*** FIRST DRAFT ***
Fertility after divorce in Flanders (Belgium)

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Introduction and research question

At the country level, marriage instability is positively associated with fertility in Europe as countries with a higher divorce level also have a higher fertility level (Coleman, 2005; Thomson et al., 2012; Van Bavel et al., 2012). At the individual level, however, recent studies in France and Italy find a somewhat higher completed or cumulated fertility for those who never dissolved a union or a marriage than for those who did, even after control for the post-separation union formation (Meggiolaro & Ongaro, 2010; Solaz & Beaujouan, 2008). This study addresses the issue of the first birth after a first marriage dissolution with new detailed data from Flanders (the Dutch-speaking region of Belgium).

Belgium moved in 4 decades from the bottom group of European countries with regard to the divorce rate to the top 5 (Billari, 2005; OECD, 2011). In 1970 1.82 per 1,000 married women (aged 18-79) divorced; in 2010 this share went up to 10.32 per 1,000 (Corijn, 2011; 2012a). At the same time, Belgium remains since long a country with a moderate fertility level. The period TFR decreased from 2.25 in 1970 to 1.84 in 2009 and cohort TFR decreased from 2.16 for the cohort of 1940 to 1.82 for the one of 1960 (ADSEI; Billari, 2005).

The recent high divorce rate in Belgium coincides with quite a long duration before marriages break up compared to other countries (Eurostat, 2010). The median duration of broken marriages fluctuates since long around 11-12 years. But this duration reflects an increase of both divorces after very short-lived marriages (facilitated through changes in the legislation) and divorces after quite long marriages. In 1970 12.7% of all divorces happened within the first 4 years of the marriage; in 2010 this increased to 19.2%. Focusing on long marriage durations, in 1970 18.7% of all divorces took place after a marriage of 20 years or more; in 2010 this share had reached 27.8% (ADSEI; Corijn, 2012a). The 'quick' or early divorces point to marriages with an interrupted fertility history, if reproduction ever started at all. In contrast, the late divorces concern marriages that lasted long enough to potentially realize the preferred number of children. This is an important source of heterogeneity that we will have to take into account when analysing reproduction after a marital break-up.

Several further pieces of information point to a fair share of broken first marriages with potentially unfulfilled fertility desires and expectations. More than half (58%) of the divorces of 1970 in Belgium were childless and 22% involved 1 child. This changed as children became less an obstacle for a divorce. In recent years, only 1 out of 3 divorces are childless and almost 1 out of 4 divorces involve only 1 child (ADSEI; FOD Justitie, 2011). At the same time, the 2-child family norm remained in force, although the average preferred family size decreased from 2.5 children in 1970 to 2.0 children in 2008 (Van Peer, 2008). So we may expect that many Belgian men and women did not realize their fertility expectations completely, if at all, at the time of their divorce.

Educational differences play a role in both union formation and dissolution (De Graaf & Kalmijn, 2006; Harkönen & Dronkers, 2006; Lichter & Qian, 2008; Liefbroer & Dourleijn, 2006; Poortman & Kalmijn, 2006; Wagner & Weiss, 2006) and in fertility behaviour (Beaujouan, 2011; Kravdal & Rindfuss, 2008; Lappegard et al., 2008, Pasteels & Neels, 2010; Neels & De Wachter, 2010). But the direction of the educational differentials is country-specific and may change over time. In Belgium the association between the educational level and the divorce risk changed from positive to negative (Corijn, 2012b; Neels, 2006).

The relation between education and fertility, however, changed from negative to positive (Neels & De Wachter, 2010). Moreover the role of education can be specific for second unions and second marriages as for married and non-married fertility. In this presentation we want to explore the answer to the question: what role do parity and educational attainment play in the post-divorce fertility in Flanders?

It is well-known that the presence of children and union stability are positively associated (Coppola & Di Cesare, 2008; Corijn, 1999; de Graaf & Kalmijn, 2006; Erlangssen & Andersson, 2001; Waite & Lillard, 1991). But how do children affect fertility after separation and divorce? Any analysis on the determinants of fertility in higher order unions must take into account the parity of the broken union. Moreover, as childbearing involves two partners, information on the fertility history of both partners is needed. In effect, only few empirical studies take children of the new partner into account. Besides, information on the living arrangement of the children, if any, of both partners is needed as children of broken marriages do not longer live per definition with the mother.

The literature provides three hypotheses about fertility after divorce that have implications for the role of parity attained at the time of separation, whether it is in second unions or second marriages, in stepfamilies, in post-divorce life or throughout a life with several partners (Buber & Prskawezt, 2000; Carlson & Furstenberg, 2006; Goldscheider & Sassler, 2006; Guzzo & Furstenberg, 2007a, 2007b; Henz & Thomson, 2005; Holland & Thomson, 2010; Kalmijn & Gelissen, 2002, 2007; Li, 2006; Logan et al., 2006; Vikat et al., 1999, 2004; Wijckmans et al., 2011). The parenthood hypothesis states that (separated) individuals tend to want at least one child of their own in order to attain a parent status. The commitment hypothesis focuses on the meaning of a shared biological child and puts that (separated) individuals want a common child to confirm or strengthen their new union. The sibling hypothesis, derived from the 2-child norm, emphasizes the fact that (separated) individuals with only 1 child want to give that child a half-sibling and those with already 1 common child want to give that child a full sibling in the new union.

Data and method
The 'Divorce in Flanders' (DiF) data were collected in 2009-10 among first marriages (of the 1971-2008 cohorts) that were either dissolved or not in the meantime (Mortelmans et al., 2011). The sample of still intact marriages and that of non-intact marriages were selected from the Population Register proportional to the marriage year. Partners had to be of different sex, both in their first marriage, younger than 40 years at the time of the marriage, living in Flanders both at the time of the marriage and of the interview and have the Belgian nationality from birth on. Both first marriage partners were invited to participate. Also, if there were shared (biological or adoptive) children from the first marriage, one was randomly selected and invited to participate, as well as the new partner, if there currently was one, and one parent of each marriage partner. In total 26,376 persons were contacted, 12,110 participated which results in a response rate of 46% (Pasteels et al., 2011).

For this study we only use data from the partners who already dissolved their first marriage. We excluded the very few respondents (1.1%) that were younger than 30 years at the time of the interview. One element of the DiF-sample design has important implications for our study: only people who divorced only once were allowed in the sample; no second divorces were allowed. We have data from 2,052 ever-divorced men and 2,360 ever-divorced women. A quarter of those respondents was each other's husband/wife, but since we do all analyses separately by sex, this does not imply a violation of the assumption of independent observations for our statistical tests.

Information on the complete partnership history of the respondents was collected starting from the relationship with the first marriage partner. New partnerships were registered when they had lasted at least

3 months. The timing (start and end) of each new partnership and each new cohabitation was recorded, as well as the timing of the second marriage. We observed that 19% of all respondents engaged in a new relationship before they left the marital home. Notwithstanding, we consider the period of being at risk for post-divorce fertility to start at the time of the factual separation (i.e. when one or both partners leave the marital home).

The complete fertility history was recorded as well. Besides the timing of each birth, the father- and motherhood of each child was identified. In a number of cases, children born during the first marriage were not parented by both first marriage partners. These children were included in the count of attained parity at the time of separation rather than included in the analysis of post-divorce fertility, even when the partner in the higher order union was actually identified as the biological parent of the child born before the recorded date of separation.

In our analysis the main dependent variable is the timing of the first post-divorce birth, if any. Respondents are censored at the interview date or at age 49 for women, whichever comes first. The modelling of the risk of a first post-divorce birth was done with discrete time event history analysis, using logistic regression on monthly spells of observation.

Covariates measuring time-related characteristics were: first marriage cohorts, age at separation from the first marriage and year of separation. Duration since separation was registered in months; it was also introduced squared in the model to allow a nonlinear functional form. For the respondents' children it was known when each child lived within the household or not. For each new partner of the respondent after the separation it was only known whether or not s/he had children of his/her own at the start of the relationship and whether or not at least one of these children ever lived in the household of the new union. It was left up to the respondents to interpret whether children lived with them in the household or not, implying a certain degree of subjectivity, particularly in the case of weekend and alternating arrangements after a separation. Living outside the household could be due to the separation or to leaving the parental home. The information on the educational level of the respondent has been recoded into 3 ISCED levels (0-2, 3-4 and 5-6).

In Table 1 we bring together some descriptive characteristics of the sample used in the analyses. Almost half of the men and 60% of the women separated before the age of 35, which has implications for potential pre- and post-divorce fertility, particularly for women. About 1 in 4 first marriages ended childless and 3 out of 4 separated respondents were parents. The most common combined parity in a new union (about 50%) is the one of two parents. About 1 in 4 childless separated men and women chose a new partner with children. Repartnering is quite common after a first divorce, as is cohabitation. Only 1 in 3 divorcees opted already for a second marriage.

Table 1 Descriptive characteristics of the 'Divorce in Flanders'-sample used for the analyses, by gender (in %)

	Men			Women		
First marriage cohort						
1971-75	9.9			9.6		
1976-80	16.6			15.6		
1981-85	18.4			20.6		
1986-90	22.6			22.0		
1991-95	19.3			19.3		
1996-2000	9.8			9.8		
2001-08	3.4			3.0		
Age at separation						
<25 years	5.8			11.5		
26-30 years	18.4			23.3		
31-35 years	27.2			25.6		
36-40 years	24.4			22.2		
41+ years	24.3			17.1		
Parity of R at separation						
No children	27.0			22.3		
1 child	25.3			26.4		
2 children	33.2			35.8		
3+ children	14.3			14.9		
*Parity of new partner at start of union**						
No children	43.2			42.8		
Children in new household	19.5			39.1		
Children not in new household	37.3			19.1		
*Combined parity **						
Both no children	10.6		18.1	8.7		15.3
R children, new P no children	6.7		11.4	6.2		10.9
R no children, new P children	14.8		25.3	15.1		26.5
Both children	26.5		45.2	27.0		47.4
R no children, no new partner	29.2			34.5		
R children, no new partner	12.1			8.5		
% ever *repartnered*	84			7880		
Mean number of new partners	1,18			1,06		
% ever in new *cohabitation*	71			62		
Mean number of new cohabitations	0,80			0,68		
% *remarried*	30			28		
Educational level						
Lower	26			21		
Middle	42			42		
Higher	32			36		
N	2,052			2,360		

Source: Divorce in Flanders, 2009-10   R=respondent P=partner   * based on person-period file

Results

Before turning to the results on the impact of the parity and the educational level, we summarize the results on the time and partnership covariates. Age at separation is quite a strong determinant for post-divorce fertility. Across marriage cohorts the risk for a first post-divorce birth increased. Living together strongly increases the risk for a first post-divorce birth. A remarriage adds an extra risk to this cohabitation effect.

In order to test the commitment hypothesis we explore the impact of parity using different measures of his, her and their parity (Table 2). First we check the impact of the parity of the respondent without taking into account the partnership history information (model 1). We can observe a non-linear effect among men as only those with 2 or more children have a significant lower first post-divorce birth risk. Among women we find that the more children they have at the time of separation, the lower their risk of a first post-divorce birth. Adding the time-varying partnership history information (model 2) also reduces the 1 child effect among women (and it turns non-significant statistically), so a large part of the negative effect of pre-divorce parity on subsequent fertility is related to the post-separation union formation. Indeed, from earlier studies, we know that the presence of children negatively affects union formation after divorce for women (Pasteels et al., 2012). In general, the literature suggests that young children in the household lower the post-separation repartnering rate for women (Henz 2002; Prskawetz et al. 2003; but see Wu & Schimmele 2005 and Goldscheider & Sassler 2006 for contrasting results). This may be explained by the fact that women are still the chief caretakers of children, implying both time and money constraints for women to find a new partner (Ganong et al. 2006). For men, on the other hand, having pre-union children seems to increase their chances to find a new partner. It has been suggested that being perceived as a good father increases men's attractiveness in the (re)marriage market (Wu & Schimmele 2005; Prioux, 2006; Goldscheider & Sassler, 2006). Adding the presence of the children of the new partner in model 3 further reduces the impact of the own parity of divorced women, while it leaves only the effect of the 2+ parity among divorced men significantly negative. Children of the new partner strongly reduce the risk of a first post-divorce birth. When the new partner brings at least one of his/her children into the new common household the risk of a birth is strongly reduced. But also when the new partner has children that s/he does not bring into the new household the risk is strongly reduced. This applies particularly when the new partner of the divorced men does not bring her children into the household. This latter group is probably small as most separated mothers keep the main responsibility for their children and continue to live with them. Only in exceptional cases, when the children are already older or when there are particular problems, children tend not to live with their mother. This negative effect is weaker when the new male partner does not bring his children into the household; which is the more common situation. These results can also be due to a gender-specific interpretation of 'children ever lived in the household' after a separation.

An additional test on the living arrangement of each child of the respondent reveals that the living arrangement does not play a role for the first post-divorce birth for men nor for women; at least once the age of the respondent at the separation is controlled for (model 4).

An additional test of the commitment hypothesis (results not shown) among respondents with at least two children to check whether they also want to prove their commitment to the new relationship with an extra child does not point in that direction.

Hence, we can conclude that his and her parity at the time of separation and subsequent union formation clearly do play a role, so our data do not lend support to the partnership commitment hypothesis.

Table 2 Test of the commitment hypothesis for a first post-divorce birth risk, by gender (logistic regression on person period file)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Parity of R (No children=ref.)								
1 child	-0.166	**-0.302**	-0.131	-0.127	-0.042	-0.055		
2 or more children	**-0.458**	**-0.492**	**-0.338**	**-0.326**	**-0.263**	-0.213		
Parity of R								
Childless (0/1)							0.064	0.433
1 child in hh (0/1)							0.179	0.410
1 child not in hh(0/1)							-0.254	0.209
2+ children in hh (0/1)							-0.141	-0.049
2+ children not in hh							-0.128	0.146
Children of new P (New P no children or no new P=ref.)								
In household					**-0.847**	**-0.879**	**-0.848**	**-0.894**
Not in household					**-1.955**	**-0.584**	**-1.954**	**-0.589**
Partnership history TV								
Relationship (0/1)			0.060	-0.225	0.497	0.000	0.502	-0.007
Cohabitation (0/1)			**1.569**	**1.519**	**1.452**	**1.571**	**1.450**	**1.579**
Marriage (0/1)			**1.052**	**0.916**	**1.036**	**0.926**	**1.046**	**0.929**
First marriage cohort (1971-75=ref.)								
1976-80	0.031	0.310	0.392	0.407	0.343	0.448	0.342	0.439
1981-85	0.089	**0.764**	0.537	**0.862**	0.405	**0.801**	0.425	**0.798**
1986-90	0.258	**0.953**	0.898	1.122	**0.724**	**1.015**	0.762	**1.013**
1991-95	0.298	**1.112**	1.091	1.287	**0.885**	**1.145**	0.930	**1.138**
1996-2000	0.484	**1.223**	1.485	1.464	**1.180**	**1.277**	1.224	**1.259**
2001-08	0.476	**1.547**	1.471	1.839	**1.161**	**1.626**	1.232	**1.601**
Age at separation (<25 years=ref.)								
26-30 years	-0.428	-0.352	-0.214	-0.270	-0.192	-0.268	-0.182	-0.271
31-35 years	**-.796**	**-1.326**	-.459	**-1.156**	-.404	**-1.157**	-.392	**-1.154**
36-40 years	**-1.346**	**-2.643**	**-.894**	**-2.258**	**-.806**	**-2.277**	**-.795**	**-2.288**
41+ years	**-2.172**	**-4.552**	**-1.380**	**-4.035**	**-1.199**	**-4.085**	**-1.192**	**-4.090**
Year of separation	0.016	-0.012	-0.029	-0.031	-0.014	-0.022	0.016	-0.012
Duration since separation (in months)	0.016	0.019	-0.001	0.003	0.000	0.003	0.016	0.019
Duration^2	**0.000**	**0.000**	**0.000**	**0.000**	**0.000**	**0.000**	**0.000**	**0.000**
Educational level (middle=ref.)								
Lower	-0.107	0.108	-0.042	0.024	-0.014	0.025	-0.017	0.017
Higher	**0.199**	0.119	0.095	0.178	0.009	**0.206**	0.008	**0.199**
Constant	-36.900	17.225	51.244	55.124	21.857	37.163	28.560	35.145
N of respondents	2,041	2,336	2,041	2,336	2,041	2,336	2,041	2,336
N of person months	241,257	235,955	241,257	235,955	241,257	235,955	241,257	235,955
N of first births	540	531	540	531	540	531	540	531

TV=time-varying   hh=household   coefficients in bold are significant

Source: Divorce in Flanders, 2009-10

In order to test the parenthood hypothesis we measure childlessness in the new union(s) in different ways (Table 3). If we compare the ever divorced respondents who are childless at the time of separation with all the others (without any control for the partnership history information, model 1), we find a positive effect of childlessness on subsequent fertility, but it is not statistically significant. If we add the time-varying partnership information (model 2), the ever divorced without children do get a statistically significant higher risk for a first post-divorce birth. The risk is as high for men as for women. However, if we add the children of the new partner (model 3), the effect of the own childlessness is no longer significant and the effect of the children of the new partner predominates. In model 4 we focus on the combined childlessness at the new couple level (putting R and new P with children wherever they live in the same category). We find evidence for the parenthood hypothesis among men. Particularly childless men repartnering with a childless woman, but also those repartnering with a mother, have a higher first post-divorce birth risk. Ever divorced fathers repartnering with a childless woman realize the parenthood wish of their new partner as well. Among women, the parenthood hypothesis is only confirmed for the childless women repartnering with a childless man, making both of them parents. Besides, there exists another type of childless women who repartner with a father and end up with a similar first post-divorce birth risk as the ever divorced mothers repartnering a father. Finally, there are ever divorced mothers that realize the parenthood wish of their new childless partner.

Table 3 Test of the parenthood hypothesis for a post-divorce birth risk, by gender (logistic regression on person period file)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
R no children	0.233	0.178	**0.219**	**0.205**	0.136	0.114		
Children of new P (New P no children or no new P=ref.)								
In household					**-0.840**	**-0.886**		
Not in household					**-1.961**	**-0.589**		
Children of R and New P (both children=ref.)								
Only R childless							**0.813**	0.148
Only new P childless							**1.333**	**0.738**
R & new P childless							**1.218**	**0.831**
R childless, no new P							**0.751**	**0.692**
R children, no new P							**1.015**	**0.827**
N of respondents	2,041	2,336	2,041	2,336	2,041	2,336	2,041	2,336
N of person months	241,257	235,955	241,257	235,955	241,257	235,955	241,257	235,955
N of first births	540	531	540	531	540	531	540	531

Model 1: controlled for first marriage cohort, age at separation, year of separation, duration since separation and educational level. Model 2 to 4: additionally controlled for partnership history - coefficients in bold are significant
Source: Divorce in Flanders, 2009-10

In order to test the sibling hypothesis, we restrict the sample to the ever-divorced respondents with at least one child at the time of separation (Table 4). Whether or not we leave out the partnership history information (models 1 and 2), we find no half-sibling effect. Also after adding information on the children of the new partner (model 3), there is no evidence that those having only 1 child have a higher risk to give that only child a half-sibling than those with more than 1 child.

Table 4 Test of the half-sibling hypothesis for a first post-divorce birth risk among divorced respondents with children, by gender (logistic regression on person period file)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Parity of R (2 or more=ref.)						
1 child	0.233	0.178	0.144	0.225	0.155	0.174
Children of new P (New P no children or no new P=ref.)						
In household					**-1.151**	**-0.865**
Not in household					**-2.518**	**-0.599**
N of respondents	1,491	1,810	1,491	1,810	1,491	1,810
N of person months	170,561	180,826	170,561	180,826	170,561	180,826
N of first births	297	285	297	285	297	285

Model 1: Controlled for first marriage cohort, age at separation, year of separation, duration since separation and educational level. Model 2 & 3: additionally controlled for partnership history - coefficients in bold are significant

Source: Divorce in Flanders, 2009-10

In order to understand the link between parity at the time of separation and educational level, we observed that among the ever divorced in the DiF-sample this link is positive for men and women, but became weaker across marriage cohorts. As becoming a parent seems to play an important role in post-divorce fertility, we keep in mind that 27% men and 22% women were childless at the time of their separation and that among the divorced without children 31% men compared to 40% women are higher educated. The educational level is not only related to the parity at separation but also to the post-separation partnership history. Earlier analyses on DiF-data revealed that lower educated men had consistently lower repartnering risks across separation cohorts. In contrast, for women a positive association showed up, but only for those divorced in the 1990s (Pasteels et al., 2012).

Table 5 summarizes the results on the effect of the level of educational attainment. Without any control for the parity at the separation and for the post-separation partnership history, we observe that that higher educated men have a significantly higher risk for a first post-divorce birth then the others; this does not apply for women (model 1). Adding information on the parity of the respondent at the time of the separation does not change the coefficients much (model 2). However, by adding information on the post-separation partnership history, the education effect disappears for men and shows up (non-significantly) for women (model 3). Only in model 4, when adding information on the children of the new partner, the education effect among women becomes significant. Higher educated women have a higher first post-divorce birth risk than the other ever divorced women. Hence we can conclude that among divorced men education affects their post-separation partnership risks, but once they are repartnered they have similar risks for a birth. Among divorced women the educational level affects more their fertility at separation and after separation, and less their post-separation union partnership behaviour.

Table 5 Impact of the educational level on the first post-divorce birth risk among divorced respondents, by gender (logistic regression on person period file)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Educational level (middle=ref.)								
Lower	-0.099	0.074	-0.107	0.108	-0.042	0.024	-0.014	0.025
Higher	**0.196**	0.170	**0.199**	0.119	0.095	0.178	0.009	**0.206**

Model 1: Controlled for first marriage cohort, age at separation, year of separation, duration since separation. Model 2: additionally controlled for parity of R. Model 3: additionally controlled for partnership history. Model 4: additionally controlled for children of new partner - coefficients in bold are significant

Source: Divorce in Flanders, 2009-10

Discussion of limitations and further plans

In these analyses on the DiF-data we only used the educational level of the respondent, as no information on the educational level of each new partner in the post-separation life of the ever-divorced respondents was collected. Information on the educational level of the new partner, making educational homo- and heterogamy an issue, as well as the age of the new partner, making age homo- and heterogamy an issue, is only available for the current new partner, but that would limit the analyses to surviving unions of different higher union order. Moreover, in these first analyses we did not take into account that the link between education on the one hand and union formation, union dissolution and post-dissolution union behaviour on the other hand may have changed over time. In further analyses we have to check for possible changes such as the decreasing link between the educational level and the parity at the separation.

Given these limitations, the first results point to the fact that higher educated ever divorced men have a higher first post-divorce birth risk only if their post-separation partnership behaviour is not controlled for and that higher educated ever divorced women have a higher first post-divorce birth risk only if their post-separation partnership behaviour is controlled for.

Results on the impact of parity on the further higher union fertility are mixed in the literature because different operationalisations are used and because different aspects of the post-first-union or post-first-marriage fertility are considered. As union formation and fertility involves two partners, it is crucial to take into account information on the parity of the two partners. This clearly stands out from the results presented in this paper. In other studies, data limitations often restrict the perspectives of both partners. The DiF-data allowed checking for the presence of children of each new partner and of their living arrangement. Collecting information on the living arrangement of children after a separation is quite open to subjective interpretation as living in the household could vary from during the weekends only, over alternating weeks, to most of the time. More detailed information was collected on the parity of the current new partner but that would again limit the analyses to surviving higher order unions.

Evidence was provided only for the parenthood hypothesis for all ever divorced childless men and for those repartnering with a childless woman. However, it was only provided for ever divorced childless women repartnering with a childless partner not for those repartnering with a father. Also Jefferies et al. (2000) point to 2 groups of divorced childless women; those with a high propensity to have a birth and those that are unable or unwilling to. With regard to fertility in higher order unions, the DiF-data limited the analyses as respondents with a second divorce were excluded. Moreover, of all post-separation cohabiting unions observed 87% were second unions; hence the results concern mainly second unions.

At last, the DiF-data do not capture well the most recent developments: premarital cohabitation and fertility outside marriage increased in Flanders quite strongly since 2000 and a new divorce law in 2007 made divorce legally easier than before. No second divorces were allowed in the sample; but at the population level the share of divorces that are second divorces reaches recently up to 23% (ADSEI), making the link between divorce and fertility even more complex.

Literature

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