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**Parenting and fairness  
in diverse families**

**Tara Koster**



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# **Parenting and fairness in diverse families**

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# 1

## Synthesis

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## 1.1 Introduction

Families traditionally consisted of a two-parent family with the mother as the main caregiver and the father as the main earner. The family landscape, however, has changed. Several demographic trends have been among the most visible features of the recent decades of family change. First, with the substantial rise in divorce and repartnering in most Western countries from the late 1960s, fractured families have become increasingly prevalent. More and more children do not grow up with both biological parents in the household, but in a single-parent family or stepfamily. To illustrate, the percentage of Dutch minor children living in a single-parent or stepfamily increased from 14 to 22 percent between 1997 and 2017 (Van Gaalen & Van Roon, 2020). Second, there has been a clear rise in women's labor force participation since the 1970s. The labor force participation rate of Dutch women more than doubled from 30 percent in 1970 to 77 percent in 2020 (OECD, 2020). Although the figures vary across countries, this increase is typical to most Western countries.

These changes have an impact on parents' involvement in childcare and their fairness perceptions of the childcare division. Parenting is more complex after divorce (or more generally, separation) because parents live in multiple households—with children residing with one parent most of the time (i.e., sole residence) or living alternately with each parent (i.e., shared residence). When new partners enter parents' lives, this may lead to a further redefinition of parental roles and involvement. Such complexity likely also affects parents' fairness perceptions of the childcare division. Particularly after divorce, ex-partners often have conflicts and opposing interests, which may make them more critical about how childcare is divided. But also the massive movement of women into the labor force, which has not been followed by a proportional increase of men's involvement in children's care, may lead parents in non-divorced families to be more sensitive about the gendered division of childcare.

It is therefore essential to gain insight into parents' involvement in childcare and how they perceive the childcare division in terms of fairness. Not only because parental involvement and fairness perceptions may have come under pressure in contemporary families, but also because involvement and fairness are crucial for parental and child outcomes. Higher levels of parental involvement lead children to perform better in school, have higher levels of socio-emotional functioning and fewer problem behaviors (e.g., Amato, 2000; El Nokali et al., 2010; Fiorini & Keane, 2014), and parents themselves to report greater happiness and well-being (e.g.,

Musick et al., 2016; Nelson-Coffey et al., 2019). Also, when parents perceive the division of labor at home as fair has been shown to positively influence their well-being and marital stability (e.g., Dew & Wilcox, 2011; Polachek & Wallace, 2015). The central research question of this dissertation is: *To what extent are parents involved in childcare and do they perceive the childcare division as fair?*

This dissertation focuses on a wide range of non-divorced and postdivorce families and examines both behavior and fairness perceptions. It is important to do so for three reasons. First, contemporary families are diverse, and increasingly so. Concerning postdivorce families, shared residence has become an increasingly favored arrangement in many Western countries. In the Netherlands, the number of children living in shared residence increased from less than 5% in the 1980s to about 25% in 2013 (Poortman & Van Gaalen, 2017). Although it is still relatively uncommon for children to reside primarily with their fathers, there has been a non-negligible rise in father residence (Bernardi & Mortelmans, 2021). In addition, living-apart-together (LAT) relationships have become an alternative to marriage and cohabitation for divorced people (Liefbroer et al., 2015). As previous research has rarely paid attention to these emergent postdivorce family types, little is known about parental involvement and fairness perceptions of a growing group of parents in recent postdivorce families. In this dissertation, I consider a broad range of families, including these emergent postdivorce family types and non-divorced families. In doing so, I gain insight into how involvement and fairness in postdivorce families differ from that in non-divorced families, and whether there may be factors specific to postdivorce families, such as living in separate households, repartnering, or parental conflict that affect parents' involvement and their fairness perceptions.

Second, as both men and women have increased their time in childcare activities (Pailhé et al., 2021), childcare has become a more important part of people's lives—with potentially even a greater impact on parental and child outcomes. In light of this growing importance of childcare, it is surprising that so little research has investigated involvement in various parenting behaviors. Whereas most researchers have studied involvement in regular care, I also include involvement in leisure and irregular care and parents' influence in child-related decision-making. Although these latter three parenting behaviors may be less time-intensive and necessary for children's daily functioning, this does not imply that they are less important. In fact, parents' involvement in leisure or irregular care activities may capture quality time that may have stronger associations with child development and well-being

than involvement in regular care activities (Kendig & Bianchi, 2008; Zick et al., 2001). Including a broad range of parenting behaviors leads to a more complete picture of which parenting responsibilities parents across diverse family types do and do not take.

Third, fairness perceptions are key to parental and child outcomes, even more so than the actual division. Studies on non-divorced families have shown that it is perceived fairness rather than the actual division of labor that affects parents' well-being (Chong & Mickelson, 2016). Parents who perceive the division of labor at home as unfair have poorer mental and physical health (DeMaris & Mahoney, 2017; Polachek & Wallace, 2015), which likely also affect child well-being. Particularly in postdivorce families, unfairness perceptions of the division of childcare and the costs of children may fuel continuing conflict between ex-partners (Claessens & Mortelmans, 2021), even further reducing the well-being of the entire family. So far, fairness research is limited with its focus on the division of housework concerning non-divorced families. Given the importance of fairness perceptions for outcomes, it is necessary to provide insight into whether fairness perceptions may not be universal, but different depending upon the type of investment or family context. In this dissertation, I therefore investigate fairness perceptions of the division of housework and childcare in non-divorced families, and fairness perceptions of the division of childcare and child-related costs in postdivorce families.

## **1.2 Theoretical background and previous research**

In the following section of the dissertation, I provide an overview of the factors and theories used in explaining parental involvement and fairness perceptions. I also summarize the empirical literature on parental involvement and fairness perceptions to identify important shortcomings and gaps in the existing literature.

### **1.2.1 Research on parental involvement**

Different family types offer parents different opportunities for parental involvement. The literature generally draws on two explanatory factors: residence and the presence of a partner. First, parental involvement may depend upon the residence arrangement. Whereas in non-divorced families children live with both biological parents in the same household, after divorce children reside with one parent most of the time or live alternately with each parent. Essentially, there are four types of arrangements for parents: non-divorced, resident, shared residence, and nonresident. Parents who live with their children most of the time have greater

access to their children than those who do not. Living together in the same house allows parents to spend a lot of time with and be close to the children, which increases the opportunities for active parenting (Castillo et al., 2011; Furstenberg & Nord, 1985). This residence argumentation suggests that non-divorced parents and (shared) resident parents may be more involved with their children than nonresident parents, as the former (alternately) share a household with their children. Although non-divorced parents spend more time living with their children than (shared) resident parents, this does not necessarily mean that non-divorced parents are more engaged. This also depends on the second explanatory factor: the presence of a partner.

Regarding the presence of a partner, it is necessary to distinguish between having a partner who is the children's biological parent (i.e., non-divorced family) and a "new" partner who is the children's stepparent (i.e., postdivorce family). The way parents in non-divorced families raise their children is often collaborative (Pruett et al., 2006). Although women usually have more responsibility for parenting than men, non-divorced parents value and facilitate each other's involvement with their children. After divorce, when there is a reduction of care provided by the other biological parent, (shared) resident parents may even have more parenting responsibilities because they are in the position to provide children's daily care by themselves. Particularly for fathers, who usually perform a complementary role rather than being their children's primary caregiver during marriage, being the (shared) resident parent after divorce may relate to higher involvement with their children. After divorce, parents may also start a new relationship. Although some researchers have suggested that repartnering may increase the repartnered parent's involvement—for instance, because household chores can be shared with the new partner (Bastaitis & Mortelmans, 2017; Hetherington, 2006)—most scholars have suggested a negative impact of repartnering. The idea is that repartnering may distract parents from spending money for and time with their children from the prior union because they shift their attention to the new partner. Repartnered parents may perceive competing loyalties between their children and their partner, which may result in trading old parenting responsibilities for responsibilities to the new partner. Moreover, in the case of additional parenting obligations (i.e., step- and half-siblings), there may be even lower willingness or possibilities to spend money for or time with the children from the prior union. This tendency to shift resources from the old family to the new family has also been called "swapping families" (Manning & Smock, 2000; Manning et al., 2003).

Empirically, research has focused on the most common family types and a specific type of parenting behavior. When it comes to studied family types, research concerning residence has mostly focused on non-divorced parents, resident parents (usually mothers), and nonresident parents (usually fathers) (Lamb, 2000; Sweeney, 2010). Although this research has not often compared non-divorced parents with divorced parents (across different residence arrangements) in a single study, there is convincing evidence that nonresident parents are less involved with their children than non-divorced parents and resident parents (e.g., Carlson et al., 2017; Hawkins et al., 2006). As much less attention has been devoted to less common residence arrangements, it needs to be questioned, for instance, whether (shared) resident fathers are actually more involved with their children than non-divorced fathers. For similar reasons, what the role of gender is across different postdivorce family types has been largely left unanswered.

Regarding postdivorce repartnering, the literature typically refers to co-residing with the new partner. This literature is also largely separate from the residence literature and has mainly focused on nonresident fathers (Bastaitis & Mortelmans, 2017). Most studies have found a negative effect of repartnering on the money and time nonresident parents allocate to their children, or only in the case of new parenting obligations (e.g., Kalmijn, 2015a; McGene & King, 2012). More research is needed to ascertain the separate role of residence and repartnering, but also to examine their interplay. Because shared resident parents, and particularly resident parents, have greater and more continuing parenting responsibilities than nonresident parents, they may not shift their focus to the new partner as strongly as nonresident parents do.

When it comes to types of parental involvement, despite the wide plurality in its conceptualizations and measurements—from supervision to emotional support to parent-child activities (e.g., Bastaitis & Mortelmans, 2017; Hawkins et al., 2006; Lee & Hofferth, 2017; Pleck, 2010)—some parenting behaviors remain understudied. In the case of parent-child activities, most researchers have studied engagement in regular care—the more obligatory and regularly occurring activities necessary for children’s daily functioning. Less is known about engagement in more discretionary and less frequent activities. In addition to various parent-child activities, what is also lacking is how much influence parents have in childrearing decisions. Including these understudied parenting behaviors in research is important, as it may well be that the type of parenting behavior matters for the impact of residence and repartnering. For example, the negative effects of being



the nonresident parent or having a new partner may be the least consequential for parents' influence in childrearing decisions because decision-making influence is less bound by time restrictions than actual involvement in parent-child activities.

### 1.2.2 Fairness research

A prominent theory to understand fairness perceptions of the division of labor in intimate relationships has been equity theory. According to equity theory (Hatfield & Rapson, 2012; Walster et al., 1978), the division of labor is a key factor in explaining fairness perceptions. Equity theory assumes that partners evaluate what they invest in and receive from a relationship (Hatfield & Rapson, 2012; Walster et al., 1978). Equity occurs when the relative gains (i.e., outcomes relative to investments) of partners are equal. Assuming that the outcomes of a romantic relationship are distributed equally, this means that the relationship may be perceived as fair if the investments of the two partners are the same. If the investments are not the same, this may be perceived as unfair. An unfair relationship may be unfair in two ways (Walster et al., 1978): a person whose investments are higher than the partner's investments may feel unfairly disadvantaged (i.e., "underbenefit") and a person whose investments are lower tends to feel unfairly advantaged (i.e., "overbenefit"). Investments take many forms, such as performing unpaid or paid labor.

The empirical literature has tested equity theory only to a limited extent, by focusing on a specific investment without considering other investments, and without going beyond the non-divorced family context. So far, fairness research has applied equity theory primarily to the division of housework and implicitly assumes that housework is not that enjoyable. Housework may be evaluated negatively because of its boring and isolated nature (Coltrane, 2000). As people generally attach great weight to negative entities (Rozin & Royzman, 2001), partners may be critical about the division of housework, which suggests that equity may play an important role. Although research has shown that an unequal division of housework is often regarded as fair, it also holds that: the more unequal the housework division is, the less it is perceived as fair (e.g., Braun et al, 2008; DeMaris & Longmore, 1996; Young et al., 2015). This research generally tests equity theory without considering the total burden of labor. As women nowadays actively participate in paid work, the division of housework may be evaluated in relation to the total workload and not in isolation from other types of labor. For example, women's higher investments in housework may relate more strongly to unfairness perceptions the more hours women work for pay. Studies have mainly examined

the main effects of housework and paid labor (e.g., Baxter, 2000; Nordenmark & Nyman, 2003; Young et al., 2015), but overlooked the interplay between different types of labor (for exceptions, see Braun et al., 2008).

In the case of the other type of household labor, that is childcare, equity may be defined differently. People generally find childcare more enjoyable and rewarding to perform than housework (Poortman & Van der Lippe, 2009; Van Lenning & Willemsen, 2001). The more positive meaning of childcare suggests that people may focus less on equity, and thus leading to a weaker association between an unequal childcare division and unfairness perceptions.

In a postdivorce context, equity may play a particularly important role because ex-partners may place great emphasis on give and take. Whereas partners often engage in a form of specialization and act based on love and affection (Kluwer et al., 2002; Thompson, 1993), this works differently after divorce. Ex-partners can no longer adopt a pattern of specialization and pool their income, but they need to renegotiate how to divide care tasks and child expenses. Ex-partners may be more self-centered and critical about the division of childrearing responsibilities, especially when conflict is high. These arguments suggest that unfairness perceptions may be more widespread after divorce—but this is an existing knowledge gap because previous research has been largely silent about fairness perceptions in a postdivorce context (but see Claessens & Mortelmans, 2021).

### **1.3 Contributions of this dissertation**

This dissertation contributes to the literature in the following ways. First, I examine parental involvement across a wide range of postdivorce families, including emergent but rarely studied family types, such as shared residence, father residence, and LAT relationships. This not only does justice to the increased complexity of postdivorce families, but also allows for a more comprehensive examination of the role of residence, repartnering, and gender.

Second, I compare the parental involvement of divorced fathers with that of non-divorced fathers. Such a comparison across family contexts has not been systematically done in prior research, especially when it comes to including fathers in less common postdivorce residence arrangements. Doing so gives a greater insight into the reconfiguration of family roles triggered by a divorce. Divorced fathers are generally assumed to be less involved than non-divorced fathers, but possibly this impression needs to be nuanced when taking into consideration resident and shared resident fathers.

Third, this dissertation involves a broad range of parenting behaviors: parents' involvement in regular care, leisure and irregular care, and their influence in child-related decision-making—of which the latter three have been understudied. Given that these four parenting behaviors differ in time-intensity and the extent to which they might be considered as obligatory, I gain knowledge of whether the type of parenting behavior matters for the role of residence or repartnering.

Fourth, in addition to fairness perceptions of housework, I also look at fairness perceptions of childcare and child-related costs. The meaning of these time and money investments is different in terms of enjoyability and rewards, and so their divisions may relate differently to fairness perceptions. Moreover, I test the impact of total workload (i.e., taking into account paid labor) on people's fairness evaluations, which is crucial given that women nowadays actively participate in paid labor. Accordingly, this dissertation contributes to our understanding of whether fairness evaluations depend upon the type of investment or total workload.

Fifth, this dissertation goes beyond fairness research concerning non-divorced families, by also taking into consideration postdivorce families. Because ex-partners are in a different situation than partners—in which they no longer form a joint family and the division of childrearing responsibilities may be a conflict-sensitive issue—fairness perceptions may be different after divorce. Insights are thus gained into whether fairness evaluations depend upon the family context.

Sixth, I make use of unique data from the survey New Families in the Netherlands (NFN; Poortman et al., 2014, 2018, 2021). NFN includes extensive information about different types of parenting behaviors of large samples of both non-divorced and divorced parents, which allows for a comprehensive examination of parental involvement across a full array of diverse family types. In addition, both non-divorced and divorced parents reported on the division of different time and money investments and related fairness perceptions, so I am able to investigate whether fairness evaluations depend upon the family context or type of investment. More detailed information about the NFN data and its strengths can be found in the section below.

## **1.4 The NFN data**

The NFN data have been collected in 2012/13 (Wave 1), 2015/16 (Wave 2), and 2020 (Wave 3) (Poortman et al., 2014, 2018, 2021). Although NFN aimed at a main group of postdivorce families, data were also gathered among a control group of non-divorced families. The sampling for Wave 1 was done by Statistics Netherlands

(CBS). CBS has access to register data about the complete Dutch population, which allows for sampling on specific criteria, such as parenthood and marital status. The main sample consists of heterosexual parents with minor children who divorced or separated in 2010 (in short: divorced sample). The control sample consists of married or cohabiting heterosexual parents with minor children (in short: non-divorced sample). For both samples, both (former) partners were approached via mail and invited to complete a self-administered online survey or a paper-and-pencil version of the survey at the final reminder. The response rate of the non-divorced sample for Wave 1 was 45% on the individual and 56% on the household level (i.e., if just one of the partners participated this counts as a response on the household level), resulting in 2,173 non-divorced parents. For the divorced sample, the response rate was 39% among persons and 58% among former households, totaling 4,481 divorced parents. These response rates are relatively high considering the potentially difficult-to-reach target group of recently divorced parents and/or the online mode and are comparable to other family surveys in the Netherlands, a country known for low and declining participation rates (De Leeuw et al., 2018). Participants of Wave 1 who gave permission to be re-contacted and who could be reached, were invited to complete a follow-up survey in Wave 2. For the non-divorced sample, 70% did so, yielding 1,336 non-divorced parents (response rate on the household level 74%). For the divorced sample, 63% participated in Wave 2, yielding 2,544 divorced parents (response rate on the former household level 69%). A replacement sample was added in Wave 2 consisting of 920 divorced parents (drawn identically as for Wave 1) to compensate for panel attrition, totaling 3,464 divorced parents in Wave 2. For Wave 3, only parents from the divorced sample who lastly participated in either Wave 1 or Wave 2 were reapproached. The response rate was 68% among persons and 72% among former households, yielding 3,056 divorced parents in Wave 3.

The NFN data are perfectly suited for this dissertation, as indicated by the following unique features. As evident from the data description above, NFN is recent and contains large-scale data. Besides a large control group of married/cohabiting parents, CBS oversampled divorced/separated parents. This allows for examining parental involvement and fairness perceptions across diverse family types. Previous studies on parental involvement have mainly relied on older datasets, often without an oversample of postdivorce families (e.g., the first wave of data collection: Add Health 1994/96; Fragile Families 1998/2000; NSFH 1987/88). These data are, thus, limited in the inclusion of infrequent and more

recent postdivorce family types, such as father residence, shared residence, and LAT relationships. As NFN is recent and oversampled postdivorce families, it includes relatively large numbers of these less common and emerging postdivorce family types. For example, more than 25% of divorced parents in Wave 1 had shared residence or were in a LAT relationship. Other recent datasets oversampling postdivorce families are scarce, but the few there are contain smaller sample sizes of parents in less common postdivorce family types and/or less extensive measures of different parenting behaviors (e.g., DiF 2009/10).

NFN is particularly rich in its measures of parenting behaviors and fairness perceptions. Wave 2 includes extensive information about parents' involvement with their children in a broad range of parent-child activities (i.e., regular care, leisure, and irregular care), but also parents' influence in child-related decision-making. Moreover, NFN contains detailed information about the division of time and money investments, and related fairness perceptions. Wave 2 covers questions about the division of housework and childcare between partners, and related fairness perceptions. Wave 3 includes unique information about the postdivorce division of childcare and child-related costs between ex-partners, and whether they evaluate these divisions as fair. If other datasets include information on fairness perceptions, it is often about fairness perceptions of the division of housework and/or paid labor concerning non-divorced families (e.g., DiF 2009/10; Pairfam 2008/09 to 2019/20, but not included in all waves). Fairness perceptions of the division of childcare concerning non-divorced families are usually not included (but see, e.g., NSFH 1987/88), and as far as I am aware, other datasets do not cover fairness perceptions in a postdivorce family context.

## 1.5 Four empirical studies

In the four empirical chapters of this dissertation, I address the core research question on the extent to which parents are involved in childcare and perceive the childcare division as fair. Each empirical chapter focuses on a different aspect of the core research question. Note that this dissertation is not exhaustive because I was not able to make all possible distinctions and comparisons. For example, whereas the chapters on parental involvement distinguish different types of care tasks, the chapters on fairness perceptions focus on childcare in general. Also, I could not directly test whether non-divorced and divorced parents differ in their fairness perceptions, because this information was not collected in the same wave. Nevertheless, the most important aspects are being distinguished and I am

cautious when it comes to comparisons that could not be empirically tested.

Table 1.1 provides an overview of the empirical chapters, the samples, and the outcome variables that were analyzed. The first two chapters focus on parental involvement as the outcome variable. *Chapter 2* examines parental involvement across different postdivorce family types, based on residence, repartnering, and parents' gender. *Chapter 3* only includes fathers and investigates father involvement of all types of divorced fathers—based on residence—and how it compares to that of non-divorced fathers. The next two chapters study fairness perceptions as the outcome variable. *Chapter 4* addresses fairness research concerning non-divorced families, and tests how the division of housework, childcare, and paid labor relate to fairness perceptions of housework and childcare. *Chapter 5* addresses fairness research concerning postdivorce families and examines how the postdivorce division of childcare and child-related costs relate to fairness perceptions of childcare and child-related costs.

**Table 1.1:** Overview of the empirical chapters

Chapter	Title	Sample	Dependent variables
2	Parenting in postdivorce families: The influence of residence, repartnering, and gender	Divorced	Regular care Leisure Irregular care Decision-making influence
3	Are separated fathers less or more involved in childrearing than partnered fathers?	Divorced (only men) Non-divorced (only men)	Regular care Leisure
4	Fairness perceptions of the division of household labor: Housework and childcare	Non-divorced	Housework unfairness Childcare unfairness
5	Fairness perceptions of the postdivorce division of childcare and child-related costs	Divorced	Postdivorce childcare unfairness Postdivorce child-related cost unfairness

*Chapter 2: Parenting in postdivorce families: The influence of residence, repartnering, and gender*

The first empirical chapter analyzes biological parents' involvement with their children across postdivorce families. Parenting has become increasingly complex because of the rise in divorce and repartnering: parents live in separate households after divorce and new (step/half) family members may enter parents' lives (Amato,

2000). Additionally, postdivorce families have become increasingly heterogeneous due to the rise in shared residence and LAT relationships. Patterns of parenting are indicative of how parents redefine their roles and responsibilities after divorce and repartnering, but extant research has largely overlooked parenting across a full array of postdivorce families. This study extends previous research by investigating how residence (including shared residence), repartnering (including LAT relationships), and additional children (step- and half-siblings) relate to patterns of parenting. This study further tests whether the role of repartnering varies across residence arrangements and whether patterns differ by gender and type of parenting behavior. Parenting behavior refers to a broad range of parent-child activities (i.e., regular care, leisure, irregular care) as well as parents' influence in child-related decision-making.

The findings show that residence is highly relevant for parents' engagement with their children. Resident parents are most involved in regular care, leisure, and irregular care and have the greatest decision-making influence, followed by shared resident parents and nonresident parents, respectively. Repartnering and additional children have smaller effects and it matters which type of parenting behavior is considered. Repartnering or stepchildren lead parents to spend less time on parent-child activities, but repartnering is least consequential for regular care activities—which are more frequent and less discretionary. Repartnering is positively associated with decision-making influence. Only for decision-making influence, the role of repartnering depends on residence: the positive effect of repartnering is not found for nonresident parents who live with a partner. Gender differences are also only found for decision-making influence, showing that variations in parenting across residence arrangements or between repartnered and single parents are more pronounced for mothers than for fathers. In conclusion, residence relates more strongly to parenting than repartnering, and the strength and nature of associations vary between types of parenting. Influence in decision-making in particular stands out as a distinct parenting behavior.

### *Chapter 3: Are separated fathers less or more involved in childrearing than partnered fathers?*

Chapter 3 zooms in on fathers' involvement with their children in non-divorced and postdivorce families. Both non-divorced and divorced fathers are increasingly willing and socially expected to be actively engaged in childcare (Hook & Wolfe, 2012). At the same time, postdivorce residence arrangements have become

increasingly heterogeneous, particularly due to the rise in shared residence (Bernardi & Mortelmans, 2021). Previous research on divorced fathers, however, has primarily focused on nonresident fathers, and has consistently found that they are less involved than non-divorced fathers (e.g., Carlson et al., 2017). This general impression of less involved divorced fathers might be misleading because it does not take into consideration the changing context of postdivorce care arrangements. Resident and shared resident fathers may be more involved than non-divorced fathers, because the former bear primary childcare responsibilities while the latter often act as secondary caregivers. Expanding on previous research, this study investigates father involvement in regular care and leisure activities across a full range of divorced fathers (i.e., resident father, shared resident father, nonresident father), and how it compares to that of non-divorced fathers. This study furthermore tests whether patterns differ by father's education. Educational attainment is consistently found to be a key factor in explaining the level and type of parental engagement among non-divorced and nonresident fathers (e.g., Manning et al., 2003; Sullivan, 2010). Less is known about how education affects fathers' active parenting in other residence arrangements, and this study tries to fill this gap.

The results confirm that, as compared to non-divorced fathers, shared resident fathers and especially resident fathers are more actively involved in regular care activities, whereas nonresident fathers are less involved. The results are similar for leisure, except that non-divorced fathers are similarly involved as shared resident fathers in this activity. Including resident and shared resident fathers, thus, offers a more optimistic view of fathers' postdivorce parenting role. For these divorced fathers, the reconfiguration of family roles triggered by the divorce may have increased their engagement with their children. Education also matters: involvement of fathers across different postdivorce residence arrangements is more similar to that of non-divorced fathers when being highly educated. High-educated non-divorced fathers, and particularly nonresident fathers, are more involved than their lower educated counterparts, whereas this is not found for high-educated (shared) resident fathers. Because (shared) resident fathers already bear primary responsibility for children's day-to-day care, this may explain why there are no large observed differences in their level of involvement by educational attainment.



#### *Chapter 4: Fairness perceptions of the division of household labor: Housework and childcare*

Chapter 4 links the division of household labor (i.e., housework and childcare) between partners with fairness perceptions. Fairness research has mainly focused on housework and found that an unequal division of housework is often regarded as fair (e.g., Braun et al., 2008; Young et al., 2015), which may explain why women still do most household labor. Contrary to most previous research, this study also investigates childcare—an increasingly important part of household labor, which is likely to have a more positive meaning than housework (i.e., more enjoyable and rewarding). The different meaning of childcare suggests that an unequal childcare division may be less likely to be perceived as unfair than an unequal housework division. This study examines how perceptions of fairness for both housework and childcare are influenced by the division of housework, childcare, and paid labor, and whether these patterns differ by gender.

The findings show that unequal divisions of household labor are not necessarily seen as unfair. Unequal divisions of housework, and especially childcare, are often regarded as fair—but the more unequal the divisions are, the more they are perceived to be unfair. When it comes to how an increase in the unequal household labor division relates to unfairness, it is not so much about the type of labor (i.e., housework or childcare), but more about gender: unequal divisions of household labor relate more strongly to unfairness perceptions for women than for men. It is not found that an unequal childcare division relates weaker to unfairness than an unequal housework division. Perhaps a person's increasingly higher investments of time and energy when taking care of the children are more important than the rewarding aspects of childcare when evaluating the fairness of the childcare division—making these investments comparable to housework contributions. Both men and women evaluate the household labor division in terms of total workload: the more they are involved in different types of labor, the stronger the actual household labor division is evaluated as unfair.

#### *Chapter 5: Fairness perceptions of the postdivorce division of childcare and child-related costs*

The final empirical chapter of this dissertation addresses fairness research concerning postdivorce families. So far, fairness research concerns non-divorced families—families in which women usually do most childcare and men take on a much larger share of child expenses as they work longer hours (Lachance-Grzela &

Bouchard, 2010). Although this research has mainly focused on housework and has neglected child-related costs, few studies on childcare have shown that an unequal childcare division is often regarded as fair (e.g., Baxter, 2000). The current study investigates whether this is also the case for divorced parents—who no longer form a joint family and for whom the division of childrearing responsibilities may be a conflict-sensitive issue. It examines how the division of childcare and child-related costs after divorce affect fairness perceptions, and whether these patterns differ by postdivorce parental conflict.

Results show that generally about half of divorced parents perceive the childcare and child-related cost division as fair, yet for childcare, this amounts to 60% for fathers. Higher contributions to child-related costs always lead to an increase in unfairness perceptions. For childcare, not only parents who contribute a lot but also parents who contribute very little are most likely to perceive the division as unfair (with parents with more equal contributions falling in between these two extremes). These patterns are largely similar for parents with low and high postdivorce conflict. In conclusion, given that unfairness perceptions are relatively widespread in postdivorce families, it seems that the division of childcare and the costs of children is less taken for granted after divorce. Postdivorce fairness evaluations differ for money and time investments in children: whereas divorced parents are at ease with increasingly low child expenses, this does not hold for increasingly low childcare contributions because they may feel that they miss out on active engagement with the children.

## **1.6 Conclusion**

Based on the insights provided by the four empirical chapters, the first part of this section synthesizes the main conclusions of the dissertation. In the second part, I reflect on the broader implications of these conclusions.

### **1.6.1 Main conclusions**

#### *Residence is key to parental involvement*

The extent to which parents in contemporary families are involved in childcare strongly depends on residence. Resident parents are more involved with their children than nonresident parents, which corroborates findings from previous research (e.g., Bastaitis et al., 2014; Hawkins et al., 2006). Shared resident parents' involvement is in between that of resident parents and nonresident parents. Thus, the more time parents reside with their children, the higher their involvement.

Residing with the children allows parents to be close to the children, which increases the opportunities for active parenting (Castillo et al., 2011; Furstenberg & Nord, 1985). If only residence would have been relevant, non-divorced parents would be most involved because children's time spent in a parent's household is highest in non-divorced families. I find evidence, however, that (shared) resident fathers are generally more involved with their children than non-divorced fathers. So nuance is required, that in addition to residence, the parent's relationship status with the other biological parent also influences the extent to which parents are involved in childcare. Although non-divorced fathers spend more time living with their children than (shared) resident fathers, in non-divorced families it usually is the mother who takes the most responsibility for parenting (Lachance-Grzela & Bouchard, 2010). In contrast, (shared) resident fathers do not reside with the children's biological mother, and so they take over primary responsibility for children's daily care, which makes that these divorced fathers are more involved than non-divorced fathers.

*Repartnering is not facilitating but restricting parental involvement*

Having a new partner and additional parenting obligations generally restrict repartnered parents' engagement with their children from the prior union. Although having shared children with a new partner bears no relation with parenting, repartnering—co-residing more so than being in a LAT relationship—or having stepchildren are generally associated with lower parental involvement. This holds equally for both genders and for different residence arrangements. These results are in line with the majority of studies showing negative effects of repartnering (e.g., Hawkins et al., 2006; Tach et al., 2010) and build upon these studies by showing that living apart together with the new partner may already reduce parental involvement. My findings suggest that new family responsibilities compete with old family responsibilities, which has been referred to as “swapping families” (Manning & Smock, 2000). A new partner and stepchildren absorb parents' time, leading to lower willingness or possibilities to engage with their children from the prior union.

*..... Yet the type of parenting behavior matters*

Though, in general, residence positively and repartnering negatively relate to parental involvement, the distinction between different parenting behaviors nuances these conclusions. This dissertation emphasizes the value of examining

not only regular care—as in most previous studies—but multiple parenting behaviors because the strength and nature of associations vary between parenting behaviors. Having new family responsibilities is most consequential for leisure and irregular care. This suggests that the time spent on these activities is easier to reduce because of their more discretionary nature. In contrast, the time dedicated to regular care is more protected as it constitutes an important part of children’s daily care. Also, influence in child-related decision-making stands out as a distinct parenting behavior: repartnered parents report having more instead of less influence than single parents. Because such influence is less time-consuming than the other parenting behaviors, I would expect a smaller negative effect, yet a positive association was not expected. Perhaps a new partner empowers parents, leading to a greater say in decision-making or that parents perceive having greater influence. Furthermore, residence is more crucial to involvement in regular care than leisure. Whereas shared resident fathers are more involved in regular care than non-divorced fathers, they are equally involved in leisure. This indicates that after divorce, fathers in a shared residence arrangement increase their engagement in regular care but not in leisure activities. This finding is not surprising as non-divorced fathers generally enjoy the more pleasurable aspects of childcare and are more reluctant to engage in day-to-day practical care (Craig, 2006; Stewart, 1999).

*Unfairness perceptions are more widespread after divorce*

Although I was not able to test in one empirical chapter whether non-divorced and divorced parents differ in their fairness perceptions, comparing Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 indicates that unfairness perceptions are more common after divorce. In non-divorced families, the childcare division is generally perceived as fair by about four-fifths of parents, yet in postdivorce families, this amounts to only about half of parents—with these figures being somewhat higher for (divorced) fathers than for (divorced) mothers. Although differences in the actual division may contribute to this difference in fairness perceptions between non-divorced and postdivorce families, it may also well be that the division of childrearing responsibilities is less taken for granted after divorce. This latter idea is strengthened by my finding that after divorce, it is not only higher childcare contributions that are increasingly perceived as unfair, but lower contributions as well. Divorced parents no longer form a joint family unit in which the benefits of specialization are shared, but they need to renegotiate how to divide childrearing responsibilities. Whereas couples act based on love and commitment (Thompson, 1993), ex-partners often have opposing

interests and conflicts (Bonach, 2005). Divorced parents are, thus, in a different situation than non-divorced parents in which there is a greater emphasis on equity, explaining divorced parents' higher unfairness perceptions. They perceive low involvement in childcare as unfair because they likely have limited access to the children and may feel that they are missing out on the children's lives.

#### *Fairness perceptions depend upon the type of investment and total workload*

Fairness perceptions are different depending upon the type of investment. Generally, the division of childcare is more often perceived as fair than the division of housework or child-related costs. Also, the association between the actual division and unfairness perceptions is different for childcare and child-related costs, at least in postdivorce families. Whereas divorced parents are at ease with increasingly low child expenses, probably because paying is usually not something desirable (Waller & Plotnick, 2001), this does not hold for increasingly low involvement in childcare. Divorced parents in such a situation actually desire to invest more time in children. Surprisingly, the association between the actual division and unfairness perceptions is not different for childcare and housework. Despite the greater enjoyment and rewards to perform childcare than housework (Poortman & Van der Lippe, 2009; Van Lenning & Willemsen, 2001), higher contributions to childcare or housework increase unfairness perceptions to a similar extent. Apparently, when parents in non-divorced families are increasingly taking care of the children the focus is less on the enjoyable aspects of childcare, but, just as for housework, more on the investments of time and energy it requires. What matters more, however, is the total burden of labor. The more parents are involved in different types of labor, the stronger their contributions to childcare or housework are evaluated as unfair. This finding emphasizes that the fairness of a certain division is evaluated in relation to the total workload and not in isolation from other types of labor.

#### **1.6.2 Broader reflections and implications**

Divorce generally carries a negative connotation because it is often portrayed in the media as a phenomenon with negative consequences for parents and their children (Kelly & Emery, 2003). Based on this dissertation, however, the consequences of divorce are not necessarily detrimental when it comes to parental involvement. The conclusion that resident and shared resident fathers are more engaged in parenting than non-divorced fathers, suggests that the general impression of divorced

fathers being less involved with their children than non-divorced fathers needs to be nuanced. For fathers with sole- or shared residence, the reconfiguration of family roles triggered by the divorce has increased their opportunities to be more actively involved in parenting. These postdivorce residence arrangements were once uncommon but are now on the rise (Bernardi & Mortelmans, 2021), which could imply a trend toward more gender-equal engagement in childrearing in postdivorce families. Furthermore, the conclusion that having new family responsibilities is least consequential for regular care (i.e., repartnering itself does not lead to lower involvement) and that repartnered parents have more influence in child-related decision-making, means that repartnering does not consistently negatively affect parental involvement. Overall, what this implies for the broader society needs to be questioned (e.g., how does father residence relate to fathers' and their children's well-being?), but although parental involvement is more complex after divorce and repartnering (Amato, 2000), it also is a unique situation in which parents can show their commitment making sure that their children receive the necessary support. Also with an eye to the future, in which more children will not grow up with both parents in the same household and the family landscape may be even more complex (Thomson, 2014), it might be a comforting thought that increased complexity does not only come with constraints on parental involvement but opportunities as well.

With regards to fairness perceptions, it is interesting to observe that fairness perceptions about the unequal division of childcare and housework in non-divorced families are so widespread, despite the considerable increase in women's labor force participation. It seems that the taken-for-grantedness concerning the traditional labor division still dominates society (Korpi et al., 2013). However, total workload also plays an important role. It is acceptable to bear primary responsibility for housework or childcare when being compensated by lower investments in paid labor, but being increasingly responsible for both the home and work domain reduces fairness perceptions. If women continue to be increasingly involved in the labor force and devote almost twice as much time to household labor than men (Portegijs et al., 2018), the traditional division of household labor between partners may become the topic of conversation more and more. After divorce, the division of childrearing responsibilities is already a sensitive topic, as is indicated by the relatively low fairness perceptions. Moreover, fairness evaluations after divorce not only concern how parents divide the time spent with their children but also how they divide their money investments: when household income is no longer pooled it suddenly becomes an issue who is responsible for which child expenses. Although

it needs to be considered what the wider implications of postdivorce unfairness perceptions are, it may be plausible to assume that unfairness perceptions fuel continuing conflict between ex-partners (Claessens & Mortelmans, 2021), which in turn may harm the well-being of the entire family. A more optimistic thought is that if shared residence continues to become increasingly common among future generations (Raley & Sweeney, 2020), I speculate that postdivorce fairness perceptions may improve. Because in shared residence children spend about an equal amount of time in both parents' home, on the one hand, there will be fewer parents who miss out on active engagement with the children (i.e., nonresident parents), and on the other hand, fewer parents who bear primary responsibility for care tasks (i.e., resident parents), which may result in lower unfairness perceptions.

### **1.7 Limitations and directions for future research**

Despite the contributions this dissertation makes to the literature, it also has some limitations that deserve consideration. First, it is important to be aware that the findings of this dissertation may be limited to the Netherlands and not generalizable to other countries, as the legal and normative contexts of (postdivorce) parenting differ between countries. In recent decades there has been a remarkable shift in the social and cultural norms shaping fathers' nurturing role in both non-divorced and postdivorce families. Many Western countries started to encourage non-divorced and divorced fathers' involvement with new legislation and social policies ever since (Lamb, 2000; McIntosh, 2009; Pilkauskas & Schneider, 2020), but not to a similar extent. Regarding postdivorce families, shared residence—which strengthens fathers' postdivorce position—is only encouraged rather than prescribed by Dutch law (Nikolina, 2015). Some countries, such as Belgium, take it a step further as shared residence is the default judicial recommendation for divorcing parents (Sodermans et al., 2013). If shared residence is not the default, parents who opt for this arrangement may possess certain desirable traits (e.g., high education, low predivorce conflict), whereas if it is, the group of parents in shared residence likely is more heterogeneous on these traits (Poortman & Van Gaalen, 2017; Sodermans et al., 2013). Consequently, my findings may overestimate shared resident parents' involvement with their children when compared to countries with legal defaults. Regarding non-divorced families, fathers' engagement in childcare has been promoted to some extent in the Netherlands, yet many policies still facilitate a more traditional division of labor between partners (Korpi et al., 2013). Paternity leave is limited and there is no heavily-subsidized public childcare, and

so a “one-and-a-half earner” model has become popular (Visser, 2002)—with the majority of two-parent families composed of a full-time working father and a part-time working mother who takes the most responsibility for childcare. Meanwhile, Scandinavian countries, such as Sweden, have generous parental leave policies and high-quality subsidized public childcare that support dual-earner families and gender equality (Korpi et al., 2013). As such, the finding that an unequal childcare division between partners is often perceived as fair in the Netherlands, may not be found in more gender-egalitarian countries, but may rather be perceived as unfair. Future research is invited to study whether the outcomes of this dissertation are generalizable to other countries that vary in legal and normative contexts, for example by using a country-comparative approach.

Second, although three waves of NFN data have been collected, I was not able to apply a longitudinal design as the main variables of interest were not included in several waves. Because of its cross-sectional nature, causal claims cannot be made. For instance, when studying parental involvement across diverse family types, I have tried to address selection into divorce as well as into postdivorce family types by including a wide range of parental demographic and predivorce relationship characteristics. Also, propensity score analysis was performed as an alternative method to minimize selection bias on observed variables when comparing parental involvement of non-divorced and divorced fathers. Unfortunately, I cannot completely rule out the possibility of selection because of unobserved factors such as parents’ predivorce well-being, personality traits, or attitudes. These parental characteristics may have influenced the decision to divorce, or the choice for repartnering or a certain postdivorce residence arrangement, but also the level of involvement. Future research would benefit from using panel data, to include a broader range of possible confounders and to observe parents before and after divorce. As far as I am aware, existing panel data do not cover enough divorced parents in the less common and more recent family types, nor information on a wide range of key variables as is used in this dissertation.

Third, the fairness measures focused on perceived fairness, not on what people mean by fairness or why they perceive certain divisions as fair. Future research should ideally collect such data, because different people may see different divisions as fair or unfair, and they may have very different ideas on what it means for a division to be fair (Kleingeld & Anderson, 2014). Furthermore, the measures for the division of childcare, child-related costs, and housework between (ex-)partners were in terms of relative contributions and reported by the parent, which may have



affected the reliability of my findings. Parents are likely to report in a self-serving direction by overestimating their own and underestimating their (ex-)partner's contributions (Braver et al., 1991; Seltzer & Brandreth, 1994). Parents may also not always have an accurate view of the actual contributions of themselves or their (ex-)partner. Using time diaries among parents as well as their (ex-)partner are recommended for future research, as this method provides a more precise measure of the actual division between (ex-)partners by directly measuring their time spent on childcare and housework, and the money spent on child expenses (Hofferth & Sandberg, 2001; Kendig & Bianchi, 2008).

Fourth, I focused on biological parents and left other actors out of the equation. Although it was beyond the scope of this dissertation, an interesting direction for future research would be to include the role of stepparents. The conclusion that having new family responsibilities is generally associated with lower involvement in parent-child activities, does not necessarily mean that children end up with lower parental engagement. Stepparents may very well be involved in their stepchildren's care (e.g., Hofferth & Anderson, 2003; Ivanova, 2017), which suggests that children may receive even higher absolute levels of parental involvement than when parents are non-repartnered. Additionally, if stepparents invest time and money in their stepchildren, this also merits studying the role of stepparents in fairness research. Next to unfairness to self or the ex-partner, parents may perceive a certain division as unfair to their new partner. For example, if the parent's new partner (i.e., stepparent) pays more child-related costs than the ex-partner, the parent may perceive this as unfair to the new partner.

Lastly, in this dissertation, I was interested in parental involvement and fairness perceptions in contemporary families. Yet, a next step would be to investigate the (long-term) stability and consequences of parental involvement and fairness perceptions. For example, I found that shared and father residence offer divorced fathers increased opportunities to be more actively involved in parenting, but it would be interesting to see what the consequences of these arrangements are for fathers' and their children's well-being, or how stable these residence arrangements are (see, e.g., Melli & Brown, 2008; Poortman & Van Gaalen, 2017; Vanassche et al., 2013). Also, the finding that unfairness perceptions are relatively widespread in postdivorce families, raises questions about what the impact of these unfairness perceptions is for parents' well-being or the stability of the division of childrearing responsibilities. Answering such questions in future research would better inform us how durable the organization of childrearing in contemporary families is.

Despite these limitations, this dissertation has been a first step to shedding more light on parental involvement and fairness perceptions in a more diverse family landscape.





# 2

## **Parenting in postdivorce families: The influence of residence, repartnering, and gender**

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The authors jointly developed the core ideas of this chapter. Koster wrote the main part of the manuscript and conducted the analyses. Poortman, Van der Lippe and Kleingeld substantially contributed to the manuscript. An earlier version of this chapter has been presented at the Dag van de Sociologie in Rotterdam, the Netherlands (2018-06-14) and the Divorce Conference in Tel Aviv-Yafo, Israel (2018-10-10).

## **Abstract**

This study investigates the role of residence (including shared residence), repartnering (including LAT relationships), and additional children (step- and half-siblings) on parenting in postdivorce families, and whether patterns differ by gender and type of parenting behavior. Patterns of parenting are indicative of how parents redefine their roles and responsibilities after divorce and repartnering, but extant research has largely overlooked parenting across a full array of postdivorce families. The analyses were based on data from Wave 2 of the New Families in the Netherlands survey, which was conducted among a random sample of divorced or separated heterosexual parents with minor children ( $N = 2,778$ ). The findings show that residence was highly relevant for parenting in regular care, leisure, irregular care, and influence in child-related decision-making. Repartnering and additional children had smaller effects and it mattered which type of parenting behavior was considered, but they were generally associated with lower parental engagement, except for decision-making influence. Gender differences were only found for decision-making influence, showing that variations in parenting across residence arrangements or between repartnered or single parents were more pronounced for mothers than fathers. Overall, residence was more strongly related to parenting than repartnering, and the strength and nature of associations varied between parenting behaviors. Influence in decision-making stood out as a distinct parenting behavior, and also the frequency and obligatory nature of parent-child activities mattered.

## 2.1 Introduction

Parenting has become increasingly complex because of the rise in divorce and repartnering (Amato, 2000). Parenting is more complex after divorce (or more generally, separation), because family members live in multiple households—with children residing with one parent most of the time (i.e., sole residence), or living alternately with each parent (i.e., shared residence or joint physical custody). When parents start a new relationship, new parent figures and possibly additional children enter the family, which may lead to a redefinition of parental roles and involvement. This study focuses on biological parents' parenting across postdivorce families and examines how residence, repartnering, and their interplay shape patterns of parenting. Parenting refers to a broad range of parent-child activities as well as parents' influence in child-related decision-making. It is important to study patterns of postdivorce parenting, because these are indicative of how parents redefine their roles and responsibilities after divorce and repartnering. In addition, parental involvement is important for children's well-being and development (Amato, 2000).

Existing studies have consistently found that nonresident parents are less involved with their child than resident parents, suggesting that residence is a key factor in explaining parenting behaviors (Bastaitis et al., 2014; Hawkins et al., 2006). Resident mothers are found to be generally more engaged in (different types of) parenting than resident fathers (Dufur et al., 2010; Lee & Hofferth, 2017). Findings about gender differences in parenting for nonresident parents are less conclusive, with some studies indicating that they adopt similar, low-involved parenting styles, whereas others suggest that nonresident mothers are more engaged than nonresident fathers (Kielty, 2006; King, 2007; Stewart, 1999). Research on parenting in the increasingly common shared residence arrangement is scarce, but indicates that shared resident parents are more involved with their child than nonresident parents (Bastaitis et al., 2014).

Another strand of literature has examined the role of repartnering. Repartnering typically refers to co-residing with a new partner (be it married or not). This literature is largely separate from the residence literature (Bastaitis & Mortelmans, 2017) and has focused on nonresident fathers and their child-support payments or frequency of visitation, and more recently also on qualitative parenting behaviors (Kalmijn, 2015a; McGene & King, 2012). Some studies have found that repartnering reduces nonresident fathers' parenting (Juby et al., 2007; Kalmijn, 2015a). Other studies have found this to be the case only when they

have additional children, suggesting that it is important to distinguish between repartnering and the role of new parenting responsibilities (Manning & Smock, 2000; McGene & King, 2012). Studies that include nonresident mothers, resident parents, and particularly parents in shared residence are scarce and yield mixed findings. For example, studies found that repartnered resident parents, both fathers and mothers, were less involved with their child from a prior union than their single counterparts, whereas others reported no differences between resident mothers, either repartnered or single (Carlson & Berger, 2013; Hawkins et al., 2006; Thomson et al., 2001). Some studies even found that repartnering had a positive effect on parenting (Bastaitis & Mortelmans, 2017).

The current study contributes to prior research first by combining the separate strands of literature on residence and repartnering. We consider both residence and repartnering and examine their interplay, showing whether repartnering has different effects on parenting depending upon whether parents reside with the child. Second, in case of repartnering, we include living-apart-together (i.e., LAT) relationships and the role of stepchildren and shared children. Separating repartnering from additional children has not been systematically done in prior research. Third, we take into account shared residence. The rise in shared residence in many Western countries, offering increased opportunities for both parents to remain close with their child after divorce, merits studying parenting in this residence arrangement. Fourth, we study the role of gender across a wide range of postdivorce families. Prior research mainly compared within one gender (Castillo et al., 2011; Thomson et al., 2001), or compared fathers and mothers in only a limited number of family structures (Lee & Hofferth, 2017; Stewart, 1999). Fifth, we distinguish multiple parenting behaviors. Most researchers have studied parenting in routine care—the more obligatory and regularly occurring activities necessary for the child’s daily functioning (e.g., taking the child to school or sports). We also include less obligatory activities, such as leisure (e.g., playing a game) and irregular care (e.g., attending parent-teacher meetings). We furthermore include parents’ influence in child-related decision-making (e.g., about medical treatment child). Patterns of parenting across postdivorce families may depend upon the specific type of parenting behavior.

We use the New Families in the Netherlands survey (NFN; Poortman et al., 2014, 2018). These data include extensive information about parenting and family structure of a large sample of divorced and separated parents, yielding enough cases to study a wide variety of postdivorce families.



## 2.2 Theoretical background

### 2.2.1 Residence and parenting

Residence arrangements shape parents' opportunities for and constraints on parenting. Resident parents may be more involved with their child than their nonresident counterparts because they have greater access to the child (Castillo et al., 2011; Furstenberg & Nord, 1985). Living together in the same house allows resident parents to spend time with and be close to the child, and to take primary responsibility for the child's daily care. Nonresident parents are more constrained in their access to their child, because they often face practical barriers to maintain contact (e.g., geographical distance and time), which hinder high-level parenting (Hawkins et al., 2006). Also the child may decide to have less contact with the nonresident parent, which negatively affects engagement in parenting. The involvement of parents in shared residence is expected to be in between that of resident parents and nonresident parents. In shared residence, the child spends about an equal amount of time in both parents' home (Nielsen, 2011). This offers both parents the opportunity to remain actively involved in parenting, more so than nonresident parents.

Opportunities for parenting may also depend upon parents' gatekeeping behavior. In intact families, parents often actively promote each other's involvement with their child, which is referred to as positive gatekeeping (Pruett et al., 2006). Gatekeeping in divorced contexts is more restrictive for the nonresident parent (i.e., negative gatekeeping), because of a protective resident parent (Pruett et al., 2006). The resident parent may limit the nonresident parent's access to the child by not allowing (face-to-face) contact beyond the agreed upon visitation schedules. Nonresident parents' opportunities to be involved with their child are then reduced. Parents in shared residence likely engage in positive gatekeeping because they often desire that the child maintains a close relationship with both of them (Nielsen, 2011). In sum, we hypothesize that: *(H1) Resident parents are most involved with their child, followed by parents in shared residence and nonresident parents, respectively.*

### 2.2.2 Repartnering, additional children, and parenting

Repartnered parents (be it co-residing with a new partner or not) may either be more or less involved with their child from a prior union than those who did not repartner. Repartnering, particularly when co-residing with a new partner, may increase parenting because parents have more time available: household chores

can be shared with the new partner and the extra financial resources brought in by the new partner allow parents to work less (Bastaitis & Mortelmans, 2017). In contrast, repartnering may also distract parents from spending time with their child because they shift their attention to the new partner (Manning & Smock, 2000). Repartnered parents may perceive competing loyalties between their child and their partner, which may result in trading parenting responsibilities for responsibilities to the new partner. The child may therefore have less social capital as the repartnered parent may invest less in the child, thus limiting the child's access to the parent's resources (Coleman, 1988; Coleman et al., 2000). Moreover, when the repartnered parent has children with the new partner (i.e., shared children) or when the new partner has children from a prior union (i.e., stepchildren), the repartnered parent has to take care of additional children. In case of additional parenting responsibilities, the child's access to the parent's resources may be even less as there is less time and energy available to dedicate to this child. Also the child may distance him or herself from the repartnered parent, thereby restricting the opportunities for parenting (Kalmijn, 2015a). Children may find it difficult to accept that their parent has a new partner, or they may not get along well with the stepparent (and/or possibly step- and half-siblings). Furthermore, the new partner may be actively engaged in the child's parenting (Meggiolaro & Ongaro, 2015). He or she may do so to show that (s)he is a good partner or because the repartnered parent may pull the new partner into new parenting responsibilities. Because parenting tasks are then shared, the biological parent's involvement may decrease.

Prior research has focused on co-resident new partners and their findings are mixed. Note that it is difficult to compare the results, because studies focus on different residence arrangements (e.g., resident and/or nonresident parents), different outcome measures (e.g., relationship quality, parent-child activities), and different samples (e.g., children's different ages, recent or older data collection). Although some studies have found a positive effect (Meggiolaro & Ongaro, 2015) or no effect at all of repartnering—or only in case of new parenting responsibilities—(Carlson & Berger, 2013; Manning et al., 2003), most studies have suggested a negative effect of repartnering on parenting (Juby et al., 2007; Tach et al., 2010). We therefore expect: **(H2)** *Repartnered parents, particularly when they co-reside with their partner and/or have additional parenting responsibilities, are less involved with their child from a prior union than parents without a new partner.*

### 2.2.3 Residence, repartnering, and parenting

Nonresident parents may be more likely to shift their investments to the new partner than resident parents and parents in shared residence. Because the child is not living with them, it may be easier and less stressful to shift the focus to the new family with whom residence is shared (Manning & Smock, 2000). In contrast, resident parents and parents in shared residence (alternately) share a household with their child, which means that parenting goes on. Because of these greater and more continuing parenting responsibilities, particularly among sole resident parents, they probably do not shift their focus to the new partner as strongly as nonresident parents do. We thus expect the following: **(H3)** *The negative effect of repartnering on parenting is the strongest for nonresident parents, followed by parents in shared residence and then resident parents.* Note that we refrain from expectations about interactions between additional children and residence, because we cannot test these given the small number of cases in some combinations of additional children and residence.

### 2.2.4 Gender differences in residence and repartnering on parenting

Although access to the child is more limited for nonresident mothers than for (shared) resident mothers, the often close relationship with the child prior to the divorce and strong norms about motherhood may lead nonresident mothers try to compensate by being as involved as possible (Kielty, 2006; Scott et al., 2007). Because fathers are expected to be the primary breadwinner instead of primary caretaker, nonresident fathers may feel less pressure than nonresident mothers to compensate by actively engaging in different parenting tasks (Furstenberg & Nord, 1985; Stewart, 1999). Hence, fathers' involvement is expected to be more varied across residence arrangements than mothers'.

For similar reasons, repartnering may have a greater impact on fathers' engagement with the child. Because mothers likely feel more pressure to contribute to parenting than fathers and generally have a stronger bond with their child (Scott et al., 2007), they may be more likely than fathers to maintain their original parental role and less inclined to shift their attention to a new partner. In contrast to mothers, fathers are not necessarily viewed as "bad" fathers when they spend less time on parenting, because society does not expect them to be the primary caregiver (Kielty, 2006). This makes it more socially acceptable for fathers to focus on a new partner than for mothers (Manning & Smock, 2000). We thus expect the following: *The effects of (H4) residence and (H5) repartnering on parenting are*

*stronger for fathers than mothers.* Although the interplay between residence and repartnering may also differ between fathers and mothers, we refrain from expectations because we cannot test these given the small number of cases in some combinations of gender, residence, and repartnering. For similar reasons, we cannot test interactions between additional children and gender.

### **2.2.5 Type of parenting behavior**

The role of residence and repartnering may depend upon the type of parenting behavior. Resident and shared resident parents spend a lot of time with their child, allowing for parenting in a wide range of parent-child activities, from leisure to providing daily routine care. Nonresident parents see their child less often. In the limited time they spend together, nonresident parents may be more restricted or less motivated to be engaged in caring activities. Especially more obligatory and frequent activities necessary for the child's daily functioning (e.g., taking the child to school or sports) may be done more often by the resident parent because the most common visitation schedules typically include stays at the nonresident parent's house during weekends. Instead, nonresident parents may be more inclined to engage in leisure activities (Furstenberg & Nord, 1985; Stewart, 1999). This suggests that involvement in leisure may vary less across residence arrangements than involvement in (routine) caring activities. Parents' influence in child-related decision-making may vary least across residence arrangements, as decision-making power is less tied to actually having access to the child. Moreover, in many Western countries, including the Netherlands, automatic continuation of joint parental authority after divorce is regulated by law, suggesting that residence should not matter regarding parents' decision-making.

In case of repartnering, parents need to divide their time between their child and their new partner (Thomson et al., 2001). It is difficult for repartnered parents to reduce their time spent on regular, routine care activities, as these activities are more obligatory and important for daily functioning of the child. Irregular care and particularly leisure activities are less demanding and less part of the child's routine care. It may therefore be easier to reduce the time spent on these activities, suggesting a stronger negative effect of repartnering on parenting in irregular care and leisure than in regular care. The smallest difference between repartnered parents and non-repartnered parents may be found for parents' influence in child-related decision-making, as deciding on important issues in the child's life is less bound by time restrictions than involvement in parent-child activities.

### 2.2.6 Selection into residence or repartnering

It is important to be aware of parents' possible selection into particular postdivorce family types. Research has shown that parents who opt for shared residence might possess certain desirable traits (e.g., high socioeconomic status, low predivorce conflict) that not only affect their choice for this particular residence arrangement (Cancian et al., 2014) but also their parenting behavior (Poortman & Van Gaalen, 2017). Similarly, selection into sole father custody (e.g., high predivorce involvement, mother's health limitations or financial problems) may affect parental involvement (Golombok & Tasker, 2015; Kitterød & Lyngstad, 2014). Research on repartnering has shown several factors to affect new union formation, such as attitudes, personality traits or socioeconomic status (De Graaf & Kalmijn, 2003; Pasteels & Mortelmans, 2017), which have also been found to affect parenting (Bulanda, 2004; Manning et al., 2003). To address possible selection issues, analyses control for a wide range of parental demographic and predivorce relationship characteristics. As we do not have information about parents' health, personality traits, or attitudes, we cannot completely rule out the possibility of selection.

## 2.3 Data and method

### 2.3.1 Data

We used the survey New Families in the Netherlands (Poortman et al., 2014, 2018; Poortman & Van Gaalen, 2019a, 2019b). Because questions about parenting were not included in Wave 1 (2012/13), we only used Wave 2 (2015/16). The sampling of the first wave was done by Statistics Netherlands (CBS). CBS has access to register data about the complete Dutch population, which allows for sampling on specific criteria, such as parenthood and marital status. A random sample was drawn from the population of formerly married or cohabiting heterosexual parents with minor children who officially divorced (for married parents) or started living apart (for cohabiting parents) in 2010. Both ex-partners were sent a letter by post inviting them to complete an online survey. A gift voucher of €5 was enclosed. The final reminder included a paper-and-pencil questionnaire. For about one third of the contacted former households, both ex-partners participated. The response rate in Wave 1 was 39% among persons and 58% among households. These response rates are comparable to other Dutch family surveys, and relatively high considering that NFN uses an online mode and targets a group of recently divorced parents (Poortman et al., 2014). In total, 4,481 parents participated in Wave 1, with former

cohabiters, men (particularly those with young children), younger persons, people of non-Western descent, and people on low incomes and on welfare being underrepresented. Participants of Wave 1 were invited to participate in Wave 2, in which a similar procedure was followed. Both ex-partners participated for about one fifth of the former households. The response rate was 63% on the individual level, adding up to 69% on the household level, with a total of 2,544 participating parents. Besides re-approaching parents of the first wave, a refreshment sample of parents with minor children who divorced or separated in 2010 was approached. At the time of Wave 1, CBS provided a list of extra respondents, which was meant to be used in case response rates would have been extremely low. As these respondents were not used for Wave 1, they were approached for Wave 2 to compensate for panel attrition. For a quarter of the former households, both ex-partners participated. The response rate was 32% among persons and 52% among households, resulting in 920 participants in the refreshment sample. Both samples of Wave 2 were—as in Wave 1—selective on former union type, gender, age, ethnicity, and main source of income. Especially the lower educated and people who were less satisfied with their lives were more likely to drop out after the first wave. The total sample consisted of 3,464 respondents (original sample:  $n = 2,544$ ; refreshment sample:  $n = 920$ ).

Parents provided information on a focal child who was selected in Wave 1. If at least one of the children was 10 or older at the time of Wave 1, parents reported about the youngest child of 10 or older. If all children were younger than 10, parents reported on the oldest child. Parents answered questions about the same child in Wave 2. Because Wave 2 took place about 3 years after Wave 1, the cut-off age for selecting the focal child was 13 years old for parents in the refreshment sample. Although ex-partners received similar instructions and questions, some of them reported about a different child (18%), as information on the child's gender and age did not coincide. In case both former partners participated, we furthermore found that the father more often than the mother reported shared residence (44.1% according to the father and 38.1% according to the mother) or father residence (6.5% according to the father and 5.3% according to the mother). Because either report may be “true,” the analyses include both partners' reports (see Analytical strategy).

We excluded respondents who had children with a same-sex ex-partner ( $n = 12$ ). Cases were also excluded when the focal child was older than 18 years of age ( $n = 506$ ), because the measures for parenting were less relevant for older children. Respondents with another residence arrangement than sole- or shared residence for the focal child were excluded ( $n = 102$ ). Respondents with a missing

value on the four dependent variables that represent different parenting behaviors were also excluded ( $n = 44$ ). Finally, we excluded cases with missing values on all other variables used in the analyses ( $n = 22$ ). The final sample consisted of 2,778 respondents (from 2,363 households), of which 74% was previously married. Note that this percentage also includes a small group of registered partners (4%), who have almost the same legal status in the Netherlands as married couples.

### 2.3.2 Dependent variables

*Regular care and leisure.* Respondents reported how often (1 = *Not* to 7 = *Few times per day*) they spent time with their child during the last month in the following eight activities: “Dropping child off or picking child up from school or sports,” “Having dinner together,” “Helping with school or homework,” “Talking with child about issues in child’s life,” “Doing household tasks together,” “Playing a game or doing crafts,” “Watching television,” and “Leisure activities away from home, such as to the zoo.” From the first five items measuring *regular care*, we created a scale by taking the mean (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = 0.86$ ). We also calculated the mean score on the latter three items measuring *leisure* (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = 0.80$ ).

*Irregular care.* Respondents reported how often (1 = *Almost never* to 5 = *Always*) they participated in four activities: “Look after child when ill,” “With child to doctor, hospital or dentist,” “Attend child’s play, presentation or competition,” and “Attend parent-teacher meetings.” We calculated the mean score on these items (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = 0.83$ ).

*Influence in child-related decision-making.* Respondents indicated how much influence (1 = *Very little* to 5 = *A lot*) they had in decisions regarding: “School child,” “Sport or musical instrument child,” “Medical treatment child,” and “What to allow child, such as what time to go to bed.” A scale was created by taking the mean (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = 0.91$ ).

Note that for all items involved in the four dependent variables, respondents could also choose the answer category “Not applicable” (e.g., Child is too old or too young). We treated these respondents as having a missing value on these particular items. Respondents were included when they had a non-missing value on at least one of the items included in the scale. For some items, we found missing values of about 10%, as these items indicate activities for which children are too young (e.g., helping with school) or too old (e.g., dropping off/picking up), or that may not be relevant at all (e.g., influence sport/musical instrument). Also note that for every dependent variable, exploratory factor analyses revealed a single factor

behind the items, with sufficiently high factor loadings (range factor loadings regular care 0.69–0.81; leisure 0.60–0.87; irregular care 0.70–0.85; influence 0.79–0.91). Correlations between the different parenting behaviors were statistically significant and positive, ranging from  $r = 0.46$  (between leisure and influence) to  $r = 0.78$  (between regular care and leisure).

### 2.3.3 Independent variables

*Residence.* Respondents indicated with whom the focal child lived most of the time at the time of the survey, with answers: “With me,” “With ex-partner,” “With both parents about equally,” and “Other arrangement.” We excluded respondents in the “Other arrangement” category and constructed three dummy variables for whether the respondent was the *resident parent* (reference group), *nonresident parent*, or in *shared residence* (1 = Yes). Such a categorization distinguishing between shared residence versus two types of sole residence has also been commonly used in previous research about shared residence (e.g., Bastaitis et al., 2014). The assumption is that parent-child contact is the highest for resident parents, followed by shared resident and nonresident parents, respectively. Additional analyses estimating the mean amount of monthly parent-child contact showed that the residence groups differed in expected ways (i.e., resident parents: 23 days; shared resident parents: 14 days; nonresident parents: 5 days)—but contact also varied within residence groups, especially for nonresident parents (i.e., range 0–14 days, with about 20% seeing their child 8 days or more).

*Repartnering.* Respondents reported whether they had: “No steady partner,” “Steady partner, not living together,” “Steady partner, living together unmarried,” and “Steady partner, living together married.” Additional analyses revealed that for some of our measures for parenting there was no difference between respondents without a steady partner and respondents who did not live with their partner, whereas for others there was. As the theoretical arguments for repartnering not only apply to respondents who co-reside with their new partner, but also for those who do not co-reside, we decided to analyze respondents who do not co-reside with their new partner separately from respondents without a new partner. Additional analyses further showed that there was no difference on all parenting measures between unmarried and married co-residing partners. We therefore generated three dummy variables (1 = Yes): *no partner* (reference group), *LAT partner*, and *co-residing (unmarried/married) partner*.

*Stepchildren.* In case of repartnering, respondents were asked whether their



current partner had children from a previous relationship, and if yes, with whom these children lived most of the time. We generated three dummies (1 = Yes): *no stepchildren* (respondents without a partner and respondents with a partner but without stepchildren) as the reference group, *co-residing partner with stepchildren* (co-residing with partner and stepchildren living with partner or elsewhere), and *LAT relationship with stepchildren* (LAT partner and stepchildren living with partner or elsewhere). We did not distinguish on the basis of whether these stepchildren were living with the partner or elsewhere because the number of cases was too low. Additional analyses, however, suggested no statistically significant differences in parenting between respondents with resident partners whose children lived in the household or elsewhere. Similarly, for respondents in a LAT relationship, we found no statistically significant differences in parenting depending on the residence of the stepchildren.

*Shared children.* In case of repartnering, respondents were asked whether they had or adopted children with their current partner. A dummy indicating whether the respondent had shared children (1 “Yes”) was created. Note that the group of respondents who had shared children includes a small group of 21 respondents who did not live with their partner.

*Parent’s gender.* A variable indicating whether the parent was a 0 “Male” or 1 “Female”.

### 2.3.4 Control variables

*Parent’s education* measures respondents’ highest obtained education (1 = *Primary school not finished* to 10 = *Postuniversity*). *Parent’s employment* indicates whether respondents had a paid job at the time of the survey (1 = Yes). *Parent’s work hours* refer to the work hours per week according to the contract. Work hours of over 80 were recoded to 80 to avoid too much influence of these extremes. Nonemployed parents were assigned the gender-specific mean. This implies that the effect of parent’s employment indicates the difference between nonemployed people and people with average working hours (Poortman & Kalmijn, 2002). Because of small regression coefficients, we divided parent’s work hours by 10. For *predivorce conflict*, respondents indicated how often (1 = *never* to 4 = *often*) five different conflict situations (e.g., heated discussions) happened between them and their ex-partner in the last year before divorce. If respondents had a non-missing value on at least one of the items, a scale was created by taking the mean (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = 0.88$ ). For *predivorce involvement*, respondents reported who did most (1 = *ex-partner much*

more often than respondent to 5 = respondent much more often than ex-partner) of six care tasks (e.g., changing diapers) during the relationship with their ex-partner. We computed the mean score if they had a non-missing value on at least one of the items (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.93$ ). *Child's gender* indicates whether the focal child was a 0 "Boy" or 1 "Girl." *Child's age* refers to the focal child's age measured in years. *Former union type* is a dummy for whether the parent's relationship with the ex-partner was 0 "Cohabitation" or 1 "Marriage/registered partnership." *Number of children* includes the number of children parents had or adopted with their ex-partner. *Parent's age* is measured in years. *Sample* is a dummy referring to the 0 "Original sample" or 1 "Refreshment sample." Note that information from Wave 1 was used for some control variables as this information was no longer asked in Wave 2 (i.e., parent's education, predivorce conflict and involvement, former union type and number of children). Table 2.1 presents descriptive statistics for all variables used in the analyses, for fathers and mothers separately; see Table A.1 in the appendix for cell sizes.

**Table 2.1:** Mean, standard deviation and range of the variables in the analyses

	Fathers			Mothers		
	M	SD	Range	M	SD	Range
Regular care	3.81	1.33	1-7	4.93	1.06	1-7
Leisure	3.65	1.34	1-7	4.30	1.19	1-7
Irregular care	3.38	1.11	1-5	4.48	0.65	1-5
Influence in decision-making	3.84	1.26	1-5	4.60	0.71	1-5
Residence						
Resident	0.10	a	0-1	0.69	a	0-1
Shared residence	0.38	a	0-1	0.26	a	0-1
Nonresident	0.52	a	0-1	0.05	a	0-1
Repartnering						
No partner	0.34	a	0-1	0.40	a	0-1
LAT partner	0.23	a	0-1	0.24	a	0-1
Co-residing partner	0.43	a	0-1	0.36	a	0-1
Stepchildren						
No stepchildren	0.63	a	0-1	0.62	a	0-1
Co-residing and stepchildren	0.20	a	0-1	0.21	a	0-1
LAT and stepchildren	0.17	a	0-1	0.17	a	0-1
Shared children						

Table 2.1: Continued.

	Fathers			Mothers		
	M	SD	Range	M	SD	Range
No shared children	0.87	<sup>a</sup>	0-1	0.92	<sup>a</sup>	0-1
Shared children	0.13	<sup>a</sup>	0-1	0.08	<sup>a</sup>	0-1
<i>Controls</i>						
Parent's education	6.94	1.87	1-10	6.83	1.75	2-10
Parent's employment						
Not employed	0.10	<sup>a</sup>	0-1	0.14	<sup>a</sup>	0-1
Employed	0.90	<sup>a</sup>	0-1	0.86	<sup>a</sup>	0-1
Parent's work hours (x 10)	3.88	0.69	0.2-8	2.78	0.77	0-7
Predivorce conflict	2.23	0.75	1-4	2.39	0.85	1-4
Predivorce involvement	2.85	0.65	1-5	4.27	0.65	2-5
Child's gender						
Boy	0.52	<sup>a</sup>	0-1	0.51	<sup>a</sup>	0-1
Girl	0.48	<sup>a</sup>	0-1	0.49	<sup>a</sup>	0-1
Child's age	12.91	3.19	2-18	12.56	3.28	3-18
Former union type						
Cohabitation	0.24	<sup>a</sup>	0-1	0.28	<sup>a</sup>	0-1
Marriage	0.76	<sup>a</sup>	0-1	0.72	<sup>a</sup>	0-1
Number of children	1.92	0.78	1-6	1.86	0.77	1-6
Parent's age	46.94	6.57	28-71	43.53	6.09	20-62
Sample						
Original sample	0.74	<sup>a</sup>	0-1	0.74	<sup>a</sup>	0-1
Refreshment sample	0.26	<sup>a</sup>	0-1	0.26	<sup>a</sup>	0-1
N of respondents	1,112			1,666		

Note: <sup>a</sup> Standard deviation (SD) not presented for discrete variables. Source: New Families in the Netherlands, Wave 1, 2.

### 2.3.5 Analytical strategy

We performed linear regression analyses. To take into account that in our analytic sample both ex-partners participated for 18% of the former households, we clustered the standard errors on the level of the former household (using command “vce(cluster)” in Stata). For all parenting behaviors, we estimated five models. Model 1 includes residence, repartnering, and the controls, showing the overall effects of residence and repartnering on parenting. To test whether effects

of residence and repartnering differed depending on the type of parenting, Wald tests assessed for the equality of coefficients between equations (using command “Suest” in Stata). Significant differences were reported in the text and presented statistically in Table A.2 in the appendix. In Models 2 and 3, we examined whether it is additional caring responsibilities that matter most (rather than repartnering per se) by testing whether stepchildren and shared children have particularly strong effects. Model 2 only includes residence and the measures for additional children, whereas Model 3 also includes repartnering. Model 3 should be interpreted with care because the association between repartnering and additional children is strong (e.g., stepchildren are only applicable when there is a new partner). Note also that the number of respondents who have additional children is relatively low (see Table A.1 in the appendix). Model 4 includes interactions between residence and repartnering to test whether the role of repartnering depends on residence. Model 5 includes interactions with parent’s gender to examine whether residence and repartnering play a different role for fathers and mothers. For Models 4 and 5, Wald tests assessed whether the interactions improved the model. We did not test whether interactions between residence and repartnering differed by parent’s gender because of few cases in some groups (e.g., co-residing resident fathers:  $n = 25$ ). For similar reasons, we did not test interactions between additional children and residence, and between additional children and parent’s gender (e.g., nonresident parents with LAT relationship and stepchildren:  $n = 76$ ).

## 2.4 Results

### 2.4.1 Hypotheses testing

Table 2.2 shows that residence was significantly related to all parenting behaviors. For Models 1 to 3, all residence effects were negative: parents in shared residence and nonresident parents spent less time on leisure, regular-, and irregular care and had a smaller influence on decision-making than resident parents. Changing the reference category (not shown) indicated that nonresident parents were less involved in all parenting behaviors than shared resident parents (e.g., leisure  $b = -1.08$ , influence  $b = -1.24$ ;  $p < .001$ ). Residence effects were the strongest for regular care. When testing for statistically significant differences between equations (Model 1), only the residence effects on regular care differed from the effects on the other parenting measures (see Table A.2 in the appendix). Effect sizes were modest to large. Focusing on the largest effects for regular care (Model 1),

the difference between shared and resident parents was modest ( $0.32 = 0.41/SD(Y)$  with  $SD(Y) = 1.29$ ) and the difference between nonresident and resident parents was large ( $1.46 = 1.88/1.29$ ).

Having new family responsibilities also mattered. Although shared children with a new partner were not found to be statistically significantly related to parenting (see Models 2 and 3), repartnering and stepchildren were related to parental engagement. Patterns differed, however, between parenting behaviors. For regular care, no statistically significant difference was found between repartnered and single parents (Model 1). Models 2 and 3, however, show that parents who co-resided with a new partner who had children engaged less in regular care. When parents were in a LAT relationship with their partner, there was no additional influence of having stepchildren. Also for leisure, stepchildren seemed to matter more than a new partner. Although parents co-residing with a new partner were less involved in leisure activities than single parents (Model 1), the negative impact of living with a new partner appeared to be particularly strong when this partner had children: the estimate referring to a co-resident new partner with children in Model 2 ( $b = -0.21$ ) was significant and double the size of the effect of merely co-residing with a new partner ( $b = -0.10$ ). The effect of co-residence was furthermore no longer significant once the presence of stepchildren was taken into account (Model 3). For irregular care, repartnered parents—be it co-residing or not—were less involved than their single counterparts (Model 1). When a distinction was made regarding the presence of stepchildren (Models 2 and 3), no stronger effects were found. Hence, repartnering rather than having additional caring responsibilities decreased parenting in irregular care. Similar results were found for parents' influence in decision-making: it was repartnering (Model 1) and not so much having additional children (Models 2 and 3) that affected parents' influence. Note though that repartnering was positively (instead of negatively) related to influence. Repartnered parents—be it co-residing or not—had more influence than single parents (Model 1: LAT partner  $b = 0.20$ , co-residing partner  $b = 0.11$ ). When testing for statistically significant differences in the effects of repartnering between equations (Model 1), the effects of LAT and co-residing on decision-making influence were different from effects on the other parenting measures (see Table A.2 in the appendix). The effect of co-residing with a partner also differed between regular care and leisure. When testing for statistically significant differences in the effects of having stepchildren between the dependent variables (Model 2), the effects of co-residing partner with stepchildren and LAT

relationship with stepchildren on influence were different from the effects on the other parenting measures (see Table A.2). The effect of co-residing partner with stepchildren also differed between regular care and leisure, and leisure and irregular care. Overall, effect sizes of repartnering and having stepchildren were small. One of the strongest effects was found for co-residing with a new partner who had children on parenting in leisure activities (e.g., Model 3,  $b = -0.23$ ), but this amounted to only a small effect size of 0.18 ( $=0.23/1.29$ ). Moreover, Wald tests assessed that the effects of repartnering and having additional children were smaller than the effects of residence (not shown).

Model 4 in Table 2.3 includes interactions between residence and repartnering. With leisure, regular care, or irregular care as outcome variable, Wald tests showed that adding interactions did not improve the models, suggesting that the role of repartnering did not differ across residence arrangements for these activities. The association between repartnering and influence in decision-making depended on residence ( $\chi^2(4) = 2.55$ ;  $p = .037$ ). The estimates for having a LAT relationship did not vary across residence arrangements ( $b = 0.07$ ,  $b = -0.07$ ;  $p > 0.10$ ) and were positive for all residence arrangements. The estimates for a co-resident partner did vary, though. Compared with being single, living with a new partner was associated with greater influence for shared resident and resident parents, but less so for nonresident parents (statistically significant interaction effect:  $b = -0.33$ ). Additional analyses showed that for nonresident parents, the estimate for co-residing with a new partner was not statistically significant. So having a LAT relationship was associated with greater influence (as compared to being single) regardless of children's residence, whereas co-residing with a partner led to more influence only in case children (partly) lived with the parent.

Model 5 shows whether residence and repartnering played a different role for fathers and mothers. No gender differences in residence and repartnering effects were found for parents' engagement in leisure, regular care, and irregular care, as adding interactions with gender did not improve model fit. For influence in decision-making adding interactions improved model fit ( $\chi^2(4) = 3.47$ ;  $p = .008$ ). The main effects of residence showed that shared resident fathers had equal influence in decision-making as resident fathers, whereas nonresident fathers had less influence than both resident and shared resident fathers. The statistically significant interaction effects showed that the (negative) effects of shared residence ( $b = -0.18$ ) and nonresidence ( $b = -0.36$ ) were stronger for mothers than for fathers. Additional analyses indicated that both shared resident mothers ( $b = -0.20$ ;  $p < .001$ )

and particularly nonresident mothers ( $b = -1.59; p < .001$ ) were less successful than resident mothers in exerting influence. The association between repartnering and decision-making influence also differed between fathers and mothers. Although the effect of a LAT relationship was equally positively associated with influence for mothers and fathers, the association differed for having a co-residing partner. For fathers, the main effects showed that fathers co-residing with their partner had equal influence as single fathers, and both these types of fathers had less influence than fathers with a LAT relationship. The effect of co-residing was stronger and positive for mothers, as indicated by the interaction term ( $b = 0.23; p = .005$ ). Additional analyses showed that both mothers with a LAT relationship ( $b = 0.21; p < .001$ ) and mothers who did co-reside ( $b = 0.20; p < .001$ ) had more influence than single mothers. Mothers who co-resided did not differ from mothers with a LAT relationship ( $b = -0.01; p = .835$ ). So for fathers it is a LAT relationship that led to greater influence, whereas for mothers also a co-residing new partner was associated with greater decision-making influence.

Table 2.2: Regression analyses for variables predicting parenting

	Regular care			Leisure			Irregular care			Influence in decision-making		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Residence (ref. = resident)												
Shared residence	-0.41** (.04)	-0.41** (.04)	-0.41** (.04)	-0.26** (.05)	-0.25** (.05)	-0.25** (.05)	-0.24** (.03)	-0.25** (.03)	-0.24** (.03)	-0.18** (.04)	-0.17** (.04)	-0.18** (.04)
Nonresident	-1.88** <sup>aa</sup> (.07)	-1.87** <sup>aa</sup> (.07)	-1.87** <sup>aa</sup> (.07)	-1.34** <sup>aa</sup> (.07)	-1.34** <sup>aa</sup> (.07)	-1.34** <sup>aa</sup> (.07)	-1.45** <sup>aa</sup> (.06)	-1.45** <sup>aa</sup> (.06)	-1.45** <sup>aa</sup> (.06)	-1.42** <sup>aa</sup> (.07)	-1.39** <sup>aa</sup> (.07)	-1.41** <sup>aa</sup> (.07)
Repartnering (ref. = no partner)												
LAT partner	-0.01 (.05)		0.00 (.07)	-0.06 (.05)		-0.02 (.08)	-0.08* (.03)		-0.09~ (.05)	0.20** (.04)		0.16* (.07)
Co-residing partner	-0.01 (.04)		0.08 (.06)	-0.10* (.05)		0.02 (.07)	-0.10** (.05)		-0.07 (.04)	0.11** <sup>b</sup> (.04)		0.19** (.05)
Stepchildren (ref. = no stepchildren)												
Co-residing and stepchildren		-0.12** (.05)	-0.18** (.06)		-0.21** (.05)	-0.23** (.07)		-0.08* (.04)	-0.05 (.05)		0.02 (.04)	-0.09 (.06)
LAT and stepchildren		-0.04 (.05)	-0.02 (.08)		-0.07~ (.05)	-0.05 (.09)		-0.04 (.04)	0.03 (.06)		0.16** <sup>cc</sup> (.04)	0.06 (.07)
Shared children (ref. = no shared children)		0.08 (.06)	0.04 (.07)		0.04 (.07)	0.03 (.08)		-0.06 (.05)	-0.03 (.06)		-0.03 (.06)	-0.12~ (.07)



Table 2.2: Continued.

	Regular care			Leisure			Irregular care			Influence in decision-making		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<i>Controls</i>												
Parent's gender (ref. = male)	-0.01 (.06)	0.00 (.06)	0.00 (.06)	-0.30** (.07)	-0.28** (.07)	-0.28** (.07)	0.20** (.05)	0.21** (.05)	0.20** (.05)	0.11* (.05)	0.10~ (.05)	0.11* (.05)
Parent's education	0.05** (.01)	0.05** (.01)	0.05** (.01)	0.01 (.01)	0.01 (.01)	0.01 (.01)	0.02* (.01)	0.02* (.01)	0.02* (.01)	0.02* (.01)	0.02* (.01)	0.02* (.01)
Parent's employment (ref. = nonemployed)	-0.04 (.06)	-0.04 (.06)	-0.04 (.06)	0.01 (.07)	0.01 (.07)	0.00 (.07)	-0.17** (.04)	-0.17** (.04)	-0.17** (.04)	0.11* (.05)	0.11* (.05)	0.10* (.05)
Parent's work hours (x 10)	0.02 (.02)	0.02 (.02)	0.02 (.02)	0.04 (.03)	0.04 (.03)	0.04 (.03)	-0.02 (.02)	-0.02 (.02)	-0.02 (.02)	0.01 (.02)	0.01 (.02)	0.01 (.02)
Predivorce conflict	-0.01 (.02)	-0.01 (.02)	-0.01 (.02)	-0.05~ (.03)	-0.05~ (.03)	-0.05~ (.03)	-0.06** (.02)	-0.06** (.02)	-0.06** (.02)	-0.08** (.02)	-0.09** (.02)	-0.08** (.02)
Predivorce involvement	0.12** (.03)	0.12** (.03)	0.12** (.03)	0.18** (.03)	0.18** (.03)	0.18** (.03)	0.09** (.02)	0.09** (.02)	0.09** (.02)	-0.02 (.03)	-0.02 (.03)	-0.02 (.03)
Child's gender (ref. = boy)	0.05 (.03)	0.05 (.03)	0.05 (.03)	0.01 (.04)	0.01 (.04)	0.01 (.04)	0.01 (.03)	0.01 (.03)	0.01 (.03)	-0.02 (.03)	-0.02 (.03)	-0.03 (.03)
Child's age	-0.11** (.01)	-0.11** (.01)	-0.11** (.01)	-0.13** (.01)	-0.13** (.01)	-0.13** (.01)	-0.01* (.01)	-0.01* (.01)	-0.01* (.01)	-0.05** (.01)	-0.04** (.01)	-0.05** (.01)
Former union type (ref. = cohabitation)	-0.03 (.04)	-0.03 (.04)	-0.03 (.04)	-0.03 (.05)	-0.03 (.05)	-0.03 (.05)	-0.02 (.03)	-0.03 (.03)	-0.02 (.03)	-0.03 (.03)	-0.02 (.03)	-0.03 (.03)
Number of children	-0.07* (.03)	-0.06* (.03)	-0.06* (.03)	-0.09** (.03)	-0.09** (.03)	-0.09** (.03)	-0.08** (.02)	-0.08** (.02)	-0.08** (.02)	-0.01 (.02)	-0.01 (.02)	-0.01 (.02)

Table 2.2: Continued.

	Regular care			Leisure			Irregular care			Influence in decision-making		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Parent's age	0.00 (.00)	0.00 (.00)	0.00 (.00)	-0.01 (.00)	0.00 (.00)	0.00 (.00)	-0.01~ (.00)	0.00 (.00)	-0.01~ (.00)	0.00 (.00)	-0.01* (.00)	0.00 (.00)
Sample (ref. = original sample)	0.03 (.04)	0.03 (.04)	0.03 (.04)	0.04 (.05)	0.04 (.05)	0.04 (.05)	0.08** (.03)	0.08** (.03)	0.08** (.03)	0.02 (.04)	0.02 (.04)	0.02 (.04)
R <sup>2</sup>	.506	.507	.508	.339	.342	.342	.530	.529	.530	.376	.374	.377
N (respondents)	2,778	2,778	2,778	2,778	2,778	2,778	2,778	2,778	2,778	2,778	2,778	2,778
N (households)	2,363	2,363	2,363	2,363	2,363	2,363	2,363	2,363	2,363	2,363	2,363	2,363

Note: <sup>a</sup>The difference between nonresident and shared residence is significant (two-sided  $p < .01$ ). <sup>b</sup>The difference between co-residing partner and LAT partner is significant (two-sided  $p < .05$ ). <sup>c</sup>The difference between co-residing partner and stepchildren, and LAT partner and stepchildren is significant (two-sided  $p < .05$ ). ~ Two-sided  $p < .10$ ; \* Two-sided  $p < .05$ ; \*\* Two-sided  $p < .01$ . Source: New Families in the Netherlands, Wave 1, 2.

Table 2.3: Regression analyses for variables predicting parenting, interactions

	Regular care			Leisure			Irregular care			Influence in decision-making		
	Model 4	Model 5	Model 4	Model 5	Model 4	Model 5	Model 4	Model 5	Model 4	Model 5	Model 4	Model 5
Residence (ref. = resident)												
Shared residence	-0.53** (.06)	-0.40** (.08)	-0.31** (.07)	-0.28* (.11)	-0.20** (.05)	-0.34** (.07)	-0.22** (.05)	-0.22** (.05)	-0.22** (.05)	-0.22** (.05)	-0.22** (.05)	-0.02 (.08)
Nonresident	-1.84** <sup>aa</sup> (.11)	-1.82** <sup>aa</sup> (.09)	-1.29** <sup>aa</sup> (.12)	-1.33** <sup>aa</sup> (.12)	-1.42** <sup>aa</sup> (.09)	-1.50** <sup>aa</sup> (.08)	-1.24** <sup>aa</sup> (.11)	-1.24** <sup>aa</sup> (.11)	-1.24** <sup>aa</sup> (.11)	-1.24** <sup>aa</sup> (.11)	-1.23** <sup>aa</sup> (.09)	-1.23** <sup>aa</sup> (.09)
Repartnering (ref. = no partner)												
LAT partner	-0.09 (.06)	-0.01 (.08)	-0.07 (.08)	-0.08 (.09)	-0.03 (.04)	-0.09 (.07)	0.19** (.04)	0.19** (.04)	0.19** (.04)	0.17* (.08)	0.17* (.08)	0.17* (.08)
Co-residing partner	-0.05 (.05)	-0.02 (.08)	-0.12~ (.07)	-0.14~ (.08)	-0.07* (.03)	-0.15* (.07)	0.17** (.03)	0.17** (.03)	0.17** (.03)	0.17** (.03)	0.17** (.03)	-0.03 <sup>b</sup> (.08)

Table 2.3: Continued.

	Regular care		Leisure		Irregular care		Influence in decision-making	
	Model 4	Model 5	Model 4	Model 5	Model 4	Model 5	Model 4	Model 5
Parent's gender (ref. = male)	-0.01 (.06)	0.01 (.10)	-0.30*** (.07)	-0.35*** (.12)	0.20*** (.05)	0.08 (.08)	0.11* (.05)	0.18* (.09)
Interactions of LAT partner with:								
* Shared residence	0.21* (.09)		0.08 (.11)		-0.11~ (.07)		0.07 (.07)	
* Nonresident	0.00 (.16)		-0.08 (.16)		-0.04 (.12)		-0.07 (.16)	
Interactions of co-residing partner with:								
* Shared residence	0.18* (.08)		0.09 (.10)		-0.05 (.06)		0.05 (.06)	
* Nonresident	-0.06 (.12)		-0.06 (.13)		-0.04 (.10)		-0.33*** (.12)	
Interactions of parent's gender with:								
* Shared residence		0.00 (.09)		0.04 (.12)		0.13~ (.08)		-0.18* (.08)
* Nonresident		-0.23 (.18)		-0.10 (.21)		0.00 (.16)		-0.36* (.18)
* LAT partner		-0.01 (.10)		0.04 (.11)		0.02 (.08)		0.04 (.09)
* Co-residing partner		0.01 (.09)		0.07 (.10)		0.09 (.07)		0.23*** (.08)
R <sup>2</sup>	.507	.506	.339	.339	.530	.531	.380	.379
N (respondents)	2,778	2,778	2,778	2,778	2,778	2,778	2,778	2,778
N (households)	2,363	2,363	2,363	2,363	2,363	2,363	2,363	2,363

Note: Controls as in Table 2.2. <sup>a</sup>The difference between nonresident and shared residence is significant (two-sided  $p < .01$ ). <sup>b</sup>The difference between co-residing partner and LAT partner is significant (two-sided  $p < .05$ ). ~ Two-sided  $p < .10$ ; \* Two-sided  $p < .05$ ; \*\*\* Two-sided  $p < .01$ . Source: New Families in the Netherlands, Wave 1, 2.

### 2.4.2 Robustness analyses

To check the robustness of our findings, we first conducted multilevel regression analyses to see whether our regression analyses with the cluster option were sufficient to take into account the participation of both ex-partners in 18% of former households. These analyses yielded similar results. Second, we analyzed repartnering and residence in separate models, as existing studies have often focused on either repartnering or residence. Without repartnering in Model 1, results for the effects of residence were similar. When residence was excluded from Model 1, we generally found stronger negative effects of repartnering on regular care, leisure, and irregular care, and weaker positive effects for decision-making influence (see Table A.3 in the appendix). Parents co-residing with a new partner were less involved in all three types of parent-child activities ( $b =$  between  $-0.22$  and  $-0.26$ ;  $p < .001$ ), and they had equal influence in important decision-making as single parents. Parents with a LAT relationship were less involved in irregular care ( $b = -0.08$ ;  $p = .034$ ) and had more influence in decision-making than single parents ( $b = 0.19$ ;  $p < .001$ ). It is thus necessary to include both residence and repartnering in research to avoid overestimating the effects of repartnering. Third, scholars have distinguished regular care activities in routine activities from interactive activities (Kendig & Bianchi, 2008). Additional analyses showed that findings did not differ when distinguishing routine activities (i.e., dropping child off or picking child up from school or sports; having dinner together) and interactive activities (i.e., helping with school or homework; talking with child about issues in child's life; doing household tasks together). The correlation between these scales was also high ( $r = 0.70$ ).

## 2.5 Discussion

Because of the rise in divorce and remarriage, parenting has become increasingly complex: parents live in separate households after divorce and new (step/half) family members may enter people's lives. Extending the body of research on parenting in postdivorce families, we simultaneously focused on the role of children's residence arrangements (including shared residence), repartnering (including LAT relationships), and additional children. We went beyond prior research by studying whether the role of repartnering varied across residence arrangements and whether patterns differed by gender and type of parenting behavior.

Using recent Dutch data, this study first showed that residence was highly

relevant for parents' engagement with their children. Resident parents were more involved in regular care, leisure and irregular care, and had greater decision-making influence than nonresident parents. These findings were in line with findings from previous research (e.g., Bastaits et al., 2014; Hawkins et al., 2006). Shared resident parents' level of involvement was in between that of resident parents and nonresident parents. Parents in shared residence have more opportunities to actively participate in their child's life and to take on the role of primary caregiver than nonresident parents. Nonresident parents are constrained in their access to and time with their child because of limited visitation schedules or negative gatekeeping behavior of resident parents. Note that nonresident parents may also separate themselves from the parental role, as feeling no longer obligated to be involved with their child (Amato et al., 2009).

Second, having new family responsibilities was generally associated with lower parental engagement. Although having shared children with a new partner bore no relation with parenting, repartnering or stepchildren led parents to spend less time on parent-child activities. This was in line with the (small) majority of studies showing negative effects of repartnering on parenting (e.g., Hawkins et al., 2006; Tach et al., 2010). For leisure activities and particularly regular care activities—which are more frequent and less discretionary—it was living with a partner who had children (i.e., stepchildren) rather than a new partner as such that mattered. For irregular care activities, repartnering irrespective of whether they co-resided with the new partner or whether the new partner had children decreased parental engagement. These findings could indicate that a new partner and stepchildren absorb parents' time at the cost of spending time with their biological children or that children distance themselves from their parents in case of repartnering (Manning et al., 2003; Manning & Smock, 2000). A more optimistic interpretation is that parenting tasks are shared with the new partner, which decreases the biological parent's involvement.

This study, however, nuances the conclusion that new family responsibilities reduce parental engagement in two ways. A first nuance is that repartnering and stepchildren were found to be less important for parents' engagement with their children than residence: effect sizes were small—and smaller than those for residence. A second nuance is that it mattered which type of parenting behavior was considered. As discussed earlier, the strength and statistical significance of the negative effects of repartnering and stepchildren depended on the type of parent-child activity (i.e., regular care, leisure, irregular care). As expected, repartnering

was least consequential for the more frequent and less discretionary parent-child activities, that is, regular care. This suggests that time spent on these activities is more difficult to reduce as they constitute an important part of a child's routine care. Furthermore, repartnering was positively associated instead of negatively associated with parents' influence in child-related decision-making. Because such influence is less time demanding than the other parenting behaviors, we would expect a smaller (negative) effect. A positive association, however, was not expected. We may speculate that a new partner empowers parents, leading to a greater say in decision-making, or that they perceive having greater influence.

Third, little support was found for the idea that it is easier for nonresident parents to shift their focus to the new partner because they have less parenting responsibilities toward the original family than (shared) resident parents. Only for influence, we found some support as the observed positive effect of repartnering was not found for nonresident parents who lived with a partner. The fact that the effect of repartnering was similar across residence arrangements for most types of parenting might be related to a relatively high frequency of visitation by some nonresident parents. A substantial number of nonresident parents in our sample saw their child quite often and this is in line with studies showing that nonresident parents, usually fathers, nowadays have more contact with their children than in the past (Amato et al., 2009), also in the Netherlands (Nikolina, 2015). Also, fathers are being increasingly expected to contribute to parenting. Nonresident parents may therefore be less able to reduce their parenting time in case of repartnering or be more motivated to stay involved.

Finally, this study provided little support for the idea that variations in parenting across residence arrangements or between repartnered and single parents would be less pronounced for mothers than fathers, because of stronger motherhood norms. Only for influence, gender differences were found, but these were contrary to expectations. Although resident mothers had a greater say than resident fathers, shared resident mothers and nonresident mothers were more rather than less likely to lose their influence than shared resident fathers and nonresident fathers. Mothers possibly have less power than fathers to maintain exerting influence in important child-related decisions when they do not have sole-custody. Furthermore, the positive effect of co-residing with a new partner was stronger for mothers than fathers, suggesting that repartnering empowers women to a greater extent.

Despite the insights provided by our study, it is also limited because of its cross-

sectional nature; solid causal claims cannot be made. For instance, repartnering may be selective of better resourced parents or parents with certain attitudes or personality traits (De Graaf & Kalmijn, 2003; Pasteels & Mortelmans, 2017), which may also lead them to have a greater say in decision-making than single parents. Future research would thus ideally use panel data. Second, because the survey took place in the first years after parents divorced, our conclusions may only apply to the period shortly after divorce. Differences in parenting across postdivorce families may decrease as time passes, as parents and children adjust to the new situation. Alternatively, differences may increase over time, as nonresident parents or repartnered parents may become less committed to remain involved or due to attempts by their ex-partners to minimize parent-child contact (Cheadle et al., 2010). Third, although the used data were of large scale, the number of cases in some postdivorce family types was low. We particularly had few resident fathers and nonresident mothers in our sample, and this group may also be selective (e.g., mother's low mental health). This may have decreased the likelihood of finding gender differences in the effects of residence and repartnering. Future research should further investigate the role of gender across postdivorce families, as evidence is mixed that mothers, irrespectively of their residence arrangements and regardless of new relationships, are more involved in parenting than fathers (Dufur et al., 2010; Kielty, 2006). Fourth, some groups were underrepresented in our data, such as immigrants and people with low income. In addition, there might not only be selection on observed characteristics, but also on unobserved characteristics (e.g., less involved parents might be underrepresented). This may have decreased the variation in both independent and dependent variables, possibly leading to less statistically significant findings. Fifth, parents may have overestimated their involvement as they felt ashamed of their actual involvement (i.e., social desirability bias) or may not have an accurate view of their actual involvement. We recommend using time diaries for future research (Kendig & Bianchi, 2008).

Overall, our study emphasizes the value of including both residence and repartnering and of examining not only regular care—as most previous studies—but various parenting behaviors. We showed that residence was more strongly related to parenting than repartnering, and that the strength and nature of associations varied between types of parenting. Influence in decision-making in particular stood out as a distinct parenting behavior, and also the frequency and obligatory nature of parent-child activities mattered.





# 3

## **Are separated fathers less or more involved in childrearing than partnered fathers?**

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The authors jointly developed the core ideas of this chapter. Koster wrote the main part of the manuscript and conducted the analyses. Castro-Martín contributed substantially to writing the manuscript. An earlier version of this chapter has been presented at the Divorce Conference (2020-10-15) and the Nederlandse Demografieweek (2020-11-20).

## **Abstract**

Separated fathers are generally assumed to be less involved with their children than partnered fathers. Yet, extant research on separated fathers has mainly focused on nonresident fathers without taking into consideration the existing diversity in post-separation residence arrangements. In fact, separated resident and shared residence fathers may possibly be more involved than partnered fathers, because the former likely bear primary childcare responsibilities, while the latter often act as secondary caregivers. This study extends previous research by investigating father involvement via regular care and leisure activities across a full range of separated fathers, and how it compares to that of partnered fathers, as well as whether patterns differ by father's education. Data from the New Families in the Netherlands survey ( $N = 1,592$ ) reveal that as compared to partnered fathers, shared residence fathers and especially resident fathers are more actively involved in the regular care of their child, whereas nonresident fathers are less involved. Results are similar for leisure, except that partnered fathers are similarly involved as shared residence fathers in this activity. Education also matters: involvement of fathers across different post-separation residence arrangements is more similar to that of partnered fathers when being highly educated. These findings suggest that including resident and shared residence fathers in the picture offers a more optimistic view of fathers' post-separation parenting role, because these separated fathers are actually more actively involved in childrearing than partnered fathers.

### 3.1 Introduction

Over the last decades, there has been a remarkable shift in the social and cultural norms shaping fathers' involvement with their children, reflecting changes in family gender roles and the division of care and paid work. Alongside their breadwinning responsibilities, fathers are nowadays expected to assume a nurturing role and to get involved in their children's direct care (Hook & Wolfe, 2012). In response to the evolving definition of fatherhood and the increased recognition of the important role fathers play on child development and well-being, the literature on fathering has become more extensive and varied, although the bulk of research still focuses on parenting behaviors of partnered fathers<sup>1</sup> compared to partnered mothers' (Lamb, 2000).

In this general context of increasing father involvement in children's upbringing, the rise in union dissolution poses an important challenge to the continuity and quality of father-child relationships (Härkönen, 2014). In the recent past, mother sole custody was the norm, and the degree of involvement of separated fathers<sup>2</sup> was assessed by the frequency of father-child contact, economic support, and participation in childrearing decisions, but less so by fathers' engagement in childcare (Seltzer, 1991). However, besides the cultural shift in the normative expectations of fathers' nurturing roles, the continuing involvement of separated fathers in their children's lives has been reinforced by social policies oriented to promote more gender-equal engagement in childrearing in all types of families (Pilkauskas & Schneider, 2020) and legislative changes toward more gender-neutral parental custody laws (Lamb, 2000; McIntosh, 2009). Hence, the social and cultural shifts toward more involved fatherhood have altered living and care arrangements after separation. Post-separation residence arrangements have diversified over the last decades, with a small rise of resident fathers (i.e., children residing primarily with their father) and a steep rise of fathers in shared residence (i.e., children residing alternately with each parent) (Bernardi & Mortelmans, 2021). Ample visitation rights for nonresident fathers have also increased their involvement in parenting activities (Waller et al., 2018).

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- 1 Although we use the term "non-divorced fathers" throughout the dissertation, in this study we use "partnered fathers" to refer to fathers who are married or in a cohabiting union with the child's mother, as this latter term was preferred by the journal in which this study has been published.
  - 2 Although we use the term "divorced fathers" throughout the dissertation, in this study we use "separated fathers" to refer to fathers who dissolved their marriage or cohabiting union with the child's mother, as this latter term was preferred by the journal in which this study has been published.

In this changing demographic, social, and cultural context, the literature on separated fathers has evolved from the initial focus on child support payments and father-child contact to a growing emphasis on fathers' caregiving. However, existing studies on separated fathers have mainly focused on nonresident fathers, and less attention has been devoted to other types of residence arrangements (but see Bastaits & Mortelmans, 2017; Bastaits et al., 2014; Hook & Chalasani, 2008) which were once uncommon, but are now on the rise. The literature consistently shows that separated fathers are less involved with their children than partnered fathers (e.g., Carlson et al., 2017; Grätz, 2017), yet this generalization does not take into consideration the existing diversity in post-separation residence arrangements. In fact, separated resident and shared residence fathers might possibly be more involved in childrearing than partnered fathers, because the former place great emphasis on their parenting role and the latter often act as secondary caregivers.

The present study contributes to the existing literature, first, by taking into account the existing variety of separated fathers' residential contexts. By focusing on a full range of post-separation residence arrangements (i.e., resident father, shared residence father, nonresident father), we examine father involvement of all types of separated fathers, and how they compare to partnered fathers. Second, we test whether differences in father involvement across residence arrangements vary by father's education. Educational attainment is consistently found to be a key factor in explaining the level and type of parental engagement (Monna & Gauthier, 2008; Sullivan, 2010). Prior research has shown that high-educated partnered fathers tend to be more involved with their children than the lower educated, because the former are more likely to adopt modern fatherhood norms and often have the resources (i.e., time and money) that make involvement easier (Köppen et al., 2018; Sayer et al., 2004). High-educated nonresident fathers have also been found to be more involved in childrearing (Cheadle et al., 2010; Kalmijn, 2015b). Less is known about how education affects fathers' active parenting in other post-separation residence arrangements, and this study tries to fill this gap.

We use data from the New Families in the Netherlands (NFN) survey (Poortman et al., 2014, 2018). The strength of the NFN is that it includes extensive information about father involvement in a broad range of parent-child activities (i.e., regular care and leisure) of large samples of both married/cohabiting fathers and divorced/separated fathers. Additionally, the sample of divorced/separated fathers includes a relatively large number of resident and shared residence fathers, which allows a comprehensive examination of father involvement across a full variety of residential contexts.

## 3.2 Theoretical background

Father involvement is a multidimensional and continually evolving construct, which encompasses a wide range of behavioral, cognitive, and affective practices. Notwithstanding the growing literature on fathering (Marsiglio et al., 2000), there is still no consensual theoretical framework to guide research on father involvement, possibly because it constitutes a moving target, as social expectations of paternal roles are continuously evolving over time. The pioneering conceptualization of father involvement by Lamb et al., (1987) identified three key dimensions: accessibility (physical and psychological availability to the child), engagement (direct interactions with the child through caretaking and shared activities), and responsibility (organizing and managing child's care and welfare). Subsequent studies have expanded the concept of father involvement to include aspects such as warmth, responsiveness, emotional support, or supervision (Pleck, 2010), and have fostered multidisciplinary approaches (Cabrera & Tamis-LeMonda, 2013). Despite the wide plurality in conceptualizations and measurements of paternal involvement across studies, disciplines, and societies, there is nonetheless a common shift in focus from quantity to quality of time spent with children and an increasing attention to diversity in fathers' parenting across different family contexts (Schoppe-Sullivan & Fagan, 2020).

### 3.2.1 Residential status and father involvement

Partnered and separated fathers have different opportunities and constraints with regard to how they fulfill their parental role and dedicate time and effort to childcare. In the literature, we find three arguments to expect different levels of father involvement according to residential status. A first argument focuses on the structural position of being a primary caregiver. Men and women have been long socialized into different gender roles, with women having the greatest responsibility for childrearing, whereas men were expected to assume the primary breadwinner role (Craig & Mullan, 2011). In the last decades, the so-called new fatherhood has emerged, shifting the focus of fatherhood from its breadwinner role to its nurturing role (Hook & Wolfe, 2012). Nonetheless, although time use studies have documented that the amount of time partnered fathers spend with their children has increased, partnered mothers continue to bear major responsibility for care tasks (Craig & Mullan, 2011). Many partnered fathers are still "part-timers" in childrearing, performing a complementary role rather than being their child's primary caregiver (Craig, 2006). After separation, when there is a reduction of

care provided by the mother, resident and shared residence fathers take on the role of primary caregiver, irrespective of whether they are repartnered (Bastaits & Mortelmans, 2017). Taking on nontraditional roles and responsibilities to provide the child's daily care—even if this only applies half of the time in the case of shared residence—they will generally be more involved than partnered fathers (Hilton & Devall, 1998; Spruijt & Duindam, 2010). Nonresident fathers are not in a primary caregiver position, just like most partnered fathers. Although there has been a notable increase in the frequency of nonresident father-child contact over divorce cohorts (Westphal et al., 2014), living in separate households poses major challenges for active fathering. Nonresident fathers are more constrained in their access to their child than partnered fathers, because the former often face practical barriers (e.g., geographical distance, time and visitation rights) which likely limit their level and forms of parenting involvement (Hawkins et al., 2006).

A second argument focuses on mothers' gatekeeping behavior. Although some studies suggest that partnered mothers generally value and actively promote their partner's involvement with their child (i.e., positive gatekeeping) (Puhlman & Pasley, 2013; Walker & McGraw, 2000), others have shown that partnered mothers' gatekeeping can also be restrictive for fathers (i.e., negative gatekeeping) (Allen & Hawkins, 1999; Gaunt, 2008). Partnered mothers may inhibit fathers' active engagement in parenting so they can retain primary responsibility for childrearing (Fagan & Barnett, 2003), or because they do think of fathers providing a lower standard of care than they themselves deliver (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010). Negative gatekeeping may be even more pronounced in a post-separation context for the nonresident father, because of a protective resident mother. Although not all resident mothers may "gatekeep" the father's access to the child (Sano et al., 2008), they often play a major role in deciding how much time the father spends with the child by limiting (face-to-face) father-child contact to either the formal court prescriptions or the agreed-upon informal visitation arrangements (Pruett et al., 2006). Nonresident fathers may, thus, be more hindered from being actively involved with their child than partnered fathers. By contrast, (shared) resident fathers are not likely to experience negative gatekeeping by the mother. For resident fathers, negative gatekeeping would be ineffective as nonresident mothers are not in the position of primary caregiver. For fathers in shared residence, negative gatekeeping would be impractical because this particular living arrangement requires extensive cooperation between the parents (Nielsen, 2011).

Third, research has shown that separated parents generally have more feelings

of guilt toward their children than partnered parents, as the former may feel guilty about the separation and its potential negative consequences for the child (Kalmijn, 2018). For (shared) resident fathers, feelings of guilt may positively affect their involvement. Because these fathers co-reside with their child at least half of the time and act as primary caregiver, they may respond to these feelings of guilt by trying to compensate for the potentially harmful consequences of separation, or for the reduction of care provided by the mother. (Shared) resident fathers may be particularly motivated to show that they are a “good” parent by dedicating extra time and effort to their child’s needs. Nonresident fathers are often more constrained to be engaged in their child’s daily life, but they might try to compensate their guilt feelings by focusing on shared leisure activities with their child—sometimes described as “Disneyland dads” (Stewart, 1999).

Prior research has consistently shown that nonresident fathers are less involved with their child than partnered fathers (Carlson et al., 2017; Hawkins et al., 2006). The few studies that have compared father involvement between partnered fathers and separated fathers in the less common residence arrangements indicate that resident fathers are more involved than partnered fathers (Bastaitis & Mortelmans, 2017; Hilton & Devall, 1998; Hook & Chalasani, 2008). Shared residence fathers have been found to display similar levels of father involvement as partnered fathers (Bastaitis & Mortelmans, 2017). Note that mentioned studies include different measures of father involvement (e.g., paternal control, emotional support, parent-child activities) and different samples (e.g., parenting reported by parents or children, recent or older data collection), which may make it difficult to compare the findings, and that relatively small sample sizes of separated fathers in infrequent residential arrangements often preclude firm conclusions. Building on prior research and based on the arguments developed above, we expect that:

*(H1a) Shared residence fathers and especially resident fathers are more involved with their child than partnered fathers.*

*(H1b) Nonresident fathers are less involved with their child than partnered fathers.*

### **3.2.2 Residential status, father’s education, and father involvement**

Highly educated fathers are generally well aware of the positive impact of father involvement on children’s development and well-being. Well-educated fathers are also more likely to embrace modern fatherhood norms and to have more financial resources to invest in their children (Kalmijn, 2015b; Monna & Gauthier, 2008). Hence, high-educated fathers are typically more involved in childrearing than

low-educated fathers—yet the extent may depend upon the residential context.

Previous studies have shown that partnered fathers—who generally perform a secondary role in caregiving—take on more of the responsibility for parenting tasks when being highly educated (Köppen et al., 2018; Sayer et al., 2004). As compared to partnered fathers, educational attainment may positively influence father involvement to a lesser extent for resident and shared residence fathers because of a ceiling effect. Regardless of their educational level, (shared) resident fathers bear major responsibility for childrearing in their primary caregiver position. High-educated (shared) resident fathers may be somewhat more involved with their child than their low-educated counterparts, yet it is unlikely that we find large differences across educational strata. Differences in parenting involvement between partnered fathers and (shared) resident fathers may thus be smaller among the highly educated because of greater involvement of high-educated partnered fathers.

The literature on nonresident fathers has also documented that the well-educated are more engaged in parenting than the lower educated (Manning et al., 2003; Westphal et al., 2014). It is plausible that educational attainment positively affects parenting involvement of nonresident fathers to a greater extent than that of partnered fathers. High-educated nonresident fathers may be more motivated than high-educated partnered fathers to take on an active parenting role to compensate for the fact that they do not live with their child and the child's potential loss of social capital, for instance by increasing the quantity and quality of father-child interactions (Cheadle et al., 2010). The financial aspect may also be relevant for nonresident fathers (Kalmijn, 2015b). Well-educated fathers tend to have more economic resources that facilitate contact, especially if the child lives at some distance (Cheadle et al., 2010). High-educated nonresident fathers may also be more able to contribute financially to the child's care, thereby gaining the ex-partner's cooperation (Coley & Hernandez, 2006). The ex-partner may allow increased visitation between the nonresident father and the child, which positively affects the father's opportunities to be involved. These arguments suggest that differences in parenting involvement between partnered fathers and nonresident fathers may be smaller among the highly educated because of higher involvement of high-educated nonresident fathers. On the basis of these considerations, we hypothesize that:

*(H2a) Among the highly educated, the gap in father involvement between partnered fathers and (shared) resident fathers is smaller because of greater involvement of high-educated partnered fathers.*



*(H2b) Among the highly educated, the gap in father involvement between partnered fathers and nonresident fathers is smaller because of greater involvement of high-educated nonresident fathers.*

### **3.2.3 The Dutch context and selection issues**

Since the 1970s, a new ideal of fatherhood has emerged, emphasizing fathers' nurturing role in both partnered and post-separation families (Lamb, 2000). Many Western countries started to encourage partnered and separated fathers' parenting involvement with new legislation and social policies ever since. In the Netherlands, partnered fathers' engagement in childcare has been promoted to some extent, yet many policies still consider fathers as primary breadwinners and mothers as primary caregivers (Korpi et al., 2013). Since 2001 fathers are entitled to two days of paternity leave,<sup>3</sup> whereas mothers get sixteen weeks of maternity leave (Plantenga & Remery, 2009). Because paternity leave is limited and there is no heavily subsidized public childcare, a "one-and-a-half earner" model has become dominant (Visser, 2002)—with the majority of two-parent families with children composed of a full-time working father and a part-time working mother who takes most responsibility for childcare. Although there has been a trend toward increasing participation of partnered fathers in childcare over the last decades, partnered mothers continue to devote almost twice as much time on their children's care (Portegijs et al., 2018).

Regarding post-separation families, automatic continuation of joint legal custody after union dissolution—implying shared decision-making on child-related matters—is regulated by Dutch law since the late 1990s. Moreover, since 2009 the law promotes joint physical custody after union dissolution. With this emphasis on promoting continued coparenting after separation, shared residence has become an increasingly common living arrangement in the Netherlands. About one-fourth of divorced and separated parents are in a shared residence arrangement (Spruijt & Kormos, 2014). As shared residence is only encouraged rather than prescribed by Dutch law, there is often self-selection into this residence arrangement. Fathers who opt for shared residence often have a high socioeconomic status, experience little pre-separation conflict and few personal problems (Poortman & Van Gaalen, 2017). These factors likely also affect their level of post-separation parenting involvement (Cancian et al., 2014; Gunnoe & Braver, 2001). Father residence after separation is relatively uncommon, about 7% (Spruijt & Kormos, 2014). Father residence is more likely when the child is older (Poortman & Van Gaalen, 2017)

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3 Paternity leave has been recently extended (in 2019), but only to five days.

and parent characteristics may also play a role (e.g., father's high pre-separation involvement, mother's personal problems). Selection into sole father custody may also affect post-separation fathering (Kitterød & Lyngstad, 2014). Furthermore, it is important to be aware of fathers' possible selection into separation. Partnered fathers who experience high levels of marital conflict or who are less involved in childrearing are more likely to separate (Kalmijn, 1999). To address potential selection bias, analyses control for a wide range of parental demographic and (pre-separation) relationship characteristics.

### **3.3 Data and method**

#### **3.3.1 Data**

We used the survey NFN (Poortman & Van Gaalen, 2019a, 2019b; Poortman et al., 2014, 2018). Because questions about involvement in parent-child activities were only included in Wave 2 (2015/16), the bulk of the analysis is based on Wave 2, although some information of Wave 1 (2012/13) was also used. Based on population registers, Statistics Netherlands (CBS) draw two random samples for the first wave: one among married or cohabiting heterosexual parents with minor children (i.e., partnered sample) and one among formerly married or cohabiting heterosexual parents with minor children who dissolved their union in 2010 (i.e., separated sample). For both samples, both (ex-)partners were approached by post and invited to complete an online survey. The final reminder included a written questionnaire. For the partnered sample, the response rate in Wave 1 was 45% among persons and 56% among households, yielding 2,173 married or cohabiting parents. For the separated sample, the response rate was 39% on the individual level and 58% on the former household level, totaling 4,481 divorced or separated parents. These response rates are comparable to other Dutch family surveys, and relatively high considering that NFN uses an online mode, but also targets a group of recently separated parents (Poortman et al., 2014).

Parents who agreed to be re-contacted for follow-up research were invited to participate in Wave 2, in which a similar procedure was followed. For the partnered sample, the retention rate—the overall percentage of participants in Wave 1 who also participated in Wave 2—was 61% among persons and 67% among households, totaling 1,336 participants. For the separated sample, the retention rate amounted to 57% on the individual level and 63% on the former household level, yielding 2,544 participants. An additional random sample of formerly married

or cohabiting heterosexual parents with minor children who dissolved their union in 2010 was approached to participate in Wave 2 to compensate for panel attrition. The response rate was 32% among persons and 52% among former households, resulting in 920 participants in this refreshment sample. The total sample of Wave 2 contains 4,800 parents, of which 1,336 married/cohabiting parents and 3,464 divorced/separated parents.

Regarding the partnered sample, for both waves, men were moderately underrepresented, yet selectivity on several characteristics was similar for men and women: non-Western immigrants and people on low incomes were underrepresented. Additionally, the well-educated were more likely to respond in Wave 2. Regarding the separated sample, similar to Wave 1, men were moderately underrepresented, and selectivity on several criteria was similar for men and women: former cohabiters, younger people, non-Western immigrants, and people on low incomes were underrepresented. Note also that having a high education and paid work were most predictive of participating again in Wave 2.

Parents provided information on a focal child who was selected in Wave 1. If at least one of the children was ten or older at the time of Wave 1, parents reported on the youngest child of ten or older. If all children were younger than ten, parents reported on the oldest child. In Wave 2 parents answered questions about the same child. In the refreshment sample, the cutoff age for selecting the focal child was thirteen years old because Wave 2 took place about three years after Wave 1.

Because the focus of this study is on father involvement, we only selected fathers ( $n = 1,971$ ). We excluded fathers who had children with a same-sex (former) partner ( $n = 4$ ). Fathers were also excluded when the focal child was older than 18 years of age at the time of Wave 2 ( $n = 277$ ). Fathers with another living arrangement than partnered, resident, shared residence or nonresident father were omitted ( $n = 47$ ). We further excluded cases with missing values on the variables of interest ( $n = 51$ ). Missing values were low, ranging from 0 to 1.2%. The final analytical sample consisted of 1,592 fathers (partnered sample:  $n = 482$ ; separated sample:  $n = 1,110$ ).

### 3.3.2 Dependent variables

Drawing on the key components of fathering—availability, engagement, and responsibility—posited by Lamb et al., (1987), the present study largely focuses on the engagement dimension, that is, the extent to which fathers experience shared interactions with their child. We distinguish two types of activities fathers may engage in with their children: *regular care* and *leisure*. The distinction between

care and play is relevant, because partnered and nonresident fathers have been found to often enjoy the more pleasurable aspects of childcare by spending more time on leisure activities with their child (Craig, 2006; Stewart, 1999), whereas (shared) resident fathers are expected to be involved in a wide range of parent-child activities.

The measure of *regular care* is derived from five items on how often (1 = *not to 7 = few times per day*) fathers spent time with their child during the last month in the following activities: “having dinner together,” “helping with school or homework,” “talking with child about issues in child’s life,” “dropping child off or picking child up from school or sports,” and “doing household tasks together.” We calculated the mean score for these items combined (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = 0.84$ ).

The measure of *leisure* is derived from three items on how often (1 = *not to 7 = few times per day*) fathers spent time with their child during the last month in the following activities: “watching television,” “playing a game or doing crafts,” and “leisure activities away from home, such as to the zoo.” A scale was created by calculating the mean score (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = 0.80$ ). The correlation between regular care and leisure was statistically significant and positive ( $r = 0.78$ ).

Note that fathers could also fill out “not applicable” (e.g., child is too old or too young) for all items involved in the two dependent variables. Fathers were treated as having a missing value on these particular items if they did so. They were included in the scale when having a non-missing value on at least one of the items. For three items we found missing values of about 10%, as these items indicate activities for which children are too young (helping with school; dropping off/picking up) or too old (playing game/doing crafts).

### 3.3.3 Independent variables

*Father’s residential status.* Fathers of the partnered sample were assigned to the group of partnered fathers. Fathers of the separated sample indicated with whom the focal child lived most of the time at the time of the survey, with response categories: “with me,” “with ex-partner,” “with both parents about equally,” and “other arrangement.” We excluded fathers in the “other arrangement” category. Dummy variables were constructed for the four different groups of fathers: *partnered father* (reference group), *resident father*, *nonresident father*, and *shared residence father*.

*Father’s education.* In Wave 1 fathers reported their highest attained educational level (1 = *primary school not finished* to 10 = *post graduate*). Because the effect of

education may not be linear, we generated three dummy variables: *low education* (lower secondary education or less) as the reference group, *medium education* (upper secondary education and vocational training) and *high education* (tertiary education).

### 3.3.4 Control variables

As mentioned earlier, we controlled for factors that may be related to selection into separation as well as into post-separation residence arrangements, namely pre-separation father involvement, pre-separation level of conflict and pre-separation union type—for partnered fathers those variables refer to their current partnership. We also controlled for factors that the literature has documented to be associated with father involvement: parents' age, mother's education, father's work hours, child's gender and age, and number of children (Carlson et al., 2017; Cheadle et al., 2010; Grätz, 2017; Landale & Oropesa, 2001; Manning et al., 2003; Sayer et al., 2004). Note that Wave 1 information was used for some controls as this information was no longer asked in Wave 2 (i.e., partnered sample: mother's education; separated sample: mother's education, pre-separation involvement, conflict, and union type, and number of children).

To measure (*pre-separation*) *involvement*, partnered fathers reported at Wave 1 who did most (1 = *I much more often than partner* to 5 = *partner much more often than me*) of five care tasks (e.g., putting child to bed) during their current relationship. For separated fathers, the items and response categories were similar, yet they reported on who did most during the relationship with their ex-partner. We recoded the items in the direction of the father's contribution, so that a higher score indicated that his involvement was higher than his (ex-)partner's. The mean score was computed (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.84$ ). For (*pre-separation*) *conflict*, fathers indicated how often five different conflict situations (e.g., fierce arguments) occurred during the past year (partnered sample) or in the final year before separation (separated sample). Answers ranged from 1 (= *never*) to 4 (= *often*). A scale was created by taking the mean (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.89$ ). (*Pre-separation*) *union type* is a dummy for whether the father's relationship with the (ex-)partner was 0 "*cohabitation*" or 1 "*marriage/registered partnership*." A registered partnership is a form of legal cohabitation offering almost the same rights as marriage (6% in the sample). *Parents' age* is measured in years. We constructed variables for the father's and the mother's age, based on father's reports. *Mother's education* was reported by the father, and was measured in the same way as father's education. *Father's work hours* refer to the

number of contractual hours that fathers worked per week. If they did not have a paid job at the time of the survey, they were assigned zero hours. Work hours of over 60 were recoded to 60. Because of small regression coefficients, we divided father's work hours by 10. *Child's gender* is a dummy for whether the focal child was a 0 "boy" or 1 "girl". *Child's age* is the focal child's age measured in years. *Number of children* includes the number of children fathers had or adopted with their (ex-) partner. Table 3.1 shows descriptive statistics of all variables used in the analyses across fathers' residential contexts.

### 3.3.5 Analytical strategy

We, first, describe and compare the characteristics of partnered, resident, shared residence, and nonresident fathers in Table 3.1. We also added Table 3.2 with more descriptive information only concerning separated fathers (e.g., post-separation repartnering), which may be relevant for parenting involvement, but cannot be included in the multivariate analysis because it encompasses both partnered and separated fathers. Next, linear regression analyses were performed, estimating three models for both regular care and leisure (Table 3.3). Model 1 includes only father's residential status to assess whether there are observed differences in father involvement by residence arrangements. This model should be interpreted with caution because it does not control for possible selection factors. In Model 2, we added father's education and the controls, to examine the net impact of residential status on father involvement. Model 3 includes interactions between residential status and father's education to test whether differentials in father involvement by residential status vary across educational strata. Because of few cases in some groups (e.g., resident fathers with low education:  $n = 19$ ), we dichotomized the education variable: 0 "less than tertiary education" (i.e., low and medium education) and 1 "tertiary education." Wald tests were conducted to test for interactions with the three dummies for residential status simultaneously.

**Table 3.1:** Range, mean and standard deviation of the variables in the analyses

	Range	Partnered fathers		Resident fathers		Shared residence fathers		Nonresident fathers	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Regular care	1-7	4.30	0.89	4.76	0.89	4.55	0.84	3.08	1.29
Leisure	1-7	4.05	1.09	4.31	1.20	4.20	1.03	3.11	1.35
Father's education									
Low education	0-1	0.16	<sup>a</sup>	0.17	<sup>a</sup>	0.10	<sup>a</sup>	0.22	<sup>a</sup>
Medium education	0-1	0.34	<sup>a</sup>	0.40	<sup>a</sup>	0.30	<sup>a</sup>	0.37	<sup>a</sup>
High education	0-1	0.50	<sup>a</sup>	0.43	<sup>a</sup>	0.59	<sup>a</sup>	0.41	<sup>a</sup>
<i>Controls</i>									
(Pre-separation) involvement	1-5	2.46	0.63	3.13	0.80	2.90	0.59	2.75	0.63
(Pre-separation) conflict	1-4	1.50	0.40	2.33	0.76	2.08	0.71	2.32	0.76
(Pre-separation) union type									
Cohabitation	0-1	0.25	<sup>a</sup>	0.17	<sup>a</sup>	0.26	<sup>a</sup>	0.23	<sup>a</sup>
Marriage	0-1	0.75	<sup>a</sup>	0.83	<sup>a</sup>	0.74	<sup>a</sup>	0.77	<sup>a</sup>
Father's age	28-73	47.59	6.35	48.18	6.79	47.06	6.06	46.71	6.82
Mother's age	26-73	45.17	5.78	45.23	5.79	44.22	5.65	44.10	6.08
Mother's education									
Low education	0-1	0.17	<sup>a</sup>	0.41	<sup>a</sup>	0.20	<sup>a</sup>	0.36	<sup>a</sup>
Medium education	0-1	0.35	<sup>a</sup>	0.35	<sup>a</sup>	0.33	<sup>a</sup>	0.37	<sup>a</sup>
High education	0-1	0.49	<sup>a</sup>	0.23	<sup>a</sup>	0.47	<sup>a</sup>	0.27	<sup>a</sup>
Father's work hours (x 10)	0-6	3.64	1.09	3.24	1.46	3.55	1.20	3.48	1.38

Table 3.1: Continued.

	Range	Partnered fathers		Resident fathers		Shared residence fathers		Nonresident fathers	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Child's gender									
Boy	0-1	0.47	<sup>a</sup>	0.54	<sup>a</sup>	0.52	<sup>a</sup>	0.51	<sup>a</sup>
Girl	0-1	0.53	<sup>a</sup>	0.46	<sup>a</sup>	0.48	<sup>a</sup>	0.49	<sup>a</sup>
Child's age	2-18	12.67	3.37	14.31	3.09	12.79	2.99	12.78	3.29
Number of children	1-8	2.14	0.85	2.05	0.85	1.92	0.72	1.89	0.82
N of respondents		482		111		426		573	

Note: <sup>a</sup>Standard deviation (SD) not presented for discrete variables. Source: New Families in the Netherlands, Wave 1, 2.



## 3.4 Results

### 3.4.1 Profile of fathers by residential status

Table 3.1 shows that the mean amount of father involvement in regular care and leisure across residence arrangements differed in expected ways: it was highest among resident fathers, followed by shared residence fathers, partnered fathers, and nonresident fathers, respectively. Whereas differences between partnered and (shared) resident fathers were not that large, nonresident fathers clearly lagged behind in their parenting involvement. As regards education, shared residence fathers stood out with the highest proportion of highly educated—in line with prior research (Poortman & Van Gaalen, 2017)—and nonresident fathers with the highest proportion of lower educated. Mother's education is also particularly low in the case of resident fathers. Somewhat unexpectedly, (pre-separation) involvement was higher among all types of separated fathers than partnered fathers, but differences between separated fathers were as anticipated: shared residence fathers, and especially resident fathers, were more involved prior to the separation than nonresident fathers. In line with prior research (Kalmijn, 1999), there was a clear distinction in (pre-separation) conflict between partnered fathers and separated fathers, with the former experiencing less conflict. Pre-separation conflict also varied among separated fathers: resident and nonresident fathers reported similar levels of pre-separation conflict, whereas fathers in shared residence reported lower levels.

Table 3.2 provides more detailed information on separated fathers. Whereas the majority of shared residence fathers (66%) and nonresident fathers (70%) had repartnered—be it co-residing with a new partner or in a LAT relationship—resident fathers were less often in a new partnership (45%). Among repartnered fathers, only a relatively small proportion had joint children with the new partner (6%, 12% and 15% among resident, shared residence, and nonresident fathers, respectively). Co-residing with a new partner who had children from a prior union, and thus having stepchildren, was more common, particularly among nonresident fathers (25%). The mean amount of monthly parent-child contact shows that the residence groups differed in expected ways (i.e., resident fathers: 24 days; shared residence fathers: 14 days; nonresident fathers: 5 days). Although there was a nontrivial proportion of nonresident fathers who had no face-to-face contact with their child at all (9%), the large majority saw their child once per month or more often (84%). Lastly, we observe that for most separated fathers, travel time to the ex-partner's house was low (i.e., 15 min or less), yet this was more so the case for

fathers in shared residence (80%) than for resident fathers (59%) and nonresident fathers (58%)—which corroborates findings from previous research (Thomas et al., 2018).

**Table 3.2:** Range, mean and standard deviation of additional variables for separated fathers

	Range	Resident fathers		Shared residence fathers		Nonresident fathers	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Repartnering							
No partner	0-1	0.56	<sup>a</sup>	0.35	<sup>a</sup>	0.30	<sup>a</sup>
LAT partner	0-1	0.22	<sup>a</sup>	0.30	<sup>a</sup>	0.18	<sup>a</sup>
Co-residing partner	0-1	0.23	<sup>a</sup>	0.36	<sup>a</sup>	0.52	<sup>a</sup>
Stepchildren							
No stepchildren	0-1	0.68	<sup>a</sup>	0.61	<sup>a</sup>	0.63	<sup>a</sup>
LAT and stepchildren	0-1	0.18	<sup>a</sup>	0.24	<sup>a</sup>	0.12	<sup>a</sup>
Co-residing and stepchildren	0-1	0.14	<sup>a</sup>	0.16	<sup>a</sup>	0.25	<sup>a</sup>
Joint children with new partner							
No joint children	0-1	0.94	<sup>a</sup>	0.88	<sup>a</sup>	0.85	<sup>a</sup>
Joint children	0-1	0.06	<sup>a</sup>	0.12	<sup>a</sup>	0.15	<sup>a</sup>
Monthly father-child contact	0-28	23.92	3.67	13.57	1.91	4.63	3.31
Yearly face-to-face contact with child							
Never	0-1					0.09	<sup>a</sup>
1-11 times per year	0-1					0.07	<sup>a</sup>
Once per month or more often	0-1					0.84	<sup>a</sup>
Travel time to ex-partner's house							
15 min or less	0-1	0.59	<sup>a</sup>	0.80	<sup>a</sup>	0.58	<sup>a</sup>
Between 16-59 min	0-1	0.30	<sup>a</sup>	0.16	<sup>a</sup>	0.30	<sup>a</sup>
60 min or more	0-1	0.11	<sup>a</sup>	0.03	<sup>a</sup>	0.12	<sup>a</sup>

*Note:* <sup>a</sup> Standard deviation (SD) not presented for discrete variables. *Source:* New Families in the Netherlands, Wave 2.

### 3.4.2 Differences in father involvement across residential contexts

Model 1 in Table 3.3 only includes father's residential status. Consistent with the descriptive results, resident and shared residence fathers were more involved with their child in both regular care and leisure activities than partnered fathers (reference category), and nonresident fathers were less involved. All coefficients were statistically significant.

Model 2 takes into account father's education and the control variables. Starting with the results for regular care, resident fathers ( $b = 0.59$ ) and shared residence fathers ( $b = 0.18$ ) were more involved with their child than partnered fathers. Father involvement was lower for nonresident fathers as compared to partnered fathers ( $b = -1.17$ ). Additional analyses with shared residence fathers as reference category furthermore showed that resident fathers were more involved in regular care than shared residence fathers ( $b = 0.41$ ). As regards leisure activities, resident fathers showed greater levels of involvement than partnered fathers ( $b = 0.43$ ), whereas nonresident fathers showed lower levels of involvement than partnered fathers ( $b = -0.92$ ). The difference in father involvement between shared residence fathers and partnered fathers, however, was not statistically significant, indicating that these fathers were similarly involved in leisure activities. Effect sizes were generally modest to large. Only two small effect sizes were found: for regular care, the difference between partnered and shared residence fathers ( $0.15 = 0.18/SD(Y)$  with  $SD(Y) = 1.24$ ) and, for leisure, the difference between resident and shared residence fathers ( $0.25 = 0.32/1.28$ ). These findings generally confirm H1a and H1b that compared to partnered fathers, shared residence fathers and especially resident fathers were more involved with their child, whereas nonresident fathers were less involved. Only with regard to leisure activities, we did not find that shared residence fathers were more involved than partnered fathers.

Comparing the coefficients between Models 1 and 2, we observe that all differentials in parenting involvement by residential status remain statistically significant, except for the case of shared residence fathers, which no longer differed from partnered fathers in their engagement in leisure activities after controls. We also observe an increase in the coefficient of sole residence and a small reduction of the coefficient of shared residence and nonresidence on the level of father involvement in both regular care and leisure, after including control variables. These findings indicate that it is necessary to control for possible selection into separation and post-separation residence arrangements in order to avoid under- or overestimation of the differentials in father involvement by residential status.

**Table 3.3:** Regression analyses for variables predicting father involvement

	Regular care			Leisure		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Father's residential status (ref. = partnered father)						
Resident father	0.46** <sup>ab</sup> (.11)	0.59** <sup>ab</sup> (.11)	0.66** <sup>ab</sup> (.14)	0.26* <sup>b</sup> (.12)	0.43** <sup>ab</sup> (.12)	0.59** <sup>ab</sup> (.16)
Shared residence father	0.25** <sup>c</sup> (.07)	0.18* <sup>c</sup> (.07)	0.24* <sup>c</sup> (.10)	0.15* <sup>c</sup> (.08)	0.11 <sup>c</sup> (.08)	0.18 <sup>c</sup> (.11)
Nonresident father	-1.22** (.06)	-1.17** (.07)	-1.32** (.09)	-0.94** (.07)	-0.92** (.08)	-1.04** (.10)
Father's education (ref. = low education)						
Medium education		0.09 <sup>d</sup> (.07)			0.14~ (.08)	
High education		0.25** (.08)			0.17* (.09)	
Father's education (ref. = less than tertiary education)			0.10 (.09)			0.02 (.10)
Interactions of father's education with:						
* Resident father			-0.16 (.21)			-0.36 (.23)
* Shared residence father			-0.09 (.13)			-0.11 (.15)
* Nonresident father			0.35** (.12)			0.28* (.14)
<i>Controls</i>						
(Pre-separation) involvement		0.21** (.04)	0.22** (.04)		0.15** (.04)	0.16** (.04)
(Pre-separation) conflict		-0.09* (.04)	-0.09* (.04)		-0.10* (.04)	-0.10* (.04)
(Pre-separation) union type		-0.03 (.06)	-0.02 (.06)		-0.01 (.07)	-0.01 (.07)
Father's age		0.00 (.01)	0.00 (.01)		0.00 (.01)	0.00 (.01)
Mother's age		0.00 (.01)	0.00 (.01)		-0.01 (.01)	-0.01 (.01)
Mother's education (ref. = low education)						

Table 3.3: Continued.

	Regular care			Leisure		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Medium education		0.07 (.07)	0.08 (.06)		0.02 (.07)	0.04 (.07)
High education		0.14* (.07)	0.15* (.07)		0.01 (.08)	0.03 (.08)
Father's work hours (x 10)		0.04~ (.02)	0.04* (.02)		0.04 (.02)	0.04~ (.02)
Child's gender (ref. = boy)		-0.04 (.05)	-0.04 (.05)		-0.14* (.05)	-0.13* (.05)
Child's age		-0.09** (.01)	-0.09** (.01)		-0.12** (.01)	-0.12** (.01)
Number of children		-0.11** (.03)	-0.12** (.03)		-0.14** (.04)	-0.14** (.04)
<i>Adjusted R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.292	0.389	0.394	0.151	0.285	0.289
<i>N</i> of respondents	1,592	1,592	1,592	1,592	1,592	1,592

Note: <sup>a</sup> The difference between resident father and shared residence father is significant (two-sided  $p < .05$ ). For regular care Model 1 this difference is only marginally significant (two-sided  $p < .10$ ). <sup>b</sup> The difference between resident father and nonresident father is significant (two-sided  $p < .01$ ). <sup>c</sup> The difference between shared residence father and nonresident father is significant (two-sided  $p < .01$ ). <sup>d</sup> The difference between father's medium education and father's high education is significant (two-sided  $p < .01$ ). ~ Two-sided  $p < .10$ ; \* Two-sided  $p < .05$ ; \*\* Two-sided  $p < .01$ . Source: New Families in the Netherlands, Wave 1, 2.

Model 2 further shows the association between father's education and father's involvement. Fathers with a high level of education were more involved in both regular care and leisure than fathers with a low education (regular care:  $b = 0.25$ ; leisure:  $b = 0.17$ ). Additional analyses showed that high-educated fathers were also more involved in regular care than fathers with a medium education ( $b = 0.16$ ).

The rest of the covariates controlled for in Model 2 show, in general, the expected sign. (Pre-separation) involvement was positively related to father involvement for both regular care and leisure. Fathers with a high-educated (ex-)partner were more involved in regular care than fathers with a low-educated (ex-)partner. (Pre-separation) conflict, the child's higher age, and having a larger number of children were associated with lower father involvement in both regular care and leisure. Fathers were less involved in leisure activities if the child was a girl.

### 3.4.3 Differences in father involvement across residential contexts by education

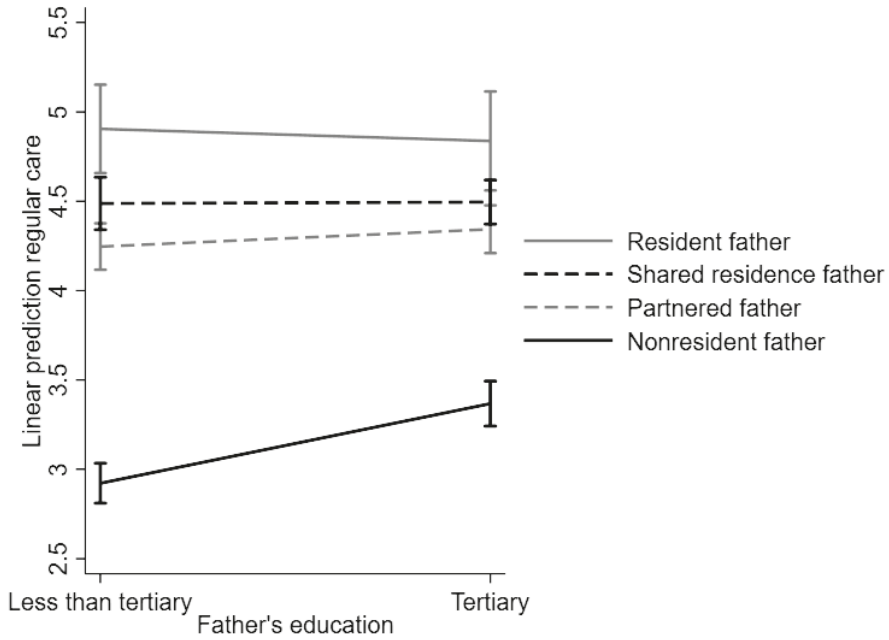
Model 3 in Table 3.3 includes the interactions between father's residential status and father's education. For both regular care and leisure, Wald tests showed that adding interactions improved model fit (regular care:  $\chi^2(3) = 5.45$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ; leisure:  $\chi^2(3) = 4.22$ ;  $p = 0.006$ ). The statistically significant and positive interaction effects with nonresident father (regular care:  $b = 0.35$ ; leisure:  $b = 0.28$ ) indicated that the gap in involvement between nonresident fathers and partnered fathers narrowed among the highly educated.

To better interpret the interaction model, we graphically represented the results in Figure 3.1. This figure shows predicted father involvement in regular care (Panel A) and leisure (Panel B) and the 95% confidence intervals for different combinations of father's education (at values 0 "less than tertiary education" and 1 "tertiary education") and residence arrangements. For regular care, Figure 3.1 (Panel A) shows the expected differences in father involvement across residential contexts when fathers had no tertiary education. Partnered fathers with tertiary education were only slightly more involved in regular care than their partnered counterparts with a lower education. Shared residence fathers were equally involved and resident fathers slightly less involved when they had tertiary education. As a result, when fathers were highly educated, there was no statistically significant gap in involvement between partnered and shared residence fathers, and the gap somewhat narrowed between partnered and resident fathers. Nonresident fathers' involvement increased to a greater extent than that of partnered fathers at a higher educational level. Although the difference in father involvement between partnered and nonresident fathers remained statistically significant among the highly educated, the gap in father involvement was smaller.

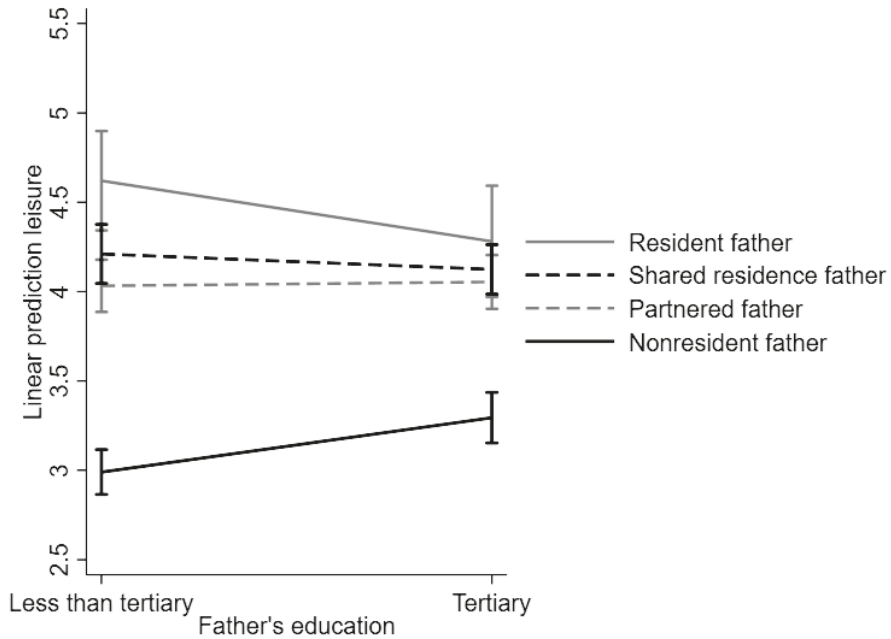
For leisure, Figure 3.1 (Panel B) shows that among fathers without tertiary education, resident fathers were more involved and nonresident fathers less involved than partnered fathers. Shared residence fathers were similarly involved as partnered fathers. The influence of father's education across residence arrangements followed roughly similar patterns as for regular care. A tertiary education was related to greater involvement for nonresident fathers, but only slightly for partnered fathers. Resident fathers, and shared residence fathers only to a limited extent, were less involved in leisure when being highly educated. As a result, when being highly educated, partnered, shared residence, and resident fathers were similarly involved in leisure activities, whereas nonresident fathers

**Figure 3.1:** Father involvement in regular care and leisure by father's residential status and education

Panel A: Regular care



Panel B: Leisure



lagged behind—although the gap was clearly smaller.

Overall, these findings confirm H2b that among the highly educated, the gap in father involvement between partnered fathers and nonresident fathers was smaller because of greater involvement of high-educated nonresident fathers. We found weak support for H2a that among the highly educated, the gap in father involvement between partnered fathers and (shared) resident fathers was smaller because of greater involvement of high-educated partnered fathers. High-educated partnered fathers were only slightly more involved, whereas high-educated (shared) resident fathers were equally involved or less involved—particularly in leisure—than their less educated counterparts. The gap in father involvement between partnered fathers and (shared) resident fathers did narrow among the highly educated, but not for the reasons that we had anticipated. A possible explanation for the lower involvement of high-educated resident fathers might be that only a few resident fathers were low-educated in our sample ( $n = 19$ ), and these fathers are likely to be selective (e.g., mother's personal problems), which may have driven their higher level of involvement.

#### **3.4.4 Robustness checks**

To test the robustness of our findings, we first ran propensity score analysis (PSM). Including possible selection factors as controls in multivariate regression models has been systematically done in previous studies to address potential selection issues, but PSM provides an alternative method to minimize selection bias on observed variables—although bias from unobserved factors may still remain (McCaffrey et al., 2013). We re-estimated the regression models with the PSM matched sample of separated and partnered fathers. We first adjusted the distribution of demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the four groups of fathers (i.e., partnered, resident, shared residence, and nonresident fathers), to make the groups balanced on the characteristics that may affect both group assignment and father involvement. The method we used was propensity score weighting for multiple treatments using generalized boosted models (McCaffrey et al., 2013). The covariates we included for the propensity score matching were: father's education, age and work hours, mother's age and education, child's gender and age, number of children, and (pre-separation) union type. (Pre-separation) conflict and involvement were excluded because including these two variables not only resulted in a sample size ( $N = 1,095$ ) that differed substantially from the actual sample size ( $N = 1,592$ ), but also imbalance between the groups of fathers



remained in these two variables. After the propensity score matching, the weighted sample ( $N = 1,346$ ) consisted of 402 partnered fathers, 60 resident fathers, 377 shared residence fathers, and 507 nonresident fathers who were balanced on the abovementioned variables. In a next step, we performed propensity-weighted regressions estimating father involvement on the weighted sample. In the weighted regression models, we only controlled for (pre-separation) conflict and involvement, as these variables were not included in the propensity score matching (McCaffrey et al., 2013). The findings of these analyses can be consulted in Table B.1 in the appendix, and showed similar patterns as the ones presented in the paper.

Second, the literature often distinguishes regular care activities in practical and developmental dimensions of care (Kendig & Bianchi, 2008). We rerun separate models for practical care activities (i.e., dropping child off or picking child up from school or sports; having dinner together; doing household tasks together) and for positive engagement activities that are likely to foster child development (i.e., helping with school or homework; talking about issues in child's life). Results (in Table B.2) showed that differentials in father involvement by residential status were similar for both types of care activities.

Third, in our sample 9% of nonresident fathers did not see their child in the past year ( $n = 52$ ). To check that differences in father involvement between nonresident fathers and fathers in the other residence arrangements were not driven by this group of parents who had no contact at all with their child, we performed additional analyses excluding these non-involved nonresident fathers. These analyses, shown in Table B.3, yielded similar results.

Fourth, because the main analyses included partnered fathers, we could not control for factors that were only relevant for separated fathers, such as new family responsibilities. In additional analyses confined to the separated sample, we examined the influence of new partnerships (in Table B.4, Model 2a) and additional (step/joint) children (in Table B.4, Model 2b) on separated fathers' involvement across residential contexts. Note that resident fathers could not be included in this analysis because of small number of cases (e.g., resident fathers co-residing with new partner:  $n = 25$ ; resident fathers with joint children:  $n = 7$ ). For nonresident fathers, we found that it was having additional children rather than repartnering that affected their level of involvement: those who co-resided with a new partner who had children from a prior union (i.e., stepchildren) were less involved in regular care and leisure—although effect sizes were small (regular care:  $0.22 = 0.29/1.29$ ; leisure:  $0.24 = 0.33/1.35$ ). Shared residence fathers'

involvement remained unchanged, which suggests that the higher engagement of shared residence fathers in childcare is not significantly affected by their new family responsibilities.

### 3.5 Discussion

Both partnered and separated fathers are increasingly willing and socially expected to be actively involved in childrearing. At the same time, post-separation residence arrangements have become increasingly heterogeneous, particularly due to the rise in shared residence. Research on separated fathers, however, has primarily focused on nonresident fathers, and has consistently found that they are less involved than partnered fathers. This general impression of less involved separated fathers might be misleading and needs to be nuanced, taking into consideration the changing context of post-separation care arrangements. Expanding on previous studies, we examined father involvement in regular care and leisure activities across a full range of post-separation residence arrangements and how it compares to that of partnered fathers, and whether patterns differed by father's education.

Although separation certainly triggers disruptions in parenting and a reconfiguration of family roles (Härkönen, 2014), this study's analysis of recent Dutch data has shown that separated fathers were either more or less involved than partnered fathers, depending on their post-separation residence arrangements. In line with findings from previous research (Carlson et al., 2017; Hawkins et al., 2006), nonresident fathers were less involved with their child than partnered fathers. Nonresident fathers are typically more constrained in their access to their child than partnered fathers. Limited visitation schedules or high levels of negative gatekeeping behavior by the mother may hinder their involvement. Note that for a substantial number of nonresident fathers in our sample, travel time to the ex-partner's house was low, indicating that their lower involvement may also be a matter of choice: nonresident fathers may disengage themselves from the parental role and feel less obligated to be involved in childrearing (Haux & Platt, 2021). In contrast, shared residence fathers, and particularly resident fathers, showed higher levels of involvement in regular care activities than partnered fathers. Although both partnered fathers and (shared) resident fathers co-reside with the child, it seems that the latter take on more of the responsibility for parenting tasks. These fathers may also be highly motivated to perform the "good parent" role to compensate for the potentially adverse consequences of the separation. Nonetheless, for leisure activities, we did not find that shared residence fathers

were more involved than partnered fathers. This finding is not surprising as previous studies have shown that partnered fathers generally enjoy the more pleasurable aspects of childcare and are more reluctant to engage in day-to-day practical care (Craig, 2006; Stewart, 1999).

The current study also found that when fathers were highly educated, involvement of fathers in all post-separation residence arrangements was more similar to that of partnered fathers. Possibly driven by modern fatherhood norms and resources, and in line with findings from previous studies (Sayer et al., 2004; Westphal et al., 2014), highly educated partnered and nonresident fathers were found to be more involved with their child than their lower educated counterparts—although this was clearly stronger for nonresident fathers. This latter finding could indicate that highly educated nonresident fathers choose to often visit the child, which corroborate findings from previous studies showing that well-educated nonresident fathers nowadays have more contact with their children than in the past (Westphal et al., 2014). High levels of visitation allow for more active fathering (Waller et al., 2018). For both resident and shared residence fathers, a high education affected their level of fathering involvement to a lesser extent than that of partnered and nonresident fathers. Because (shared) resident fathers already bear primary responsibility for the child's day-to-day care, this may be why there are no large observed differences in their level of involvement by educational attainment. This conclusion needs to be nuanced for resident fathers, who were found to be less engaged in regular care and leisure when being highly educated, but, as noted, this result might be related to the small number of low-educated resident fathers in the sample.

The study also has some limitations that deserve consideration. First, although we have tried to minimize selection bias by controlling for pre-separation factors and performing propensity score analysis, self-selection into separation and post-separation residence may still underlie some of the differences found in father involvement across residence arrangements, so solid causal claims cannot be made. Second, less than 1% of fathers in our sample reported on a child under the age of four. Differences in father involvement between partnered fathers and (shared) resident fathers may be particularly large when children are very young, as partnered fathers may experience maternal gatekeeping (Gaunt, 2008), whereas (shared) resident fathers may be more responsive to younger children's greater need of childcare. Third, fathers with low income and low education were underrepresented in both the separated and partnered sample. Less involved fathers

might also be underrepresented as they might have lower interest to fill in a survey on family relationships. The underrepresentation of less involved fathers and those with low socioeconomic status, which are more likely to be in a nonresidence than a shared/sole residence arrangement, might lead to an overestimation of the childcare contribution of participating nonresident fathers. Hence, differences in father involvement may in fact be larger than our results suggest. Fourth, fathers in all residence arrangements may have overreported their level of involvement as fathers tend to overestimate their engagement with children (Pasley & Braver, 2004) or feel embarrassed of their actual involvement. Future research may use time diaries to minimize social desirability bias.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the current study provides valuable insights on active fathering across residential contexts. Despite new legislation and social policies to encourage fathers' post-separation involvement (McIntosh, 2009; Pilkauskas & Schneider, 2020), thus far empirical evidence on actual father involvement in the case of shared and father residence remains scarce. As one of the first to examine father involvement across a variety of residential contexts, this study showed that including resident and shared residence fathers offers a more optimistic view of fathers' post-separation parenting role, because these fathers are actually more involved in childrearing than partnered fathers. In fact, for some of them the reconfiguration of family roles triggered by the separation may have increased their level of engagement with their children. Education also mattered, as the involvement of fathers in the different post-separation residence arrangements was more similar to that of partnered fathers when they were highly educated.





# 4

## **Fairness perceptions of the division of household labor: Housework and childcare**

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The authors jointly developed the core ideas of this chapter. Koster wrote the main part of the manuscript and conducted the analyses. Poortman, Van der Lippe and Kleingeld substantially contributed to the manuscript. An earlier version of this chapter has been presented at the International Community, Work and Family conference in Valletta, Malta (2019-05-24) and the Dag van de Sociologie in Amsterdam, the Netherlands (2019-06-27).

## **Abstract**

An unequal division of housework has been found to be often regarded as fair, which may explain why women still do most household labor. This study extends previous research by also investigating childcare—an increasingly important part of household labor, which is likely to have a different meaning than housework. It examines how perceptions of fairness for both housework and childcare are influenced by the division of housework, childcare, and paid labor, and whether patterns differ by gender. Data from the Netherlands (men:  $N = 462$ ; women:  $N = 638$ ) show that unequal divisions of housework, and especially childcare, are often perceived as fair. When it comes to how an increasingly unequal household labor division is related to unfairness, associations are stronger for women than for men. Fairness of the household labor division is evaluated in relation to total workload and not in isolation from other types of labor.



## 4.1 Introduction

Even though women's labor market participation has increased considerably, women continue to do most of the housework and childcare—in short, household labor or unpaid labor (Lachance-Grzela & Bouchard, 2010). This finding has resulted in a stream of research to explain the unequal division of household labor. Explanations have focused on time availability, partners' relative resources, and gender ideology (Coltrane, 2000). To better understand the unequal division of household labor and why this division is so resistant to change, research also looked at fairness perceptions. The assumption is that unequal divisions of household labor may not be perceived as unfair. Fairness research, indeed, has found that unequal divisions of household labor are often regarded as fair (Baxter, 2000; Braun et al., 2008; Young et al., 2015). Studying fairness perceptions is not only relevant to better understand the unequal household labor division, but also because studies have shown that it is not the actual division of household labor that explains well-being and relationship outcomes, but rather the perceived fairness of the division. People who perceive the household labor division as unfair show higher levels of depression (Glass & Fujimoto, 1994) and marital dissatisfaction (Dew & Wilcox, 2011).

This study examines fairness perceptions of household labor among men and women. We contribute to existing literature in three ways. First, fairness research so far has foremost focused on housework. Little research has investigated fairness perceptions in relation to childcare (for exceptions, see Baxter, 2000; Chong & Mickelson, 2016). We argue that it is important to look at both housework and childcare for several reasons. First, childcare has become a more important part of household labor over time. In recent years, both men and women have increased their time spent on childcare (Bianchi et al., 2012). Whereas men's contributions to housework have increased, yet to a lesser extent than for childcare, women's contributions have decreased. Second, as already suggested by these different trends, the meaning of childcare may differ from housework. People generally find childcare more enjoyable than housework (Poortman & Van der Lippe, 2009). Furthermore, there is a stronger rewarding component to childcare than housework: people invest in childcare for the benefit—that is, the development and well-being—of their child (Sullivan, 2013). The different meaning of childcare suggests that it may be less strongly related to unfairness perceptions than housework, and that unequal divisions of childcare may be less likely to be perceived as unfair than unequal divisions of housework. In the context of the

actual division of labor, scholars have confirmed that housework and childcare are conceptually different, and argued that these types of household labor should be treated separately (Coltrane, 2000; Sullivan, 2013). When it comes to fairness research, however, studies sometimes combine childcare with housework tasks, but they often do not include childcare at all (but see Baxter, 2000; Chong & Mickelson, 2016).

Second, we contribute to the field by considering the total burden of labor—housework, childcare, and paid labor—and examine their interplay in explaining household labor fairness. Prior research mainly examined the main effects of housework, paid labor, and, to a lesser extent, childcare (Baxter, 2000; Nordenmark & Nyman, 2003; Young et al., 2015). As argued by Braun et al., (2008), it may be more accurate to look at the interplay between different types of labor because partners may evaluate the household labor division in terms of their overall workload. Our study investigates whether time spent on one type of household labor is more strongly related to household labor unfairness, if time spent on paid labor or the other type of household labor is higher.

Third, by studying both men and women, we can compare their fairness perceptions of housework and childcare. Previous research has shown that women, regardless of the actual division of housework, are more likely than men to perceive the division of housework as unfair (Nordenmark & Nyman, 2003). Gender differences may be less pronounced for childcare unfairness because of the more positive meaning of childcare (i.e., childcare is more enjoyable and rewarding than housework). We further test whether unequal divisions of housework, childcare, and paid labor are differently associated with household labor unfairness for men and women. Women's total work time is generally higher than men's (Sayer et al., 2009), and women are generally more relationship-oriented than men (Amato & Rogers, 1997). Women may thus be more likely than men to translate unequal divisions of labor into unfairness perceptions.

The research questions are to what extent men and women perceive the division of housework and childcare as fair; how the division of both paid and unpaid labor relates to housework and childcare fairness perceptions; and whether patterns are different depending upon people's gender. We use data from the New Families in the Netherlands survey (NFN; Poortman et al., 2014, 2018). The strength of the NFN is that both men and women reported on the division of housework, childcare, and paid labor, and on their fairness perceptions of housework and childcare.

## 4.2 Theoretical background

First, we theorize how the division of unpaid and paid labor, and their interplay, are related to fairness perceptions of household labor. We further explain why the relationship between the division of household labor and fairness perceptions may differ for housework and childcare. Finally, we focus on gender differences, by theorizing how the division of (unpaid and paid) labor may be differently related to household labor fairness for men and women.

### 4.2.1 Equity theory and fairness perceptions

A prominent theory to understand fairness perceptions of the division of labor in intimate relationships has been equity theory. According to equity theory (Hatfield & Rapson, 2012; Walster et al., 1978), the division of labor is a key factor in explaining fairness perceptions. Equity theory assumes that partners evaluate what they invest in and receive from a relationship. A relationship is perceived as fair when a person's outcomes, relative to the investments made, are equal to the partner's outcomes, relative to the partner's investments. Assuming that outcomes of a romantic relationship are distributed equally, equity occurs if both partners invest as much in the relationship. If total investments are not equal, the relationship may be perceived as unfair. An unfair relationship might be unfair in two ways (Walster et al., 1978): a person who invests more in the relationship than the partner tends to feel unfairly disadvantaged (i.e., "underbenefit"). If a person's investments are lower than the partner's investments, this person may feel unfairly advantaged (i.e., "overbenefit"). Whereas underbenefit relates to unfairness to self, overbenefit relates to unfairness to the partner. Note that we do not distinguish between unfairness to self and to partner in our hypotheses, as we cannot test this (see the Data and method section).

Investments take many forms. Here, we focus on investments in both household labor and paid labor. Starting with household labor, equity theory thus implies that a situation in which a person's relative contributions to household labor are higher than the partner's contributions, may increase unfairness perceptions to self because this person invests more time and energy in the relationship. The partner tends to feel unfairly advantaged as he/she contributes less to household labor, which might increase unfairness perceptions to the other. Previous research found that the higher a person's relative contribution to housework, the more likely he/she was to see this distribution as unfair to self, whereas the opposite was found for the person's perceived unfairness to the partner (Young et al., 2015). Given that

deviations from equal divisions of household labor generally go in the direction of women contributing more than men (Coltrane, 2000), we expect that: **(H1)** *The higher the relative household labor contribution of women, the stronger the unfairness perceptions of household labor.* Despite the positive association between unequal divisions of household labor and unfairness perceptions, this is not to say that unequal divisions of household labor are necessarily perceived to be unfair. On the contrary, unequal divisions of household labor are still regarded as fair, but the more unequal the divisions are, the less they are perceived as fair (Baxter, 2000; Braun et al., 2008; DeMaris & Longmore, 1996; Young et al., 2015).

Equity theory further emphasizes the importance of including investments in other types of labor when studying household labor fairness. This is in line with the “time availability perspective,” an approach taken from the literature on the division of household labor (Shelton & John, 1996). The idea is that fairness perceptions toward a specific type of labor may not only depend upon investments in that specific type of labor but also on how much time and energy is invested in other types of labor. For example, fairness perceptions of housework may also be associated with investments in paid labor and the other type of household labor, that is, childcare. The assumption is that the higher the investments in other types of labor, the stronger the unfairness perceptions. Prior studies on housework fairness did not include the division of childcare, but they did investigate the role of the division of paid labor. Findings of these studies have been mixed, with some finding support for the positive association between paid labor and perceived housework unfairness (Braun et al., 2008; Perales et al., 2015), whereas others did not or only a little (Nordenmark & Nyman, 2003; Young et al., 2015). A study examining both housework and childcare fairness similarly included paid labor and only one type of household labor (depending on whether the dependent variable was housework or childcare fairness) and found that women’s own paid work hours were related to stronger unfairness perceptions of housework, not of childcare (Baxter, 2000). We hypothesize that: **(H2)** *The higher women’s relative contributions to the other types of labor, the stronger the unfairness perceptions of household labor.*

Braun et al., (2008) argued to look at the interplay between different types of labor, as partners may evaluate the division of household labor in terms of their overall workload. For example, if a person invests more in housework than the partner, but he/she is being compensated by lower investments in paid labor or childcare, this unequal housework division may be perceived as fair. If a person bears primary responsibility for different types of labor, this may be perceived

as unfair. Research on whether investments in a specific type of labor are more strongly related to unfairness perceptions of this specific type of labor, if investments in other types of labor are higher, is scarce (but see Braun et al., 2008). Braun et al., (2008) studied fairness perceptions of housework among women and found that the more hours women worked for pay, the stronger their unfairness perceptions to an increasingly unequal division of housework. We expect that: **(H3)** *The positive relationship between women's relative household labor contribution and unfairness perceptions of household labor is stronger if women's relative contributions to the other types of labor are higher.*

#### 4.2.2 Type of household labor and fairness perceptions

The actual division of housework may be more strongly related to unfairness perceptions than the actual division of childcare. A first reason is that people generally have more favorable attitudes toward childcare than housework (Poortman & Van der Lippe, 2009). Housework (e.g., cleaning) may be evaluated negatively because of its boring and isolated nature, whereas most aspects of childcare (e.g., playing with child) may be regarded as more enjoyable (Coltrane, 2000). Although both housework and childcare are performed daily, housework is more repetitive in a negative manner. Childcare tasks vary over time as children grow older (e.g., from bringing child to bed to going on outings with child), whereas housework tasks change less over time and may therefore feel as never-ending tasks (Sullivan, 2013). Also note the element of choice in the decision to have a child, whereas housework is a fact of life for everyone.

Second, performing childcare may be more rewarding than housework (Connelly & Kimmel, 2010; Sullivan, 2013), particularly because relationships with children are irreplaceable and lifelong (Nelson, 2010). Investing in both housework and childcare may be rewarding as people may enjoy keeping the home and family running. For childcare, there is also a stronger rewarding component: to care for the well-being and development of children (Connelly & Kimmel, 2010). Parents enjoy investing in childcare because they value the development of their children (Van Lenning & Willemsen, 2001). As people are likely to attach greater weight to negative entities than positive entities (Rozin & Royzman, 2001), a negative entity, such as performing unenjoyable and less rewarding tasks, is subjectively more potent and of higher salience. People may thus be more critical about an unequal division of housework than an unequal division of childcare, suggesting that the actual division of housework may be more strongly related to unfairness

perceptions than the actual division of childcare. One might even argue that childcare is a return instead of an investment. If people perceive childcare as enjoyable and rewarding, performing more childcare may increase perceived fairness instead of unfairness. The few studies on childcare fairness found that an increase in women's childcare contribution (slightly) increased their unfairness perceptions (Baxter, 2000; Chong & Mickelson, 2016). Based on these findings, it is more likely to assume that people see childcare as an investment than a return, which may thus be related to unfairness perceptions when investments are higher.

Third, studies suggest that partners are more likely to deliberate about the division of childcare than housework (Hooghiemstra & Pool, 2003; Van Lenning & Willemsen, 2001; Wiesmann et al., 2008). Van Lenning and Willemsen (2001) found that people explicitly agree on the division of childcare but neglect housework tasks from their explicit deliberations. This is not striking, as it is more relevant to deliberate which partner will pick up the child from school than who will empty the dishwasher. If partners explicitly discuss and agree upon their unequal investments in childcare, unequal divisions of childcare might be less strongly related to unfairness perceptions. Unfairness perceptions might be stronger for housework, as not dealing explicitly with who does which housework chores might mean that partners do not agree and feel dissatisfied with the unequal division of housework. Given the above arguments, we expect that: **(H4)** *The positive relationship between women's relative housework contribution and housework unfairness perceptions is stronger than the positive relationship between women's relative childcare contribution and childcare unfairness perceptions.*

### 4.2.3 Gender and fairness perceptions

Women's relative (household and paid) labor contributions may be stronger related to household labor unfairness perceptions for women than for men because of the difference between under- and overbenefit. Equity theory assumes that unfairness perceptions are stronger for the person who invests more in the relationship (Hatfield & Rapson, 2012). Strictly speaking, this argument is not about gender differences, but about time availability. Women's total work time, including both unpaid and paid labor, is often higher than men's (Sayer et al., 2009). Women may thus feel that they receive less than they deserve, which may be strongly related to unfairness perceptions. Men are in an advantaged position, as their total work time is lower. Men's unfairness perceptions may therefore be less strong and are related to feeling guilty or sympathy toward their partner whose total work time is higher.

A second argument focuses on the gendered nature of intimate relationships. Women are generally socialized giving greater importance to intimate relationships than men (Amato & Rogers, 1997; Grote et al., 2002). This socialization allows for more complex thinking about their romantic relationship (Martin, 1991) and may make them more aware of relational issues (Acitelli, 1992). Women being more socially embedded in romantic relationships than men, may thus result in women being more critical about unequal divisions of labor, and unfairness perceptions may therefore be stronger. As men are less relationship-oriented than women (Vangelisti & Daly, 1997), they may be less likely to translate unequal divisions of labor into unfairness perceptions. We thus hypothesize that: *(H5) The positive relationship between women's relative (household and paid) labor contribution and unfairness perceptions of household labor is stronger for women than for men.*

## 4.3 Data and method

### 4.3.1 Data

We analyzed data of the NFN survey (Poortman et al., 2014, 2018; Poortman & Van Gaalen, 2019a, 2019b). Although NFN aimed at a main group of divorced or separated parents, data were also gathered among a control group consisting of married or cohabiting parents, which we used here. Because questions about the division of housework tasks between partners were not included in Wave 1 (2012–2013), we only used data of Wave 2 (2015–2016) and applied a cross-sectional design. In collaboration with Statistics Netherlands, a random sample for the first wave was drawn from the population of married or cohabiting heterosexual parents with minor children who were in these unions before 2010. Both parents were asked to participate in an online survey. The final reminder also included a written questionnaire. Both partners participated for about two-thirds of the contacted households. The response rate in Wave 1 was 45% on the individual level and 56% on the household level. Overall, 2,173 parents participated in the first wave. Men, people of non-Western descent, and people on low incomes were underrepresented. Parents who agreed to be recontacted for follow-up research were invited to complete the online survey or written questionnaire for the second wave. For about half of the households, both parents participated. The response rate was 70% among persons and 74% among households, with a total of 1,336 participating parents. The sample of Wave 2 was, as in Wave 1, selective on gender, ethnicity, and income. Additional analyses showed that especially the lower educated and

younger persons were more likely to drop out after Wave 1.

We excluded respondents who reported to have the same sex as their partner ( $n = 10$ ). We also excluded cases in which the youngest child of the respondent was 18 years or older ( $n = 206$ ) because the measures for the division of childcare tasks were less relevant for parents with older children. We further excluded cases with missing data on the variables used in the analyses ( $n = 20$ ). The final sample consisted of 1,100 respondents from 756 households. Analyses were performed separately for men ( $n = 462$ ) and women ( $n = 638$ ).

### 4.3.2 Dependent variables

*Housework unfairness.* Respondents were asked: “How fair (0 = *very unfair for me*; 3 = *fair for both*; 6 = *very unfair for my partner*) do you find the way you and your partner have arranged the division of housework tasks?” A similar measure has been used by Kluwer et al., (2002), which in turn was based on the measure in the first wave of the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH; Sweet et al., 1988). We collapsed the seven response options into four categories: 0 “fair for both,” 1 “somewhat unfair (for me/partner),” 2 “unfair (for me/partner),” and 3 “very unfair (for me/partner).” A higher score on the scale indicated stronger unfairness perceptions of housework.

*Childcare unfairness.* Respondents indicated how fair (0 = *very unfair for me*; 3 = *fair for both*; 6 = *very unfair for my partner*) they find the way the division of the care and supervision of the child(ren) was arranged between them and their partner. Responses were recoded into: 0 “fair for both,” 1 “somewhat unfair (for me/partner),” 2 “unfair (for me/partner),” and 3 “very unfair (for me/partner)” (see Kluwer et al., 2002). A higher score on the scale indicated stronger unfairness perceptions of childcare.

Note that although the dependent variables’ response categories allowed for examining unfairness to self or to partner separately compared with fairness to both, we could not perform reliable analyses because of the small number of cases in some response categories (e.g., men experiencing the childcare division to be unfair for partner:  $n = 69$ ).

### 4.3.3 Independent variables

*Women’s relative housework contribution.* Respondents indicated who did six housework tasks more often (1 = *you much more often than your partner*, 3 = *equally*, 5 = *your partner much more often than you*): “preparing dinner,” “grocery



shopping,” “cleaning,” “doing the laundry,” “chores in and around the house,” and “administration, arranging finances” (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = 0.61$ ). As conventional research argues in favor of focusing on routine housework tasks instead of combining all forms of housework tasks (Braun et al., 2008; Demaris & Longmore, 1996), we only included the first four tasks in the scale (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = 0.90$ ). Responses were made gender-specific and recoded in the direction of women’s contribution. Subsequently, responses were coded as proportions. For women, responses were coded as follows: *you much more often than your partner* = 1, *you more often than your partner* = 0.75, *equally* = 0.50, *your partner more often than you* = 0.25, and *your partner much more often than you* = 0. Responses were reverse coded for men (e.g., *you much more often than your partner* = 0). A mean scale was created, ranging from 0 (0%) to 1 (100%), reflecting the relative contribution of women. A score of 0 indicates that women take almost no responsibility for housework tasks, whereas a score of 1 indicates that women take most responsibility for these tasks.

*Women’s relative childcare contribution.* Respondents reported who did the following five care tasks more often (1 = *you much more often than your partner*, 3 = *equally*, 5 = *your partner much more often than you*): “washing and bathing the child,” “putting the child to bed,” “playing games at home, crafts,” “talking with your child about issues in the child’s life,” and “outing with the child (such as to the playground, zoo, cinema)” (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = 0.85$ ). As for housework, responses were made gender-specific and recoded in the direction of women’s contribution. Responses were then coded as proportions, and a mean scale was created, ranging from 0 (0%) to 1 (100%), reflecting women’s relative contribution. Note that for all items involved in the two scales, measuring women’s relative housework or childcare contribution, respondents could also choose the response category “not applicable.” We treated these respondents as having a missing value on these particular items. Respondents were included when they had a non-missing value on at least one of the items included in the scale.

*Women’s relative paid labor contribution.* Respondents reported the number of actual hours that they and their partner worked per week. If respondents or their partners were not employed, they were assigned zero hours. If respondents or their partners worked over 80 hours per week, they were assigned a score of 80. We made the responses gender-specific and divided women’s work hours by total work hours. The scale ranged from 0 (0%) to 1 (100%), reflecting women’s relative contribution. In case both respondent and partner scored 0 on paid work hours ( $n = 21$ ), these cases received a score of 0.50 on the created variable.

#### 4.3.4 Control variables

As is usually done in fairness research, we controlled for relative resources (i.e., education) and gender ideology—factors that have commonly been used to explain the unequal division of household labor, but that may also affect fairness perceptions (Braun et al., 2008). Basic sociodemographic characteristics are also controlled for. Note that we used information from Wave 1 for three control variables, as this information was no longer asked in Wave 2 (i.e., respondent’s and partner’s education, and respondent’s gender ideology). *Respondent’s and partner’s education* measure highest obtained education (1 = *primary school not finished* to 10 = *postgraduate*). To measure *respondent’s gender ideology*, respondents indicated the extent to which they agreed (1 = *completely agree* to 5 = *completely disagree*) with the following four statements: “A woman is more suitable for bringing up small children than a man,” “It is more important for men than for women to have a job,” “Mothers are just as responsible as fathers for earning a decent family income,” and “Fathers are just as responsible as mothers for the upbringing of children.” The latter two statements were reverse coded so that a higher score indicated a more egalitarian gender ideology. A scale was created by taking the mean (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = 0.66$ ). *Union type* is a dummy for whether the respondent’s relationship with the partner is 0 “cohabitation” or 1 “marriage/registered partnership.” A registered partnership is a form of legal cohabitation offering almost the same rights as marriage (7% in the sample). *Number of children* includes the number of children that respondents had or adopted with their partner. We used information from Wave 1 for respondents who had a missing or invalid value on this variable ( $n = 15$ ). *Respondent’s age* is measured in years. Descriptive statistics of all variables used in the analyses are presented in Table 4.1, for men and women separately.

#### 4.3.5 Analytical strategy

Our analyses began with a description of the division of housework and childcare between men and women, and their fairness perceptions of housework and childcare (Tables 4.2 and 4.3). Next, we performed linear regression analyses for men and women separately. For both housework unfairness and childcare unfairness, we estimated two models. Model 1 included women’s relative contributions to housework, childcare, and paid labor, and the controls, to test to what extent women’s relative labor contributions were related to housework unfairness and childcare unfairness. In addition, to examine whether the effects of the division of household labor on unfairness perceptions were stronger for housework than

**Table 4.1:** Mean, standard deviation and range of the variables in the analyses

	Men			Women		
	M	SD	Range	M	SD	Range
Housework unfairness	0.47	0.72	0-3	0.63	0.83	0-3
Childcare unfairness	0.20	0.47	0-3	0.28	0.58	0-3
Women's relative housework contribution	0.74	0.23	0-1	0.80	0.20	0-1
Women's relative childcare contribution	0.62	0.16	0-1	0.64	0.14	0.2-1
Women's relative paid labor contribution	0.34	0.21	0-1	0.34	0.20	0-1
<i>Controls</i>						
Respondent's education	7.08	1.84	1-10	7.07	1.73	1-10
Partner's education	7.01	1.82	1-10	6.87	1.98	1-10
Respondent's gender ideology	3.54	0.67	1-5	3.66	0.68	1-5
Respondent's age	47.18	6.31	28-73	44.30	5.41	29-58
<i>Union type</i>						
Cohabitation	0.26	<sup>a</sup>	0-1	0.29	<sup>a</sup>	0-1
Marriage	0.74	<sup>a</sup>	0-1	0.71	<sup>a</sup>	0-1
Number of children	2.12	0.85	1-8	2.15	0.88	1-9
N of respondents	462			638		

Note: <sup>a</sup> Standard deviation (SD) not presented for discrete variables. Source: New Families in the Netherlands, Wave 1, 2.

for childcare, a Wald test assessed for the equality of coefficients between equations (using command “Suest” in Stata). Using the same test and taking into account that in our analytic sample both partners participated for 46% of the households (i.e., using command “vce(cluster)” in Stata to cluster the standard errors on the level of the household), we examined whether the effects of women's relative contributions to housework, childcare, and paid labor on unfairness perceptions differed depending upon respondent's gender. In Model 2, we added two-way interactions between women's relative labor contributions to test whether the role of contributions to one type of labor depended on contributions to the other types of labor. Wald tests assessed whether interactions improved the model. As correlations between the different types of labor were significant but weak or modest ( $r = 0.32$  for men and  $0.26$  for women between housework and childcare;  $r = -0.36$  for men and  $-0.34$  for women between housework and paid labor;  $r = -0.15$  for men and  $-0.09$  for women between childcare and paid labor), we included the interactions simultaneously. In the case of a significant interaction variable, in

additional analyses, we changed this variable from minimum to maximum levels, to see how this influenced the estimates.

## 4.4 Results

### 4.4.1 Descriptive findings

Table 4.2, first, shows whether women's relative contributions to housework and childcare were lower, equal, or higher than men's contributions. Women took more responsibility for both housework and childcare than men, which is in line with findings from previous studies (Bianchi et al., 2012; Sayer, 2005). About 82% of men reported that their partner's housework contributions were higher than their own contributions, and this percentage was 63% for childcare. Women more often reported that their relative contributions were higher than their partner's contributions (90% for housework and 66% for childcare). In addition, the contributions of partners were more often reported to be equal for childcare (29% and 31% as reported by men and women, respectively) than housework (men: 5%; women: 4%). Despite the unequal division of household labor, Table 4.2 shows that the majority of men and women perceived that housework, and especially childcare, were distributed fairly. The division of housework was perceived as fair by 64% of men and 56% of women, and 83% of men and 77% of women reported that the division of childcare was fair. Gender differences in fairness perceptions were somewhat smaller for childcare than housework. In line with prior research, these findings illustrate that women were less likely than men to perceive the division of household labor to be fair (Nordenmark & Nyman, 2003).

In Table 4.3, we more directly linked the actual division of household labor with fairness perceptions. Generally, we see that fairness perceptions were highest when men and women contributed equally to housework and childcare. Even in situations in which household labor was unequally divided, both men and women often perceived this to be fair—a finding consistent with prior research (Baxter, 2000; Carriero, 2011). For example, if women's relative housework contributions were higher than men's, about 61% of men and slightly more than half of women (54%) reported this division as fair. Unequal divisions of childcare were even more often perceived as fair when women contributed more: 79% of men and 70% of women reported the division as fair. Note that if men's contributions to housework or childcare were higher than women's, this was more often perceived to be fair than if women's contributions were higher than men's contributions. The group

of men contributing more than women is likely to be selective in a way that the division may be explicitly deliberated between the partners, or that the woman may be highly involved in paid labor, resulting in fairness perceptions.

**Table 4.2:** Frequency distributions for women’s relative household labor contributions and fairness perceptions, by gender

	Men	Women	Men	Women
	Housework (%)		Childcare (%)	
<i>Women’s relative contribution<sup>a</sup></i>				
Lower than partner	12.3	6.6	8.9	3.6
Equal	5.4	3.9	28.6	30.7
Higher than partner	82.3	89.5	62.6	65.7
<i>(Un)fairness perceptions<sup>b</sup></i>				
Fair	64.3	56.4	83.1	77.3
Unfair	35.7	43.6	16.9	22.7

Note: <sup>a</sup> Lower = 0% - 44%; Equal = 45% - 55%; Higher = 56% - 100%. <sup>b</sup> For ease of interpretation, we collapsed “Somewhat unfair (for me/partner)”, “Unfair (for me/partner)”, and “Very unfair (for me/partner)” in one category “Unfair”. Source: New Families in the Netherlands, Wave 2.

**Table 4.3:** Fairness perceptions by women’s relative household labor contributions, by gender

	Men		Women	
	Fair	Unfair	Fair	Unfair
<i>Women’s relative contribution to housework (%)</i>				
Lower than partner	80.7	19.3	85.7	14.3
Equal	80.0	20.0	72.0	28.0
Higher than partner	60.8	39.2	53.6	46.4
<i>Women’s relative contribution to childcare (%)</i>				
Lower than partner	87.8	12.2	82.6	17.4
Equal	90.9	9.1	92.3	7.7
Higher than partner	78.9	21.1	69.9	30.1

Source: New Families in the Netherlands, Wave 2.

#### 4.4.2 Linear regression analyses

Model 1 in Table 4.4 shows the main effects of women’s relative housework, childcare, and paid labor contributions. Recall that higher scores on the two

dependent variables—housework unfairness and childcare unfairness—indicate stronger unfairness perceptions. Starting with the results for housework unfairness, the higher women’s relative housework contribution, the stronger men’s and women’s unfairness perceptions of housework. Effect sizes were large. On the unfairness scale from 0 to 3, the effect was 0.6 points for men and 1.1 points for women, equivalent to a large effect size of 0.83 for men ( $0.6/SD(Y)$ , with  $SD(Y) = 0.72$ ) and 1.33 for women ( $1.1/0.83$ ). Contributions to the other two types of labor were only relevant for explaining women’s housework unfairness perceptions. If women’s relative contributions to childcare and paid labor increased, the more that women perceived the division of housework to be unfair. Effect sizes (calculated in the same way as earlier) amounted to 0.96 for women’s relative childcare contribution and 1.08 for women’s relative paid labor contribution. These effects were smaller than the effect size for women’s relative housework contribution, but they were still large in magnitude.

Findings were largely similar for childcare unfairness. The higher women’s relative contribution to childcare, the more that both men and women experienced the childcare division as unfair. Effect sizes were large: 1.28 for men and 1.66 for women. The division of the other types of labor only mattered for women. When women’s relative housework contribution increased, women perceived stronger childcare unfairness. Although not significant at the conventional level of 5% ( $b = 0.21$ ;  $p = 0.070$ ), results also suggest that the higher women’s relative contributions to paid labor, the stronger their unfairness perceptions of childcare. Effect sizes were large (0.69 for women’s relative housework contribution) to small (0.34 for women’s relative paid labor contribution). In additional analyses (not shown), we included paid labor as two separate variables, indicating paid work hours by self and partner. Findings showed that when women’s own paid work hours increased, the more they perceived the division of both housework and childcare as unfair, whereas an increase in their partner’s paid work hours only resulted in women experiencing less housework unfairness.

We also tested whether the effects of the division of household labor on unfairness perceptions were stronger for housework than for childcare. Starting with men, the effect of women’s relative housework contribution on housework unfairness ( $b = 0.64$ ) was somewhat higher, but it was close to the effect of women’s relative childcare contribution on childcare unfairness ( $b = 0.57$ ; Model 1). A Wald test showed that the divisions of housework and childcare were not differently related to unfairness perceptions ( $\chi^2(1) = 0.07$ ;  $p = 0.792$ ). When comparing the

effects for women ( $b = 1.11$  for housework;  $b = 1.24$  for childcare), results of the Wald test also illustrated that the difference was statistically insignificant ( $\chi^2(1) = 0.26$ ;  $p = 0.609$ ). Contrary to our expectations, the divisions of housework and childcare were not differently related to fairness perceptions.

Furthermore, we examined gender differences in the effects of women's relative contributions to housework, childcare, and paid labor. For housework unfairness, the effect of women's relative housework contribution was stronger for women ( $b = 1.11$ ) than for men ( $b = 0.64$ ; Model 1), and this difference was statistically significant according to a Wald test ( $\chi^2(1) = 5.16$ ;  $p = 0.023$ ). Women's relative contributions to childcare and paid labor also had a stronger effect on housework unfairness for women than for men (childcare:  $\chi^2(1) = 4.08$ ;  $p = 0.043$ ; paid labor:  $\chi^2(1) = 6.59$ ;  $p = 0.010$ ). For childcare unfairness, a Wald test ( $\chi^2(1) = 6.21$ ;  $p = 0.013$ ) showed that the positive effect of women's relative childcare contribution was stronger for women ( $b = 1.24$ ) than for men ( $b = 0.57$ ). No statistically significant gender differences were found in the effects of women's relative contributions to housework and paid labor.

None of the controls had a statistically significant impact on housework unfairness for men and women (Model 1). Results were similar for childcare unfairness, except that married women experienced less unfairness than cohabiting women. These results corroborate findings from prior research— that there is little evidence that perceptions of household labor unfairness are influenced by factors other than the division of labor (Baxter, 2000).

Model 2 in Table 4.4 includes interactions between the different types of labor. For both housework unfairness and childcare unfairness, interactions improved model fit as Wald tests were statistically significant (results not shown). The findings for housework unfairness showed that, for men, the association between women's relative housework contribution and housework unfairness, depended on women's relative childcare contribution, as the interaction between housework and childcare was significant. The main effect illustrated that there was a negative effect of women's relative housework contribution on unfairness in the case of women's minimal contributions to childcare and paid labor (value of 0), but this effect became increasingly positive if women's childcare contribution increased. At the maximum level of childcare (value of 1), the effect of women's relative housework contribution was significant and positive ( $b = 1.72$ ;  $p < 0.001$ , results not shown). For women, we see two significant interactions, although the interaction with childcare was not significant at conventional levels (5%). The main effect

**Table 4.4:** Regression analyses for variables predicting housework and childcare unfairness: regression coefficients and SE between brackets

	Housework unfairness		Childcare unfairness		Housework unfairness		Childcare unfairness	
	Model 1	Model 1	Model 1	Model 1	Model 2	Model 2	Model 2	Model 2
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Women's relative housework contribution	0.64** (.17)	1.11** (.17)	0.21~ (.11)	0.38** (.12)	-1.22* (.60)	-0.70 (.79)	-0.91* (.36)	-1.33* (.51)
Women's relative childcare contribution	0.28 (.22)	0.95** (.22)	0.57** (.14)	1.24** (.16)	-2.00** (.66)	-0.68 (.96)	-1.59** (.60)	-1.20 (.78)
Women's relative paid labor contribution	0.28 (.18)	0.93** (.17)	0.07 (.12)	0.21~ (.12)	-0.05 (.48)	-0.14** (.54)	-1.32** (.43)	-0.13 (.54)
Interaction of women's relative housework contribution with:								
* Women's relative childcare contribution					2.94** (.81)	2.00~ (1.13)	1.88** (.58)	2.76** (.81)
Interaction of women's relative paid labor contribution with:								
* Women's relative housework contribution					0.44 (.61)	1.41* (.67)		
* Women's relative childcare contribution							2.23** (.66)	0.52 (.78)
<i>Controls</i>								
Education respondent	0.01 (.02)	0.00 (.02)	0.01 (.01)	0.00 (.01)	0.01 (.02)	0.00 (.02)	0.01 (.01)	0.00 (.01)
Education partner	-0.01 (.02)	0.02 (.02)	0.01 (.01)	0.00 (.01)	-0.01 (.02)	0.02 (.02)	0.02 (.01)	0.00 (.01)
Gender ideology respondent	0.03 (.05)	-0.06 (.05)	-0.01 (.03)	-0.03 (.04)	0.04 (.05)	-0.07 (.05)	0.00 (.03)	-0.02 (.03)
Union type (ref. = cohabitation)	0.02 (.08)	-0.12~ (.07)	-0.03 (.05)	-0.10* (.05)	0.04 (.08)	-0.11 (.07)	-0.01 (.05)	-0.10* (.05)
Number of children	0.05 (.04)	0.01 (.04)	-0.01 (.03)	0.00 (.03)	0.04 (.04)	0.01 (.04)	-0.02 (.03)	0.00 (.03)
Age respondent	0.00 (.01)	0.01 (.01)	0.00 (.00)	0.00 (.00)	0.00 (.01)	0.01~ (.01)	0.00 (.00)	0.00 (.00)
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.047	.134	.065	.139	.074	.143	.094	.155
<i>Adjusted R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.028	.122	.046	.127	.051	.128	.072	.140
<i>N</i> of respondents	462	638	462	638	462	638	462	638

~ Two-sided  $p < .10$ ; \* Two-sided  $p < .05$ ; \*\* Two-sided  $p < .01$ . Source: New Families in the Netherlands, Wave 1, 2.



showed no significant effect of women's relative housework contribution when the other types of labor were 0 (woman does minimum). The effect became positive when women's childcare or paid labor contribution was at maximum levels, but it only reached statistical significance in the former case ( $b = 1.70$ ;  $p = 0.018$  for maximum childcare;  $b = 0.71$ ;  $p = 0.368$  for maximum paid labor, results not shown).

For childcare unfairness, the results for men showed that both interactions played a role. As shown by the main effect, women's relative childcare contribution was negatively associated with unfairness when women's contributions to housework and paid labor were minimal. When women performed more housework or paid labor, childcare was more positively associated with unfairness. Additional analyses showed that the positive effect of women's relative childcare contribution on unfairness did not reach statistical significance at maximum levels of housework or paid labor. For women, we see a significant interaction between housework and childcare. The main effect showed that women's relative childcare contribution did not affect unfairness perceptions when women contributed only minimally to the other types of labor, but it became increasingly positive if women's housework contribution increased. At the maximum, the effect of women's relative childcare contribution was statistically significant and positive ( $b = 1.56$ ;  $p = 0.001$ , results not shown).

## 4.5 Discussion

Fairness research has primarily focused on housework and found that unequal divisions of housework are often regarded as fair. Because childcare has become an increasingly important part of household labor, and the meaning of childcare may be more positive than that of housework (i.e., more enjoyable and rewarding), an unequal division of childcare may be differently related to fairness perceptions than housework. Contrary to most previous studies, we examined how perceptions of fairness for both housework and childcare were influenced by the division of housework, childcare, and paid labor. We furthermore examined whether patterns differed by gender.

Using Dutch data, this study first showed that an unequal division of household labor was often perceived as fair, especially by men and for childcare. When looking at the most common scenario of women doing more than men, a small majority of women and two-thirds of men perceived the division of housework to be fair. For childcare, these figures even amounted to 80% for men and 70% for women. These findings were also found in previous research (Baxter, 2000; Carriero, 2011;

Nordenmark & Nyman, 2003) and may explain why the household labor division is so resistant to change: if an unequal division is not perceived as unfair, partners likely feel that there is no need to divide household labor more equally.

Second, this study found no support for the idea that the actual division of childcare was less strongly related to unfairness perceptions than the actual division of housework. For both housework and childcare, we found that the division of housework and childcare was a key factor in explaining men's and women's unfairness perceptions: the more the women contributed, the stronger the unfairness perceptions. These findings corroborate findings from previous research (Baxter, 2000; Braun et al., 2008; Young et al., 2015). The associations, however, did not differ between housework and childcare. Although, from a theoretical perspective, the greater enjoyment and rewards to perform childcare than housework (Nelson, 2010; Poortman & Van der Lippe, 2009; Van Lenning & Willemsen, 2001) would suggest a weaker association for childcare, divisions of housework and childcare were evaluated in a similar way. Perhaps the investments of time and energy when taking care of the children are more important than the rewarding aspects of childcare when evaluating the fairness of the division of childcare tasks—making these investments comparable to housework contributions. It might also be relevant here to distinguish between unfairness to self and to partner (not possible in this study), which we explain later when discussing limitations of the study.

Third, fairness perceptions of household labor were not evaluated solely in relation to the division of household labor, but they depended on investments in other types of labor as well. For women, we found that not only the division of one type of household labor was associated with unfairness perceptions, but the actual division of paid labor and the other type of household labor also directly influenced their unfairness perceptions. These findings support the “time availability perspective” (Shelton & John, 1996), that implies that fairness perceptions of household labor are evaluated in relation to how much time and energy are invested in other types of labor as well. Furthermore, both men and women evaluated the household labor division in terms of total workload. When contributions to the other types of labor were low, the unequal household labor division was not or even negatively associated with household labor unfairness, but this association became increasingly positive if contributions to the other types of labor increased. Results are in line with the view of Braun et al., (2008), that the more a person is involved in different types of labor, the stronger the actual

household labor division is evaluated as unfair.

Finally, this study found that unequal divisions of both household labor and paid labor were more strongly related to unfairness perceptions for women than men. As women are generally more focused on romantic relationships than men (Amato & Rogers, 1997), women may be more sensitive to injustices like unequal divisions of labor, resulting in stronger unfairness perceptions. Also, equity theory might be relevant here, as this theory assumes that unfairness perceptions are stronger for the underbenefitting person and less strong for the overbenefitting person (Hatfield & Rapson, 2012). Women's total workload is often higher than men's workload (Sayer et al., 2009), so women may feel under-rewarded, which may be reflected in strong feelings of unfairness. Overbenefitting men also perceive unfairness, but this is less strong and related to feeling guilty or sympathy toward their partner.

We also acknowledge some shortcomings. Our study was cross-sectional and the sample was limited to parents who were in a long-term relationship (i.e., married or cohabiting before 2010). Fairness perceptions likely change over time. In the beginning of a relationship, investing more in labor than the partner may be perceived as fair, but if the unequal labor division carries on for too long, it may lead to feelings of unfairness. In contrast, an unequal labor division, that was perceived as unfair in the beginning, may become a norm as the relationship progresses, and may not feel as unfair anymore. Future research should use panel data to see how fairness perceptions change as time passes. Furthermore, some groups, including people of non-Western descent and people on low incomes, were underrepresented in our sample. As people of non-Western descent and people on low incomes are less likely to value an equal sharing of household labor (John et al., 1995; Shows & Gerstel, 2009), unequal divisions may be less associated with unfairness perceptions—indicating a possible overestimation of our effects. Also, due to power issues, we could not disentangle unfairness perceptions to self or to partner. A previous study showed that respondents performing more housework than their partner were more likely to see the division of housework as unfair to themselves and less likely to perceive unfairness to the partner (Young et al., 2015). Perhaps for childcare, higher investments than the partner may be related to unfairness to the partner instead of unfairness to self, as one may feel sorry for the partner that he/she is not equally involved in childcare tasks, which are generally evaluated as enjoyable and rewarding. Finally, our measures for the division of housework and childcare between partners were in terms of relative contributions.

Research would ideally include absolute measures because they enable to examine whether fairness perceptions are more influenced by own or partner's time spent on household labor tasks. Some research suggests that for both men and women, men's time spent on household labor is more relevant in explaining fairness perceptions (Baxter, 2000).

Overall, our study suggests that unequal divisions of household labor are not necessarily seen as unfair. Unequal divisions of household labor, especially childcare, are often regarded as fair—but the more unequal the divisions are, the more they are perceived to be unfair. When it comes to how an increase in the unequal household labor division is related to unfairness, it is not so much about the type of labor (i.e., housework or childcare), but more about gender. Fairness of the division of housework or childcare is evaluated in relation to the total workload and not (only) in isolation from other types of labor.





# 5

## **Fairness perceptions of the postdivorce division of childcare and child-related costs**

This chapter is currently under review at an international journal. The authors jointly developed the core ideas of this chapter. Koster wrote the main part of the manuscript, conducted the analyses and contributed to the data collection. Poortman substantially contributed to the manuscript. An earlier version of this chapter has been presented at the Dag van de Sociologie (2021-06-10).

## **Abstract**

This study examines how the division of childcare and child-related costs after divorce affect fairness perceptions, and whether these patterns differ by postdivorce parental conflict. So far, fairness research has primarily focused on married families and found that unequal divisions of household labor are often regarded as fair. This study investigates whether fairness perceptions are also common for divorced parents—who no longer form a joint family and for whom the division of childrearing responsibilities may be a conflict-sensitive issue. The analyses were based on data from Wave 3 of the New Families in the Netherlands survey, which was conducted among a random sample of divorced or separated heterosexual parents ( $N = 3,001$ ). The findings show that the division of childcare and child-related costs after divorce is perceived as fair by about half of parents. Higher contributions to child-related costs always lead to an increase in unfairness perceptions. For childcare, not only parents who contribute a lot but also parents who contribute very little are most likely to perceive the division as unfair (with parents with more equal contributions falling in between these two extremes). These patterns are largely similar for parents with low and high postdivorce conflict. Overall, given that unfairness perceptions are relatively widespread in postdivorce families, it seems that the division of childrearing responsibilities is less taken for granted after divorce. The association between parents' postdivorce contribution and unfairness perceptions depends on whether the contribution is a time (i.e., childcare) or money (i.e., child-related costs) investment.



## 5.1 Introduction

Couples often engage in a form of specialization, especially after the transition to parenthood (Kluwer et al., 2002; Wiesmann et al., 2008). Mothers then cut down on their working hours and bear primary responsibility for childcare. Fathers continue to work full time and have the highest earnings, thus bearing major responsibility for household and child expenses. Despite recent changes in gender roles, mothers still do most of childcare, whereas fathers contribute most to the household income (Lachance-Grzela & Bouchard, 2010). If we would ask these married or cohabiting parents (in short: married parents) how they perceive this division, most of them would say it is fair. Although fairness research has mainly focused on housework and has neglected child expenses, the few studies on childcare have shown that an unequal childcare division is often regarded as fair (Baxter, 2000; Chong & Mickelson, 2016; Koster et al., 2022). But would divorced parents also evaluate the division of childcare and the costs of children generally as fair?

After divorce (or more generally, separation), the division of childcare and child-related costs is more complex. Ex-partners are no longer a joint family unit. They can no longer adopt a pattern of specialization and pool their income, but they need to renegotiate how to divide childcare and child-related costs. Furthermore, whereas couples act based on love and commitment (Thompson, 1993) and may therefore evaluate the traditional division as fair, ex-partners may be more self-centered and critical about the division of childrearing responsibilities. Deciding on these responsibilities may be subject of continuous negotiations, possible even conflict-laden (Bonach, 2005). These arguments suggest that the division of childcare and child-related costs after divorce is not taken for granted but rather complex and likely associated with tensions and conflicts (Bonach, 2005). Accordingly, fairness perceptions may be different after divorce. In the current study, we therefore shift the attention from fairness in married families to fairness in postdivorce families, and ask: To what extent are the division of childcare and child-related costs after divorce perceived as fair? How do the division of childcare and child-related costs after divorce relate to fairness perceptions? Are these associations different depending upon postdivorce parental conflict? These questions are examined for fathers and mothers separately.

We contribute to the literature in several ways. First, this study is one of the few to examine parents' fairness perceptions in postdivorce families (but see Claessens & Mortelmans, 2021). This is particularly relevant because the number of postdivorce families has been growing over the last decades, but also because

studies on married families have shown that it is perceived fairness rather than the actual division that affects parents' well-being (Chong & Mickelson, 2016), and by extension child well-being. These studies have found that unfairness perceptions relate to higher levels of depression and poorer physical health (DeMaris & Mahoney, 2017; Polachek & Wallace, 2015). For postdivorce families, unfairness perceptions may also fuel continuing conflict between ex-partners (Claessens & Mortelmans, 2021), even further reducing parent and child well-being.

Second, in addition to fairness perceptions of childcare, we include fairness perceptions of child-related costs. The division of child-related costs and related fairness perceptions have been overlooked, also in research on married families. Parents' investments in their children not only consist of time (i.e., childcare), but also money (i.e., child-related costs) (Thomson et al., 1994). The division of the costs of children is therefore a salient part of how parents organize childrearing, maybe even more so after divorce (Bonach, 2005). Because in married families parents often pool their income or split expenses for the child 50-50 (Ashby & Burgoyne, 2008; Kenney, 2004), negotiations about the division of child expenses are not needed. In contrast, in divorced families the division of child-related costs has been shown to be a conflict-sensitive issue, often with arguments about who is responsible for particular child expenses (Bonach, 2005; Noller et al., 2008). As divorced parents may not agree and feel dissatisfied with the division, this may positively relate to unfairness perceptions of child-related costs.

Third, we highlight the moderating role of postdivorce parental conflict, a factor that may be especially relevant in fairness research concerning postdivorce families. In the first years after a divorce, the majority of parents have been found to experience anger and conflict with their ex-partner (Bonach, 2005; Garrity & Baris, 1994). When ex-partners experience conflicts and do not get along well with each other, they may be more sensitive to unequal divisions of childcare and the costs of children. In high-conflict situations ex-partners may therefore be more likely to translate unequal divisions into unfairness perceptions.

We use the third wave of the survey New Families in the Netherlands (NFN; Poortman et al., 2021). These data are unique in that NFN contains retrospective information on the division of childcare and child-related costs after divorce, and related fairness perceptions, of a large sample of divorced and separated parents.

## 5.2 Theoretical background

Equity theory has been a prominent theory in the literature on married families

to understand the link between the division of household labor (i.e., childcare and housework) and fairness perceptions. We explain how equity theory has been used in married families and how this theory may help to understand fairness perceptions of the childcare and child-related cost division in postdivorce families—families in which equity may play a particularly important role because ex-partners may place great emphasis on give and take. Given that ex-partners are in a different situation than partners, our expectations are sometimes contrary to equity theory's expectations. We further explain how associations may depend upon postdivorce parental conflict and gender.

### **5.2.1 Equity theory and fairness perceptions in married families**

Equity theory assumes that partners evaluate what they invest in and receive from a relationship (Hatfield & Rapson, 2012; Walster et al., 1978). A relationship is perceived as fair when the relative gains (i.e., outcomes relative to investments) of partners are equal. Assuming that outcomes of a romantic relationship are distributed equally, this means that equity occurs if investments of both partners are the same. If investments are not the same, this may be perceived as unfair in two ways (Walster et al., 1978). A person who invests more than the partner tends to feel unfairly disadvantaged (i.e., “underbenefit”) and a person who invests less than the partner may feel unfairly advantaged (i.e., “overbenefit”). Whereas underbenefit relates to unfairness to self, overbenefit relates to unfairness to the partner. Investments take many forms, such as performing household labor. Although research on married families has shown that an unequal division of household labor is often regarded as fair, it also holds that: the more unequal the division is, the less it is perceived as fair (Baxter, 2000; Braun et al., 2016; Koster et al., 2022).

### **5.2.2 Postdivorce childcare division and fairness perceptions**

Following equity theory, a divorced parent's increasingly higher childcare contribution may increase unfairness perceptions to self, because this parent invests more time and energy in caring for the children. It is questionable whether an increasingly lower childcare contribution increases unfairness perceptions to the ex-partner, which would be in line with equity theory's expectation. Parents may be less likely to feel such a situation as unfair to the ex-partner because they may not get along well with the ex-partner after the break-up (Bonach, 2005), or they may generally be more concerned with their own position than their ex-

partner's position. Rather than feeling unfairly advantaged due to increasingly lower childcare contributions, it may be more plausible that the parent feels unfairly disadvantaged. Investing very little in childcare after divorce often relates to having limited access to the children (e.g., not living with the children), which is the consequence of children being so-called "indivisible goods": they cannot be divided across households (Young, 1995). It is difficult for the divorced parent who is constrained in his or her access to the children to spend time with and be close to the children (Castillo et al., 2011; Hawkins et al., 2006). As parents generally enjoy being involved in childcare (Poortman & Van der Lippe, 2009) and value to care for children's development and well-being (Connelly & Kimmel, 2010), not being able to do so may increase unfairness perceptions to self. Although we do not know where the turning point is (i.e., the point at which unfairness perceptions are the lowest), the division of childcare may have a curvilinear effect on unfairness perceptions, that is: **(H1)** *Parents who contribute a lot to childcare after divorce as well as parents who contribute very little are most likely to perceive the postdivorce childcare division as unfair to self (with parents with more equal contributions falling in between these two extremes)*. Note that we only hypothesize about unfairness to self because the arguments developed above suggest that particularly unfairness to self may play a role after divorce.

### 5.2.3 Postdivorce child-related cost division and fairness perceptions

Equity theory would imply that a divorced parent's increasingly higher child-related cost contribution is positively related to unfairness to self. This parent may feel unfairly disadvantaged as (s)he contributes more and more money to the costs of children. For similar reasons as for childcare, if a divorced parent's child-related costs are increasingly lower, this may not be perceived as unfair to the ex-partner. It may also not be evaluated as unfair to self because unlike performing childcare, paying for child-related costs is not something desirable (Waller & Plotnick, 2001). The divorced parent is likely to be satisfied with low child-related costs, but when the costs become higher, this may increase unfairness to self. We, thus, expect the child-related cost division to have a linear effect on unfairness perceptions, that is: **(H2)** *The higher parents' contribution to the costs of children after divorce, the more likely that the postdivorce child-related cost division is perceived as unfair to self.*

### 5.2.4 The moderating role of postdivorce parental conflict

When postdivorce conflict with the ex-partner is high, parents may be increasingly

focused on trying to be at least as well off as their ex-partner regarding the division of childcare and child-related costs (Kelly, 2003). High conflict may, thus, trigger a stronger emphasis on equity. So if the care or the costs are unequally divided, divorced parents involved in high conflict may be more aware of the unequal situation. They may perceive the unequal situation as an injustice, which increases the likelihood of unfairness perceptions. When postdivorce conflict is low, ex-partners are generally more cooperative and supportive over childrearing issues (Bonach, 2005; Claessens & Mortelmans, 2021), which suggest that they may be less critical about unequal divisions of childcare or child-related costs. Consequently, parents involved in low conflict may be less likely to translate unequal divisions of childcare or the costs of children into unfairness perceptions. We expect that: **(H3)** *The associations as stated in H1 and H2 are stronger, the higher the level of postdivorce parental conflict.*

### 5.2.5 The moderating role of gender

Although rarely studied, previous fairness research concerning married families has shown that an unequal division of household labor is more strongly related to unfairness perceptions for women than for men (Koster et al., 2022). As women are generally more socially embedded in romantic relationships than men (Amato & Rogers, 1997), this may make them more sensitive to injustices like unequal divisions of labor. Also, women are often the underbenefited person in a romantic relationship because of their higher total workload than men's workload (Sayer et al., 2009), which may translate into stronger feelings of unfairness. Concerning postdivorce families, these explanations may lead to less clear gender differences in the fairness evaluation of unequal divisions of childcare and the costs of children. After divorce, not only women, but also men may be more aware of relational issues because ex-partners may generally place great emphasis on give and take. Additionally, although women may be the underbenefited person when it comes to their often greater responsibility for children's care after divorce, men may as well be the underbenefited person: not only do men more often have limited access to the children after divorce, their child expenses (e.g., child support) may also be high. Taken together, because gender differences are a priori unclear and so little is known about fairness processes in divorced families, we do not hypothesize and test for gender differences. Rather such differences are explored by examining the associations for men and women separately.

## 5.3 Data and method

### 5.3.1 Data

Our data come from the New Families in the Netherlands survey (Poortman et al., 2014, 2018, 2021; Poortman & Van Gaalen, 2019a, 2019b). Because questions about the postdivorce division of childcare and child-related costs, and related fairness perceptions were only included in Wave 3 (2020), the analysis is based on Wave 3, although some information of Wave 1 (2012/13) and Wave 2 (2015/16) was also used. For Wave 1, Statistics Netherlands (CBS) drew a random sample from the population of formerly married or cohabiting heterosexual parents with minor children who officially divorced or started living apart in 2010. Both ex-partners were approached via post and invited to complete an online survey. The final reminder included a paper-and-pencil version of the survey. For approximately 30% of former households, both ex-partners participated. The response rate in Wave 1 was 39% among persons and 58% among former households. A response rate of 39% is comparable to other Dutch family surveys, and a good response considering that NFN uses an online mode and targets a potentially difficult-to-reach group of recently divorced parents (Poortman et al., 2014). In total, 4,481 respondents participated in Wave 1. From these participants, those who gave permission to be re-contacted and still belonged to the target population and could be reached, 63% also participated in Wave 2. An additional random sample from the same population was added in Wave 2 to compensate for panel attrition. This refreshment sample consisted of 920 participants, yielding a total of 3,464 respondents in Wave 2. For Wave 3—which is most central in this study—parents who lastly participated in either Wave 1 or Wave 2 were reapproached. The response rate in Wave 3, largely similar to Wave 2, was 68% among persons and 72% among former households, yielding 3,056 respondents. The most notable and consistent patterns for all three waves were that men, former cohabiters, younger people, non-western immigrants, and people on low incomes and on welfare were underrepresented. Having a high education and paid work were most predictive of participating again in Wave 2 and Wave 3. Also, women, older people and respondents with a new partner were more likely to participate again in Wave 3.

We excluded cases with missing values on the variables used in the analyses ( $n = 55$ ). The final sample consisted of 3,001 respondents (from 2,537 former households), of which 1,242 fathers and 1,759 mothers. Note that we used this total sample for the descriptive analysis, but that for the multivariate analysis

we excluded respondents reporting unfairness to the ex-partner or unfairness to both (see below), thereby limiting the sample to only those respondents reporting fairness to both or unfairness to self (childcare unfairness:  $N = 1,117$  fathers and  $1,583$  mothers; child-related cost unfairness:  $N = 1,210$  fathers and  $1,698$  mothers).

### 5.3.2 Main variables

*Parent's relative childcare contribution.* Respondents were asked: "If you think back to the period after the divorce/separation, how was the care and upbringing of the children of you and your ex-partner divided? After the divorce/separation, did you do more, as much as, or less than your ex-partner?" Response options ranged from 1 = *I did much more than my ex-partner* to 5 = *I did much less than my ex-partner*. Responses were reverse coded in the direction of the respondent's higher contribution. Subsequently, responses were coded as proportions: *I did much less than my ex-partner* = 0, *I did less than my ex-partner* = 0.25, *I did as much as my ex-partner* = 0.50, *I did more than my ex-partner* = 0.75, *I did much more than my ex-partner* = 1. The created variable ranged from 0 (0%) to 1 (100%) reflecting the respondent's relative contribution. A score of 0 indicates that the respondent took almost no responsibility for childcare, and a score of 1 that the respondent took most responsibility.

*Childcare unfairness.* After the question about the division of the care and upbringing of the children, respondents were subsequently asked: "To what extent did you perceive this division of care and upbringing for you and your ex-partner as fair or unfair?" Responses were: 0 = *Fair for both*, 1 = *Only unfair for me*, 2 = *Only unfair for my ex-partner*, 3 = *Unfair for both*. We used the four response categories for the descriptive analysis. For the main regression analysis, we only used 0 "*Fair for both*" and 1 "*Only unfair for me*" because, from a theoretical perspective, the division of childrearing responsibilities after divorce may be particularly associated with unfairness to self, but also given the small number of cases that have reported unfairness perceptions to (also) the ex-partner (see descriptive findings).

*Parent's relative child-related cost contribution.* Respondents were asked: "If you think back to the period after the divorce/separation, how were the costs of the children of you and your ex-partner divided (e.g., child support, school expenses)? After the divorce/separation, did you contribute more, as much as, or less than your ex-partner?" Responses ranged from 1 = *I contributed much more than my ex-partner* to 5 = *I contributed much less than my ex-partner*. Similar to childcare, responses were recoded in the direction of the respondent's higher contribution and then

coded as proportions. The variable ranged from 0 (0%) to 1 (100%) reflecting the respondent's relative contribution to child-related costs.

*Child-related cost unfairness.* After the question about the division of the costs of the children, respondents indicated to what extent they did perceive this division of costs for themselves and their ex-partner as fair or unfair (0 = *Fair for both*, 1 = *Only unfair for me*, 2 = *Only unfair for my ex-partner*, 3 = *Unfair for both*). The four response options were included in the descriptive analysis. For similar reasons as for childcare unfairness, in the main regression analysis only 0 "*Fair for both*" and 1 "*Only unfair for me*" were used.

*Postdivorce parental conflict.* Respondents reported how often (0 = *Almost never* to 4 = *Very often*) there were tensions or conflicts between them and their ex-partner at the time of the survey. A higher score on this variable indicates higher levels of conflict. Note that because the dependent variables childcare unfairness and child-related cost unfairness relate to the general period after divorce (i.e., retrospective design), we measured postdivorce conflict at the time of Wave 1 (Wave 2 for parents in the refreshment sample). Because it is unknown to which exact period parents referred to and parents' retrospective fairness perceptions may be influenced by their current situation, robustness analyses were performed measuring postdivorce conflict at Wave 2 and Wave 3. Results of these analyses are reported in the text if differences were found.

### 5.3.3 Control variables

We controlled for basic sociodemographic characteristics and factors related to NFN design (i.e., sample). Similar to postdivorce parental conflict, the control variables were measured at the time of Wave 1 (Wave 2 for parents in the refreshment sample). Robustness analyses with information from Wave 2 and Wave 3 for the controls (if possible) yielded similar findings.

*Parent's education* measures respondents' highest attained level of education on a scale from 1 (*Incomplete elementary school*) to 10 (*Post-graduate education*). *Parent's employment* is a dummy for whether respondents had a paid job at the time of the survey (1 = *Yes*). *Parent's work hours* indicate the work hours per week according to the contract. Work hours of over 80 were recoded to 80 to avoid too much influence of these extremes. Nonemployed parents were assigned the gender-specific mean. This implies that the effect of parent's employment indicates the difference between nonemployed people and people with average working hours (Poortman & Kalmijn, 2002). To measure *repartnering*, respondents reported whether they



had: “No steady partner,” “Steady partner, not living together (i.e., LAT),” “Steady partner, living together unmarried,” and “Steady partner, living together married.” We generated three dummy variables (1 = Yes): *no partner* (reference group), *LAT partner*, and *co-residing (unmarried/married) partner*. *Parent’s religiosity* indicates whether respondents identify as belonging to a specific religious denomination (1 = Yes). *Former union type* is a dummy for whether the parent’s relationship with the ex-partner was 0 “*Cohabitation*” or 1 “*Marriage/registered partnership*”. *Number of children with ex-partner* includes the number of children parents had or adopted with their ex-partner. *Parent’s age* is measured in years. *Sample* is a dummy for whether the response came from the 0 “*Original sample*” or 1 “*Refreshment sample*”. Table 5.1 shows descriptive statistics for all variables used in the analyses, for fathers and mothers separately.

### 5.3.4 Analytical strategy

The analyses began with a description of the postdivorce division of childcare and child-related costs, and fathers’ and mothers’ fairness perceptions of the postdivorce division of childcare and child-related costs. Next, logistic regression analyses were performed for fathers and mothers separately. For both dependent variables, three models were estimated: Models 1a, 1b, and 2. For childcare unfairness, Models 1a and 1b were estimated to examine how parent’s relative childcare contribution relates to unfairness perceptions. Model 1a includes parent’s relative childcare contribution, postdivorce parental conflict, and the controls. In Model 1b we add the squared term of parent’s relative childcare contribution, as from a theoretical perspective, parent’s childcare contribution may have a nonlinear rather than a linear effect on childcare unfairness. Likelihood ratio tests assess whether the linear or nonlinear model has best model fit. In Model 2, based on whether Model 1a or Model 1b fits best, we include the (squared) interaction term(s) with postdivorce parental conflict to test whether the role of parent’s childcare contribution depends on the level of conflict. Likelihood ratio tests assess whether the interactions improve model fit. Note that parent’s relative child-related cost contribution is also controlled for in the models estimating childcare unfairness. The models for child-related cost unfairness are constructed in the same way as for childcare unfairness, but with parent’s relative child-related cost contribution as main independent variable and parent’s relative childcare contribution as control variable.

**Table 5.1:** Mean, standard deviation and range of the variables in the analyses

	Fathers			Mothers		
	M	SD	Range	M	SD	Range
Childcare unfairness <sup>b</sup>	0.34		0-1	0.49		0-1
Child-related cost unfairness <sup>c</sup>	0.45		0-1	0.48		0-1
Parent's relative childcare contribution	0.45	0.28	0-1	0.85	0.22	0-1
Parent's relative child-related cost contribution	0.76	0.26	0-1	0.65	0.30	0-1
Postdivorce parental conflict	0.79	0.95	0-3	0.87	0.94	0-3
<i>Controls</i>						
Parent's education	6.95	1.86	1-10	6.84	1.75	2-10
Parent's employment						
Not employed	0.08	<sup>a</sup>	0-1	0.12	<sup>a</sup>	0-1
Employed	0.92	<sup>a</sup>	0-1	0.88	<sup>a</sup>	0-1
Parent's work hours (x10)	3.85	0.70	0-8	2.74	0.79	0-8
Repartnering						
No partner	0.41	<sup>a</sup>	0-1	0.47	<sup>a</sup>	0-1
LAT partner	0.31	<sup>a</sup>	0-1	0.28	<sup>a</sup>	0-1
Co-residing partner	0.29	<sup>a</sup>	0-1	0.25	<sup>a</sup>	0-1
Parent's religiosity						
Not religious	0.70	<sup>a</sup>	0-1	0.68	<sup>a</sup>	0-1
Religious	0.30	<sup>a</sup>	0-1	0.32	<sup>a</sup>	0-1
Former union type						
Cohabitation	0.20	<sup>a</sup>	0-1	0.25	<sup>a</sup>	0-1
Marriage	0.80	<sup>a</sup>	0-1	0.75	<sup>a</sup>	0-1
Number of children with ex-partner	1.98	0.80	1-7	1.92	0.78	1-7
Parent's age	45.81	6.89	26-71	42.31	6.50	20-63
Sample						
Original sample	0.81	<sup>a</sup>	0-1	0.80	<sup>a</sup>	0-1
Refreshment sample	0.19	<sup>a</sup>	0-1	0.20	<sup>a</sup>	0-1
<i>N</i> of respondents	1,242			1,759		

Note: <sup>a</sup> Standard deviation (SD) not presented for discrete variables. <sup>b</sup> *N* of respondents: Fathers = 1,117; Mothers = 1,583. <sup>c</sup> *N* of respondents: Fathers = 1,210; Mothers = 1,698. Source: New Families in the Netherlands, Wave 1, 2, 3.

## 5.4 Results

### 5.4.1 Descriptive findings

Table 5.2, first, shows fathers' and mothers' reports on whether they contributed more than, as much as, or less than their ex-partner to childcare or child-related costs. Although fathers and mothers agreed that mothers took more responsibility for childcare after divorce, their reports differed substantially. Four-fifths of mothers reported to contribute more than their ex-partner, whereas only two-fifths of fathers reported that they did less than their ex-partner. Also, the situation that fathers did more than their ex-partner, was reported more often by fathers (21%) than mothers (2%). For child-related costs, both fathers and mothers reported that they paid more than their ex-partner. Two-thirds of fathers reported that they contributed more to child-related costs, whereas only 19% of mothers reported that their ex-partner's contributions were higher. Similarly, 50% of mothers and only 7% of fathers reported that mother's child-related cost contributions were higher. These results imply that fathers and mothers reported in a self-serving direction: they overestimate their own and underestimate their ex-partner's postdivorce contributions to childcare and child-related costs, which align with findings from prior research (Braver et al., 1991; Seltzer & Brandreth, 1994). Furthermore, the findings indicate that fathers and mothers might have a different understanding of what child-related costs were. Generally, divorced mothers more often pay the daily child expenses and divorced fathers child support (Seltzer & Brandreth, 1994). If mothers compared their daily child expenses with their ex-partner's daily child expenses, and fathers their child support payments with their ex-partner's child support payments, it is not surprising that they both perceived that they paid more than their ex-partner.

Table 5.2 further shows fairness perceptions. The postdivorce childcare division was perceived to be fair by 60% of fathers and 46% of mothers, and 54% of fathers and 50% of mothers reported that the postdivorce division of the costs of children was fair. These figures illustrate that fairness perceptions were higher among fathers than mothers, especially for childcare. When parents perceived the postdivorce division of childcare or the costs of children as unfair, it was most often unfair to self (range 30-46%). Unfair to ex-partner (range 1-4%) or to both (range 2-7%) were much less common, particularly for child-related costs.

Table 5.3 links parents' contributions with fairness perceptions. Fairness perceptions were highest when ex-partners contributed equally to childcare

(fathers: 92%; mothers: 98%) or child-related costs (fathers: 94%; mothers: 90%). For childcare, a situation in which parents contributed more than their ex-partner, was most often perceived as unfair to self: more than half of fathers (53%) and mothers (52%) reported this. When parents performed less childcare than their ex-partner, however, this also most often related to unfairness to self, namely by 42% of fathers and 51% of mothers. Note that when mothers performed either more or less childcare than their ex-partner, both divisions were seen as unfair to self by a similar percentage of women (i.e., more than half). Men more often reported it to be unfair to self when they contributed more (53%) than less (42%), although differences were not that large. For child-related costs, it was also found that an unequal division in the direction of parents paying more than their ex-partner, was most often perceived as unfair to self (62% and 84% as reported by fathers and mothers, respectively). If child expenses were lower than the ex-partner's, the majority of fathers (73%) and mothers (87%) perceived this division as fair to both rather than unfair to self (the latter was the case for childcare).

Although unfairness to the ex-partner or to both were less common than feelings of fairness or unfairness to self, it seems that parents sometimes also felt the division was unfair for the ex-partner—especially by mothers and for childcare—namely when their own contributions were low. For example, when mothers performed less childcare than their ex-partner, 18% of mothers perceived this as unfair to the ex-partner and 13% as unfair to both.

**Table 5.2:** Frequency distributions (%) for parents' contributions to childcare and child-related costs, and fairness perceptions, by gender

	Childcare		Child-related costs	
	Fathers (N = 1,242)	Mothers (N = 1,759)	Fathers (N = 1,242)	Mothers (N = 1,759)
<i>Parents' contribution<sup>a</sup></i>				
I did/contributed (much) more than my ex-partner	20.5	82.0	67.5	50.4
I did/contributed as much as my ex-partner	38.8	15.7	26.0	30.9
I did/contributed (much) less than my ex-partner	40.7	2.2	6.5	18.6
<i>(Un)fairness perceptions</i>				
Fair for both	59.5	46.2	53.6	50.4
Only unfair for me	30.4	43.8	43.8	46.1
Only unfair for my ex-partner	3.6	2.8	0.6	1.4
Unfair for both	6.4	7.2	1.9	2.0

Note: <sup>a</sup>For ease of interpretation, we collapsed "I did much more than my ex-partner" and "I did more than my ex-partner" in one category, and "I did much less than my ex-partner" and "I did less than my ex-partner" in one category. Source: New Families in the Netherlands, Wave 3.

**Table 5.3:** Frequency distributions (%) of fairness perceptions by parents' contributions to childcare and child-related costs, by gender

	Fathers (N = 1,242)			Mothers (N = 1,759)		
	Fair for both	Only unfair for me	Only unfair for my ex-partner for both	Fair for both	Only unfair for me	Only unfair for my ex-partner for both
<i>Contribution to childcare</i>						
I did (much) more than my ex-partner	36.5	52.9	3.5	37.1	51.6	2.9
I did as much as my ex-partner	92.1	6.0	0.0	97.5	2.5	0.0
I did (much) less than my ex-partner	40.0	42.4	7.1	17.9	51.3	17.9
<i>Contribution to child-related costs</i>						
I contributed (much) more than my ex-partner	36.2	62.1	0.1	12.6	84.2	0.3
I contributed as much as my ex-partner	94.1	5.3	0.0	90.1	9.7	0.0
I contributed (much) less than my ex-partner	72.8	8.6	8.6	86.9	3.4	6.7

Source: New Families in the Netherlands, Wave 3.

### 5.4.2 Childcare unfairness

Table 5.4 shows the results of the logistic regression for childcare unfairness. Parent's relative childcare contribution did not have a linear effect on childcare unfairness for fathers (Model 1a), but it did for mothers: their increased relative childcare contributions were associated with increased log odds of unfairness to self ( $b = 4.33$ ; Model 1a). Including the squared term of parent's relative childcare contribution (Model 1b) improved model fit as the likelihood ratio tests were statistically significant ( $\chi^2(1) = 191.27$  for fathers and  $84.30$  for mothers;  $p < .001$ ), suggesting that the association between parent's relative childcare contribution and childcare unfairness was nonlinear for both fathers and mothers. Interpreting this model for fathers, their higher relative childcare contribution decreased the log odds of unfairness to self ( $b = -11.70$ ) until a minimum value of their relative contribution, that is  $0.54 (-b/(2 \times b^2) = 11.70/21.82)$ . Afterwards, their higher relative childcare contribution increased the log odds of unfairness to self ( $b^2 = 10.91$ ). To ease interpretation, in Figure 5.1 (Panel A) we plotted the predicted probabilities of childcare unfairness by father's childcare contribution (using commands "margins" and "marginsplot" in Stata). The figure illustrates that unfairness perceptions were lowest when the childcare division was about equal. Unfairness perceptions increased when fathers contributed more than their ex-partner, but also when they contributed less than their ex-partner. For mothers, findings were similar. The effects of mother's relative childcare contribution in Model 1b (i.e.,  $b = -10.17$ ;  $b^2 = 10.02$ ) and the predicted probabilities in Figure 5.1 (Panel B) show that unfairness perceptions were lowest when mothers contributed as much as their ex-partner to childcare (minimum value:  $0.51 = 10.17/20.04$ ). Not only when mothers contributed more than their ex-partner, but also when they contributed less than their ex-partner, this increased unfairness to self. These findings confirm H1 that parents who contribute a lot to childcare after divorce as well as parents who contribute very little are most likely to perceive the postdivorce childcare division as unfair to self (with parents with more equal contributions falling in between these two extremes).

Model 1b further shows the association between postdivorce parental conflict and childcare unfairness. Higher levels of conflict increased the likelihood of unfairness to self for both fathers and mothers. The rest of the covariates controlled for, show that for both fathers and mothers their higher relative child-related cost contribution increased the log odds of childcare unfairness. For fathers, being higher educated, employed, or older reduced the log odds of childcare unfairness,

**Table 5.4:** Logistic regression analyses for variables predicting childcare unfairness to self: regression coefficients and SE between brackets

	Fathers (N = 1,117)			Mothers (N = 1,583)		
	Model 1a	Model 1b	Model 2	Model 1a	Model 1b	Model 2
Parent's relative childcare contribution	-0.33 (.25)	-11.70** (.96)	-9.84** (1.25)	4.33** (.35)	-10.17** (1.55)	-9.77** (2.00)
Parent's relative childcare contribution <sup>2</sup>		10.91** (.86)	9.72** (1.12)		10.02** (1.08)	10.10** (1.40)
Postdivorce parental conflict	0.72** (.07)	0.67** (.08)	1.39*** (.29)	0.31** (.06)	0.27** (.07)	0.75 (.53)
Interaction of postdivorce parental conflict with:						
* Parent's relative childcare contribution			-2.63* (1.18)			-0.40 (1.59)
* Parent's relative childcare contribution <sup>2</sup>			1.76~ (1.02)			-0.16 (1.13)
<i>Controls</i>						
Parent's relative child-related cost contribution	1.22** (.30)	0.78* (.33)	0.76* (.34)	0.72** (.21)	0.55* (.22)	0.57** (.22)
Parent's education	-0.12** (.04)	-0.11** (.04)	-0.11** (.04)	-0.08* (.03)	-0.05 (.04)	-0.05 (.04)
Parent's employment (ref. = not employed)	-0.77** (.27)	-0.62* (.30)	-0.61* (.30)	-0.14 (.18)	-0.07 (.18)	-0.07 (.18)
Parent's work hours (x10)	0.19~ (.10)	0.13 (.12)	0.13 (.12)	0.09 (.08)	0.11 (.08)	0.12 (.08)
Repartnering (ref. = no partner)						
LAT partner	0.04 (.17)	0.02 (.19)	0.01 (.19)	-0.25~ (.14)	-0.26~ (.14)	-0.25~ (.14)
Co-residing partner	0.17 (.18)	0.13 (.20)	0.14 (.20)	-0.26~ (.15)	-0.30** (.15)	-0.31* (.15)
Parent's religiosity (ref. = not religious)	0.34 (.15)	0.26 (.17)	0.24 (.17)	-0.14 (.12)	-0.13 (.13)	-0.12 (.13)
Former union type (ref. = cohabitation)	0.07 (.18)	0.07 (.20)	0.07 (.20)	0.00 (.14)	0.00 (.14)	0.01 (.14)
Number of children with ex-partner	0.06 (.09)	-0.01 (.10)	-0.02 (.10)	0.09 (.08)	0.09 (.08)	0.09 (.08)
Parent's age	-0.03** (.01)	-0.03** (.01)	-0.03** (.01)	0.02* (.01)	0.01 (.01)	0.01 (.01)
Sample (ref. = original sample)	0.49** (.18)	0.60** (.20)	0.64** (.20)	0.00 (.15)	0.03 (.16)	0.04 (.16)
<i>Pseudo-R2</i>	0.126	0.260	0.266	0.171	0.209	0.211

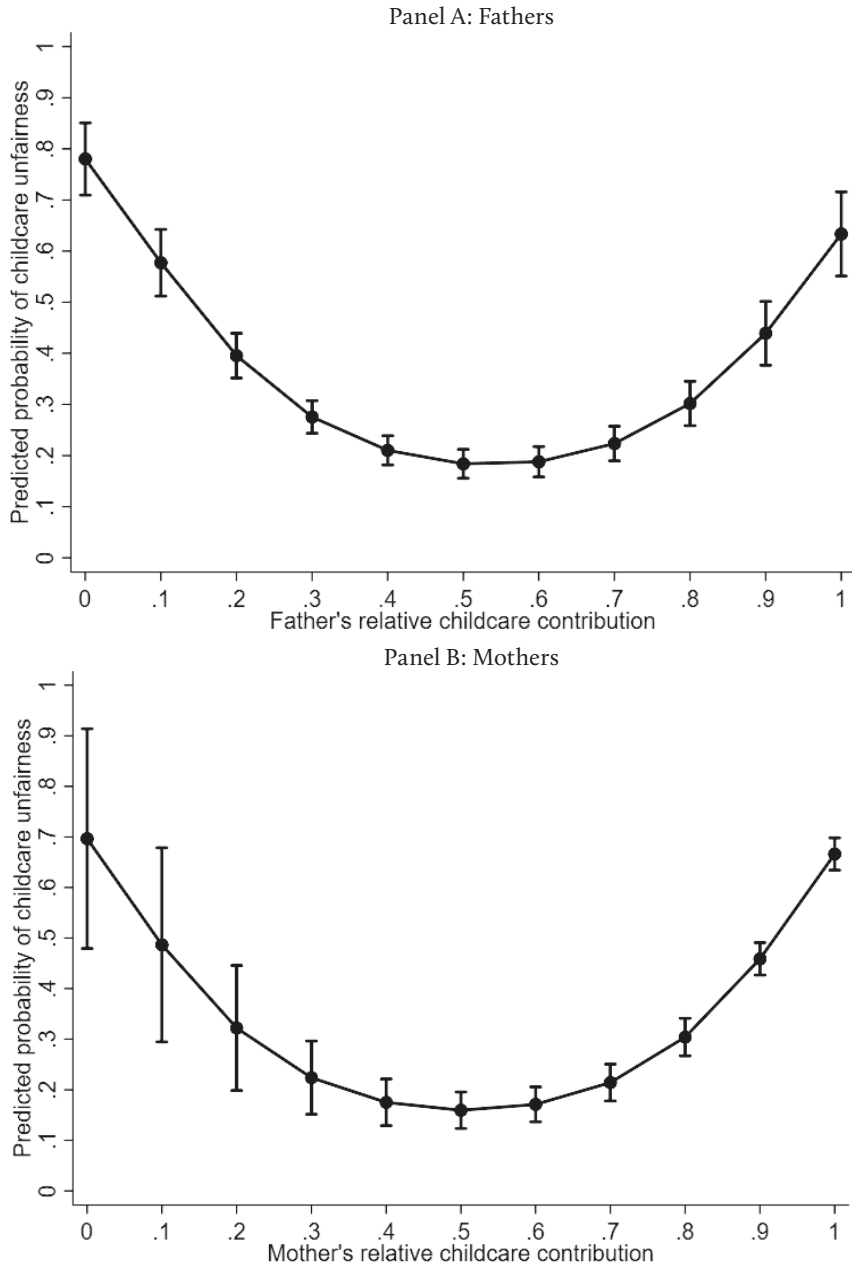
~ Two-sided  $p < .10$ ; \* Two-sided  $p < .05$ ; \*\* Two-sided  $p < .01$ . Source: New Families in the Netherlands, Wave 1, 2, 3.



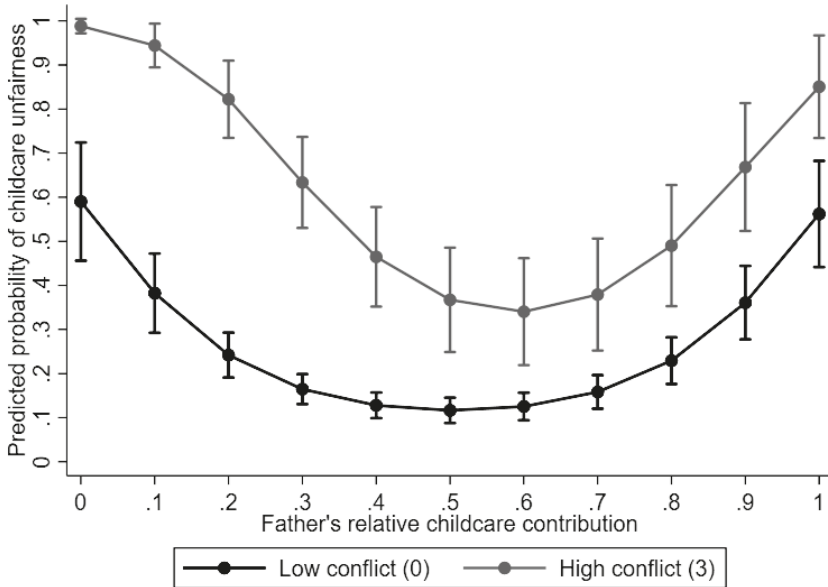
while being in the refreshment sample increased the log odds of unfairness. For mothers, co-residing with a new partner, as compared to not having a new partner, decreased the likelihood of unfairness perceptions.

Model 2 includes interactions between parent's relative childcare contribution and postdivorce parental conflict. For mothers, the likelihood ratio test showed that adding interactions did not improve model fit, indicating that the role of their childcare investments did not depend upon the level of postdivorce conflict. For fathers, the association between their childcare contribution and childcare unfairness depended on conflict ( $\chi^2(2) = 8.66; p = .013$ ). When fathers experienced low conflict (value of 0), the linear effect of their relative childcare contribution on childcare unfairness was  $-9.84$  ( $p < .001$ ) and the nonlinear effect was  $9.72$  ( $p < .001$ ). These effects became stronger if conflict increased, as indicated by the statistically significant interactions ( $b = -2.63$  and  $1.76$ , respectively)—although the interaction with the quadratic term was not significant at conventional levels (5%). To better interpret this interaction model, we plotted the predicted probabilities of childcare unfairness by father's childcare contribution and postdivorce conflict in Figure 5.2. Both for fathers with low (value of 0) and high conflict (value of 3), childcare unfairness was lowest when the childcare division was equal, but increased when fathers contributed either more or less than their ex-partner. More importantly, we observe that the increase in childcare unfairness is steeper for those with high conflict—especially in the case of lower childcare contributions than the ex-partner. So for fathers, the findings are in line with H3 that the associations as stated in H1 are stronger the higher the level of postdivorce parental conflict. Note that we should interpret this moderation effect with care, because it was no longer statistically significant when conflict was measured at Wave 2 or Wave 3. A possible explanation for this finding will be provided in the discussion section.

**Figure 5.1:** Predicted probabilities of childcare unfairness to self by parent's relative childcare contribution



**Figure 5.2:** Predicted probabilities of childcare unfairness to self by father's relative childcare contribution and postdivorce parental conflict



### 5.4.3 Child-related cost unfairness

The findings for child-related cost unfairness are presented in Table 5.5. Comparing Models 1a and 1b, suggests that parent's relative child-related cost contribution had a linear effect on child-related cost unfairness for fathers, and a nonlinear effect for mothers. Likelihood ratio tests confirmed that including the nonlinear term did not improve model fit for fathers, but only for mothers ( $\chi^2(1) = 6.15$ ;  $p = .013$ ). For fathers, the positive coefficient of their relative child-related cost contribution indicates that the higher father's contribution, the greater the likelihood that the child-related cost division was perceived as unfair to self ( $b = 6.30$ ; Model 1a). For mothers, the effects of their relative child-related cost contribution in Model 1b (i.e.,  $b = 15.66$ ;  $b^2 = -4.79$ ) imply an inverted u-shaped relationship with child-related cost unfairness, in which the maximum value of 1.63 ( $-15.66/-9.58$ ) did not fall within the range of child-related cost unfairness (0-1). This means that only the increasing part (i.e., left part) of the inverted u-shaped relationship is relevant for interpreting the effect of mother's relative childcare contribution. Figure 5.3 graphically shows this relationship. Generally, it can be seen that child-related cost unfairness increased with mother's higher relative child-related cost contribution, but the increase became less steep the higher the contribution. These findings are in line with H2 that the higher parents' postdivorce contribution to the costs

of children, the more likely that the postdivorce child-related cost division is perceived as unfair to self.

Postdivorce parental conflict positively affected the likelihood of child-related cost unfairness for both fathers ( $b = 0.57$ ; Model 1a) and mothers ( $b = 0.53$ ; Model 1b). The control variables show that the association between parent's relative childcare contribution and child-related cost unfairness was nonlinear: unfairness perceptions of child-related costs were lowest when the childcare division was about equal for fathers (minimum value: 0.47) and beyond equal for mothers (minimum value: 0.67)—but they increased when fathers and mothers contributed either more or less. Furthermore, for fathers, being higher educated or older negatively related to unfairness perceptions, while being previously married with the ex-partner increased the log odds of child-related cost unfairness.

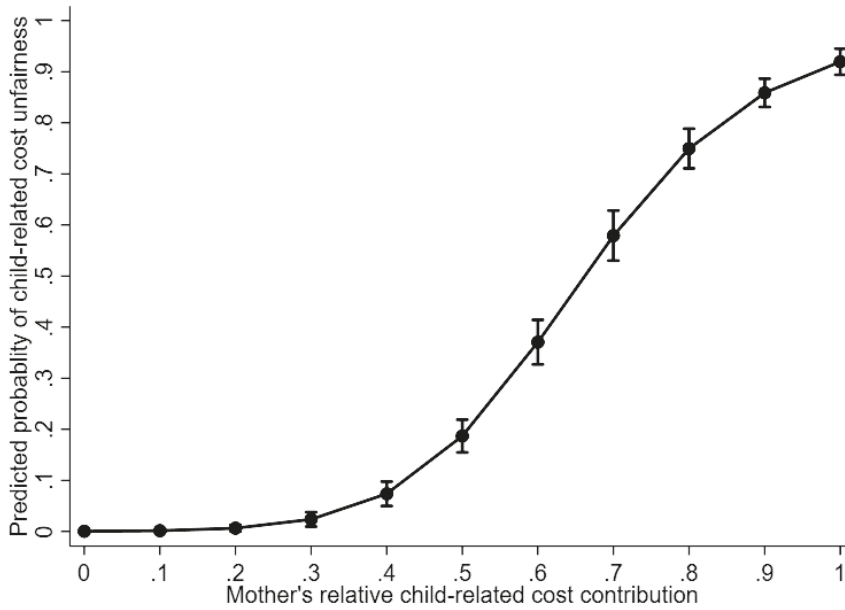
In Model 2 interactions between parent's relative child-related cost contribution and postdivorce parental conflict were added. The interaction is statistically insignificant for fathers, suggesting that the role of father's child-related cost contribution did not depend upon the level of conflict. For mothers, the interactions are statistically significant, and the likelihood ratio test assessed that they improved the model ( $\chi^2(2) = 37.51$ ;  $p < .001$ ), indicating that the association between mother's child-related cost contribution and unfairness perceptions depended on conflict. When mothers experienced low conflict (value of 0), the main effects of their relative child-related cost contribution (i.e.,  $b = 36.30$ ;  $b^2 = -18.74$ ) imply an inverted u-shaped relationship with child-related cost unfairness, with a maximum value of 0.97 (-36.30/-37.48). So for mothers with low conflict, only the increasing part (i.e., left part) of the inverted u-shaped relationship is relevant for interpreting the effect of mother's relative child-related cost contribution. At the maximum level of conflict (value of 3), additional analyses (not shown) illustrated that the linear effect of mother's contribution was -2.33 and statistically insignificant, and the nonlinear effect 8.24 ( $p < .001$ ), which indicate a u-shaped relationship with a minimum value of 0.14 (2.33/16.48). For mothers with high conflict, it is mostly the increasing part (i.e., right part) of the u-shaped relationship that is necessary for interpreting the effect of mother's relative child-related cost contribution. These associations are plotted in Figure 5.4. Despite the statistically significant difference in the relationship between mother's child-related cost contribution and unfairness perceptions for mothers with low and high conflict, the patterns

**Table 5.5:** Logistic regression analyses for variables predicting child-related cost unfairness to self: regression coefficients and SE between brackets

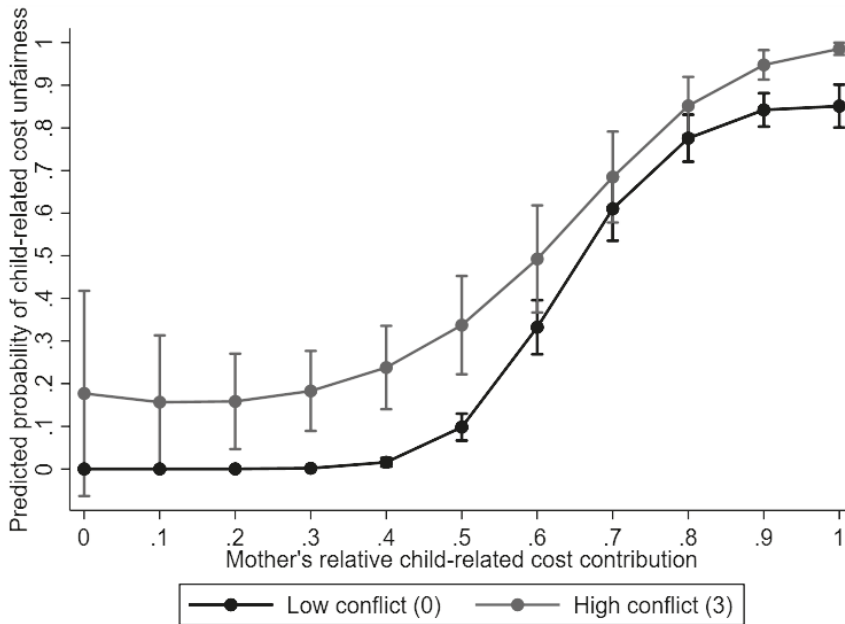
	Fathers (N = 1,210)		Mothers (N = 1,698)	
	Model 1a	Model 1b	Model 1a	Model 1b
Parent's relative child-related cost contribution	6.30** (.41)	4.28~ (2.56)	8.94** (.43)	15.66** (2.95)
Parent's relative child-related cost contribution <sup>2</sup>		1.35 (1.71)		-4.79* (2.05)
Postdivorce parental conflict	0.57** (.09)	0.57** (.09)	0.51** (.09)	0.53** (.10)
Interaction of postdivorce parental conflict with:				
* Parent's relative child-related cost contribution		-0.48 (.37)		-12.88** (1.98)
* Parent's relative child-related cost contribution <sup>2</sup>				8.99** (1.44)
<i>Controls</i>				
Parent's relative childcare contribution	-4.23** (.92)	-4.16** (.92)	-5.74** (1.84)	-6.41** (1.96)
Parent's relative childcare contribution <sup>2</sup>	4.47** (.86)	4.39** (.86)	4.33** (1.29)	4.80** (1.36)
Parent's education	-0.11** (.04)	-0.11** (.04)	-0.07 (.05)	-0.08 (.05)
Parent's employment (ref. = not employed)	-0.34 (.33)	-0.33 (.33)	0.02 (.27)	-0.03 (.27)
Parent's work hours (x10)	0.10 (.12)	0.10 (.12)	-0.07 (.10)	-0.06 (.10)
Repartnering (ref. = no partner)				
LAT partner	-0.06 (.18)	-0.06 (.18)	0.09 (.19)	0.09 (.19)
Co-residing partner	-0.21 (.19)	-0.21 (.19)	0.00 (.20)	-0.01 (.20)
Parent's religiosity (ref. = not religious)	0.04 (.17)	0.04 (.17)	0.23 (.17)	0.23 (.17)
Former union type (ref. = cohabitation)	0.87** (.20)	0.87** (.20)	-0.16 (.19)	-0.18 (.19)
Number of children with ex-partner	-0.19~ (.10)	-0.19~ (.10)	0.17 (.11)	0.18~ (.11)
Parent's age	-0.03* (.01)	-0.03* (.01)	0.02~ (.01)	0.02~ (.01)
Sample (ref. = original sample)	0.22 (.20)	0.23 (.20)	-0.19 (.22)	-0.17 (.21)
<i>Pseudo-R2</i>	0.345	0.346	0.542	0.545
		0.346		0.561

~ Two-sided  $p < .10$ ; \* Two-sided  $p < .05$ ; \*\* Two-sided  $p < .01$ . Source: New Families in the Netherlands, Wave 1, 2, 3.

**Figure 5.3:** Predicted probabilities of child-related cost unfairness to self by mother's relative child-related cost contribution



**Figure 5.4:** Predicted probabilities of child-related cost unfairness to self by mother's relative child-related cost contribution and postdivorce parental conflict



were largely similar. There is, thus, no convincing evidence that mother's higher childcare contributions relate more strongly to unfairness perceptions when postdivorce conflict is high. So for both fathers and mothers, we cannot confirm H3 that the association as stated in H2 is stronger the higher the level of postdivorce parental conflict.

#### 5.4.4 Additional analyses

Although, from a theoretical perspective, the division of childrearing responsibilities after divorce would particularly be associated with unfairness to self, we performed additional logistic regression analyses including parents who perceived the division of childcare or the costs of children as unfair to the ex-partner or unfair to both. We dummy-coded the four original response options into 0 "*Fair for both*" and 1 "*Unfair for me/my ex-partner/both*". So in this additional analysis unfairness is not only about self, but also (partly) about the ex-partner. Ideally we would perform multinomial analysis with the response options separately, but this was impossible given the low number of cases in both "*Unfair for my ex-partner*" and "*Unfair for both*", particularly for child-related costs (e.g., fathers who perceived the child-related cost division as unfair to the ex-partner:  $n = 8$ ; or unfair to both:  $n = 24$ ). Findings for these additional analyses are presented in Figures C.1 to C.3 in the appendix. For childcare unfairness, compared to the main analysis we found a stronger increase in fathers' and mothers' unfairness perceptions, particularly when their own childcare contributions were low (Figure C.1). Thus, if parents were only little involved with the child themselves, they felt this was unfair to the ex-partner as well. We did not find a statistically significant interaction with postdivorce parental conflict for fathers anymore, which suggests that conflict mainly plays a role when it comes to unfairness perceptions to self. For child-related cost unfairness, a substantial difference compared to the main analysis was that for fathers their child-related cost contribution had a nonlinear effect on unfairness perceptions (Figure C.2 Panel A). When fathers' child-related cost contribution was increasingly low (i.e., below the minimum value of 0.26), their unfairness perceptions increased to some extent, which may indicate that when fathers paid almost no costs themselves, they felt this was somewhat unfair for the ex-partner. For mothers, although the average association between their child-related cost contribution and unfairness perceptions (Figure C.2 Panel B) was largely comparable to the association found in the main analysis, a difference can be observed for those who experienced high conflict (Figure C.3): when these

mothers' child expenses were increasingly low (i.e., below the minimum value of 0.28), their unfairness perceptions increased. This may suggest that mothers with high conflict felt it was unfair for the ex-partner when the ex-partner paid the largest share.

## 5.5 Discussion

Previous fairness research has primarily focused on married families and showed that an unequal division of household labor is often perceived as fair. We asked whether this is also the case for divorced parents—who no longer form a joint family and for whom the division of childrearing responsibilities may be a conflict-sensitive issue. We studied to what extent the division of childcare and child-related costs after divorce influenced fairness perceptions, and whether these patterns differed by postdivorce parental conflict.

This study's analysis of large-scale Dutch data, first, showed that generally about half of divorced parents perceive the childcare and child-related cost division as fair, yet for childcare this amounts to 60% for fathers. These figures suggest that postdivorce fairness perceptions are higher for fathers than for mothers—a finding which has also been found in married families (Koster et al., 2022). More importantly, these figures indicate that fairness perceptions in divorced families are relatively low when compared to married families. Fairness research on married parents found that the childcare division was perceived to be fair by a clear majority—between 69% and 83% (Baxter, 2000; Koster et al., 2022). Although differences in the actual division may partly underlie this difference in fairness perceptions between divorced and married parents, it may also be that the division of childrearing responsibilities is less taken for granted after divorce. Divorced parents no longer form a joint family unit in which the benefits of specialization are shared, but they need to renegotiate how to divide childcare and the costs of children. When ex-partners have opposing interests and experience conflicts, this further complicates the division of these tasks and costs (Kelly, 2003)—all factors that may contribute to their higher unfairness perceptions.

Second, not only higher but also lower postdivorce contributions are perceived as unfair to self, at least for childcare. That increasingly higher contributions to childcare and child-related costs after divorce positively relate to unfairness to self, corresponds with equity theory: parents feel unfairly disadvantaged when their investments of time, energy, and money become higher (Hatfield & Rapson, 2012). Interestingly, for childcare we also found that increasingly lower contributions



after divorce increased unfairness perceptions to self. This finding has not been found in previous research on married families (Koster et al., 2022), and, thus, implies that divorced parents are in a different situation than married parents. Low involvement in children's care may not be perceived as unfair to self by married parents because they still share a household with their children and have great access to their children. In contrast, low involvement after divorce often means that the parent does not live with the children. Because of limited access to the children, the parent may feel that (s)he is missing out on the children's lives, which results in feelings of unfairness to self. The finding further implies that postdivorce fairness perceptions differ for money and time investments in children. Divorced parents may be at ease with low child expenses because paying is generally not something desirable (Waller & Plotnick, 2001), but this does not hold for low involvement in childcare. Divorced parents in such a situation actually desire to invest more time in children.

Third, postdivorce parental conflict played a minor role in the associations between parents' postdivorce childcare or child-related cost contribution and unfairness perceptions. We only found that in high-conflict situations fathers were more sensitive to increasingly higher and lower childcare contributions, but this was only the case when conflict was measured at Wave 1. An explanation for the minor moderating role of parental conflict may lie in the selectivity of the sample: the average level of parental conflict was already low in Wave 1, and even more so in Wave 2 and Wave 3, which indicate that high-conflict families were less likely to participate in the survey. This may have decreased the likelihood of finding differences in the effects of parents' contributions to childcare and the costs of children between parents with low and high conflict. Despite the minor support for the moderating role of parental conflict, this is not to say that conflict was not important. Although not hypothesized, parental conflict had a direct influence on unfairness perceptions: higher levels of postdivorce conflict increased unfairness perceptions of childcare and the costs of children.

Fourth, although overall unfairness perceptions to (also) the ex-partner were relatively uncommon, we found that lower contributions to child-related costs and particularly childcare were also perceived as unfair to the ex-partner. Including unfairness perceptions to (also) the ex-partner in the multivariate analysis, generally resulted in a stronger increase in unfairness perceptions when parents' childcare or child-related cost contributions were increasingly low. These findings indicate that divorced parents are not solely concerned with their own position, but

sometimes also with their ex-partner's position: parents may feel that it is unfair for their ex-partner who takes main responsibility for childcare or child-related costs when they themselves do not contribute much to these tasks or costs.

Despite the insights provided by our study, we also address some limitations. First, the study had a retrospective design. The questions about the postdivorce division of childcare and child-related costs and related fairness perceptions referred to the general period after divorce—a period of about ten years at the time of the survey. This is a relatively long period in which both the division and fairness perceptions may change, yet it is unknown to which exact period parents referred to. Also, retrospective reports may be influenced by present circumstances—circumstances in which divorced parents likely have adjusted to the postdivorce situation and experience less conflict with their ex-partner (Bonach, 2005). This may imply a more optimistic evaluation of past circumstances, and, thus, a possible underestimation of our figures. Future research would benefit from using data that are more precise in the period they refer to (e.g., the first two years after the divorce) or using reports on present circumstances. Second, our measure for the division of child-related costs could be improved upon by using more elaborate items. As our findings indicate that fathers and mothers possibly had a different understanding of what child-related costs were, future research should consider to distinguish between different types of costs, such as daily child expenses (e.g., food, clothing), child support, and infrequent big expenses (e.g., school expenditures). Third, for repartnered parents, it may very well be that the new partner (i.e., the stepparent) also contributes to the child's care and child expenses (Ivanova, 2017; Maclean et al., 2016). Additional questions on how childcare and child-related costs are divided between respondents, their ex-partner, and their current partner, and how fair they perceive this, would be an interesting direction for future research.

Altogether, our study emphasizes the value of examining postdivorce fairness perceptions and of including both money and time investments in children. We showed that unfairness perceptions are relatively widespread in divorced families. A next step would therefore be to investigate the possible negative consequences, for example for parents' and children's well-being. This is relevant because studies on married families have shown that it is particularly the perceived fairness of a division that explains well-being and relationship outcomes (Chong & Mickelson, 2016; Dew & Wilcox, 2011). We further showed that fairness evaluations after divorce not only concern how parents divide their time investments in children, but also how they divide their money investments: when household income is no longer

pooled it suddenly becomes an issue who is responsible for which child expenses. We support that studies on married families also examine fairness perceptions of the division of child-related costs, because it may be plausible that fathers feel it is unfair that they bear major responsibility for child expenses by working longer hours than their partner.





## **Appendices**

## Appendix A - Chapter 2

**Table A.1:** Cell sizes for residence, repartnering, additional children, residence \* gender, repartnering \* gender, and residence \* repartnering

	Total sample	Fathers	Mothers	Repartnering			
				No partner	LAT partner	Co-residing partner	Total
Residence							
Resident	1,264	111	1,153	548	292	424	1,264
Shared residence	863	425	438	313	243	307	863
Nonresident	651	576	75	188	117	346	651
Total	2,778	1,112	1,666				
Repartnering							
No partner	1,049	381	668				
LAT partner	652	256	396				
Co-residing partner	1,077	475	602				
Total	2,778	1,112	1,666				
Stepchildren							
No stepchildren	1,734						
Co-residing and stepchildren	572						
LAT and stepchildren	472						
Total	2,778						
Shared children							
No shared children	2,494						
Shared children	284						
Total	2,778						

Source: New Families in the Netherlands, Wave1, 2.

**Table A.2:** Results of testing equality of coefficients across models, for residence, repartnering, and additional children

	Regular care	Leisure	Irregular care	Influence	$\chi^{2ab}$
<b>Residence (see Model 1 Table 2.2)</b>					
<i>Regression coefficients</i>					
Shared residence (ref. = resident)	-0.41**	-0.26**	-0.24**	-0.18**	
Nonresident (ref. = resident)	-1.88**	-1.34**	-1.45**	-1.42**	
Nonresident (ref. = shared residence)	-1.46**	-1.08**	-1.20**	-1.24**	
<i>Test equality of coefficients across models</i>					
Comparisons of effect shared residence (ref. = resident)					
Regular care - Leisure					13.90**
Regular care - Irregular care					13.06**
Regular care - Influence					22.41**
Comparisons of effect nonresident (ref. = resident)					
Regular care - Leisure					115.26**
Regular care - Irregular care					39.73**
Regular care - Influence					40.71**
Comparisons of effect nonresident (ref. = shared residence)					
Regular care - Leisure					77.75**
Regular care - Irregular care					19.14**
Regular care - Influence					12.79**
<b>Repartnering (see Model 1 Table 2.2)</b>					
<i>Regression coefficients</i>					
LAT partner (ref. = no partner)	-0.01	-0.06	-0.08*	0.20**	
Co-residing partner (ref. = no partner)	-0.01	-0.10*	-0.10**	0.11**	
Co-residing partner (ref. = LAT partner)	0.00	-0.05	-0.02	-0.09*	



**Table A.2:** Continued.

	Regular care	Leisure	Irregular care	Influence	$\chi^{2ab}$
<i>Test equality of coefficients across models</i>					
Comparisons of effect LAT partner (ref. = no partner)					
Influence - Regular care					16.70**
Influence - Leisure					18.08**
Influence - Irregular care					44.21**
Comparisons of effect co-residing partner (ref. = no partner)					
Influence - Regular care					7.21**
Influence - Leisure					15.67**
Influence - Irregular care					31.19**
Regular care - Leisure					5.99*
<b>Stepchildren (see Model 2 Table 2.2)</b>					
<i>Regression coefficients</i>					
Co-residing and stepchildren (ref. = no stepchildren)	-0.12**	-0.21**	-0.08*	0.02	
LAT and stepchildren (ref. = no stepchildren)	-0.04	-0.07	-0.04	0.16**	
LAT and stepchildren (ref. = co-residing and stepchildren)	0.09	0.14*	0.04	0.14**	
<i>Test equality of coefficients across models</i>					
Comparisons of effect co-residing and stepchildren (ref. = no stepchildren)					
Influence - Regular care					8.46**
Influence - Leisure					16.95**
Influence - Irregular care					6.37*
Regular care - Leisure					5.54*
Leisure - Irregular care					5.57*
Comparisons of effect LAT and stepchildren (ref. = no stepchildren)					
Influence - Regular care					13.94**
Influence - Leisure					14.07**
Influence - Irregular care					22.46**

Note: <sup>a</sup>Only statistically significant contrasts are shown. <sup>b</sup> $\chi^2$  based on Wald test. \* Two-sided  $p < .05$ ; \*\* Two-sided  $p < .01$ . Source: New Families in the Netherlands, Wave 1, 2.



**Table A.3:** Regression analyses for variables predicting parenting, excluding residence

	<b>Regular care</b>	<b>Leisure</b>	<b>Irregular care</b>	<b>Influence</b>
Repartnering (ref. = no partner)				
LAT partner	-0.03 (.05)	-0.06 (.06)	-0.08* (.04)	0.19** (.04)
Co-residing partner	-0.22** <sup>a</sup> (.05)	-0.25** <sup>a</sup> (.05)	-0.26** <sup>a</sup> (.04)	-0.05 <sup>a</sup> (.04)
<i>Controls</i>				
Parent's gender (ref. = male)	0.62** (.07)	0.15* (.07)	0.70** (.06)	0.60** (.06)
Parent's education	0.09** (.01)	0.04** (.01)	0.05** (.01)	0.05** (.01)
Parent's employment (ref. = nonemployed)	-0.02 (.07)	0.02 (.07)	-0.15** (.05)	0.13* (.06)
Parent's work hours (x 10)	-0.04 (.03)	0.00 (.03)	-0.07** (.02)	-0.03 (.02)
Predivorce conflict	-0.06* (.03)	-0.09** (.03)	-0.10** (.02)	-0.13** (.02)
Predivorce involvement	0.27** (.04)	0.29** (.04)	0.20** (.03)	0.08** (.03)
Child's gender (ref. = boy)	0.03 (.04)	0.00 (.04)	0.00 (.03)	-0.04 (.04)
Child's age	-0.10** (.01)	-0.13** (.01)	-0.01 (.01)	-0.04** (.01)
Former union type (ref. = cohabitation)	-0.05 (.05)	-0.04 (.05)	-0.03 (.04)	-0.04 (.04)
Number of children	-0.07* (.03)	-0.10** (.04)	-0.08** (.02)	-0.01 (.03)
Parent's age	-0.01 (.00)	-0.01* (.00)	-0.01* (.00)	-0.01~ (.00)
Sample (ref. = original sample)	0.02 (.05)	0.03 (.05)	0.07* (.04)	0.01 (.04)
$R^2$	.312	.238	.336	.189
$N$ (respondents)	2,778	2,778	2,778	2,778
$N$ (households)	2,363	2,363	2,363	2,363

Note: <sup>a</sup>The difference between co-residing partner and LAT partner is significant (two-sided  $p < .01$ ).  
 ~ Two-sided  $p < .10$ ; \* Two-sided  $p < .05$ ; \*\* Two-sided  $p < .01$ . Source: New Families in the Netherlands,  
 Wave 1, 2.

## Appendix B - Chapter 3

Table B.1: Propensity weighted regression analyses for variables predicting father involvement

	Regular care		Leisure	
	Model 2	Model 3	Model 2	Model 3
Father's residential status (ref. = partnered father)				
Resident father	0.52** <sup>ab</sup> (.13)	0.61** <sup>ab</sup> (.19)	0.40** <sup>ab</sup> (.18)	0.58** <sup>ab</sup> (.25)
Shared residence father	0.19** <sup>c</sup> (.07)	0.24** <sup>c</sup> (.09)	0.13 <sup>c</sup> (.09)	0.20 <sup>c</sup> (.12)
Nonresident father	-1.18** (.08)	-1.37** (.10)	-0.91** (.09)	-1.08** (.13)
Father's education (ref. = less than tertiary education)		0.12 (.08)		-0.04 (.11)
Interactions of father's education with:				
* Resident father		-0.18 (.24)		-0.36 (.31)
* Shared residence father		-0.11 (.12)		-0.13 (.15)
* Nonresident father		0.40** (.14)		0.38* (.16)
<i>Controls</i>				
(Pre-separation) involvement	0.24** (.05)	0.25** (.05)	0.17** (.06)	0.19** (.06)
(Pre-separation) conflict	-0.05 (.05)	-0.05 (.05)	-0.08 (.06)	-0.09 (.06)
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.326	0.340	0.171	0.182

Note: <sup>a</sup> The difference between resident father and shared residence father is significant (two-sided  $p < .05$ ). For leisure Models 2 and 3 this difference is only marginally significant (two-sided  $p < .10$ ). <sup>b</sup> The difference between resident father and nonresident father is significant (two-sided  $p < .01$ ). <sup>c</sup> The difference between shared residence father and nonresident father is significant (two-sided  $p < .01$ ). ~ Two-sided  $p < .10$ ; \* Two-sided  $p < .05$ ; \*\* Two-sided  $p < .01$ . Source: New Families in the Netherlands, Wave 1, 2.

**Table B.2:** Regression analyses for variables predicting father involvement in practical and developmental care activities

	Practical care		Developmental care	
	Model 2	Model 3	Model 2	Model 3
Father's residential status (ref. = partnered father)				
Resident father	0.58** <sup>ab</sup> (.14)	0.62** <sup>ab</sup> (.18)	0.60* <sup>ab</sup> (.12)	0.67** <sup>ab</sup> (.15)
Shared residence father	0.19* <sup>c</sup> (.09)	0.20 <sup>c</sup> (.12)	0.15* <sup>c</sup> (.08)	0.24* <sup>c</sup> (.11)
Nonresident father	-1.04** (.08)	-1.21** (.11)	-1.28** (.07)	-1.43** (.10)
Father's education (ref. = low education)				
Medium education	0.09 <sup>d</sup> (.09)		0.08 <sup>d</sup> (.08)	
High education	0.31** (.09)		0.20* (.08)	
Father's education (ref. = less than tertiary education)		0.12 (.11)		0.07 (.10)
Interactions of father's education with:				
* Resident father		-0.12 (.25)		-0.18 (.22)
* Shared residence father		0.01 (.16)		-0.14 (.14)
* Nonresident father		0.37* (.15)		0.35** (.13)
<i>Adjusted R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.286	0.289	0.368	0.373
<i>N</i> of respondents	1,588	1,588	1,591	1,591

*Note:* Analyses control for (pre-separation) involvement, (pre-separation) conflict, (pre-separation) union type, father's and mother's age, mother's education, father's work hours, child's gender and age, and number of children. <sup>a</sup>The difference between resident father and shared residence father is significant (two-sided  $p < .05$ ). <sup>b</sup>The difference between resident father and nonresident father is significant (two-sided  $p < .01$ ). <sup>c</sup>The difference between shared residence father and nonresident father is significant (two-sided  $p < .01$ ). <sup>d</sup>The difference between father's medium education and father's high education is significant (two-sided  $p < .01$ ). For developmental care this difference is only marginally significant (two-sided  $p < .10$ ). ~ Two-sided  $p < .10$ ; \* Two-sided  $p < .05$ ; \*\* Two-sided  $p < .01$ . *Source:* New Families in the Netherlands, Wave 1, 2.

**Table B.3:** Regression analyses for variables predicting father involvement, excluding nonresident fathers who did not see their child in the past year

	Regular care		Leisure	
	Model 2	Model 3	Model 2	Model 3
Father's residential status (ref. = partnered father)				
Resident father	0.50*** (.10)	0.55*** (.14)	0.34* (.12)	0.48*** (.16)
Shared residence father	0.13~ (.07)	0.18~ (.09)	0.05 <sup>c</sup> (.08)	0.12 <sup>c</sup> (.11)
Nonresident father	-1.03*** (.07)	-1.18*** (.09)	-0.78*** (.07)	-0.90*** (.10)
Father's education (ref. = low education)				
Medium education	0.12 <sup>d</sup> (.07)		0.16* (.08)	
High education	0.26*** (.07)		0.17* (.08)	
Father's education (ref. = less than tertiary education)		0.09 (.09)		0.02 (.10)
Interactions of father's education with:				
* resident father		-0.14 (.19)		-0.33 (.22)
* shared residence father		-0.07 (.12)		-0.09 (.14)
* nonresident father		0.34*** (.12)		0.26~ (.13)
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.365	0.369	0.263	0.265
N of respondents	1,540	1,540	1,540	1,540

Note: Analyses control for (pre-separation) involvement, (pre-separation) conflict, (pre-separation) union type, father's and mother's age, mother's education, father's work hours, child's gender and age, and number of children. <sup>a</sup> The difference between resident father and shared residence father is significant (two-sided  $p < .05$ ). <sup>b</sup> The difference between resident father and nonresident father is significant (two-sided  $p < .01$ ). <sup>c</sup> The difference between shared residence father and nonresident father is significant (two-sided  $p < .01$ ). <sup>d</sup> The difference between father's medium education and father's high education is significant (two-sided  $p < .05$ ). ~ Two-sided  $p < .10$ ; \* Two-sided  $p < .05$ ; \*\*\* Two-sided  $p < .01$ . Source: New Families in the Netherlands, Wave 1, 2.

**Table B.4:** Regression analyses for variables predicting father involvement of shared residence and nonresident fathers, including new family responsibilities

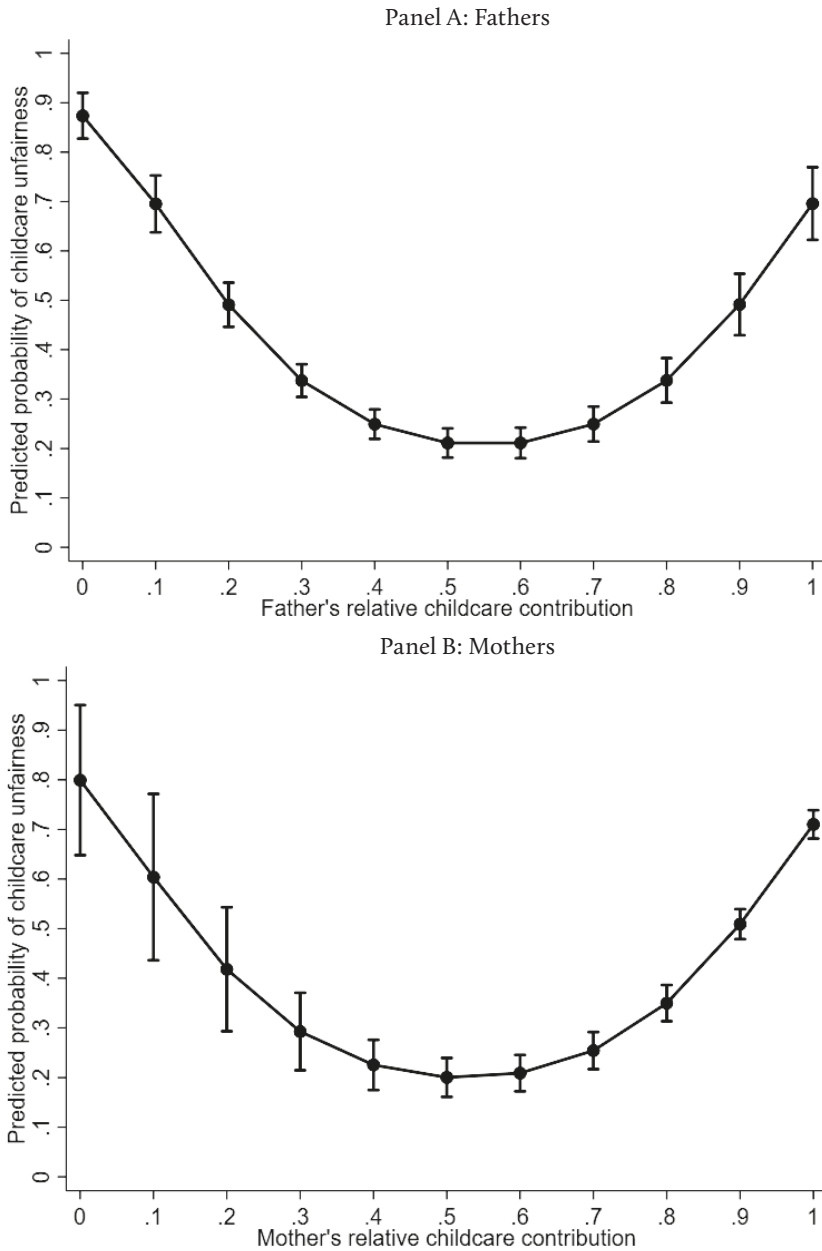
	Shared residence fathers				Nonresident fathers				
	Regular care		Leisure		Regular care		Leisure		
	Model 2a	Model 2b	Model 2a	Model 2b	Model 2a	Model 2b	Model 2a	Model 2b	
Repartnering (ref. = no partner)									
LAT partner	0.13 (.09)		-0.01 (.11)		-0.18 (.15)		-0.20 (.16)		
Co-residing partner	0.12 (.10)		-0.02 (.12)		-0.16 (.12)		-0.20 (.13)		
Stepchildren (ref. = no stepchildren)									
LAT and stepchildren	0.10 (.09)		0.02 (.11)		0.03 <sup>a</sup> (.16)		0.00 <sup>a</sup> (.17)		
Co-residing and stepchildren	0.01 (.11)		-0.05 (.13)		-0.29 <sup>*</sup> (.12)		-0.33 <sup>**</sup> (.12)		
Joint children with new partner (ref. = no joint children)	-0.07 (.13)		0.06 (.16)		0.05 (.15)		0.00 (.16)		
Father's education (ref. = low education)									
Medium education	-0.16 <sup>b</sup> (.14)	-0.19 <sup>b</sup> (.14)	-0.22 (.17)	-0.22 (.17)	0.24 <sup>~b</sup> (.14)	0.30 <sup>*</sup> (.15)	0.30 <sup>*</sup> (.15)		
High education	-0.01 (.14)	-0.03 (.14)	-0.22 (.17)	-0.21 (.17)	0.53 <sup>**</sup> (.15)	0.50 <sup>**</sup> (.15)	0.42 <sup>**</sup> (.16)	0.38 <sup>*</sup> (.16)	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.175	0.172	0.184	0.183	0.109	0.114	0.147	0.153	
N of respondents	425	426	425	426	573	573	573	573	573

*Note:* Analyses control for pre-separation involvement, pre-separation conflict, pre-separation union type, father's and mother's age, mother's education, father's work hours, child's gender and age, and number of children. <sup>a</sup> The difference between co-residing partner and stepchildren, and LAT partner and stepchildren is significant (two-sided  $p < .05$ ). For leisure this difference is only marginally significant (two-sided  $p < .10$ ). <sup>b</sup> The difference between father's medium education and father's high education is significant (two-sided  $p < .05$ ). For regular care this difference is only marginally significant (two-sided  $p < .10$ ). <sup>~</sup> Two-sided  $p < .10$ ; <sup>\*</sup> Two-sided  $p < .05$ ; <sup>\*\*</sup> Two-sided  $p < .01$ . *Source:* New Families in the Netherlands, Wave 1, 2.



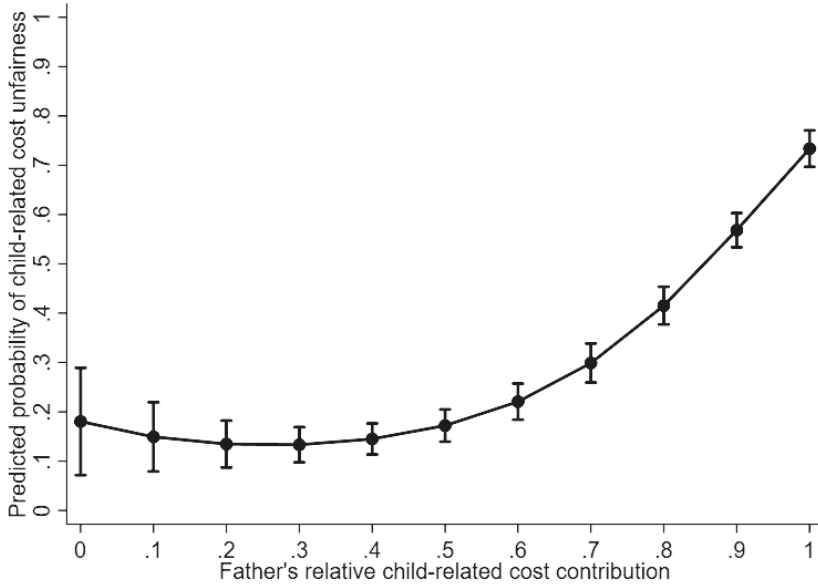
## Appendix C - Chapter 5

**Figure C.1:** Predicted probabilities of childcare unfairness to self/ex/both by parent's relative childcare contribution

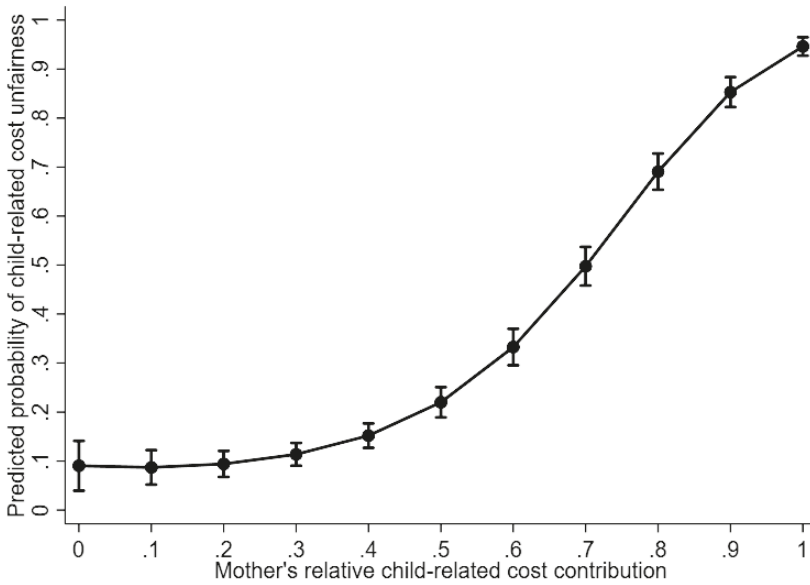


**Figure C.2:** Predicted probabilities of child-related cost unfairness to self/ex/both by parent's relative child-related cost contribution

Panel A: Fathers

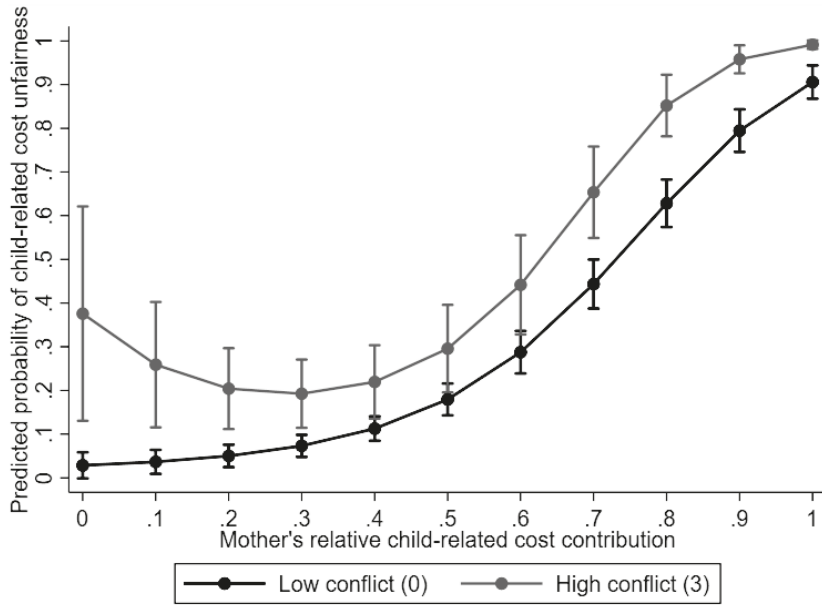


Panel B: Mothers



A

**Figure C.3:** Predicted probabilities of child-related cost unfairness to self/ex/both by mother's relative child-related cost contribution and postdivorce parental conflict









## **Nederlandse samenvatting**

## Inleiding

Het traditionele gezin zoals we dat kennen, bestaat uit een tweeoudergezin met een zorgende moeder en een werkende vader. Het gezinsleven is de afgelopen decennia echter veranderd door een aantal demografische ontwikkelingen. Ten eerste, door de grote toename van het aantal (echt)scheidingen en de daaropvolgende herpartnering vanaf het einde van de jaren '60, zijn gebroken gezinnen normaler geworden. Steeds meer kinderen groeien op in een eenouder- of stiefgezin. Het percentage minderjarige kinderen dat in Nederland in een eenouder- of stiefgezin woont, is tussen 1997 en 2017 gestegen van 14 naar 22 procent. Ten tweede is er vanaf de jaren '70 een enorme stijging geweest in de arbeidsparticipatie van vrouwen. In Nederland is deze meer dan verdubbeld van 30 procent in 1970 tot 77 procent in 2020.

Deze veranderingen hebben een impact op de betrokkenheid van ouders bij de zorg voor hun kinderen, en op hun eerlijkhed percepties wat betreft de verdeling van zorgtaken. Ouderlijke betrokkenheid is complexer na een scheiding, omdat de ouders in verschillende huishoudens wonen—waarbij de kinderen het grootste deel van de tijd bij één ouder wonen of ongeveer evenveel bij elke ouder wonen (d.w.z. co-ouderschap). Wanneer ouders na een scheiding een nieuwe partner vinden, kan dit leiden tot een verdere herdefiniëring van de ouderrol. Een dergelijke complexiteit heeft waarschijnlijk ook een impact op de eerlijkhed percepties van ouders over hoe de zorgtaken zijn verdeeld. Vooral na een scheiding kunnen ex-partners conflicten en tegengestelde belangen hebben, waardoor zij kritischer kunnen zijn over hoe de zorgtaken zijn verdeeld. Maar ook de massale instroom van vrouwen op de arbeidsmarkt, die niet is gevolgd door een evenredige toename in de betrokkenheid van mannen bij de opvoeding van kinderen, kan er toe leiden dat ouders in niet-gescheiden gezinnen kritischer zijn over de traditionele verdeling van zorgtaken.

Het is daarom essentieel om inzicht te krijgen in ouderlijke betrokkenheid en hoe ouders de verdeling van de zorg voor hun kinderen ervaren in termen van eerlijkheid. Niet alleen omdat ouderlijke betrokkenheid en eerlijkhed percepties in hedendaagse gezinnen mogelijk onder druk staan, maar ook omdat zowel ouderlijke betrokkenheid als eerlijkhed percepties cruciaal zijn voor de uitkomsten van ouders en kinderen. Een hoge mate van ouderlijke betrokkenheid leidt ertoe dat kinderen beter presteren op school en minder probleemgedrag vertonen, en dat ouders zelf meer geluk en welzijn rapporteren. Ook is aangetoond dat wanneer ouders de taakverdeling thuis als eerlijk ervaren, dit een positieve invloed heeft

op hun welzijn en een stabiel huwelijk. De centrale onderzoeksvraag van dit proefschrift luidt: *In hoeverre zijn ouders betrokken bij de zorg voor hun kinderen en ervaren zij de verdeling van de zorgtaken als eerlijk?*

Dit proefschrift richt zich op een breed scala aan gescheiden en niet-gescheiden gezinnen, en onderzoekt zowel ouderlijke betrokkenheid als eerlijkheidspercepties. Dit is belangrijk om drie redenen. Ten eerste is de diversiteit onder hedendaagse gezinnen toegenomen. Als we kijken naar gescheiden gezinnen, wordt co-ouderschap steeds populairder. In Nederland is co-ouderschap gestegen van minder dan 5% in de jaren '80 tot ongeveer 25% in 2013. Hoewel het nog relatief ongebruikelijk is dat kinderen na een scheiding bij de vader gaan wonen, is ook hier sprake van een kleine stijging. Daarnaast zijn latrelaties—relaties waarbij de partners apart wonen—een alternatief geworden voor (on)gehuwd samenwonen door gescheiden mensen. Aangezien eerder onderzoek nauwelijks aandacht heeft besteed aan deze nieuwere gezinsvormen, is er weinig bekend over ouderlijke betrokkenheid en eerlijkheidspercepties in verschillende typen gescheiden gezinnen. In dit proefschrift bestudeer ik een breed scala aan gezinnen, waaronder deze recentere gezinsvormen en niet-gescheiden gezinnen. Hierdoor krijg ik inzicht in hoe ouderlijke betrokkenheid en eerlijkheidspercepties verschillen tussen gescheiden en niet-gescheiden gezinnen. Maar ook of er factoren specifiek voor gescheiden gezinnen zijn—zoals het wonen van ouders in verschillende huishoudens, herpartnering, of conflict—die ouderlijke betrokkenheid en eerlijkheidspercepties beïnvloeden.

Ten tweede, zowel mannen als vrouwen zijn meer tijd gaan besteden aan zorgtaken, wat suggereert dat ouderlijke betrokkenheid een belangrijker onderdeel van het leven van mensen is geworden. Gezien dit grotere belang van ouderlijke betrokkenheid, is het verrassend dat er weinig onderzoek is gedaan naar verschillende typen ouderlijke betrokkenheid. Terwijl de meeste onderzoekers betrokkenheid in frequente zorgtaken (bijv. kind naar school of sport brengen) hebben bestudeerd, kijk ik ook naar betrokkenheid in vrijetijdsactiviteiten (bijv. een spelletje doen) en minder frequente zorgtaken (bijv. naar een ouderavond gaan). Bovendien kijk ik naar de invloed die ouders hebben op beslissingen rond de kinderen (bijv. aangaande medische ingrepen). Hoewel deze laatste drie typen ouderlijke betrokkenheid minder tijdrovend en noodzakelijk zijn voor het dagelijks functioneren van kinderen, betekent dit niet dat ze minder belangrijk zijn. Integendeel, de betrokkenheid van ouders in vrijetijdsactiviteiten of minder frequente zorgtaken heeft mogelijk een sterkere invloed op het welzijn en de

ontwikkeling van kinderen dan de betrokkenheid in frequente zorgtaken. Het bestuderen van uiteenlopende typen ouderlijke betrokkenheid in dit proefschrift leidt tot een completer beeld van welke verantwoordelijkheden ouders in uiteenlopende gezinsvormen op zich nemen en welke niet.

Ten derde is de focus op eerlijkheidspercepties interessant, omdat voorgaande studies hebben aangetoond dat het eerder de eerlijkheidspercepties zijn dan de feitelijke taakverdeling die het welzijn van ouders beïnvloeden. Ouders die de taakverdeling thuis als oneerlijk ervaren, hebben een slechtere mentale en fysieke gezondheid, wat mogelijk ook van invloed is op het welzijn van kinderen. Vooral in gescheiden gezinnen kunnen oneerlijkheidspercepties met betrekking tot de verdeling van zorgtaken en de kosten voor de kinderen conflicten tussen ex-partners aanwakkeren, waardoor het welzijn van het hele gezin mogelijk nog verder afneemt. Tot nu toe is onderzoek naar eerlijkheidspercepties voornamelijk beperkt gebleven tot de verdeling van huishoudelijk werk in niet-gescheiden gezinnen. Gezien het belang van eerlijkheidspercepties voor de uitkomsten van ouders en kinderen, is het noodzakelijk om inzicht te krijgen in de vraag of eerlijkheidspercepties verschillen naar type investering of de gezinscontext. Dit proefschrift onderzoekt daarom eerlijkheidspercepties van de verdeling van huishoudelijk werk en zorgtaken in niet-gescheiden gezinnen, en eerlijkheidspercepties van de verdeling van zorgtaken en kosten voor de kinderen in gescheiden gezinnen.

In dit proefschrift analyseer ik data van het survey Nieuwe Families in Nederland (NFN), verzameld door de Universiteit Utrecht in samenwerking met het Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (CBS). Het CBS heeft een willekeurige steekproef getrokken van gescheiden en niet-gescheiden ouders met minderjarige kinderen. De ouders zijn in 2012/13 (Wave 1) voor het eerst per brief benaderd om een internetvragenlijst in te vullen. Zo'n 5,000 gescheiden ouders en 2,200 niet-gescheiden ouders hebben aan deze eerste wave deelgenomen. In 2015/16 (Wave 2) en 2020 (Wave 3) zijn ouders opnieuw benaderd.

### **Samenvatting per hoofdstuk**

Dit proefschrift bestaat uit vier empirische hoofdstukken. In Hoofdstuk 2 en 3 staat ouderlijke betrokkenheid centraal en in Hoofdstuk 4 en 5 richt ik mij op eerlijkheidspercepties. Per hoofdstuk worden de contributies en de belangrijkste bevindingen samengevat.

## *Hoofdstuk 2: Ouderlijke betrokkenheid in gescheiden gezinnen: De invloed van verblijfsarrangement, herpartnering, en geslacht*

In hoofdstuk 2 staat ouderlijke betrokkenheid van biologische ouders in gescheiden gezinnen centraal. Gescheiden gezinnen zijn diverser geworden, met name doordat meer ouders na een scheiding kiezen voor co-ouderschap of een latrelatie. Deze nieuwere gezinsvormen zijn nog maar zelden meegenomen in eerder onderzoek, waardoor er geen compleet beeld bestaat van hoe gescheiden ouders de ouderrol opnieuw vervullen in uiteenlopende gezinsstructuren. Deze studie richt zich daarom op een breed scala aan gescheiden gezinnen, door de rol te onderzoeken van verblijfsarrangement (inwonende ouder, ouder met co-ouderschap, uitwonende ouder), herpartnering (geen partner, latrelatie met partner, samenwonend met partner) en additionele kinderen (stief/halfbroers en zussen) op de mate van ouderlijke betrokkenheid. Verder wordt onderzocht of de rol van eerdergenoemde factoren afhangt van het geslacht van de ouder en het type ouderlijke betrokkenheid.

De resultaten laten zien dat verblijfsarrangement erg belangrijk is voor de mate van ouderlijke betrokkenheid. Inwonende ouders zijn het meest betrokken bij frequente zorg-, minder frequente zorg- en vrijetijdsactiviteiten, en hebben de grootste invloed in beslissingen rond de kinderen, gevolgd door ouders met co-ouderschap en daarna uitwonende ouders. Herpartnering en additionele kinderen hebben kleinere effecten, en het type ouderlijke betrokkenheid is hier van belang. Enerzijds leidt het hebben van een nieuwe partner en stiefkinderen tot minder betrokkenheid in de verschillende ouder-kind activiteiten, hoewel dit het minst het geval is voor de frequente zorgtaken. Anderzijds leidt herpartnering juist tot meer invloed in beslissingen rond de kinderen. Over het algemeen zijn deze resultaten hetzelfde voor mannen en vrouwen.

## *Hoofdstuk 3: Zijn gescheiden vaders minder of meer betrokken bij de zorg voor hun kinderen dan niet-gescheiden vaders?*

Hoofdstuk 3 zoomt in op ouderlijke betrokkenheid van vaders in zowel gescheiden als niet-gescheiden gezinnen. Het idee heerst dat gescheiden vaders over het algemeen minder betrokken zijn bij hun kinderen dan niet-gescheiden vaders. Eerder onderzoek naar gescheiden vaders heeft dan ook vooral gekeken naar uitwonende vaders, zonder rekening te houden met de diversiteit in verblijfsarrangementen na een scheiding. Inwonende vaders of vaders met co-ouderschap zijn mogelijk actiever betrokken bij de zorg voor hun kinderen dan niet-gescheiden vaders, omdat

eerstgenoemden waarschijnlijk de primaire zorg voor de kinderen dragen, terwijl niet-gescheiden vaders vaak een secundaire rol vervullen. Deze studie onderzoekt vaderbetrokkenheid in frequente zorg- en vrijetijdsactiviteiten van gescheiden vaders in verschillende verblijfsarrangementen (uitwonende vader, vader met co-ouderschap, inwonende vader), en hoe dit zich verhoudt tot vaderbetrokkenheid van niet-gescheiden vaders. Daarnaast wordt gekeken of de rol van verblijfsarrangement afhangt van het opleidingsniveau van de vader. In de bestaande literatuur blijkt een hoger opleidingsniveau een relevante factor te zijn in het verklaren van actievere betrokkenheid van niet-gescheiden vaders en uitwonende vaders. Minder is bekend over de invloed van het opleidingsniveau op de betrokkenheid van inwonende vaders en vaders met co-ouderschap. Deze studie probeert deze leemte op te vullen.

Uit de analyses blijkt dat vaders met co-ouderschap en inwonende vaders actiever betrokken zijn bij de frequente zorg voor hun kinderen dan niet-gescheiden vaders, terwijl uitwonende vaders minder betrokken zijn dan niet-gescheiden vaders. De resultaten zijn hetzelfde voor vaderbetrokkenheid in vrijetijdsactiviteiten, behalve dat niet-gescheiden vaders evenveel tijd besteden aan deze activiteiten als vaders met co-ouderschap. Het opleidingsniveau doet er ook toe: de verschillen in ouderlijke betrokkenheid tussen niet-gescheiden vaders enerzijds en gescheiden vaders in verschillende verblijfsarrangementen anderzijds, zijn kleiner wanneer zij hoger opgeleid zijn. Terwijl een hoog opleidingsniveau voor niet-gescheiden vaders, maar vooral voor uitwonende vaders leidt tot meer betrokkenheid, geldt dit niet voor inwonende vaders en vaders met co-ouderschap. Een mogelijke verklaring voor deze laatste bevinding is dat inwonende vaders en vaders met co-ouderschap, ongeacht hun opleidingsniveau, al de primaire verantwoordelijkheid dragen voor de dagelijkse zorg van hun kinderen, en dus zijn er weinig verschillen in ouderlijke betrokkenheid te vinden naar opleidingsniveau.

#### *Hoofdstuk 4: Eerlijkheidspercepties met betrekking tot de verdeling van huishoudelijk werk en zorgtaken*

Het vierde hoofdstuk gaat over eerlijkheidspercepties met betrekking tot de verdeling van huishoudelijk werk en zorgtaken. Eerder onderzoek naar eerlijkheidspercepties heeft zich voornamelijk gefocust op de verdeling van huishoudelijk werk, en heeft gevonden dat een ongelijke verdeling vaak als eerlijk wordt ervaren door beide partners—wat de verklaring zou kunnen zijn voor waarom vrouwen nog steeds het merendeel van de huishoudelijke taken op zich nemen. Deze studie bouwt voort op eerder onderzoek door ook te kijken naar



eerlijkheidspercepties met betrekking tot de verdeling van zorgtaken. Omdat het zorgen voor de kinderen vaak als leuker wordt beschouwd dan huishoudelijk werk, kan het zijn dat een ongelijke verdeling van zorgtaken minder snel als oneerlijk wordt ervaren dan een ongelijke verdeling van huishoudelijk werk. Deze studie onderzoekt hoe eerlijkheidspercepties met betrekking tot huishoudelijk werk en zorgtaken worden beïnvloed door de verdeling van huishoudelijk werk en zorgtaken. Ook onderzoek ik welke rol de totale werklast en geslacht hierin spelen.

De resultaten laten zien dat een ongelijke verdeling van huishoudelijk werk en zorgtaken niet simpelweg als oneerlijk worden beschouwd. Integendeel, wanneer vrouwen meer huishoudelijk werk verrichten dan mannen, ervaart een kleine meerderheid van de vrouwen en twee derde van de mannen deze verdeling als eerlijk. Deze percentages zijn nog hoger voor een ongelijke verdeling van zorgtaken: 70% van de vrouwen en 80% van de mannen ervaart dit als eerlijk. Kijkend naar het effect van een ongelijke verdeling op oneerlijkheidspercepties, blijkt dat hoe ongelijker de verdeling, des te sterker het als oneerlijk wordt gezien. Dit effect is hetzelfde voor huishoudelijk werk en zorgtaken, dus het kan niet bevestigd worden dat een ongelijke verdeling van zorgtaken minder snel leidt tot oneerlijkheidspercepties dan een ongelijke verdeling van huishoudelijk werk. Wel blijken vrouwen een ongelijke verdeling van huishoudelijk werk en zorgtaken sterker als oneerlijk te ervaren dan mannen. Mogelijk komt dit doordat vrouwen over het algemeen meer relatiegericht zijn dan mannen, waardoor zij gevoeliger kunnen zijn voor ongelijkheden in de relatie, zoals een ongelijke verdeling van huishoudelijk werk en zorgtaken. Verder speelt de totale werklast een rol: hoe groter de betrokkenheid in verschillende domeinen (huishoudelijk werk, zorgtaken, betaald werk), des te sterker dit als oneerlijk wordt ervaren.

#### *Hoofdstuk 5: Eerlijkheidspercepties met betrekking tot de verdeling van zorgtaken en kosten voor de kinderen na een scheiding*

Als laatste kijk ik naar eerlijkheidspercepties in gescheiden gezinnen. De bestaande literatuur naar eerlijkheidspercepties heeft zich gericht op niet-gescheiden gezinnen—gezinnen waarin vrouwen vaak het merendeel van de zorgtaken op zich nemen en mannen het meest bijdragen aan de kosten voor de kinderen, omdat zij meer uren werken. Ook al heeft deze literatuur voornamelijk de verdeling van huishoudelijk werk bestudeerd, laten de schaarse studies naar de verdeling van zorgtaken zien dat een ongelijke verdeling van zorgtaken vaak als eerlijk wordt beschouwd. De vraag is of dit ook opgaat voor gescheiden ouders—die niet langer

tot één huishouden behoren en voor wie de verdeling van de zorg en kosten voor de kinderen een conflictgevoelige kwestie kan zijn. Deze studie onderzoekt in hoeverre de verdeling van zorgtaken en kosten voor de kinderen na een scheiding een invloed hebben op eerlijkheidspercepties, en of dit afhangt van de mate van conflict tussen de ex-partners.

Uit de resultaten blijkt dat ongeveer de helft van de gescheiden ouders de verdeling van de zorgtaken en kosten voor de kinderen als eerlijk ervaren. Daarnaast leidt een hogere bijdrage aan de kosten altijd tot een toename in oneerlijkheidspercepties, terwijl voor de zorgtaken niet alleen een hogere maar ook een lagere bijdrage leidt tot een toename in oneerlijkheidspercepties. Deze resultaten zijn hetzelfde voor ouders die zowel weinig als veel conflict hebben met hun ex-partner. Ik concludeer dat aangezien oneerlijkheidspercepties relatief vaak voorkomen in gescheiden gezinnen, het erop lijkt dat de verdeling van de zorgtaken en kosten na een scheiding minder vanzelfsprekend zijn. Verder verschilt het effect van de bijdrage op oneerlijkheidspercepties voor de zorgtaken en kosten: terwijl lagere kosten als eerlijk worden ervaren, geldt dit niet voor een lagere betrokkenheid in de zorgtaken. Dit toont aan dat geld- en tijdsinvesteringen in kinderen na een scheiding een verschillende betekenis hebben.

## **Conclusie**

De vijf centrale conclusies van dit proefschrift zijn: (1) Verblijfsarrangement is cruciaal voor ouderlijke betrokkenheid; (2) Herpartnering leidt tot minder ouderlijke betrokkenheid; (3) .... Maar het type ouderlijke betrokkenheid is van belang; (4) Oneerlijkheidspercepties komen vaker voor na scheiding; (5) Eerlijkheidspercepties hangen af van het type investering en de totale werklast.

Ten eerste hangt de mate van ouderlijke betrokkenheid sterk af van verblijfsarrangement. Inwonende ouders zijn meer betrokken bij de zorg voor hun kinderen dan uitwonende ouders. De betrokkenheid van ouders met co-ouderschap zit hier tussenin. Dus hoe meer tijd ouders met hun kinderen wonen, des te sterker hun betrokkenheid. Als alleen verblijfsarrangement relevant zou zijn, dan zou betrokkenheid het hoogst zijn onder niet-gescheiden ouders, omdat deze ouders de meeste tijd met hun kinderen wonen. Echter, uit dit proefschrift blijkt dat inwonende vaders en vaders met co-ouderschap over het algemeen actiever betrokken zijn bij de zorg voor hun kinderen dan niet-gescheiden vaders. Naast verblijfsarrangement speelt de relatiestatus met de andere biologische ouder dus ook een rol. Ook al wonen niet-gescheiden vaders de meeste tijd met hun

kinderen, in deze gezinnen is het vaak de moeder die de meeste zorgtaken op zich neemt. Inwonende vaders en vaders met co-ouderschap daarentegen, wonen niet met de biologische moeder van de kinderen en dus nemen zij de primaire verantwoordelijkheid voor de dagelijkse zorg van de kinderen over. Hierdoor zijn deze gescheiden vaders meer betrokken dan niet-gescheiden vaders.

Ten tweede beperkt het hebben van een nieuwe familie na een scheiding de mate van ouderlijke betrokkenheid bij de zorg voor de kinderen uit de vorige relatie. Herpartnering en stiefkinderen leiden over het algemeen tot minder ouderlijke betrokkenheid. Deze bevindingen suggereren dat verantwoordelijkheden naar de nieuwe familie concurreren met verantwoordelijkheden naar de “oude” familie. Dit staat in de literatuur ook wel bekend als “swapping families”. Een nieuwe partner en stiefkinderen kosten de ouder tijd, wat leidt tot minder bereidheid of mogelijkheden om tijd te besteden aan kinderen uit de vorige relatie.

Ten derde, wanneer we rekening houden met de verschillende typen ouderlijke betrokkenheid, is er nuance nodig in de conclusies dat verblijfsarrangement over het algemeen positief samenhangt en herpartnering negatief samenhangt met ouderlijke betrokkenheid. Het hebben van een nieuwe partner en stiefkinderen heeft de grootste negatieve invloed op de tijd die ouders besteden aan minder frequente zorgtaken en vrijetijdsactiviteiten. Voor frequente zorgtaken geldt dat herpartneren zelf niet leidt tot minder ouderlijke betrokkenheid, maar alleen wanneer er ook stiefkinderen zijn. Dit laat zien dat de tijd besteed aan frequente zorgtaken beter beschermd is, aangezien deze taken een belangrijk onderdeel vormen voor het dagelijkse functioneren van kinderen. Verder hebben ouders met een nieuwe partner juist meer invloed in beslissingen rond de kinderen dan alleenstaande ouders. Ten slotte is er voor verblijfsarrangement ook sprake van een nuancering. Hoewel niet-gescheiden vaders minder betrokken zijn bij de frequente zorgtaken dan vaders met co-ouderschap, besteden deze vaders evenveel tijd aan vrijetijdsactiviteiten met hun kinderen. Deze bevinding is niet verrassend, aangezien niet-gescheiden vaders vaak de leukere zorgtaken op zich nemen, terwijl ze terughoudender zijn in het uitvoeren van de dagelijkse zorgtaken.

Ten vierde wordt de verdeling van zorgtaken in niet-gescheiden gezinnen door vier vijfde van de ouders als eerlijk ervaren, terwijl dit in gescheiden gezinnen slechts neerkomt op ongeveer de helft van de ouders. Deze cijfers liggen iets hoger voor vaders dan voor moeders. Het lijkt er dus op dat de verdeling van zorgtaken na een scheiding minder vanzelfsprekend is. Dit idee wordt versterkt door de bevinding dat ouders het na een scheiding niet alleen als oneerlijk ervaren

wanneer zij veel tijd besteden aan zorgtaken, maar ook wanneer zij hier weinig tijd aan besteden. Gescheiden ouders vormen niet langer één huishouden waarin de voordelen van specialisatie—waarbij de één de meeste zorgtaken uitvoert en de ander meer bijdraagt aan het huishoudinkomen—worden gedeeld, maar zij moeten de taken en kosten rondom de kinderen opnieuw verdelen. Dit kan gepaard gaan met conflicten en tegengestelde belangen. Gescheiden ouders bevinden zich dus in een andere situatie dan niet-gescheiden ouders, waarin logischerwijs meer ruimte is voor oneerlijkhedsperecepties. Dat gescheiden ouders het als oneerlijk ervaren wanneer zij weinig betrokken zijn bij de zorg voor de kinderen, komt waarschijnlijk omdat ze niet met de kinderen wonen en dus maar weinig tijd samen doorbrengen. Hierdoor kunnen ze het gevoel hebben dat ze niet wezenlijk bijdragen aan het leven van de kinderen.

Ten slotte zijn eerlijkhedsperecepties niet universeel. Allereerst hangen ze af van het type investering. De verdeling van zorgtaken wordt bijvoorbeeld vaker als eerlijk beschouwd dan de verdeling van huishoudelijk werk en de kosten voor de kinderen. Ook verschilt het effect van een ongelijke verdeling op oneerlijkhedsperecepties voor zorgtaken en de kosten voor de kinderen, tenminste in gescheiden gezinnen. Terwijl gescheiden ouders het eerlijk vinden wanneer zij steeds minder bijdragen aan de kosten—waarschijnlijk omdat betalen meestal niet iets wenselijks is—geldt dit niet voor steeds minder betrokkenheid bij zorgtaken. Gescheiden ouders willen in zo'n situatie juist meer tijd aan hun kinderen besteden. Verrassend genoeg vind ik geen verschil in het effect voor zorgtaken en huishoudelijk werk: ondanks dat het zorgen voor de kinderen veelal als leuker wordt beschouwd dan huishoudelijk werk, leidt een ongelijke verdeling van zorgtaken niet minder sterk tot oneerlijkhedsperecepties dan een ongelijke verdeling van huishoudelijk werk. Wanneer ouders in niet-gescheiden gezinnen in toenemende mate verantwoordelijk zijn voor de kinderen, ligt de nadruk blijkbaar minder op de leuke aspecten van zorgtaken, maar net als bij huishoudelijk werk, op de investeringen in tijd en energie die het kost. Ten tweede hangen eerlijkhedsperecepties af van de totale werklust. Het is acceptabel om de primaire verantwoordelijkheid te dragen voor zorgtaken of huishoudelijk werk wanneer dit gecompenseerd wordt door een lagere arbeidsmarktparticipatie—maar een toenemende verantwoordelijkheid voor zowel het gezin als betaald werk wordt sterker als oneerlijk beschouwd.





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## **About the author**

Tara Koster was born in Wehl, the Netherlands, on the 24<sup>th</sup> of December, 1993. In 2015, she obtained her Bachelor of Science degree in Sociology (*cum laude*) from the Radboud University in Nijmegen. In 2017, she completed her Research Master's in Social and Cultural Science (*cum laude*) at the same university. In September 2017, she started as a PhD candidate at the Department of Sociology at Utrecht University, as part of the Interuniversity Center for Social Science Theory and Methodology (ICS) and the research program Sustainable Cooperation—Roadmaps to Resilient Societies (SCOOP). She wrote her dissertation under the supervision of Anne-Rigt Poortman, Tanja van der Lippe and Pauline Kleingeld. As part of her PhD training, in February and March 2020 she was a visiting scholar at the Centre for Human and Social Sciences (CSIC) in Madrid, hosted by Teresa Castro-Martín. Chapter 3 is the result of this visit. During her PhD she taught in the bachelor course Sociale Problemen and supervised bachelor theses. She also helped in collecting the third wave of the New Families in the Netherlands survey.







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Families traditionally consisted of a two-parent family with the mother as the main caregiver and the father as the main earner. In recent decades, however, the family landscape has changed in most Western countries. There has been a clear rise in women's labor force participation and postdivorce families have become more prevalent. Also, postdivorce families are diverse, and increasingly so: shared residence, father residence and LAT relationships have become more common. As a result of these developments, parents have likely adapted their parental roles and involvement. Using large-scale survey data from the Netherlands, this dissertation considers a wide range of postdivorce and non-divorced families and examines to what extent parents are involved in childcare and whether they perceive the childcare division as fair. In doing so, it gains insight into whether and how parental involvement and fairness perceptions have come under pressure in a more diverse family landscape.

Tara Koster obtained a Bachelor's degree in Sociology (cum laude) and a Research Master's degree in Social and Cultural Science (cum laude) at the Radboud University in Nijmegen. She conducted the present study at the department of Sociology at Utrecht University, as part of the Interuniversity Center for Social Science Theory and Methodology (ICS) and the research program Sustainable Cooperation—Roadmaps to Resilient Societies (SCOOP).