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What About the Grandparents? Children's Postdivorce Residence Arrangements and Contact With Grandparents

Despite the importance of grandparents in their grandchildren's lives, little is known about grandparent–grandchild contact after parental divorce. In this study, the authors investigated differences in grandparent–grandchild contact across 3 postdivorce residence arrangements (mother residence, father residence, and shared residence) using recent survey data from the Netherlands (N = 3,842). The results indicated that contact with maternal grandparents after divorce was highest in mother-residence arrangements, followed by shared residence and then father residence. Contact with paternal grandparents was highest for children in father-residence and shared-residence arrangements, followed by mother residence. Parental conflict had little influence on children's contact with maternal grandparents, but it decreased contact with paternal grandparents. Moreover, the results partly support the assumption that conflict moderates the relationship between residence arrangements and grandparental contact, with differences between residence arrangements being more pronounced in the case of high-conflict divorced families than in low-conflict ones.

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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 that have investigated 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 have shown 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 researchers explain these differences in postdivorce grandparental contact by pointing out that maternal kinship ties are generally stronger (Dench & Ogg, 2002), others

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 because of 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). In the present study we aimed to extend our knowledge of grandparental contact after divorce by examining children's contact with grandparents across different residence arrangements. We did this in three ways.

First, whereas most existing studies have compared grandparental contact between children in mother-residence arrangements and children in father-residence arrangements, we broadened the focus to include shared residence. *Shared residence*, also referred to as *shared care* or *joint physical custody*, describes an arrangement whereby 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; Statistics Netherlands, 2012), and similar trends have been 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 because it prevents paternal grandparents from being excluded (Douglas & Ferguson, 2003; Kaganas, 2007). By including shared residence in our study, we were able to evaluate this untested claim.

Second, to understand why grandparental contact varies across residence arrangements,

we used a theoretical framework based on the idea that parents are important mediators of 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 investigated 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 former in-laws' child access and that the effectiveness of this strategy may depend on the postdivorce residence arrangement.

Third, we examined whether parental conflict might also moderate the association between residence arrangements and grandparental contact. On the basis of 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 arrangements may be more pronounced in high-conflict than in low-conflict families.

We based our analyses on the New Families in the Netherlands survey (NFN; Poortman, Van der Lippe, & Boele-Woeki, 2014; $N = 3,842$), 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 have (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).

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) supported 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 expected that in shared residence child access is more equally distributed between the parents because

the child lives with both parents after the divorce. As a result, parents with shared-residence arrangements 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 (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1986; Cooney & Smith, 1996). 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 setups, 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.

On the basis of the access and need arguments, our first hypothesis read as follows:

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 arrangements.

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 arrangements.

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 parents' gatekeeping behavior toward each other and the ex-partner's family. *Gatekeeping* refers to 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) suggested that shared residence is chosen mostly by low-conflict families. Consequently, we expected that parental conflict and the degree of gatekeeping are lower in shared-residence than in sole-residence arrangements.

In addition to the level of conflict, residence arrangements might also influence parents' effectiveness when it comes to restricting child access. After a 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, in which there is generally more conflict and thus more 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 arrangements because of the restricted amount of time that parent spends with the child. On the basis of the idea that parents' level of conflict and their effectiveness at controlling child access varies across postdivorce

residence arrangements, we formulated the following hypothesis:

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

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

Moreover, on the basis of the given arguments, we expected 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, given that there will be many reasons for gatekeeping and, as a consequence, a parent's gatekeeping ability will matter more. On the basis of these arguments, we expected that in high-conflict situations, contact with the maternal grandparents will be lowest when the child resides with the father because 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 fall in between these two extremes, with both parents being equally effective at gatekeeping contact with their former in-laws. Note that we expected the same differences in high-conflict cases as postulated in Hypothesis 1. For paternal grandparents, the reverse holds because contact is about mother's ability to gatekeep. Our third hypothesis therefore read as follows:

Hypothesis 3A: With regard to child contact with the maternal grandparents, the differences between mother-residence, shared-residence, and father-residence arrangements (as postulated in Hypothesis 1A) 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 arrangements (as postulated in Hypothesis 1B) 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 took into account several characteristics of the child, parent, and grandparent 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.

METHOD

Sample

To test our hypotheses, we used data from the NFN survey (Poortman, Van der Lippe, & Boele-Woelki, 2014), 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 one 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. When we compared the sample characteristics of the NFN with representative Dutch statistics, we found 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 selected only respondents who had a minor child from a heterosexual relationship living in a mother-, father-, or shared-residence arrangement 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 1 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 because our data did not contain this information. It is unlikely, however, that the lack of information on coresidence has influenced our results, given that earlier research suggests that coresidence of grandparents is rare in the Netherlands (<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 to only 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 age 10 years selected their oldest child, and respondents with children above age 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.

Measures

Similar to previous research (e.g., Hilton & Macari, 1998), we measured *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 [$100 \times (e^{Bx} - 1)$].

Independent Variables

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 [xxxx]." We recoded this variable to distinguish three dummy variables: (a) *mother residence* (1 = yes, 0 = no), (b) *father residence* (1 = yes, 0 = no), and (c) *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, Venassche, 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: (a) predivorce conflict, (b) tensions, and (c) serious conflict.

Predivorce conflict was included to control for parent's possible selectivity on the conflict measures, given that parents who set up shared-residence arrangements may be more likely to have had lower levels of predivorce conflict (Smyth et al., 2004). Respondents were asked how often different conflicts had 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 awhile,' '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 so it ranged from 0 to 15.

Tensions captured the current level of tension between divorced/separated parents. Respondents were asked, "How often are there currently tensions 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 the 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 as follows: Predivorce conflict and serious conflict correlated .43, predivorce conflict and tensions correlated .31, and serious conflict and tensions correlated .57. Although these are only moderate correlations, a possible overlap between our predivorce and postdivorce conflict measures should be acknowledged in the interpretation because we may have overcontrolled for parental conflict.

Controls

Our analyses controlled for *child's gender*, *grandparent's gender*, and *parent's gender* (0=female, 1=male) because mothers are found to stay in closer contact with relatives than fathers and grandmothers reported more frequent contact with grandchildren than grandfathers (Chan & Elder, 2000; Uhlenberg & Hammill, 1998). We included *child's age*, measured in years, in our models, given that grandparental contact is found to decrease as children grow older (Oppelaar & Dykstra, 2004). Furthermore, we accounted for *child's number of siblings*, a continuous variable, because bigger families may create more occasions for contact (Oppelaar & Dykstra, 2004). *Parent's education* was included in our analyses as a proxy for parent's socioeconomic status and liberal family values. Highly educated parents may have greater financial resources and more liberal family values than those with less education and therefore rely less on grandparents' help with child care after divorce. Parent's education was measured by three dummy variables: (a) low education, (b) intermediate education, and (c) high education. Low education includes respondents who reported having no primary education, having only primary education, or having 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, the high-education category included respondents with higher vocational training, university education, or postuniversity education (0=no high education, 1=high education). *Parent's age* was measured in years. *Dissolution of cohabitation union* was 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 would be the same for 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*

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Dependent and Independent Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Range
Dependent variables			
Contact with grandparents	44.19	67.79	0–365
Contact with grandparents (log)	3.01	1.36	0–5.9
Independent variables			
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
Residence arrangement			
Mother residence ^a	0.67		0–1
Father residence ^b	0.05		0–1
Shared residence ^c	0.28		0–1
Controls			
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
Child characteristics			
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
Grandparent's characteristics			
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 deviations are not reported for dichotomous variables.

^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.

(0=one grandparent alive, 1=both grandparents alive) because previous research indicates that children have more contact with grandparents if both grandparents of a lineage are alive (Monserud, 2008). The descriptive statistics for all variables are shown in Table 1.

Analytical Strategy

Our analyses begin with a description of differences in grandparent–grandchild contact across residence arrangements (see Figure 1), before we present the multivariate results (see Tables 2 and 3). In the multivariate models, we made use of multilevel techniques.

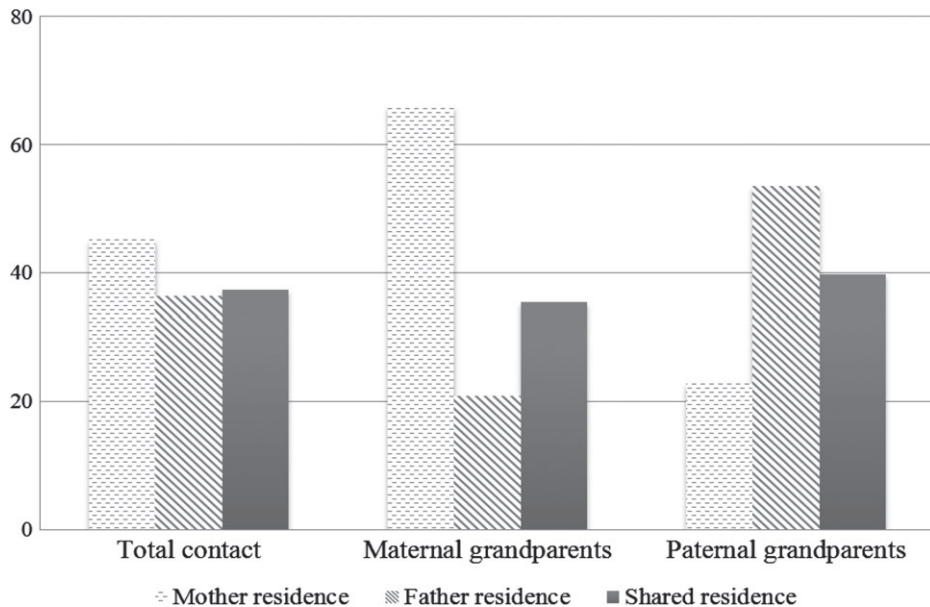
Both divorced parents participated in the study and reported on the same child’s contact with grandparents in about one third of the cases, so some children are represented twice in our data. In these cases, our data constitute repeated measurements of the child’s contact with the same grandparent as 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 parent or sometimes both parents. We took the child as the unit of analysis. We restructured our data so that every contact measurement in a grandparent–grandchild 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 multilevel modeling. We estimated unstructured variances for the lower level residuals to account for clusters of correlated responses associated with parents providing multiple measurements of the same grandparent–grandchild dyad. For all models estimated, we found a high residual correlation between the same parent’s reports on grandparent–grandchild 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,

FIGURE 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: $n = 3,291$.

Table 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	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>
Residence (ref.: mother residence)								
Shared residence			-.23*** ^a	.05	-.23*** ^a	.05	-.20***	.06
Father residence			-.79***	.09	-.79***	.09	-.52***	.15
Current tensions								
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
Controls								
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 education)								
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
Variance components/model								
<i>SD</i> (σ^{MMGF})	1.43	.02	1.42	.02	1.42	.02	1.42	.02
<i>SD</i> (σ^{MMGM})	1.25	.02	1.24	.02	1.24	.02	1.24	.02
<i>SD</i> (σ^{FMGF})	1.38	.03	1.36	.03	1.35	.03	1.35	.03
<i>SD</i> (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 χ^2	630.28		728.22		735.35		745.43	
BIC	17,341.06		17,277.75		17,297.44		17,324.15	

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; ref. = reference category; Corr. = correlation; BIC = Bayesian Information Criterion.

^aShared residence differs significantly from father residence.

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

the baseline model, contact with grandparents was regressed against the control variables. In Model 2, we added the residence arrangements to the regression to study differences in contact with grandparents. Mother residence

was used as the reference category for contact with maternal grandparents (see Table 2), and father residence constituted the reference in Table 3. We also rotated the reference categories to see whether differences between the other

Table 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	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>
Residence (ref.: father residence)								
Mother residence			-.74***	.10	-.76***	.09	-.42**	.15
Shared residence			-.15 ^a	.10	-.20 ^a	.10	-.02	.16
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
Controls								
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 education)								
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
Variance components/model								
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 χ^2	320.04		522.64		556.57		585.25	
BIC	14,936.41		14,775.99		14,772.54		14,781.63	

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^{FPGM} = Residual error of father's reports on paternal grandmother, σ^{FPGF} = Residual error of father's reports on paternal grandfather. ref. = reference category; Corr. = correlation; BIC = Bayesian Information Criterion.

^aShared residence differs significantly from mother residence.

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

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.

RESULTS

Descriptive Results

Figure 1 shows children's yearly contact with grandparents for children in mother-residence, father-residence, and shared-residence arrangements. Children's overall grandparental contact

was 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 found that children's contact with maternal grandparents was highest in mother-residence (66.1), followed by shared-residence (35.5) and then father-residence (20.8) arrangements. Contact with paternal grandparents was highest in father residence, with about 53.6 contacts, followed by shared residence (39.8) and then mother residence (22.7). Taken together, the data in Figure 1 suggest that children's contact varied across living arrangements, with contact differences appearing to be greater between mother- and father-residence arrangements and mother- and shared-residence arrangements and less pronounced between father- and shared-residence arrangements.

Contact with maternal grandparents. The results of the multilevel regression analyses for the log of children's yearly contact with maternal grandparents are presented in Table 2. We begin by presenting the baseline model (Model 1). Compared to mothers, fathers reported significantly less contact with maternal grandparents. Parent's age was 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 found that, compared to highly educated parents, parents with low and intermediate levels of education reported more contact with maternal grandparents. Child's age significantly decreased contact with maternal grandparents, possibly because parents of older children may require less assistance with child care from grandparents. Moreover, we found that grandparent's gender significantly influenced 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 had about 20.9% more contact with their maternal grandparents if both maternal grandparents were alive. We found no significant effects for number of siblings, child's gender, and dissolution of cohabitation union on contact with maternal grandparents.

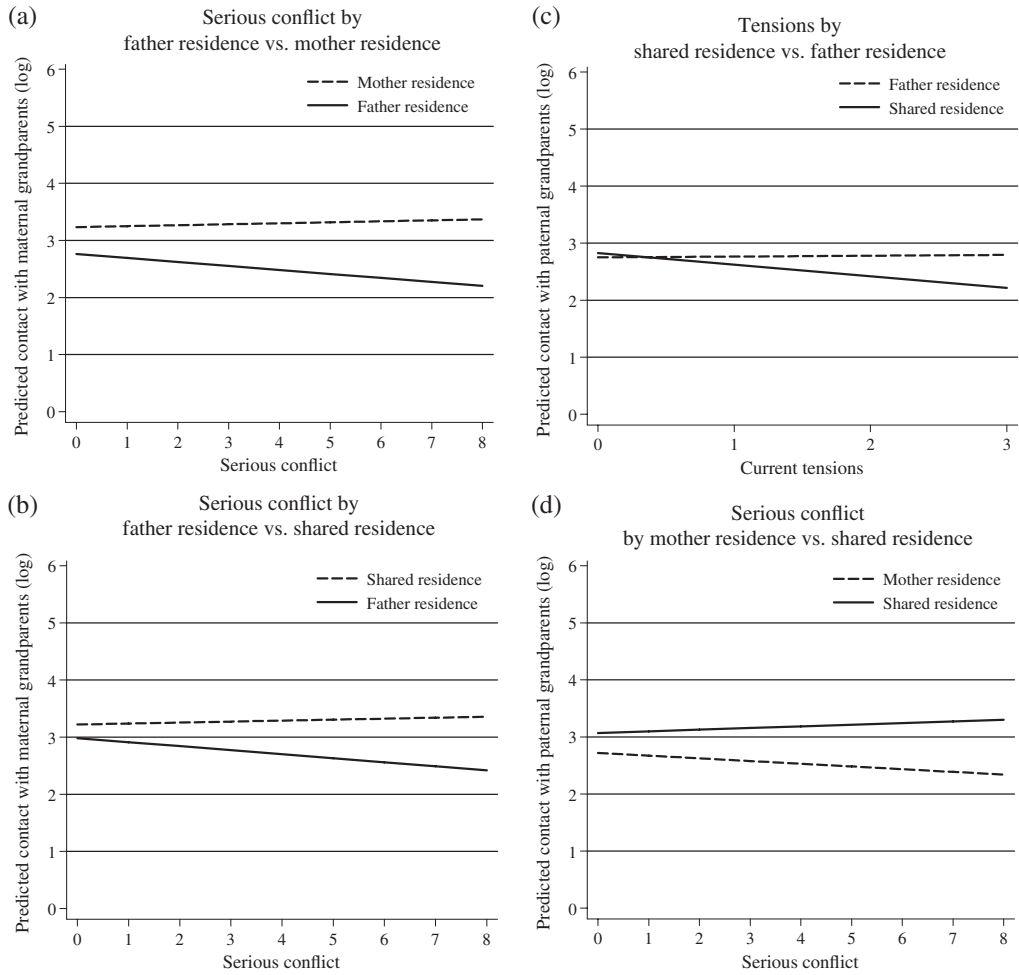
Model 2 includes child's postdivorce residence arrangements. The model shows that,

compared to children in mother-residence arrangements, children in shared-residence arrangements had about 25.9% less contact with their maternal grandparent ($b = -0.23$, $p < .001$). For father residence, we found that this effect is even stronger: Children living with their father had about 120.3% less contact with their maternal grandparents than those who lived with their mother ($b = -0.79$, $p < .001$). We should bear in mind that the father-residence group was rather small in our sample at about 5% (see Table 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 suggested that contact with maternal grandparents differed 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 arrangements.

In Model 3, we added the conflict measures to the regression equation. Tension and serious conflict were not significantly related to contact with maternal grandparents. Even so, it appears that predivorce conflict significantly decreased children's contact with maternal grandparents, although this effect was rather small ($b = -0.01$, $p < .05$). A comparison of the effect sizes for the residence arrangements with those in Model 2 revealed no changes when controlling for conflict. On the basis of these results, we conclude that parental conflict plays only 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 found that only the interaction term between father residence and serious conflict was 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 (see Figure 2, Panel a). Finally,

FIGURE 2. EFFECTS OF PARENTAL CONFLICT ON CONTACT WITH MATERNAL AND PATERNAL GRANDPARENTS BY CHILDREN'S POSTDIVORCE ARRANGEMENTS.



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 was significant only for father residence and serious conflict ($b = -0.09, p < .05$). Children who lived with their fathers and whose parents are in serious conflict had less contact with their maternal grandparents than those living in high-conflict shared-residence arrangements (see Figure 2, Panel b). Overall, our results show that differences between residence arrangements were more pronounced in high-conflict situations than in low-conflict ones, thus supporting Hypothesis 3A.

Contact with paternal grandparents. The results of the mixed-model regression for the log of children's contact with paternal grandparents are shown in Table 3. Model 1 includes only the controls. Parent's gender was 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 was negatively related to contact with paternal grandparents. We also found that older children have significantly less contact with the paternal side of the family than younger ones. Moreover, paternal grandfathers had about 23.4% less contact with grandchildren than grandmothers did. Having two surviving

grandparents increased children's contact with grandparents by about 43.3%. We found 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 found significant differences across residence arrangements in regard to contact with grandparents. Compared to children living in father-residence arrangements, children living with their mother after divorce had about 109.6% less contact with their paternal grandparents. When we compared shared-residence and father-residence arrangements, however, we found no significant differences in contact with paternal grandparents. Rotating the reference category to investigate whether contact with paternal grandparents also differed between mother and shared residence, we noted that children in mother-residence arrangements had less contact with paternal grandparents than those in shared-residence arrangements ($b = -0.59, p < .001$). In sum, our results suggest that the degree of contact with paternal grandparents was highest in father- and shared-residence arrangements, and lowest in mother-residence arrangements, thus partly supporting our Hypothesis 1B.

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

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 reached significance, suggesting a larger discrepancy between father- and shared-residence arrangements in the contact with paternal grandparents when tensions were running high (see

Figure 2, Panel c). To check whether the effect of tension on contact with grandparents also differed between mother- and shared-residence arrangements, we changed the reference category and found that the interaction between mother-residence arrangements and serious conflict reached significance (Figure 2, Panel d). Contact with paternal grandparents differed little between mother- and shared-residence arrangements in low-conflict situations, but in high-conflict situations contact differences between these two arrangements became increasingly pronounced. Taken together, our results suggest that higher levels of conflict increased the differences in contact with paternal grandparents between both father- and shared-residence arrangements and mother- and shared-residence arrangements, thus supporting Hypothesis 3B.

DISCUSSION

Only a handful of studies have investigated grandparent–grandchild contact after divorce. Using new large-scale data from the Netherlands, this study is one of the first to investigate children's contact with grandparents across different postdivorce living arrangements. We have 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 arrangements, 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 for those in mother

residence. Consistent with earlier research conducted 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, given that 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, grandparents' 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 did find that parental conflict was 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 show conflict as having a significant effect on contact only 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 argued that mothers' gatekeeping behavior might result from parental role division in child care. From infancy onward, mothers function as the child's primary caregivers 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 who 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 arrangements as well as between shared- and father-residence arrangements. Two explanations for these findings are possible. First, reduced contact with maternal grandparents for children in a high-conflict father-residence arrangements might result from fathers exhibiting gatekeeping behavior toward the maternal grandparents. Hilton and Macari (1998) suggested 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 the father's custody, maternal grandparents may be more likely to withdraw from contact with their grandchildren after divorce because they may feel that contact is unpleasant for the grandchild. In regard to contact with

paternal grandparents, our findings indicate that higher levels of tension between parents may increase contact differences between father- and shared-residence arrangements. Moreover, our results show that higher levels of serious conflict increased the discrepancy in the child's contact with paternal grandparents between mother- and shared-residence arrangements. In conflictual 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 focused only on face-to-face contact with grandparents, consequently neglecting remote forms of contact, such as e-mail, 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 e-mail contact between grandchildren and grandparents (Holladay & Seipke, 2007). We thus encourage researchers to extend our work by investigating other forms of postdivorce grandparent–grandchild contact.

Second, because our data mostly came from recently divorced respondents, we must bear in mind that our conclusions may apply to grandparent–grandchild contact only in the period shortly after divorce and cannot be generalized to the long term. Because families usually go through a 2- to 3-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, because 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 in the long run, given that

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.

The third limitation is that our results may be biased because of the selective nonresponse of certain groups. In comparison to the Dutch population, men, younger people, immigrants, people from urban areas, and individuals from low-income families were underrepresented in our sample. 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 were underrepresented in our data, because individuals who have had a conflictual 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 was rather small in our sample (about 5%), possibly because of the underrepresentation of men in the data, which may limit the validity of our conclusions. Fifth, our measure of shared residence did not indicate how much time children actually spend at each home. Although children in shared-residence arrangements 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. Finally, because our study contained 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 grandparent–grandchild contact, we recommend

that researchers 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.

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