003) into divorce. From another angle it looks at how the life courses of children are shaped by their own and their parents' decisions as well as the institutional and historical contexts in the background. We look at the pathways from two perspectives: from longitudinal perspective and from multigenerational perspective.

The current study takes a **longitudinal approach** to the study of life events. Longitudinal studies provide more accurate data on family transitions than a simply retrospective approach (Bumpass & Raley, 2007). The time interval between the interview and the events to be recalled is shorter, although even in longitudinal studies we cannot eliminate recall error completely. The longitudinal approach also allows us to take into account individual as well as group trends in different areas of life course. This is especially important as the events of different life spheres take place at the same ages. At the same time the longitudinal approach also has its own specific methodological problems. In the context of divorce and separation Bumpass & Raley (2007) give three. First, the choice between the dates of separation and official divorce as well as the date of the start of the union. Bumpass & Raley (2007) advise using the dates of separation as the more accurate measure because some couples separate but never register their divorce officially. So, whenever possible the current study uses dates of marriage and divorce as well as dates couples start and stop living together. Second, the definiteness of the transition and time that has elapsed since. Concerning the accuracy of measurement, estimates of separation tend to be somewhat higher in the survey closest to a marriage cohort than in later surveys. We actually don't know if the separation reported during the last interview was definite or if the partners reconciled. For earlier waves of interviews the newer information provided from the respondents can be used to account for this. Third, spells that began and ended between the interviews might be missed. In the current study this is a particular problem concerning the information about the partner of the respondent. To account for this, variables relating to the partner are included in the models as a separate category with missing values. In this way our longitudinal study maximises the information available for modelling.

In addition the study also takes a **multigenerational perspective**. It acknowledges the idea of linked lives (Elder et al., 2003) by taking into account the perspectives of parents as well as children. In terms of data quality the use of

the parents' as well as children's answers allows us to look more precisely at the differences in meaning given to certain family life events. At the same time it provides information about the life events of the parents directly from the source.

Following the life course approach the study looks at the term 'generation' as a kinship term within a given family (Alwin & McCammon, 2003) rather than in the sense of cohort or age group. However, we acknowledge the idea of generational order in society: generally speaking whether a person has the role of child or adult, although the focus of the current study is more narrowly inside the family, looking at children and their family plans and values in the context of their own parental family.

3.2. Data and methods

Following the methodological approaches chosen the study makes generally use of two types of data: longitudinal and multigenerational.

3.2.1. Longitudinal data

The current thesis relies on studies based on two sociological surveys. In **Studies I** and **II** we use data from the longitudinal Estonian survey Paths of a Generation (Titma & Tuma, 1995). The survey began in 1983 when graduating secondary school students born in the mid-1960s were surveyed. It is a representative sample of secondary school graduates in Estonia in that year in a context in which secondary education was compulsory. The next waves of interviews followed in 1987, 1992, 1997 and 2004/2005. The size of datasets used for analysis in the current thesis is shown in table 2. Ninety nine percent of the respondents' birth years were between 1962 and 1966 with about half born in 1965.

Table 2. Number of respondents by year of the longitudinal study

	1983	**1987**	**1992**	**1997**	**2005**
Number of respondents	3360	2183	2128	2141	1442
Attrition rate		35%	37%	36%	57%

The survey itself is unique not only because of the long time period it covers, but also because during the first two waves Estonia belonged to the Soviet Union, while for the last three Estonia was independent. So we can follow the life courses of these individuals up to the age of about 40 across two different regimes. Information about life events like leaving the parental home, the beginning and end of the first consensual union, the birth of children and

education is obtained from the groups born during and after the Soviet period and from interviews with the groups closest to these events. Because this was a period when cohabitation spread rapidly in Estonia in addition to registered marriage, cohabitations are taken into account when looking at family formation.

The general strategy of data preparation was to prevent the loss of individuals as much as possible. Therefore information about the family life course of the respondents is used from as long a period as possible. For example, if a person participated in the study until 1997, the information gathered up to that date is used for modelling. If an event under consideration had not taken place by that time, the status of the person is set to be censored at that age.

Information about parental dissolution mainly originates from the third wave of interviews, but also from the fourth and fifth (from the years 1992 to 2005). Information about the parental family during childhood was available for 1718 people. At the age of 16, 73% of them lived with both (biological) parents, 18% had experienced parental divorce and 9% the death of a parent. Only very few respondents were from families where the parents had never lived together. When looking at national statistics, according to the population census of 1979 about 16% of families in Estonia consisted of a single parent and child or children, which is reasonably close to the number in our sample. Probably many people who had divorced or were widowed had married again and were in other types of family, because the proportion of repeated marriages among all marriages registered in Estonia in 1981 was quite high, about 22%.

3.2.2. Multigenerational data

Study III uses data from the study, Value of Children and Intergenerational Relations in Estonia (Kasearu & Rootalu, 2011). The study and the questionnaires it uses are based on the designs of the Value of Children and Intergenerational Relations project (Trommsdorff, 2002), a study of 14–17-year-old adolescents of both sexes, their mothers and maternal grandmothers. Two methods of data collection were used. Mothers and grandmothers were interviewed (with the interviewers completing the questionnaires). Children filled out the questionnaires themselves. The interviews were conducted in the summer of 2009. The sample was constructed on the basis of the children's age and place of residence and they were recruited from random residential addresses. About 60% of the children were from the two biggest cities in Estonia. The rest were from 11 Estonian counties. The number of children and the number of mothers in the sample was 300 of each, the number of grandmothers was 115. Our main interest during this study lay in the attitudes of children, mothers and grandmothers toward divorce; answers were assessed on a 5-point Likert scale. The first question asked whether the parents should stay together, even if they do not get along, because they have small children. The second question asked whether conflict between the parents harms children more than divorce. Only

mothers and grandmothers were asked the last question, “Is it too easy to get a divorce in Estonia today”.

The multigenerational data is a valuable addition to the longitudinal data described above in which information about the parental family was provided by the respondents themselves.

3.2.3. Methods of analysis

In modelling the causes and consequences of divorces the study makes use of different regression techniques. **Study I** builds models of divorce risk using parametric Sickle shaped models (Diekmann & Mitter, 1984). The results have also been controlled using different models (Cox proportional hazard models, different parametric models, piecewise constant models), although doing so did not alter the main conclusions. In addition different scenarios were controlled for with respect to possible time-dependency settings of the respondents’ education and presence of children in the family.

Study II uses Cox proportional hazard models for life events and ordinal regression models with logit link for the life plan models. Following the example of previous studies on the topic, models are built separately for men and women. As with study I here different model specifications were also used to test the stability of the results.

OLS regression models were used to analyse the children’s attitudes toward divorce in **study III**. In addition, other types of model (ordinal and logit specifications) were considered for the final analysis, although again they did not yield essentially different results. Information about the mothers’ attitudes is used as one of the main independent variables in the study. Due to their low numbers information about grandmothers’ attitudes is not presented here. Models are built separately for boys and girls.

4. FINDINGS

The aim of the current thesis is to look at divorce from the life course perspective. Therefore the studies looked at the antecedents (Study I) and consequences of divorce (Studies II and III).

4.1. The effect of education on divorce risk in Estonia

The aim of study I was to find out if the events of educational and family life course influence the risk of relationship dissolution. It looks at the divorce risk factors using data from the longitudinal survey Paths of a Generation and concentrates on the risk factors of relationship dissolution in first unions (registered marriages and cohabitations). The main interest focus of this study is on educational life course. Although the influence of education on divorce risk is a widely discussed topic in international studies, there are few studies in Estonia that look at both men's and women's family formation and dissolution. The study revealed that the higher risk of divorce in the lower education groups disappears when controlling for the parameters of family formation (Table 2 in Study I). This shows that the processes of educational attainment and family formation are indeed closely related and dependent on each other. Of the two, family formation behaviour has a higher impact on relationship dissolution risk. Age at the start of first union has a consistently negative influence on the risk of divorce (meaning that people who marry later have a lower divorce risk, or stay longer in the union). When looking at the type of union, registered marriages have lower divorce risks than cohabitations. And having children halves the risk of divorce risk.

Taking the educational gradient of divorce separately for men and women reveals differences. Women with vocational or university level education do not have different union dissolution risks than women with just general secondary education. At the same time, having a university level education reduces the divorce risk for men compared to both vocational and general secondary education.

In the current study it also was possible to look at possible divorce risk factors that arise from the family of origin of the respondent. When looking at parental education it turned out that having at least one of the parents with a higher education increases the risk of divorce. At the same time parental divorce did not have a significant effect on divorce risk once other relationship specific variables were entered into the model. To clarify these effects Study II looked more closely at the parental family of the respondents.

4.2. The impact of parental divorce on children in a changing society

After seeing the important role of family formation processes in affecting the risk of divorce, study II looks more closely at how parental divorce influences children's life plans and life events. We looked at three processes: children moving away from the parental home and having their own living space, marriage (or start of the first union), and the birth of the first child separately for men and women. While doing this we also tried to shed light on some possible mechanisms connected with the parental home and relations in it that could account for differences.

Generally it can be seen that parental divorce only has a significant effect on girls' plans to move out of the parental home: girls from divorce families planned to move out earlier (Table 2 in Study II). At the same time it did not have a significant effect on the actual age of moving out for either men or women. When looking at plans of family formation no significant differences can be seen. However, when looking at life events, girls with divorced parents tended to start their first unions earlier (Table 3 in Study II). The results suggest that the influence of parental divorce, especially on girls' family life decisions, are complex and mediated by different contextual and other life course decisions.

It was also possible to look at different factors arising from the family of origin of respondents that could account for (some of) the effect of parental divorce on children's life course. First, we looked at the material situation in the parental home and the number of siblings. The results show that girls who evaluated the material situation in their parental family during secondary school to be better than their classmates' situations planned to marry at a somewhat earlier age. However, when looking at the actual life events they did not, and even moved out from the parental family somewhat later than the reference group. The number of siblings only affected boys' plans to become parents: boys with a higher number of siblings planned to do this earlier. In actual life events both boys and girls with more siblings moved out from the parental home earlier, although there were no effects on the actual ages of family events. So the data yields only limited support for the strain mechanism.

The second explanation of the differences in family life events between children from divorced families and children from families where parents live together uses the conflict approach. Therefore we looked to see if there were any differences in life plans and life events according to the respondents' answers to questions about if they had often conflicts with their parents (during the study wave that covered leaving secondary school). Girls who had conflicts with their parents planned to get their own living space earlier, but interestingly there were effects of conflict with parents on girls' actual family life events (the girls started their first unions and gave birth to their first children earlier). So the conflict explanation seems to be in concordance with the overall life course paradigm of how families are formed.

The third possible mechanism arising from parental family was parental control. The students could evaluate whether their parents closely watched their behaviour during secondary school. Girls who answered yes planned to move out of the parental home earlier, but actually did not do so. At the same time both boys and girls whose behaviour was closely watched had somewhat higher risks of becoming parents. This result gives some support to the control mechanism.

Generally, the structure and situation in the parental family has a greater influence on the life courses of girls than boys. It also has stronger effects on the life plans that concern the nearer future, and not so much on plans of family formation that are generally made at older ages. At the same time and despite the lack of intention we still see some differences in actual life events. This can possibly be brought back to cumulative life course inequalities with one aspect being parental family structure.

From the life course perspective the results show that education ability and choices interact with other life plans. Children with better grades plan to move out from parental home later, and also do so. The type of the secondary school also has a big effect on future life plans and life course. Students from vocational schools plan to start their independent lives earlier and plan to become parents at younger ages. The same is true of women graduating from vocational schools.

The aim of Study III was to look at how children's attitudes toward divorce are influenced by the family of origin. We looked at the attitude congruence and the possible effect of parental divorce on children's divorce attitudes. In line with study II we found only very weak indications that children's attitudes toward divorce could be in big part influenced by their mothers' attitudes or by family structure. The results show that there is very little or no attitude transmission between generations in the family. We also saw that parental divorce in general did not have a strong effect on children's divorce attitudes (Table 2 in Study III).

The study also found that other characteristics of the mother – education, religiosity, number of children – did not have a significant effect on children's divorce attitudes. The only characteristics with reasonable effect sizes were the gender of the child and his/her education plans. Having no strong influences on divorce attitudes leaves more room for future life events to structure the young person's family life course.

DISCUSSION

The original studies in this thesis look at relationship dissolution in Estonia from two sides: the antecedents of divorce and the effects of parental divorce on children. The main results can be discussed in the framework of life course perspective (Aldous, 1990; Bengtson & Allen, 1993; Elder et al., 2003) following the principles proposed by Elder et al. (2003): time and place of lives, life-span development, human agency, timing of lives, and linked lives. Whereas some of the principles reflected decisions taken on the methodological level (for example the timing of lives), others provide more room for discussion.

Time and place of lives: divorce in the transitional context

Our studies looked at relationship dissolution in Estonia mainly in the 1983–2009 period. During the years and decades before, it was administratively not especially hard to obtain a divorce in Estonia. It was possible to file for divorce on a no-fault basis and the procedure did not entail large financial costs. This means that there were no remarkable administrative barriers that would prevent couples from divorcing. Therefore, following the propositions by Goode (1970), we should not see higher divorce risks in couples with higher education and social status. This is also the result from our models in Study I: divorce risk is not higher in people with higher education. Similar results have been found in the countries like Latvia, Finland and Sweden (Härkönen & Dronkers, 2006).

The nuclear family was clearly the most common arrangement of family life in this period in Estonia (Tiit, 2003) as in many other European countries. Living together in multigenerational families was not supported either by the current ideology nor valued by young families. At the same time the predominant family type was not the breadwinner-homemaker family as proposed by Parsons (1942) or Becker (1991). Typically both husbands as well as wives participated in the occupational structure at the start of the period under consideration (early 1980s) as well as during the transition period afterwards. At the same time, even during the Soviet period in popular belief the husband was still seen as the main provider in the family. This was the case despite the fact that the educational level of women exceeded that of men. But as Field (1968) states, the equality granted in the constitution was "an equality of rights and obligations, and under present conditions leads to inequality since, in most instances, women must continue to carry on their domestic duties together with their work outside the home" (Field (1968:11). Given the poor situation of shopping facilities, housing conditions and labour-saving devices this placed an additional burden on working women (Field 1968). As a consequence, because the pressure for a change in gender roles was imposed so rapidly, the conflicts that arose in the family might have been more insoluble, arise more frequently and be more explosive (Geiger 1968). The situation in the labour market together with the secular context helps to explain the trends in divorce in

Estonia during the time when divorce rates in Western European countries were considerably smaller.

On the other hand, in addition to looking at the legal and economic context of families one should also take into account the changes in demographic behaviour (Stanfors & Goldscheider, 2017). In the period under consideration Estonia was already well advanced in the second demographic transition (Katus, Puur, Sakkeus, & Poldma, 2009; Rahnu, Puur, Sakkeus, & Klesment, 2015). The spread of cohabitation had already begun and compared to other countries divorce numbers had been high for decades. The age of family formation was relatively young during the Soviet period. However, the situation was heavily influenced by economic factors imposed by the system. From the 1990s the ages at marriage and childbirth started to increase whereas the spread of cohabitation continued. This posits contradictory expectations of divorce risk for early and late family builders in Study I and III. For the group who started their families rather early (in the 1980s) higher divorce risks could be expected due to low age at marriage, but lower risks were expected due to the tendency towards registered marriage (compared to long-term cohabitation) and the presence of children. For the group of late family-formers the expected risks would be in the opposite direction. Despite possibly evening out in early and latecomer groups the results from Study I demonstrate substantial differences in divorce risks according to the type and age of family formation: cohabitation and early marriage are connected with a higher divorce rate, the presence of children in the marriage lowers it. The results are largely in concordance with earlier studies (Lyngstad & Jalovaara, 2010).

However, familial attitudes, as well as family behaviour, were also in flux (Ainsaar, Kasearu, & Rootalu, 2014). The start of the transition period connected with the regaining of independence from the Soviet Union posed new challenges for young people. They were left in the situation where the family of origin was set up in a different societal system than their own family of procreation. A greater set of family patterns became visible apart from those at show in the family of origin. The situation has also been interpreted from the viewpoint of developmental idealism (Thornton & Philipov, 2009) suggesting that during the transitional period young people tended to idealise Western family patterns that were not available in previous years. From earlier studies it could be anticipated that in a changing society familial attitudes are also in change and that there is a need, or at least the possibility, to define them again and to realise new family roles (Burgess, 1926). This is a situation that can lead to experimentation (Mowrer 1927). Studies using Estonian data on societal discontinuity and its effects on family behaviour (Sakkeus, Klesment, & Puur, 2016) give some support to this explanation. In concordance with the approaches presented above, the results of our Study III do not show considerable attitude transmission from mothers to children when looking at attitudes toward divorce. It can't be said that the children's generation is more liberal toward divorce. Rather, the results show that children who favour

divorce don't necessarily come from families where the mother has a positive attitude toward divorce, they come from different kinds of family.

One of the consequences of these changes is the controversial mentality in Estonia relating to the divorce and family life. Studies have found that divorce is as, or a little less, acceptable than in other European countries during the same period (Gelissen, 2003), but that the number of divorces was higher than in most of these other countries. In concordance with this, our studies show that the role of parental attitude toward divorce on children's attitudes is not to be overestimated. Only when the relationship with the parents is really good, and parents' opinions about matters relating to the family are taken seriously, we can see attitude transmission between generations (Study III). This is a result that is in concordance with studies from other countries (Boyd, 1989; Rueter & Conger, 1995) which demonstrate attitude transmission especially from mothers to daughters (Kapinus, 2004). Possibly the demographic context in the country could be an important factor here. Whether divorce attitude transmission is weaker and more dependent on the dynamics of the relationship in countries where divorce is more common would be a question for further comparative research.

Life span development of cumulative inequalities

Our studies indicate that the realised family life course can best be described in the context of smaller or bigger choices made during the life that are quite often made on the basis of the current situation in time and space (for example conflict, strain or control issues in the parental family) and cumulatively build up to a life course outcome. This is in concordance with other studies showing the cumulative effect of life course disadvantage: more and less vulnerable groups are affected to different extents by different life course events (Vandecasteele, 2011). Possible divorce is the outcome of long-term life course progression that incorporates different processes: not only decisions about family life but also education and residential arrangements. Concerning the education level, the results of the current analysis were not in concordance with some other studies predicting higher divorce risks for educated women (Becker et al., 1977; de Rose, 1992; Poortman & Kalmijn, 2002; Vignoli & Ferro, 2009). At the same time studies from places with similar political backgrounds to Estonia often also do not find differences in divorce risk according to the education of the woman (Muszynska, 2008; Muszynska & Kulu, 2007). However, one can't say that the role of education is non-existing in the family formation process. Analysis also shows that in the Paths of a Generation study higher education is connected with older ages of family formation (Tooding & Aas, 2002). The differences in the education gradient of divorce in different countries and regions could therefore been seen through the lens of the incremental process of family formation with the different resources and barriers connected with it. Following Levinger (1979) the subjective value of being married as well as barriers to divorce might differ between countries and regimes, leading to different family formation and dissolution patterns.

The range of results from study II also raises the question of whether parental divorce itself and alone is causing negative consequences for children's life courses. If so, considerable effort should be made to preserve the traditional family including employing the appropriate social policy measures. The results of study II after all rather support the notion that much of the impact of parental divorce is mediated by other socio-economic, psychological and life-course aspects (McLanahan & Sanderfur, 1994). The children of divorce tend to have more material and psychological strain as well as less parental control, factors that operate together with the divorce in shaping their further life course.

Human agency and linked lives

In general, the union formation intentions have been shown to be good predictors of actual behaviour in Western countries (Liefbroer, Gerritsen, and Gierveld, 1994). At the same time research has shown that life course transitions might become less age-specific when the larger structural environment changes, because there are more opportunities for negotiation and reorganization of the personal life course (Huang, 2013). Even when the planned and real ages of family life events generally correlate our study II shows that they are not in the same way affected by parental family. Concerning children's plans about family formation our studies show that in the transitional context there is very little direct impact from parental family life decisions (at least on the example of divorce). It rather seems that the family life course of the children as an outcome of different types of context specific life course choice, rather than a fully planned and value-based end-goal decision taken in the early years. This result raises the question of what the driving force of young people's family formation decisions is. Earlier studies of the same data looking at occupational mobility, stress the role of human agency during the transition period (Roots, 2013). The results of the current studies yield some support for this: children who are oriented towards longer education careers (have higher GPAs or study in more academically oriented secondary schools) plan to start their families later. There is also some indication that individuals who have for some reasons terminated their studies at vocational schools or higher education institutions also seem to end their relationships more easily. Together with small effects of parental family characteristics from study III, this indicates the role of human agency in shaping family life course. In the context of the changes in education and family life course it is certainly something that is worth investigating in future studies.

When looking at the demographic trends in Europe during the period under consideration, the question may arise as to whether there is evidence of a de-standardisation of the family life course for the 1983 Paths of a Generation cohort. The individual autonomy in the planning of family life course, family formation and dissolution increased in the 1990s and this could be seen as a precondition of the increase in the diversity of patterns of family formation and dissolution. If we define de-standardisation as a decline in standardisation then we easily found evidence for this in at least one of the dimensions of family life,

that of events, states or trajectories (Huinink, 2013). Whether this de-standardisation is of a transitory nature and would lead to a new pattern in family life (the re-standardisation of the family life course), or evolve as an on-going trend (Huinink, 2013), cannot be answered conclusively from the data on which the current dissertation is based. High relationship dissolution rates together with general approval of divorce (as seen on the attitude level in Study III) would certainly support the hypothesis of re-standardisation of the family life course in the area of relationship dissolution.

CONCLUSION

The ambition of the current dissertation was to extend the current understanding of the antecedents and consequences of relationship dissolution in Estonia. It looks at relationship dissolution in the context of changing societal conditions in Estonia from two sides: the antecedents of divorce and the effects of parental divorce on children. The main framework for the study is the life course approach, which allows me to take into account various individual and contextual influences on life course decisions.

The studies presented in the current dissertation show that **in the process of divorce the role of individual family life course choices is the biggest.** The age at the start of the union or marriage and the type of marriage (registered marriage or cohabitation) had the greatest influence on the risk of divorce (Study I). **Educational level had an effect on the divorce risk only for men, not for women.** Whereas the notion that marriages formed at early ages are less stable than marriages that are formed in the middle and late 20s is not new, the results on the educational gradient of divorce are new and controversial. As during the studies the two-earner family was the typical arrangement of families in Estonia, and also the proportion of single-mother families was high, the results reflect the absence of direct economic barriers to divorce. On the other hand, the negative educational effect found for men might lend more support to the conflict explanation, arguing that men with higher education could have better conflict resolution skills and participate more in the sharing of household tasks (see for example Amato, 1996; Esteve et al., 2016; Faust & McKibben, 1999). The diminishing negative effect of education on divorce risk in Estonia is also in concordance with later studies using different data sources (Puur et al., 2016).

Studies II and III also revealed **cumulative inequalities connected with the structure of the parental family and lone parenthood**. However, the effects were not especially strong and could possibly cushioned by the economic independence of women and subsidised prices for different commodities and housing, as has been proposed before (Sakkeus et al., 2016). The result contradicts the propositions made by Kreidl, Štípková & Hubatková (2017), using the example of educational attainment that the effect of parental education should be more negative in countries where divorce is more common, in concordance with studies that show less negative effects of divorce on children and adolescents in countries with higher prevalence of divorces (Gähler et al., 2009; Rootalu, 2008).

Another observation of this thesis is that the **role of parents' attitudes and behaviour in forming children's divorce attitudes was not big** (Study III). This is a finding that could be explained by the context of the societal transition, in which old norms lose value and new family forms are available. However, it could also be a result of a longstanding demographic pattern in Estonia where divorce was relatively common and most probably every child knew someone

from a divorced family or who was themselves divorced. Being divorced or having divorced parents was not really special and there was hardly any stigma for divorced individuals. Therefore, divorce could be seen by young people as one possible choice when relationships fail and might not be as highly value-laden as in other more religious countries.

In conclusion it can be said that the study of the antecedents and consequences of divorce in a changing society is a complex task both methodologically as theoretically. The current study illustrated many aspects of this, and certainly many more could to be taken into account. The approach in the current study was multigenerational and longitudinal, allowing us to take into account data from different points of time and opinions from different generations. Certainly other data sources (for example national records of divorce registration) and methods (including qualitative methods) could complement the results and provide even more input, for example for proposing different social policy measures or interventions in family therapy. This analysis could be undertaken in further studies.

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SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

Abielulahutuste põhjusi ja tagajärgi Eestis põlvkonna ajaperspektiivis

Kooselude ja abielude sõlmimise ja lagunemise trendid on viimastel kümnenditel olnud tihti nii teadlaste, poliitikakujundajate kui tavainimeste huvi all, nii teaduslike kui maailmavaateliste väitluste tulipunktis. Selgitusi, miks nii palju kooselusid laguneb, on antud lähtuvalt teisest demograafilisest üleminekust (Lesthaeghe, 1995; Rahnu, 2016; Van De Kaa, 1987), muutustest soorollides (Esteve et al., 2016; Goldscheider et al., 2015) arengulisest idealismist (Thornton & Philipov, 2009) või ka abielu ja kooselu muutnud funktsioonide kontekstis (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002).

Käesolevas töös vaadatakse abielulahutuste põhjuseid ja tagajärgi lastele eelkõige demograafilisest ja sotsioloogilisest vaatepunktist. Töös võetakse peamiseks aluseks eluteepõhine lähenemine (Elder et al., 2003; Settersten et al., 2014). Sellest tulenevalt vaadeldakse kuidas lahkuminek demograafilise faktina on kujunenud inimese elutee jooksul. Vaatluse all on nii registreeritud abielude registreeritud lahutused kui ka kooselude ja abielude registreerimata lahkuminekud. Selleks kasutatakse kahe sotsioloogilise uuringu andmeid. Esimeseks on projekti „Ühe põlvkonna elutee“ andmed, milles jälgitakse 1983. aasta keskkoolilõpetajate edasist eluteed kuni aastani 2005 (Titma & Tuma, 1995). Teiseks on projekti „Laste väärtus ja põlvkondadevahelised suhted“ käigus läbi viidud kolme põlvkonna uuring, mille Eesti andmed koguti aastal 2009 (Kasearu & Rootalu, 2011; Trommsdorff, 2002).

Töö peamised tulemused on avaldatud kolmes teadusartiklis, mis on avaldatud vahemikus 2010–2016. Nimetatud artiklites otsitakse vastust järgmistele uurimisküsimustele:

Millised on lahutuste faktorid Eestis (artikkel I) ehk milliseid demograafilisi seaduspärasusi võib näha lahkuminevate paaride puhul. Selles artiklis on vaatluse all eeskätt vastaja eluteed puudutavad faktorid: kooselu alustamise vanus ja kooselu tüüp, laste olemasolu ja partnerite haridustasemed. Uuringu käigus selgus, et lahutuse risk on seotud eelkõige vastava suhte perekonnalooliste aspektidega. Suurema tõenäosusega lahutatakse nooremas vanuses sõlmitud kooselud, registreeritud abielud on stabiilsemad kui vabaabielud. Samuti on väiksem lahutuse risk sellistes kooseludes, kus kasvavad ka lapsed. Abikaasade hariduse mõju lahutuse riskile on tunduvalt väiksem. Uuringust selgus, et naiste puhul haridustase lahutuse riski ei mõjuta. Meeste puhul oli kõrgharidusega vastajatel veidi väiksem lahutuse risk kui madalama haridustasemega meestel. Haridustee katkestamine (õpingute poolelijätmine) oli samuti seotud suurenenud lahutuse riskiga hilisemas elus.

Samast uuringust selgus, et kontrolltunnuste olemasolul vastaja vanemate lahutusel vastaja abielu purunemisele olulist mõju ei olnud. Vanemate lahutuse mõju vastaja eluteele uuriti siiski edasi artiklis II. Selles otsiti vastust küsimu-

sele: **kas ja kuidas vanemate lahutus mõjutab noore inimese elutee plaane ja tegelikke elusündmusi**. Uuringust selgus, et vanemate lahutuse mõju on nähtav eriti tüdrukute puhul. Lahutatud vanematega perest pärit tüdrukud plaanivad varem kodust välja kolida kui kahe koos elava vanemaga kasvanud tüdrukud. Tegelike elusündmuste ajastuses siiski kodust väljakolimise vanustes erinevusi ei leidunud. Küll aga oli näha, et lahutatud vanematega perest pärit tüdrukud hakkavad oma peret looma varem kui kahe vanemaga peres kasvanud tüdrukud. Seega, tehtud plaanid ja tegelikud elusündmused olid vanemate lahutusest mõjutatud eri viisil. Tundub, et vanemate lahutuse mõju laste eluteele ei ole niivõrd planeerimise tulemus kui kujunenud sotsiaalmajandusliku ja psühholoogilise olukorra tulem. Analüüsi käigus selgus näiteks, et sagedased konfliktid vanematega olid seotud neidude plaanidega varakult iseseisvalt elama kolida samal ajal kui parem majanduslik olukord päritoluperes oli seotud hilisemate plaanidega pere loomiseks. Ka haridusel oli oluline roll: kutsekoolis õppivad noored plaanisid praktiliselt kõiki elusündmusi nooremasse vanusesse kui üldhariduslikus keskkoolis õppivad noored. Samuti on nooremasse ikka tehtud plaanidega tugevalt seotud seksuaalsuhte kogemuse olemasolu küsitluse hetkeks. Tegemist on tulemustega, mis on üksikult kinnituste leidnud ka varasemates väljaspool Eestit läbi viidud uuringutes.

Kolmas artikkel otsis vastust küsimusele, **kuidas mõjutab päritolupere noorte inimeste hoiakuid abielulahutuste suhtes**. Vaatluse all oli kaks stsenaariumi: suhtumine lahutustesse, kui peres on lapsed (küsimuse sõnastus „Väikeste (eelkooliealiste) laste olemasolul ei tohiks vanemad lahutada ka siis, kui nad omavahel hästi läbi ei saa“) ja suhtumine lahutusesse kui konfliktse peresuhte alternatiivi (küsimuse sõnastus „See, kui vanemad pidevalt tülitsevad, on laste seisukohalt kahjulikum, kui see, et nad lahutavad ja kolivad eraldi elama“). Uuringust selgus, et 15-aastaste laste hoiakud abielulahutuste suhtes ei sõltunud suurel määral nende emade hoiakutest lahutuste suhtes ega ka kasvupere tüübist. Siiski oli näha, et kui ema ja lapse suhted olid tihedad ning laps arvestas oma eluplaanides ema arvamusega, suhtus lahutatud perest pärit laps lahutustesse üldiselt positiivsemalt.

Uuringute käigus leiti lahututega seotud aspekte nii indiviidi, pere kui ühiskonna tasandilt. Seega võib öelda, et ennast õigustas uuringute kavandamisel elutee lähenemise (Elder et al., 2003; Settersten et al., 2014) aluseks võtmine. Siiski tuleb märkida, et erinevatel (tihti andmetest tulenevatel) põhjustel ei saanud käesolevas töös arvestada paljusid eluloolisi aspekte, mis senise kirjanduse põhjal teadaolevalt samuti abielulahutustega seotud on. Näiteks seosed tööalase karjääriga ja sissetulekutega peavad jääma ootama uusi longituudseid uuringuid.

PUBLICATIONS

CURRICULUM VITAE

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Education

2003–present	PhD studies in sociology (University of Tartu)
2001–2003	Master studies in sociology (University of Tartu)
1997–2001	Bachelor studies in sociology (University of Tartu)

Professional employment

2017–present	Assistant, Institute of Social Studies, University of Tartu
2014–2017	Lecturer, Institute of Social Studies, University of Tartu
2017–present	Program director of the Sociology, social work and social policy BA program, University of Tartu
2016–present	Program director of the Sociology MA program, University of Tartu
2005–2014	Assistant, Institute of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Tartu
2003–2005	Assistant, Institute of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Tartu

Special courses

2017	HVEE.TK.010 "Automatic analysis of Estonian textual data" (University of Tartu)
2016	LSE Methods Summer Program course "Introduction to Data Science and Big Data Analytics" (LSE, London)
2015	ESRA short course "Statistical Learning / Machine Learning for social scientists" (Reykjavik)
2013	ESSTrain 13: "The Challenges and Opportunities of Longitudinal Hierarchical Modeling" (Ljubljana)
2013	Research and Expertise Centre for Survey Methodology (RECSM) course "Continuous time modeling of panel data by means of structural equation modeling" (Barcelona)
2008	ESStrain 5: "Structural Equation Modelling for Cross-cultural Research with the Program Amos" (Mannheim)
2008	ESStrain 4: "Comparability of Survey Data Across Countries and Time" (Mannheim)
2007	Max Planck Institute of Demography and IUSSP Summer School "Mathematical Demography with Application to Humans and Non-human Species" (Rostock)
2006	ECSR Summer School "Quality and Inequality in Education: Theory, Research, and Policy" (Prague)

Research interests

Quantitative methods, studies of life course, sociology of family, sociology of health, corruption

Publications

Sööt, M.-L., Rootalu, K. (2017). Bringing about Penal Climate Change: The Role of Social and Political Trust and of Perceptions about the Aims for Punishment in Lowering the Temperature of Punitiveness. *Juridica International, 25*, 32-42.

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Teenistuskäik

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Erialane enesetäiendus

2017 HVEE.TK.010 “Eestikeelsete tekstiandmete automaatanalüüs” (Tartu Ülikool)
2016 LSE Methods Summer Program kursus “Introduction to Data Science and Big Data Analytics” (LSE, London)
2015 ESRA lühikursus “Statistical Learning / Machine Learning for social scientists” (Reykjavik)
2013 ESSTrain 13: “The Challenges and Opportunities of Longitudinal Hierarchical Modeling” (Ljubljana)
2013 Research and Expertise Centre for Survey Methodology (RECSM) kursus “Continuous time modeling of panel data by means of structural equation modeling” (Barcelona)
2008 ESStrain 5: “Structural Equation Modelling for Cross-cultural Research with the Program Amos” (Mannheim)
2008 ESStrain 4: “Comparability of Survey Data Across Countries and Time” (Mannheim)
2007 Max Planck Institute of Demography ja IUSSP suvekool “Mathematical Demography with Application to Humans and Nonhuman Species” (Rostock)
2006 ECSR suvekool “Quality and Inequality in Education: Theory, Research, and Policy” (Praha)

Teadustöö põhisuunad

Kvantitatiivsed meetodid, eluteeuuringud, perekonnasotsioloogia, tervisesotsioloogia, korruptsioon

Publikatsioonid

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Erialaorganisatsioonid

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