

ARE THE KIDS ALRIGHT?

**Essays on postdivorce residence
arrangements and children's well-being**

Sarah K. Westphal

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and children's well-being**

HOE GAAT HET MET DE KINDEREN?

**Essays over verblijfsarrangementen van kinderen na echtscheiding en hun
welzijn
(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)**

Proefschrift

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To my family.

Preface

Not all those who wander are lost

J.R.R. Tolkien

Writing this book often felt like a journey to me. While some days of this journey seemed endless, leaving me wondering if I ever could make it, other days flew by so quickly. And like every great journey, it is the people you meet along the road that make the ride worthwhile.

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Sarah Westphal

Utrecht, March 2015

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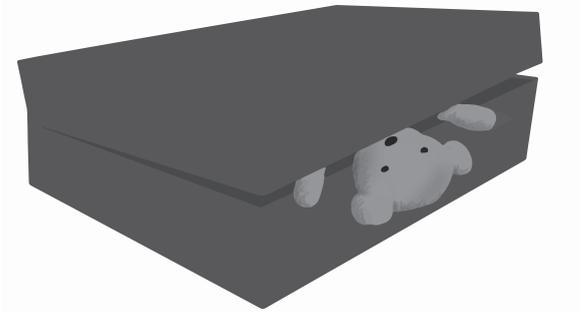
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1

Introduction

1.1 Background and aim of the study

For long, postdivorce parenting arrangements have been characterized by the limited involvement of fathers. After a divorce children typically stay with the mother, whereas the father takes on the role of the nonresident parent. Fathers' contributions to their children's lives are often confined to paying child support and visiting their children on every other weekend and in the holidays; and over time many children are thought to lose contact with their nonresident fathers (Kalmijn & De Graaf, 2000; Seltzer, 1998). As a result of their limited involvement in children's lives, divorced fathers have been often described as 'deadbeat dads' (Furstenberg, 1988; Maldonado, 2005).

However, evidence accumulates that postdivorce parenting practice is changing. In intact families, parents are increasingly sharing their parental duties (Melli & Brown, 2008; Casper & Bianchi, 2002). Since the 1970s, a new ideal of fatherhood is emerging that emphasizes fathers' care giving responsibilities for children (Maldonado, 2005; Lamb, 2000). Like mothers, fathers should be nurturing parents who actively engage in child care. These 'new' fathers change diapers, walk their children to school, and take parental leave to be able to spend more time with their offspring.

Possibly as a result of these social changes, recent family law legislation in many Western countries emphasizes on shared parenting after divorce (McIntosh, 2009). With this emphasis on shared parenting, shared residence – a postdivorce parenting arrangement where the child lives on alternating terms with both parents after separation – has become an increasingly favored arrangement among divorcing parents (Melli & Brown, 2008). In the Netherlands, the number of children living in shared residence increased from 5% in 1998 to about 30% in 2011 (Spruijt & Duindam, 2010; CBS, 2012), and comparable numbers are reported for Sweden and Belgium (Sondermans, Matthijs, & Swicegood, 2013; Carlsund, Erikson, Löfsted, & Sellström, 2012).

While some scholars and legal professionals welcome the increase in shared residence because both parents' continued involvement in child rearing after separation may contribute to children's well-being (e.g., Bausermann, 2002; McIntosh, 2009), others remain skeptical about the benefits of shared residence as they fear that this parenting arrangement may expose children to ongoing conflict and instable environments (e.g., Harris-Short, 2010).

Against this background, the aim of this study is to shed light on the changing nature of postdivorce parenting and investigate the consequences of children's postdivorce residence arrangements, in particular shared residence, for children's well-being. The central research question of this dissertation reads: *How did postdivorce residence arrangements change over time and what are the consequences of postdivorce residence arrangements for children's well-being?*

Postdivorce residence arrangements are widely approached in this study. We will not only differentiate between different types of residence arrangements based on with whom the child resides after divorce: mother residence, father residence, and shared residence, but also take the amount of contact with the nonresident parent into account, as well as consider the number of times children change between their parents' houses. Because children's well-being is a broad concept in the divorce literature (Amato, 2004), we center our investigation on two aspects child well-being: children's psychological well-being, and on what we call social well-being, children's relationships with family members such as parents and grandparents.

We concentrate on the Netherlands in this study, because recent Dutch legislation strongly encourages shared parenting after divorce. In March 2009, the Dutch government passed a law stating that children have the right to equal care by both parents after divorce. With this new law the Dutch government intends to promote the use of shared residence arrangements among separating parents and encourages parents to equally share child care responsibilities after divorce (Ter Voert & Geurts, 2013). Although the new law is assumed to be in the 'best interest of the child' and is meant to mitigate the negative consequences of parental divorce for children (Antokolskaia, 2011), it remains largely unknown in the Netherlands whether shared residence really contributes to child well-being after divorce. By investigating the consequences of shared residence, this study contributes to the ongoing societal and scientific discussion on the risks and benefits of shared residence for children's well-being.

1.2 Social and legal developments promoting joint parenting in the Netherlands

Since the rise of divorce in the 1970s, postdivorce parenting has been a subject of change (Melli & Brown, 2008). In the early years of divorce, the legal practice of custody decisions in many countries was dominated by the idea that children should stay with their mothers after divorce, and fathers would take on the role of

the nonresident parent reflecting their minor importance in child rearing during marriage (Kelly, 2006). In the Netherlands, until the 1980s, in the vast majority of the divorce cases custody was awarded to the mother after separation (Kalmijn & De Graaf, 2000; Knijn & Selten, 2002). Fathers were expected to pay child support after divorce and could be granted visitation rights, but in most cases no enforcement for visitation was provided, which made postdivorce father contact dependent on the parents' cooperation (Knijn & Selten, 2002).

The maternal preference in custody decisions and father's limited legal position after divorce, however, sharply contrasted with the emerging ideal of modern fatherhood in intact families of the 1970s (Lamb, 2000). The social norms surrounding fatherhood shifted towards a new ideal embracing both breadwinning and care giving (Daly, 1996; Knijn & Selten, 2002; Melli & Brown, 2008). Fathers were now expected to be actively involved in their children's upbringing and take over care giving tasks for their children.

With the growing focus on father's care giving responsibilities, several changes were made to strengthen father's legal position after divorce. During the 1980s and 1990s judges and legal professionals began to increasingly consider father-child contact after divorce as a right of divorced fathers and their children (Knijn & Selten, 2002). However, many experts felt that father's involvement in their children's lives should not be limited to the visitor's role, but that fathers should gain more responsibility in their children's upbringing (e.g., Knijn & Selten, 2002). To increase father involvement after divorce, joint legal custody was seen as an effective solution (Melli & Brown, 2008; Knijn & Selten, 2002; Seltzer, 1998). Parents should make major decisions about the child's upbringing together. And as a consequence, in 1998, the Dutch government made joint legal custody obligatory for divorcing parents, unless the court could be convinced that joint custody was not in the best interest of the child (Antokolskaia, 2010).

Although the introduction of joint legal custody gave parents equal parental rights, many scholars considered the legal changes surrounding the division of postdivorce parenting not to be far-reaching enough. In their eyes, joint legal custody only gave parents the same rights on paper, but did not greatly change the practice of postdivorce parenting (Maldonado, 2005; Antokolskaia, 2010). For many children contact with their nonresident fathers was still rather limited. To encourage parents to share their care giving more strongly after divorce, the Dutch government passed in 2009 the law "Wet bevordering voortgezet ouderschap en

zorgvuldige scheiding” (Promotion of Continued Parenting and Proper Divorce Act) promoting the cooperative sharing of parental responsibilities after divorce. Children now have the right to equal care by both parents after divorce, and parents are obliged to make a parenting plan for the court containing information on how they want to share their parental responsibilities after divorce (Antokolskaia, 2010). These changes are thought to be in the ‘best interest of the child’, because the legislator hopes to improve father involvement after divorce and requires parents to cautiously plan the division of postdivorce parenting (Nikolina, 2012).

1.3 Theoretical background and previous research

The following section of the dissertation provides an overview on the existing literature on postdivorce parenting arrangements and their consequences for children’s well-being. We start by reviewing theories explaining father’s limited involvement in postdivorce parenting. Subsequently, we summarize the discussion on the risks and benefits of postdivorce residence arrangements for children’s well-being, and give an overview of the theoretical arguments used in the debate on shared residence. We then turn to the empirical literature on postdivorce residence arrangements and children’s psychological well-being to identify shortcomings and gaps in the existing literature. Finally, we summarize the state of art of the literature on postdivorce residence arrangements and children’s relationships with family members.

1.3.1 Father involvement after divorce

Because after divorce many nonresident fathers lose touch with their children, the existing literature on postdivorce parenting arrangements has largely focused on nonresident fathers’ deficits (Braver et al., 2005). To explain fathers’ limited involvement in their children’s upbringing after divorce, the ‘*package deal*’ hypothesis is often used in the divorce literature (e.g., Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991; Townsend, 2004). Because men are thought to be only weakly attached to the parental role, men’s involvement in child rearing is believed to be closely dependent on the marital relationship, and with separation men are thought to distance themselves from the father role and their parental duties (Tach, Mincy, & Edin, 2010). Other scholars have referred to the *investment theory* to explain fathers’ absence in postdivorce parenting (e.g., De Graaf & Fokkema, 2007). From an investment perspective the

strength of a tie between individuals is a function of previous investments (Rusbult, 1983). Parenting activities such as care giving, playing or helping with homework can be regarded as investments in the parent-child relationship that generate commitment and strengthen the bond between parents and children (De Graaf & Fokkema, 2007; De Graaf & Kalmijn, 2000). Because compared to mothers, fathers are often little involved in child rearing activities during marriage, their bond with the children is expected to be weaker and more easily broken by divorce (De Graaf & Fokkema, 2007; De Graaf & Kalmijn, 2000).

In the last decades, however, some scholars have begun to question whether these notions still accurately describe postdivorce fatherhood (e.g., Amato, Meyers, & Every, 2009; Braver & O'Connell, 1998; Braver et al., 2005). For example, Braver et al. (2005) suggest, based on a comparison of figures of nonresident father contact from earlier and newer studies, that the current generation of divorced fathers is more involved with their children than ever before. Similarly, a comparison made by Kelly (2006) suggests that the number of nonresident fathers without contact to their children has strongly decreased since the 1980s. Unfortunately, studies investigating a possible increase in postdivorce father involvement over time are scarce. In the United States, Amato et al. (2009) studied changes in nonresident father contact over a long period from 1976 to 2002 and found that nonresident father contact has increased over time. Likewise, Kalmijn and De Graaf (2000) who examined nonresident father contact in the Netherlands for divorces before and after 1980 showed that nonresident fathers contact levels were lower for divorces before 1980 than for divorces in the cohort after 1980. Although these studies suggest that nonresident fathers have become more involved with their children over time, they have largely neglected to investigate the underlying mechanisms behind the given increase. Consequently, it remains open from the existing literature what are the drives the increase in nonresident father contact over time.

1.3.2 The ongoing debate on postdivorce residence arrangements and child well-being

The increasing legal focus on shared parental responsibility after divorce and the rising popularity of shared residence among divorcing parents has sparked a discussion among scientists and family professionals on the risks and benefits of postdivorce residence arrangements for children's well-being (Bauserman, 2002; McIntosh, 2009). In general, this discussion is characterized by two opposing views:

on the one hand, supporters of shared residence suggest that shared residence may contribute to children's well-being after divorce as shared residence allows children to experience the active postdivorce involvement of two care givers and helps children to maintain close bonds with both parents after parental separation (e.g., Bauserman, 2002; Nielsen, 2011; Nielsen, 2014; Spruijt & Duindam, 2010). On the other hand, however, opponents of the shared residence model argue that shared residence may have adverse consequences for children's well-being as shared residence may lead to instable environments and may expose children to ongoing parental conflict (e.g., Harris-Short, 2010; Kuehl, 1989; Golstein, Freud, & Solnit, 1973).

In the absence of specific theories describing the mechanism behind the link between shared residence and children's well-being, the existing literature has often drawn on arguments explaining the effect of parental divorce to understand the expected positive or negative effect of shared residence on child outcomes (e.g., Bauserman, 2002; Sodermans, 2013). One argument that has often been used in the debate on children's postdivorce residence arrangements to explain the possible benefits of shared residence for children's well-being is the *loss of resources hypothesis* (e.g., Melli & Brown, 2008). Based on the social capital perspective, the loss of resources hypothesis assumes that access to social resources and their consumption determine children's well-being (Amato, 2000; Gruber, 2004). According to this theory, parents function as essential providers of social resources for children by assisting with homework, providing advice in difficult situations, or fostering contact with other family members (Amato, 1993). With parental separation, however, the supply of resources that children can obtain from their parents is assumed to decline, as upon divorce one parent usually leaves the home which subsequently decreases the available amount of resources for the child (Fischer, 2004). In line with these arguments, it is often assumed that because in shared residence arrangements both parents remain actively engaged in the child's upbringing, the loss of social resources will be less detrimental for children in shared residence than in sole residence arrangements (e.g., Breivik & Olweus, 2006).

Other researchers have focused on the *parental relationship* after divorce to explain possible differences in child well-being between postdivorce residence arrangements (e.g., Cashmore et al., 2010; Bauserman, 2002). Two characteristics of the parental relationship are often suggested to account for differences in child

well-being across postdivorce residence arrangements: contact between parents and parental conflict. Based on the idea that children benefit from supportive parenting after divorce, some scholars have emphasized the importance of *parental contact* after divorce (Kaspiew et al., 2009). According to this view, it is not only important for children's well-being that parents take major decisions together, but also that parents contact each other about the child's needs and wishes (Linker, Stolberg, & Green, 1999). Because compared to parents in sole residence arrangements, parents in shared residence are more likely to contact each other about child matters to synchronize their parenting activities, supporters of shared residence often expect that children in shared residence may experience higher levels of well-being than their counterparts in mother or father residence.

Other scholars, however, have stressed the negative effects of *parental conflict* for children's well-being after divorce (e.g., Amato, 2004; Fabricius & Luecken, 2007). Parental conflict decreases children's well-being by creating loyalty issues and causing anxiety (e.g., Amato & Afifi, 2006). Because parents in shared residence are in closer contact with each other after divorce, critics of shared residence often fear that shared residence exposes children to higher levels of parental conflict after divorce than sole residence arrangements and thus decreases their well-being (Harris-Short, 2010; Nelson, 1990). Although there has been little research on the role of the parental relationship for the link between postdivorce residence arrangements and child well-being, some family experts have even come to the conclusion that shared residence only benefits children when parents are able to maintain a friendly relationship after divorce with frequent contact between parents and low levels of conflict (e.g., Buchanan, Maccoby, & Dornbusch, 1993).

Another argument that is often mentioned by the opponents of shared residence to explain the possible risks of shared residence for children is the *instability hypothesis*. According to this perspective, stability of location and stability of parenting are important determinants for child well-being after divorce (Kuehl, 1989). After divorce, children should live in one stable place with one parent acting as the psychological parent (Freud, Goldstein & Solnit, 1979). Residence arrangements which call for children to make frequent transitions between parents' homes, such as shared residence, should be avoided as they may decrease children's well-being by burdening them with traveling times, exposing them to different rules and regulations, and forcing them to adapt to inflexible schedules (Cashmore et al., 2010; Harris-Short, 2010; Kline, Tschann, Johnston, & Wallerstein, 1989).

Finally, next to the causal explanations offered for the link between residence arrangements and child outcomes, some scholars suggest that differences in child well-being across mother, father, and shared residence might be the result of parents' *self-selection* into postdivorce residence arrangements (e.g., Gunnoe & Braver, 2001). According to this perspective, parents who choose for shared residence after divorce might possess certain desirable traits (e.g., high socio-economic status, low predivorce conflict or a more equal division of child care during marriage) that do not only predispose the choice for shared residence, but also contribute to children's well-being after divorce (Gunnoe & Braver, 2001; Trinder, 2010). Subsequently, it has been suggested that differences in child well-being across postdivorce residence arrangements might be largely the result of these unmeasured factors that determine whether parents opt for a certain arrangement, rather than a result of the residence arrangement itself (Gunnoe & Braver, 2001).

In the next section of this dissertation, we give a review of the empirical literature on postdivorce residence arrangements and children's well-being. In doing so, we focus on the two aspects of child well-being that are central to this dissertation: children's psychological well-being and children's social well-being in the form of their social relationships with family members.

1.3.3 Previous research on postdivorce residence arrangements and children's psychological well-being

Because since the early years of divorce children typically stayed with one of their parents after divorce, mostly the mother, earlier research has mostly focused on the link between nonresident father contact and children's psychological well-being such as emotional problems, antisocial behavior or self-esteem (e.g., Amato & Rezac, 1994; Furstenberg, Nord, Peterson, & Zill, 1983; Selzer, 1998). These studies have shown that although a certain amount of contact with the nonresident father is necessary to maintain a relationship after divorce, there seems to be no direct relationship between nonresident parent contact and child well-being (Amato, 1993; Amato & Gilbreth, 1999). Instead, it appears from the existing literature that the quality of the father-child relationship and the presence of an authoritative parenting style seem to be more important predictors for child well-being after divorce than the total amount of contact (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999; Whiteside & Becker, 2000). For example, Amato and Gilbreth (1999) showed in their meta-analysis of 63 studies on nonresident parent contact and child outcomes that when

nonresident parents maintained a warm relationship and engaged in authoritative parenting activities such as talking about problems, helping with homework, and correcting unwanted behavior, children had higher levels of psychological well-being than those children whose fathers were less involved. Consequently, many researchers have concluded that the quality of contact with the nonresident father rather than the quantity of contact matters for children's well-being after separation (Dunn, Cheng, O'Connor, & Bridgens, 2004; Gilmore, 2009).

Considering the relative importance of high quality contact for children's psychological well-being, some scholars have argued that custody arrangements should allow for more structural parenting time for fathers after divorce such as overnight stays and longer visits (Nielsen, 2011). These researchers propose that residence arrangements with rigid visitation schedules that limit contact with the nonresident parent to weekends or holidays are less likely to benefit children's well-being because they restrict the nonresident parent's possibilities to engage in supportive parenting (Parkinson & Smyth, 2003; Gilmore, 2010; Nielsen, 2011). Instead, it has been argued that residence arrangements should ensure the continued involvement of both parents after divorce in the child's upbringing in order to benefit children's well-being after divorce (Lamb, Sternberg, & Thompson, 1997).

Because shared residence may be relevant to many of the points identified by the existing research literature, several studies have investigated child well-being across mother, father, and shared residence arrangements (e.g., Bauserman, 2002; Fabricius & Luecken, 2007; Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992; Melli & Brown, 2008; Spruijt & Duindam, 2010; Vanassche, Sodermans, Matthijs, & Swicegood, 2013). These studies are difficult to navigate as they focused on a broad range of child outcomes related to children's psychological well-being, such as self-esteem (e.g., Breivik & Olweus, 2006; Luepnitz, 1986), behavioral problems (e.g., Melli & Brown, 2008; Kaspiew et al., 2009), depression or anxiety (e.g., Buchanan, Maccoby, & Dronbusch, 1992; Spruijt & Duindam, 2010; Vanassche et al., 2013), and it remains unclear which conclusions can be drawn from the existing research. Although some studies have shown that compared to sole residence arrangements, children in shared residence experience higher levels of psychological well-being (e.g., Melli & Brown, 2008; Spruijt & Duindam, 2010), other studies found no differences in child well-being between sole residence and shared residence (e.g., Pearson & Thoennes, 1990; Kline et al., 1989; Vanassche et al., 2013), and some even reported

worse psychological outcomes for children in shared residence (e.g., Neoh & Mellor, 2010). Probably, the most cited study on differences in child well-being across postdivorce residence arrangements is Bauserman's (2002) meta-analysis on 33 studies comparing child well-being between sole residence and shared residence arrangements. This study found that children in shared residence scored higher on all measures of psychological and behavioral well-being than those living in sole residence arrangement after divorce. Consequently, Bauserman concluded that shared residence can be beneficial for some children after divorce. However, because the study was unable to make a distinction between shared residence arrangements and joint legal custody arrangements it should be interpreted with care (Gilmore, 2010).

Next to the inconsistent results on the consequences of shared residence for child outcomes, the research literature on postdivorce residence arrangements and children's psychological well-being is also compromised by several methodological and theoretical shortcomings. First of all, the existing studies examining child well-being across mother, father, and shared residence are often based on small, local or convenience samples containing only little respondents in shared residence which reduces their reliability of their comparisons and limits their generalizability (e.g., Kline et al., 1989; Luepnitz, 1986; Spruijt & Duindam, 2010). Another methodological shortcoming of the literature on postdivorce residence arrangements and child well-being has been the lack of attention for possible self-selection into postdivorce residence arrangements. Because so far most previous research (e.g., Breivik & Olweus, 2006) has not adequately controlled for certain confounders that may predispose the parents' choice for a certain residence arrangement, as well as children's psychological outcomes after divorce, the differences identified in previous studies between the mother, father, and shared residence group may also be due to these unmeasured confounders. Next to these methodological shortcomings, little research has examined the different theoretical explanations for the association between residence arrangements and children's well-being. Therefore, it remains unclear from the literature to what extent differences in child well-being across postdivorce residence arrangements are the result of variations in the parental relationship after divorce. Finally, because most of the existing studies on residence arrangements and child well-being draw on data from the United States (e.g., Buchanan et al., 1992; Melli & Brown, 2008) it still needs to be examined in how far their findings can be generalized to other national contexts.

1.3.4 Previous research on postdivorce residence arrangements and children's social relationships with family members

While a variety of studies has investigated differences in children's psychological well-being across mother, father, and shared residence, far less is known about the link between postdivorce residence arrangements and children's social relationship with family members such as parents and grandparents. The lack of research on the association between postdivorce residence arrangements and children's relationship with family members is surprising, since family members are thought to take an important position in children's social networks after divorce (Wolchick, Ruehlman, Braver, & Sandler, 1989). Family members constitute an essential source of social support for children of divorce (e.g., Handerson, Hayslip, Sanders, & Loudon, 2009) and it has been shown that children with closer relationships to family members after divorce such as grandparents or parents experience higher levels of postdivorce well-being (Luisser, Deater-Deckard, Dunn, & Davies, 2002).

Against this background, it is often argued in the discussion on postdivorce residence arrangements that shared residence may be beneficial for children after divorce because it may help children to maintain strong bonds with both parents as well as with their extended family members such as grandparents (Kaganas, 2007). However, empirical support for this claim is rather scarce. The few existing studies on postdivorce residence arrangements and children's relationship with family members, however, have mostly focused on comparing children's relationship with family members across mother and father residence arrangements (Aquilino, 1994; Donnelly & Finkelhor, 1992; Hilton & Macari, 1998). Only recently, studies have begun to include shared residence in the range of studied residence arrangements (Jappens & Van Bavel, 2013; Spruijt & Duindam, 2010; Vanassche et al., 2013). For example, Spruijt and Duindam (2010) who compared the parent-child relationship quality between mother, father, and shared residence showed that while the mother-child relationship varied little between residence arrangements, the father-child relationship after divorce was highest in shared residence, followed by father residence, and lowest in mother residence. Similarly, Jappens and Van Bavel (2013) who investigated differences in the grandparent-grandchild relationship across different postdivorce residence arrangements showed that postdivorce residence arrangements are an important predictor for children's contact with grandparents after divorce. While the relationship with maternal grandparents varied little between children from married parents and those living with their mother after

divorce, it appeared that shared residence reduced contact with the maternal grandparents. For contact with paternal grandparents, the authors found that living with the father and living in shared residence contributed to children's contact with paternal grandparents.

Although these studies suggest that residence arrangements shape children's family relationships after divorce, they do not investigate the underlying mechanisms behind the association between postdivorce residence arrangements and relations with family members. Some scholars have suggested that the postdivorce parental relationship might play an important role in understanding differences in children's relationship with family members across postdivorce residence arrangements (e.g., Hilton & Macari, 1998). It has been argued that when the parental relationship after divorce is strained, parents are more likely to exhibit gatekeeping behavior towards their expartner and the expartner's family to prevent them from having access to the child; and parents' effectiveness in monitoring child access is thought to be dependent on the child's postdivorce residence arrangement (Purett, Williams, Insabella, & Little, 2003). But to our knowledge, no empirical research has yet tested this assumption.

1.4 Contributions of the study

In the light of the ongoing discussion on changes in postdivorce parenting arrangements and their consequences for child well-being after divorce, this dissertation contributes to the divorce literature in four important ways. First, to gain more insight into the changing nature of postdivorce parenting and examine why divorced fathers are becoming increasingly more involved in their children's upbringing, we focus on *father involvement* during marriage as a driving force behind the increase in nonresident father contact. Based on the idea that involved fathers are willing to keep in closer contact with their children after divorce, we examine to what extent fathers' greater participation in child care activities may account for the increase in nonresident father contact over time. Moreover, we study the moderating role of father involvement during marriage, because it is likely that due to the increasing social and legal emphasis on father's care responsibilities father involvement during marriage has become more important for postdivorce nonresident father contact over time.

Second, we add empirically to the current discussion on the risk and benefits of postdivorce residence arrangements for children's well-being by focusing on

children's social well-being, an aspect of child well-being which has been relatively little studied in the literature. To study children's social well-being across mother, father, and shared residence we concentrate on two important relationships within the family network: the parent-child relationship and children's contact with grandparents. In doing so, we are able to give a more complete overview of the association between postdivorce residence arrangements and child outcomes, and assess the claim that shared residence benefits children of divorce because it helps them to maintain stronger bonds with family members than sole residence arrangements.

Third, to shed light on the causal mechanisms behind the association between postdivorce residence arrangements and child well-being, we zoom in on role of the *parental relationship* after divorce. Although it has been often suggested that differences in child well-being across postdivorce residence arrangements may partly be the result of variations in the postdivorce parental relationship, empirical research on this issue is largely lacking. By focusing on two aspects of the parental relationship, parental conflict and contact between parents, we are able to examine in how far the parental relationship accounts for differences in child well-being across postdivorce residence arrangements. We also study the moderating role of the parental relationship for the link between residence arrangements and child well-being, as some scholars have suggested that shared residence only benefits children if parents maintain a positive postdivorce relationship. By testing this assumption, we provide empirical evidence to the debate on shared residence and investigate under which family circumstances different postdivorce residence arrangements may be more or less advantageous for children.

Fourth, we contribute *methodologically* to the existing literature on postdivorce residence arrangements and child well-being by drawing on recent survey data from the New Families in the Netherlands survey (NFN), a large-scale survey among recently divorced and separated parents in the Netherlands (Poortman, Van der Lippe, & Boele-Woelki, 2014). Compared to other data sets, the NFN contains more detailed measures of the predivorce family situation allowing us to partly solve possible selection effects into postdivorce residence arrangements by controlling for a wider range of parents' socio-demographic and predivorce relationship characteristics. Consequently, we are able obtain a more rigorous assessment of variations in child well-being across postdivorce residence arrangements than previous research did. Moreover, the NFN contains a higher number of parents

in shared residence arrangements than previous data, allowing us to make more reliable comparisons of children's well-being and family relationships for children living in shared residence and those living in mother or father residence than previous research (e.g., Breivik & Olweus, 2006; Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992; Smyth, 2009; Spruit & Duindam, 2010). Finally, the fact that about one third of the sample the data contains both parents' reports on child outcomes provides us with a more accurate measurement of postdivorce child outcomes than previous studies, as parents evaluations of child outcomes might differ.

1.5 Research chapters of the study

In the four empirical chapters of this dissertation, we address changes in postdivorce parenting and their consequences for children's well-being. *Chapter 2* makes the starting point for this investigation by studying whether over time nonresident fathers have increased contact with their children after divorce. We examine to what extent the increase in nonresident father contact over time is the result of fathers' greater participation in child care activities during marriage and whether over time father involvement during marriage has become more important for nonresident father contact after divorce. In the remaining chapters, *chapter 3*, *4*, and *5* we focus on a new postdivorce parenting arrangement which is currently gaining popularity among divorcing families: shared residence. Against the background of the ongoing controversy about the consequences of shared parenting and shared residence, these chapters examine variations in child well-being across three postdivorce residence arrangements: mother, father, and shared residence. Each chapter focuses on a different facet of child well-being. While *chapter 3* addresses children's psychological well-being in postdivorce residence arrangements and tests the concerns of the critics of shared residence, *chapter 4* and *chapter 5* concentrate on children's social relationships with family members, namely, the quality of the parent-child relationship and children's contact with grandparents. Table 1.1 gives a summary of the research questions and methods used in each empirical chapter of this dissertation.

1.5.1 Chapter 2: Changes in nonresident father's postdivorce involvement with their children

Given the social and legal changes in postdivorce parenting, *chapter 2* examines to what extent nonresident fathers have increased their postdivorce contact levels

with children over time, both in daytime and overnight contact. To explain changes in nonresident father contact, we focus on the mediating and moderating effect of father involvement during marriage. Based on the idea that the culture of fatherhood has changed during the last decades and fathers have been increasingly expected to take responsibility for child rearing tasks (Lamb, 2000; McGill, 2014), we suggest that as men have become more involved in child care, they may have also become more committed to the father role within and after marriage and may therefore remain in closer contact with their children after divorce. We thus contend that at least part of the increase in postdivorce contact between nonresident fathers and their children may be attributed to the rise in fathers' involvement in child rearing during marriage. In addition, we examine the moderating role of father involvement during marriage by studying whether over time father involvement during marriage has become more important for nonresident father contact after divorce. We suggest that due to the growing focus on fathers' care giving responsibilities and their strengthened legal position, father involvement during marriage may have become more important for postdivorce contact over time. To summarize, our research questions in chapter 2 read: *Did nonresident father contact increase over time? And to what extent can increased father involvement during marriage explain the increase in nonresident father contact after divorce? Has the importance of father involvement during marriage for postdivorce nonresident father contact increased over time?* With chapter 2 we add to previous research (Kalmijn & De Graaf, 2000; Amato et al., 2009) by differentiating between different types of father contact (daytime and overnight contact), studying the mediating role of father involvement for postdivorce nonresident father contact, and finally, by investigating the moderating role of father involvement during marriage for postdivorce nonresident father-contact.

1.5.2 Chapter 3: Shared residence for children of divorce? Testing the critics' concerns

In *chapter 3*, we study the link between postdivorce residence arrangements and children's psychological well-being. In this chapter we focus on the arguments of the opponents of shared residence by addressing two prominent concerns about shared residence that are often stated in the research literature: shared residence creates instability for children through living in two houses and shared residence puts strain on children by exposing them to ongoing parental conflict (e.g., Harris-Short, 2010; Kuehl, 1998). By using direct measures of parental conflict and

instability, we examine the role of conflict and instability for differences in children's psychological well-being across mother, father, and shared residence. Furthermore, we investigate the assumption that shared residence is more harmful for children in high conflict families than for those in low conflict families (Fehlberg, Smyth, & Mclean, 2011; McIntosh, Smyth, Kelaher, Wells, & Long, 2010). To rule out that variations in child well-being across postdivorce residence arrangements are due to self-selection into postdivorce residence arrangements, we take the predivorce relationship as well as a variety of parent's socio-demographic characteristics into account. The research questions guiding chapter 3 read: *Does children's psychological well-being differ between postdivorce residence arrangements? What is the role of instability and parental conflict for children's well-being in mother residence, father residence, and shared residence after divorce?* With this chapter we provide to the existing literature (e.g., Breivik & Olweus, 2006; Spruijt & Duindam, 2010) by testing the validity of the critics' concerns, controlling for possible selection factors, and by investigating under which conditions shared residence is especially harmful children's psychological well-being.

1.5.3 Chapter 4: The impact of residence arrangements on children's relationships with parents

Chapter 4 focuses on variations in the parent-child relationship quality across postdivorce residence arrangements. Because shared residence allows both parents to stay involved in the children's upbringing after divorce, it has been assumed that shared residence leads to better parent-child relationships than mother or father residence (Bauserman, 2002; Stone, 2006). By studying differences in the parent-child relationship quality between mother, father, and shared residence, we investigate in chapter 4 in how far this assumption is true. To understand differences in the parent-child bond across postdivorce residence arrangements, we focus on the postdivorce relationship between parents. Based on arguments of family system theory (Minuchin, 1988, Erel & Burman, 1995), we argue that the postdivorce relationship between parents and children is partly dependent on the relationship between parents after separation. We focus on two aspects of the parental relationship after divorce: parental conflict and contact between parents. Because the parental relation is likely to vary between postdivorce residence arrangements, we examine in how far variations in the level of parental conflict and contact between parents account for differences in the quality of the parent-child

bond across residence arrangements. In addition, we also examine whether the parental relationships conditions the association between postdivorce residence arrangements and the parent-child bond. Because in the discussion on shared residence it has been often suggested that shared residence is only good for children if parents maintain a friendly relationship other after divorce (Buchanan, Maccoby, & Dornbusch, 1993), we study whether shared residence is more detrimental for the parent-child bond than sole residence in families where the postdivorce parental relationship is strained. Consequently, the research questions of chapter 4 read: *Does parent-child relationship quality differ between postdivorce residence arrangements? To what extent can the postdivorce parental relationship account for differences in relationship quality across postdivorce residence arrangements? And does the parental relationship moderate the association between residence arrangements and the parent-child relationship quality after divorce?* In this chapter we improve upon existing studies on differences in the parent-child bond (e.g., Aquilino, 1994; Maccoby, Buchanan, Mnookin, & Dornbusch, 1993) in three ways: first, by examining differences in the parent-child relationship quality across a broad range of postdivorce residence arrangements, second, by investigating the role of parental conflict and contact for the parent-child relationship after divorce, and lastly through testing the moderating role of the postdivorce parental relationship for the association between residence arrangements and the parent-child bond.

1.5.4 Chapter 5: Children's postdivorce residence arrangements and contact with grandparents

The last empirical chapter of this dissertation, *chapter 5*, investigates differences in children's contact with grandparents across mother, father, and shared residence. In the discussion on custody arrangements, grandparental rights organizations claim that shared residence benefits children's contact with grandparents after divorce, as it stops paternal grandparents from being excluded from the child's upbringing due to the greater involvement of the father (Douglas & Ferguson, 2003; Kaganas, 2007). By focusing on parents' role as mediators between the generations (Monserud, 2008; Robertson, 1975), we examine to what extent postdivorce residence arrangements promote or limit grandparental contact through the parents, concentrating in specific on parental conflict as a restriction for grandparental contact. We argue that parents with conflicting relationships after divorce are more likely to engage in gatekeeping behavior to limit their ex-in-laws' child access, and that the

postdivorce residence arrangement determines their effectiveness in gatekeeping. Moreover, assuming that residence arrangements influence parents' effectiveness in gatekeeping and that gatekeeping is more commonly used in high conflict families, we investigate whether variations in grandparent-grandchild contact increase with higher levels of parental conflict. Against this background our last research question reads: *To what extent does children's contact with grandparents vary between postdivorce residence arrangements and what is the role of parental conflict for these differences in grandparent-grandchild contact after divorce?* With chapter 5 we improve on earlier research (e.g., Hilton & Macari, 1998; Jappens & Van Bavel, 2013; Kruk & Hall, 1995) by including shared residence in the range of studied residence arrangements after divorce, investigating the role of parental conflict for children's contact with grandparents after divorce, and by testing whether conflict conditions the link between residence arrangements and grandparental contact.

1.6 Data

To answer our research question, we use two large-scale surveys on divorced respondents in the Netherlands: the *Divorce in the Netherlands Survey* (SIN98) and the *New Families in the Netherlands Survey* (NFN).

1.6.1 Divorce in the Netherlands Survey (SIN98)

To study changes in postdivorce nonresident father contact over time, chapter 2 uses data from the retrospective survey *Divorce in the Netherlands* (SIN98) (Kalmijn, De Graaf, & Uunk, 2000). Although we would prefer repeated cross-sectional data to study trends in nonresident father contact over time, data that contains enough divorced individuals and covers a long period of time is not available in the Netherlands or anywhere else.

The SIN98 is based on a two-step stratified sample design oversampling divorced persons. In a first step, a sample from 19 Dutch municipalities in different parts of the Netherlands was obtained. In a second step, the population registers of these municipalities were used to draw three samples of persons between 30 and 75 years of age: married persons, divorced persons who had not remarried, and divorced persons who had remarried. The data was collected by means of structured face-to-face interviews focusing on the marriage, the divorce, and the postdivorce living situation of the respondent. The sample of the SIN98 consists of 2,346 respondents

Table 1.1 *Summary of the Empirical Chapters of the Dissertation*

Chapter	Research question	Studied residence arrangement(s)	Dependent variable	Data source and design
2	To what extent can increased father involvement during marriage explain the increase in nonresident father contact after divorce and has the effect of father involvement during marriage on postdivorce nonresident father contact increased over time?	Mother residence Nonresident father contact	Daytime contact with nonresident father Overnight contact with nonresident father	Retrospective data, Divorce in the Netherlands Survey (SIN98), linear regression analysis
3	What is the effect of instability and parental conflict for children's well-being in mother residence, father residence, and shared residence after divorce?	Mother residence Father residence Shared residence	Child's psychological well-being after divorce	New Families in the Netherlands (NFN), mixed multilevel models
4	Does the parent-child quality differ between postdivorce residence arrangements and to what extent can variations in the postdivorce parent-child relationship account for these differences?	Mother residence Father residence Shared residence	Parent-child relationship quality after divorce	New Families in the Netherlands (NFN), linear regression analysis
5	How does children's contact with grandparents vary between postdivorce residence arrangements and what is the role of parental conflict for these differences in grandparent-grandchild contact after divorce?	Mother residence Father residence Shared residence	Children's frequency of contact with grandparents after divorce	New Families in the Netherlands (NFN), mixed multilevel models

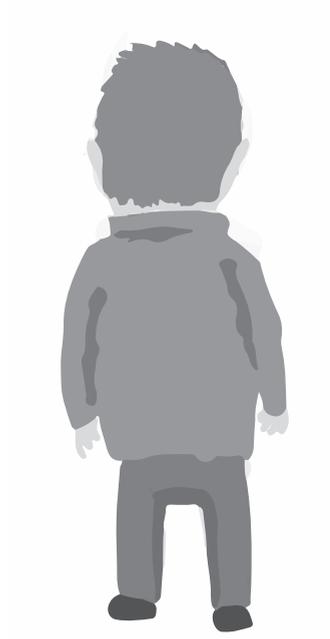
of whom 76.4% were divorced between 1949 and 1998. The response rate was 45.6%, a response rate comparable to other Dutch surveys (Kalmijn et al., 2000). During the interview respondents reported on the father's involvement in child care during marriage, their divorce, and nonresident father daytime and overnight contact after divorce.

1.6.2 The New Families in the Netherlands Survey

Because chapter 3, 4, and 5 focus on a new phenomenon in postdivorce parenting – shared residence – recent data is necessary to study the consequences of shared residence for children's well-being. For this reason, we use the main sample of the New Families in the Netherlands Survey (NFN) (Poortman, Van der Lippe, & Boele-Woelki, 2014), a new large-scale online survey on legal arrangements of divorced and separated parents in the Netherlands. The NFN contains detailed information on children's postdivorce residence arrangements, the postdivorce parental relationship, and children's well-being after divorce.

The NFN is based on a random sample of formerly married and cohabiting couples with minor children who officially divorced or dissolved their cohabitation in 2010. The sample was obtained by Statistics Netherlands from the Dutch Social Statistical Data Base (SSB), a register of all persons residing in the Netherlands. To invite respondents to take part in the survey both ex-partners were contacted by personalized letter and asked to participate in a self-administered online survey or fill in a paper and pencil version of the questionnaire. Of all contacted respondents 4,481 respondents took part in the study. In about one third of the contacted couples, both ex-partners participated in the study. This results in a total response rate of about 39% on the individual level, adding up to a response rate of 58% on the household level. These response rates are high for an online survey carried out amongst recently divorced parents, a target group in a demanding life period, and are in general similar to those of other large scale-family surveys in the Netherlands, a country with traditional low participation rates (De Leeuw & De Heer, 2002). During the online survey respondents were asked several questions about one of their children, selected by age: respondents with children younger than 10 years were asked to report on their eldest child, whereas respondents with children older than 10 years were asked about their youngest child.

The following part of the dissertation contains the four empirical chapters of the dissertation. Each chapter stand on its own, but they are connected by the central research question of the book. The final chapter, chapter 6, summarizes the main findings, addresses the contributions and limitations of the study, and provides directions for further research.



2 Nonresident father-child contact across divorce cohorts: The role of father involvement during marriage

This copy-edited paper is co-authored by Anne-Rigt Poortman and Tanja van der Lippe. A slightly different version is published in *European Sociological Review* (2014, vol. 30(4), pp. 444-456). The published version is available at <http://esr.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2014/05/13/esr.jcu050>. Earlier versions of this paper have been presented at the Dag van de Sociologie, May 2011, Gent, Belgium; the International Divorce Conference, October 2011, Milan, Italy; and the Dag van de Demografie, November 2011, Utrecht, The Netherlands. A Dutch summary of this study has been published in the science blog versvak.nl in February 2014.

2.1 Introduction

Previous studies on nonresident father contact have shown that many fathers have little contact with their children after divorce (e.g., Kalmijn, 2008; King & Heard, 1999). For instance, the number of nonresident fathers who had no contact with their children was found to range from about 50% in earlier studies (Furstenberg, Nord, Peterson, & Zill, 1983) to about 25% in more recent ones (De Graaf, 2001; Juby, Billette, Laplante, & Le Bourdais, 2007).

Due to the high number of absent fathers after divorce, previous research has mainly focused on nonresident fathers' deficits (Braver, Griffin, Cookston, Sandler, & Williams, 2005). In the literature, fathers' absence following divorce is often explained by men's limited attachment to the paternal role (e.g., Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991). Men are thought to view fatherhood as closely dependent on the marital relationship; hence, when parents separate, men separate themselves from the father role and no longer feel obligated to involve themselves in their children's lives (Amato, Meyers, & Emery, 2009; Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991; Tach, Mincy, & Edin, 2010). Consequently, nonresident fathers are often regarded as 'deadbeat dads' who neglect their parental duties after divorce (Furstenberg, 1988).

Recently, however, some scholars have begun to question whether these notions accurately describe modern postdivorce fatherhood. For example, Braver et al. (2005) argue that a comparison of figures of nonresident father contact from earlier and more recent studies suggests increasing levels of contact after divorce. Other scholars presume that the growing emphasis on fathers' care responsibilities may have increased nonresident father contact after divorce (Amato et al., 2009). If these presumptions are true and nonresident father contact has indeed increased, then this would not only suggest that nonresident fathers might be better than their reputation, but also indicate that nonresident fathers have increased their commitment to the father role.

Against this background, it is surprising that hardly any researchers have explored changes in nonresident father contact over time. To our knowledge, only two studies have investigated changes in nonresident father contact: Kalmijn and De Graaf (2000) looked at nonresident father contact in divorces occurring in the Netherlands, and Amato et al. (2009) studied trends in nonresident father contact between 1976 and 2002 in the United States. Both studies show that nonresident father contact has increased over time, but they do not explain the observed changes empirically.

In this study, we contribute to the literature on nonresident father-child contact in three ways. First, we are one of the few studies examining change in nonresident father contact over time in the Netherlands from 1949 to 1998. We build upon Kalmijn and De Graaf (2000) by giving a more detailed description of the changes in this period. This time period is interesting because divorce rates rose (especially in the 1970s and 1980s) and several important developments in Dutch divorce law took place, for example the introduction of no-fault divorce in 1971 and the new Dutch Civil Code in 1998, which established shared legal custody as standard after divorce (Knijn & Selten, 2002).

Second, in contrast to earlier studies on nonresident father contact, we not only examine changes in daytime contact but also investigate possible changes in overnight stays. Although some studies distinguish day- and nighttime contact when describing contact patterns (Kalmijn & De Graaf, 2000), studies rarely distinguish these two qualitatively different types of contact when analyzing the correlates of nonresident father contact. Compared to daytime contact, overnight stays are characterized by greater intensity and quality of parenting, allowing fathers to spend time with their children that resembles pre-divorce family life (Parkinson & Smyth, 2003). Taken together, both measures of contact give a detailed picture of how father contact has developed over time.

Third, to shed light on the driving forces behind the increase in postdivorce nonresident father contact, we focus on the role of father involvement during marriage. The culture of fatherhood has changed in recent decades, and fathers have been increasingly expected to take responsibility for child rearing tasks (Lamb, 2000; McGill, 2014). Although women are still responsible for the majority of child care, some studies show that married men have increased their contribution to child care since the 1960s (Casper & Bianchi, 2002; Sayer, Bianchi, & Robinson, 2004). For example, in the Netherlands the absolute amount of time spent on parenting tasks by fathers with young children doubled from 4.2 to 8.4 hours per week between 1975 and 1995 (Van Praag & Niphuis-Nell, 1997). It is plausible that as men have become more involved in child care, they may have also become more committed to the father role within and after marriage and may therefore remain in closer contact with their children after divorce. We thus contend that at least part of the increase in postdivorce contact between nonresident fathers and their children may be attributed to the rise in fathers' involvement in child rearing during marriage.

Moreover, we argue that the growing societal emphasis on fathers' child care responsibilities has altered the institutional context of postdivorce fatherhood. During the 1980s and 1990s, divorced fathers' legal position was improved by several legal adjustments (Knijn & Selten, 2002). Because of these legal adjustments and the increased importance of fathering per se, mothers, fathers, and judges may have given more consideration to father involvement during marriage in more recent divorce settlements than before. We therefore argue that father involvement during marriage may have become a more important factor in postdivorce contact over time. To summarize, we pose three research questions: (1) *Has father contact increased over time?*, (2) *To what extent can increased father involvement during marriage explain the increase in nonresident father contact after divorce?*, and (3) *Has the effect of father involvement during marriage on postdivorce nonresident father contact increased over time?*

To answer our research questions, we use the Divorce in the Netherlands Survey (SIN98). The strength of SIN98 lies in the fact that it contains retrospective information on father involvement during marriage and father contact for respondents divorced between 1949 and 1998. To study changes in nonresident father contact over time, we make use of four divorce cohorts: 1949-1971, 1972-1980, 1981-1990, 1991-1998.

2.2 Theoretical background

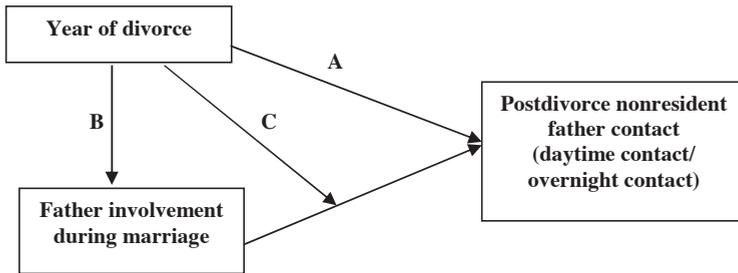
Figure 2.1, our conceptual framework, summarizes the expected relationship between year of divorce, father involvement during marriage, and postdivorce nonresident father contact. The direct path (A) between year of divorce and postdivorce nonresident father contact depicts our first assumption, i.e. that nonresident father contact has increased over time. We base this assumption on two arguments.

First, whereas up to the 1970s being a good father was defined by being the family 'bread-winner,' the norms associated with fatherhood have shifted in recent decades toward a new concept that embraces both economic support and child care responsibilities (Daly, 1996). This new concept of fatherhood states that fathers should be actively involved in their children's lives (Lamb, 2000; McGill, 2014).

Second, possibly in response to the shift in social norms associated with fatherhood, fathers have acquired a stronger legal position. Up to the 1980s, custody was awarded to the mother in most Dutch divorce cases; the court could grant the

father visitation rights, but in most cases it did not provide for enforcement of these rights, so that father contact depended on parents' collaboration (Knijn & Selten, 2002). During the 1980s and 1990s, however, policy makers and judges began to recognize contact between children and their nonresident fathers as the right of divorced fathers and children (Knijn & Selten, 2002).

Figure 2.1 *Conceptual Framework of the Relationship Between Year of Divorce, Father Involvement During Marriage, and Postdivorce Nonresident Father Contact*



We assume that these social and legal changes in fatherhood contributed to an increase in nonresident father contact over time in three ways. First, with growing emphasis on fathers' importance to child well-being and recognition of divorced fathers' rights, judges may have come to favor visitation arrangements for nonresident fathers in divorce settlements. Second, the acknowledgement of fathers' importance for child development may have increased mothers' willingness to allow the father contact with the children after divorce. Third, these changes may have increased the importance that fathers themselves attach to child contact after divorce. Consequently, our first hypothesis reads: *nonresident father-child contact has increased over time.*

Path (B) in Figure 2.1 shows the expected mediating influence of father involvement during marriage on the association between year of divorce and nonresident father contact. Previous research found that involved fathers are more likely to remain in contact with their children, gain shared custody, or become the residential parent after divorce (Kalmijn & De Graaf, 2000; Juby, Le Bourdais, & Marcil-Gratton, 2005). The literature provides two explanations for this relationship. The first explanation is that involvement during marriage increases nonresident fathers' opportunities for contact. For instance, judges might be more willing to grant visitation rights to fathers if they were closely involved in child care during

marriage. Furthermore, mothers who perceive their ex-partners as caring during the marital relationship may be more willing to allow child contact after separation (Ganong, Coleman, & McCaulley, 2012; Juby et al., 2005). Lastly, children who experienced their father as committed prior to separation might demand more contact, which might increase the father's opportunities for contact after divorce. Another explanation is that involvement during marriage increases father's preferences for contact. From an investment perspective, child rearing activities such as playing with one's child are investments in the father-child relationship that generate commitment (Rusbult, 1983). Consequently, involved fathers are thought to experience a greater sense of loss than less involved fathers if they lose touch with their children (De Graaf & Fokkema, 2007; Kalmijn, 1999), and they are therefore expected to be more committed to maintaining contact with their children after separation.

The positive relationship between father involvement and postdivorce contact combined with the increase in paternal involvement during marriage in recent decades (Casper & Bianchi, 2002) suggests that increased father involvement may partly mediate the increase in nonresident father contact after divorce. We expect fathers in more recent divorce cohorts to have been more involved in child care during marriage and thus to potentially have more child contact than fathers in earlier cohorts. Our second hypothesis hence predicts *that part of the increase in nonresident father contact over time can be explained by an increase in father involvement during marriage*.

Path (C) in Figure 2.1 shows the expected moderating effect of year of divorce on the relationship between father involvement during marriage and nonresident father contact. Up to the early 1980s, legal practice raised several barriers that made it difficult for fathers to maintain contact with their children after divorce (Knijn & Selten, 2002). For example, many visitation arrangements followed guidelines allowing fathers to see their child every second weekend and during vacations. This approach was thought to benefit the child, reflecting the prevailing view that children would be harmed by spending longer periods of time without their mother (Kelly, 2007).

As society became more aware of the father's importance for child development, legal barriers to paternal involvement may have been reduced. The acknowledgement of father's importance for child development and the resulting changes in legal practice may have changed the role that father involvement plays

in postdivorce contact over time. Whereas mothers and judges might have attached little importance to father involvement in earlier divorce settlements, more recently they may have made more allowance for father involvement when deciding on visitation schedules. Hence, our third hypothesis states that *father involvement during marriage might be less important for nonresident father-child contact in early divorce cohorts than in more recent divorce cohorts*. Finally, to better understand changes in nonresident father contact over time, we consider several parent and child characteristics in our analyses that may be related to nonresident father contact: father's education, father's payment of child support, respondent's gender, distance between ex-partners' houses, age of the youngest child at separation, and children's gender.

2.3 Method

2.3.1 Sample

We tested our hypotheses using the retrospective Divorce in the Netherlands Survey 1998 (SIN98; Kalmijn, De Graaf, & Uunk, 2000), the data that have also been used by for example Kalmijn and De Graaf (2000) and De Graaf and Fokkema (2007). The SIN98 sampling method was based on a two-step stratified sample design. The first step involved obtaining a sample from 19 Dutch municipalities in different parts of the Netherlands. The second step involved drawing three random samples of persons from the population registers of these municipalities: married persons, divorced persons who had not remarried, and divorced persons who had re-married. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with respondents in their homes, focusing on several issues concerning their first marriage and their divorce. The response rate was 45.6%, which is comparable to other Dutch surveys (Kalmijn et al., 2000). Due to the sampling method, ever divorced respondents are overrepresented. The sample consists of 2,346 respondents of whom 76.4% divorced between 1949 and 1998.

For our analysis, we selected divorced respondents who had provided information on the year of divorce, had minor children with their ex-partner at separation, for whom the mother was the primary care giver after divorce, and who had valid values on the dependent variables ($n = 892$). Parents with one or more children in shared residence arrangements are not included in our analysis because fathers in these arrangements are not nonresident fathers, as children live with them part of the time ($n = 22$). Moreover, checks on the data manipulation revealed that

some respondents had provided ambiguous information on the independent or control variables (e.g., indicating that they were the custodial parent after divorce but that their children were 18 years or older at time of divorce). These respondents were excluded from our analyses ($n = 62$). We substituted missing values on the independent and control variables by the mean (for continuous variables) or the most common category (for discrete variables). The total number of missing cases (listwise) amounted to 11.9%. Additional analyses revealed that results were the same whether the missing values were excluded or mean-replaced. The sample ultimately consisted of 808 respondents.

2.3.2 Measures

Postdivorce nonresident father contact. We used two measures of nonresident father contact in our study: *daytime contact* and *overnight stays*. Depending on whether the respondent was identified as the resident parent, respondents were either asked about their ex-partner or their own contact with the children.

Daytime contact with the nonresident father was determined by asking “*How often did you/your ex-partner see the children on average per month in the first year after divorce?*” Respondents had to fill in the number of daytime periods per month in the first year after divorce that they or their ex-partner saw the children. Overnight stays were measured by asking “*And how often did the children stay overnight at your/your ex-partner’s house?*” Respondents were asked for the number of overnight stays per month in the first year after divorce. Because both dependent variables were skewed to the right, the variables are log transformed ($y' = \ln(y + 1)$). To improve interpretation, we decided to use the formula $100 \times (e^{Bx} - 1)$ to calculate the percentage change in y with a one unit change in x (Wooldridge, 2009).

Year of divorce. Respondents were asked the year in which they made the decision to break up and how many months it took before they started living apart. Using these variables, we calculated the year of living apart. Note: this measure does not refer to the official divorce, but to the year in which respondents ceased living with their ex-partner. For ease of terminology, we use the term year of divorce rather than year of living apart. This variable ranges from 1949 to 1998. Due to the small number of cases per year, especially in the early years when divorce was relatively uncommon, we recoded this variable and distinguish four divorce cohorts: separated between 1949-1971; 1972-1980; 1981-1990; and 1991-1998. For the first cohort, the cut-off point is 1971 because that was the year that no-fault divorce was introduced in the Netherlands. The second divorce cohort, 1972-1980,

was chosen because divorce rates increased dramatically in the Netherlands up to the early 1980s (De Graaf & Kalmijn, 2006). From the 1980s to the end of the 1990s, divorce rates in the Netherlands were consistently high. We decided to follow De Graaf and Kalmijn's (2006) practice and divided this period into two cohorts: 1981-1990, representing the first peak in Dutch divorce rates, and 1991-1998, the second peak. Additional analyses using different cut-off points or including the year of divorce as a continuous variable yield similar results.

Father involvement during marriage. Respondents were asked about the division of child rearing tasks during marriage: reading to and playing with the children, bringing/taking children to school/sports, talking about problems, and going on excursions such as to the movies/zoo. Response options ranged from 1 '*respondent much more often than spouse*' to 5 '*spouse much more often than respondent*'. First, we recoded the response categories to reflect the father's contribution to child rearing. Consequently, higher values indicate that the father made a larger contribution than the mother. Next, we constructed a scale from the five items by taking the mean. The scale measures fathers' relative contribution and has good reliability ($\alpha = .80$). Respondents with missing values were assigned the mean of father involvement, calculated on the basis of those respondents who separated in the same year ($n = 12$). Lastly, we mean-centered the variable.

2.3.3 Controls

Our analyses controlled for father's level of education measured in seven categories, ranging from 1 '*Elementary school or less*' to 7 '*University*'. Higher educated parents may have more egalitarian parenting styles and might be more willing to stimulate nonresidential father contact after divorce (Cheadle, Amato, & King, 2010).

We also controlled for *father's payment of child support*, a dummy variable indicating whether the father ever paid child support (0 = *no*, 1 = *yes*), as child support and visitation are found to be related (Furstenberg et al., 1983).

Furthermore, we controlled for the *respondent's gender* (0 = *female*, 1 = *male*), because previous research has shown that mothers' and fathers' reports on paternal postdivorce contact differ (Amato et al., 2009). To examine whether results are the same for mothers and fathers, we included interactions with respondent's gender for all independent variables. The interactions were, however, not significant.

The *distance between respondent's and ex-partner's residence* was measured in minutes of commuting time between residences. A greater distance between child's and father's residence has been found to decrease contact frequency (Arditti &

Keith, 1993).

We also controlled for children's demographic characteristics. *Age of the youngest child at separation* has been found to be negatively related to contact frequency (Amato et al., 2009). We measured age of the youngest child at separation in years. We also controlled for the *gender composition of the children*, as previous studies have shown that nonresident fathers have more contact with sons than daughters (King, Harris, & Heard, 2004). Gender composition of the children was measured by three dummies: all children are girls (0 = no, 1 = yes), all children are boys (0 = no, 1 = yes), and children are of different genders (0 = no, 1 = yes) as the reference group. Table 2.1 shows the descriptive statistics for the variables used in the analyses.

Table 2.1 Descriptive Statistics for Sample Variables ($N = 808$)

Variables	M	SD	Range
<i>Dependent variables</i>			
Daytime contact	6.03	6.78	0 – 48
Log daytime contact	1.53	0.95	0 – 3.89
Overnight stays	2.02	2.87	0 – 16
Log overnight stays	0.76	0.80	0 – 2.83
<i>Independent variables</i>			
Divorce cohort 1949-1971	0.06	0.24	0 – 1
Divorce cohort 1972-1980	0.23	0.42	0 – 1
Divorce cohort 1981-1990	0.41	0.49	0 – 1
Divorce cohort 1991-1998	0.30	0.46	0 – 1
Father involvement during marriage (centered)	0.00	0.83	-1.02 – 2.98
<i>Controls</i>			
Father's education	3.72	1.89	1 – 7
Father's payment of child support ^a	0.66	0.47	0 – 1
Respondent's gender ^b	0.36	0.48	0 – 1
Distance between respondent's and ex-partner's house	28.49	41.61	0 – 660
Age of the youngest child at separation	6.84	4.66	0 – 17
Sex composition of the children			
All children girls ^c	0.27	0.44	0 – 1
All children boys ^d	0.29	0.45	0 – 1
Children of different genders ^e	0.44	0.50	0 – 1

Note: M = Mean, SD = Standard deviation. ^a Father's payment of child support: 0 = no payment, 1 = payment. ^b Respondent's gender: 0 = female, 1 = male. ^c All children girls: 0 = not all children girls, 1 = all children girls. ^d All children boys: 0 = not all children boys, 1 = all children boys. ^e Children of different genders: 0 = not children of different genders, 1 = children of different genders.

2.3.4 Analytical strategy

Our analyses began with a description of changes in nonresident father contact and father involvement during marriage across divorce cohorts (Figure 2.2 and 2.3). Next, we used linear regression to evaluate trends over time (Table 2.2 and Table 2.3). Model 1, the baseline model, includes only the control variables. In Model 2, we added the divorce cohorts to study changes over time. The 1949-1971 cohort is the reference category in the tables presented, but we changed the reference group in additional analyses to see which cohorts differed significantly from the others. In Model 3, we introduced father involvement to the regression equation to test Hypothesis 2, i.e., whether increased father involvement can explain the change over time. In Model 4, the final model, we included interaction effects between the divorce cohorts and father involvement to test Hypothesis 3, i.e. whether father involvement has become more important for contact over time. Due to the small number of cases in the earliest divorce cohort, we were concerned that outliers would influence our results. However, graphical examinations of the relationship between divorce cohorts and contact and assessment of the residuals using Cook's distance revealed no influential cases.

2.4 Results

2.4.1 Descriptive analyses

Figure 2.2 depicts the changes in nonresident father contact across four divorce cohorts. The left-hand graph shows trends in daytime contact and overnight stays over time. Whereas nonresident fathers had on average 3.5 daily contact periods per month in the 1949-1971 cohort, daytime contact increased continuously across the 1972-1980 and 1981-1990 cohorts to about 7 contact periods in the 1991-1998 cohort. This pattern suggests a sharp rise in daytime contact from 1949 to 1990 that then slackened in the early 1990s. The increase in overnight stays is less steep over time. As expected, the 1949-1971 cohort had the fewest overnight stays, with 0.7 nights per month, while the 1991-1998 cohort had the greatest number, with about 2.4 nights per month. There was almost no change in overnight contact in the 1981-1990 and 1991-1998 cohorts.

Turning to the right-hand side of Figure 2.2, we see that the increase in nonresident father-child contact was even more pronounced when considering the number of fathers who had no contact whatsoever with their children. The

percentage of fathers who had no daytime contact at all dropped sharply from 52% in the 1949-1971 cohort to about 11% in the 1991-1998 cohort. An even sharper decline is visible for the percentage of fathers without overnight stays. The percentage was highest in 1949-1971, with about 84% of the fathers having no overnight stays, and then declined to 56%, 43% and 37% across divorce cohorts. Overall, Figure 2.2 suggests a sharp increase in nonresident father contact over time.

Figure 2.2 *Postdivorce Nonresident Father Contact Across Divorce Cohorts*

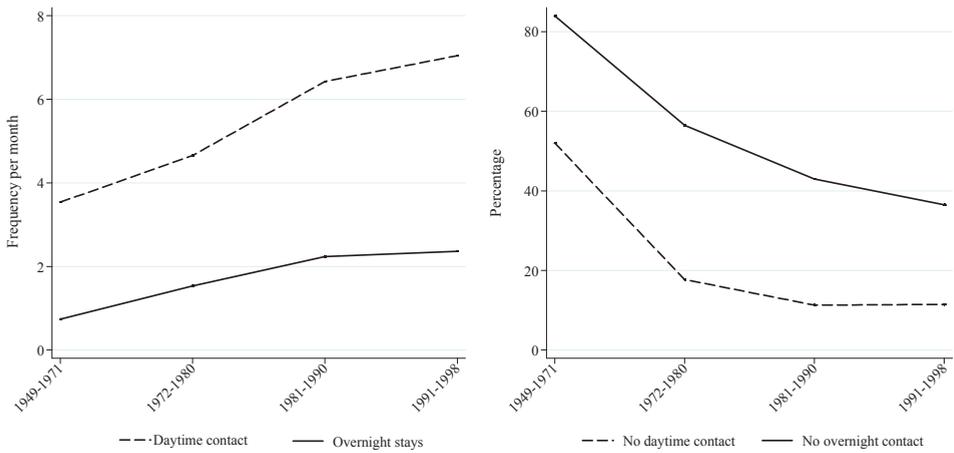


Figure 2.3 *Father Involvement During Marriage Across Divorce Cohorts*

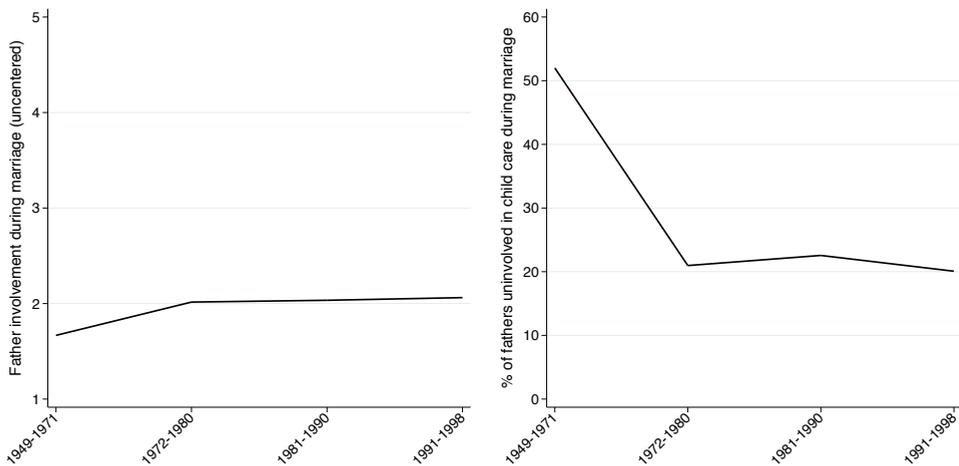


Figure 2.3 shows father involvement during marriage across divorce cohorts. The left-hand graph shown in Figure 2.3 reveals a modest increase in father involvement across divorce cohorts. In 1949-1971, fathers scored about 1.7 on the father involvement scale ranging from 1 to 5, which means that on average, the mother was more involved in child care than the father. Over time this value increased to a score of about 2.1 for the 1991-1998 cohort. The small increase in father involvement across divorce cohorts suggests that father involvement can only partly explain the increase in father contact over time. The right-hand graph shown in Figure 2.3 presents the percentage of fathers across the four cohorts who were uninvolved in child care during their marriage, defined as the fathers scoring lowest on the father involvement measure. Whereas about 52% of the fathers in the earliest cohort were not involved in child care during marriage, this declined to about 21% for the 1972-1980 cohort. For the 1981-1990 and 1991-1998 divorce cohorts, we find almost no change in the number of uninvolved fathers during marriage. Taken together, our findings suggest that although the number of fathers who were uninvolved in child care during marriage declined between 1949 and 1980, the overall increase in fathers' contribution toward child care has been small across cohorts.

2.4.2 Explanatory analyses

Table 2.2 presents the multivariate regression analysis of the log of daytime contact with the nonresident father. First, we briefly address the control variables (Model 1). Father's payment of child support increased daytime contact by about 27%. One explanation for this finding is that fathers who pay child support maintain more contact with their children to ensure that the payments are actually benefitting the child (Arditti & Keith, 1993). The distance between the respondent's and ex-partner's residence was negatively related to daytime contact. Consistent with previous research (e.g., Amato et al., 2009), we found that men reported about 20% more contact with their children than women. Father's education, age of youngest child at separation, and gender composition of children were not found to have significant effects on daytime contact.

Model 2 includes the divorce cohorts. In line with our first hypothesis, we find that the level of father contact was significantly higher in the 1972-1980, 1981-1990 and 1991-1998 cohorts than in the reference category 1949-1971, with each respective cohort having a higher contact frequency than the cohort before.

Compared to the earliest cohort, 1949-1971, fathers in the most recent cohort had about 141% more child contact in the first year after divorce. Although not shown here, we checked whether the differences between the other divorce cohorts were significant by changing the reference category. The results suggested that the level of contact was higher in the 1981-1990 and 1991-1998 cohorts than in the 1972-1980 cohort. Nevertheless, we find no significant difference in nonresident father contact in the 1981-1990 and 1991-1998 cohorts, supporting our conclusion from Figure 2.2 that father contact has hardly changed since the early 1990s.

In Model 3, we included father involvement during marriage to examine the extent to which such involvement can explain the rise in nonresident father contact. Father involvement during marriage had a significant positive effect on children's daytime contact with the nonresident father ($b = 0.22, p < .01$). Fathers who scored one unit higher on the father involvement scale had about 25% more daytime contact with their children than fathers who scored lower. Moreover, including father involvement in our analyses reduced the effect of the 1972-1980 divorce cohort by 13%, and the effect of the 1981-1990 and 1991-1998 cohorts by about 9% each. This indicates that father involvement partly mediates the effect of the time period on nonresident father contact. To test the significance of the mediated effect, we performed a Sobel test (Baron & Kenny, 1986). We used a continuous variable for year of divorce, since it is hard to test the significance of the reduction in effect sizes with dummy variables. The Sobel test was statistically significant ($z = 2.33, p < .05$). Nevertheless, the test showed that father involvement explained only a small part of the rise in nonresident father contact (7.2%), and the effects of the cohorts continued to be significant once we had controlled for the increase in father involvement during marriage. Furthermore, entering father involvement during marriage into the regression equation reduced the coefficient for respondent's gender to non-significance, indicating that gender and father involvement are positively related owing to men reporting higher levels of involvement.

Lastly, we turn to Model 4, which includes divorce cohorts, father involvement during marriage, interaction terms between divorce cohorts and father involvement, and the controls. The interaction terms test our third hypothesis, i.e. whether the effect of father involvement on nonresident father contact has become stronger over time. As expected, the interaction terms were increasingly positive across divorce cohorts, suggesting that father involvement has become a more important factor in postdivorce contact over time. Only the interaction term between the 1991-1998 divorce cohort and father involvement reached significance, however ($b = 0.30,$

$p < .05$). In additional analyses, we rotated the reference category to investigate whether the effect of father involvement on daytime contact differed significantly between cohorts. We found no significant difference between the 1972-1980 and 1981-1990 cohorts. Taken together, these results suggest that father involvement mattered little in earlier divorce cohorts but became more important in the 1991-1998 cohort and is positively related to father contact in more recent cohorts.

Table 2.3 shows the results of the regression analysis for overnight stays. Model 1 includes the controls. Similar to Model 1 for daytime contact, father's payment of child support, respondent's gender, and traveling distance between father and child were related significantly to overnight stays. Moreover, we find that father's education was positively associated with overnight stays. Higher educated fathers have more overnight stays with their children than lower educated fathers, possibly due to more modern family values emphasizing on the importance of overnight care. Age of the youngest child at separation was negatively related to overnight stays, as older children may be more independent (Amato et al., 2009).

Including the divorce cohorts in our analysis (Model 2) revealed that overnight stays increased over time. Compared to the 1949-1971 divorce cohort, overnight stays increased by about 97% in the 1991-1998 cohort. Though not presented here, we checked for significant differences in overnight contact between the other cohorts. Overnight contact was more frequent in the 1981-1990 and 1991-1998 cohorts than in the 1972-1980 cohort. Again, we found no difference between the 1981-1990 and 1991-1998 cohorts.

Next, we included father involvement during marriage in the analysis (Model 3). Father involvement had a positive effect on overnight contact. The more the father was involved in pre-divorce child care, the more overnight contact he had after divorce. When controlling for father involvement, we found that the divorce cohorts' effect sizes were reduced. Again, the Sobel test ($z = 2.33$, $p < 0.05$) revealed that father involvement partly mediated the effect of the time period on overnight contact. Again, however, increased father involvement could only partly explain the rise in overnight contact (about 6.9%), and even when taking rising levels of father involvement into account; we still observed a significant rise in father contact across cohorts.

Model 4 includes the interaction terms between father involvement and the divorce cohorts. The model reveals that the interaction effect sizes were very small and that none of the interactions reached significance, indicating that father involvement during marriage did not become more important for overnight contact over time.

Table 2.2 Linear Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Daytime Contact With Nonresident Father After Divorce (N = 808)

Variables	Daytime contact with nonresident father											
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 3		Model 4	
	B	SE B	B	SE B	B	SE B	B	SE B	B	SE B	B	SE B
Divorce cohort 1949-1971	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Divorce cohort 1972-1980			0.55**	0.14	0.48**	0.14	0.54**	0.15				
Divorce cohort 1981-1990			0.82**	0.14	0.75**	0.14	0.81**	0.14				
Divorce cohort 1991-1998			0.88**	0.14	0.80**	0.14	0.85**	0.15				
Father involvement during marriage					0.22**	0.05	0.04	0.13				
Divorce cohort 1972-1980 Father involvement during marriage							0.14	0.15				
Divorce cohort 1981-1990 Father involvement during marriage							0.17	0.14				
Divorce cohort 1991-1998 Father involvement during marriage							0.30*	0.14				
<i>Control variables</i>												
Father's level of education	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.02				
Father's payment of child support	0.24**	0.07	0.22**	0.07	0.21**	0.07	0.21**	0.07				
Respondent's gender (1 = Male)	0.18*	0.07	0.19**	0.07	-0.02	0.08	-0.03	0.08				
Age of the youngest child at separation	-0.01	0.01	-0.01	0.01	-0.01	0.01	-0.01	0.01				
Distance between respondent's and ex-partner's house ^a	-0.37**	0.08	-0.30**	0.08	-0.29**	0.08	-0.29**	0.08				
All children boys	0.02	0.08	0.01	0.08	0.00	0.08	0.01	0.08				
All children girls	0.00	0.08	-0.03	0.08	-0.01	0.08	-0.01	0.08				
Children of different genders	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—				
<i>Model</i>												
R ²		.06		.11		.13		.14				
Adjusted R ²		.05		.10		.12		.12				
F for change in R ²		6.73**		9.78**		11.15**		9.15**				

Note: Father involvement during marriage is mean-centered.

^a Coefficient multiplied by 100.

* p < .05., **p < .01



Table 2.3 Results of the Linear Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Overnight Stays With Nonresident Father After Divorce (N = 808)

Variables	Overnight stays with nonresident father							
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	B	SE B	B	SE B	B	SE B	B	SE B
Divorce cohort 1949-1971	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Divorce cohort 1972-1980			0.35**	0.12	0.29*	0.12	0.30*	.13
Divorce cohort 1981-1990			0.59**	0.12	0.53**	0.12	0.53**	.12
Divorce cohort 1991-1998			0.68**	0.12	0.61**	0.12	0.61**	.13
Father involvement during marriage					0.19**	0.04	0.17	.11
Divorce cohort 1972-1980 Father involvement during marriage							0.02	.13
Divorce cohort 1981-1990 Father involvement during marriage							0.02	.12
Divorce cohort 1991-1998 Father involvement during marriage							0.01	.12
<i>Control variables</i>								
Father's level of education	0.04**	0.01	0.03*	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.02	.01
Father's payment of child support	0.16**	0.06	0.14*	0.06	0.14*	0.06	0.14*	.06
Respondent's gender (1 = Male)	0.17**	0.06	0.18**	0.06	-0.00	0.07	-0.00	.07
Age of the youngest child at separation	-0.03**	0.01	-0.03**	0.01	-0.03**	0.01	-0.03**	.01
Distance between respondent's and ex-partner's house ^a	-0.14*	0.07	-0.08	0.07	-0.07	0.07	-0.07	.07
All children boys	-0.07	0.07	-0.08	0.06	-0.08	0.06	-0.08	.06
All children girls	0.05	0.07	0.02	0.07	0.04	0.07	0.04	.07
Children of different genders	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
<i>Model</i>								
R ²		.06		.11		.13		.13
Adjusted R ²		.05		.10		.12		.12
F for change in R ²		7.43**		9.73**		11.15**		8.73**

Note: Father involvement during marriage is mean-centered.

^a Coefficient multiplied by 100.

* p < .05. ** p < .01.

2.5 Conclusion and discussion

This study was one of the first to describe and explain changes in nonresident father-child contact. Using retrospective data from the Netherlands drawn from divorce cohorts between 1949 and 1998, we contributed to the literature in that we not only described but also attempted to explain the rise in nonresident father contact by studying the mediating role of father involvement prior to divorce. We also investigated whether father involvement during marriage has come to play a more important role in nonresident father contact over time. Finally, we distinguished daytime contact from overnight stays in our analyses.

Our study showed a sharp increase in nonresident father contact for the time period investigated. From 1949 to 1998, nonresident fathers have increased the level of contact with their children, both daytime contact and overnight stays. In particular, the number of absent fathers decreased from 1949 to 1998. Whereas in the earliest divorce cohort (1949-1971), 52% of the fathers had no daytime contact with their children in the first year after divorce, this number decreased to about 11% in the most recent cohort (1991-1998). Similarly, the number of fathers who had no sleepovers in the first year after divorce declined from about 84% to 37%. Our more detailed description of the trend as compared to the study of Kalmijn and De Graaf (2000) showed that the main changes occurred from 1950 to the early 1990s, when father visitation steadily increased, and that the 1990's showed already little change. The changed social and legal context of (postdivorce) fatherhood may have led mothers, fathers, and judges to attach more and more importance to postdivorce father-child contact when deciding on visitation arrangements in this period.

Our findings seem to support Amato et al. (2009), who concluded that the negative stereotype of nonresident fathers as 'deadbeat dads' needs to be revised. The majority of Dutch fathers who separated between 1991 and 1998 remained in contact with their children after separation. Note, however, that our results pertain to the first year after separation. Because contact between nonresident fathers and children has been found to decline in the years following separation (Seltzer, 1991), we must caution that the percentages of involved nonresident fathers may be lower in the longer run.

Our results partly supported our expectation that the change toward higher levels of father-child contact after divorce can in part be explained by rising father involvement during marriage. Father involvement was positively associated

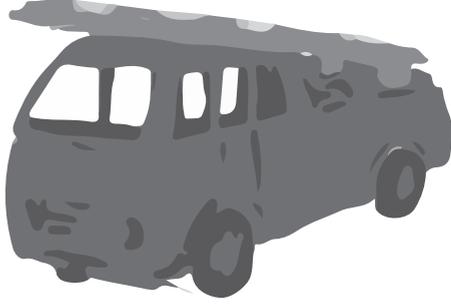
with daytime contact and overnight stays. Moreover, we find that greater father involvement during marriage partly explains the increase in nonresident father contact over time. Nevertheless, the mediating effect of father involvement in our analysis is rather small. We suspect that this finding mirrors the modest increase in father involvement over time, as observed in our data. Our results are in line with LaRossa's (1985) claim that changes in fathers' behavior lag behind altered norms and expectations associated with fathers' involvement in child rearing. Consequently, it appears that it is not so much fathers' changed behavior during marriage that may explain the increase in father-child contact, but rather the changed image of fatherhood. Future research could investigate this point by examining the mediating influence of attitudes toward fatherhood on the increase in postdivorce contact.

Furthermore, our results partly supported our hypothesis that father involvement has become an increasingly important factor in postdivorce father-child contact. At least for daytime contact, we found that this was indeed the case. Whereas the extent of father involvement mattered little in the earliest cohort, it became increasingly important in more recent cohorts, with involved fathers having more child contact after divorce. When deciding on visitation schedules, fathers, mothers, and judges in the more recent cohorts may have given greater weight to father involvement prior to divorce. Concerning overnight contact, however, we found no evidence that father involvement has become more important, suggesting that mothers are still automatically assumed to be the primary caregivers in divorce settlements when it comes to nurturing parenting tasks such as overnight stays.

Although our study suggests that fatherhood has become increasingly important in the postdivorce context, we believe that some cautionary remarks are in order. First, our study used retrospective data. People were asked retrospectively about nonresident father contact and father involvement, and some respondents' divorce may have taken place a long time ago. It is unclear how recall bias may have influenced our results. On the one hand, recall bias might lead to an overestimation of postdivorce contact and pre-divorce father involvement in the early cohorts, since people's answers might be influenced by present role expectations of (postdivorce) fatherhood. This would mean that we underestimated the increase in father involvement and nonresident father contact. On the other hand, recall bias could lead to an underestimation of father involvement and postdivorce contact, since people might not remember postdivorce contact and father involvement from a distance of many years. Consequently, we would have overestimated the increase

in involvement and contact over time. To overcome this problem, future research should make use of prospective data. Second, although we control for a range of variables that may affect our results, we cannot completely rule out the possibility that a third unmeasured variable (such as liberal gender values) has influenced our results. This unmeasured variable may not only bias the relationship between father involvement and postdivorce nonresident father contact, but may also be responsible in part for the observed trends over time. Third, we measured father involvement as the father's share in child rearing compared with the mother's. This might be problematic because it is not the relative level of father involvement in child care that might matter to fathers, mothers, and judges in custody decisions, but the absolute amount of time spent with the child. Fourth, our data is limited to parents who were married at some point. In the period studied, cohabitation was uncommon in the earlier cohorts and often short-lived and ending in marriage in later cohorts. Fifth, our dependent variable for daytime contact is measured in daytime contact periods, making comparisons with previous research on changes in nonresident father contact difficult. Sixth, the number of cases per year was quite small, especially in the earliest years, when divorce was rare. Although we attempted to obtain more reliable results by grouping years into divorce cohorts, we still had relatively few people who divorced prior to 1972. Lastly, when generalizing our results to other national contexts, one should bear in mind that the normative and legal context of (postdivorce) fatherhood varies across countries. Even if the tendency toward caring fatherhood after divorce is visible in many European countries (Knijn & Selten, 2002; Sigle-Rushton, Goisis, & Keizer, 2013), we encourage future research to study whether our findings also hold for other countries.

Despite these shortcomings, we believe that our study has interesting implications for the changing nature of postdivorce nonresident fatherhood. First, both the substantial increase in nonresident father contact and the mediating effect of father involvement during marriage on the increase in contact over time conclusively support the idea that, over time, men have become more engaged in the paternal role inside and outside marriage. Second, our results partly support the idea that mothers, fathers and judges have increasingly valued father involvement during marriage when negotiating nonresident father contact after divorce. Indeed, these trends may have even gained momentum in recent years.



3 Shared residence for children of divorce? Testing the critics' concerns

This paper is co-authored by Christiaan Monden. It is currently under review. A slightly different version of this paper was presented at the Workshop of the Max Plank Institute 'Life-Course Transitions after Separation: Stepfamilies, Lone and Non-residential Parenthood' and has been awarded with a Poster Presentation Award.

3.1 Introduction

Parental separation is a stressful life-event that impacts negatively upon children's psychological well-being: children from divorced families more often suffer from behavior problems, stress, and depression than other children (Amato, 2004), and these problems persist partially into adulthood (Amato & Sobolewski, 2001). In the light of these negative consequences of divorce for children's well-being, recent legislation in many Western countries encourages the equal sharing of parental responsibility after divorce (McIntosh, 2009). Consequently, a residence arrangement where the child lives alternately with each parent after separation or divorce – most often called shared residence, but also referred to as shared physical custody or alternating residence – has become increasingly commonplace amongst separated parents (Trinder, 2010). In the Netherlands, the number of children living in shared residence after parental separation increased from 5% in 1998 to about 30% in 2011 (Spruijt & Duindam, 2010; CBS, 2012) and similar trends are reported for Belgium and Sweden (Sodermans, Matthijs, & Swicegood, 2013; Carlsund, Erikson, Löfsted, & Sellström, 2012). Estimates for the United States suggest that about 30% of children live in shared residence after divorce (Melli & Brown, 2008).

One possible factor contributing to the increasing popularity of shared residence may be the idea that it counterbalances the harmful consequences of divorce for children (Bartfeld, 2011). Because under this arrangement both parents remain actively involved in parenting, it is assumed that shared residence may act as a buffer against the loss of parental resources and may thus reduce the negative consequences of divorce for child well-being (McIntosh, 2009; Bartfeld, 2011).

Despite much enthusiasm about the potential benefits of shared residence, however, some scholars are more skeptical and argue that shared residence might also hold potential risks for child well-being. First, shared residence exposes children to instability, as a result of living in two homes (Gilmore, 2006; Kline, Tschann, Johnston, & Wallerstein, 1989; Pearson & Thoennes, 1990). Constantly-changing care givers, and living environments with different routines, may increase anxiety in children, making shared residence an inadequate living arrangement (Kuehl, 1989). Secondly, it has been argued that shared residence places strain upon children, by exposing them to ongoing parental conflict through the continual involvement of both parents after separation (Harris-Short, 2010).

Although a variety of studies have investigated the relationship between postdivorce residence arrangements and child well-being (e.g., Bauserman, 2002; Breivik & Olweus, 2006; Melli & Brown, 2008; Spruijt & Duindam, 2010; Vanassche, Sodermans, Matthijs, & Swicegood, 2013) increasing our understanding of this relationship is important for two reasons. First, the existing research evidence on postdivorce residence arrangements and child well-being remains inconclusive. Although some studies have shown that children in shared residence experience higher levels of well-being than those living in sole residence (e.g., Bauserman, 2002; Melli & Brown, 2008; Breivik & Olweus, 2006), other studies have found no differences between the two arrangements (Spruijt & Duindam, 2010; Vanssche et al., 2013), or have suggested that children in shared residence experience a lower degree of well-being (Neoh & Mellor, 2010; McKinnon & Wallerstein, 1991). Secondly, legal research suggests that the conflict and instability objections that are raised against shared residence may influence custody decisions. For example, Williams (2005) found that attorneys frequently named instability and conflict as reasons why they rejected the idea of shared residence for children of divorce. Similarly, Henaghan (2001) showed that some judges refused to make shared residence orders in custody cases, fearing the negative consequences of instability for child well-being. Currently, however, it remains open from the literature whether these concerns are appropriate. It therefore seems important to add to the empirical basis of custody decision-making by evaluating these two objections to shared residence more closely.

In this study, we contribute to the ongoing debate on the risks and benefits of shared residence for child well-being by examining the validity of these two common objections (i.e., instability and conflict). To do so, we study the effects of instability and parental conflict for children in three residence situations: living with their mothers, living with their fathers and living with their parents alternately (defined as mother residence, father residence and shared residence, respectively). By using direct measures of instability and parental conflict, such as the number of transitions between parents' residences and the level of conflict between parents, we are able to assess which role parental conflict and instability play for differences in child well-being across postdivorce residence arrangements. Moreover, to address the possibility that differences in child well-being between residence arrangements are the results of self-selection into particular types of residence arrangements (Breivik & Olweus, 2006; Gunnoe & Braver, 2001), we control for a wide range of parental demographic and pre-divorce relationship characteristics in our analysis.

This allows us to obtain a more rigorous assessment of differences in child well-being between the different postdivorce residence arrangements.

We base our analyses on recent survey data from the Netherlands, the New Families in the Netherlands Survey (NFN) (Poortman, Van der Lippe, & Boele-Woelki, 2014). Using the NFN for our study has three advantages. First, the NFN contains detailed measures of parental conflict and instability that allow us to test directly the concerns of skeptics with regard to shared residence. Secondly, when compared to other data sets on divorced and separated families, the NFN contains a relatively large number of children in shared residence, which allows us to make more reliable comparisons both between children living in shared residence and those living in either mother residence or father residence, and between children who are all living in shared residence. Finally, the NFN also contains information on pre-divorce conflict and parental involvement.

3.2 Theoretical background

3.2.1 The instability argument

Skeptics of shared residence often claim that shared residence deprives the child of stability. Based on the ideas of early attachment theory, supporters of this theory argue that stability of location and consistency in parenting are central determinants for child well-being after parental separation (Kuehl, 1989). Frequent changes between the parents' homes are considered harmful for child well-being, because they preclude children from having a stable home and are thought to cause feelings of insecurity and anxiety in children (Harris-Short, 2010; Kline et al., 1989). Moreover, frequent changes might burden children with organizational difficulties, such as moving their belongings between homes, adapting to travelling times, and coping with inflexible schedules (e.g., Cashmore et al., 2010; Gilmore, 2006).

Critics of shared residence argue that frequent changes between parents' homes also decrease children's well-being by exposing them to different parenting styles (Harris-Short, 2010). Thus, frequent changes are thought to confront children with two different sets of norms and rules, which might lead to stress and confusion in children. Furthermore, when children are confronted with divorce at an early age, frequent changes between homes might hinder the development of a secure attachment with the primary care giver (Freud, Goldstein & Solnit, 1979; Harris-Short, 2010).

In mother residence or father residence, stability is provided by the fact that the child lives in one location, with the resident parent acting as the primary care giver. Moreover, in sole residence arrangements, contact with the non-resident parent is mostly limited to a few hours or short overnight stays (Smyth, 2005), limiting the disruption of parenting patterns and reducing instability to a minimum. Children in shared residence arrangements, on the other hand, live in two homes with potentially different routines and parenting styles, which may undermine their sense of stability and generate stress. Following the above arguments, our first hypothesis reads that *children in shared residence experience more emotional difficulties than their counterparts in either mother residence or father residence, on account of their greater exposure to instability.*

In addition, some scholars suggest that stability of location and parenting might be especially important for the well-being of younger children (Cashmore et al., 2010; McIntosh & Long, 2006); and some argue further that shared residence is inappropriate for younger children (Kline et al., 1989). Because younger children have a more limited comprehension of visiting schedules than older children, frequent changes between the parents' homes might be more stressful at younger ages. The evidence currently available on this point is mixed, however. Although some studies found that shared residence might not be beneficial for children under four years old (McIntosh, Smyth, Kelaher, Wells & Long, 2010), other researchers argued that frequent changes between parents might diminish also the well-being of kindergarten and school-age children (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). Nevertheless, taking the evidence together, we formulate a second hypothesis, on the effect of stability and age: *differences in children's emotional difficulties between shared residence and either mother residence or father residence are larger for younger children than for older ones.*

3.2.2 The parental conflict argument

The second objection against shared residence that is prominent in the debate amongst researchers, legal professionals and family therapists is the parental conflict argument. Parental conflict is a key stressor for children's adjustment after separation (Musick & Meier, 2010). When post-separation parental conflict is high, children are often found to suffer from depression, anxiety, and aggression (Buchanan, Maccoby & Dornbusch, 1991).

There are many possible pathways by which parental conflict might influence child well-being, but two mechanisms dominate the literature. First, conflict might decrease children's well-being by exposing them directly to hostility, heated arguments or violence (Amato, 2004). Secondly, parental conflict might cause stress for children through loyalty issues, as children feel forced to take sides with one of the parents (e.g., Amato & Afifi, 2006). For example, Buchanan et al. (1991) found that children in families with high levels of postdivorce conflict more often reported feeling caught between their parents than children in low-conflict families; and feeling caught between parents was found to be closely related to a lower degree of child adjustment.

Against this background, critics of shared residence claim that it exposes children to ongoing parental conflict (Harris-Short, 2010). Parental conflict is assumed to persist for a longer period after divorce in shared residence arrangements than in sole residence arrangements (Gunnoe & Braver, 2001; Cashmore et al., 2010), because parents in shared residence need to communicate frequently about child-care issues, make decisions together, and coordinate their schedules. Consequently, children in shared residence are expected to experience lower levels of well-being than their counterparts in sole residence arrangements. Empirical support for this claim is, however, mixed. For example, Smyth (2005) suggested that parents in shared residence arrangements possessed better problem-solving skills, and experienced less conflict in their postdivorce relationships, compared to parents in sole residence arrangements. In contrast, Melli and Brown (2008) found that parents in shared residence arrangements reported more conflict and disagreement than those in sole residence arrangements. Following the parental conflict argument, and assuming that parents in shared residence have more conflict than parents in sole residence, we formulate a third hypothesis: *through the increased exposure to parental conflict, children in shared residence arrangements will have, ceteris paribus, more emotional difficulties compared to their counterparts in mother residence or father residence.*

In addition to voicing concerns about the possible exposure of children in shared residence arrangements to higher levels of conflict, some researchers also claim that parental conflict may be more harmful for child well-being in shared residence than in sole residence arrangements (Fehlberg et al., 2011). Because children in shared residence may have a closer emotional relationship to both parents and spend more time with both parents compared to children in sole residence arrangements,

exposure to parental quarrels may generate stronger feelings of being caught in their parents' conflict among children in shared residence. In other words, parental conflict might be more harmful for children in shared residence. Research by McIntosh et al. (2010), studying child well-being in conflicting divorces over four years, indirectly supports this argument. Children in shared residence consistently reported higher levels of feeling caught in parental conflict. By the fourth year of the study, children in the shared residence group showed more problems with attention, task completion, and concentration than their counterparts in other residence arrangements. Thus, we might expect that in high-conflict situations shared residence has more damaging consequences for child well-being than sole residence arrangements. Therefore, our fourth hypothesis reads: *the level of parental conflict has stronger associations with children's emotional difficulties in shared residence than in mother residence or father residence.*

3.3 Data, variables, and analytical strategy

3.3.1 Data

We used data from the New Families in the Netherlands Survey (NFN), a new online survey (Poortman et al., 2014). The NFN is based on a random sample of formerly married and cohabiting couples who officially divorced, or dissolved their cohabitation, in 2010. The sample was drawn by Statistics Netherlands from the Dutch Social Statistical Data Base (SSB). Both ex-partners were contacted by mail and invited to complete an online survey or fill in a paper and pencil version of the questionnaire. In about one third of the contacted couples, both respondents participated. About 38.7% of all contacted respondents took part in the study, resulting in a response rate of 57.7% at a household level. These response rates are high for an online survey carried out amongst recently divorced parents, and in general are comparable with response rates for other surveys in the Netherlands (De Leeuw & De Heer, 2002). In total, the sample consisted of 4,481 respondents. Comparing the NFN dataset with representative Dutch statistics of people who have recently become divorced, we find that men, younger persons, people from urban areas, people of non-Western descent, people with low incomes and individuals on welfare are all under-represented in the NFN.

Respondents reported on the well-being of one of their children, selected by age: respondents with children younger than 10 years were asked to report on their eldest child, whereas respondents with children older than 10 years were asked

about their youngest child.

To be able to control for a broad range of possible selection factors describing the pre-divorce situation, we enriched the NFN data with register data on respondent's income obtained from the Dutch Social Statistical Data Base with the help of Statistics Netherlands. Income information was provided based on tax records for each respondent over a period from 2003 to 2011. This information was employed to estimate the respondent's predivorce and current household income.

We limited our sample to respondents with valid values on the dependent variable, who ended a heterosexual relationship during or after 2004, and who reported on a child aged 4 to 16 years living in mother residence, father residence or shared residence ($n = 3,747$). Parents with children outside this age range were excluded as the psychometric properties of the employed measure of children's well-being are best for the group between 4-16 years (Goodman, 1997). We also excluded ex-partners who did not report on the same child ($n = 222$). Finally, we excluded respondents who could not be matched with register data due to inconsistent information. The number of missing values across our sample variables was small ($n = 167$; 4.7%). We used list-wise deletion to handle these missing cases, leading to an analytical sample of 3,355 parents reporting on the well-being of 2,652 children.

3.3.2 Dependent variable

Children's emotional difficulties: We measured children's well-being with the parent report version of the Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (Goodman, 1997), a frequently used tool to assess psychological well-being in children aged between 4 and 16 years. The SDQ consists of 25 items, which can be divided into five subscales consisting of five items each: pro-social behavior, hyperactivity, peer problems, conduct problems, and psychological problems (Goodman, 1997). For each of these items, respondents were asked whether the item described the child's behavior during the last 6 months. Answer categories ranged from 'not true' (0), 'somewhat true' (1), and 'certainly true' (2). The ten SDQ items that refer to the child's strength were reversed when calculating subscales. The subscales of the SDQ are less reliable in general samples and therefore, we focused on the overall difficulties score (Goodman, Lamping, & Ploubidis, 2010). To score the subscales, the 5 items for each scale were summed, resulting in scores for each scale ranging from 0 to 10. To compute the SDQ Total Difficulties Score, the scores of the subscales for hyperactivity, peer problems, conduct problems, and psychological problems

were summed ($\alpha = .71$). Children's SDQ Total Difficulties Scores can range between 0 and 40, with higher scores indicating more emotional difficulties (Goodman, 1997). Because our dependent variable was rightly skewed, we ran additional analyses using a log-transformation of our dependent variable. As these analyses lead to the same conclusions, we decided to use the untransformed measure of children's emotional difficulties in our models.¹

3.3.3 Independent variables

Children's postdivorce residence arrangements: To assess children's postdivorce residence arrangements, respondents were asked: 'With whom does the child live most of the time?' Answer categories were: 'with me'; 'with ex-partner'; 'about equally much with both parents' and 'other residence arrangement'. We generated three dummy variables that indicated whether the child lived in mother residence (1 = yes; 0 = no), father residence (1 = yes; 0 = no), or shared residence (1 = yes; 0 = no). Next, we categorized the open answers from the 'other residence category' as mother, father or shared residence (n = 50) based on Sodermans, Vanassche, Matthijs and Swicegood's (2014) operationalization of postdivorce residence arrangements. We classified open answers as mother residence if respondents indicated that children stayed more than 70% of the time with the mother. Answers indicating that the child stayed between 30% and 70% of the time with the mother were coded as shared residence. Responses specifying that children stayed more than 70% with the father were considered as father residence. Additional analyses, excluding the open answers from our results gave the same results.

Instability: We used two measures to assess instability: *number of changes between parents' homes* and *distance between parents' homes*. The number of changes between parents' homes captured the frequency of exposure to different parental environments. To calculate the number of changes children made per month between their parents' homes parents were given a month-long calendar on which they were asked to indicate for each day and night of an average month whether the child stayed with her/him or with the ex-partner. With the help of this calendar we counted the total number of changes between parents' homes, which

¹ When using the log-transformation of children's emotional difficulties as the dependent variables in our models differences in child well-being between the residence arrangements are less pronounced. We find no significant differences in child well-being between mother and father residence in Model 1, however, this difference is also borderline significant in Table 3 ($p = 0.046$). In Model 4 no differences in emotional well-being between father residence and shared residence are found when controlling for conflict.

ranged from 0 to 56 per month. In additional analyses we also examined a possible non-linear association of instability with children's emotional difficulties. These analyses, however, revealed no non-linear relationship between changes between parents' homes and child well-being.

Our second measure of instability was the distance between the respondent's home and the ex-partner's home. Distance is used as a proxy for instability, because a longer distance between parents' residences is thought to expose children to different environments and to generate more travelling time and greater organizational requirements (Cashmore et al., 2010). Respondents were asked to indicate the traveling time in minutes between their own and their ex-partner's residence. We used $\log(\text{minutes})$ because the distribution was right-skewed.

Conflict: To test the conflict argument we used two measures of parental conflict: *tensions between parents* and *serious conflict*. The measure, 'tensions between parents,' was measured by asking respondents how often they currently had tensions with their ex-partner. Answer categories ranged from 'almost never' (0) to 'very often' (3).

Serious conflict between parents was assessed by presenting to respondents a list of eight items describing offensive behaviors. Respondents were asked: 'Has your ex-partner done any of the following things since separation?' Blamed you severely; said nasty things about you to others; made uninvited calls or visits; turned your children against you; wrongly accused you; spoken ill of your common past; scolded/quarreled with you; threatened to use violence. Responses were coded as 0 if the behavior did not occur or 1 if the behavior occurred. The total response across items was used to measure serious conflict ($\alpha = .87$). The correlation between serious conflict and tensions was $r = 0.58$.

3.3.4 Confounding factors

We included variables that are related to the choice of postdivorce residence arrangement as well as to child well-being. *Father involvement during marriage* was assessed by asking respondents whether they or their ex-partner engaged more often in the following child care tasks during marriage: changing diapers, physical care, playing with the child at home, talking about the child's problems, excursions with the child (e.g., zoo, playground). Answer categories ranged from 1 = 'respondent more often than ex-partner' to 5 = 'ex-partner more often than respondent'. The items

were recoded to indicate the level of paternal involvement. We averaged the scores across the five items ($\alpha = .91$).

To measure *pre-divorce conflict*, respondents were asked how often the following conflict situations occurred in the last year before separation: tensions or arguments with ex-partner; heated discussions; one partner strongly accusing the other; not wanting to talk to each other; and escalating fights. Response options varied from 1 = 'never' to 4 = 'often'. We re-coded the variable to range from 0 to 15. The sum of the responses across the items was used as the measure of pre-divorce conflict ($\alpha = .87$).

Pre-divorce disposable household income. Statistics Netherlands provided income register data, based on tax records, for all respondents. We took the sum of annual income from labor, capital and social benefits (pension, welfare, housing benefits, etc.) for all members of the household, minus all negative transfers (e.g., taxes, national insurance contributions and alimony payments) in the last year before divorce, as our measure of pre-divorce disposable household income. A standard equivalence scale by Siermann, Van Teeffelen, and Urlings (2004) was used to adjust income for size and composition of the household. Thirty-two respondents had negative values on their disposable household income, meaning that their negative transfers exceeded their received income from work and state transfers; their incomes were set to zero in our analyses. We log-transformed pre-divorce disposable household income, using the formula $(\ln(x+1))$.

Mother's and father's level of education was categorized in one of three levels: *low education*, *intermediate education*, and *high education*. Respondents with no primary education, with primary education only, or who had received a lower-level vocational education were in each case defined as having lower education. Respondents with general secondary education to pre-university level were assigned to the intermediate education category. Respondents categorized as having higher education were those with tertiary education. We used dummy variables to indicate the education level for both parents individually; high education was the reference category in all models.

Table 3.1 Descriptive Statistics for Dependent and Independent Variables (N = 3,355)

Variables	M	SD	Range
SDQ Total Difficulties score	8.26	6.0	0 – 32
<i>Residence arrangements</i>			
Mother residence ^a	.66	–	0 – 1
Shared residence ^b	.29	–	0 – 1
Father residence ^c	.05	–	0 – 1
<i>Stability</i>			
Changes between parents' homes	7.57	6.17	0 – 56
Distance between parents' homes	17.97	32.20	0 – 600
<i>Conflict</i>			
Tensions between parents	.90	.97	0 – 3
Serious conflict	3.02	2.67	0 – 8
<i>Selection Variables</i>			
Pre-divorce conflict between parents	6.82	4.04	0 – 15
Father involvement before divorce	2.16	.82	1 – 5
<i>Mother's education</i>			
Low education	.13	–	0 – 1
Intermediate education	.54	–	0 – 1
High education	.32	–	0 – 1
<i>Father's education</i>			
Low education	.17	–	0 – 1
Intermediate education	.47	–	0 – 1
High education	.36	–	0 – 1
Pre-divorce disposable household income	24,133	13,116	0 – 229,583
<i>Controls</i>			
Respondent's gender ^d	.43	–	0 – 1
Respondent's re-partnering ^e	.24	–	0 – 1
Child's age	10.13	3.33	4 – 16
Child's gender ^f	.52	–	0 – 1
Current disposable household income	19,426	10,097	0 – 275,133
Year of moving out	2009.32	.99	2004 – 2011
Dissolution of cohabitation union ^g	0.24	–	0 – 1

Note: 3,355 reports of child well-being, 2,652 children. Standard deviation not reported for dichotomous variables. M = mean, SD = Standard deviation.

^a Mother residence: 0 = no, 1 = yes. ^b Shared residence: 0 = no, 1 = yes. ^c Father residence: 0 = no, 1 = yes. ^d Respondent's gender: 0 = female, 1 = male. ^e Respondent's re-partnering: 0 = no new residential partner, 1 = new residential partner. ^f Child's gender: 0 = female, 1 = male. ^g Dissolution of cohabitation union: 0 = dissolution of marriage, 1 = dissolution of cohabitation union.

3.3.5 Control variables

We controlled for *child's gender*, coded (0 = *girl*, 1 = *boy*), and *child's age*, measured in years. *Current disposable household income* was the sum of all income received from labor, capital and social benefits (pension, welfare, housing benefits, etc.), for all members of the household in which the child was living following parental separation, minus all outgoings (e.g., taxes, national insurance contributions, alimony payments), calculated for the year 2011. Data for current disposable household income for non-participating ex-partners were also provided (by Statistics Netherlands). Children in shared residence were assigned the mean of their mother's and their father's disposable household incomes. Again, we used the equivalence scale of Siermann et al. (2004) to adjust income for household size and composition. We recoded respondents with negative disposable income to zero ($n = 18$). Finally, we took the natural log of the variable, because income distribution was skewed to the right. Pre-divorce disposable household income and current disposable income correlated moderately ($r = .43$). *Respondent's gender* (0 = *women*, 1 = *men*) was added to our models to account for a possible reporting bias between mothers and fathers. We controlled for *respondent's repartnering* (0 = *no new residential partner*, 1 = *new residential partner*), because the parent's repartnering might influence children's well-being. *Dissolution of cohabitation union* (0 = *dissolution of marriage*, 1 = *dissolution of cohabitation union*) is controlled for in our models as children's emotional difficulties may differ between formerly married and formerly cohabiting families. *Year of moving out*, a continuous variable, refers to the year in which parents began living apart. Table 3.1 presents the summary statistics for all the variables used in our models.

3.3.6 Analytical strategy

Because about one third of our sample consists of ex-couples where both parents reported on the same child, the structure of our data can be seen as repeated measurements of child well-being (i.e., one measure obtained from the mother and one from the father). To model the data accurately, we therefore employ multi-level models that take into account the dependence between observations of the same child. We define a two-level model, with parent's reports of child well-being as lower level and children as upper level units, and we model unstructured variances for the lower level residuals to control for correlated responses associated with multiple measurements. The residual correlation of about 0.5 across all models

indicates considerable correlation between ex-parents' reports on the well-being of their child.

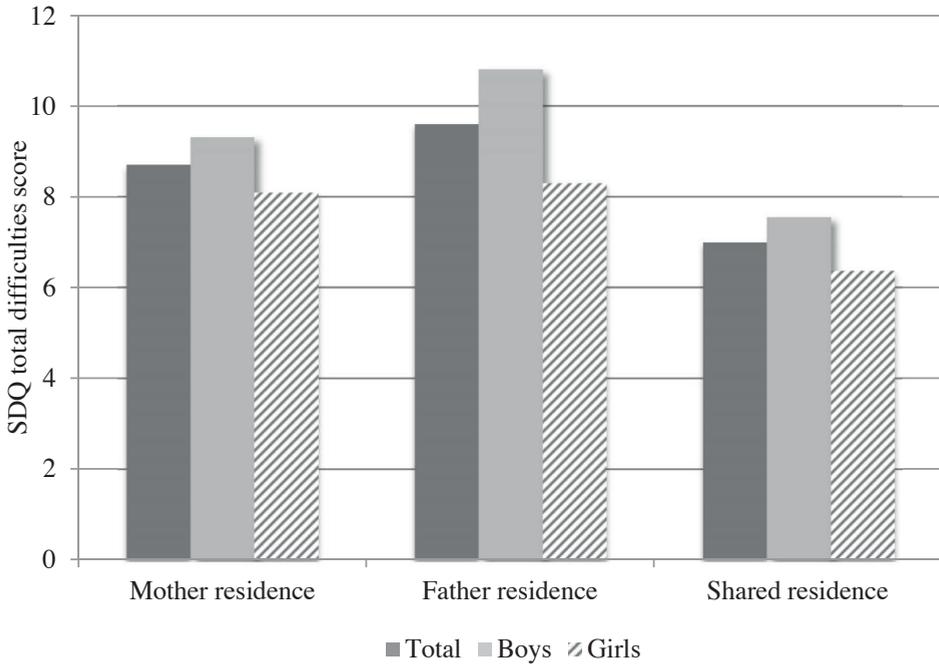
We begin the analyses with a description of differences in child well-being across residence arrangements (Figure 3.1). We then investigate differences in the independent variables across residence arrangements to assess how much the shared residence group differs from the families opting for either mother residence or father residence upon separation (Table 3.2). The results of the multilevel analyses that test our hypotheses are presented in Table 3.3 and Table 3.4. In additional robustness checks (not shown here), we split the analyses for children from formerly married and cohabiting parents. These analyses lead to the same substantive conclusions.

3.4 Results

3.4.1 Descriptive results

Figure 3.1 presents unadjusted SDQ Total Difficulties scores for children in mother residence, father residence, and shared residence. Emotional difficulties are highest for children in father residence (9.6), followed by children in mother residence (8.7), and are lowest for children living in shared residence (7.0). A similar picture appears when we compare the scores for boys and girls separately across residence arrangements. Girls living in shared residence have considerably lower emotional difficulties scores (6.4) than girls in sole residence arrangements. There is little difference in the girls' SDQ scores between mother residence (8.1) and father residence (8.3). Figure 3.1 shows that boys in father residence have the highest SDQ total difficulties scores (10.8), followed by boys in mother residence (9.3), whereas boys in shared residence have the lowest scores (7.5).

Figure 3.1 SDQ Total Difficulties Score Across Residence Arrangements by Child's Gender



Note: n = 3,355 reports of child well-being.

Next, we compare mother, father and shared residence across a number of important independent variables (Table 3.2). Compared to mother residence or father residence, parents with shared residence reported lower levels of conflict before divorce. Parents in shared residence are more likely to be educated to a higher level and to have higher pre-divorce income than parents in sole residence arrangements. These results suggest that the group of families opting for shared residence were already different, prior to divorce, from the group choosing sole residence.

Table 3.2 also shows that parents in shared residence arrangements reported lower postdivorce levels of conflict. Children in shared residence change more frequently between homes than their counterparts in either father residence or mother residence, but the distance between the homes is shorter for children in shared residence.

Table 3.2 Mean Scores of Covariates and Confounders by Residence Arrangement

Predictors / Confounders	Mother residence (M)	Father residence (F)	Shared residence (Sh)	Significant differences ($p < .05$)
Tensions	.99	1.06	.67	Sh < M, F
Serious conflict	3.31	3.82	2.20	Sh < M, F
Changes between parents' homes	7.18	5.06	8.89	F, M < Sh
Distance between parents' homes	21.50	26.13	8.41	Sh < M, F
<i>Confounders</i>				
Father involvement during marriage	2.02	2.58	2.43	M < F, Sh
Pre-divorce conflict	7.22	7.02	5.87	Sh < M, F
Pre-divorce disposable household income	23,345	23,185	26,112	M, F < Sh
Mother's education				
Low education	.15	.28	.07	Sh < M < F
Intermediate education	.57	.60	.47	Sh < M, F
High education	.28	.12	.45	Sh, M > F
Father's education				
Low education	.21	.23	.09	Sh < M, F
Intermediate education	.50	.43	.41	M > Sh, F
Higher education	.29	.34	.50	Sh > M, F

Note: Sample sizes: Mother residence ($n = 2,217$), father residence ($n = 172$), and shared residence ($n = 966$).

3.4.2 Multivariate results

Table 3.3 presents the results of the multilevel analysis for children's SDQ Total Difficulties scores. Model 1 includes the dummy variables for the residence arrangements and the control variables. Compared to children in shared residence, children in mother residence score about 1.65 points higher on the SDQ Total Difficulties scale. Father residence is associated with, on average, 2.65 points higher on the SDQ Total Difficulties scores than shared residence. These statistically significant differences are also substantial if compared to the standard deviation of the scale (6.0). Moreover, upon changing the reference category, we find that father residence is associated with more emotional difficulties ($b = 0.99$, $p = 0.46$) than children living with their mother. These results suggest that children in shared residence exhibit lower SDQ scores than children in sole residence arrangements.

In Model 2, we add the confounding factors to the regression model in order to take into account possible selection effects. We find that father involvement during marriage and SDQ scores are negatively related, indicating that children of fathers who were more involved in child care during marriage show a lower

level of emotional difficulties after divorce ($b = -0.36, p < .05$). Furthermore, pre-divorce conflict between parents is significantly related to children's SDQ scores ($b = 0.20, p < .001$). We also find that parental education is significantly related to SDQ Total Difficulties scores. For both mothers and fathers, we see that children of parents with lower or intermediate education have more emotional difficulties than children of parents with higher education. Turning to the control variables, we find that upon adding the confounders to the model, the respondent's gender becomes significant ($b = 0.73, p < .01$), with fathers reporting more emotional difficulties for their child than mothers.

To what extent can the confounders account for the differences in children's outcomes by residence arrangement? Comparing the coefficients for residence arrangement between Model 1 and Model 2, we observe that adding the confounders decreases the difference in SDQ scores between shared residence and mother residence by 48% and between shared residence and father residence by 34%. Note, however, that the attenuated differences between shared residence and sole residence remain statistically significant. We find no significant difference between mother residence and father residence in Model 2 upon controlling for the confounding factors (not shown in Table 3.3).

Model 3 includes measures of instability and tests the first hypothesis. As expected, we find that the distance between parents' homes is positively related to children's emotional difficulties ($b = 0.26, p < .05$). Yet, contrary to expectations, the number of changes between parents' homes is negatively associated with children's SDQ Total Difficulties scores ($b = -0.07, p < .001$) suggesting that frequent changes between parents houses decrease children's emotional difficulties. This contradicts the concern of the critics of shared residence that more frequent changes between homes would result in more emotional difficulties for children. Turning to the coefficients for residence arrangements, we again find that children in shared residence have fewer difficulties than those in either mother residence or father residence. Comparing the coefficients for the residence arrangements between Model 3 and Model 2, we see that controlling for instability reduces the coefficient for mother residence by 28% and for father residence by 22%. This suggests that the measures of instability explain some of the differences between shared residence and sole residence arrangements. Overall, we conclude that these findings provide only limited support for our first hypothesis: that children in shared residence arrangements experience more emotional difficulties on account of their exposure to instability.

Table 3.3 Results of the Mixed Effects Model Predicting Children's SDQ Total Difficulties Scores (N = 3,355)

Variables	Children's SDQ total difficulties scores									
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5					
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Mother residence	1.65 ***	.25	.86 **	.25	.62 *	.26	.54 *	.25	.36	.25
Father residence	2.65 ***	.52	1.74 **	.51	1.35 *	.51	1.19 *	.50	.90	.51
Changes between parents' homes			-.07 ***	.02					-.05 **	.02
Distance between parents' homes (log)			.26 *	.12					.20	.12
Tensions					.66 ***	.12			.66 ***	.12
Serious conflict					.32 ***	.05			.30 ***	.05
Pre-divorce conflict			.20 ***	.03	.19 ***	.02	.08 **	.03	.07 **	.03
Father involvement during marriage			-.36 *	.16	-.33 *	.16	-.25	.16	-.24	.16
Mother's education										
Low education			2.33 ***	.37	2.32 ***	.37	2.22 ***	.36	2.21 ***	.36
Intermediate education			.67 *	.25	.69 *	.25	.59 *	.25	.61 *	.24
Father's education										
Low education			1.59 ***	.33	1.56 ***	.33	1.61 **	.32	1.58 ***	.32
Intermediate education			.91 ***	.25	.89 ***	.25	.96 ***	.24	.94 ***	.24
Pre-divorce disposable household income (log)			.03	.10	.03	.10	.03	.09	.03	.09
Controls										
Respondent's gender	.26	.17	.73 **	.24	.75 **	.24	.61 *	.24	.63 *	.24
Respondent's repartnering	-.37 **	.23	-.58 **	.22	-.61 **	.19	-.83 **	.22	-.85 ***	.22
Child's age	.02	.03	.00	.03	-.02	.03	-.01	.03	-.02	.03
Child's gender	1.24 ***	.22	1.23 ***	.21	1.22 ***	.21	1.26 ***	.21	1.25 ***	.21
Current disposable household income (log)	-.12	.10	-.01	.03	.00	.10	-.02	.10	-.02	.10
Year of moving out	-.01	.11	-.06	.11	-.05	.11	.05	.11	.06	.11
Dissolution of cohabitation union	-.17	.27	-.22	.26	-.20	.26	-.18	.25	-.16	.25
Variance Components/Model										
SD(σ Mother's report)	5.88	.11	5.70	.11	5.66	.11	5.55	.10	5.52	.10
SD(σ Father's report)	5.95	.10	5.77	.09	5.75	.09	5.67	.09	5.66	.09
Corr (σ Mother's reports σ Father's reports)	.51	.03	.48	.03	.47	.03	.47	.03	.46	.03
Wald Chi2	95.15 ***		288.94 ***		315.99 ***		441.90 ***		460.07 ***	
BIC	21,352.92		21,229.50		21,222.23		21,109.51		21,110.92	

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$



In Model 4, we add the measures of postdivorce conflict to the regression equation. As expected, tensions and serious conflict are positively correlated to children's emotional difficulties. A one-unit increase in tensions is associated with a 0.66 points increase in the difficulties score ($p < .001$), whereas a one-unit increase in serious conflict is related to a 0.32 points increase ($p < .05$). Comparing Model 4 to Model 2, we find that controlling for conflict substantially decreases the coefficients for mother residence and father residence, but we still find that children in shared residence have significantly lower SDQ scores. This suggests that parental conflict partly explains the differences in emotional difficulties between shared residence and sole residence arrangements. Moreover, including conflict in our model strongly reduces the association between pre-divorce conflict and emotional difficulties, suggesting that pre-divorce conflict persists after divorce. Taken together, the results from this model contradict our third hypothesis. Children in shared residence experience less emotional difficulties and are exposed to less parental conflict than their counterparts in mother or father residence.

Model 5, the full model, includes the instability measures, parental conflict, and confounding factors, and the controls used in Models 1 to 4. We find that number of changes between homes, tensions, and serious conflict are all significantly related to children's SDQ scores. In this final model, we no longer observe significant differences between residence arrangements. This suggests that differences in conflict and instability can account for the variation in SDQ scores across residence arrangements.

Table 3.4 presents the results of the interaction terms between residence arrangements and conflict on the one hand, and residence arrangements and child's age on the other. These interaction terms are added to the full model (Model 5). Model 6 includes the interactions between child's age and residence arrangements. None of the interactions between residence arrangements and child's age is statistically significant. Thus, Model 6 provides no support for the hypothesis that differences in child well-being between residence arrangements are larger for younger children than for older ones.

Table 3.4 Interaction Results: SDQ Total Difficulties Score ($N = 3,355$)

Variables	Model 6		Model 7		Model 8	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Mother residence	.03	.78	.15	.34	-.17	.81
Father residence	-1.32	2.03	-.55	.82	-2.27	2.13
Tensions between parents	.67 ***	.12	.49	.27	.49	.27
Serious conflict	.28 ***	.05	.26 **	.09	.26 **	.09
Changes between parents' homes	-.05 **	.02	-.05 **	.02	-.05 **	.02
Distance between parents' homes (log)	.18	.11	.20	.12	.21	.12
Child's age	-.04	.06	-.02	.03	-.05	.06
Child's age × mother residence	.03	.07			.03	.07
Child's age × father residence	.19	.16			.14	.16
Serious conflict × mother residence			.01	.11	.01	.11
Serious conflict × father residence			.52 **	.19	.51 *	.20
Tensions × mother residence			.30	.30	.29	.30
Tensions × father residence			-.39	.50	-.36	.51
Variance Components/Model						
SD(σ ^{Mother's report})	5.55	.10	5.51	.10	5.52	.10
SD(σ ^{Father's report})	5.66	.09	5.65	.09	5.65	.09
Corr (σ ^{Mother's reports} σ ^{Father's reports})	.46	.03	.46	.03	.46	.03
Wald Chi2	443.80 ***		471.30 ***		472.11 ***	
BIC	21,132.37		21,133.43		21,148.86	

Note: Shared residence is reference category. log = logarithm. Controlled for pre-divorce conflict, father involvement during marriage, mother's low education, mother's intermediate education, father's low education, father's intermediate education, pre-divorce disposable household income, respondent's gender, respondent's re-partnering, child's gender, current disposable household income, year of moving out, and dissolution of cohabitation union.

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

We find no evidence for differences in the effect of parental conflict by residence arrangement in the expected direction. Models 7 and 8 show no significant differences between residence arrangements, for the effect of tensions. Nevertheless, we do observe a significant interaction effect between serious conflict and father residence. Higher levels of serious conflict appear to be more harmful for children in father residence compared to children in shared residence ($b = 0.52$, $p < .01$). The effect of serious conflict is also stronger in father residence compared to mother residence ($b = 0.51$, $p < .01$; not shown in Table 3.4). This contradicts the critical view of the skeptics regarding the effect of conflict in shared residence.

3.5 Discussion

In the ongoing debate on custody arrangements for children of divorce, critics of shared residence put forward two arguments against it: lack of stability, and exposure to parental conflict. Making use of new Dutch survey data, our study investigated the validity of the conflict and instability argument. Using direct measures of conflict and instability, we examined whether children in shared residence arrangements were exposed to more instability and conflict than those living in mother residence or father residence. Moreover, we investigated the claim that shared residence may be especially damaging for children from high-conflict families or for children who experience divorce at a young age.

We found no support for the notion that shared residence is harmful for child well-being (e.g., Kuehl, 1989). In contrast, it appeared from our analyses that, following separation or divorce, children in shared residence arrangements had less emotional difficulties than those living in sole residence. Taken together, and also taking into account pre-divorce conflict, pre-divorce income and education, our results seem to support a positive view on shared residence and its association with child well-being.

Nevertheless, our findings also suggest that the positive association between shared residence and child well-being is in part at least the result of selection effects. When we controlled for possible confounders, such as parents' demographic and pre-divorce relationship characteristics, we found that differences in well-being between shared residence and sole residence arrangements were reduced. For both mother residence and father residence, a large part of the initial difference in emotional difficulties in comparison to shared residence could be accounted for by fixed or pre-divorce socio-demographic and conflict factors.

Moreover, when parents' demographic and pre-divorce relationship characteristics were taken into account, there were no differences in emotional difficulties between children in mother residence and children in father residence. Consequently, we presume that the differences in behavior problems for children in mother residence compared to children in father residence found in previous studies (e.g., Breivik & Olweus, 2006) might, in part at least, be a result of selection.

Furthermore, our results provide little evidence for the instability argument. Although children in shared residence seem to commute more often between parent's homes, the concern that frequent changes are harmful for the child's well-being is not supported by our results. In fact, changes between parents' homes seemed to be

negatively correlated with emotional difficulties after divorce. When we controlled for instability measures in our analyses, children in shared residence still showed higher emotional well-being than children in sole residence arrangements. These findings lend some support to the claim of Kelly and Lamb (2000) that previous research may have overestimated the importance of stability of location. According to Kelly and Lamb (2000), stability is a multidimensional concept that may not only be created by living in one place but also through continuous parental involvement and frequent contact with both parents. Frequent changes between homes may help children to maintain a close attachment with both parents and allow parents to engage in authoritative parenting, a factor which is positively related to child well-being after divorce (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999).

Contrary to our expectations, we found no evidence for the idea that stability of location might be especially important for younger children. Critics of shared residence have argued that shared residence might decrease the well-being of younger children as it undermines attachment development (Kline et al., 1989). Our results showed no differences in well-being between younger and older children. This finding contradicts earlier research suggesting that shared residence may be more appropriate for older children (McIntosh & Chisholm, 2008). Note, however, that our sample includes only children between 4 and 16 years, and thus does not allow conclusions for very young children. Future research could extend our study, by focusing especially upon consequences of instability for infants and toddlers.

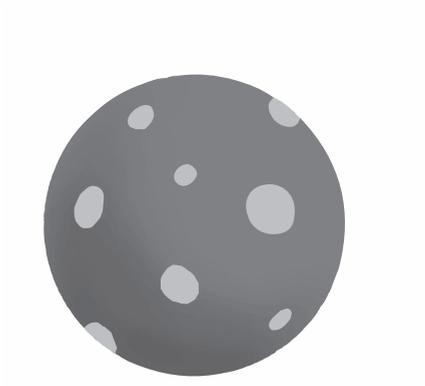
The results also did not support the hypothesis that children in shared residence would have more emotional difficulties due to higher levels of parental conflict. Although we did find a positive association between conflict and children's emotional difficulties, children in shared residence seemed to be less exposed to parental conflict. We found that controlling for tensions and serious conflict between parents strongly reduced the differences in emotional difficulties between sole residence arrangements and shared residence. In father residence especially, conflict seems to be a driving force behind children's emotional difficulties after divorce. No support was found for the hypothesis that higher levels of parental conflict are more harmful in shared residence than in sole residence arrangements; indeed, serious conflict seems to be more harmful in father residence than in either shared or mother residence arrangements. The fact that our results differ from recent Australian studies by McIntosh et al. (2010) and Kaspiw et al. (2009),

showing that higher levels of conflict are more harmful in shared residence than in sole residence, might be due to the small number of shared residence parents reporting high conflict in our sample. In the Netherlands, the shared residence presumption in custody decisions is less strong than in Australia, where courts must first evaluate the possibility of shared residence, before considering other residence arrangements (McIntosh, 2009). This possibility leads to a higher number of relationships with conflict among the Australian shared residence population.

Although both the design of our study and the data we present introduce several improvements to the literature, we should also draw attention to some limitations. First, the cross-sectional and observational nature of our data means that we cannot address all endogeneity concerns. We assume that residence arrangements influence the well-being of children postdivorce, but reversed causality cannot be ruled out. Our choice of confounding factors was limited by the data and thus cannot be viewed as exhaustive. For example, we were not able to control for pre-divorce levels of child well-being, which could itself have effects on parents' choice of a residence arrangement, as well as on a child's level of well-being postdivorce; in particular, it is possible that the presence of a problematic child might make shared residence less likely. Consequently, unmeasured confounders might at least in part account for the relationship between postdivorce residence arrangements and child well-being. Finally, compared to the proportion of children living in either mother residence or shared residence, the proportion of children living in father residence in our sample was rather small (about 5%). This might limit the power of our analyses to identify differences in well-being across postdivorce residence arrangements and thereby decrease the reliability of our conclusions for the father residence group, especially when interpreting the interaction terms.

We believe that, despite these limitations, our results provide some policy implications regarding the shared residence debate. First, with regard to instability and children's well-being, we find no support for the claim that regular changes between parents' homes are harmful for children's well-being. This questions the emphasis of legal practitioners on geographical stability in custody decisions that is evident from studies of case law (Henaghan, 2001). Secondly, in considering the relative importance of conflict in determining the level of child well-being, legal practitioners might want to focus more strongly on the possibility of mediation if the co-parental relationship is strained. Thirdly, although our findings show that shared residence is positively associated with children's emotional well-being after

divorce, we caution against considering shared residence as a ‘one-fits-all’ solution for custody decisions. There is considerable variation in both conflict and child well-being within the shared residence group. Moreover, our results suggest that in a regime where shared residence is voluntary there are strong positive selection effects; however, if shared residence arrangements were to be prescribed rather than chosen, the positive association with child well-being might disappear, or even become negative. Finally, there are probably specific groups, such as children with special needs – mental or physical health issues, for example – who may not profit from shared residence. Thus, though our results do not support the concerns of the skeptics, we would caution against applying shared residence as a default. The empirical evidence is not yet solid enough. It seems advisable for parents and legal professionals to consider carefully the individual circumstances when opting for shared residence for children of divorce.



4 Postdivorce residence arrangements and the parent-child relationship: The role of the parental relationship

This paper is co-authored by Anne-Rigt Poortman and is currently under review at an international journal.

4.1 Introduction

Whereas the quality of the mother-child relationship is often little affected by parental divorce, the strength of the father-child bond frequently declines when parents end their relationship (Amato, 2004). Many children lose contact with their fathers after divorce, which reduces their closeness and attachment (e.g., Amato & Gilbreth, 1999; Aquilino, 2006); and even those fathers who keep in touch with their children after separation often struggle to maintain strong bonds with them (Trinder, 2009). This decline in father-child relationship quality is unfortunate, as the strength of the father-child bond is an important predictor for a child's well-being after divorce, regardless of the amount of contact between fathers and children after the divorce (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999; Lamb, 2010).

In the divorce literature these gender differences in the parent-child relationship are generally explained with reference to postdivorce residence arrangements and visitation schedules (e.g., Aquilino, 1994; De Graaf & Fokkema, 2007; Frank, 2007). Because the majority of children reside with the mother after divorce, while the father takes on the role of the nonresident parent, children's contact with the mother remains frequent and is thought to preserve the mother-child bond after separation (De Graaf & Fokkema, 2007). Being the nonresident parent, however, limits fathers' opportunities for interaction with the child, often resulting in an erosion of the father-child bond after divorce (Booth & Amato, 1994).

Because residence arrangements are often considered to be an important factor in the parent-child bond after divorce, some studies have examined differences in the parent-child relationship quality across postdivorce residence arrangements (e.g., Aquilino, 1994; Donnelly & Finkelhor, 1992; Frank, 2007; Spruijt & Duindam, 2010; Vanassche, Sodermans, Matthijs & Swicegood, 2013). These studies have provided mixed results on the association between postdivorce residence arrangements and the parent-child bond. For example, Frank (2007) found little differences in the mother-child relationship across postdivorce residence arrangements, becoming the nonresident parent clearly decreased the father-child relationship after divorce. In contrast, Ahorns and Tanner (2003) who examined the father-child relationship over 20 years found no effect of the residence arrangement on the quality of the parent-child bond. Moreover, because the existing studies examining differences in the parent-child relationship across postdivorce residence arrangements are often based on relatively small samples (e.g., Buchanan, Maccoby, & Dornbusch, 1996; Frank, 2007; Spruijt & Duindam, 2010), the reliability of their conclusions is limited.

Against this background, the present study aims to broaden our understanding of the association between residence arrangements and the quality of the parent-child relationship in three ways.

First, whereas earlier research on the quality of parent-child relationship after divorce has mostly studied differences in the parent-child bond across mother and father residence (e.g., Aquilino, 1994), we also look at shared residence, a parenting form where the child lives about equally much with both parents after divorce. Including shared residence in the range of studied arrangements is important, as the popularity of shared residence is rising in many Western countries (Sodermans, Matthijs, & Swicegood, 2013). Although more and more parents opt for shared residence after divorce, so far little is known on how shared residence affects the parent-child relationship after divorce. Some family experts (therapists, mediators, etc.) and scholars consider shared residence a way to mitigate the negative consequences of divorce for the parent-child relationship, especially for fathers (Stone, 2006; Vanassche et al., 2013). Compared to sole-residence arrangements (i.e., residing only with the mother or father), shared residence is thought to permit both parents to stay involved in the child's upbringing after divorce; allowing them to preserve stronger bonds with their children than nonresident parents in sole-residence arrangements (Bauserman, 2002). Although this notion is intuitively appealing, empirical evidence is relative scarce. By investigating differences in the parent-child relationship across mother, father and shared residence, we evaluate the claim that more contact with both parents leads to stronger parent-child bonds.

Second, to understand differences in parent-child relationship quality between residence arrangements, we focus on the parental relationship after divorce. Although previous research on married couples suggests that the nature of the parental relationship has strong consequences for the quality of the parent-child bond (Erel & Burman, 1995), little is known about whether the parental relationship also plays a role for the postdivorce relationship between parents and children. After divorce, the parental relationship is thought to determine the degree to which parents promote or sabotage each other's relationship with the child (Margolin, Gordis, & John, 2001). Assuming that the parental relationship varies between postdivorce residence arrangements, we examine to what extent variations in the level of parental conflict and contact can account for differences in the quality of the parent-child bond across residence arrangements. Moreover, we investigate the moderating role of the parental relationship for the link between residence arrangements and the quality of the parent-child bond. One of the important

issues in the discussion on postdivorce residence arrangements is the question of which arrangement is appropriate when the relationship between parents is strained (Bauserman, 2002). Although a cooperative relationship between parents is desirable for all children, some experts believe that the quality of the parental relationship may be more important for the parent-child bond in shared residence than in sole-residence arrangements, as children in shared residence are in frequent contact with both parents (Buchanan, Maccoby, & Dornbusch, 1993; Fehlberg et al., 2011). To test this assumption, we study whether shared residence is more harmful than sole residence for the parent-child relationship in family situations with high levels of parental conflict or little contact between parents.

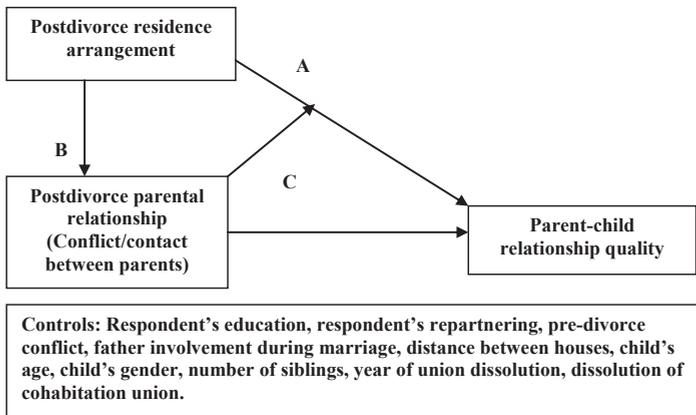
Finally, we improve on previous research by drawing on data from the New Families in the Netherlands Survey (NFN; N = 3,974), a new survey of recently divorced and separated parents in the Netherlands. Besides the detailed measures of the parental relationship which allow us to directly investigate the influence of conflict and contact between parents on the parent-child bond, the NFN also contains a higher number of children in shared residence than previous data, enabling us to do more reliable comparisons between mother, father, and shared residence.

4.2 Theoretical background

To illustrate the anticipated associations between postdivorce residence arrangement, parental relationship, and the parent-child bond, Figure 4.1 introduces the theoretical model of our study. Arrow A represents the expected direct effect of residence arrangements on parent-child relationship quality, independently of the postdivorce relationship between parents. We distinguish three residence arrangements: shared residence, mother residence, and father residence. For mother and father residence, we also take the amount of contact with the nonresident parent into account. To understand the direct effect of residence arrangements on the parent-child relationship, we assume that residence arrangements affect the quality of the parent-child bond by determining shared time and activities. Moreover, we suggest that the association between residence arrangement and the parent-child relationship results from differences in the parental relationship after divorce (Arrow B). Because the level of parental conflict and parental contact is likely to vary between residence arrangements, we argue that the parental relationship might partly account for differences in the quality

of the parent-child bond across residence arrangements. Arrow C summarizes the expected moderating effect of the parental relationship for the link between residence arrangements and the parent-child bond, as discrepancies in relationship quality across postdivorce residence arrangements may be greater when the parental relationship is strained. Finally, to tackle possible selection effects, i.e., the parents’ choice for a postdivorce residence arrangement may be dependent on the relationship between them, we control for characteristics of the predivorce parental relationship.

Figure 4.1 *Conceptual Model of the Relationships Between Postdivorce Residence Arrangements, Parental Relationship, and Parent-Child Relationship Quality*



4.2.1 Postdivorce residence arrangements and the parent-child relationship

Like all social relationships, the parent-child bond thrives on shared time and activities (De Graaf & Fokkema, 2007). With parental separation, however, parents’ time and activities with the child depend on the postdivorce residence arrangement. Because in sole-residence arrangements, the resident parent spends most of the time with the child, the nonresident parent’s contact often follows strict visitation schedules, reducing the nonresident parent’s abilities to engage in supporting parenting activities such as helping with homework, talking about problems, or reading bedtime stories (Nielsen, 2011). Supportive parenting, however, is often considered a key determinant for child well-being and the basis of a meaningful relationship between parents and children (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999; Bastais, Ponnet, & Mortelmans, 2014; Sobolewski & King, 2005). In shared

residence, in contrast, both parents are thought to be able to practice supportive parenting through their frequent involvement with the child (Nielsen, 2011). Given these arguments, we expect that mother-child relationship quality is highest after divorce in mother residence, followed by shared residence, and lowest in father residence. Similarly, we expect that father-child relationship quality is highest in father residence, followed by shared residence, and lowest in mother residence. Moreover, we propose that higher levels of nonresident parent contact in sole-residence arrangements increase the quality of that parent-child bond, as they may increase nonresident parents' opportunities for engaging in supportive parenting.

4.2.2 The role of postdivorce parental conflict

An alternative explanation for differences in the quality of the parent-child relationship across postdivorce residence arrangements focuses on the role of parental conflict. Previous research has shown that parental conflict decreases the parent-child relationship quality (e.g., Riggio, 2004; Fabricius & Luecken, 2007). Parents in conflict situations often use their children to hurt the ex-partner: parents let their children carry messages, try to win them as confidants, or malign the other parent in front of them (Buchanan, Maccoby, & Dornbusch, 1991). As a result, postdivorce parental conflict frequently results in a situation of triangulation for children causing emotional stress and loyalty issues for the child (Afifi & Schrodt, 2003; Maccoby, Buchanan, Mnookin, & Dornbusch, 1993).

Even though conflict is common among separated parents, the degree of dispute between parents seems to differ between postdivorce residence arrangements. Even though possibilities for disagreement between parents are frequent in shared residence, research by Cashmore et al. (2010) investigating parental conflict levels across postdivorce residence arrangements found that shared residence parents reported lower levels of conflict than those in sole residence. Likewise, Kaspiew et al. (2009) showed that although a small proportion of the parents in shared residence have conflicting relationships, the majority of parents in shared-residence arrangements maintain friendly relationships after divorce. Given that parental conflict is lower in shared residence than in sole-residence arrangements, and lower levels of parental conflict are associated with better parent-child relationships, we suggest that parental conflict might partly account for the differences in relationship quality between types of postdivorce residence arrangements. Moreover, because previous research has also shown that parents in sole residence with extended

visitation arrangements with the other parent report fewer conflicts than those with little or no nonresident parent contact (Bauserman, 2002), we also suggest that parental conflict may partly account for the association between nonresident parent contact and the parent-child bond in sole-residence arrangements.

In addition, parental conflict may moderate the association between residence arrangements and the parent-child bond. Some scholars have suggested that parental conflict may be more harmful for the parent-child bond in shared residence than sole residence (Buchanan et al., 1991). Since frequent access to both parents is thought to generate loyalty issues for children in conflicted family situations (Afifi & Schrodt, 2003), children may withdraw from parents to escape conflict, which in turn impairs relationship quality. Therefore, we assume that in conflicting family situations the advantage of shared residence compared to nonresident parents is less for the parent-child relationship than in low-conflict family situations. We also suggest that in conflicted sole-residence arrangements, higher levels of nonresident parent contact impair the quality of the parent-child relationship.

4.2.3 The role of postdivorce parental contact

Another characteristic of the parental relationship that might account for differences in the quality of the parent-child bond across postdivorce residence arrangements may be the level of contact between parents. Although little research has investigated the influence of parental contact on the parent-child relationship, the literature contains some evidence that parental contact improves the quality of the parent-child relationship after divorce (Linker, Stolberg, & Green, 1999). To provide effective and supportive parenting after divorce, a condition for a strong parent-child bond, parents need to engage in contact and exchange information about the child's needs and activities (Kaspiew et al., 2009). It is not only important that parents make major decisions together, but that they also contact each other about everyday matters in the child's life such as school grades, birthday wishes, or problems with friends (Linker et al., 1999).

Some scholars have suggested that postdivorce parental contact is higher in shared residence compared to sole-residence arrangements (Kaspiew et al., 2009). Because shared residence parents need to synchronize their postdivorce parenting activities more closely than those in sole residence, parents are thought to contact each other more often about the child's activities. In sole-residence arrangements, by contrast, contact between parents is thought to be relatively infrequent, on the basis of parents' unequal involvement in childrearing. Given these arguments, we

suggest that contact between parents partly explains the link between residence arrangements and the parent-child relationship. Similarly, it is likely that parents in sole residence with high levels of nonresident parent contact need to arrange their parenting more closely than those in sole-residence arrangements with little nonresident parent contact. Consequently, we suggest that parental contact may also partly account for the link between nonresident parent contact and parent-child relationship quality.

In line with these ideas, it is also likely that parental contact moderates the link between residence arrangements and relationship quality. As children in shared residence divide their time equally between parents, some scholars have suggested that shared residence only works for children if parents frequently contact each other about the child's needs (Cashmore et al., 2010). This assumption is based on the idea that in shared residence, the lack of parental contact might increase inconsistent parenting and thus decrease the quality of the child's bonds with both parents. Subsequently, we may expect that when parental contact is low, the positive effect of greater access to both parents in shared residence is partly offset by greater inconsistencies in parenting. Consequently, we assume that differences in relationship quality between mother (or father) residence and shared residence are less pronounced when parental contact is low, and are greater when parental contact is high. Similarly, we may assume that in low-contact sole residence increasing levels of nonresident parent contact may lower the quality of the parent-child relationship.

4.3 Method

4.3.1 Data

To study the association between residence arrangements, the parental relationship, and the quality of the parent-child relationship we would prefer to rely on longitudinal data in order to rule out selection into residence arrangements based on both the parental relationship and the parent-child relationship prior to separation. Moreover, recent longitudinal data containing a large number of divorced individuals would be necessary in order to include the relatively new phenomenon of shared residence. Unfortunately, this data does not exist for the Netherlands or anywhere else. Consequently, like most studies in this area, ours drew on cross-sectional data from the New Families in the Netherlands Survey (NFN, Poortman, Van der Lippe,

& Boele-Woelki, 2014). The NFN is a recent survey on divorced and separated parents. It is based on a random sample of formerly married parents and a random sample of previously cohabiting parents who divorced/dissolved their cohabitation in 2010. The sample was obtained from the Dutch Social Statistical Data Base (SSB) in collaboration with Statistics Netherlands. Both ex-partners were contacted by letter and invited to complete an online survey or postal survey covering topics such as the divorce/separation, current living situation, and the well-being of the child. For about one third of the contacted ex-couples, both respondents participated. On an individual level the response rate was 39%, with the response being higher among formerly married couples than cohabiting couples. On the household level this added up to a total response of 58%. The response rates of the NFN are high for a web survey among separated and divorced parents, and correspond to the response rates of other large-scale surveys in the Netherlands (De Leeuw & De Heer, 2002). The total sample consisted of 4,481 respondents. Comparing the NFN to Dutch population statistics, we find that men, younger people, people from urban areas, non-Western foreigners, people with low incomes, and those on public assistance are underrepresented.

For our analyses, we confined our sample to respondents who had a minor child living in mother, father or shared residence ($n = 4,319$). Because our sampling frame was on heterosexual couples, we excluded respondents who had children from a homosexual union ($n = 30$). Respondents who did not have valid scores on the dependent variable, relationship quality, were excluded ($n = 206$). Because the number of missing values across all independent variables added up to only to about 2.6%, we used list-wise deletion to handle the missing cases ($n = 109$). This selection led to our total sample of 3,974 respondents. Respondents reported on their relationship with one of their children, selected by age: respondents with children younger than 10 years of age were asked to report about the oldest child, whereas respondents with children older than 10 years were asked about their relationship with their youngest child.

4.3.2 Measures

Parent-child relationship: Following the example of Shapiro and Lambert (1999), we used a single indicator to measure the overall parent-child relationship quality after divorce. Respondents were asked ‘How would you rate the relationship with [child’s name] on a scale from 1 to 10?’ Answering options ranged from 1 = ‘very bad’ to

10 = *'absolutely perfect'*. Because our dependent variable was skewed to the left, we conducted additional analyses using different transformations of the dependent variable (e.g., log transformation, reducing the tail by employing different cut-off points). As these analyses led to the same substantive conclusions, we decided to employ the untransformed variable as the dependent variable in our analyses.

We use two measures of the postdivorce residence arrangement: *children's main postdivorce residence arrangement* and *contact with the nonresident parent*. To assess children's main residence arrangement, respondents were asked with whom the child lived most of the time. Respondents could choose between 1 = *'with me'*, 2 = *'with ex-partner'*, 3 = *'about equally much with both parents'*. From this variable, three dummy variables were constructed: mother residence (1 = *yes*; 0 = *no*), father residence (1 = *yes*; 0 = *no*), and shared residence (1 = *yes*; 0 = *no*).

To measure contact with the nonresident parent in sole-residence arrangements, we used two measures: *contact with nonresident mother per month* and *contact with nonresident father per month*. Depending on the child's residence arrangement, respondents were asked how often they or their ex-partner currently saw their child. The possible answers were *'never'*, *'once or twice a year'*, *'several times a year'*, and *'once a month or more'*. Respondents who indicated that either their or their ex-partner's contact with their child was once a month or more were asked to fill out a calendar indicating whether the child stayed with them or with the ex-partner for each day and night for one month. The number of times per month that the child stayed with the nonresident parent was used to construct the measure of nonresident parent contact. Respondents indicating that they had child contact less than once a month (less than 8%) were given the value 0 on this measure. Because children in mother residence and shared residence do not have a nonresident mother, we assigned these respondents the sample mean of nonresident mother contact. With this technique we are able to estimate the effect of nonresident mother contact while keeping respondents with father and shared residence in our analyses (Poortman & Kalmijn, 2002). Because we control for mother residence and shared residence, the effect of contact with the nonresident mother now relates to children in father residence. The same practice was used for nonresident father contact for those children in father and shared residence. We again assigned these respondents the sample mean of nonresident father contact allowing us to calculate the effect of nonresident father contact on the father-child bond for children in mother

residence while keeping respondents in mother residence and shared residence in the sample. Note, that as we control for father and shared residence, the effect of nonresident father contact relates to children in mother residence only.

Parental conflict: Two measures of postdivorce conflict are used in our analyses: *tensions* and *serious conflict*. Tensions between parents were measured by asking respondents: ‘How often do you currently have tensions or conflicts with your ex-partner?’ Answer categories ranged from 0 = ‘almost never’ to 3 = ‘very often’. *Serious conflict* measures the occurrence of strong conflicts between parents since separation (Fischer, De Graaf, & Kalmijn, 2005). Respondents were asked ‘Has your ex-partner ever done the following things since you separated?’ followed by a list of items describing offensive and abusive behaviour: “Criticized you severely”; “Said nasty things about you to others”; “Called or visited uninvited”; “Turned your children against you”; “Wrongly accused you of something”; “Spoke ill of your common past”; “Scolded, quarrelled with you”; “Threatened to use violence”. Respondents had to state whether the ex-partner had shown each behavior since separation (1 = *did occur*) or not (0 = *did not occur*). We used the total response across items as the measure of serious conflict ranging from 0 to 8 ($\alpha = .87$). Serious conflict and tensions correlate moderately ($r = .58$).

Contact between parents: Because it is likely that higher levels of contact between parents lead to more exchange between parents about child matters, we measured parental contact after divorce by asking respondents ‘How often do you have contact with your ex-partner? Contact is defined as seeing each other, calling, emailing, etc.’ Answering options ranged from 0 = ‘never’ to 8 = ‘daily’.

4.3.3 Controls

We controlled for several characteristics of the respondent and the child. One was *father involvement during marriage*, because the division of parenting tasks during the marriage may influence the quality of the parent-child relationship as well as the choice of the postdivorce residence arrangement. We measured the father’s contribution to child rearing relative to the mother by using a list of tasks: changing diapers, physical care [e.g., feeding, bathing], playing with the child, talking about the child’s problems, taking excursions with the child. Respondents had to rate whether they or their ex-partner engaged more often in each task during the last year of the marriage/cohabitation. Answer categories ranged from 1 = ‘respondent

more often than ex-partner' to 5 = 'ex-partner more often than respondent'. After recoding the response categories to reflect the father's contribution to child rearing, we constructed a scale from the items by taking the mean ($\alpha = .91$).

Respondent's education was categorized in three levels: *low*, *intermediate*, and *high education*. Respondents with no education at all, primary education only, or lower-level vocational education were defined as low educated (0 = *no low education*, 1 = *low education*). Respondents with general secondary education to preuniversity level were assigned the intermediate education category (0 = *no intermediate education*, 1 = *intermediate education*). Respondents with tertiary education were categorized as highly educated (0 = *no higher education*, 1 = *higher education*). High education is the reference in all models.

Because parents with less-conflicted divorces may be more likely to choose for shared residence, we controlled for *predivorce conflict*, a variable measuring the occurrence of conflicting situations in the last year of marriage. Respondents were asked how often each item on a list of conflicts had occurred in the last year before the divorce: "Tensions or arguments between you and your ex-partner"; "Heated arguments between you and your ex-partner"; "One partner accusing the other"; "Not wanting to talk with each other for a while"; "Fights that escalated". Answers varied from 1 = *'never'* to 4 = *'often'*. We used the sum across the different items as our measure of predivorce conflict ($\alpha = .87$) and recoded the scale to have a zero point.

Because the parent-child relationship might be less strong if parents and children live farther away, we controlled for the *distance between parents' homes* (log) in minutes (Sobolewski & King, 2005). As the presence of a new residential partner may influence the parent-child bond, we accounted for *respondent's repartnering* (0 = *no new residential partner*, 1 = *new residential partner*). *Year of union dissolution* refers to the year in which parents began living apart, as relationship quality between parents and children may change over time (Shapiro & Lambert, 1999). We controlled for the *dissolution of a cohabitation union* (0 = *dissolution of marriage*, 1 = *dissolution of cohabitation union*) as the parent-child relationship may vary between formerly cohabiting and formerly married couples.

Child's gender (0 = *girl*, 1 = *boy*) is accounted for as previous research has shown that the parent-child bond is higher in same-sex dyads. *Child's age* was measured in years. Lastly, we accounted for *number of siblings* as family composition may influence the parent-child bond. Table 4.1 presents the descriptive statistics for all the variables used in our models separately for mothers and fathers.

Table 4.1 Descriptive Statistics for Dependent and Independent Variables for Mothers and Fathers^a

Variables	Mothers (n = 2,289)		Fathers (n = 1,685)	
	M	SD	M	SD
<i>Dependent Variable</i>				
Relationship quality	8.40	1.11	8.06	1.55
<i>Residence arrangement</i>				
Mother residence ^a	0.71	–	0.60	–
Shared residence ^b	0.24	–	0.32	–
Father residence ^c	0.04	–	0.07	–
Contact nonresident father	9.30	5.60	10.33	5.56
Contact nonresident mother	6.81	1.65	6.86	2.36
<i>Parental relationship</i>				
Tensions	0.90	0.96	0.82	0.96
Serious conflict	2.99	2.74	2.92	2.55
Contact between parents	5.51	1.92	5.64	1.91
<i>Controls</i>				
Father involvement during marriage	1.69	0.63	2.78	0.63
<i>Respondent's education</i>				
Low education ^d	0.10	–	0.11	–
Intermediate education ^e	0.56	–	0.47	–
High education ^f	0.34	–	0.41	–
Predivorce conflict	7.20	4.23	6.24	3.74
Distance between homes (log)	2.51	0.49	2.41	0.92
Respondent's repartnering ^h	0.22	–	0.28	–
Child's age	10.40	3.74	10.61	3.61
Child's gender ⁱ	0.52	–	0.53	–
Number of siblings	0.92	0.81	0.97	0.79
Year of union dissolution	2009.14	1.85	2009.13	1.85
Dissolution of cohabitation union ^j	0.25	–	0.21	–

Note: Standard deviation not reported for dichotomous variables. M = Mean, SD = Standard deviation, Log = logarithm.

^a Mother residence: 0 = no, 1 = yes. ^b Shared residence: 0 = no, 1 = yes. ^c Father residence: 0 = no, 1 = yes. ^d Low education: 0 = no, 1 = yes. ^e Intermediate education: 0 = no, 1 = yes. ^f High education: 0 = no, 1 = yes. ^g Respondent's gender: 0 = female, 1 = male. ^h Respondent's repartnering: 0 = no, 1 = yes. ⁱ Child's gender: 0 = female, 1 = male. ^j Dissolution of cohabitation union: 0 = dissolution of marriage, 1 = dissolution of cohabitation union.

4.3.4 Analytical strategy

To examine the relationship between residence arrangements, the parental relationship, and the quality of the parent-child bond, we used linear regression. We split the sample for mothers and fathers. The results of the linear regression analyses are presented in Table 4.2 and Table 4.3. Model 1 contains the residence arrangements, nonresident parent visitation, and the controls. Shared residence is the reference category in all models. To investigate whether differences between mother and father residence were significant we changed the reference category. In Model 2, we include conflict and contact between parents to test to what degree the parental relationship can account for differences in the parent-child bond across residence arrangements. To investigate the moderating role of conflict, interaction terms between conflict and residence arrangements are added to the regression in Model 3. Model 4 includes the interactions for contact between parents and residence. Since the measures of parental conflict and parental contact go in two different directions, making it difficult to interpret the main effects of the interactions when including all interaction terms in one model, we will refrain from presenting a full model.

4.4 Results

4.4.1 Father-child relationship quality

Table 4.2 presents the results of the linear regression analysis for father-child relationship quality. To test the total effect of residence arrangements on the father-child relationship, Model 1 includes the measures of the residence arrangement and the controls. Our results indicate that mother residence is negatively associated with relationship quality, suggesting that children in mother residence score about 0.71 points lower than those in shared residence on the measure of relationship quality. No differences in father-child relationship quality were found between father residence and shared residence. Changing the reference category to father residence (not shown here) reveals that the father-child bond also differed significantly between mother and father residence ($b = -0.60$, $p < .01$) with father-child relationship quality being significantly lower in mother residence compared to father residence. Contact with the nonresident father is positively related to relationship quality, indicating that in mother residence, higher levels of contact with the nonresident father result in stronger father-child relationships. Turning to

the controls, we find that the number of siblings, predivorce conflict, and child's age are negatively associated with the quality of the father-child bond.

In Model 2, we include conflict and contact between parents to investigate to what extent the association observed between residence arrangements and relationship quality is due to differences in the postdivorce relationship between parents. As expected, higher levels of contact between parents increase the relationship quality with the father. Whereas tensions between parents have no effect on the quality of the father-child relationship, serious conflict reduces the quality of the father-child bond. Comparing the coefficients of the residence arrangements between Model 1 and Model 2, we see that the effect of mother residence decreases by about 39% ($\chi^2 = 55.1, p < .01$) when controlling for the parental relationship. This suggests that differences in the quality of the father-child bond between mother and shared residence are reduced when characteristics of the parental relationship are taken into account. We also find that the effect of contact with the nonresident father decreases by about 22% when we include the measures of the parental relationship in our analyses ($\chi^2 = 34.9, p < .01$). Taken together, these results suggest that the benefit of shared residence over mother residence for the father-child relationship quality is partly the result of the higher levels of contact between parents and lower levels of parental conflict in shared residence.

To test the moderating effect of conflict, interaction terms between the residence arrangements and conflict are included in Model 3. For ease of interpretation, Figure 4.2 graphs the interaction terms presented in Table 4.2. The interaction for mother residence and serious conflict suggests that differences in father-child relationship quality between mother and shared residence are few if conflict is low, but increase with higher levels of parental conflict (Figure 4.2a). Interestingly, it is in mother residence where higher levels of conflict are especially harmful for the father-child relationship. Changing the reference group (not shown here), we find that the discrepancies in the father-child relationship between mother and father residence increase when serious conflict is high. Children in conflicting mother residence have lower relationship quality with their fathers than their counterparts in high-conflict father residence ($b = -0.14, p < .01$). Likewise, the significant interaction of nonresident father contact and conflict suggests that nonresident father contact matters little for the father-child bond in low-conflict situations, but gains importance for the quality of the father-child bond in high-conflict situations (Figure 4.2b). To conclude, our results suggest that variations in the father-child relationship quality are relatively small in low-conflict families, but increase with increasing levels of conflict between parents.

Table 4.2 Linear Regression Analysis Predicting Father-Child Relationship Quality (N = 1,685)

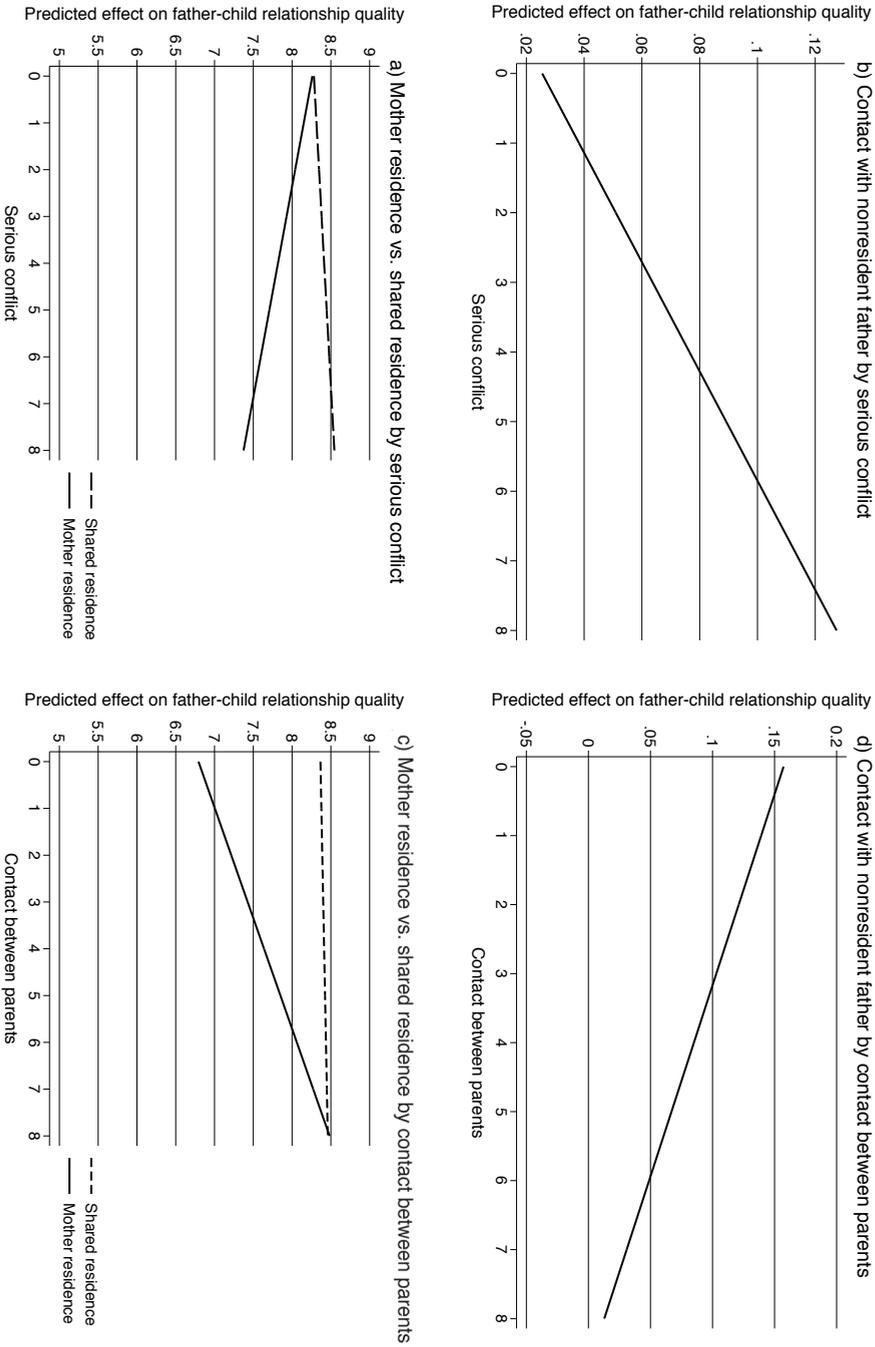
Variables	Overall father-child relationship quality							
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Mother residence	-.71**	.07	-.43**	.07	-.06	.09	-1.58**	.33
Father residence	-.07 ^a	.11	.21 ^a	.11	.04	.18	-.40 ^a	.28
Contact with nonresident father	.09**	.01	.07**	.01	.02	.01	.16**	.04
Tensions			-.10	.06	-.22	.13	-.12*	.06
Serious conflict			-.06**	.02	-.10*	.05	-.05**	.02
Contact between parents			.20**	.03	.17**	.03	.19*	.08
Mother residence × tensions					.05	.09		
Father residence × tensions					.03	.11		
Mother residence × serious conflict					-.14**	.03		
Father residence × serious conflict					.01	.04		
Nonresident father contact × tensions					.01	.01		
Nonresident father contact × serious conflict					.01**	.00		
Mother residence × contact between parents							.20**	.05
Father residence × contact between parents							.07	.05
Contact nonresident father × contact between parents							-.02**	.01
<i>Controls</i>								
Father involvement during marriage	.04	.06	.14**	.06	.15**	.06	.15**	.06
Predivorce conflict	-.02*	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01
<i>Respondent's education (ref = High educ.)</i>								
Low education	.14	.13	.24	.13	.21	.12	.27*	.12
Intermediate education	.05	.07	.09	.07	.09	.07	.10	.06
Respondent's repartnering	-.00	.08	.11	.07	.12	.07	.12	.07
Distance between parents' homes (log)	-.07	.04	-.03	-.04	-.03	.04	-.04	.04
Child's age	-.06**	.01	-.04**	.01	-.05**	.01	-.05**	.01
Child's gender	-.01	.07	-.02	.06	-.01	.06	.00	.06
Number of siblings	-.13**	.05	-.10*	.05	-.11*	.05	-.09*	.05
Year of union dissolution	-.00	.02	-.01	.02	-.02	.02	-.02	.02
Dissolution of cohabitation union	.09	.08	.04	.07	.01	.07	.06	.07
<i>Model</i>								
R-squared	0.213		0.283		0.312		0.315	

Note: Shared residence is reference category. Robust standard errors.

^aFather residence differs significantly from mother residence.

** p<.01, * p<.05

Figure 4.2 Effects of Residence Arrangements on Father-Child Relationship Quality by Levels of Conflict and Contact between parents



Model 4 includes the interactions between residence arrangements and contact between parents. The interaction effect for mother residence and contact suggests large discrepancies in relationship quality between mother residence and shared residence when parental contact is low after divorce, but these differences are found to decrease if parents engage more frequently in contact after divorce (Figure 4.2c). Rotating the reference category (not displayed), we also find that the interaction between father residence and contact between parents is significant in our analyses ($b = -0.13, p < .05$). Children in mother residence arrangements with low levels of parental contact experience worse relationships with their fathers than those in low-parental contact father residence. Again, we find that these differences between mother and father residence decrease with higher levels of contact between parents. Likewise, we find that the importance of nonresident father contact for the quality of the father-child bond declines when parents communicate frequently (Figure 4.2d). All in all, our results indicate that differences in father-child bond between residence arrangements are more pronounced when contact between parents is low and decrease when parents frequently contact each other after divorce.

4.4.2 Mother-child relationship quality

Table 4.3 presents the results of the regression analyses for mother-child relationship quality after divorce. Model 1 again includes the residence arrangements and controls. While the model reveals no differences in the mother-child bond between mother and shared residence, we find that mother-child relationship quality is significantly lower in father residence than shared residence. Changing the reference to mother residence (not shown here) reveals that the mother-child relationship quality also differs between mother and father residence. Children in father residence score about 1.38 points lower on relationship quality than those in mother residence ($b = -1.38, p < .01$). Moreover, our results suggest that contact with the nonresident mother is positively related to mother-child relationship quality. Addressing the control variables, we find that mothers who have a new partner report significantly better mother-child relationship than those who are not repartnered. Moreover, we find that predivorce conflict, child's age, number of siblings, and year of union dissolution are negatively related to the quality of the mother-child bond.

Model 2 includes the measures of the postdivorce parental relationship. Our results show that only tensions influence the mother-child bond, which suggests that higher tensions between parents reduce mother-child relationship quality. Comparing the results of Model 2 with those of Model 1 reveals that the effect of

father residence only decreased by 5% when controlling for the parental relationship ($\chi^2 = 8.45, p < .01$). Given these findings, we conclude that the postdivorce relationship between parents only plays a minor role for the quality of the mother-child relationship.

Model 3 includes the interactions between residence arrangements and conflict. Again, the interactions from the model are graphed in Figure 4.3. While the interactions between residence arrangement and tensions are insignificant, the interaction term between father residence and serious conflict indicates that differences in relationship quality between father and shared residence increase with higher levels of serious conflict between parents (Figure 4.3a). Changing the omitted category to mother residence (not shown), we also find that differences in mother-child relationship quality between mother and father residence increase with greater levels of parental conflict. Whereas we find little differences in the quality of the mother-child relationship between mother and father in low-conflict families, our results suggest that in high-conflict families the mother-child relationship quality is significantly lower for children in father residence than those in mother residence ($b = -0.21, p < .01$). No significant differences in relationship quality were found between the largest groups, mother residence and shared residence, suggesting that especially father residence is harmful for the mother-child relationship in families with higher levels of parental conflict. Furthermore, the interaction between nonresident mother contact and serious conflict suggests that contact with the nonresident mother is less important for the mother-child bond in low-conflict families than in high-conflict ones (Figure 4.3b). Taken together, these results suggest little variations in the mother-child relationship quality between father and shared residence and mother and father residence when parental conflict is low, but these differences in relationship quality are enhanced with higher levels of parental conflict.

Table 4.3 Linear Regression Analysis Predicting Mother-Child Relationship Quality (N = 2,289)

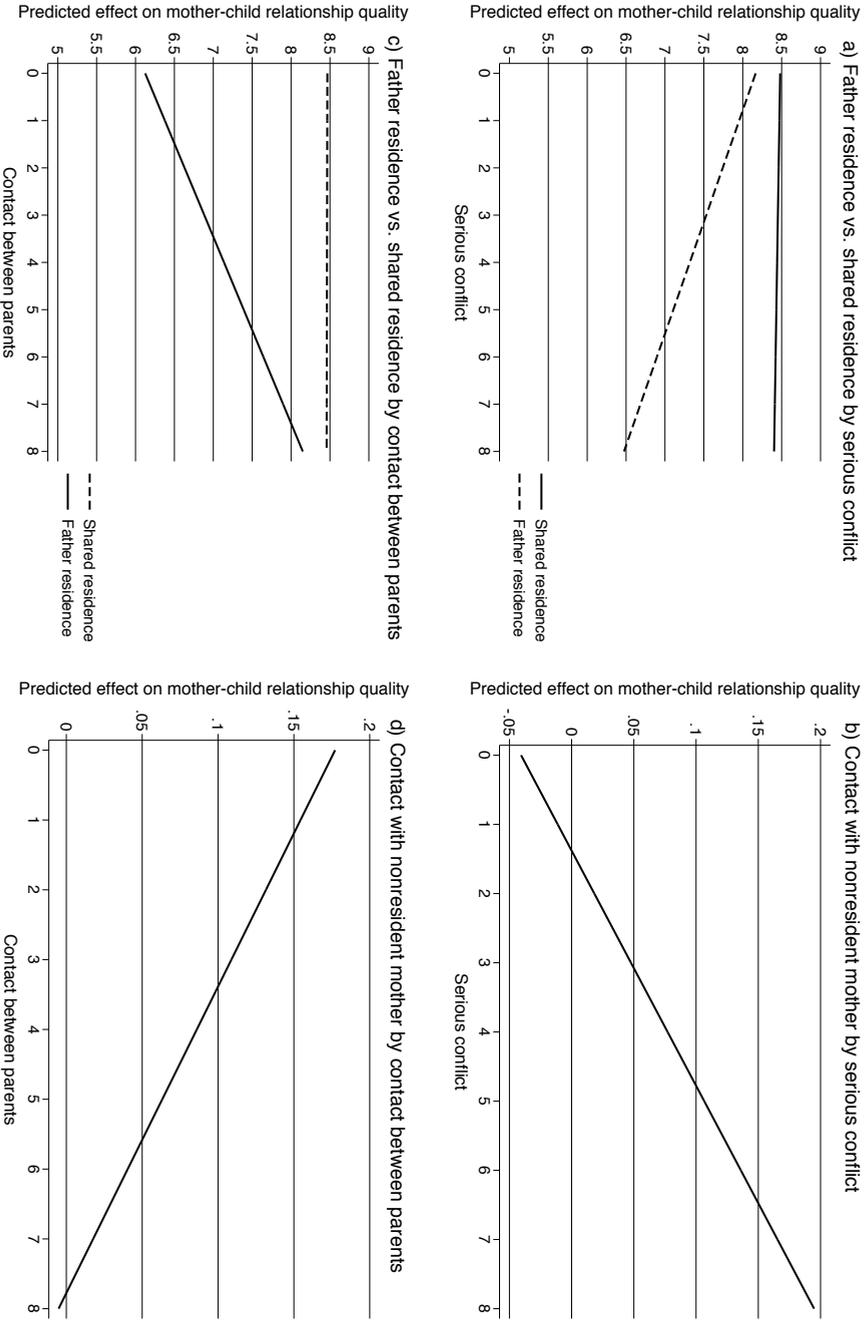
Variables	Overall mother-child relationship quality							
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Mother residence	-.03 ^a	.05	-.00 ^a	.05	-.03	.07	-.17 ^a	.20
Father residence	-1.38**	.21	-1.31**	.21	-.21	.24	-2.34**	.49
Contact with nonresident mother	.09**	.02	.08**	.02	-.04	.02	.18**	.05
Tensions			-.06*	.03	-.04	.15	-.07*	.03
Serious conflict			-.02	.01	-.22**	.07	-.02	.03
Contact between parents			.02	.02	.02	.02	.14	.07
Mother residence × tensions					-.01	.07		
Father residence × tensions					-.11	.22		
Mother residence × serious conflict					.01	.02		
Father residence × serious conflict					-.20*	.08		
Nonresident mother contact × tensions					.00	.02		
Nonresident mother contact × serious conflict					.03**	.01		
Mother residence × contact between parents							.02	.03
Father residence × contact between parents							.25**	.09
Contact nonresident mother × contact between parents							-.02**	.01
<i>Controls</i>								
Father involvement during marriage	-.01	.04	-.05	.04	-.04	.04	-.06	.04
Predivorce conflict	-.03**	.01	-.02**	.01	-.02**	.01	-.02**	.01
<i>Respondent's education (ref = High educ.)</i>								
Low education	.02	.09	.03	.10	-.00	.09	-.00	.09
Intermediate education	.00	.05	.00	.05	-.02	.04	-.01	.04
Respondent's repartnering	.15**	.05	.16**	.05	.15**	.05	.14**	.05
Distance between parents homes (log)	-.03	.02	-.02	.02	-.03	.02	-.03	.02
Child's age	-.04**	.01	-.05**	.01	-.04**	.01	-.04**	.01
Child's gender	.03	.04	.03	.04	.01	.04	.03	.04
Number of siblings	-.06*	.03	-.05	.03	-.05	.03	-.05*	.03
Year of union dissolution	-.03*	.01	-.03*	.01	-.03*	.01	-.03*	.01
Dissolution of cohabitation union	.04	.05	.03	.05	.02	.05	.02	.05
<i>Model</i>								
R-squared	.140		.149		.181		.183	

Note: Shared residence is reference category. Robust standard errors.

^aMother residence differs significantly from father residence.

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Figure 4.3 Effects of Residence Arrangements on Mother-Child Relationship Quality by Levels of Conflict and Contact between parents.



Our final model, Model 4, tests the moderating effect of parental contact for the mother-child relationship. The interaction effect between father residence and contact between parents indicates that differences in mother-child relationship quality between shared residence and father residence are more pronounced in families with low levels of parental contact than in families where parents frequently communicate (Figure 4.3c). Compared to children from shared-residence arrangements with low level of parental contact, children from low-contact father residence families score significantly lower on mother-child relationship quality; however, these differences decrease with higher levels of parental contact. Furthermore, when rotating the reference group (not shown here), we also find that the effect of parental contact differs between mother and father residence ($b = 0.23$, $p < .05$). Differences in relationship quality between mother and father residence are more pronounced in situations where parental contact is low than in situations where parental contact is high. Similarly, the interaction term between contact between parents and nonresident mother contact suggests that the importance of nonresident mother contact for the relationship quality between mothers and children declines with higher levels of parental contact (Figure 4.3d). Thus, we conclude that variations in the mother-child relationship quality are larger when parental contact is low after divorce and decline with higher levels of contact between parents.

4.4.3 Further investigations

To check whether our results could somewhat be driven by a personal reporting bias – causing parents with little child contact to report more negatively about their bonds with the child and the ex-partner, resulting in an overestimation of the association between residence arrangements and the parent-child bond – we ran additional analyses using a subsample of the data containing only those respondents whose ex-partners were also included in the data ($n = 2,130$). To investigate the reporting bias, we substituted the respondent's information on the contact measures, conflict, and parental contact with that of the ex-partner. These analyses showed that the results are the same for conflict and contact between parents but weaker and no longer significant for the measures of the residence arrangements. Comparing the interaction effects between the residence arrangements and parental conflict as well as the interaction terms between residence arrangements and parental contact with our main results, we find mixed results without a clear pattern. While

some interaction effects are no longer significant, other interaction effects gain significance. Although these results suggest that there may be some reporting bias present in our results, we are cautious to draw strong conclusions as our analyses on the subsample contain less statistical power due to the smaller number of cases and may be less reliable as the group of respondents who also has their partner in the data might be a rather selective group with less conflicting divorces decreasing the variation in our data.

In addition, to further understand why shared residence is less deleterious than sole residence for the parent-child relationship in high-conflict situations, we investigated whether conflict topics differed between residence arrangements. Prior research on parental conflict suggests that conflict is especially harmful for the parent-child relationship if parents include children in their disputes (Buchanan et al., 1993). Comparing those parents in the highest quartile on the serious conflict measure, our investigations showed that shared residence parents indeed exhibited a different conflict style. Although shared residence parents also engaged in arguments, unscheduled visits, and negative communication, their conflict was characterized by lower levels of violence, denigration, and less child-inclusive than the conflict of sole-residence parents.

Third, we investigated whether our conclusions differed between couples who had separated from a cohabitation union and those separated from a marriage. The results of running fully interacted models showed no differences for formerly married versus cohabiting respondents in the quality of the father-child relationship across residence arrangements. For the mother-child relationship, however, our results indicated that the effect of father residence on the mother-child bond differed between formerly married and cohabiting respondents. Formerly cohabiting mothers in father residence reported better mother-child bonds than formerly married mothers in father residence. Note here, that the father residence group is very small (about 5%) possibly limiting the validity of our conclusions.

4.5 Discussion

Although the parent-child bond is an important predictor for child well-being after divorce, little research has investigated differences in the parent-child relationship quality across postdivorce residence arrangements. Drawing on recent data from the Netherlands, this study contributed to our understanding of differences in parent-child relationship across mother, father, and shared

residence. To understand variations in relationship quality, we focused on the role of the postdivorce relationship between parents. We investigated to what extent parental conflict and contact between parents influenced the relationship between residence arrangements and parent-child relationship quality. We also explored the moderating role of the parental relationship by investigating whether conflict and parental contact conditioned the link between residence arrangements and relationship quality.

Our findings showed that the parent-child bond differed across postdivorce residence arrangements. We found that father-child relationship quality was significantly higher in father residence and shared residence than in mother residence arrangements. Moreover, in mother residence, regular nonresident father contact contributed to the father-child relationship. A comparable pattern emerged for the mother-child bond; mother-child relationship quality was higher in mother and shared residence than in father residence. Moreover, our results suggested that higher levels of nonresident mother contact in father residence improved the mother-child bond. Taken together, these results support the idea that residence arrangements affect the parent-child relationship by shaping parents' contacts with children (e.g., De Graaf & Fokkema, 2007). Children's bonds with both their mothers and fathers seem to be stronger when they have frequent contact with the respective parent after divorce. Because shared residence requires higher involvement from both parents than sole-residence arrangements where the nonresident parent has little involvement in child rearing, our findings support the notion that the child's relationship with both parents after divorce is better preserved by shared residence than sole residence (Stone, 2006). However, considering the ongoing prevalence of mother-residence arrangements in divorce cases, our findings emphasize the importance of regular contact with the nonresident father for maintaining the father-child bond after separation.

Furthermore, our findings support the assumption that variations in the parent-child bond across residence arrangements are partially the result of differences in the parental relationship. Although tensions between parents were significantly related to mother-child relationship quality, our analyses showed that tensions between parents could only account for a small part of the variation in mother-child bond between residence arrangements. However, controlling for serious conflict between parents and parental contact strongly reduced differences in the father-child bond between mother and shared residence and reduced the

association between nonresident father contact and father-child relationship quality. In line with previous research on intact families (Almeida, Wetherington, & Chandler, 1999), these findings suggest that the parental relationship is more strongly associated with the father-child bond than with the mother-child one. One explanation for this finding may be the differing emphasis on the parental role in mothers' and fathers' lives (Parke, 2002). Because the postdivorce father role is less clearly defined for men than the maternal role is for women, the father-child relationship may be more strongly influenced by the parental relationship than the mother-child bond (Booth & Amato, 1994). Consequently, it is likely that contact between parents provides valuable guidance to men in performing the paternal role, while parental conflict fosters fathers' insecurity and results in disengagement from their children.

Our results provided no support for the assumption that in high-conflict situations, shared residence is more harmful for the parent-child relationship than sole residence (Buchanan et al., 1991). Instead, our results showed that in conflicting family situations, frequent parent-child contact improves the parent-child bond after divorce. Our findings suggest that when parental conflict is low, differences in father-child bond across residence arrangements are minor, but that higher levels of conflict increase variations in relationship quality between mother and shared residence as well as between father and mother residence. We also found that in conflicting mother-residence situations, higher levels of nonresident father contact contributed to the father-child relationship. Our results propose that higher levels of conflict increased discrepancies in mother-child relationship quality between father and shared residence as well as between mother and father residence. Moreover, our results showed that higher levels of nonresident mother contact benefited the mother-child relationship in in high conflict father residence arrangements. Consequently, we conclude that in high-conflict families, shared residence and regular contact with the nonresident parent may improve the parent-child bond after divorce. Feuding parents often try to undermine each other's relationship with the child by maligning the ex-partner for the child (Maccoby, Depner, & Mnookin, 1990). In these situations, regular contact with the child may allow parents to work against the ex-partner's obstruction and help to maintain a positive bond with the child.

Lastly, we found no support for the idea that in families with low level of parental contact, shared residence is more damaging for the parent-child relationship than

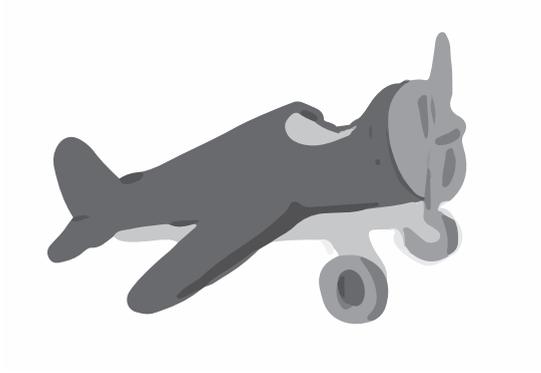
sole residence. On the contrary, our results showed that in low-parental contact situations, children in shared residence had better bonds with their fathers than their counterparts in mother residence. Moreover, differences in the father-child bond between mother and father-residence arrangements were more distinct in situations where parental contact was low than in families where parental contact was frequent. In addition, in mother-residence arrangements with little contact between parents, higher levels of father contact improved the father-child relationship. Likewise, our results showed that whereas families with little contact between parents showed significant differences in the mother-child relationship quality between shared and father residence and between mother and father residence, these differences decreased as parental contact increased. Nonresident mother contact contributed to the mother-child bond in families where parental contact was infrequent. Taken together, these findings suggest that parental contact is especially important for the parent-child bond in postdivorce residence arrangements where contact with one parent is limited. Consequently, we may conclude that parental contact helps parents with little child access after divorce to be better informed about important developments in their children's lives, and thus to provide more supportive parenting to their children.

Before we conclude, we should acknowledge several limitations of this study. First, although previous research (Shapiro & Lambert, 1999) used a single indicator to assess the parent-child relationship quality, this approach is likely to neglect the complexity of the parent-child bond after divorce as it only gives a general idea of the relationships between children and their parents. To understand to what extent our conclusions also apply to other dimensions of the parent-child relationship such as closeness, social support, and attachment, it would be useful for subsequent research to employ a more finely grained measure of the parent-child relationship. Secondly, note that given the cross-sectional design of our data, we cannot rule out the possibility of reversed causality. Even though we expect that it is the postdivorce residence arrangements that influence the parent-child bond, it is also possible that the parent-child bond affects the postdivorce residence arrangement. In families where the relationship between the child and one or both parents is strained after divorce, parents and children may be more likely to change the residence arrangement. Consequently, it is possible that the parent-child relationship after divorce shapes the choice of residence arrangement. Although the use of cross-sectional data is common in this area of research, future research should further

investigate the issue of reversed causality by using longitudinal data. Thirdly, we caution that unmeasured confounders such as the parent-child relationship prior to divorce may influence the link between residence arrangements and relationship quality. If the parent-child relationship was already difficult during the marriage, parents may be less likely to choose for shared residence after divorce. Thus, unmeasured confounders such as the predivorce relationship might at least partially be responsible for the association between residence arrangements and relationship quality. Fourthly, because our data only had to do with parents' opinions of the parent-child bond, it remains open whether our conclusions apply to children's perceptions of the parent-child relationship. Fifthly, note that our conclusions only apply to a short period of time after divorce and may not be generalizable to the long run, as the majority of people in our data had only recently divorced. Differences in the quality of the parent-child relationship across residence arrangement may increase over time, as the limited contact with the nonresident parent in sole-residence arrangements may further weaken the parent-child bond. Lastly, our measure of contact between parents only stated how often parents contacted each other, and contained no information about the reason for contact. Hence, we may be overestimating the parents' information exchange about the child. Future research should build upon our findings by using a more defined measure of parental contact.

Regardless of these shortcomings, we believe that our study holds interesting implications for family professionals. Since our results showed that contact improved the parent-child relationship after divorce, family professionals should emphasize the importance of regular nonresident parent visitation to divorcing parents who opt for a sole residence arrangement. Moreover, given the importance of the postdivorce parental relationship for the parent-child bond evident from our results, family specialists may also want to consider the use of mediation more broadly when working with divorcing families. We also showed that in conflicting postdivorce families, shared residence is no more harmful than sole residence for the parent-child relationship, and that sole residence with extended visitation or shared residence gives both parents in conflicting postdivorce situations the ability to maintain their bond with the child through continued involvement. Although further research needs to investigate this finding more closely, we recommend that family professionals also inform parents in these situations of the possible benefits of shared residence or extended visitation. Finally, because our study showed that

differences in the quality of the parent-child relationship between sole-residence and shared-residence arrangements were reduced when parents regularly informed each other about the child, it is important that parents find ways to regularly contact each other about important developments in the child's life.



5

What about the grandparents? Postdivorce residence arrangements and children's contact with grandparents

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5.1 Introduction

Various studies have shown that divorce changes children's relationship with their parents (e.g., Amato, 1993). Many children lose contact with their nonresident father after their parents' divorce (King & Heard, 1999), and the child's relationship with the mother becomes less supportive (Riggio, 2004). Far less is known, however, about how divorce influences children's relationship with grandparents. This gap in the literature is unexpected because grandparents are often an important source of support for grandchildren in family crises such as divorce (Hilton & Koperafrye, 2007; Lussier, Deater-Deckard, Dunn, & Davies, 2002); some studies even suggest that grandparent-grandchild contact contributes to children's and grandparents' emotional well-being (e.g., Drew & Silverstein, 2007).

The few studies investigating the association between parental divorce and grandparent-grandchild contact have been inconclusive. For example, Oppelaar and Dykstra (2004) found that parental divorce reduced grandparent-grandchild contact. In contrast, other studies showed that divorce may have different consequences for maternal and paternal grandparents: whereas contact with maternal grandparents increased after divorce, contact with paternal grandparents decreased (Kruk & Hall, 1995).

Although some studies explain these differences in postdivorce grandparental contact by pointing out that maternal kinship ties are generally stronger (Dench & Ogg, 2002), other studies ascribe them to parental custody arrangements (Johnson, 1999). They argue that, because children usually live with their mother after divorce, contact with maternal grandparents increases whereas contact with paternal grandparents decreases due to the nonresident father's limited child access (Cooney & Smith, 1996). So far, only a handful of studies have examined the residence explanation (e.g., Hilton & Macari, 1998; Jappens & Van Bavel, 2013; Weston, 1992). The present study aims to extend our knowledge of grandparental contact after divorce by examining children's contact with grandparents across different residence arrangements. We do this in three ways.

First, whereas most existing studies have compared grandparental contact between children in mother residence and children in father residence, we broaden the focus to include shared residence. Shared residence, also referred to as shared care or joint physical custody, describes an arrangement where children spend alternating periods living with both parents after divorce. Shared residence has become increasingly popular among divorced parents in recent years. In the

Netherlands, the number of children in shared residence arrangements after parental separation has increased from 5% in 1998 to about 30% in 2011 (Spruijt & Duindam, 2010; CBS, 2012) and similar trends are observed for Sweden and Belgium (Carlsund, Eriksson, Löfstedt, & Sellström, 2013; Sodermans, Matthijs, & Swicegood, 2013). By studying shared residence, we can provide a more complete picture of how grandparent-grandchild contact varies by postdivorce residence arrangement. Moreover, extending the focus to shared residence is important for a practical reason. In the ongoing discussion of custody arrangements, pressure groups promoting grandparents' rights argue for shared residence in divorce cases (Kaganas, 2007). Because grandparents have a restricted legal position in custody disputes, these groups claim that shared residence is beneficial for grandparent-grandchild contact after divorce, as it prevents paternal grandparents from being excluded (Douglas & Ferguson, 2003; Kaganas, 2007). By including shared residence in our study, we are able to evaluate this untested claim.

Second, to understand why grandparental contact varies across residence arrangements, we use a theoretical framework based on the idea that parents are important mediators for the grandparent-grandchild relationship (e.g., King & Elder, 1995). From an intergenerational perspective, the tie between grandparents and grandchildren is not a direct relationship but one bridged by the parents (Monserud, 2008). Against this background, we investigate how residence arrangements facilitate or restrict grandparental contact via the parents, focusing in particular on the role of parental conflict as a possible constraint for grandparental contact. We argue that divorcing parents who experience higher levels of conflict may be more likely to engage in gatekeeping behavior to restrict their ex-in-laws' child access, and that the effectiveness of this strategy may depend on the postdivorce residence arrangement.

Third, we study whether parental conflict might also moderate the association between residence arrangements and grandparental contact. Based on the assumptions that residence arrangements shape parents' ability to gatekeep their former in-laws and that gatekeeping behavior is more prevalent in high conflict relationships than in low conflict ones, we suggest that differences in grandparental contact across mother, father and shared residence may be more pronounced in high conflict than in low conflict families.

We base our analyses on the New Families in the Netherlands survey (NFN, $N = 3,842$), a representative large-scale survey among separated and divorced parents

in the Netherlands collected in 2012/2013. One of the strengths of the NFN is that it contains data on a relatively large number of children living in father or shared residence arrangements after divorce, allowing us to make more reliable comparisons between arrangements than previous studies (e.g., Lussier et al., 2002). Moreover, for many children the NFN includes both parents' reports on contact with each living grandparent after divorce, allowing us to provide a more accurate measurement of postdivorce grandparent-grandchild contact than previous studies (Hilton & Macari, 1998; Jappens & Van Bavel, 2013).

5.2 Theoretical background

Contact between grandparents and grandchildren depends on the opportunity for contact (Oppelaar & Dykstra, 2004). Parents play an important role in grandparent-grandchild contact by functioning as brokers between generations. As stated by the parent-as-mediator theory, parents mediate the grandparent-grandchild relationship by providing or restricting opportunities for contact and social exchange between grandparents and grandchildren (Monserud, 2008; Robertson, 1975). For example, parents decide which family members are invited for birthdays or holidays and thus actively shape children's social contacts. It has been suggested that the mediating role of parents in the grandparent-grandchild relationship continues into children's adulthood (Geurts, Poortman, Van Tilburg, & Dykstra, 2009).

In the absence of specific theories describing the influence of postdivorce residence arrangements on the grandparent-grandchild relationship, it may be useful to think of such arrangements as a factor influencing parents' ability to mediate grandparental contact. In the following section, we present different explanations for how residence arrangements influence the grandparent-grandchild relationship via parents.

Our first explanation for variations in the grandparent-grandchild relationship across residence arrangements emphasizes parental child access. In a divorce, each parent's ability to bring grandparents and grandchildren into contact depends on the residence arrangement, which defines the parent's access to and time with the child (Kelly & Emery, 2003). In sole residence arrangements such as father or mother residence, children spend the majority of their time with the resident parent and the nonresident parent's access to the child is limited. We assume that this unequal division of child access in sole residence arrangements results in parents having

differing opportunities to facilitate grandparent-grandchild contact. Whereas the resident parent might have many opportunities to initiate grandparent-grandchild contact on the resident side, the nonresident parent's opportunities on the nonresident side are restricted by the visitation agreement. Doyle, O'Dwyer, and Timonen (2010) support this view by showing that many grandparents attributed reduced contact with their grandchildren to their own child being the nonresident parent after divorce. In contrast to sole residence arrangements, we expect that in shared residence child access is more equally distributed between the parents because the child lives with both parents after divorce. As a result, parents in shared residence may have more equal opportunities to facilitate contact between their child and with their own parents than in sole residence.

Our second explanation focuses on a parent's need for support as a reason for variations in grandparental contact between residence arrangements. Grandparents are valuable sources of support for young families (Geurts, Van Tilburg, Poortman, & Dykstra, 2014; Hank & Buber, 2009). Grandparents often support the middle generation by babysitting or helping in the household (Geurts, Poortman, & Van Tilburg, 2012). Divorce is thought to increase parents' need for support from grandparents (Lussier et al., 2002). We assume that in a separation, the need for support from grandparents might be determined by the residence arrangement. Although former in-laws might be an important source of support after divorce, it seems plausible that parents rely more on the support of their own family (Weston, 1992). Consequently, we assume that in sole residence arrangements (mother or father residence), the resident parent's need for support from his or her own family members increases, resulting in more contact with grandparents on the resident side (Cooney & Smith, 1996; Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1986). The nonresident parent, on the other hand, has limited involvement in child care, leading us to assume that he or she has little need for support from the grandparents on the nonresident side. In shared residence, however, both parents are actively involved in child care because the child resides with both for alternating periods, increasing both parents' need for support from their own parents.

Based on the access and need arguments, our first hypothesis reads:

Hypothesis 1a: *Degree of contact with maternal grandparents is highest for children in mother residence, followed by children in shared residence, and then children in father residence.*

Hypothesis 1b: *Degree of contact with paternal grandparents is highest for children in father residence, followed by children in shared residence, and then children in mother residence.*

Our third argument focuses on parental conflict as a driving force behind differences in grandparental contact across residence arrangements. Previous research on conflict after divorce suggests that conflict strengthens the relationship between individuals and their own family members, but harms the relationship with members of the ex-partner's family (Kruk & Hall, 1995). In addition, it appears that children from high conflict divorced families have more distant relationships with their grandparents on the nonresidential side (Doyle et al., 2010). A possible explanation for this finding might be that conflict increases parent's gatekeeping behavior towards each other and the ex-partner's family. Gatekeeping describes one or both parents' attempt to control child access (Pruett, Williams, Insabella, & Little, 2003). By limiting grandparental access to the child, parents may try to make a clean break with their former kin to protect the new family unit or to attempt to reduce conflict with their former in-laws (Doyle et al., 2010; Kruk & Hall, 1995).

Although little is known about the relationship between parental conflict and residence arrangements, the literature provides some evidence that conflict varies by arrangement. Even though shared residence offers more opportunities for parental conflict, Smyth, Caruana, and Ferro (2004) suggest that shared residence is chosen mostly by low conflict families. Consequently, we expect that parental conflict and the degree of gatekeeping are lower in shared residence than in sole residence arrangements.

Besides the level of conflict, residence arrangements might also influence parents' effectiveness when it comes to restricting child access. After divorce, whether parents are effective at controlling children's contacts depends on the amount of time they spent with the child. Hence, we can assume that in sole residence arrangements, where there is generally more conflict and thus reason to gatekeep, the resident parent is more effective at controlling child access than the nonresident parent (Pruett et al., 2003; Timonen, Doyle, & O'Dwyer, 2009). In contrast, the nonresident parent's ability to control child access is limited in sole residence because of the restricted amount of time that parent spends with the child. Based on the idea that parents' level of conflict and their effectiveness at controlling child access varies across postdivorce residence arrangements, we formulate the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2a: *Degree of contact with maternal grandparents is highest in shared residence, followed by mother residence, and then father residence.*

Hypothesis 2b: *Degree of contact with paternal grandparents is highest in shared residence, followed by father residence, and then mother residence.*

Moreover, based on the given arguments, we expect that conflict might also be a moderating factor for the relationship between residence arrangements and grandparental contact. In low conflict situations, parents have no need to gatekeep their former in-laws, so we can expect that grandparent-grandchild contact will not vary as much across residence arrangements. In high conflict situations, on the other hand, the residence arrangements may have a more profound impact on children's contact with grandparents, as there will be many reasons for gatekeeping and, consequently, a parent's gatekeeping ability will matter more. Based on these arguments, we expect that in high conflict situations, contact with the maternal grandparents will be lowest when the child resides with the father, as the father will be able to restrict access. When the child lives with the mother, however, contact will be highest with the maternal grandparents, because the father's ability to gatekeep child access is limited. Shared residence is thought to be in between these two extremes, with both parents being equally effective at gatekeeping contact with their former in-laws. Note that we expect the same differences in high conflict cases as postulated in Hypothesis 1. For paternal grandparents the reverse holds, as it is about mother's ability to gatekeep. Our third hypothesis therefore reads:

Hypothesis 3a: *With regard to child contact with the maternal grandparents, the differences between mother residence, shared residence and father residence (as postulated in H1a) are larger in high conflict situations than in low conflict ones.*

Hypothesis 3b: *With regard to child contact with the paternal grandparents, the differences between father residence, shared residence and mother residence (as postulated in H1b) are larger in high conflict parental relationships than in low conflict ones.*

To better assess the relationship between residence arrangements and children's contact with grandparents, we take several characteristics of the child, parent, and grandparent into account that may influence grandparental contact after divorce: child's age, child's number of siblings, child's gender, parent's education, parent's gender, parent's age, dissolution of cohabitation union, grandparent's gender, and the presence of both grandparents from a lineage.

5.3 Method

5.3.1 Sample

To test our hypotheses, we use the New Families in the Netherlands (NFN; Poortman, Van der Lippe, & Boele-Woelki, 2014) survey, a new online survey conducted in 2012/2013. The NFN is based on a random sample of married couples who divorced in 2010 and a random sample of cohabiting couples who separated in 2010. The samples were obtained from the Dutch Social Statistical Database, with the help of Statistics Netherlands. Both former partners were invited by letter to complete the survey online or fill in a paper and pencil version of the questionnaire. For about a third of the ex-couples contacted, both parents took part in the study. Of the respondents contacted, 38.7% participated in the survey, with response rates being higher for formerly married individuals. The household response rate was 57.7% of the households contacted. The NFN response rate is relatively high for an online survey among divorced and separated families, and is comparable to response rates for other large-scale face-to-face surveys in the Netherlands. In total, the data consist of 4,481 divorced and separated men and women. Comparing the sample characteristics of the NFN with representative Dutch statistics, we find that men, younger persons, people of non-Western descent, persons from urban areas, people with low income, and those on welfare are underrepresented.

For our analyses, we only selected respondents who had a minor child from a heterosexual relationship living in mother, father or shared residence after the parent's divorce ($n = 4,347$). Next, we excluded respondents who indicated that the child had no surviving grandparents or had invalid values on the contact frequency with all living grandparents ($n = 134$). Finally, we excluded ex-couples who did not report on the same child ($n = 280$). Parents were considered to have reported on different children when their reports disagreed on the child's gender and year of birth. This was a rather strict rule. The majority of the report discrepancies are due to parents' giving differing answers for child's birth year ($n = 242$); most parents, however, differed in their reports of child's year of birth by only one year. These discrepancies may be due to faulty recall or to differences in the timing of the interview. Moreover, we were unable to exclude respondents who coreside with grandparents, as our data did not contain this information. It is unlikely, however, that the lack of information on coresidence has influenced our results, as earlier research suggests that coresidence of grandparents is rare in the Netherlands (less

than 5%), even in cases of divorce (Smits, Van Gaalen, & Mulder, 2010).

Because the total number of missing values for all variables used in the analyses amounted only to 2.3%, we decided to use listwise deletion ($n = 91$). Each respondent was asked to select one child based on age; respondents with children under 10 years selected their oldest child, and respondents with children above 10 years were asked to select their youngest child and report about the selected child's contact with each surviving grandparent. This selection resulted in a sample of 3,842 parents submitting 11,345 reports of grandparent-grandchild contact.

5.3.2 Measures

Contact with grandparents: Similar to previous research (e.g., Hilton & Macari, 1998), we measure grandparental contact as face-to-face contact. Because parents are likely to play an important role in this form of contact, postdivorce residence arrangements are expected to be of particular influence on face-to-face contact between grandparents and grandchildren (Holladay & Seipke, 2007). Respondents were asked about the child's contact with all surviving grandparents: 'How often has [child] seen your father/ mother in the last year?' and 'How often has [child] seen your ex-partner's father/ mother in the last year?' Response options ranged from 1 = daily to 8 = less than once a year. First, we recoded the variables so that higher values indicated more grandparental contact. Next, given the ordinal nature of the variable, we followed the example of Geurts et al. (2009) by assigning each category a value corresponding to the approximate number of contacts in the last year: a report of daily contact was given the value 365, several times a week was given the value 104, once a week was assigned 52, several times a month was given the value 24, once a month was given the value 12, several times a year was recoded as 6, once per year was given the value 1, and less than once a year was assigned a 0. This approach allowed us to use regression analysis, our method of choice, which eases interpretation (Geurts et al., 2009). Note, however, that a measure assessing the actual number of contacts with grandparents per year might have produced other results. Because the contact variables were rightly skewed, we transformed the variable by the natural log ($y' = \ln(y + 1)$). For easier interpretation of the results, we calculated the percentage change in contact with grandparents (y) with a one-unit increase in the x variables ($100(e^{Bx} - 1)$) (Wooldridge, 2009).

Children's postdivorce residence arrangement: Respondents were asked with whom the child lived most of the time after divorce. Response options ranged

from 1 'with me', 2 'with ex-partner', 3 'about equally with both parents' and 4 'other arrangement, namely'. We recoded this variable to distinguish three dummy variables: mother residence (1 = *yes*, 0 = *no*), father residence (1 = *yes*, 0 = *no*), and shared residence (1 = *yes*, 0 = *no*). Next, we manually classified the open answers from the 'other arrangement' category as mother, father, or shared residence (n = 71). In classifying the open answers, we loosely followed Sodermans, Vanassche, Matthijs and Swicegood's (2014) operationalization of postdivorce residence arrangements: open answers were recoded into mother residence if respondents indicated that the child resided more than 70% of the time with the mother; if the child resided between 30% and 70% of the time with the father, the answers were classified as shared residence; and open answers indicating that the child resided more than 70% of the time with the father were coded as father residence. Excluding the open answer cases from our analyses led to the same substantive conclusions.

Parental conflict: Because parental conflict is a multidimensional concept and it is assumed that parents prolong their predivorce conflict after separation (Kelly & Emery, 2003), we considered three conflict measures in our analyses:

Predivorce conflict was included to control for parent's possible selectivity on the conflict measures, as shared residence parents may be more likely to have had lower levels of predivorce conflict (Smyth et al., 2004). Respondents were asked how often different conflicts occurred during the last year of their relationship: 'How often have the following things happened between you and your ex-partner in the year preceding your divorce? Tensions or arguments between you and your ex-partner. Heated disputes between you and your ex-partner. One partner accusing the other. Not wanting to talk to each other for a while. Escalating fights.' Response options varied from 1 = *never* to 4 = *often*. The sum of responses across the items was used as measure of predivorce conflict ($\alpha = .87$). We then recoded the scale to range from 0 to 15.

Tensions captured the current level of tension between divorced/separated parents. Respondents were asked 'How often are there currently tensions or conflicts between you and your ex-partner?' Response categories ranged from 1 = *almost never* to 4 = *very often*. To give the variable a meaningful zero point, we subtracted 1 from each value.

Serious conflict measured the occurrence of offensive or abusive behavior since separation by asking participants 'Has your ex-partner ever done the following things since you separated? Blamed you severely. Said nasty things about you to

others. Called or visited uninvited. Turned your children against you. Wrongly accused you. Spoke ill of your common past. Scolded, quarreled with you. Threatened to use violence.' Each response was either coded 0 = *has not happened* or 1 = *has happened*. The sum across the eight items served as a measure of conflict, ranging from 0 to 8 ($\alpha = .87$). The correlations between the different measures of conflict were: predivorce conflict and serious conflict correlated $r = .43$, predivorce conflict and tensions correlated $r = .31$, and serious conflict and tensions correlated $r = .57$. Although these are only moderate correlations, a possible overlap between our predivorce and postdivorce conflict measures should be acknowledged in the interpretation of our results, as we may have overcontrolled for parental conflict.

5.3.3 Controls

Our analyses control for *child's gender*, *grandparent's gender* and *parent's gender* (0 = *female*, 1 = *male*), as mothers are found to stay in closer contact with relatives than fathers, and grandmothers report more frequent contact with grandchildren than grandfathers (Chan & Elder, 2000; Uhlenberg & Hammill, 1998). We include *child's age* measured in years in our models, as grandparental contact is found to decrease as children grow older (Oppelaar & Dykstra, 2004). Furthermore, we account for *child's number of siblings*, a continuous variable, as bigger families may create more occasions for contact (Oppelaar & Dykstra, 2004). *Parent's education* is included in our analyses as a proxy for parent's socio-economic status and liberal family values. High-educated parents may have greater financial resources and more liberal family values than low-educated ones and therefore rely less on grandparents' help with child care after divorce. Parent's education is measured by three dummy variables: *low education*, *intermediate education* and *high education*. Low education includes respondents reporting having no primary education, primary or junior secondary education (0 = *no low education*, 1 = *low education*). Respondents with lower general secondary education, higher general secondary education, preuniversity secondary education, or lower vocational training were defined as intermediate educated (0 = *no intermediate education*, 1 = *intermediate education*). Finally, high education includes respondents having higher vocational training, university education or postuniversity education (0 = *no high education*, 1 = *high education*). *Parent's age* is measured in years. *Dissolution of cohabitation union* is included to control for possible differences in grandparental contact between respondents who dissolved a marriage and those who ended a cohabitation union (0 = *dissolved marriage*, 1 = *dissolved cohabitation union*). To investigate whether our results are the same for

Table 5.1 Descriptive Statistics for Dependent and Independent Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Range
<i>Dependent Variables</i>			
Contact with grandparents	44.19	67.79	0 – 365
Contact with grandparents (log)	3.01	1.36	0 – 5.9
<i>Independent Variables</i>			
Conflict			
Serious conflict	2.98	2.66	0 – 8
Current tensions	0.88	0.96	0 – 3
Predivorce conflict	6.80	4.05	0 – 15
<i>Residence arrangement</i>			
Mother residence ^a	0.67	—	0 – 1
Father residence ^b	0.05	—	0 – 1
Shared residence ^c	0.28	—	0 – 1
<i>Controls</i>			
Parent's characteristics			
Parent's gender ^d	0.41	—	0 – 1
Parent's education			
Low education ^e	0.09	—	0 – 1
Intermediate education ^f	0.53	—	0 – 1
High education ^g	0.38	—	0 – 1
Parent's age	40.92	6.79	21 – 69
Dissolution of cohabitation union ^h	0.27	—	0 – 1
<i>Child characteristics</i>			
Child's age	9.57	3.91	0 – 18
Child's gender ⁱ	0.52	—	0 – 1
Child's number of siblings	0.86	0.79	0 – 9
<i>Grandparent's characteristics</i>			
Grandparent's gender ^j	0.45	—	0 – 1
Both maternal grandparents alive ^k	0.75	—	0 – 1
Both paternal grandparents alive ^l	0.68	—	0 – 1

Note: N = 11,345 reports of grandparent-grandchild contact from 3,842 parents. Standard deviation not reported for dichotomous variables. M = Mean; SD = Standard deviation; Log = Logarithm. ^aMother residence: 0 = no, 1 = yes. ^bFather residence: 0 = no, 1 = yes. ^cShared residence: 0 = no, 1 = yes. ^dParent's gender: 0 = female, 1 = male. ^eLow education: 0 = no, 1 = yes. ^fIntermediate education: 0 = no, 1 = yes. ^gHigh education: 0 = no, 1 = yes. ^hDissolution of cohabitation union: 0 = dissolution of marriage, 1 = dissolution of cohabitation union. ⁱChild's gender: 0 = female, 1 = male. ^jGrandparent's gender: 0 = female, 1 = male. ^kBoth maternal grandparents alive: 0 = no, 1 = yes. ^lBoth paternal grandparents alive: 0 = no, 1 = yes.

formerly married and cohabiting respondents, we included interaction terms between the dummy variable for dissolution of cohabitation union and all independent variables in the model. These interactions were, however, not significant. Finally, we controlled for whether *both maternal and paternal grandparents* are alive (0 = *one grandparent alive*, 1 = *both grandparents alive*), as previous research indicates that children have more contact with grandparents if both grandparents of a lineage are alive (Monserud, 2008). Table 5.1 shows the descriptive statistics for all variables.

5.3.4 Analytical strategy

Our analyses begin with a description of differences in grandparent-grandchild contact across residence arrangements (Figure 5.1), before presenting the multivariate results (Tables 5.2 and 5.3). In the multivariate models, we make use of multilevel techniques.

Both divorced parents participated in the study and reported on the same child's contact with grandparents in about a third of the cases, so some children are represented twice in our data. In these cases, our data constitute repeated measurements of the child's contact with the same grandparent as obtained from the mother and the father. This structure results in a special form of nesting in which measurements of grandparent-grandchild contact are nested within the child, which is nested within one or sometimes both parents. We took the child as the unit of analysis. We restructured our data so that every contact measurement in a child-grandparent dyad was treated as a separate observation. For example, a child with two living grandparents for whom contact measures were obtained from both parents contributed four observations to the data, whereas a child with two living grandparents for whom measures of grandparental contact were obtained from one parent contributed two observations. Consequently, the number of observations of grandparent-grandchild contact ranged from one to eight for each child.

To account for dependencies in our data (i.e., in terms of referring to the same grandparent-grandchild dyad and being obtained from the same parent), we used mixed multi-level modeling. We estimated unstructured variances for the lower level residuals to control for clusters of correlated responses associated with parents providing multiple measurements of the same grandparent-grandchild dyad. For all models estimated, we find high residual correlation between the same parent's reports on grandchild-grandparent contact as well as for parents' contact

reports concerning the same grandparent-grandchild contact, indicating internal consistency in the same parent's reports as well as high correlations between parents' reports on the same grandparent-grandchild dyad.

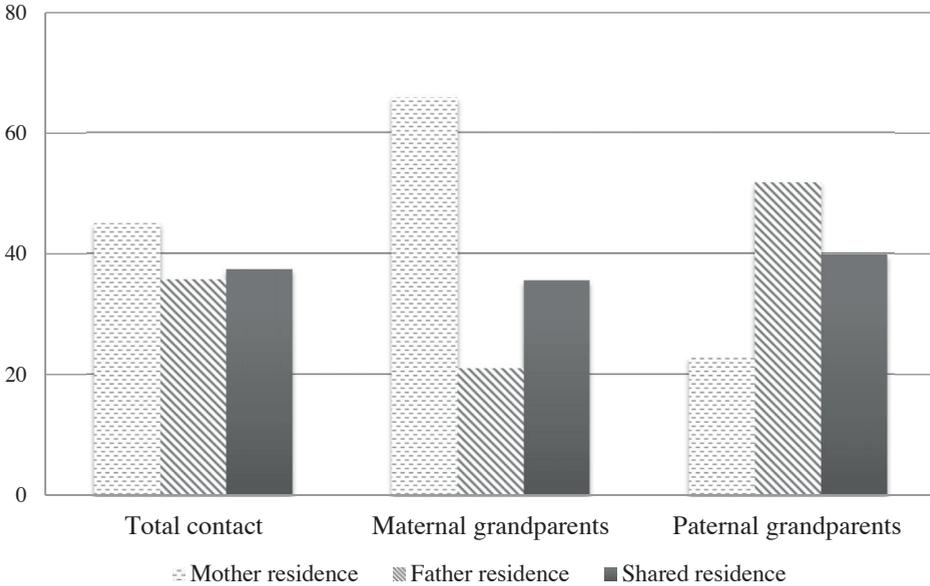
To test our hypotheses, we split the sample for maternal and paternal grandparents. In Model 1, the baseline model, contact with grandparents is regressed against the control variables. In Model 2, we add the residence arrangements to the regression to study differences in contact with grandparents. Mother residence is used as reference category for contact with maternal grandparents (Table 5.2) and father residence constitutes the reference in Table 5.3. We also rotated the reference categories to see whether differences between the other residence arrangements were significant. Model 3 includes the parental conflict measures. The final model, Model 4, includes the residence arrangements, conflict measures, controls, and interactions between residence arrangements and conflict to investigate the moderating role of conflict.

5.4 Results

5.4.1 Descriptive results

Figure 5.1 shows children's yearly contact with grandparents for children in mother residence, father residence and shared residence. Children's overall grandparental contact is highest in mother residence with about 45.1 contacts a year, followed by shared residence with 37.3 contacts, and then father residence with 36.4 contacts. For maternal grandparents, we find that children's contact with maternal grandparents is highest in mother residence (66.1), followed by shared residence (35.5), and then father residence (20.8). Contact with paternal grandparents is highest in father residence with about 53.6 contacts, followed by shared residence (39.8), and then mother residence (22.7). Taken together, Figure 5.1 suggests that children's contact varies across living arrangements, with contact differences appearing to be greater between mother and father residence and mother and shared residence and less pronounced between father and shared residence.

Figure 5.1 *Frequency of Child's Yearly Contact with Grandparents*



Note: reports of overall grandparental contact n = 3,842; reports on contact with maternal grandparents n = 3,507; reports on contact with paternal grandparents n = 3,291

5.4.2 Contact with maternal grandparents

Table 5.2 presents the results of the multilevel regression analyses for the log of children’s yearly contact with maternal grandparents. We begin by presenting the baseline model (Model 1). Compared to mothers, fathers report significantly less contact with maternal grandparents. Parent’s age is negatively related to contact with maternal grandparents, with older parents reporting less contact with maternal grandparents, probably because children of older parents tend to have older and less mobile grandparents. We also find that compared to high educated parents, low and intermediate educated parents report more contact with maternal grandparents. Child’s age significantly decreases contact with maternal grandparents, possibly because parents of older children may require less assistance with child care from grandparents. Moreover, we find that grandparent’s gender significantly influences children’s contact with grandparents, with children having about 39.1% less contact with their maternal grandfathers than with their maternal grandmothers. Furthermore, our results show that children have about 20.9% more contact with their maternal grandparents if both maternal grandparents are

alive. We found no significant effects for number of siblings, child's gender, and dissolution of cohabitation union on contact with maternal grandparents.

Model 2 includes child's postdivorce residence arrangements. The model shows that compared to children in mother residence, children in shared residence have about 25.9% less contact with their maternal grandparent ($b = -0.23, p < .001$). For father residence, we find that this effect is even stronger. Children living with their father are found to have about 120.3% less contact with their maternal grandparents than those living with their mother ($b = -0.79, p < .001$). We should bear in mind that the father residence group is rather small in our sample at about 5% (see Table 5.1). To assess whether contact also differed between shared residence and father residence, we conducted additional analyses (not shown here) by changing the reference category. The results suggest that contact with maternal grandparents differs significantly between father and shared residence, with children in father residence having about 75.1% less contact with grandparents compared to shared residence. Taken together, our results support Hypothesis 1a that contact with maternal grandparents is highest in mother residence, followed by shared residence, and then father residence.

In Model 3, we added the conflict measures to the regression equation. Tension and serious conflict are not significantly related to contact with maternal grandparents. Even so, it appears that predivorce conflict significantly decreases children's contact with maternal grandparents, although this effect is rather small ($b = -0.01, p < .05$). Comparing the effect sizes for the residence arrangements with those in Model 2 reveals no changes when controlling for conflict. On the basis of these results, we conclude that parental conflict only plays a limited role in contact with maternal grandparents.

To test whether conflict moderates the relationship between residence arrangements and contact with maternal grandparents, we included four interaction terms between residence arrangements and conflict measures (Model 4). We find that only the interaction term between father residence and serious conflict is significant ($b = -0.09, p < .01$), indicating that serious conflict moderates the relationship between residence arrangement and contact with maternal grandparents. Graphing the significant interaction from Model 3 reveals that for contact with maternal grandparents, the differences between mother and father residence are greater in high conflict situations than in low conflict ones (Figure 5.2a). Finally, we rotated the reference category to test whether the effect of conflict on contact with maternal grandparents also differed between father and shared residence. Again, the interaction term is only significant for father residence and

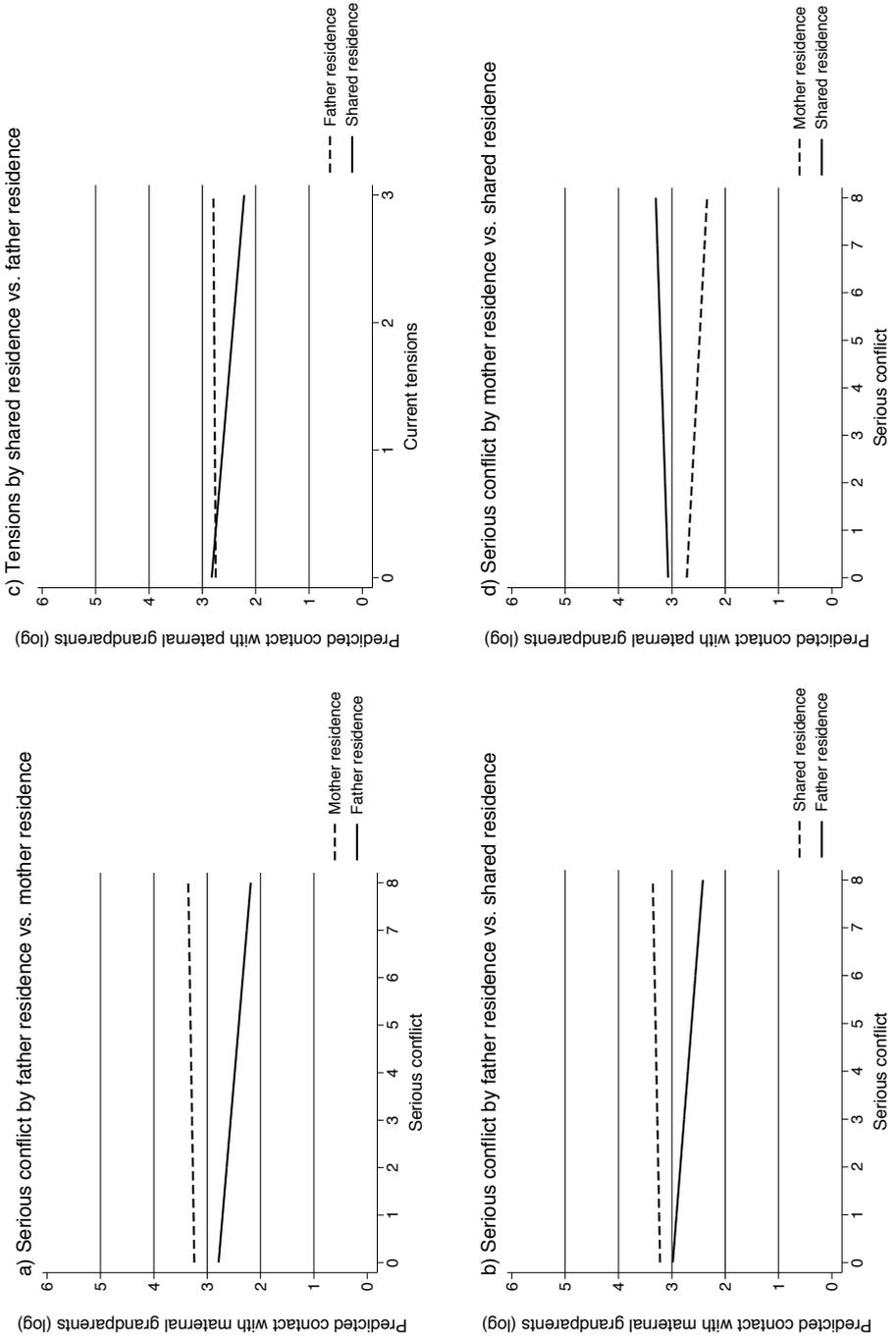
serious conflict ($b = -0.09, p < .05$). Children who live with their fathers and whose parents are in serious conflict have less contact with their maternal grandparents than those living in high conflict shared residence arrangements (Figure 5.2b).

Table 5.2 Mixed Effects Linear Model for Log of Yearly Postdivorce Contact With Maternal Grandparents

Variables	Contact with maternal grandparents							
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Mother residence	—		—		—		—	
Shared residence			-.23***	.05	-.23***	.05	-.20***	.06
Father residence			-.79***	.09	-.79***	.09	-.52***	.15
Current tensions					-.01	.02	-.00	.03
Serious conflict					.01	.01	.02	.01
Predivorce conflict					-.01*	.00	-.01*	.00
Shared residence*serious conflict							-.00	.03
Father residence*serious conflict							-.09**	.03
Shared residence*current tensions							-.04	.05
Father residence*current tensions							.06	.08
<i>Controls</i>								
Parent's gender	-.09***	.03	-.06*	.03	-.07**	.03	-.08**	.03
Parent's age	-.02***	.00	-.02***	.00	-.02***	.00	-.02***	.00
Parent's education (ref = High educ.)								
Low education	.19**	.06	.18**	.06	.18**	.06	.18**	.06
Intermediate education	.17***	.04	.16***	.04	.16***	.04	.16***	.04
Dissolution of cohabitation union	-.01	.05	-.01	.05	-.01	.05	-.01	.05
Child's age	-.08***	.01	-.07***	.01	-.07***	.01	-.07***	.01
Child's gender	.01	.05	.02	.05	.02	.05	.02	.05
Child's number of siblings	.00	.03	.00	.03	.00	.03	.00	.03
Grandparent's gender	-.33***	.02	-.33***	.02	-.33***	.02	-.33***	.02
Both maternal grandparents alive	.19***	.05	.18***	.05	.18***	.05	.18***	.05
<i>Variance Components/ Model</i>								
SD (σ^{MMGF})	1.43	.02	1.42	.02	1.42	.02	1.42	.02
SD (σ^{MMGM})	1.25	.02	1.24	.02	1.24	.02	1.24	.02
SD (σ^{FMGF})	1.38	.03	1.36	.03	1.35	.03	1.35	.03
SD (σ^{FMGM})	1.25	.02	1.22	.02	1.22	.02	1.22	.02
Corr (σ^{MMGF} , σ^{MMGM})	.66	.01	.66	.01	.66	.01	.65	.01
Corr (σ^{MMGF} , σ^{FMGF})	.83	.01	.82	.01	.82	.01	.82	.01
Corr (σ^{MMGF} , σ^{FMGM})	.57	.02	.56	.02	.56	.02	.56	.02
Corr (σ^{MMGM} , σ^{FMGF})	.62	.02	.61	.02	.60	.02	.60	.02
Corr (σ^{MMGM} , σ^{FMGM})	.82	.01	.81	.01	.81	.01	.81	.01
Corr (σ^{FMGF} , σ^{FMGM})	.76	.01	.75	.01	.75	.01	.75	.01
Wald Chi2	630.3		728.2		735.3		745.4	
BIC	17341.1		17277.7		17297.4		17324.1	

Note: $n = 5,936$ reports of maternal grandparent-grandchild on 2,785 children. Variance component model for unstructured residuals. σ^{MMGF} = Residual error of mother's reports on maternal grandfather, σ^{MMGM} = Residual error of mother's reports on maternal grandmother, σ^{FMGF} = Residual error of father's reports on maternal grandfather, σ^{FMGM} = Residual error of father's reports on maternal grandmother. SD = Standard Deviation, Corr = Correlation. *Shared residence differs significantly from father residence.

Figure 5.2 Effects of Parental Conflict on Contact with Maternal and Paternal Grandparents by Children's Postdivorce Arrangements



Overall, our results show that differences between residence arrangements are more pronounced in high conflict situations than in low conflict ones, thus supporting Hypothesis 3a.

5.4.3 Contact with paternal grandparents

Table 5.3 shows the results of the mixed model regression for the log of children's contact with paternal grandparents. Model 1 includes only the controls. Parent's gender is positively related to children's contact with paternal grandparents, with fathers reporting about 28.4% more contact with paternal grandparents than mothers. Parent's age is negatively related to contact with paternal grandparents. We also find that older children have significantly less contact with the paternal side of the family than younger ones. Moreover, paternal grandfathers have about 23.4% less contact with grandchildren than grandmothers do. Having two surviving grandparents increases children's contact with grandparents by about 43.3%. We find no significant effects for parent's education, child's gender, number of siblings, or dissolution of a cohabitation union on children's contact with paternal grandparents.

After including the residence arrangements in Model 2, we find significant differences across residence arrangements in the contact with grandparents. Compared to children living in father residence, children living with their mother after divorce have about 109.6% less contact with their paternal grandparents. When we compare shared residence and father residence, however, we find no significant differences in contact with paternal grandparents. Rotating the reference category to investigate whether contact with paternal grandparents also differs between mother and shared residence, we see that children in mother residence have less contact with paternal grandparents than those in shared residence ($b = -0.59, p < .001$). In sum, our results suggest that the degree of contact with paternal grandparents is highest in father and shared residence, and lowest in mother residence, thus partly supporting our Hypothesis 1b.

Model 3 introduces the conflict measures to the model. We find that both serious conflict and tensions between parents decrease contact with paternal grandparents. Predivorce conflict is not significantly related to contact with grandparents along the paternal side. Turning to the postdivorce residence arrangements, we find that when controlling for parental conflict, contact with paternal grandparents is lower in shared residence and mother residence than in father residence arrangements. Moreover, changing the omitted category (not shown here) reveals that mother residence also differs significantly from shared residence ($b = -0.55, p < .001$).

Table 5.3 *Mixed Effects Linear Model for Log of Yearly Postdivorce Contact With Paternal Grandparents*

Variables	Contact with paternal grandparents							
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Mother residence			-.74***	.10	-.76***	.09	-.42**	.15
Shared residence			-.15 ^a	.10	-.20 ^a	.10	-.02	.16
Father residence	—		—		—		—	
Current tensions					-.04*	.02	.12	.08
Serious conflict					-.03**	.01	-.00	.03
Predivorce conflict					-.00	.00	-.00	.00
Mother residence*serious conflict							-.05	.03
Shared residence*serious conflict							.03	.04
Mother residence*current tensions							-.15	.08
Shared residence*current tensions							-.22*	.09
<i>Controls</i>								
Parent's gender	.25***	.03	.22***	.03	.22***	.03	.22***	.03
Parent's age	-.02***	.00	-.02***	.00	-.02***	.00	-.02***	.00
Parent's education (ref = High educ.)								
Low education	.10	.06	.16**	.06	.16**	.06	.18**	.06
Intermediate education	.06	.04	.11**	.04	.11**	.04	.12***	.04
Dissolution of cohabitation union	-.03	.05	-.02	.05	-.02	.05	-.03	.05
Child's age	-.02*	.01	-.02**	.01	-.02**	.01	-.02**	.01
Child's gender	.02	.05	.02	.05	.01	.05	.02	.04
Child's number of siblings	-.00	.03	-.00	.03	.00	.03	-.00	.03
Grandparent's gender	-.21***	.02	-.21***	.02	-.21***	.02	-.21***	.02
Both paternal grandparents alive	.36***	.05	.35***	.05	.35***	.05	.34***	.05
<i>Variance Components/ Model</i>								
SD (σ_{MPGM})	1.23	.02	1.19	.02	1.18	.02	1.18	.02
SD (σ_{MPGF})	1.31	.02	1.28	.02	1.28	.02	1.27	.02
SD (σ_{FPGM})	1.22	.02	1.17	.02	1.16	.02	1.16	.02
SD (σ_{FPGF})	1.32	.03	1.28	.02	1.28	.02	1.28	.02
Corr ($\sigma_{MPGM}, \sigma_{MPGF}$)	.76	.01	.75	.01	.75	.01	.75	.01
Corr ($\sigma_{MPGM}, \sigma_{FPGM}$)	.80	.01	.78	.01	.78	.01	.78	.01
Corr ($\sigma_{MPGM}, \sigma_{FPGF}$)	.66	.02	.62	.02	.62	.02	.62	.02
Corr ($\sigma_{MPGF}, \sigma_{FPGM}$)	.63	.02	.61	.02	.61	.02	.61	.02
Corr ($\sigma_{MPGF}, \sigma_{FPGF}$)	.84	.01	.83	.01	.82	.01	.82	.01
Corr ($\sigma_{FPGM}, \sigma_{FPGF}$)	.79	.01	.77	.01	.77	.01	.77	.01
Wald Chi2	320.0		522.6		556.57		585.2	
BIC	14936.4		14624.3		14772.5		14781.6	

Note: n = 5,409 reports of paternal grandparent-grandchild contact on 2,621 children. Variance component model for unstructured residuals: σ_{MPGM} = Residual error of mother's reports on paternal grandfather, σ_{MPGF} = Residual error of mother's reports on paternal grandmother, σ_{FPGF} = Residual error of father's reports on paternal grandfather, σ_{FPGM} = Residual error of father's reports on paternal grandmother. SD = Standard Deviation, Corr = Correlation.

^a Shared residence differs significantly from mother residence.

*p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001

Model 4 shows the full model, including the residence arrangements, conflict, controls, and interactions for postdivorce conflict and residence arrangements. Only the interaction term for shared residence and current tension reaches significance, suggesting a larger discrepancy between father and shared residence in the contact with paternal grandparents when tensions are running high (Figure 5.2c). To check whether the effect of tension on contact with grandparents also differed between mother and shared residence, we changed the reference category. We find that the interaction between mother residence and serious conflict reaches significance (Figure 5.2d). Contact with paternal grandparents differs little between mother and shared residence in low conflict situations, but in high conflict situations contact differences between these two arrangements become increasingly pronounced. Taken together, our results suggest that higher levels of conflict increase the differences in contact with paternal grandparents between both father and shared residence and mother and shared residence, thus supporting Hypothesis 3b.

5.5 Discussion

Only a handful of studies have investigated grandparent-grandchild contact after divorce. Using new large-scale data from the Netherlands, this is one of the first studies investigating children's contact with grandparents across different postdivorce living arrangements. We contributed to the literature in three ways. First, by studying a wider range of residence arrangements (mother, father, and shared residence), we were able to give a more complete picture of differences in grandparental contact across residence arrangements. Second, to understand why children's grandparental contact varies between residence arrangements, we investigated the role of parental conflict in grandparental contact after divorce. Third, moving beyond the insights of previous research, we studied the moderating role of parental conflict for the relationship between postdivorce residence arrangements and contact with grandparents.

Our results showed that contact with grandparents varied considerably across residence arrangements. Comparing contact with maternal grandparents after divorce across mother, father and shared residence, we found that contact with maternal grandparents was highest in mother residence, followed by shared residence and then father residence. A similar picture emerged for paternal grandparents. Contact with paternal grandparents was highest for children in father residence and shared residence and lowest in mother residence. Consistent

with earlier research by Hilton and Macari (1998) and Jappens and Van Bavel (2013), these results underline the importance of residence arrangements for the grandparent-grandchild relationship after divorce. In line with the access and need argument, our findings show that for both maternal and paternal grandparents, contact is more frequent when grandparent and grandchild are related on the resident parent's side, and is limited when grandparents are related on the noncustodial side. Given that mother residence is still the most common residence arrangement among divorcing parents, these results underline Kruk and Hall's (1995) notion of the vulnerability of children's ties to paternal grandparents after divorce. Nevertheless, the steady increase of shared residence arrangements in many countries may especially benefit paternal grandparents, as shared residence seems to allow for more frequent face-to-face contact with paternal grandparents than mother residence. Consequently, our results provide some support for the claim by pressure groups that shared residence may facilitate contact with paternal grandparents after divorce (Kaganas, 2007).

Although these findings are consistent with the parent-as-mediator theory (e.g., Monserud, 2008) and underline the resident parent's influence on children's contact with grandparents after divorce, it is important to note that grandparents themselves also play a role in shaping grandparent-grandchild contact after divorce. For example, grandparent's willingness to help with child care may be an important factor for a parent's decision to seek custody, especially for fathers (Doyle et al., 2010). Likewise, some grandparents may be more active than others in maintaining contact with their grandchildren after divorce.

Moreover, although our results suggest that parental conflict cannot account for the differences in grandparental contact across residence arrangements, we do find that parental conflict is associated with grandparental contact after divorce. Whereas conflict played a limited role in contact with maternal grandparents, it seemed to have a stronger influence on contact with paternal grandparents. For paternal grandparents, serious conflict and tensions between parents significantly decreased grandparent-grandchild contact. This finding is in line with earlier research by Doyle et al. (2010), who showed that parental conflict was often mentioned by paternal grandparents as a reason for reduced contact with grandchildren after divorce. The fact that our results only show conflict as having a significant effect on contact with paternal grandparents suggests that gatekeeping behavior is exhibited mostly by mothers. A possible explanation for this finding may come from Pruett,

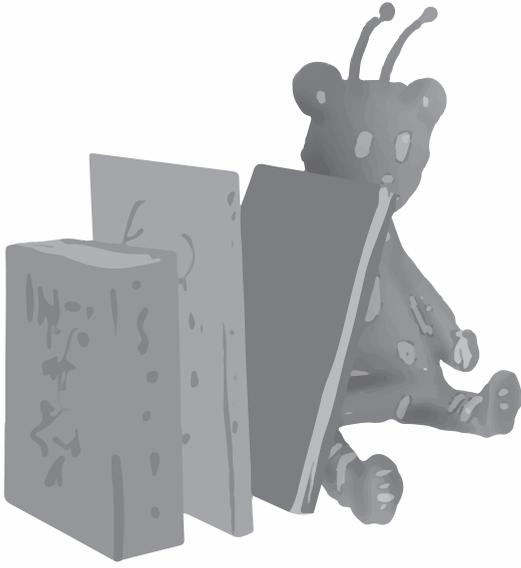
Arthur and Ebling (2007), who argue that mother's gatekeeping behavior might result from parental role division in child care. From infancy onward, mothers function as the child's primary care givers and subsequently internalize the role of permission givers for other people's involvement with their child (Pruett et al., 2007). In times of family crises such as divorce, this protective behavior might be rekindled to protect the child from possible harm. Another explanation for this finding might stem from the different situations in which mothers and fathers gain custody. Previous research on postdivorce residence arrangements indicates that fathers are more likely to gain custody after divorce if the family situation is difficult or the mother is unable to care for the child (Buchanan, Maccoby, & Dornbusch, 1996). Given these differing circumstances in which fathers gain custody, it is possible that the father residence group is a rather select group that might engage less actively in gatekeeping.

Furthermore, our results partly supported our third hypothesis that parental conflict moderates the effect of residence arrangements on contact with grandparents. For contact with maternal grandparents, our findings showed that increasing levels of serious conflict widened the gap in contact between mother and father residence as well as between shared and father residence. Two explanations for these findings are possible. First, reduced contact with maternal grandparents for children in a high conflict father residence arrangement might result from fathers exhibiting gatekeeping behavior toward the maternal grandparents. Hilton and Macari (1998) suggest that in high conflict situations, fathers may also be more likely to hinder maternal grandparents from having contact with the child. Second, given the difficult family circumstances that often precede decisions to place a child in its father's custody, maternal grandparents may be more likely to withdraw from contact with their grandchildren after divorce, as they may feel that contact is unpleasant for the grandchild. For contact with paternal grandparents, our findings indicate that higher levels of tension between parents may increase contact differences between father and shared residence. Moreover, our results show that higher levels of serious conflict increase the discrepancy between mother and shared residence in the child's contact with paternal grandparents. In conflict relationships, mothers might be more likely to show gatekeeping behavior and the more time mothers spend with their children, the more successful they may be at restricting children's contact with paternal grandparents.

Although our study suggests that grandparental contact differs considerably across postdivorce residence arrangements, we would like to point out some limitations. First, our study focuses only on face-to-face contact with grandparents, consequently neglecting remote forms of contact such as email, telephone, Skype, and text messages. Although face-to-face contact is often considered as a necessary condition for instrumental support between generations (e.g., Seeman & Berkman, 1988), remote forms of contact may also help strengthen the bond between grandparents and grandchildren (Holladay & Seipke, 2007). Remote contact between grandparents and grandchildren might be especially frequent in high conflict situations after divorce, as parents may be less able to prevent telephone or email contact between grandchildren and grandparents (Holladay & Seipke, 2007). We thus encourage future research to extend our work by investigating other forms of postdivorce grandparent-grandchild contact. Second, because our data mostly consist of recently divorced respondents, we must bear in mind that our conclusions may only apply to grandparent-grandchild contact in the period shortly after divorce and cannot be generalized in the long run. Because families usually go through a two- to three-year transition period after divorce, after which they recover from the emotional stresses of the separation (Hetherington, 2003), two different long-term scenarios are possible. On the one hand, differences in grandparental contact across residence arrangements may become more pronounced over time, as children's limited contact with nonresident grandparents in sole residence arrangements makes the relationship more fragile. On the other hand, it is possible that differences in contact across residence arrangements will decrease on the long run, as the turmoil is likely to die down and family relations may be restored. To further understand the long-term effects of residence arrangements on contact with grandparents, we recommend the use of longitudinal designs. Third, our results may be biased due to the selective non-response of certain groups. In comparison to the Dutch population, men, younger people, immigrants, people from urban areas, and individuals from low income families are underrepresented in our data. Because these individuals might be especially likely to rely on grandparental support after divorce, absolute levels of postdivorce contact between grandparents and grandchildren might be even higher than our results suggest. Moreover, it is likely that high conflict divorces are underrepresented in our data, as individuals who have had a conflict-type divorce may be less inclined to take part in a survey about their divorce, possibly leading to an overestimation of the amount of contact

with grandparents after divorce. Either way, the underrepresentation of these various groups is likely to decrease the variation in our dependent variable, possibly resulting in underestimations of the effects of our key findings in the multivariate analyses. Fourth, note that the number of children living with their fathers is rather small in our sample (about 5%), possibly due to the underrepresentation of men in the data, which may limit the validity of our conclusions. Fifth, our measure of shared residence does not indicate how much time children actually spend at each home. Although children in shared residence spend a substantial amount of time with both parents, that time is often not equally divided between parents (Fehlberg, Smyth, & Mclean, 2011). Thus, future research could investigate possible variations in grandparental contact after divorce within the shared residence group. Sixth, the lack of information in our study on geographical proximity between grandparents and grandchildren may have biased our results. And finally, as our study contains little information on grandparental characteristics, the possibility of controlling for the grandparents' demographic characteristics (e.g., employment or marital status) was limited. Because previous research has shown the importance of grandparental characteristics (e.g., Oppelaar & Dykstra, 2004) for grandchild-grandparent contact, we recommend that future research extend our study by investigating how grandparental characteristics mediate the relationship between residence arrangements and grandparent-grandchild contact.

Despite these limitations, our study offers important insights into the nature of postdivorce contact between grandparents and grandchildren across different residence arrangements. We showed that grandparental contact varied across residence arrangements, suggesting that the choice for a particular residence arrangement has consequences not only for the parent-child relationship but also for the wider family system. Moreover, the greater prevalence of gatekeeping behavior in high conflict families suggests that the grandparent-grandchild relationship is especially fragile if the parents are experiencing serious conflict after divorce.



6 Conclusion and discussion

6.1 Introduction

In light of the recent legal and social developments surrounding parenting arrangements after divorce and the ongoing discussion on the risks and benefits of postdivorce residence arrangements for children's well-being, the four empirical chapters of this dissertation set out to examine possible changes in the organization of postdivorce parenting and investigate the link between postdivorce residence arrangements and child well-being. Although each chapter focused on a specific research question, the empirical chapters of this dissertation are connected by the aim to examine changes in postdivorce parenting and contribute empirically to the debate on the consequences of shared residence for child well-being.

With this study we contributed to the existing literature in four ways. First, to understand changes in postdivorce parenting and get insight into the mechanism behind the increase in nonresident father contact after divorce, we studied the role of father involvement during marriage. Because involved fathers might be willing to maintain closer contact with their children after divorce, we studied whether higher levels of father involvement during marriage could account for the increase in nonresident father contact over time. Moreover, given the greater emphasis on father's care giving responsibilities, we also investigated whether over time father involvement during marriage has become more important for nonresident fathers' contact levels. Second, we contributed empirically to the debate on the risk and benefits of shared residence for children by focusing on children's social well-being, namely their relationships with family members. By investigating differences in the parent-child relationship and grandparental contact across mother, father, and shared residence we examined the often made claim that shared residence allows children to maintain stronger family bonds than sole residence arrangements. Third, to understand the causal mechanism behind the association between postdivorce residence arrangements and child well-being we focused on the postdivorce parental relationship. We investigated in to what extent differences in the parental relationship after divorce could account for differences in child well-being across mother, father, and shared residence. In doing so, we also contributed to the discussion on shared residence by testing the assumption that shared residence is only positive for children's well-being after divorce if parents maintain a friendly relationship after divorce. Lastly, by using data from the New Families in the Netherlands survey (NFN), we contributed methodologically to the existing literature. Using data from the NFN allowed us to control for possible

selection factors in our research and to make more reliable comparisons of child well-being between mother, father and shared residence than previous research.

We start this concluding chapter by summarizing the main findings of the four empirical chapters of this dissertation. We then offer general conclusions giving answers to the central research question of this dissertation. Subsequently, we discuss the studies strengths and weaknesses as well as provide suggestions for future research. Finally, we discuss possible policy implications of our work.

6.2 Summary of the main findings

To study changes in postdivorce parenting, *chapter 2* examined changes in nonresident father contact in the Netherlands, both in daytime contact and overnight contact, across divorce cohorts from 1949 to 1998. Given the social and legal developments surrounding postdivorce fatherhood in the last decades, we expected that nonresident father contact increased over time. To explain the increase in nonresident father contact over time, we focused on the role of father involvement during marriage. Based on the idea that in the last decades fathers have become more involved in child rearing during marriage, we suggested that men give more importance to their father role during and after divorce and consequently remain more engaged in their children's lives after divorce. Finally, we proposed that with the growing emphasis on fathers' child care responsibilities and their strengthened legal position, father involvement during marriage may have become more important for postdivorce contact over time. Our results indicated that for the investigated time period, both daytime and overnight contact between children and their nonresident fathers sharply increased. We also found that father involvement during marriage partly accounted for the increase in nonresident father contact over time. Father involvement during marriage was positively related to postdivorce daytime contact and overnights stays, and we found that over time fathers have become slightly more involved in child rearing during marriage. Furthermore, our results provided some support for the idea that over time father involvement during marriage has become more important for nonresident father-child contact after divorce. At least for daytime contact, we found that although father involvement was of little importance for nonresident father contact in earlier divorce cohorts, it mattered more strongly for daytime contact with the nonresident father in later divorce cohorts.

In *chapter 3*, we focused on differences in children's psychological well-being across postdivorce residence arrangements. Two concerns are often mentioned against the use of shared residence after divorce: shared residence exposes children to more conflict, and children in shared residence are suffering from instability due moving between parents' houses. It is also often argued that shared residence might be more harmful for children in conflicting divorce situations or in divorce situations where children are very young. Using direct measures of instability and parental conflict, such as the number of transitions between houses and the level of serious conflict and tensions between parents, we tested these concerns by investigating the association between instability and conflict and children's psychological well-being across mother, father, and shared residence. Our findings suggested that children in shared residence had fewer psychological problems than their counterparts in mother or father residence. We found, however, no support for the concern that higher levels of instability are negatively related to children's psychological well-being. Instead, it appeared that children who frequently changed between parents houses showed higher levels of psychological well-being than those who lived with one of the parents most of the time. Parental conflict, however, increased children's psychological problems and taking parental conflict into account in our models strongly decreased differences in child well-being between sole residence arrangements and shared residence. Furthermore, our results showed no support for the assumption that shared residence would be more harmful for child well-being in postdivorce situations with young children than for older ones. Finally, we found no evidence for the assumption that in high conflict families shared residence would be related to more psychological problems than in conflicting sole residence arrangements; in contrast, our results indicated that conflict was more harmful in father residence than mother or shared residence.

In *chapter 4*, we studied the link between postdivorce residence arrangements and the parent-child relationship quality. Because the bond between parents and children is thought to be dependent on the nature of the parental relationship (e.g., Erel & Burman, 1995), we investigated the mediating and moderating role of the postdivorce parental relationship for the association between residence arrangements and the quality of the parent-child relationship after divorce. In doing so, we concentrated on two aspects of the parental relationship: parental conflict and contact between parents. First, we assumed that the level of parental conflict and parental contact may vary between mother, father, and shared residence and

that these variations in the parental relationship may partly account for differences in relationship quality across postdivorce residence arrangements. Second, following an important argument in the literature on postdivorce parenting, we examined which residence arrangement is more appropriate for children when the postdivorce parental relationship is strained. Because children in shared residence are in closer contact with both parents after divorce, shared residence may be more harmful for the parent-child bond than sole residence in family situations with high levels of conflict or little contact between parents.

Our results showed that mother-child relationship quality was highest in mother and shared residence and lowest in father residence. Father-child relationship quality was highest in father and shared residence and lowest in mother residence. Because for both, the mother-child relationship as well as the father-child relationship differences in relationship quality were partly reduced when controlling for parental conflict and parental contact, we concluded that differences in the parent-child relationship across residence arrangements were partially the result of differences in the postdivorce parental relationship. Whereas parental conflict was negatively related to relationship quality with both parents, contact between parents was only positively associated with the bond between fathers and children. Furthermore, we investigated the moderating role of the postdivorce parental relationship by studying whether under certain family circumstances (high levels of parental conflict or low levels of contact between parents) shared residence was more detrimental for the parent-child relationship than sole residence. We found no support for the idea that shared residence was more detrimental for the parent-child bond in high conflict families than in low conflict ones. Instead, our findings suggest that parental conflict is more harmful for the parent-child relationship in sole residence arrangements. When parental conflict was low, differences in the parent-child bond across residence arrangements were relatively small, but that with increasing levels of conflict variations in relationship quality between sole and shared residence arrangements became more pronounced. Moreover, investigating the moderating role of parental contact, we found that differences in the parent-child bond between mother, father, and shared residence were larger in families with low levels of contact between parents than in those where contact between parents was high. Taken together, these results suggest that differences in the parent-child relationship between shared residence and sole residence arrangements are more pronounced when the parental relationship is strained (low contact between

parents, high conflict) than when parents maintain a positive relationship after divorce.

The last empirical chapter, *chapter 5*, explored the consequences of postdivorce residence arrangements for the wider family network, by investigating differences in children's contact with grandparents across postdivorce residence arrangements. Following from the parent-as-mediator theory (Monserud, 2005; Robertson, 1975), we suggested that residence arrangements may influence the grandparent-grandchild relationship via the parents. To explain variations in grandparent-grandchild contact between residence arrangements, we especially focused on the role of parental conflict. Parents with higher levels of conflict after divorce may be inclined to gatekeep their ex-families' access to the child, and the efficiency of this strategy may be contingent on the child's residence arrangement. Furthermore, in line with the idea that parents are more willing to gatekeep their ex-partner's family when their postdivorce relationship is strained, and that parents' effectiveness in restricting child access is dependent on the postdivorce residence arrangement, we also argued that differences in grandparent-grandchild contact across mother, father, and shared residence may be more pronounced in case of high parental conflict than in low conflict situations. We found that contact with maternal grandparents was highest when children lived with their mother after divorce, followed by shared residence, and lowest for children living in father residence. For contact with paternal grandparents our results showed that contact frequency was highest if children lived in father residence or shared residence, and considerably lower for children living with their mother after parental separation. Although parental conflict had little influence on children's contact with maternal grandparents, we found that parental conflict seemed to have a stronger influence on contact with paternal grandparents. Parental conflict was negatively related to contact frequency with grandparents along the paternal side. Furthermore, we found some evidence for the notion that parental conflict moderates the association between residence arrangements and grandparental contact. Our findings suggested for contact with maternal grandparents that increasing levels of conflict between parents widened the gap in grandparental contact between mother and father residence as well as between shared and father residence. Similarly, for contact with paternal grandparents it appeared that differences in grandparental contact between father and shared residence as well as mother and shared residence were more pronounced in high conflict divorced than in low conflict divorces.

6.3 General conclusions

Based on the findings of the empirical chapters of this dissertation, we derive four general conclusions. First, we can conclude from our findings that postdivorce parenting practices have been slowly changing towards a more equal division of postdivorce parenting as men have become more attached to the father role inside and outside marriage. In line with earlier research by Kalmijn and De Graaf (2000), and Amato, Meyers, and Every (2009), our research showed that during the last decades postdivorce parenting practices changed towards a greater involvement of divorced fathers in their children's lives. Compared to fathers from earlier divorce cohorts, we found that fathers who divorced more recently kept more contact with their children after divorce. Most of the change in nonresident father contact appeared between 1949 and the early 1990s, when nonresident father contact steadily increased, and leveled off in the 1990s after which only little change in nonresident father contact occurred. We also found that this increase in father contact over time was in part the result of fathers' greater involvement in child care during marriage. However, note that across divorce cohorts the increase in father involvement during marriage was only modest; suggesting that during the studied time period mothers still functioned as the main care givers for children during marriage. Furthermore, our results also suggested that possibly due to the growing social and legal emphasis on father's care taking responsibilities, over time father involvement in child care during marriage has gained significance for father-child contact levels after divorce. A possible explanation for this finding may be that in more recent divorce cohorts mothers, fathers, and judges may value father involvement during marriage more strongly when deciding on postdivorce contact schedules, or that involved fathers find more easily in the parenting role after divorce. And it is likely that these trends in postdivorce parenting have gained momentum in recent years.

Second, whereas it has been often suggested in the ongoing discussion on the risk and benefits of postdivorce residence arrangements for child well-being that shared residence may have adverse consequences for children's well-being after divorce (e.g., Harris-Short, 2010; Kline, Tschann, Johnston, & Wallerstein, 1989) our study did not support this claim. In contrast, it appeared from our investigation that shared residence promotes children's psychological and social well-being after divorce. Compared to children in mother residence, children in shared residence experienced higher levels of psychological well-being, kept in closer contact with

their paternal grandparents, and had better bonds with their fathers after divorce. Similarly, our study also suggested that shared residence benefits children more strongly than father residence. In comparison to children living with their father after divorce, children in shared residence had also less psychological problems, more contact with their maternal grandparents, and higher relationship quality with their mothers after divorce. Our investigation also yielded no support for the claim that in high conflict family situations shared residence is more harmful for children than sole residence. Although our results suggested that parental conflict is always harmful for the parent-child relationship, it appeared that parental conflict was especially harmful for children's well-being in sole residence arrangements. In conflicting family situations, shared residence may provide more possibilities for parents to compensate for the negative effects of parental conflict than sole residence arrangements (Fabricius & Luecken, 2007). This finding contradicts earlier research by McIntosh, Smyth, Kelaheer, and Long (2010), who suggested that shared residence may be more problematic for children in high conflict families than sole residence. Using a high conflict community sample McIntosh et al. (2010) found higher levels of behavioral problems after living 3 to 4 years in conflicting shared residence arrangements. Note, however, that the majority of parents in McIntosh et al.'s study did not voluntarily choose shared residence possibly limiting its generalizability to other populations and contexts. Based on the results of our study we can conclude that shared residence contributes to children's well-being after separation.

Third, our study showed that the postdivorce parental relationship matters for understanding differences in child outcomes across mother, father, and shared residence. As expected, the parental relationship was strongly associated with children's social and psychological well-being: higher levels of parental conflict decreased children's well-being, while frequent contact between parents after divorce was positively associated with child well-being. Moreover, accounting for the parental relationship in our analyses partly reduced differences in children's psychological and social well-being across postdivorce residence arrangements suggesting that differences in child well-being are partly the result of variations in the parental relationship after divorce. Interestingly, when studying children's social well-being it appeared from our results that the postdivorce parental relationship seemed to be especially important for children's social relationships with fathers and paternal grandparents. Whereas the postdivorce parental relationship mattered

only little for children's contact with maternal grandparents and the quality of the mother-child relationship, the parental relationship seemed to play a larger role for the father-child bond and contact with paternal grandparents. This finding may suggest that in conflicting family situations mothers are more likely to show gatekeeping behavior towards their expartner and their ex-partner's family to limit their contact with the child (Pruett et al., 2007). Because mothers mostly function as the child's primary care givers during marriage, they might be more likely take the role of permission givers for the child's contact with family members after divorce and this controlling behavior might be reinforced in conflicting postdivorce family situations (Pruett et al., 2003).

Fourth, we demonstrated that it is important to take selection effects into account when investigating differences in child well-being across mother, father, and shared residence. This dissertation has shown that shared residence parents are a special group among divorced parents. Parents who opt for shared residence after divorce are higher educated, possess higher income, live closer together after divorce, and have less conflicting divorces. When accounting for these socio-demographic characteristics of the shared residence group, differences in children's psychological well-being between shared residence and sole residence arrangements were strongly reduced. Moreover, it appears from our results that selection also plays a role for the father residence group, as no significant difference in children's psychological well-being between mother and father residence was found after including the selection factors in our analyses. Consequently, these findings do not only suggest that families in shared residence are a selective group, but also those parents who choose for father residence after divorce. Overall, our findings support the conclusion of Gunnoe and Braver (2001) that differences in child well-being across postdivorce residence arrangements can be partly attributed to factors that predispose the choice of the postdivorce residence arrangement and not to the residence arrangement itself.

6.4 Limitations and suggestions for future research

Although this study contributed to the existing literature in several ways, we also would like to acknowledge some limitations of our research. First, the cross-sectional nature of our data does not allow us to test the direction of the expected relationships and rule out endogeneity issues. Even though the theoretical mechanisms described in the literature suggest that residence arrangements

influence children's outcomes after divorce, reserved causality, however, remains possible (e.g., Brevik & Olweus, 2006; Fabricius & Luecken, 2007). For instance, children's well-being may also influence their postdivorce residence arrangement. It is likely that parents with children who are severely ill or already showed emotional and behavioral problems during the parents' marriage are less likely to opt for shared residence after divorce or may change the residence arrangement afterwards. In this case, children's predivorce levels of well-being would be the cause rather than the result of postdivorce residence arrangements. Another methodological issue of this dissertation that is related to the cross-sectional design of our study is the fact that our choice of possible confounders was limited by the data. Despite extending on previous research (e.g., Spruijt & Duindam, 2010) by controlling for a range of demographic characteristics of parents and children as well as controlling for the nature of their predivorce parental relationship, we cannot exclude that unmeasured confounders such as the parent-child relationship before divorce or parent's predivorce well-being may have influenced both the choice for a certain postdivorce residence arrangement as well as the child's well-being after divorce. To overcome these methodological shortcomings of our investigation, future research should make use of longitudinal data. Drawing on a longitudinal design would allow future research to put the causal relationship between postdivorce residence arrangements and child well-being into test and permit researchers to control for a broader range of possible confounders in order to disentangle causation and selection.

Second, in this study we relied on parent's reports of child well-being instead of using children's self-reports possibly reducing the reliability of our results. Even though the use of proxy reports is common in the literature (e.g., Melli & Brown, 2008; Kaspiew et al., 2009) it is important to note that parent's reports of child well-being might be influenced by social desirability. Among recently divorced parents, children's well-being may be a sensitive topic which may lead parents to report more positively about child outcomes (e.g., Emery, 1982). Moreover, it is possible that children's perspective on shared residence and their well-being after divorce differs greatly from parents' perspective. For example, Haugen (2010) suggests that those aspects of shared residence that adults consider beneficial for children (e.g., spending equal time with both parents) do not necessary need to be congruent with children's needs and wishes. For example, changing between parents' houses may allow children to see both of their parents regularly, but limit children's

ability to spend time on their own or decide on their whereabouts independently. Consequently, postdivorce residence arrangements might put burden on children that parents are little aware of (Haugen, 2010). To overcome the given problems that accompany the use of parents' reports of child well-being, we advise future research to make more use of children's self-reports whenever possible. This may not only help future research to get new insights into differences in child well-being across postdivorce residence arrangements, but also lead to interesting new research questions about differences in the experience of shared residence between parents and children. In cases that children are too young or unable to understand survey questions future research may want to consider the possibility of using third party reports of child well-being given by teachers or rely on observational data.

Third, we caution the generalizability of our results to other national contexts, as the normative and legal context of postdivorce parenting varies strongly between countries. Although in the last decades a trend towards a greater involvement of fathers in postdivorce parenting has been evident in many countries (e.g., Amato et al., 2009 for the US), the legal context for father involvement after divorce and shared parenting differs considerably across countries. For example, in Australia and Belgium, the legal focus on shared residence is relative strong, as the judge has to first consider the option of shared residence before deciding for another residence arrangement (Sondermans, 2013; McIntosh, 2009). In the Netherlands, the emphasis on shared residence is, however, less strong as the court has to first evaluate whether shared residence is in the best interest of the child before ordering this arrangement (Antokolskaia, 2011). Although we can only speculate how the legal context may influence our results, one possible effect may be that compared to Australia and Belgium shared residence may be less likely among conflicting divorces in the Netherlands. Consequently, we may conclude the positive effect of shared residence on child well-being may be stronger in the Netherlands than in other countries. To investigate whether our results also hold for other national contexts and to shed more light on the role of differing legal contexts, future studies may want to make use of a country comparative design.

Lastly, our findings regarding changes in postdivorce parenting and the consequences of postdivorce residence arrangements for child well-being may only apply to the time shortly after divorce due to the nature of the employed data. For example, in the NFN data, the majority of respondents is recently divorced (in 2010) which limits the possibility to generalize our results to the long-run.

Although our study suggests that on the short-run shared residence contributes to children's psychological and emotional well-being, future research should build upon our work by focusing on long-term outcomes for children such as children's educational achievement or their partnership careers. It would be interesting to see whether and how long-term outcomes for children differ between postdivorce residence arrangements. Moreover, taking a more long-term approach to studying the association between postdivorce residence arrangements and child well-being might also allow to study the stability of postdivorce residence arrangements, as some scholars have suggested that shared residence arrangements are quite unstable and often gradually turn into sole residence arrangements as time passes by (Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992; Smyth, 2009). To study this issue, future research may want to draw on the second wave of the NFN, which is currently in preparation.

6.5 Practical implications of the study

Notwithstanding the shortcomings mentioned above, our results provide important implications for some policy makers, family experts, and legal professionals regarding the ongoing debate on postdivorce parenting arrangements and risks and benefits of shared residence for children's well-being. In the Netherlands, since 2009 the new law "Wet bevordering voortgezet ouderschap en zorgvuldige scheiding" (Promotion of Continued Parenting and Proper Divorce Act) states that children have the right to equal care by both parents after divorce and parents are obliged to give a parenting plan to court in which they describe how they want to share their parental duties after divorce. With this new law the Dutch government promotes the use of shared residence after divorce and encourages both parents to stay involved in the child's upbringing after divorce (Ter Voert & Geurts, 2013).

First, although it appears from our results that shared residence contributes to children's well-being after divorce, it is important to keep in mind that shared residence should not be regarded as a universal solution in custody decisions. Because we found strong discrepancies in parental conflict and outcomes for children within the shared residence group, we advise legal professionals to be careful with prescribing shared residence in divorce cases. Legal professionals should also keep in mind that the positive association between shared residence and child well-being might be partly the result of parents' self-selection into shared residence. Our results have shown that parents with more desirable characteristics such as higher income, higher education, and less conflicting divorces are more inclined to

choose shared residence after divorce, and accounting for these differences strongly reduces the given differences in child well-being between sole residence and shared residence arrangements. Consequently, family professionals need to acknowledge that the positive effect of shared residence might somewhat be due to the more favorable characteristics of shared residence parents than shared residence itself (e.g., Breivik & Olweus, 2006; Gunnoe & Braver, 2001). Therefore, we advise family professionals to closely evaluate the parental situation when advising parents to choose for shared residence. Next to considering the parental situation, family and legal professionals may also want to pay close attention to children's needs when deciding for shared residence after divorce. Although having frequent access to both parents in shared residence may be desirable for many children, there may be certain groups of children who may not benefit from a shared residence arrangement such as children with health issues or mental problems. Because shared residence is not only demanding for parents, but also for children, legal professionals should take time to listen to children's wants and wishes.

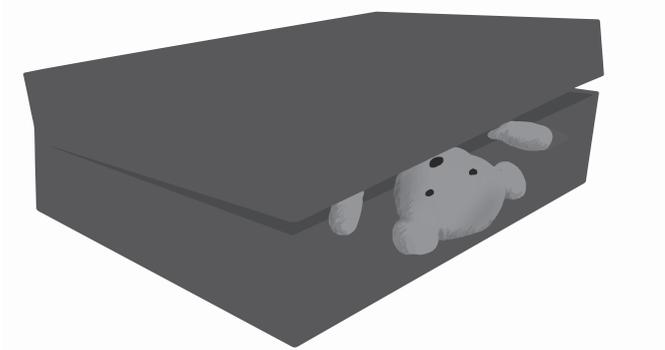
Secondly, our results showed that the parental relationship played an important role in explaining differences in child well-being across postdivorce residence arrangements. Our results suggest that when the parental relationship is strained after divorce, children's well-being is decreased regardless of the postdivorce residence arrangement. Especially higher levels of parental conflict are found to reduce children's well-being after divorce. One possibility to decrease parental conflict after divorce is the use of mediation sessions to help parents to settle disputes and improve their relationship (Emery, Sbarra, & Grover, 2005). Given the relative importance of the parental relationship for child outcomes after divorce evident from our results, we advise family professionals and legal experts to more strongly consider the possibility of mediation to decrease parental conflict when working with divorced families.

Third, contradicting the often named concern that when the postdivorce parental relationship is strained shared residence is more harmful for children's well-being, this study showed that in conflicting postdivorce families, shared residence is not more harmful for children's social and psychological well-being than sole residence. Instead, it appeared from our results that parental conflict is more harmful for children's well-being in sole residence arrangements. When the parental relationship was strained after divorce, parents in shared residence could better compensate the expartner's gatekeeping activities. Although this finding

needs to be interpreted carefully given the selective characteristics of the shared residence group and may require further investigation, it appears from our results that shared residence may help parents (and in turn their family members) in conflicting family situations to avoid being excluded from the child's life. Family lawyers and mediators may want to inform parents about these advantages of shared residence when discussing possible postdivorce residence arrangements for children.

6.7 Final conclusion

This study investigated changes in postdivorce parenting over time and examined the consequences of children's postdivorce residence arrangements for their well-being. We showed that in the last decades postdivorce parenting practices in the Netherlands changed towards nonresident father's greater engagement in their children's upbringing after divorce and this increase in father involvement seems to be the result of the increasing emphasis on fathers' care responsibilities during marriage and after divorce. Moreover, we showed with this study that child well-being differed between mother, father, and shared residence. Contradicting the concerns of the opponents of shared residence, our study showed that shared residence contributes to children's well-being after divorce. Children in shared residence did not only experience higher levels of psychological well-being than their counter parts in mother or father residence, but also possessed better relationships with their family members, especially with family members from the paternal side. These differences in child well-being were largely the result of the more positive characteristics of the shared residence group, with parents in shared residence possessing more favorable characteristics such as less conflicting divorces, higher incomes, and maintaining more friendly relationships after divorce than those in sole residence arrangements. Finally, we showed that in family situations where the parental relationship is strained after divorce shared residence is not more harmful for children's well-being than sole residence.



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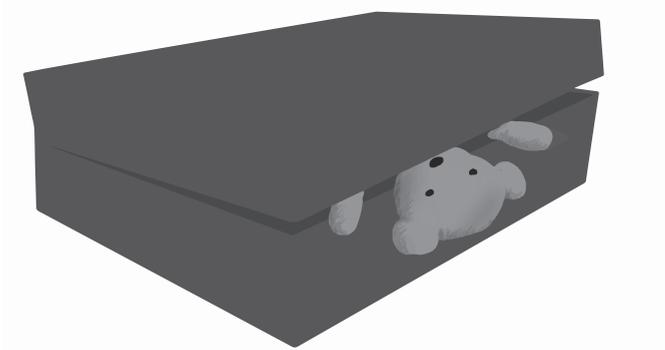


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Samenvatting in het nederlands

Inleiding

De ouderrol van vaders na een echtscheiding was vroeger doorgaans beperkt. Kinderen bleven na een echtscheiding vaak bij de moeder wonen. De rol van de vader was die van uitwonende ouder, waarbij, naast het betalen van alimentatie, betrokkenheid bij de kinderen gelimiteerd bleef tot bezoeken om het weekend en in vakantie periodes. Kinderen zouden hierdoor een groter risico lopen het contact met de vader te verliezen. Als gevolg van de beperkte betrokkenheid in het leven van hun kinderen werden vaders weggezet als “deadbeat dads”.

Meer recente signalen laten echter zien dat vaders steeds meer betrokken blijven bij de opvoeding van de kinderen na een scheiding. Binnen het nieuwe ideaalbeeld van de vader is de nadruk meer komen te liggen op zijn zorgzame kant.

Tegenwoordig wordt, mogelijk gerelateerd aan deze sociale verandering, gedeeld ouderschap na een scheiding binnen veel westerse landen gestimuleerd. Een voorbeeld hiervan is het aannemen van de wet ‘Bevordering Voortgezet Ouderschap en Zorgvuldige Scheiding’ in 2009 in Nederland, waarin staat dat kinderen recht hebben op gelijke zorg van beide ouders na een scheiding. Hiermee probeert de overheid ouders aan te moedigen om de opvoeding van de kinderen gezamenlijk te blijven doen. Met een grotere nadruk op gedeeld ouderschap na een scheiding krijgt “verblijfsco-ouderschap” – een regeling waarbij het kind afwisselend bij beide ouders woont na een scheiding – steeds vaker de voorkeur als ouderschapsregeling in Nederland. Sinds 1998 is het aantal kinderen dat in verblijfsco-ouderschap regelingen woont toegenomen van 5% tot 30% in 2011. Vergelijkbare cijfers zijn gerapporteerd voor Zweden en België.

Hoewel bepaalde onderzoekers en juristen verblijfsco-ouderschap na echtscheiding toejuichen omdat de betrokkenheid van beide ouders zou kunnen bijdragen aan het welzijn van het kind, blijven anderen sceptisch over de voordelen van verblijfsco-ouderschap, en bestaat er de vrees dat verblijfsco-ouderschap kinderen blootstelt aan conflictsituaties en een onstabiele leefomgeving.

Tegen deze context onderzoekt dit proefschrift de veranderingen in ouderschap na een scheiding en de gevolgen van verblijfsarrangementen, in het bijzonder verblijfsco-ouderschap, op het welzijn van kinderen. De hoofdvraag van dit proefschrift luidt: *In hoeverre zijn verblijfsarrangementen van kinderen na scheiding veranderd over de tijd en wat zijn de gevolgen van de verschillende verblijfsarrangementen (i.h.b. verblijfsco-ouderschap) voor het welzijn van kinderen?*



Veranderingen in uitwonend vader contact over scheidings-cohorten

Hoofdstuk 2 analyseert veranderingen in uitwonend vader contact in Nederland over de verschillende scheidings-cohorten tussen 1949 en 1998. Gegeven de sociale en juridische ontwikkelingen omtrent het vaderschap na scheiding de laatste tientallen jaren, ligt een toename van het contact tussen kinderen en uitwonende vaders in lijn der verwachtingen. Als hypothese wordt gesteld dat deze toename in contact te verklaren is door de hogere prioriteit die vaders stellen aan het bijdragen aan zorg- en opvoedingstaken tijdens het huwelijk. Dit samen met een sterker wordende juridische positie van de vader zou een toename in contact tussen kinderen en uitwonende vaders na een scheiding kunnen verklaren. Resultaten tonen aan dat gedurende de onderzochte tijdsperiode het contact met uitwonende vaders zowel overdag als s 'nachts sterk is toegenomen. Deze toename is deels te verklaren door de hogere toewijding van vaders binnen opvoedingstaken al tijdens het huwelijk. Hiernaast blijkt dat de betrokkenheid van vaders een sterkere invloed heeft op de intensiteit van contact met de kinderen in latere tijdsperioden. Voor overdag contact blijkt dat toewijding van vaders tijdens het huwelijk weinig invloed heeft in eerdere scheidings-cohorten, waar het effect sterker wordt voor latere scheidings-cohorten.

Verblijfsarrangementen en psychologisch welzijn van kinderen na echtscheiding

Hoofdstuk 3 richt zich op de verschillen in het psychologisch welzijn van kinderen binnen een verblijfsco-ouderschap, moeder-, of vaderverblijf. In relatie tot verblijfsco-ouderschap worden twee kritiekpunten vaak genoemd: verblijfsco-ouderschap zou kinderen in hogere mate blootstellen aan conflictsituaties, en ten tweede zou het kind last hebben van de instabiliteit die gepaard gaat met het wisselen tussen huishoudens. Naast deze punten wordt ook gesuggereerd dat verblijfsco-ouderschap een groter negatief effect kan hebben bij een conflictueuze relatie tussen ex-partners, en naar mate kinderen jonger zijn. Hoofdstuk 3 onderzoekt deze factoren in relatie tot het psychologisch welzijn van kinderen binnen de verschillende verblijfsarrangementen. Resultaten tonen aan dat kinderen in verblijfsco-ouderschap minder psychologische problemen hebben dan kinderen in moeder- of vaderverblijven. In plaats van het gesuggereerde negatieve

effect van het regelmatig wisselen tussen huishoudens, blijkt er dus een positieve relatie te bestaan tussen verblijfsco-ouderschap en het welzijn van kinderen. Met betrekking tot de leeftijd van de kinderen is er geen bewijs gevonden dat verblijfsco-ouderschap schadelijker zou zijn voor het welzijn van jongere versus oudere kinderen. Verder vindt Hoofdstuk 3 dat conflictsituaties het psychologisch welzijn van kinderen verlagen. Conflictsituaties blijken hiernaast de verschillen in welzijn tussen kinderen uit verschillende verblijfsarrangementen te vergroten. Ten slotte is er geen bewijs gevonden dat conflictsituaties in verblijfsco-ouderschap een sterkere negatieve invloed hebben op het welzijn van kinderen in vergelijking tot conflictsituaties binnen moeder- of vaderverblijven.

Verblijfsarrangementen en ouder-kind relaties na echtscheiding

Hoofdstuk 4 onderzoekt de relatie tussen verblijfsarrangementen na echtscheiding en de ouder-kind relatie. Omdat de kwaliteit van de band tussen ouder en kind mede afhankelijk is van de relatie tussen beide partners, analyseert Hoofdstuk 4 de mediërende en modererende effecten van de relatie tussen ex partners na echtscheiding. Twee aspecten van de relatie tussen ouders worden hierin meegenomen: conflicten tussen ouders, en het contact tussen ouders. Hiernaast analyseert Hoofdstuk 4 welk verblijfsarrangement meer geschikt is voor kinderen wanneer de relatie tussen ex-partners conflictueus is.

Resultaten laten zien dat de kwaliteit van de moeder-kind relatie het hoogste is in moederverblijven en verblijfsco-ouderschap, en het laagst in vaderverblijven. De kwaliteit van de vader-kind relatie was het hoogste in vaderverblijven en verblijfsco-ouderschap, en het laagst in moederverblijven. Met betrekking tot de mate van conflict tussen beide ouders laten resultaten een negatief verband zien voor zowel de moeder-kind als de vader-kind relatie. De intensiteit van contact tussen beide ouders heeft enkel een positieve invloed voor de vader-kind relatie. Bij het meenemen van de conflict- en contact indicatoren tussen ouders in de modellen werden de verschillen in kwaliteit van de ouder-kind relatie over verblijfsarrangementen kleiner. Verschillen in de ouder-kind relatie over verblijfsarrangementen blijken dus voor een deel afhankelijk te zijn van de relatie tussen ex-partners.

Hoofdstuk 4 heeft ook onderzocht of schadelijke familie omstandigheden, zoals een hoge mate van conflict tussen ouders en/of weinig contact tussen ouders, een sterker negatief effect heeft op de band tussen ouder en kind binnen verblijfsco-ouderschap in vergelijking tot moeder- en vader verblijven. Resultaten tonen aan



dat meer conflicten en minder contact tussen ouders juist schadelijker is voor de ouder-kind relatie binnen moeder- en vaderverblijven. In geval van een goede relatie tussen ex-partners waren de verschillen in de ouder-kind verhouding tussen verblijfsco-ouderschap, moeder- of vaderverblijf relatief klein.

Verblijfsarrangementen en contact tussen kinderen en grootouders na echtscheiding

Hoofdstuk 5 analyseert de effecten van verschillende verblijfsarrangementen na een scheiding op de relatie tussen kinderen en grootouders. Vanuit de ouder-als-mediator theorie suggereren we dat verblijfsarrangementen de grootouder-kleinkind relatie kan beïnvloeden via de ouders. Om verschillen in grootouder-kleinkind contact tussen verschillende verblijfsarrangementen te verklaren kijken we naar de mate van conflict tussen ouders. Ouders met een conflictueuze relatie na een scheiding hebben mogelijk een grotere behoefte om het contact tussen het kind en de familie van de ex-partner te blokkeren. De effectiviteit van de inspanningen om dit contact te beperken is mede afhankelijk van het verblijfsarrangement van het kind. In het verlengde hiervan suggereert Hoofdstuk 5 ook, dat verschillen in grootouder-kleinkind contact tussen de verschillende verblijfsarrangementen groter zijn, als er sprake is van veel conflict.

Bevindingen in Hoofdstuk 5 tonen aan dat contact met grootouders aan de kant van de moeder het hoogste is wanneer kinderen bij de moeder wonen na een scheiding, gevolgd door kinderen in verblijfsco-ouderschap. Contact met grootouders aan de kant van de vader is het hoogste binnen vaderverblijven, gevolgd door kinderen in verblijfsco-ouderschap. Waar conflicten tussen ouders weinig invloed hebben op het contact tussen kinderen en grootouders aan de kant van de moeder, verminderd ouderlijk conflict het contact met grootouders aan de kant van de vader. Ten slotte laten resultaten zien, dat verschillen in de kwaliteit van de grootouder-kind relatie tussen de verblijfsarrangementen duidelijker uitkomen in scheidingen met meer conflicten dan bij scheidingen met minder conflicten.

Conclusie

De empirische bevindingen binnen de hoofdstukken van dit proefschrift leiden tot vier generieke conclusies. Allereerst zijn over de tijd zorg- en opvoedingstaken binnen ouderschap na echtscheiding steeds meer op gelijke voet verdeeld tussen moeders en vaders. In overeenstemming met voorgaand onderzoek vindt dit proefschrift dat gedurende de laatste decennia vaders een steeds grotere rol zijn gaan spelen in het leven van hun kinderen na een scheiding. Deze toename in contact met uitwonende vaders komt deels doordat vaders ook tijdens het huwelijk steeds meer zijn gaan bijdragen aan zorg- en opvoedingstaken. De groeiende sociale- en ook juridische aanmoedigingen richting de zorgzame kant van de vader heeft mogelijk bijgedragen aan deze beweging.

Ten tweede vindt dit proefschrift geen bewijs dat verblijfsco-ouderschap negatieve gevolgen heeft voor het welzijn van kinderen na een scheiding. In tegendeel, resultaten laten juist een positief verband zien tussen verblijfsco-ouderschap en zowel het psychologisch als het sociaal welzijn van kinderen na een scheiding. In vergelijking tot kinderen in moederverblijven hebben kinderen in verblijfsco-ouderschap een hoger psychologisch welzijn, nauwer contact met grootouders aan de kant van de vader, en een betere band met de vader na een scheiding. In vergelijking tot een verblijf bij de vader hebben kinderen in verblijfsco-ouderschap een hoger psychologisch welzijn, meer contact met grootouders aan de kant van de moeder, en een betere relatie met hun moeder na een scheiding. Met betrekking tot conflictsituaties tussen ouders blijkt verblijfsco-ouderschap beter voor het welzijn van kinderen in vergelijking tot moeder- of vaderverblijven. Juist binnen moeder- of vaderverblijven blijkt conflict een grotere negatieve impact te hebben op het welzijn van kinderen. Concluderend stelt dit proefschrift dat verblijfsco-ouderschap mogelijk meer mogelijkheden biedt aan ouders om de negatieve gevolgen van conflictsituaties te compenseren.

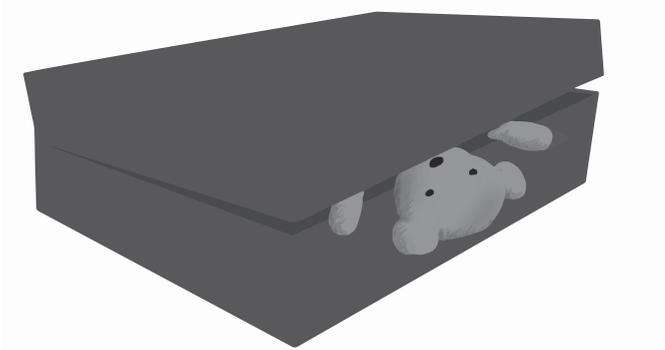
Ten derde laat dit onderzoek zien dat de relatie tussen ouders na een scheiding een impact heeft op de uitkomsten voor het welzijn van kinderen binnen moeder-, vader-, en co-ouderschapverblijven. In lijn der verwachtingen vindt dit proefschrift een sterk verband tussen de relatie tussen ouders na scheiding en het sociaal en psychologisch welzijn van kinderen: Een moeizame en conflictueuze relatie tussen de ex-partners heeft een negatieve impact op het welzijn van kinderen, waar frequent contact tussen ouders na een scheiding een positieve uitwerking heeft op het welzijn van kinderen. Bij het meenemen van de relatie tussen ouders in onze analyses



namen verschillen in het welzijn van kinderen tussen verblijfsarrangementen af. Dit suggereert, dat verschillen in welzijn tussen verblijfsarrangementen deels verklaard kunnen worden door de relatie tussen ouders.

Ten slotte laat dit proefschrift zien dat ouders die kiezen voor co-ouderschap bepaalde karakteristieken genieten. Zo hebben ze meer sociaaleconomische hulpbronnen en minder conflicten met de ex-partner in vergelijking tot andere ouders. Deze positieve karakteristieken verklaren voor een groot deel het hogere niveau van welzijn voor kinderen in verblijfsco-ouderschap.





About the author

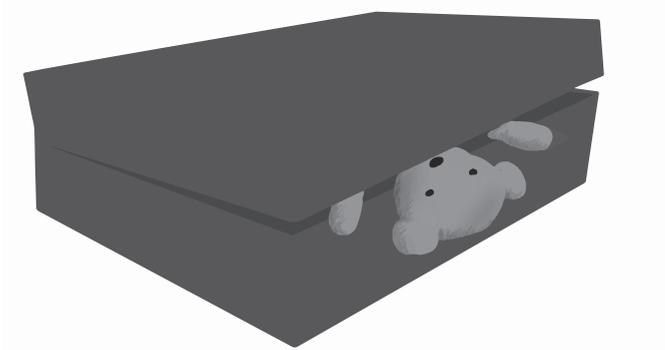


Sarah Katharina Westphal was born on 10 December 1984 in Düsseldorf, Germany. She completed her secondary education at Albert-Einstein Gymnasium, Kaarst. In 2008, she obtained her Bachelor's Degree in Social Sciences from the Heinrich-Heine University, Düsseldorf. During her studies at Heinrich-Heine University, Sarah held positions as student assistant and teaching assistant. In 2010, Sarah obtained her Master's Degree in Sociology and Social Research (cum laude) from Utrecht University.

This book is the result of her dissertation research at the Interuniversity Center for Social Theory and Methodology (ICS) at Utrecht University under the supervision of Anne-Rigt Poortman and Tanja van der Lippe. During her employment at the ICS Sarah has been a member of the New Families in the Netherlands Survey Fieldwork team, the Shared research group, and coordinator of the New Families in the Netherlands data cleaning team. In fall 2012, Sarah was a visiting research fellow at Nuffield College, Oxford University.

The different empirical chapters of this book were presented at various international and national conferences. In 2013, she received a poster prize for her poster presentation at the workshop "Life-Course Transitions after Separation: Stepfamilies, Lone and Non-residential Parenthood". Since February 2015, Sarah works as a Medior Data Analyst at ASR.





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