Post-separation families: Residential arrangements and everyday life of separated parents and their children
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This dissertation is about separated parents and their children, their residential arrangements and the organization and practising of their everyday post-separation (family) life.

All separated parents have to decide where their children will live, with whom and for which days of the week. Besides the most common post-separation residential arrangement, in which the children live with their mother and have regular contact with their father, there is a growing group of post-separation families who are involved in a shared residence arrangement. In this type of residential arrangement the children live with both parents alternately and the care for the children is divided equally. Who are these parents and why do they opt for a particular residential arrangement? How do parents involved in different residential arrangements organise and practise everyday (family) life?

Wilma Bakker obtained her Master’s degree in Human Geography at the University of Amsterdam. She conducted the research for this book at the Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research.
Post-separation Families

Residential arrangements and everyday life of separated parents and their children

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

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ten overstaan van een door het college voor promoties ingestelde commissie, in het openbaar te verdedigen in de Agnietenkapel op donderdag 10 december 2015, te 12:00 uur

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Samenvatting
Voorwoord

Toen ik in 2008 begon aan een tijdelijke baan aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam waarbij ik gescheiden ouders mocht gaan interviewen, had ik niet kunnen vermoeden dat het resultaat dit proefschrift zou zijn. In de afgelopen jaren, waarvan de eerste jaren voltijd aan de Universiteit en de laatste twee jaren naast mijn werk bij RIGO, is het onderwerp van dit onderzoek en het werken aan dit proefschrift een onlosmakelijk onderdeel van mijn dagelijks leven geworden. De afronding van dit proefschrift voelt dan ook niet alleen als het afronden van een mooi onderzoeksproject, maar ook als de afronding van een bijzondere periode in mijn leven. Hoewel er ook momenten zijn geweest waarbij mij het gevoel bekroop ‘met de gebakken peren’ te zitten, heb ik dit onderzoek en alles wat erbij kwam kijken voornamelijk als een unieke kans en een mooie tijd ervaren.

Veel mensen hebben op directe of indirecte wijze bijgedragen aan de totstandkoming van dit proefschrift. Als eerste wil ik Claartje Mulder en Lia Karsten bedanken. Zonder hen was dit project en dit proefschrift er niet geweest. Hun gedeelde interesse en liefde voor het onderwerp van mijn proefschrift heeft er toe geleid dat NWO-geld beschikbaar kwam om van mijn tijdelijke baan een promotietraject te maken. Claartje, ik wil je in het bijzonder bedanken voor de betrokken en optimistische wijze waarop je dit onderzoek hebt begeleid. Je gaf mij telkens weer het vertrouwen dat dit project tot een goed einde zou komen. In de eerste jaren aan de UvA stond je kamerdeur altijd, letterlijk, voor me open. Het was voor ons allebei dan ook even wennen toen je naar Groningen verhuisde en we ervoeren wat afstand en dual-location in de praktijk betekenen, maar al snel hebben we ook daar onze weg in gevonden. Lia, je hebt mij geleerd op een andere manier naar het dagelijks leven te kijken. Jij kijkt uit het raam, loopt over straat en ziet daar het bijzondere van het alledaagse aan je voorbijkomen. De manier waarop jij de bijzonderheden van alledag weet te benoemen en te onderzoeken, heb ik als heel waardevol ervaren, zowel voor dit project als voor het doen van onderzoek in het algemeen. Ik ben je dan ook dankbaar dat ik een kijkje heb mogen nemen in jouw kwalitatieve ‘onderzoekskeuken’.

Ik had dit proefschrift niet kunnen schrijven zonder de verhalen van de gescheiden ouders die ik mocht interviewen. Zij verwelkomen mij in hun huis en deelden openhartig hun ervaringen met mij. Een scheiding is zowel voor ouders als voor de kinderen een moeilijke periode in het leven. Ik heb het als bijzonder ervaren dat deze ouders zo open over deze periode wilden vertellen. Zij hebben het onderwerp
en de thema’s in dit proefschrift leven ingeblazen door hun persoonlijke verhalen met mij te delen. Ik ben hen daar bijzonder dankbaar voor.


Ik ben blij dat ik bij RIGO weer een leuke groep ‘nieuwe’ collega’s heb gevonden. Bedankt voor het warme welkom en jullie betrokkenheid in de afgelopen twee jaar.

Met name de laatste periode van het schrijven van dit proefschrift was intensief. Ik ben mijn familie en vrienden bijzonder dankbaar voor hun steun en toeverlaat. Remco, jij hebt me vanaf dag één gesteund en aangemoedigd bij het schrijven van dit proefschrift. Bedankt voor je betrokkenheid, liefde en geduld. Jurre, jouw komst maakte al het andere op de wereld minder belangrijk. Het schrijven van dit proefschrift is daardoor niet sneller gegaan, maar jouw aanwezigheid heeft het leven nog mooier en vrolijker gemaakt dan het al was. Mijn dank en liefde voor jullie is groot.

Utrecht, mei 2015
Introduction


1. Introduction

‘A family, that is what we still are, although we do not live under the same roof anymore. As partners we are separated because we no longer wanted to live together, but as parents, we are still attached. That is how we felt about it, and still do.’

(Alice, a shared residence mother of 15- and 18-year-old sons)

1.1 A new kind of family: the post-separation family

This dissertation is about separated parents and their children, their residential arrangements, and the organization and practising of their everyday post-separation (family) life. In recent decades, divorce and separation became common life events in most Western countries (OECD, 2011). Nowadays, in the Netherlands, 1 out of 40 couples experiences the break-up of their marriage or their cohabiting relationship annually (Spruijt and Kormos, 2014). Consequently, 30% of all Dutch children under age 18 witness the separation of their parents (Spruijt and Kormos, 2014).

All separated parents have to decide, or in case of a failing private agreement let judicial court decide, were their children will live, with whom and for what period of the week. In The Netherlands, as in most other Western countries, the dominant post-separation residential arrangement is the resident mother arrangement in which the children stay with their mother and have contact with their non-resident father on a regular basis. In 2013 66% of the Dutch children with separated parents were involved in a resident mother arrangement (Spruijt and Kormos, 2014). Although a resident mother arrangement is still the most common post-separation arrangement, the popularity of the resident mother arrangement is diminishing over the last decade and other arrangements gained popularity. Nowadays, 7% of the Dutch children with separated parents live with their father in a resident father arrangement (Spruijt and Kormos, 2014). There is also a growing category of separated parents who are involved in a shared residence arrangement, in which the children live with both parents alternately and the care for the children is divided (nearly) equally in terms of residential arrangement, (financial) responsibility, caregiving, supporting school-related activities and spending leisure time. Between 2006 and 2013 the percentage of
Dutch children with separated parents living with both parents on an equal or nearly equal basis has increased from 16 to 27% (Spruijt and Kormos, 2014). In other Western countries the category of separated families maintaining a shared residence arrangement has also become substantial in recent years (Mortelmans et al., 2011; Peacey and Hunt, 2009; Willen and Richards, 2006).

The aim of this dissertation is twofold. The first objective is to acquire a better understanding of the choice of a particular post-separation residential arrangement by looking into the life course characteristics of separated parents. The second aim is to gain insight into the organization and practising of daily (family) lives of post-separation families involved in different residential arrangements. These aims are related to two gaps that were identified in the literature on separated families.

Firstly, relatively little is known about the families who opt for or maintain a shared residence arrangement, in which the conventional, gendered parenting roles are abandoned, applied less strictly, or reversed. Despite today’s growing popularity of shared residence arrangements, most existing studies on separated families ignore the group of shared residence families and are only concerned with separated families involved in the dominant resident mother arrangement.

The lack of knowledge about shared residence families is not only remarkable because shared residence arrangements are becoming more widespread in society, but even more because shared residence arrangements are often presented, in scholarly literature, policy frameworks and political and social debates, as an arrangement that is in the best interest of the child (Kurki-Suonio, 2000). It can be questioned whether the (assumed) positive impact of living in a shared residence arrangement on children’s well-being is due to the arrangement as such or due to the specific characteristics of the parents involved in the arrangement. The questions arise who these parents are and why they opt for a shared residence arrangement. In this dissertation these questions are addressed by comparing the life course characteristics of separated parents in the Netherlands involved in different residential arrangements.

Secondly, although considerable scholarly attention has been paid to the (negative) consequences of separation for ex-partners and their children (e.g. Hetherington and Kelly, 2002; Pryor and Rodgers, 2001; Wallerstein et al., 2000), it is still relatively unknown how separated parents organize and practise everyday (family) life. The type of residential arrangement chosen after separation has considerable consequences for the organisation of everyday life of the post-separation family. Whereas resident mothers and resident fathers run the risk of becoming overburdened because they have no partners with whom to share responsibilities (Kendig and Bianchi, 2008; Sanik and Mauldin, 1986), shared residence parents might
become a dual-location household (Green et al., 1999; Van der Klis and Karsten, 2009b), which makes day-to-day life more fragmentary and complicated.

Furthermore, most contemporary family researchers recognize and emphasize the continued endurance of family life after separation (e.g. Simpson, 1998; Thompson and Amato, 1999), but do not provide much insight into how this continued family life is organized or practised. Some exceptions are the study of Smart and Neale (1999), who were the first scholars who emphasized the importance of family practices in post-separation family research, and Haugen’s (2010) qualitative study on the children’s experiences of shared residence arrangements. Although separation will disrupt family life to some degree, part of the former family life is likely to remain. It can be said that separated families challenge the often taken-for-granted family practices and, in so doing, may create their own particular ways of ‘doing family’. Given the growing diversity and complexity among the post-separation residential arrangements at present, in the Netherlands as well as in other Western countries, it becomes all the more interesting to study everyday life after separation. Therefore, the second part of this dissertation focusses on the organization and practising of everyday (family) life of separated families involved in different post-separation residential arrangements.

1.2 Research questions

The main research question addressed in this dissertation is: How can the choice of a particular post-separation residential arrangement be explained, and how do separated parents involved in different types of post-separation residential arrangements organize and practise everyday (family) life?

The four empirical studies, presented in this dissertation (chapters two to five), each address a different part of the main research question. Chapter two aims to acquire a better understanding of the choice of a particular post-separation residential arrangement by looking into the life course characteristics of separated parents. The research question addressed in the chapter is: What life course characteristics of separated parents are associated with the two most common types of post-separation residential arrangements?

The chapters three, four and five take up the second part of the research question and aim to gain insight into the organization and practising of everyday life of post-separation families involved in different post-separation residential arrangements. Chapter three aims to explain the differences between single resident mothers and single shared residence parents in organizing everyday life by addressing the research question: How do separated parents shape and balance post-separation
life, with what results and how can we explain the differences? In the chapter the differences found between the groups of single parents are explained by different commitments in the work and care domains.

Chapter four focuses on family practices after separation, by addressing the research question: Which family practices of the pre-separation family continue after separation, how are they conducted and with whom? The focus in the chapter is on two central elements of family life: routines and rituals.

Chapter five aims to gain insight into the perceptions of separated parents on their dual-locally living children’s residential experience. The three questions addressed are: (1) Do parents report they took into account their children’s (future) residential experience while negotiating the post-separation residential arrangement, and what were their considerations about this issue?; (2) How do separated parents perceive their children’s residential experiences?; and (3) What elements (of the physical, social and temporal dimensions) are perceived by parents to affect their children’s residential experience?

1.3 Life course trajectories and commitments

Life course theory has a central role in the theoretical background of this research. The life course approach originates from the early 1980s (Elder, 1978; Hareven, 1978; Willekens, 1991) and provides a way of thinking about how human lives are socially organized (Elder et al., 2003). According to this approach, human life consists of various life events, belonging to different domains of life and their corresponding careers (also denoted as trajectories), such as the housing, occupational, educational and family careers. Together, these interrelated, parallel careers form a life course (Elder et al., 2003; Willekens, 1991).

According to Giddens’ (1991; 1994) work on the life course as a project of the self, individuals are active agents who shape their own life course by making conscious decisions and reflecting continuously on these decisions, rather than following standard scripts. He called this process reflexivity. In this context the choice of a non-standard residential arrangement after separation not only become a more realistic option, but also a matter of continuous reflection, decision-making and change.

Critics of reflexive modernization question the ability of people to reflect on the circumstances of their lives, the extent of reflexivity and to which a person’s ability to reflect on their own situation actually affects their action or behavior (Alexander, 1996; Walters and Whitehouse, 2011). Stryker and colleagues (e.g. Stryker, 1968; Stryker and Burke, 2011) therefore emphasize the importance of focusing on the impact of social structures on social behavior. Accordingly, in the theoretical point of
view underlying this dissertation individuals shape their own life courses in relation to their preferences and the resources and restrictions inherent in their life course on the one hand (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Giddens, 1991; 1994, Stets and Burke, 2000) and, on the other hand, the opportunities and constraints structured by social institutions and cultural and normative ideas and patterns (Stryker, 1968; Stryker and Burke, 2011).

In this dissertation, the life course approach provides a theoretical framework not only to explain the choice of a particular type of post-separation residential arrangement, which can be understood as an outcome of preferences, resources and restrictions arising from people’s life course trajectories, but also a better understanding of the organization of post-separation everyday life.

In general, daily life is dedicated to activities and commitments in the different domains of life and people have multiple social roles in these domains. According to Burke and Reitzes’ (1991) work on identity theory, individuals categorize and identify themselves by these social roles and therefore hold multiple identities. To maintain their identities, people develop commitments that connect them with these identities (Burke and Reitzes, 1991). The term commitment refers to a choice with long-term consequences (Becker, 1960). Someone’s diverse commitments can be competing and conflicting, because commitments compete for an individual’s time and energy. In this dissertation, as in other studies (e.g. Ashforth et al., 2000; Bielby and Bielby, 1989; Karsten, 1995; Nippert-Eng, 1996), organizing daily life is understood as an act of balancing all commitments in the work, care and leisure domains.

### 1.4 Practising family life

Another important theoretical point of view underlying this study is the assumption that family members actively construct their family by practising family life. Since the middle of the 1960s, ideas about what constitutes a family have changed dramatically. Social, economic and cultural changes on the macro level, such as individualization, secularization, economic restructuring and emancipation, have weakened the traditional social structures of class, gender and religion (SCP, 2011). These processes resulted in the decline of the nuclear family and increasing family heterogeneity (Silva and Smart, 1999; Van Eeden Moorefield and Demo, 2007). The traditional nuclear family, in which the father works full-time as primary wage earner and the mother stays at home to care for the children, is being replaced by the dual-earner family (De Meester, 2010). Furthermore, other types of family arrangements, such as cohabiting unions, single-parent families, stepfamilies, gay and lesbian families have become more prevalent, thereby becoming more conventional and visible in society.
A particular non-standard family type is the dual-location family or household, in which couples or parents no longer live in one shared residence (Green et al., 1999). Examples of dual-location families are Living-Apart-Together (LAT) couples and commuter partnerships (Van der Klis, 2009). Post-separation residential arrangements in general, and shared residence arrangements in particular, might form a part of this growing category of geographical non-standard households.

In order to recognize family pluralism, diversity and fluidity, today’s family scholars refer to ‘family practices’ (e.g. Morgan, 1996; 2011; Smart and Neale, 1999) and ‘doing family’ (Morgan, 1999; Smart, 2000) instead of referring to ‘the family’ or ‘being family’. This scholarly focus on family practices fits in with the work of Giddens (1991; 1992) and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995) on the late modern age, in which family membership has changed from being a given to being a choice, depending upon the interactions of the members.

In this dissertation *practising family life* has been conceptualized by the concepts *routines* and *rituals*, which are both important to the well-being of the family (Fiese et al., 2002). Rituals, in particular, can play an important role in displaying family. Finch (2007) introduced the concept of ‘family display’. She argued that families not only need to be ‘done’, but also need to be ‘displayed’. Display is defined by Finch (2007: 67) as ‘the process by which individuals, and groups of individuals, convey to each other and to relevant other audiences that certain of their actions do constitute “doing family things” and thereby confirm that these relationships are “family” relationships’. Today’s diverse, fluid and complex character and structure of family relationships increase the need for family display, because relationships become less recognizable as constituting family relationships. Family display might also be particularly important for post-separation families.

1.5 Data and methods
This dissertation is based on a mixed methods research design, combining large-scale longitudinal survey data from the *Netherlands Kinship Panel Study* (NKPS) (Dykstra et al., 2005; 2007) and *Divorce in the Netherlands 1998* (abbreviated in Dutch as SIN) (Kalmijn et al., 2000) with data from in-depth interviews with a selection of relevant respondents from the NKPS survey (NKPS Minipanel). The mixed methods design of this study made it possible to test hypotheses about causal relationships between variables on the basis of a multivariate analysis and then to interpret the findings and the direction of causality by analysing the qualitative Minipanel data. Furthermore, selecting respondents from NKPS survey respondents made it possible to choose
separated parents with an adequate variation in post-separation residential arrangements and several other background characteristics.

**NKPS survey data**

At the time of analysis the NKPS survey data consisted of two waves (the third wave became available in 2012). The first wave, containing information on 8.161 inhabitants of the Netherlands, was conducted in 2002–2003 among a representative sample of the Dutch population aged between 18 and 79 and not living in an institution (for example, a care institution or prison). The overall response rate was 45%. The second wave, conducted in 2006–2007, was based on follow-up interviews with 6.670 respondents (82%) from wave one.

The NKPS survey data contains a wealth of information about family relations in the Netherlands. Besides many important background variables such as socio-economic and household characteristics, the dataset includes the required detailed information about the residential arrangements of separated parents and their children at the time of the interview: co-residence, locations, the number of nights spent in the maternal and paternal residence (this information was necessary to identify the type of post-separation residential arrangement of the family), and frequency of contact between the child and his/her non-resident parent.

Only those respondents were selected from the dataset who had experienced a divorce or the dissolution of an unmarried union. In general, one should be cautious taking these two categories together. Recent studies on the Dutch case, however, show that the impact of union dissolution on couples with children does not differ substantially between married and unmarried couples (Spruijt, 2007). In this dissertation the two categories are combined and therefore the term *separated* refers to parents who experienced a non-marital dissolution as well as to parents who experienced a legal divorce. Furthermore, the selected respondents had at least one child with the ex-partner, whereby at least one of the children was aged 18 or younger and lived with one parent or with both alternately, the ex-partner was still alive, and information about the division of the overnight stays of the child(ren) between both parents was available. The selection contained 295 respondents.

**SIN survey data**

The SIN survey was conducted in 1998-1999 and contains information on 2.346 Dutch-speaking inhabitants of the Netherlands aged between 30 and 75 years not living in an institution and who were in their first marriage, divorced once or divorced once and currently remarried. The overall response rate was 58%. Divorced persons were
oversampled, but among these, those who had not remarried or entered a new cohabiting relationship were slightly underrepresented.

The SIN survey data contains information about the life course of married and divorced individuals, their partners and ex-partners. Background variables on the socio-economic and household characteristics were available and also the required information to identify the type of post-separation residential arrangement of the family. For the respondent selection of the SIN data the same criteria were used as for the selection of respondents of the NKPS dataset. The selection contained 380 respondents.

**NKPS Minipanel**

An *NKPS Minipanel* is a small-scale in-depth study among NKPS survey respondents. The funding for the first two NKPS waves, provided by the Major Investments Fund of the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) [grant number 480-10-009], The Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute, Utrecht University, the University of Amsterdam and Tilburg University, included an opportunity to apply for such in-depth studies. As required for NKPS Minipanels, the qualitative data gathered have been made accessible (rendered anonymous) to other academic researchers. The available data include the research proposal and design, the interview instructions, background information, correspondence with respondents and the transcripts of the interviews (for more information see www.nkps.nl).

The Minipanel designed to address the research questions in this dissertation consisted of 35 in-depth interviews. The interviews were conducted in 2008–2009. The respondents were selected through purposive sampling (Mason, 1996). In addition to the selection criteria used for the selection of respondents in the survey data, respondents were only selected if the children lived with them for at least 50% of the time, because I was especially interested in the story of the resident parents. The selection included parents involved in a shared residence arrangement and mothers involved in a resident mother arrangement. Sixty respondents, classified as being a resident mother or a shared residence parent, were asked to participate. The response was 63.3%; this was lower among resident mothers than among respondents with a shared residence arrangement. The final sample contained 20 resident mothers, 15 shared residence parents (7 fathers, 8 mothers) and no resident fathers. In the Netherlands, the number of resident fathers is small (7% of all children of divorce live with their fathers: Spruijt and Kormos, 2014). At the moment of separation all 35 interviewed parents were in a heterosexual relationship. In two cases the relationship ended because one of the parents ‘came out’ as homosexual. Within the sample
variation was guaranteed in terms of the respondents’ place of residence (figure 1.1), level of education and the number and the age of their children. More detailed information on the characteristics of the respondents is provided in the following chapters of this book.

Figure 1.1 Overview of respondent’s places of residence

The interviews were semi-structured and focused on the definition, experience, and evaluation of the current post-separation residential arrangement and on separated parents’ experience of daily life. Beyond raising topics from the topic list,

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1 Figure 1.1 was made by Michelle Hu, RIGO Research en Advies
2 See Appendix II for the topic list.
the role of the interviewer was limited, in order to give the respondents ample time to
tell their narratives. The interviews lasted between 60 and 100 minutes; they were
recorded and fully transcribed.

The combination of survey data and qualitative data gathered among the same
respondents provided several advantages. Firstly, the survey data were the ideal
source for finding eligible respondents. Secondly, information from the survey could be
used to prepare the interviews and tailor them towards the situation of the
respondent. Unfortunately, the agreement concerning the collection of interview data
from the NKPS respondents did not allow the interviewing of respondents’ ex-partners
or children. Interviewing both parents and children could provide highly relevant
information on the discrepancy between the perceptions of parents and those of their
children.

Methods
In order to address the first research question, survey data from the NKPS and SIN
were pooled. The main advantage of pooling the two data sets was to increase the
number of respondents. The final pooled dataset contained 675 respondents.

Logistic regression analyses were performed to estimate the effects of life
course characteristics of separated parents on the choice of a post-separation
residential arrangement. The regression models were used as a convenient way to
describe multivariate associations between these variables, rather than as causal
models; the results for these variables should be seen as sophisticated descriptive
statistics (cf. Aassve et al., 2003). Data from the in-depth interviews were used to
interpret the associations arising from the survey data.

Research questions two, three and four were addressed using the qualitative
Minipanel data. The interview data were coded, classified and analyzed thematically
with the help of ATLAS.ti\(^3\). The analytical strategy was twofold: a top-down approach
was used, drawing relevant themes from the literature; and a bottom-up approach
was used, drawing relevant themes derived from the interview material.

In each of the chapters quotations from the interviews were used to underline
the research findings. To protect the privacy of the respondents, the quotes have been
rendered anonymous. To enhance the comparability of the separate chapters the
same pseudonyms were used across all chapters.

\(^3\) Software for qualitative data analysis created by Thomas Muhr at Scientific software. See www.atlasti.com
for more information.
1.6  Reading guide

The next four chapters (two to five) of this dissertation each present an empirical study addressing a different research question. Chapter two, three and four are (slightly different versions of) articles published in international peer-reviewed academic journals. Chapter five is under review for publication in an international peer-reviewed academic journal, after revision and resubmission. Finally, chapter six, consisting of the conclusion and discussion, recaptures the findings of the previous chapters, reflects on the findings in light of the literature and important political and social debates, reflects on the used data and methods and discusses an agenda for future research.

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4 See Appendix I for an overview of the articles.
Characteristics of post-separation families in the Netherlands: Shared residence versus resident mother arrangements
2. Characteristics of post-separation families in the Netherlands: Shared residence versus resident mother arrangements

This chapter has been published as:

ABSTRACT - Besides the traditional post-separation residential arrangement in which the children live with the mother and have regular contact with the father, new arrangements have emerged and become more widespread in which parents strive for a more equal division of tasks. We used an explanatory mixed methods research design to enhance insight into the life course characteristics of separated parents involved in shared residence arrangements. Survey data derived from the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study (NKPS) and Divorce in the Netherlands 1998 were supplemented with information from in-depth interviews with NKPS respondents. We found that shared residence parents seem to be a typical modern category of separated parents with a specific set of characteristics. The distance between the residences of the ex-partners plays a crucial role in maintaining a shared residence arrangement. Highly educated, dual-career ex-couples, and those with high incomes are also more likely to be involved in a shared residence arrangement. Shared residence arrangements were more likely when the woman had a new partner, but less likely when the man had a new partner. Our findings on gender differences are in line with the idea that involvement in non-traditional residential arrangements is a sign of increased paternal involvement, but decreased maternal involvement, compared with the traditional arrangements.

2.1 Introduction
Most parents and their children live together (85% of all children in the Netherlands in 2007; De Graaf, 2007), but the number of children growing up with separated parents is substantial. In the Netherlands, 27% of all children witness the separation of their parents (Spruijt and Kormos, 2010). All separated parents face the challenge to decide where and with whom their children will live. What is best for them and their children is not always blindingly obvious and will differ per household, per situation and even per child.
In Western countries, the most common post-separation residential arrangement is the resident mother arrangement in which the children live with their mother and have regular contact with their non-resident father (74% in the Netherlands: Spruijt and Kormos, 2010; see also Kelly, 2007 for the United States; Peacey and Hunt, 2009 for the United Kingdom; Smyth, 2004 for Australia). Besides this common post-separation arrangement, new arrangements, in which parents strive for a more equal division of tasks or in which the father plays a greater role in childrearing after separation than the mother, have emerged and become more widespread. Recent studies show that the number of non-resident fathers who have no contact at all with their children is declining and the visiting frequency of non-resident parents (most often fathers) is increasing (Braver and O’Connell, 1998; Kalmijn and De Graaf, 2000; Maccoby and Mnookin, 1992; Seltzer, 1991; 1998; Smyth, 2005; Stewart, 2001). There is a slowly growing group of parents who opt for a so-called shared residence arrangement in which the children live with both parents alternately and in which the care for the children is divided equally or nearly equally in terms of residential arrangement, (financial) responsibility, care giving, supporting school-related activities and spending leisure time (20% in the Netherlands: Spruijt and Kormos, 2010; 20% in Sweden: Willen and Richards, 2006; 9 to 12% in the United Kingdom: Peacey and Hunt, 2009). Compared with the resident mother arrangement, shared residence arrangements can be seen as an expression of increased paternal involvement and decreased maternal involvement. These developments are in contrast with the more conventional, gendered assumptions in which being a mother living apart from her children is considered non-normative, while being a non-resident father is typical after separation.

Despite the growing diversity of post-separation residential arrangements, most existing studies are only concerned with post-separation residential arrangements with a resident mother and a non-resident father (see for example Cooksey and Craig, 1998). Some studies have examined the relationship between contact with non-resident fathers and children’s well-being (Amato, 2000; Booth et al., 2010; King, 1994). Involvement in daily routines considerably improves the quality and sustainability of the parent-child relationship (Amato and Gilbreth, 1999; Pryor and Rodgers, 2001; Stewart, 2003). In line with these findings, recent studies conclude that, in the child’s best interests, residential arrangements should enable supportive fathers to be actively involved on a weekly basis in their children’s daily lives, including overnight stays, school-related and leisure time activities (Cashmore et al., 2008; Kelly, 2007; Smyth, 2004).
Shared residence arrangements in particular seem to enable fathers to be actively involved and therefore are often presented as an arrangement that is in the best interest of the child. According to Kurki-Suonio (2000: 183) ‘in most Western countries there is now a certain cultural consensus that joint custody is the best alternative for children when their parents separate or divorce’. Nielsen (2011) reviewed 20 studies on shared residence arrangements and concludes that children involved in a shared residence arrangement had equal or better outcomes on emotional, behavioral, physical and academic well-being than those in other arrangements. At the same time, other scholars (Haugen, 2010; Smart, 2004b) emphasize that shared residence arrangements might be in the best interest of the child, but only when children have a say and the experiences and opinions of children are taken into account. It can be questioned if the positive impact of living in a shared residence arrangement on children’s well-being is due to the arrangement as such or due to the specific characteristics of the parents involved in the arrangement. Parents involved in a shared residence arrangement might differ from parents involved in a resident mother arrangement.

Relatively little is known about the families who actually are involved in a shared residence arrangement, in which the conventional, gendered parenting roles are abandoned, applied less strictly or reversed. Evidence presented in studies over the last years is fragmental and partly contradictory. According to Nielsen’s (2011) literature review parents involved in a shared residence arrangement are more similar to other separated couples than might be assumed. Their incomes and level of education are not much higher than those of most other separated parents, but they do have more flexible work schedules. On the contrary, evidence from Australia (Smyth, 2004) suggests that shared residence parents actually are wealthier and better educated than other separated parents are. However, Smyth’s study was mainly based on focus group data consisting of 12 separated parents whom had an equal or nearly equal shared care arrangement and only to a small and limited extent on survey data. A recent study from Belgium (Mortelmans et al., 2011) argues that the socio-economic advantage of parents in a shared residence arrangement compared to parents in a resident mother arrangement is becoming less evident since shared residence arrangements are becoming more widespread. Besides the socio-economic characteristics, a small geographical distance between the households, the age of the children and the singlehood of the parents are reported to be important factors associated with a shared residence arrangement (Masardo, 2009; Smyth, 2004).
The aim of this article is to enhance insight into the characteristics of separated fathers and mothers maintaining shared residence arrangements in the Netherlands. We compare parents involved in a shared residence arrangement with parents involved in a resident mother arrangement. We do not consider resident father arrangements because there were few of these in our data. In the Netherlands, as in other Western countries, the proportion of resident father arrangements is small (6% in the Netherlands: Spruijt and Kormos, 2010).

In this article, the distinction between the two arrangements was based on the number of nights the children stay with their mother and with their father. The definitions of shared residence arrangements used in other studies involve at least 30% of the child’s time spent in each household (Baker and Townsend, 1996; Masardo, 2009). These definitions ignore the fact that in everyday life being involved in a shared residence arrangement is not that static. Our dataset revealed that there was a group of parents whose children spent between 30 and 40% of their time in both households, but who did not report being involved in a shared residence arrangement. For example, because their children stay with their father every weekend (Friday evening to Monday morning), but live solely with their mother throughout the week. In order to take into account this grey area, we classified this particular group of households, in which the children stay with their non-resident parent for nine to eleven nights per four weeks (32–39% of a year), as a shared residence arrangement or a resident mother arrangement based on the respondents’ reports about whether they regarded themselves as participating in a shared residence arrangement. Furthermore, households in which the children stayed with each parent alternately for at least twelve nights per four weeks (upwards 43%) were classified as a shared residence arrangement and households in which the children stayed with their father for less than nine nights per four weeks (<28%) were classified as a resident mother arrangement.

The central question addressed is: What life course characteristics of separated parents are associated with these different types of post-separation residential arrangement? Empirical evidence is derived from mixed methods research using an explanatory design (Plano Clark et al., 2008). The explanatory design of this mixed methods study makes it possible to test hypotheses on the basis of a multivariate

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5 In the Netherlands, each year 95,000 couples (2.3% of all couples) experience the dissolution of their marriage or cohabiting union (Spruijt and Kormos, 2010). In general, one should be cautious taking these two groups together. Recent studies on the Dutch case, however, show that the impact of union dissolution on couples with children does not differ substantially between married and unmarried couples (Spruijt, 2007). We therefore combine the two groups and use the term separated to refer to couples who experienced a non-marital dissolution as well as to couples who experienced a legal divorce.
analysis and then to interpret the findings and the direction of causality on the basis of our qualitative interview data. Survey data from the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study (NKPS) (first wave: 2002–2003; second wave: 2006–2007) and Divorce in the Netherlands 1998 (abbreviated in Dutch as SIN) are used to perform logistic regression analyses to estimate the effects of the residential context, occupational and educational characteristics and the pre- and post-separation family situation on the choice of a post-separation residential arrangement. Data from in-depth interviews conducted in 2008–2009 with 35 separated parents selected from the NKPS survey are used to interpret the associations arising from the survey data.

**2.2 Theoretical framework**

**Choosing a residential arrangement**

The choice of a specific post-separation residential arrangement can be understood as an outcome of preferences, resources and restrictions arising from people’s life course trajectories. The term life course trajectories refers to a set of parallel careers that develop simultaneously, are interrelated to each other, are followed by individuals and groups through society and generate differential access to lifestyle choices (Elder et al., 2003; Willekens, 1991). Individuals are active agents who shape their own life course trajectories in relation to their preferences and the extent to which these preferences can be put into practice, depending on the resources and restrictions inherent in their trajectories on the one hand (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Giddens, 1991; 1994; Stets and Burke, 2000) and, on the other hand, the opportunities and constraints structured by social institutions, culture and normative patterns (Stryker, 1968; Stryker and Burke, 2011). For the study of post-separation residential arrangements four relevant careers are distinguished: the residential, educational, occupational and family careers.

The interrelatedness of these careers makes it in some cases difficult to say if the choice of a post-separation residential arrangement, which is triggered by an event in the family career (the separation), affects the other life course careers, or is actually affected by them. It is therefore necessary to consider the possibility of reciprocal causation throughout our theoretical framework.

**The residential career**

A consequence of separation is the residential relocation of one or both ex-partners. The further ex-partners move away from each other, the more planning, financial and
time resources will be required to maintain contact on a regular basis between the non-resident parent and the children (Ahrons and Tanner, 2003; Arditti and Keith, 1993; Cooksey and Craig, 1998; Seltzer et al., 1989; Stephen et al., 1993; Swiss and Le Bourdais, 2009), especially when the children are young and cannot travel independently. As a result, shared residence arrangements are likely to be most sustainable when the geographical distance between the parents is short. We expected ex-partners who live close to each other to be more likely to maintain a shared residence arrangement than those living farther away from each other. The causality in this association might run both ways. On the one hand, the choice to live at a long distance (for example triggered by job opportunities or availability of housing) might lead to the choice of a specific type of post-separation residential arrangement. On the other hand, the choice of a specific arrangement might lead parents to choose a residential location in close proximity to the other parent.

The residential location of ex-couples may provide opportunities or constraints to create a specific post-separation residential arrangement. In the Netherlands, household types that have a symmetrical division of paid work are overrepresented in inner cities and urban contexts, which are attractive as residential areas because of their central location and a variety of amenities (Boterman, 2012; De Meester et al., 2007). It is likely that couples with a symmetric household arrangement would also prefer a symmetric arrangement after their separation and would tend to opt for a shared residence arrangement. Furthermore, large cities with a high housing density and a high concentration of social-rental housing and affordable dwellings may provide more opportunities to find two suitable dwellings close to each other than other types of residential environments would. We therefore hypothesized that separated parents who live in strongly urbanized areas would be more likely to be involved in a shared residence arrangement than those living in less urbanized areas. As with distance, the causation between urbanization and the choice of residential arrangement might be reciprocal.

The occupational and educational careers
In many cases, getting separated leads to a decrease in economic well-being, particularly for women (Duncan and Hoffman, 1985; Holden and Smock, 1991; Poortman, 2000; Smock, 1993; 1994; Uunk, 2004) who often become the resident parent, but to a lesser degree also for non-resident fathers (Bradshaw et al., 1999; Bull, 1993; Henman and Mitchell, 2001). Rearranging one household into two implies a decrease in household income and an increase in housing costs (Bradshaw et al., 1999; Bull, 1993). The inclusion of overnight stays in the post-separation arrangement
implies that there have to be two dwellings with enough room for the child(ren) (Bradshaw et al., 1999; Henman and Mitchell, 2001; Swiss and Le Bourdais, 2009). It is likely that a shared residence arrangement is even more expensive than a resident mother arrangement. It entails the costs of not only two suitable dwellings, but also furniture, clothes, toys and the like, which have to be present in both dwellings and so have to be bought twice. These costs might also be made by parents in resident mother arrangements, but not necessarily and likely not to the same amount. The availability of sufficient economic resources makes the costs of a shared residence arrangement easier to sustain. We therefore expected that parents with higher incomes would be more likely to choose and maintain a shared residence arrangement than would parents with lower incomes. Evidence on the relationship between income and residential arrangement is contradictory. Smyth’s (2004) focus group data for a small number of parents seem to indicate that shared residence mothers are indeed more likely to have a high income, whereas for shared residence fathers this does not seem to be the case. Other studies reveal that the socio-economic advantage of parents in a shared residence arrangement compared with parents in a resident mother arrangement is becoming less evident (Mortelmans et al., 2011) or is not so great (Nielsen, 2011).

The choice of a specific arrangement has much to do with the division of time between work and taking care of the children. For both the man and the woman, having a full-time job will impose restrictions on the time spent with the children. We expected that women working full-time and men working part-time would be more likely to be involved in a shared residence arrangement than in a resident mother arrangement. Here, too, the causality might run both ways. On the one hand, having a full-time job makes a shared residence arrangement more feasible; on the other hand, the choice of a shared residence arrangement might make spending more time on the labor market necessary to bear the costs of the arrangement.

Highly educated couples are characterized by a more equal division of paid and unpaid work (Tijdens, 2006), which fits best with a symmetrical post-separation residential arrangement, like shared residence. Furthermore, the higher a woman’s level of education, the more attached she is to the labor market (De Meester et al., 2007). After the separation, most highly educated women could be expected to want to remain in the labor market and not become a full-time mother. We therefore expected highly educated people to be more likely to be in a shared residence arrangement than the less well educated.
The pre- and post-separation family career

The preference for a specific arrangement is expected to be based on some form of continuation of the gendered division of paid work and household tasks before the separation. Masardo’s (2011) qualitative study in France and the UK shows that shared residence parents indeed shared the childcare tasks prior to separation. We hypothesized that ex-couples who had a household with a high degree of symmetry in the division of paid work and household tasks when they were still together would be more likely to be in a shared residence arrangement. Parents characterized by less symmetry were expected to be more likely to be in a resident mother arrangement.

Mothers are still seen as the primary caretakers of the children, especially when they are young. We hypothesized parents with a child aged four years or younger at the moment of separation to be less likely to be engaged in a shared residence arrangement. However, other evidence suggest that parents with younger children at the moment of divorce are more likely to be involved in a shared residence arrangement (Masardo, 2011) and that younger children experience less problems in a shared residence arrangement (Neale et al., 2003).

Having a new partner might make setting up or maintaining a shared residence arrangement more difficult. A new partner might impose time restrictions and conflicting commitments, making a shared residence arrangement more complex, especially when the new partner also has children. Some shared residence parents might also choose consciously not to start a new relationship, because they want to be available for their children. We expected parents who had a new partner after separation to be less likely to be in a shared residence arrangement. This hypothesis is in line with earlier studies. The remarriage of one of the ex-partners seems to decrease the contact frequency between the non-resident father and his child(ren) (Cooksey and Craig, 1998; Kelly, 2007; Maccoby and Mnookin, 1992; Seltzer et al., 1989).

The increase of women’s labor market participation and men’s participation in household and parenting tasks (SCP and Statistics Netherlands, 2009 for the Netherlands) has led to the fading of traditional gender roles in modern families. In the Netherlands, even though taking care of the children still mainly remains the responsibility of the mother, involvement of fathers with their children has increased in recent years (Van Wel and Knijn, 2006). Nowadays, being a separated father does not almost automatically imply seeing the children only once every two weeks. Being a non-resident father has become less normative. We expected that along with the change of norm, couples who separated more recently are more likely to be in a shared residence arrangement than those separated a longer time ago would be.
2.3 Data and methods

Survey data
We utilized data from two surveys. The first is the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study (Dykstra et al., 2005; 2007), of which two waves were available at the time of analysis (the third wave became available in 2012). The first wave, containing information on 8,161 inhabitants of the Netherlands, was conducted in 2002–2003 among a representative sample of the Dutch population aged between 18 and 79 and not living in an institution (for example, a care institution or prison). The overall response rate was 45%. The second wave, conducted in 2006–2007, was based on follow-up interviews with 6,670 respondents (82%) from wave one. For the analyses we only included respondents who were in both wave one and wave two, because only wave two includes information about the number of nights the children stay at the residence of the mother and the father. This information is necessary to identify the type of post-separation residential arrangement of the family. Men were underrepresented by about seven percentage points (Dykstra et al., 2007). Furthermore, both men and women living alone are underrepresented (by about seven percentage points and five percentage points), as are single parents (men by about one percentage points and women by about five percentage points). Consequently separated parents are likely to be underrepresented.

The second dataset is the survey Divorce in the Netherlands 1998 (Kalmijn et al., 2000). This database pertains to 2,346 individuals aged between 18 and 79 who were in their first marriage or had divorced once. The overall response rate was 58%. Single divorced persons were slightly underrepresented.

We selected those respondents from both datasets who had experienced a divorce or the dissolution of an unmarried union and had at least one child with the ex-partner, whereby at least one of the children was aged 18 or younger and lived with one parent or with both alternately, the ex-partner was still alive, and information about the division of the overnight stays of the child(ren) between both parents was available. Our final pooled dataset contained 675 respondents (table 2.1).

The main advantage of pooling the two data sets was to increase the number of respondents. A disadvantage was some loss of information owing to differences in measurement of the variables. For example, we had to categorize some ratio and interval variables from the NKPS data to match them with similar variables from the SIN dataset. Furthermore, the data were collected a few years apart, and practices of separated parents might have changed between the surveys.

The distribution in the sample indicates that, in the NKPS survey, men in a shared residence arrangement are overrepresented (1 out of 3.4) and women in such
an arrangement are underrepresented (1 out of 8.8). This discrepancy can be explained from the fact that our definition of shared residence arrangements is partly based on the respondents’ reports about whether they regarded themselves as participating in a shared residence arrangement. Separated fathers tend to report a greater father involvement than separated mothers do (Mikelson, 2008), possibly because of over-reporting of one’s own and under-reporting of the other parent’s contribution to parenting. It is therefore also likely that separated fathers report more often to be involved in a shared residence arrangement than separated mothers do. We considered the advantages of this definition (recognizing and dealing with the fact that there is a grey area whether someone is involved in a shared residence arrangement or not) greater than the disadvantages (an overrepresentation of men in shared residence arrangements). Note that all information was derived from reports of one ex-partner; the other ex-partner was not interviewed and neither was the respondent asked to report on the other’s personal or household circumstances.

Table 2.1 Overview of selected respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>SIN survey data</th>
<th>NKPS survey data</th>
<th>NKPS interview data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>men</td>
<td>women</td>
<td>men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared residence arrangements</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident mother arrangements</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>94.8</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total selected respondents</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Variables
The dependent variable is the post-separation residential arrangement of the respondent at the moment the survey took place. The distinction between the arrangements was based on the number of nights the children spent with their mother and with their father (table 2.2). These categories also include arrangements in which the children have no contact whatsoever with their father. When there were children with different arrangements in one ex-family, as occurred in twelve cases, the arrangement with the most number of nights with the father was taken; shared residence arrangements were favored over resident mother arrangements.

As indicators of the residential context, we used the geographical distance between the residential locations of the ex-partners and the degree of urbanization of the respondent’s place of residence. In the NKPS data, the geographical distance was
measured by using the x and y coordinates of the residential location of the respondent and the ex-partner to calculate the distance in kilometers along a straight line. In the SIN data, distance was measured by using the respondent’s information about the commuting time between both residences. To obtain a similar measure of distance we calculated quartiles for each dataset. This procedure resulted in four categories: (1) <1.5 kilometers or 10 minutes traveling time; (2) 1.5 to <5 kilometers or between 10 and 15 minutes traveling time; (3) 5 to <20 kilometers or between 15 and 30 minutes traveling time; and (4) 20 or more kilometers or 30 or more minutes traveling time. We distinguished three categories of degree of urbanization: (1) strongly urbanized (more than 1,500 addresses/km²); (2) moderately urbanized (1,000–1,500 addresses/km²); and (3) hardly urbanized (fewer than 1,000 addresses/km²).

Income, labor market participation and level of education were included to measure the available time and financial resources arising from the educational and occupational career. Income was measured as the annual net income of the respondent. The annual income in the SIN data was corrected for inflation for the years between 1998 and 2006. We distinguished four categories: (1) less than 11,242 euro; (2) 11,242 to less than 20,500 euro; (3) 20,500 euro or more; and (4) missing. The first three categories correspond as closely as possible to the lower 33% of the income distribution in the sample, the middle and the higher 33% (note that these exact percentages could not be used because the variable was categorical in the SIN data). Labor market participation was divided into three categories: (1) not employed; (2) employed for up to 35 hours per week (part-time job); and (3) employed for more than 35 hours per week (full-time job). Level of education was measured in three categories: (1) up to lower vocational or lower secondary; (2) middle or higher secondary or middle vocational; and (3) higher vocational or university.

Only in the SIN data was the pre-separation level of symmetry in task division available. It was measured by a variable in which three indicators of the division of specific tasks before the separation were combined: cooking dinner; doing the laundry; and housecleaning (α = 0.92). The indicators pertained to the situation after five years of living together or, if the separation had taken place earlier, at the beginning of the period of living together. They were measured on a scale from one to five: (1) the respondent did a particular task far more often than the ex-partner did; (2) the respondent did a particular task more often than the ex-partner did; (3) the respondent did a particular task as often as their ex-partner did; (4) the ex-partner did a particular task more often than the respondent did; and (5) the ex-partner did a particular task far more often than the respondent did. The average of the scores on
these measurements was taken. Scores lower than two and from four to five were categorized as (1) non-symmetrical and scores from two to less than four as (2) symmetrical task divisions. Because information about pre-separation task division was missing for NKPS respondents, these were categorized as (3) NKPS. A dummy variable measured whether or not the respondent lived with a new partner. For the year of separation, we created a variable with three categories: (1) separated before 1990; (2) separated between 1990 and 1998; and (3) separated after 1998. The variable for the age of the youngest child at the moment of interview also consisted of three categories: (1) aged younger than four; (2) aged four up to ten years old; and (3) aged older than ten.

Table 2.2 Distribution of children’s overnight stays in NKPS dataset

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of nights per month with their father</th>
<th>Percentage of children with separated parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 nights</td>
<td>35.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 up to 3 nights</td>
<td>20.7 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 nights</td>
<td>20.2 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 up to 8 nights</td>
<td>11.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 up to 11 nights</td>
<td>2.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 up to 16 nights</td>
<td>8.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 up to 19 nights</td>
<td>0.8 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interview data
In-depth interviews were conducted in 2008–2009 with 35 respondents selected from the NKPS dataset. They were selected through purposive sampling (Mason, 1996). In addition to the selection criteria used for the selection of respondents in the survey data, respondents were only selected if the children lived with them for at least 50% of the time, because we were especially interested in the story of the resident parents. The selection included parents involved in a shared residence arrangement and mothers involved in a resident mother arrangement. Within this selection we aimed for a wide range of variation in place of the residence and level of education of the respondent, the number of children, and the age of the children. The interviews were semi-structured and concentrated on the definition, experience, and evaluation of the current post-separation residential arrangement. Interviews lasted between 60 and a 100 minutes; they were recorded and fully transcribed. Sixty respondents, classified as being a resident mother or a shared residence parent, were asked to participate (table
2.1). The response was 63.3%; this was lower among resident mothers than among respondents with a shared residence arrangement.

Methods
Cross-tabulations shed light on the bivariate associations between the characteristics of the parents and the type of arrangement. For those variables related to individual resources for which a different pattern for men and women might be expected, separate cross-tabulations by gender are presented. A Chi-square test was performed to find out which associations were statistically significant. To examine whether the associations were also significant in each other’s presence, a multivariate analysis was performed in which the type of arrangement was the dependent variable and a selection of variables significantly associated with the type of arrangement in the bivariate analysis were included as independent variables. As the dependent variable has two categories, logistic regression was used. Because the hypotheses are gender specific for some variables, separate models were estimated for men and women. It is important to remember that these men and women were unrelated respondents, not the matched partners of ex-couples. Because the causality between distance, income, labor market participation, and re-partnering on the one hand and the post-separation residential arrangement on the other might be reciprocal, we have used our regression models as a convenient way to describe multivariate associations between these variables, rather than as causal models; the results for these variables should be seen as sophisticated descriptive statistics (cf. Aassve et al., 2003).

The interview data provide explanations for the associations found in the multivariate analysis and enabled us to interpret the direction of the causality between the variables. The interview data were transcribed, coded, classified and analyzed thematically. We used a top-down approach (Gibson and Brown, 2009) for the analysis, with relevant themes from the literature and the statistical data analysis. These themes included the residential context, the working schedule, economic resources, the pre- and post-separation relationship and other aspects that might play a role in the choice of a specific arrangement.

2.4 Results
The distribution of the respondents over the residential arrangements (table 2.1) confirms that the post-separation residential arrangement with a resident mother and a non-resident father is far more common than a shared residence arrangement. In the SIN data, the number of shared residence arrangements is small, in contrast with the NKPS survey. This discrepancy is attributable to the fact that shared residence
arrangements are relatively new and its practitioners constitute a growing group. The cross-tabulations of type of arrangement by all other variables are presented in table 2.3. The odds ratios from the logistic regression models predicting the type of post-separation residential arrangement are presented in table 2.4.

**The residential career**
The type of post-separation residential arrangement is found to be strongly associated with the distance between the places of residence of the ex-partners, both in the cross-tabulation and in the logistic regression models. This finding is in line with earlier qualitative studies (Masardo, 2009; Smyth, 2004). As expected, respondents who live within a distance of 1.5 kilometers or 10 minutes traveling time from their ex-partner are more likely to be in a shared residence arrangement than are respondents living further away (table 2.4). Mothers living further than 20 kilometers or 30 minutes travel time from their ex-partner are estimated to be only 0.17 times as likely to be in a shared residence arrangement compared to mothers living at the shortest distance from their ex-partners, all else being equal. Fathers living more than 20 kilometers or 30 minutes away are estimated to be only 0.02 times as likely to be in a shared residence arrangement as are fathers living close by (table 2.4). Because the distance between the places of residence of the ex-partners is a characteristic at the level of the couple, the associations for men and women should be similar. The differences in association might be explained by sample fluctuations, differences in the characteristics of male and female non-respondents, or by differences in fathers’ and mothers’ information.

An interpretation of the crucial role of distance in the choice of a specific post-separation residential arrangement can be derived from the in-depth interview data. All the interviewed shared residence parents said that living close to each other was important. School, friends and sport or hobby clubs have to be within the reach of both places of residence.

*‘This arrangement is only successful when you offer the children one social network, one crèche, one school, one group of friends, in the same neighborhood.’ [Jack⁶, a shared residence father, living less than 1 kilometer from his ex-partner]*

The respondents’ feedback strongly suggests that the causality in the relationship between the type of residential arrangement and the distance between the ex-

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⁶ The interviews have been rendered anonymous to protect the privacy of the respondents.
parents’ places of residence indeed runs both ways. Most of the shared residence parents had made a conscious choice to live close to each other to maintain a shared residence arrangement.

‘First my ex-wife lived three minutes away that way and now she lives three minutes away this way [respondent points in two different directions]. Until the children have finished school we have to live close to each other; after that we can each go our own way.’ [Jack]

Most parents emphasized that they lived close to their ex-partner only for the sake of their children, and that they would have preferred living further away if they did not have children.

‘This shared residence arrangement is the reason why I still live in this town, so that the boys can easily come over when they want to and things like that.’ [Frank, a shared residence father, living within 3 kilometers of his ex-partner]

‘We used to go to the grocery store in this neighborhood. But I do not want to unexpectedly run into my ex-partner, and especially not when he is with his new partner. So I consciously go to another grocery store. It is further away, but I do not care as long as I am sure I do not run into them.’ [Vera, a shared residence mother, living less than 1 kilometer from her ex-partner]

Most shared residence parents had explicitly agreed to live close to each other in a divorce or parenting agreement [at least 20 out of the 35 respondents had written down a divorce agreement in an official document].

‘We included this in our parenting agreement, that, as long as the children are young, we will not move further away from each other. Because that would make it impossible to maintain a shared residence arrangement.’ [Carol, a shared residence mother, living less than 1 kilometer from her ex-partner]

Other respondents had chosen to be in a resident mother arrangement because of the large distance between the two places of residence.
'It’s all about the distance. It’s not feasible to let my daughter stay there [with her father] every week. Financially neither of us [she and her ex-partner] can afford to take or fetch her every week, or even every two weeks. So we said: “one weekend per three weeks is enough”.’ [Lucy, a resident mother, living 180 kilometers from her ex-partner]

There was also a respondent living close to her ex-partner who initially had chosen to be in a resident mother arrangement, but who was slowly moving towards a shared residence arrangement because the short distance allowed the children to visit the non-resident father very often.

‘I think, because we live in the same city now, it is easier for the children to have contact with their father. Because they can go there by bicycle to spend some time together. So the arrangement has become more flexible. And the children see their father more and more.’ [Sally, a resident mother, living 3 kilometers from her ex-partner]

We did not find an association between the type of post-separation arrangement and the degree of urbanization of the residential location. So the constraints imposed by the degree of urbanization, such as housing market characteristics, either do not affect the choice of a specific arrangement or it could mean that ex-partners successfully resolve these constraints in order to create the arrangement of their choice. In line with this finding, none of the interviewed parents had the idea that whether or not they lived in a small town or a large city would make any difference to the choice of a specific arrangement.

The occupational and educational careers
In line with our hypothesis, the type of post-separation residential arrangement is associated with the respondent’s income. Men and women who have a higher income show a higher tendency to be involved in a shared residence arrangement than those with a low income, all else being equal. The regression estimates suggest that women with a moderate income are four times, and women with a high income even five times, more likely to be in a shared residence arrangement than are women with a low income. For men this relationship is even stronger. Men with a high income are estimated to be more than 15 times more likely to be in a shared residence arrangement than are men with a low income, all else being equal.
Table 2.3 Cross-tabulations of characteristics of respondents and ex-partners by type of arrangement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distance between respondent and ex-partner</th>
<th>N in sample</th>
<th>Shared residence</th>
<th>Resident mother</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Shared residence</th>
<th>Resident mother</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 1.5 km/ &lt; 10 min</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5-5 km/10-15 min</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>88.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-20 km/15-30 min</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>95.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 20 km/ &gt; 30 min</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>97.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>missing</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>84.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Degree of urbanization¹
- hardly urbanized: 219, 10.0%, 90.0%
- moderately urbanized: 109, 8.3%, 91.7%
- strongly urbanized: 347, 12.7%, 87.3%

Pre-divorce task division¹
- symmetrical: 99, 12.1%, 87.9%
- non-symmetrical: 281, 5.0%, 95.0%
- NKPS (missing): 295, 16.6%, 83.4%

Year of separation¹
- before 1990: 150, 9.3%, 90.7%
- 1990 to 1998: 334, 7.8%, 92.2%
- after 1998: 191, 18.3%, 81.7%

Age youngest child¹
- younger than 4: 84, 9.5%, 90.5%
- 4 to 10 years old: 240, 10.4%, 89.6%
- 10 or older: 351, 12.0%, 88.0%

Annual net income respondent in euro
- men:
  - less than 11,242: 212, 16.0%, 84.0%
  - 11,242 – 20,500: 213, 14.3%, 85.7%
  - more than 20,500: 141, 20.0%, 80.0%
  - missing: 109, 3.7%, 96.3%
- women:
  - less than 11,242: 3.2, 96.8%
  - 11,242 – 20,500: 14.0, 86.0%
  - more than 20,500: 21.4, 78.6%
  - missing: 6.1, 93.9%

Labour market participation
- not employed: 168, 12.9%, 87.1%
- part-time job: 265, 23.1%, 76.9%
- full-time job: 242, 14.7%, 85.3%

Educational attainment
- up to lower secondary: 228, 5.6%, 94.4%
- middle secondary to middle vocational: 172, 9.4%, 90.6%
- higher vocational or university: 275, 24.7%, 75.3%

New partner
- yes: 235, 6.4%, 93.6%
- no: 440, 21.3%, 78.7%

*** p < .01; ** p < .05; * p < .10 (chi-square)
¹ men and women together
Table 2.4 Odds ratios from logistic regression predicting shared residence arrangements. Reference: resident mother arrangements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distances between respondent and ex-partner (ref = &lt; 1.5 km / &lt; 10 min)</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.5 - 5 km / 10 - 15 min</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.14 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - 20 km / 15 - 30 min</td>
<td>0.23 **</td>
<td>0.08 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 20 km/ &gt; 30 min</td>
<td>0.17 **</td>
<td>0.02 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>missing</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.21 **</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annual net income respondent in euro (ref = &lt; 11,424)</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11,424 - 20,500</td>
<td>4.09 **</td>
<td>6.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 20,500</td>
<td>5.09 **</td>
<td>15.56 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>missing</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Labour market participation (ref = not employed)</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>part-time job</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>full-time job</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational attainment (ref = up to lower secondary)</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>middle secondary to middle vocational</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>4.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>higher vocational to university</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>8.62 ***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-divorce task division (ref = non-symmetrical)</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>symmetrical</td>
<td>3.50 **</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NKPS</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>8.59 **</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New partner</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.05 ***</td>
<td>0.24 **</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of separation (ref = before 1990)</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990 to 1998</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 1998</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 475  200

Intercept Only -2 Log Likelihood
261.74  155.91

Final -2 Log Likelihood
199.87  90.52

Chi-Square
61.87 (df=16)  65.39 (df=16)

Significance
0.00  0.00

Nagelkerke R-squared
0.27  0.48

*p < .10; ** p < .05; *** p < .01
During the interviews none of the respondents reported that they would like to be in a shared residence arrangement but could not afford it. The shared residence parents did mention the extra furniture, clothes, and toys that had been bought to maintain the arrangement, and the costs that came with arranging two suitable dwellings close to each other. It is possible that respondents do not mention arrangements that are financially out of reach, just because it might never have occurred to them to consider such arrangements.

The cross-tabulation indicates that part-time working fathers more frequently maintain a shared residence arrangement than other fathers do. In the logistic regression analysis for men, however, the association between type of post-separation residential arrangement and labor market participation is partly reversed and overruled by strong associations with level of education and income. As expected, it seems to be the full-time working mothers who more frequently maintain a shared residence arrangement than other mothers (table 2.3). This association is also found in the regression model, but is not statistically significant.

A better understanding of the association between labor market participation and the type of post-separation residential arrangements can be obtained from the interview data. During the interviews paid work was reported frequently to explain the choice of a specific arrangement. Labor market participation and the level of symmetry in performing household and care tasks seem to be closely related to each other. Being a single-career or a dual-career ex-couple seemed to be particularly important. It seems that dual-career ex-couples had a high level of symmetry during their marriage and therefore prefer to be in a shared residence arrangement. When both partners worked part-time they seemed to be more likely to be in a relationship with an equal division of tasks.

‘Well, the children were really young and we both had a job. I have always had a job, so for practical reasons ... their father had a part-time job at that moment, so for both of us a shared residence arrangement was the most practical solution. We didn’t want to be dependent on childcare all the time. That’s how we decided.’ [Carol, a shared residence mother]

Not only did shared residence parents take into account their labor market participation when they chose an arrangement; resident mothers also mentioned labor market participation to explain their choice.
'My ex-partner is a truck driver, so he leaves early in the morning and arrives home late at night or sometimes he is away a whole week. So it is not an option for my daughter to stay at her father’s place throughout the week.’ [Naomi, a resident mother]

There were also parents who changed their working schedule to maintain a specific arrangement, which clearly shows that there is no one-way direction of causality in this association.

‘Of course you have to rearrange your schedule. One week I am taking care of the children, trying to get them to school on time, driving very fast to my work, making a short working day, driving home, getting the kids, cooking dinner, and so on. And the other week I work long hours at my job to catch up with my work.’ [Henry, a shared residence father]

Congruent with our hypotheses, highly educated men are more likely to be in a shared residence arrangement than are less well-educated men. This pattern is not statistically significant for mothers. Level of education or a wish to pursue a career matching that level was never mentioned by the respondents during the in-depth interviews.

The pre- and post-separation family career

In the cross-tabulation, couples seem more likely to opt for a shared residence arrangement if the pre-separation division of household tasks with the ex-partner was symmetrical. In the regression analysis, however, this association is only found for women. For men this association seems to be reversed and it is not statistically significant. This finding is not easily interpreted, but part of the explanation might be found in gender differences in reporting about the division of household tasks.

During the interviews most ex-partners who opted for a shared residence arrangement reported that they had already had a symmetrical division of tasks and working hours when they were still together. The separation did not change that task division.

‘I took on half the care for the children when we were married ... and from the beginning of the separation it was clear that this would be continued ... yes continued, because I already did so ... and Karin wanted to take a step forward in her career.’ [Jack, a shared residence father]
Or, as Sally (a resident mother) said; ‘In our marriage I took care of the children most of the time. So the most logical solution was that they would live with me and go to their father for the weekends.’

As expected, men who have a new partner are less likely to be in a shared residence arrangement than are their single counterparts. Women, however, are more likely to be in a shared residence arrangement when they have a new partner than are single women. For women, being in a shared residence arrangement instead of in the most common arrangement with a resident mother is associated with less time spent with the children, which makes spending time with a new partner easier. For men, being in a shared residence arrangement increases the time spent with the children compared with being a non-resident father, which makes spending time with a new partner more difficult.

The interview findings suggest that the causality in this association can run both ways. On the one hand the presence of a new partner can be a reason to carry out an arrangement that includes some time without the children.

‘We [respondent and her new partner] both have our children in the same weekends. In these weekends, we do not see each other that often. During the week, on the days when I don’t have the children, I sleep over at his place.’ [Fiona, a shared residence mother]

On the other hand the choice of a shared residence arrangement may result in the choice not to have a new partner.

‘For me it’s so important, being involved with my children as much as I am right now, that I can’t do justice to a new relationship. So yes, the children influence my life.’ [Frank, a shared residence father]

Our hypothesis that those couples who separated more recently are more likely to be in a shared residence arrangement than those who separated a longer time ago is not supported, despite the greater percentage of shared residence arrangements for those who divorced after 1998 (table 2.3). Note, however, that part of the change is reflected in the parameter for being an NKPS respondent: because the NKPS survey was conducted later, it contains more recently divorced respondents. Furthermore, the growth in shared residence arrangements is probably largely explained from changes in the composition of the separated population. For example, the proportion of those in a symmetrical pre-divorce task division has likely grown while for women
we find a positive effect of such a task division on the likelihood of a shared residence arrangement.

We did not find an association between the type of post-separation arrangement and the age of the youngest child in the bivariate analyses. In the interview data, however, mothers with young children reported that they felt that the children should be with their mother while they were young. Sally, a mother in a resident mother arrangement with a non-resident father with whom the children frequently stayed for the weekend said:

‘At first I was very careful, because it scared me a bit... the kids were so young, so small. So we first tested one weekend in the month. The children were really young, a baby and a toddler.’

2.5 Conclusion and discussion

In this article, we explored the characteristics of separated parents carrying out a shared residence arrangement. We compared the life course characteristics of those separated parents with the life course characteristics of separated parents involved in a traditional arrangement with a resident mother and a non-resident father. We used a combination of NKPS and SIN survey data and data from in-depth interviews with NKPS respondents.

We expected that characteristics arising from people’s residential, educational and occupational and family careers are associated with the type of residential arrangement chosen after separation. Our findings revealed that these careers are not only associated with the choice of a specific post-separation residential arrangement, but are also strongly interwoven with each other. The causality of the associations between the different careers and the residential arrangement often seems to run both ways, which shows us that people’s life course trajectories are very complex and not easy to disentangle.

A marked, but certainly not unexpected, finding is the crucial role of geographical distance in maintaining a shared residence arrangement. The association with distance is strong, and several parents stated that a short distance was a precondition for maintaining their shared residence arrangement. Furthermore, being involved in a shared residence arrangement is associated with highly educated, dual-career ex-couples with a high income level. Part of the explanation might be that especially those parents have the resources to overcome restrictions and constraints imposed by being involved in a shared residence arrangement, such as arranging two suitable dwellings close to each other, and living at a short distance from the ex-
partner. Another part of the explanation for this selectivity might be that the choice of a shared residence arrangement creates opportunities that fit the preferences of those parents, such as maintaining a symmetrical task division or opportunities to make it easier to combine a career with taking care of the children.

We did not find any indications of an association between degree of urbanization and type of residential arrangement. We expected such an association because of the overrepresentation in cities of couples who divide household tasks and paid work symmetrically and because of the better opportunities cities offer for finding suitable accommodation for two households close to one another. Possibly less urbanized residential areas offer other opportunities than urbanized areas, such as a less tight housing market, which also enables ex-partners to maintain a shared residence arrangement.

An important feature in our analysis was the distinction between male and female respondents. Maintaining a shared residence arrangement seems to hold different meaning for men and women. Compared with the common resident mother arrangement, a shared residence arrangement implies an increase in the paternal involvement but a diminished maternal involvement. We think this distinction is capable of explaining many of the gender differences found in our analysis. Having a new partner seems to be associated with a lower likelihood for men, but a greater likelihood for women, of being in a shared residence arrangement. This finding suggests that re-partnering leads to a decrease in time spent with the children for the particular ex-partner who re-partners, but an increase for the other ex-partner. It should be noted that this finding is partly in contrast with earlier studies (Cooksey and Craig, 1998; Maccoby and Mnookin, 1992; Seltzer et al., 1989), in which the remarriage of either parent was found to diminish the contact frequency between non-resident fathers and their children. This difference between men and women confirms the importance of paying attention to gender differences in studies on separated parents and their post-separation residential arrangements.

The explanatory design of this mixed methods study made it possible to test hypotheses on the basis of a multivariate analysis and then to interpret the findings and the direction of causality. The combination of methods also yielded complementary insights. The associations of level of education and income with the type of post-separation residential arrangement, for example, could only be detected from the survey data, whereas the information from the interviews signaled the higher likelihood of shared residence among dual-career ex-couples. Furthermore, the fact that we could select interviewees from NKPS survey respondents made it possible to
choose separated parents with an adequate variation in post-separation residential arrangements and several other characteristics.

Unfortunately the survey data did not include information about matched pairs of ex-partners from the same couples. Neither did the agreement on the collection of interview data from NKPS respondents allow the interviewing of ex-partners. Information on matched pairs would be highly instructive in gaining further insight into which combinations of characteristics of ex-partners lead to specific post-separation residential arrangements and into how pairs of ex-partners reach their decision on the type of arrangement.

Last, we emphasize that, in contrast with findings from some of the earlier studies (Nielsen, 2011), shared residence parents seem to be a typical modern category of separated parents with a specific set of characteristics. Shared residence arrangements seem to be associated with a lifestyle adopted by highly educated, dual-career ex-couples with a high income level who previously practised a symmetrical task division during their partnerships. The question if the positive impact of a shared residence arrangement on children’s well-being is due to the arrangement as such or due to the specific characteristics of the parents involved in the arrangement is therefore legitimized and would merit further research. As long as the labor market participation of women keeps growing, this category of separated families is also likely to grow. We therefore underline the need for more research that acknowledges the variations in post-separation residential arrangements and the consequences of the different arrangements for the daily lives of people in post-separation families.
Balancing paid work, care and leisure in post-separation households: A comparison of resident mothers and shared residence parents
3. Balancing paid work, care and leisure in post-separation households: A comparison of resident mothers and shared residence parents

A slightly different version of this chapter has been published as:

ABSTRACT - This article provides insight into the daily lives of separated parents involved in two types of residential arrangements: resident mothers, living with their children full-time and shared residence parents living with their children part-time. Earlier studies have stated that the everyday lives of separated mothers are more constrained than those of married mothers. We show that the growing diversity of post-separation residential arrangements should no longer be ignored in studies of the consequences of separation, in policy frameworks or in debates on separation. Our findings reveal that single resident mothers experience more constraints in combining work, care and leisure in daily life than single shared residence parents do. The differences between the groups are explained by different commitments in the work and care domains. These differences are not solely matters of choice. Resident mothers who are less highly educated and work fewer hours than shared residence parents have limited resources with which to arrange or negotiate a more gender-equal outcome. Empirical evidence is drawn from individual in-depth interviews with 18 separated parents living in The Netherlands.

3.1 Introduction

Over the past few decades, balancing paid work, childcare and leisure in everyday life has become more complicated. Major social changes, such as individualization, secularization, economic restructuring and emancipation, have led to an increase in the number of women in employment. Consequently, the traditional nuclear family, in which the father works full-time as primary wage-earner and the mother stays at home to care for the children, is being replaced by the dual-earner family. Today,

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7 In order to create consistency in the terms that are used in the different chapters of this dissertation, some terms that were used in the original article have been amended in this chapter. The term co-parent has been replaced by the term shared residence parent; the term single mother has been replaced with the term resident mother; the term living arrangement has been replaced with the term residential arrangement.
because both parents work at least part of the time outside the household, childcare responsibilities and domestic work have to be outsourced or addressed after working hours. As a result, an increasing time pressure and complexity in organizing daily life is experienced.

The balancing act of dual-earner families has been described extensively (e.g. Becker and Moen, 1999; Crompton and Lyonette, 2006; De Meester et al., 2007; Forsberg, 2009; Hochschild, 1997; Jarvis, 1999; Karsten, 2003; Spain and Bianchi, 1996; Van der Lippe et al., 2006; Voydanoff, 2005) and as a result of this scholarly attention we have gained considerable knowledge of the daily lives of dual-earner families and how they construct their social roles, resources and relationships to overcome constraints. However, surprisingly little is known about the daily routines of families that have split up.

In Western countries, separation is common (OECD, 2011). Considerable scholarly attention has been paid to the consequences of separation for ex-partners and their children (e.g. Amato, 2000; Thompson and Amato, 1999). A particularly large body of research has been published concentrating on the consequences of separation on the well-being of the children (e.g. Amato, 2001; Bhrolchain et al., 2001), the quality of parent-child relationships (e.g. Seltzer, 1991; Stewart, 2003; Swiss and Le Bourdais, 2009) and on the economic well-being of resident mothers and their children (e.g. Holden and Smock, 1991; Poortman, 2000). However, how separated parents shape and coordinate their post-separation daily lives on the micro-level is relatively unknown.

Separated parents must decide whether to live with or without the children and whether to care for them full-time or part-time. The type of residential arrangement chosen after separation gives shape to a large part of the day-to-day life of the post-separation family. In Western societies, two main types of arrangement can be distinguished. First, a resident mother arrangement, in which the children stay with their mother and have contact with their father on a regular basis or not at all. Second, the relatively new shared residence arrangement in which the children live with both parents alternately with childcare responsibilities divided equally.

In some studies, the daily lives of single resident mothers generally seem worse off than those of married mothers (e.g. Kendig and Bianchi, 2008; Sanik and Mauldin, 1986). These studies ignore the growing diversity of residential arrangements among separated families. Research in this area is an important addition to the literature because the consequences for the everyday life of a single resident parent are assumed to differ from those of a single shared residence parent. Resident parents, who are most often mothers, run the risk of becoming overburdened by sacrificing
time in personal leisure and care activities, including sleep, to meet the time demands of employment, childrearing and homemaking because they have no partners with whom to share responsibilities (Hertz and Ferguson, 1998; Kendig and Bianchi, 2008; Quinn and Allen, 1989; Sanik and Mauldin, 1986). Shared residence parents might not become two households at the moment of separation but rather a dual-location household (Green et al., 1999; Van der Klis and Karsten, 2009b), making day-to-day life more fragmentary and complicated. A more detailed understanding is required of the consequences of separation for daily life and the differences between the different types of post-separation residential arrangements.

The central questions addressed in this article are: How do single resident mothers and single shared residence parents shape and balance post-separation life? With what results and how can we explain the differences? We investigate how single resident mothers and single shared residence parents combine and balance their social roles and commitments in the care, work and leisure domains. Empirical evidence is drawn from individual in-depth interviews with 10 single resident mothers and 8 single shared residence parents with children younger than 18 years of age living in The Netherlands.

3.2 Shaping post-separation life

In general, daily life is dedicated to activities in the care, work and leisure domains, and people have multiple social roles in each domain of life. Individuals categorize and identify themselves by these social roles and therefore hold multiple identities (Burke and Reitzes, 1991; Stets and Burke, 2000). For example, a separated woman may identify herself as an employee (work domain), a mother (care domain) and a sportswoman (leisure domain). Burke and Reitzes (1981; 1991) define identities as the shared social meanings that individuals attribute to themselves in a role.

To maintain their identities, people develop commitments that connect them with their identities (Burke and Reitzes, 1991). The term commitment refers to a life choice with long-term consequences (Becker, 1960). One’s diverse commitments can be competing and conflicting. Because commitments compete for an individual’s time and energy, daily life can be understood to involve trade-offs and sacrifices (Becker, 1960; Willekens, 1991). If competing identities involve equally valued commitments, considerable stress and intra-personal conflict is likely to be generated (Burke, 1991; Burke and Reitzes, 1991).

Studies on the consequences of divorce for single resident mothers indicate that these women experience more stress and work–family conflict than married mothers, because there is no partner to share responsibilities in the work, care and
leisure domains (Kendig and Bianchi, 2008; Quinn and Allen, 1989). The responsibility of providing a household income on their own imposes particularly heavy restrictions on the time and energy available to commitments in other life domains. To manage the multiple and contradictory social roles in daily life, working single resident mothers spend less time with their children, in domestic work and in leisure than married mothers do (Kendig and Bianchi, 2008; Quinn and Allen, 1989; Sanik and Mauldin, 1986). As far as we know there is as yet no literature comparing the daily lives of resident parents and shared residence parents.

Inherent in identity theory is the assumption that people are reflexive agents who are actively involved in creating their own life courses by making conscious decisions and continuously reflecting on their actions (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Giddens, 1991, 1994; Stets and Burke, 2000). Critics of reflexive modernization question the ability of people to reflect on the circumstances of their lives, the extent of reflexivity and to which a person’s ability to reflect on their own situation actually affects their action or behavior (Alexander, 1996; Walters and Whitehouse, 2011). Therefore, Stryker and colleagues (e.g. Stryker, 1968; Stryker and Burke, 2011) emphasize the structural symbolic interactionist roots of identity theory by focusing on the impact of social structures on social behavior. Individuals shape their own life courses in relation to their preferences and the resources and restrictions inherent in their life course on the one hand and, on the other, the opportunities and constraints structured by social institutions and cultural and normative ideas.

In the daily lives of resident mothers and shared residence parents, social structures on various levels, e.g. normative institutional arrangements such as family and work, cultural ideas of motherhood and fatherhood or decisions made by other household members, can act as facilitators or constraints in shaping a post-separation residential arrangement.

3.3 Balancing care, work and leisure

Coordinating everyday life concerns balancing the social roles and corresponding commitments in the work, care and leisure domains in a 24/7 schedule. Several researchers (e.g. Ashforth et al., 2000; Bielby and Bielby, 1989; Clark, 2000; Desrochers et al., 2005; Karsten, 1995; Nippert-Eng, 1996; Schieman and Young, 2010) addressing the practice of combining commitments and activities in everyday life recognize that the different domains of life are interconnected and overlapping, which results in people constantly combining different, contemporaneous commitments.

Recent theories on combining work and care in daily life (Ashforth et al., 2000; Clark, 2000; Nippert-Eng, 1996) share the idea that the domains of life are
differentiated by physical, temporal and psychological boundaries. The specific commitments of a given domain occur at a certain location, at a certain moment, during a certain period of time and are accompanied by a certain behaviour and set of emotions. In daily life, people make transitions between the different domains by crossing the borders (Clark, 2000). How easily the borders can be crossed depends on one’s commitments, which influence the permeability and flexibility of the demarcations.

Permeability is defined by Ashforth et al. (2000: 474) as the degree to which a role allows one to be physically located in the role’s domain but psychologically and behaviourally involved in another role. Some jobs or employers allow workers to be claimed incidentally by their social roles as parents. When their children telephone them, for instance, temporal and psychological borders are crossed.

Flexibility is defined as the extent to which a border may contract or expand in time and space on a daily basis, depending on the demands of other domains (Clark, 2000). When something unexpected happens to a child, a worker might decide to return home early to fulfil commitments in the care domain. Because of the worker’s identity as an employee, part of the caring time at home may be claimed by activities in the work domain, such as checking emails and answering the telephone, although the worker is also occupied by watching over the children.

Depending on the permeability and flexibility of the borders, domains are to some degree integrated or segmented. Which state is desirable cannot readily be defined and depends on a variety of characteristics of the different domains and the persons involved. When borders are highly permeable and flexible, the integration of domains can lead to a well-balanced daily life. However, highly permeable and flexible borders can also lead to blurring of the domains, making negotiating with employers and family members difficult and creating high levels of work-care conflict and stress.

Mothers, in particular, seem to experience stress and role conflict in combining work and care. Although the number of women in employment has increased significantly in recent years (OECD, 2011), a strong cultural ideology of intensive mothering (Hays, 1996) still exists. This ideology of intensive mothering is described by Hays (1996) as a set of gendered ideas about good childrearing according to which the mother is still primarily responsible for bringing up the children in a child-centered, highly emotionally committed and dedicated fashion. In addition to their increasing commitment to the work domain, most mothers prefer, are socially expected or feel obliged to give precedence to commitments related to the care domain and experience high levels of work-care conflict.
3.4 Context of The Netherlands

In The Netherlands, 35,000 marriages end in divorce annually (2.0 divorces per 1,000 inhabitants and 1% of all marriages) (Spruijt and Kormos, 2010). In addition to these formal dissolutions, 60,000 couples experience the dissolution of a cohabiting union (10% of all cohabiting unions) (Spruijt and Kormos, 2010). In general, we have to be cautious about taking these two groups together. However, recent studies of the Dutch case show that the impact of union dissolution on couples with children does not differ substantially between married and unmarried couples (Spruijt, 2007). Therefore, we have combined the two groups and use the term separated in reference to couples who experienced a non-marital dissolution and to couples undergoing a legal divorce.

Since 1998, when Dutch law changed, 90% of separated parents have had joint legal custody in The Netherlands (Spruijt and Duindam, 2009). However, the most common post-separation residential arrangement in The Netherlands and in many other Western countries is still a resident mother arrangement, in which the children live with their mother and have contact with their father on a regular basis (74% in The Netherlands) (Spruijt and Kormos, 2010). This type of post-separation residential arrangement strongly supports the ideology of intensive mothering, which still dominates in the Dutch culture of care. Compared with women in other Western countries, Dutch women are employed more often and predominantly in part-time jobs (60%) (Van Wel and Knijn, 2006). It is often assumed that a shortage of affordable and good-quality childcare facilities prevents many mothers from working longer hours. However, studies on the Dutch case (Van Wel and Knijn, 2006; Portegijs and Keuzenkamp, 2008) show that it is not external obstacles but the Dutch culture of care that motivates most mothers, despite their social-economic background, to care for their children themselves as much as possible and not to increase their participation in the labor market.

In 2009, a new Dutch law on promoting continuing parenting after divorce was adopted (Spruijt and Kormos, 2010) which obliges parents with children below the age of 18 years to formulate a parenting plan as a precondition of the request to divorce. The plan must contain a description of the consequences of separation for the children and agreements between the parents on how parenting will continue after divorce. With a change in legislative norms, societal norms also change slightly. Today, being a

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8 In The Netherlands, formal childcare is subsidized by both government and/or employers. The fees vary with income, family status and number of children. On average, a resident parent with two young children would have to spend 16% of their available budget on childcare. In Sweden, resident parents with two children spend 5% and in the UK 9% of their available budget on childcare (Immervoll and Barber, 2006).
separated father in The Netherlands no longer automatically implies seeing the children once every two weeks. Recent studies show that the number of non-resident fathers who have no contact with their children is declining and the visiting frequency of non-resident parents is increasing (Kalmijn and De Graaf, 2000; Seltzer, 1991; 1998). Accordingly, a growing number of shared residence parents exist (15% in 2005 and 20% in 2010 in The Netherlands) (Spruijt, 2007) who, in contrast to traditional gendered assumptions, share the care of their children equally in terms of residential arrangement, (financial) responsibility, caregiving, support of school-related activities and leisure time budget (Spruijt and Kormos, 2010).

3.5 Respondents and methods

The evidence presented here is of an exploratory nature and draws on qualitative data from 18 in-depth interviews conducted in 2008 and 2009 with separated parents in The Netherlands. Respondents were selected from the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study (NKPS) (Dykstra et al., 2005; 2007), which contains information on 8,161 inhabitants of The Netherlands between 18 and 79 years of age and not living in an institution.

Two groups of respondents were selected through purposive (also known as theoretical) sampling (Mason, 1996): 8 single shared residence parents (3 males and 5 females) and 10 single resident mothers. In a shared residence arrangement, the children stay with each parent alternately for at least 12 nights per four weeks. In the arrangement with a resident parent, the children stay with their resident parent and visit their non-resident parent 2 to 6 nights per four weeks. We selected the respondents who had experienced divorce or dissolution of an unmarried, cohabiting union; had at least one child aged 18 years or younger with the ex-partner and who lived with the respondent for at least half the time; and whose ex-partner was still alive. Because we focus on the daily lives of separated parents in a one-parent household, we selected respondents who did not live with a new partner at the time of the interview. Within the selection, we aimed for a wide range of variation in place of residence, level of education and the number and age of the children. The ability to select interviewees from the NKPS survey facilitated choosing separated parents with an adequate variation of characteristics. Unfortunately, the agreement concerning the collection of interview data from the NKPS respondents did not allow the interviewing of ex-partners.

Table 3.1 gives an overview of some of the characteristics of the two groups of respondents. All interviewed parents, except one jobless resident mother, have commitments in the work domain for a substantial number of hours. The shared
residence parents interviewed participate more hours per week in paid work than the interviewed resident mothers do. However, the employed resident mothers participate more hours per week in paid work than working mothers in general do in The Netherlands.

**Table 3.1 Characteristics of the respondents (total of 18 individuals)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of respondents</th>
<th>Shared residence parents (n = 8)</th>
<th>Resident mothers (n = 10)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>women</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>men</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 29 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 - 39 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 - 49 years</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 50 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contracted work hours</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not employed</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>small part-time job (&lt; 25)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>large part-time job (25 - 35)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>full-time job (&gt; 35)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attained level of education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>higher vocational to university</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>middle secondary to middle vocational</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>up to lower secondary</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year of separation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994 to 1998</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999 to 2003</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 2003</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Characteristics of the children**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of children involved in arrangement</th>
<th>Shared residence parents (n = 8)</th>
<th>Resident mothers (n = 10)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of youngest child involved in arrangement</th>
<th>Shared residence parents (n = 8)</th>
<th>Resident mothers (n = 10)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>younger than 4 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - 12 years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 12 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of oldest child involved in arrangement</th>
<th>Shared residence parents (n = 8)</th>
<th>Resident mothers (n = 10)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>younger than 4 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - 12 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 12 years</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The interviewed shared residence parents were on average older, had a higher level of education and were more often full-time employed than the interviewed resident mothers. These characteristics are in accordance with those revealed in an earlier quantitative study indicating that separated parents who have dual careers, a high level of education and a high income are more likely to be involved in a shared residence arrangement than other parents (Bakker and Mulder, 2013). Parents who have a higher level of education and higher income are expected to have greater resources with which to overcome restrictions and constraints and greater bargaining power to negotiate preferred outcomes in the work and care domains and are therefore better equipped to succeed in balancing everyday life.

On average, the interviewed resident mothers had fewer and younger children than the shared residence parents. Younger, more dependent, children might make balancing daily life more complicated, but fewer children might make it easier. The resident mothers were more often separated before 1998 than the shared residence parents. One might expect that, with the change of legislative and societal norms, couples who separated more recently were more likely to be in a shared residence arrangement than those who separated previously. However, an earlier quantitative study (Bakker and Mulder, 2013) has shown that there is no significant relationship between the year of separation and the type of residential arrangement.

All individual in-depth interviews were conducted by the first-named author of this article. They were semi-structured, with a concentration on the experience of the post-separation residential arrangement, the daily activity pattern of the parents and their children, the constraints confronting them and their strategies for resolving these constraints. The interviews, which lasted between 60 and 100 minutes, were recorded and fully transcribed. The interview data were coded, classified and analysed thematically with the help of ATLAS.ti (software for qualitative data analysis). The analyses were conducted taking a top-down approach using relevant themes from the literature combined with a bottom-up approach using relevant themes derived from the interview material.

3.6 Results: Balancing post-separation daily life

Scheduling post-separation life
The interviews revealed that talking about activities in one domain without referring to the other domains is almost impossible. For most interviewees, the different domains, particularly those of work and care, feel like two sides of the same coin. This
observation confirms that the domains of work, care and leisure are interrelated in everyday life.

The interviewed parents develop different schedules with specific commuting days and lengths of stays with the children. Figures 3.1 and 3.2 illustrate the two most common two-week cycles for resident parents and shared residence parents. The colour grey marks the days of the week when the children stay with their mothers, white marks the days with their fathers.

The commuting rhythm of the children can be regarded as the main underlying structure of post-separation life. The parents arrange their commitments and related activities in accordance with the commuting schedule of the children. In most resident mother households, the children stay for the weekend (or part of the weekend) at their father’s home every other week, whereas shared residence parents live approximately half the time with their children and half the time without them. This rhythm has considerable consequences for the time demands of the care domain in particular, but also for the scheduling of activities in the work and leisure domains.

**Figure 3.1 Two most common two-week cycles for resident mothers**

```plaintext
mon tue wed thu fri sat sun mon tue wed thu fri sat sun

mon tue wed thu fri sat sun mon tue wed thu fri sat sun
```

**Figure 3.2 Two most common two-week cycles for shared residence parents**

```plaintext
mon tue wed thu fri sat sun mon tue wed thu fri sat sun

mon tue wed thu fri sat sun mon tue wed thu fri sat sun
```

**Single resident mothers: Balancing paid work, childcare and leisure**

All interviewed single resident mothers emphasized the social role as a mother first and foremost, and because the children stay with the mothers approximately seven days a week, resident mothers must almost continuously combine their commitments in the care domain with their work and leisure commitments.
In addition to their first identity as full-time caregivers, most interviewed resident mothers emphasized their responsibility of earning sufficient income. Most of the resident mothers increased the number of working hours after the separation and had a substantial part-time job (20 to 32 hours a week) to generate household income. The resident mothers experience high levels of conflict in combining commitments in the work and care domains. The need to meet financial responsibilities as a primary wage-earner gives them the feeling that commitments in the care domain are being compromised by commitments in the work domain:

‘Last year I realized that I had to work more hours to improve our financial situation. So I had to work for four days. I said to my daughter: ‘This means that you have to be on your own for a few hours after school every day.’ Of course she didn’t like that and neither did I.’ [Naomi9, a resident mother of an 11-year-old daughter]

Some interviewed single resident mothers mentioned explicitly that they preferred to work fewer hours than they actually do. Lisa, a resident mother with an 8-year-old daughter, reported the following:

‘If we were still together, I would prefer to work fewer hours. Not because of the job, but to spend more time with my daughter, helping her with her schoolwork. Now I have no time for that. Yes, working fewer hours would be great, but is financially impossible.’

Because the interviewed resident mothers are the only caregiving adults present in the household, they feel obliged to be constantly ‘on call’ for their children. These mothers often do not experience work time as a period during which they are relieved of responsibility in the care domain. Karin, a resident mother with three sons, 6, 10 and 11 years old, gives an example:

‘During work time I make sure I can be there [at school] when it is necessary. One of the children got himself a head injury during his gym lesson at school. At these moments I need to be there quickly. Fortunately I work close by.’

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9 The interviews have been rendered anonymous to protect the privacy of the respondents.
The interviewed resident mothers experience the borders between the care and work domains as highly permeable. Commitments in the work and care domains impose similar demands on the single resident mothers; for instance, having to be available during daytime. Consequently, stress and the work–family conflict are often experienced by these mothers.

For resident mothers with school-aged children, the intensity of the work–family conflict is less. These mothers minimize the need to outsource childcare by working as much as possible during school hours. A common strategy is to work three or four relatively short days a week – a schedule that makes possible working a substantial number of hours and being at home when the children finish school at 3 p.m.

In particular for single resident mothers with pre-school-aged children, the support of others is essential to overcoming the work–family conflict. The resident mothers interviewed often remarked that they were grateful for the freedom their employer or colleagues gave them when something unexpected happened to their child. Finding a flexible job a short distance from home and colleagues who help out in the case of disruption or emergency is a strategy for avoiding constraints:

‘I was consciously looking for a job within a short distance, with flexible hours, a flexible boss, because for example when the children are sick or something unexpected happens, I need to be there.’ [Maria, a resident mother with two sons, one 5 and one 6 year old]

In addition to a flexible workplace, flexible care services are an advantage to single resident mothers balancing daily life. Most interviewed resident mothers with pre-school-aged children prefer informal childcare provided by their own mothers, their former mothers-in-law or neighbors to formal childcare. This preference does not arise only from the Dutch culture of care. The resident mothers also consider informal, in particular grandparental, childcare a more flexible and low-cost alternative to formal childcare. Daphne, a resident mother with a 12-year-old son and a 14-year-old daughter, adds the following:

‘I don’t know how I’d have survived without my parents. It [grandparental childcare] was a perfect solution to my irregular working schedule. Formal childcare was not an option. I couldn’t afford it.’
The daily combination of work and care minimizes personal leisure time. Conforming to the culture of intensive mothering, resident mothers do not prioritize their identity as individuals with a right to personal leisure. Beth, a resident mother with two daughters, one 3 and the other 7 years old, describes her leisure time as follows:

‘Every day I am not working, every holiday, is spent with the children. Sometimes they are sick or we are going out or to the dentist. All my personal free time is about the children.’

Most interviewed resident mothers reduced their leisure time to the few hours when the children stayed with their father. During this period, resident mothers have time for sports, a social life and housecleaning. Beth describes her weekend without her daughters:

‘On Friday at seven o’clock the children go to their father, at 7.30 p.m. I am in the gym. When I’ve finished, I go home and get ready to go out with friends. We go out till six o’clock in the morning. On Saturday I sleep until late, do some grocery shopping and on Sunday I clean the house before the children come home.’

Although most interviewed resident mothers initially missed their children too much to enjoy the weekends off, after a while they valued these weekends as important for their social lives. Ann, a resident mother with two sons, 10 and 16 years old, describes the situation as follows:

‘In the beginning I had to get used to the weekends on my own. I used to clean the house, since that was the only moment I had time for that. But since I have a new partner, we spent these weekends together, doing fun things only. It feels a little weird, but I really like those weekends!’

Most interviewed resident mothers only incidentally ask their social network to provide childcare when they need some personal leisure time. They feel guilty not only about the frequency with which they ask for help but also about asking for help to enjoy some leisure time. Daphne explains:
For example, when I wanted to go out with friends, I thought; ‘I can’t ask my parents again’. They already take care of my children half the time. I don’t want to ask them to take care of them so that I can enjoy myself.’

For the interviewed resident mothers, the border between the leisure and care domains is highly permeable and flexible when demands arise from the care domain. However, the border is not highly permeable and flexible when demands arise from the leisure domain. The result is minimized leisure time concentrated in the days the children stay with their fathers. In conclusion, being a working single resident mother and having young children makes balancing daily life very difficult. Although their post-separation status increases the involvement in paid work, resident mothers continue to give precedence to commitments in the care domain. The situation forces them to create highly permeable and flexible borders between the work and care domains. As a result they experience the feeling of always being ‘on call’.

Shared residence parents: Balancing paid work, childcare and leisure

Most interviewed shared residence parents value their identity as a primary wage-earner at least as highly as their identity as a parent. Shared residence parents arrange their post-separation life taking into consideration their pre-separation commitments in the work domain. Accordingly, most interviewed single shared residence parents have full-time jobs and work the same number of hours after the separation as they worked before it. Maintaining a career is frequently mentioned as a reason for opting for a shared residence arrangement. Susan, a shared residence mother with an 8-year-old daughter and a 14-year-old son, says the following:

‘Whether we considered another type of arrangement? No way! It isn’t possible to combine another type of arrangement with both our careers. This is the optimal, or rather the least bad, solution.’

Most shared residence parents have a two-week employment cycle consisting of one week (when the children are present) working short days and one week (when the children stay with the ex-partner) working long days to compensate for the missed hours. Fiona, a shared residence mother of 9, 12 and 14-year-old sons, gives an example of such an employment cycle:
'When the children stay with me I work fewer hours, my employer knows that. They take into account my personal situation. The other week, when the children stay with their dad, I work more hours.'

For shared residence parents whose children switch between their parents’ homes more often than once a week, the same type of cycle can be recognized but with a different frequency. Jessica, a shared residence parent with two daughters, 14 and 12 years old and a 7-year-old son describes her employment cycle as follows:

‘On Monday and Tuesday I work short days; at 3.00 p.m. I drive to school to get the children. On Wednesday I work at home. On Thursday and Friday I work long days to compensate. On Thursday evening I usually stay overnight in the city where I work [80 km from the place of residence], to be able to work a long day and minimize commuting time.’

The care domain of the interviewed shared residence parents is clearly temporally and physically demarcated by the presence or absence of the children, which creates less work–family conflict and time stress in daily life. The days the children stay with one shared residence parent, the other parent can dedicate him/herself solely to work without interruptions from the care domain. On the days when the children are present, the interviewed shared residence parents minimize working hours, leisure time and time spent on domestic work and dedicate themselves to the children as much as possible instead of using childcare services. This schedule minimizes the need to outsource childcare. However, for some interviewed shared residence parents this pattern of staying at home when the children are present comes about because the shared residence parents feel guilty about being absent half the time, as Jack, a shared residence father with a 13-year-old son and a 17-year-old daughter describes:

‘When the children stay with me, I stay home in the evening. I did that from the beginning. When they were younger I could have arranged a babysitter. But one half of the week I can do all the things I want, so the other half I want to be here, exclusively for my children.’

Arranging an employment cycle that fits the commuting rhythm of the children requires a flexible employer who facilitates working flexible hours. Fiona emphasizes the importance of a flexible employer to arranging a shared residence arrangement:
'Our jobs are typical flexible jobs; we can arrange our own working hours. There are a lot of inflexible jobs that would make it impossible to maintain a shared residence arrangement.'

The amount of leisure time is greater for shared residence parents than for resident mothers. Most interviewed shared residence parents plan their leisure activities for the periods during which their children stay with the ex-partner. Some of the interviewed shared residence parents therefore experience their lives as two different parts.

'The week that the children stay with their father I live with my new partner. I work long days, in the weekend we go to the movies or to a party and sometimes we plan a vacation together. These weeks feel like I am kind of a single woman again.' [Fiona]

'It is a whole different world. Enormously. It is quite schizophrenic; one half of the week I am head of a one-parent family, the other half of the week I am a single man. That is a big difference. Both situations cannot be compared to a normal nuclear family.' [Jack]

Although some shared residence parents feel uneasy about this contrastive lifestyle, most value the situation positively:

'Then [when the children stay with their father] I live like I don’t have children. Tomorrow evening, for example, I have dinner with friends and it does not matter how late I will be home. [ ... ]. It is really nice to have some days without obligations.' [Jessica]

In conclusion, although most of the interviewed single shared residence parents do not approve of not seeing their children half the time, the temporal and physical demarcation of the care domain by the presence or absence of the children enables them to succeed better in balancing daily life than most single resident mothers do.

3.7 Limits to reflexive agency
The extent to which the interviewed parents are reflexive agents who actively, consciously and reflexively affect their own lives can be questioned. Although they proved their ability to reflect on their own lives during the interviews, not all were able
or had the resources to change their lives or to negotiate the more balanced life they preferred.

Resident mothers, in particular, remarked on the structural constraints they were facing in balancing their daily lives. A lack of financial resources, normative ideas on motherhood and the preferences and decisions of the ex-partner were frequently mentioned. Daphne described this complicated set of circumstances as follows:

‘A few years ago my financial situation was really problematic. I could not work enough hours because of my pre-school-aged children. First I worked 18 hours, then 20 and now I work 22 hours a week. So I said to my ex-partner: “You will have to give us more alimony or you will have to take care of the children more often, because I don’t know how to manage this anymore.” But of course, he didn’t listen.’

In conclusion, the differences between both groups are not solely matters of choice. Resident mothers who are less highly educated have lower incomes and work fewer hours than shared residence parents and have fewer resources with which to arrange or negotiate the balanced daily life they strive for.

3.8 Conclusion and discussion

The post-separation residential arrangement shapes a large part of the day-to-day life of parents. Earlier studies (Kendig and Bianchi, 2008; Sanik and Mauldin, 1986) have shown that the daily life of separated mothers is more constrained than that of married mothers. However, this study indicates that in addition to the traditional group of single resident mothers, who experience many constraints in combining work, care and leisure, there are single shared residence parents who balance their post-separation commitments more successfully.

The differences between the two groups of separated parents can be explained by their social roles and commitments in the work and care domains. The interviewed single resident mothers support the gendered ideology of intensive mothering, according to which the mother is still primarily responsible for bringing up the children (Hays, 1996) and underline their social role as caregiver and the related commitments in the care domain. After the separation, the involvement of the resident mothers in paid work has increased, without commitments in the care domain having become any less. Because the work and care domains impose approximately similar time demands on the resident mothers (for instance, being available during daytime), the temporal, physical and psychological borders between the work and care domains must be highly
flexible and permeable. As a result, a feeling of always being ‘on call’ and high levels of stress and work–family conflict are often experienced by single resident mothers (Clark, 2000). There is seldom any leisure time.

Shared residence parents challenge the traditional gender roles by combining commitments in the work and care domains as they did before the separation. After the separation, shared residence parents continue to share the commitments in the care domain with their ex-partners. As a result, the care domain is clearly temporally and physically demarcated by the presence or absence of the children. When the children stay with one shared residence parent, the other parent is free of commitments related to the social role as parent. This unscheduled time can be dedicated to catching up on paid work, to domestic work or to the leisure domain. The clear demarcation between the work and care domains contributes to a more balanced everyday life (Clark, 2000).

Although the daily life of single shared residence parents is less constrained than the daily life of single resident mothers, we do not suggest that a shared residence arrangement is the best post-separation residential arrangement. On paper, the most desirable arrangement seems to be a shared residence arrangement, but maintaining it places heavy demands on the relationship between ex-partners and their children.

The differences in commitments found between the groups are not solely matters of choice. Not all parents are able to change the circumstances in which they find themselves. In particular, resident mothers who are less highly educated work fewer hours and have lower incomes than shared residence parents, and have fewer resources with which to arrange or negotiate the balanced daily life they prefer. Therefore, we support the statement of Stryker et al. (e.g. Stryker, 1968; Stryker and Burke, 2011) that identity theory should not be used while ignoring the impact of social structures on social behavior.

Several further research topics can be derived from the findings of this study. One relevant line of research would be a comparison of resident mothers, shared residence parents and dual-earner couples with children. Our findings raise the question of whether the daily life of single shared residence parents is also less constrained than the daily life of married parents. We underline the need for more research if this question is to be properly answered. Furthermore, a comparison between single resident fathers and single resident mothers would be highly relevant in gaining more insight into gender-related differences.

An important feature of our analysis is the comparison of shared residence parents with resident mothers. The differences between the two types of post-
separation residential arrangements found in this study show that the growing diversity of post-separation residential arrangements should no longer be ignored in studies on the consequences of separation, in policy frameworks or in important political and social debates on separation.
Family routines and rituals following separation: Continuity and change
4. Family routines and rituals following separation: Continuity and change

This chapter has been published as:

ABSTRACT - Separation always changes family life. The aim of this study is to gain insight into the everyday practices of ‘doing family’ after separation. We focus on two central elements of family life: routines and rituals. While in most families both parents are involved in family routines and rituals, this is often not the case in post-separation families. Based on the narratives of 35 separated parents living in the Netherlands, we found three types of post-separation families. For all three types, routines with the children are practised separately with each parent or mainly with the resident parent. However, the three types differ greatly in how they practise family rituals. Rituals play an important role in displaying the post-separation family as a coherent unit. Our study further reveals that the type of post-separation family is not necessarily consistent with the custodial and residential arrangement and may change over time.

4.1 Introduction
Contemporary family researchers recognize and emphasize the continued endurance of family life after separation (e.g. Simpson, 1998; Smart and Neale, 1999; Thompson and Amato, 1999). Ahrons (1980) was one of the first who emphasized that divorce leads to a redefinition of the nuclear family, whereby the family transforms from a nuclear into a bi-nuclear system, rather than the absolute dissolution of the family. Moxnes (1999) argued that this is not necessarily the case, even though divorce always changes family life dramatically. More recently, Smart (2004a) stated that divorce no longer insinuates a clear break between parents, whereby one partner is to be blamed and punished by not being entitled to see the children. Instead, divorce is regarded as a transition in family life, a process by which couples with children continue to have a relationship, although spatially divided. Although the co-resident and romantic relationship between partners has ended, economic, social, emotional and practical bonds between parents are likely to remain, even if the parents remarry and create new families (Simpson, 1998). In addition to practices of shared responsibilities for the
children, part of the former family life is likely to remain, but separation will inevitably disrupt family life to some degree (Pett et al., 1992).

The consequences of separation for parents and their children have been a popular research objective (Wallerstein et al., 2000; Pryor and Rodgers, 2001; Hetherington and Kelly, 2002). However, most studies on post-separation family life focus on custodial and residential arrangements following separation and not so much on the everyday practices of post-separation families. Although the custodial and residential arrangements provide the framework through which family life is conducted, they do not provide much insight into the everyday post-separation family practices on a micro level. Separated families challenge the often taken-for-granted family practices and, in so doing, may create their own particular ways of ‘doing family’. Given the growing diversity and complexity among the post-separation residential arrangements at present, in the Netherlands as well as in other Western countries, it becomes all the more interesting to study post-separation family practices.

Smart and Neale (1999) were among the first scholars who emphasized the importance of family practices in post-separation family research. In their study they distinguished between three patterns of post-divorce parenthood: co-parenting, custodial parenting and solo parenting. This distinction was based on two elements: sharing or not sharing parental care and sharing or not sharing parental authority. Although family routines played an important role in their study, their typology was strongly related to the post-separation custodial and residential arrangements. For example, all parents involved in a shared residence arrangement were classified as having a co-parenting parenting style. As Smart and Neale (1999) admitted themselves, there is far more variety and nuance in everyday family practices of post-separation families with the same residential or custodial arrangement. Furthermore, Smart and Neale (1999) studied two sets of relationships: the parent–child relationship and the relationship between ex-partners. But what happens to the family practices in which both parents and their children used to participate before the split-up? Especially those practices where the family is reunited might play an important role in continuing family life after separation.

In this article, we aim to gain insight into the everyday practices of separated parents in doing family. We focus on which family practices continue after separation, how they are conducted and with whom. Inspired by studies on family life of two-parent families (e.g. Fiese et al., 1993), we distinguish between two important elements of family life: routines and rituals. According to Fiese et al. (1993), all families practise routines and rituals. They constitute central aspects of family life, especially in
families with young children. However, whereas in non-separated families, both parents, simultaneously or alternately, are involved in those routines and rituals to a certain extent, this is often not the case in separated families. It is likely that separation will disrupt family routines and rituals to some degree. Some routines and rituals might continue with both parents together, alternate between parents separately or with only one parent involved. Other routines and rituals will be dismissed, renegotiated or restructured.

Empirical evidence is drawn from in-depth interviews with 35 separated parents with children, living in the Netherlands. Based on the interview data, three types of post-separation families are distinguished. Our empirically based typology is meant to explore and understand diversity and differences among our respondents, rather than to derive generalizations.

4.2 Family routines and rituals
Since the middle of the 1960s, ideas about what constitutes a family have changed (Silva and Smart, 1999). In addition to the nuclear family, other types of family arrangements, such as cohabiting unions, single-parent families, stepfamilies and gay and lesbian families, have become more prevalent, thereby becoming more conventional and more visible in society. Furthermore, processes of individualization, de-traditionalisation and increased self-reflexivity have shifted family membership from being a given to being a choice, depending on the interactions of the members (Giddens, 1991, 1992; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Finch, 2007). As a consequence, today’s scholars try to avoid the term ‘the family’ by instead referring to ‘family practices’ (e.g. Morgan, 1996, 2011; Smart and Neale, 1999), ‘family life’ (e.g. Cheal, 2002) or ‘doing family’ (e.g. Morgan, 1999; Smart, 2000) as opposed to ‘being family’. These scholars share the assumption that family members construct their family by practising family life.

‘Practising family life’ has been conceptualized in several ways. Recurring elements include caregiving, solidarity, intimacy, sharing of resources, responsibilities and obligations (Silva and Smart, 1999). Most of these elements are rooted and can be recognized in everyday family routines and rituals. Together, routines and rituals are important to the well-being of the family (Fiese et al., 2002). Although the terms ‘routines’ and ‘rituals’ are frequently used interchangeably, there are important differences in function and meaning. Whereas family routines are instrumental to family organization, rituals provide a sense of belonging and emotional exchange among family members.

Fiese et al. (2002) distinguished between routines and rituals along the
dimensions of communication, commitment and continuity. Routines are practices accompanied by instrumental or instructional communication (i.e., this needs to be done), involve a momentary time commitment and endure as long as it takes (there is no afterthought). Furthermore, routines are repeated over time and recognized by continuity in behavior, even though there is no continuity in meaning. Rituals are practices accompanied by symbolic and meaning-making communication (i.e., this is who we are). They involve an affective commitment and provide a sense of belonging, both during and after the act. People may even memorize the act once it is performed. Rituals are also repeated over time, but besides providing continuity in behavior, they also provide continuity in meaning (i.e., this is who our family will continue to be).

Rituals can play an important role in ‘displaying’ family. Finch (2007) introduced the concept of ‘family display’. She argued that families not only need to be ‘done’, but also need to be ‘displayed’. Display is defined by Finch (2007: 67) as ‘the process by which individuals, and groups of individuals, convey to each other and to relevant other audiences that certain of their actions do constitute “doing family things” and thereby confirm that these relationships are “family” relationships’. Today’s diverse, fluid and complex character and structure of family relationships increase the need for family display, because relationships become less recognizable as constituting family relationships. In a recent edited volume of Dermott and Seymour (2011a), several authors applied the concept of ‘display’ to studies on different family settings, but none of them applied the concept to a dual-location family setting. As Finch (2007) described, the distinction between household and family requires an element of display and might even intensify the need for display. Besides being recognized by relevant others as family (Dermott and Seymour, 2011b), family display is also functional to represent ourselves to ourselves in a way we would like to think we are (Gillis, 1996). Frequently used examples of family routines are washing the dishes together or escorting the children to school. Examples of family rituals include the celebration of birthdays, Christmas, St. Nicholas evening and holidays. Aside from these momentous occasions, there are also rituals that occur on a daily basis, such as bedtime stories and dinnertime rituals. What makes it difficult to distinguish between routines and rituals is that every routine can become a ritual once it shifts from being an instrumental family practice to an act imbued with symbolic meaning (Fiese et al., 2002). Most of the time only the family members involved can interpret whether a practice has symbolic meaning or not.

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10 St. Nicholas evening is a Dutch ritual whereby children receive presents and sweets. It is widely celebrated among families with young children.
4.3 Researching post-separation families

Context of the Netherlands
In the Netherlands, 95,000 couples (2.3% of all couples: Spruitj and Kormos, 2010) experience the dissolution of a marriage (35,000 couples) or a cohabiting union (60,000 couples) annually. As a consequence, 27% of all Dutch children witness the separation of their parents some time in their lives (Spruitj and Kormos, 2010). Since 1998, when Dutch family law changed and joint legal custody became the norm, 90% of the separated parents share joint legal custody in the Netherlands (Spruitj and Duindam, 2009).

Today, in the Netherlands, as well as in other Western countries, social family policies aim at preserving family life and encourage the continuation of some form of family life after separation (Spruitj and Kormos, 2010; see also Roche, 1991, for the United Kingdom [UK]). In 2009, a new Dutch law promoting continued parenting after divorce was enacted (Spruitj and Duindam, 2009). With this law, parents with children younger than 18 years of age are obliged to formulate a parenting plan as a precondition for the request for divorce, and mediation or counselling is strongly recommended. The parenting plan must contain a description of the consequences of separation for the children and the agreements that have been made between the parents on how to continue parenting after divorce.

Despite these law changes, the most common residential arrangement, both in the Netherlands and in many other Western countries, is still a resident mother arrangement, in which the children live with their mother and have contact with their father on a regular basis (74% in the Netherlands: Spruitj and Kormos, 2010; see also Kelly, 2007, for the United States; Peacey and Hunt, 2009, for the UK). Although the ideology of intensive mothering (Hays, 1996) still dominates in the Dutch culture of care, today, being a separated father in the Netherlands no longer automatically implies seeing the children once every two weeks. A relatively small group of parents (20%: Spruitj and Kormos, 2010; 9 to 12% in the UK: Peacey and Hunt, 2009) maintain a shared residence arrangement in which the children live with both parents alternately and in which the care for the children is divided (nearly) equally.

Respondents and methods
The evidence presented here is of an explorative nature and draws on qualitative data from 35 in-depth interviews conducted in 2008 and 2009 with separated parents in the Netherlands. Respondents were selected from the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study (NKPS), which contains information on 8,161 inhabitants of the Netherlands aged
between 18 and 79 and not living in an institution (Dykstra et al., 2005, 2007). The respondents were selected through purposive sampling (Mason, 1996), from the following criteria: they had experienced a divorce or the dissolution of an unmarried, cohabiting union; they had at least one child with the ex-partner; they had at least one child aged 18 or younger who lived with the respondent for at least half of the time; they had an ex-partner who was still alive.

The sample consisted of 20 resident mothers and 15 shared residence parents (seven male, eight female). Within the sample we aimed for variation in terms of the respondents’ place of residence, level of education and the number and the age of their children. The ability to select interviewees from the NKPS made it possible to choose separated parents with an adequate variation of post-separation residential arrangements. Unfortunately, the agreement concerning the collection of interview data from NKPS respondents did not permit the interviewing of ex-partners. All 35 parents participated in individual in-depth interviews conducted by the first author of this article. The interviews were semi-structured and concentrated on separated parents’ experience of daily life, particularly in relation to the family, which included, for example: their contact with their ex-partners and their extended family; the division of responsibilities and tasks between both parents; the way in which they celebrated birthdays and special events.

Beyond raising topics from the topic list, the role of the interviewer was limited, in order to give the respondents ample time to tell their narratives. The interviews lasted between 60 and 100 minutes and were recorded and fully transcribed. The data were coded and analyzed thematically. The analytical strategy was twofold: a top-down approach was used, drawing relevant themes from the literature; and a bottom-up approach was used, drawing relevant themes derived from the interview material. In our analysis, exploration, rather than generalization, was the primary objective.

### 4.4 Three types of post-separation families

Based on the narratives of the respondents about with whom family routines and rituals are practised, we distinguished three types of post-separation families (see table 4.1). The first post-separation family type was ‘continuing family life’, whereby the family routines were alternately practised with each parent separately and at least some of the pre-separation family rituals were practised with both parents present.

The second post-separation family type was ‘building a new life’, whereby family routines were alternately practised with each parent separately or mainly with the resident parent and rituals were alternately practised with each parent separately.
The third type was ‘only one parent involved’, whereby both family routines and rituals were practised only or mainly with the resident parent. Although the children visited their non-resident fathers, they did not practise family rituals and routines together regularly. An overview of the characteristics of the respondents in each family type is given in table 4.2.

We did not find post-separation families in which family routines were still practised together with all of the members of the pre-separation family. For all three types, family routines were alternately practised with each parent separately or mainly with the resident parent.

Table 4.1 Overview of the different types of family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type 1</th>
<th>Type 2</th>
<th>Type 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Continuing family life’</td>
<td>‘Building a new life’</td>
<td>‘Only one parent involved’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n=12</td>
<td>n=16</td>
<td>n=7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routines</td>
<td>Each parent involved separately</td>
<td>Each parent involved separately or mainly resident parent involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rituals</td>
<td>Each parent involved separately; for at least some of the rituals, both parents are involved together</td>
<td>Each parent involved separately</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In relation to the three types of post-divorce parenting introduced by Smart and Neale (1999), it can be said that all parents who fitted in a ‘continuing family life’ family type shared care and parental authority and therefore belonged to the group of parents who were engaged in a co-parenting parenting style. However, not all parents who were engaged in a co-parenting parenting style belonged to the ‘continuing family life’ family type, because this type of family shared more than care and parental authority after divorce. Not all the parents who were involved in a ‘building a new life’ family type shared parental authority, but they did share parental care to some extent, so these parents could have either a co-parenting or a custodial parenting style. Most of the parents in an ‘only one parent involved’ family type had a solo parenting style, but some of them did share parental authority or care.

**Type 1: ‘Continuing family life’**
The first type of post-separation family transformed from a single-location pre-
separation family into a dual-location post-separation family. The relationship of the former spouses as partners ended but their relationship as parents continued. Twelve of the interviewed parents belonged to this type of post-separation family. Despite the fact that these respondents were separated, they emphasized first and foremost the importance of continuing their pre-separation family life.

‘That is the agreement we made when we got divorced; we change our family as little as possible, for the children’s sake in particular, because there is already a lot that is going to change with the divorce.’ [Alexander\textsuperscript{11}, a shared residence father with a 21-year-old son and a 15-year-old daughter]

‘As partners, we are separated because we no longer wanted to live together as partners, but as parents, we are attached and that is how we felt about it, and still do ... I can distinguish those roles quite well. Sometimes it is difficult – it was not for nothing that we decided to divorce.’ [Alice, a shared residence mother of 15- and 18-year-old sons]

Most of the respondents in this family type did not blame their ex-partner for the separation. In their role as parents they felt morally obligated to their children to minimize the impact of their ‘failings’ in their role as partners. This moral reasoning was also described by Smart and Neale (1999) and Smart et al. (2001). They emphasized that divorce is about making difficult moral decisions instead of enacting selfishness and egoism.

In these families, family routines alternated between the separate households of each parent. For example, in both households, the children had specific household tasks, their clothes were washed in both households and the children could be at both places when they were feeling ill. Furthermore, both parents took more or less equal responsibility in caregiving, for example by escorting their children to school, to a dentist or to their swimming lessons. Not surprisingly, most of these parents (nine out of 12) were involved in a shared residence arrangement and lived less than one kilometer away from their ex-partner.

Continuity in behavior and meaning is important in this family type. To maintain the pre-separation family life, all of these families created moments in which the former family was reunited and displayed, as described by Finch (2007). Family rituals played an important role in these gatherings.

\textsuperscript{11} The identities of the respondents have been rendered anonymous to protect their privacy.
Table 4.2 Characteristics of the respondents by family type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Type 1 'Continuing family life'</th>
<th>Type 2 'Building a new life'</th>
<th>Type 3 'Only one parent involved'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n=12</td>
<td>n=16</td>
<td>n=7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>women</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>men</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 29 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 - 39 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 - 49 years</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥ 50 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contracted work hours</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no job</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>small part-time job (&lt;25)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>large part-time job (25-35)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>full-time job (&gt;35)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attained level of education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>higher vocational to university</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>middle secondary to middle vocational</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>up to lower secondary</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Residential arrangement</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shared residence</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>resident mother</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duration of separation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 5 years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - 10 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 10 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age of youngest child at time of interview</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 4 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - 12 years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 12 years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age of oldest child at time of interview</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 4 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-12 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 12 years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distance between respondent and ex-partner</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≤ 1 km</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 1 and &lt; 10 km</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥ 10 km</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>New partner</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>both</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>respondent only</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ex-partner only</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neither</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>New children (n=5; number of respondents with children from new partner)</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Frequently mentioned rituals, celebrated with both parents together, included birthdays, St. Nicholas evening, graduation ceremonies and Christmas dinner. Alice emphasized the importance of these family rituals:

‘We go together to parents’ evenings at school, as well as to other events at school, important soccer games of the children, birthdays, etcetera. We celebrate birthdays with the four of us [respondent, ex-partner and their two children] by eating cake, going out or having dinner at a restaurant. Having a moment as a family, because that is what we still are, although we live at different places.’ [Alice]

This quote notes the displaying function (‘this is our family and it works’) of family rituals. Family displaying might become more important after a separation because the structure of the post-separation family is no longer defined by a shared residence. In addition to continuing family rituals, some families create new rituals. Sometimes new partners also obtain a role in these new family rituals:

‘We also arrange a sort of family council once every six weeks, here or at her place and then we all come together – our children, my ex-partner and nowadays also our new partners. We drink coffee and there is room to discuss all the things we want.’ [Alexander]

Having dinner and drinking coffee together on a regular basis were frequently mentioned examples of new rituals. Some examples were less common:

‘Two years ago we [respondent and her son] went on holiday to France. After two weeks my ex-partner arrived. The three of us stayed a few days and then I left, leaving him with our son for two more weeks in France. We did this for two years and it was a good solution.’ [Rose, a shared residence mother with a 10-year-old son]

As is the case with parents involved in a shared residence arrangement or a co-parenting parenting style (Neale and Smart, 1997; Smart and Neale, 1999; Smart et al., 2001), not all of the separated parents who were involved in this type of post-separation family had a good relationship with their ex-partner. Some of the respondents described how hard it was, especially in the first few years after the separation, to have contact and frequent meetings with their ex-partners:
'The first years after our separation, having contact with my ex was difficult. There was so much grief, anger, disappointment, you name it ... I remember us celebrating St. Nicholas evening together in one of those first years. The situation was tense, but we did not show it. The whole evening I felt a stone in my stomach, but the children were so happy and excited about celebrating St. Nicholas evening with the four of us.... But, especially in the last three, four years – we have been separated for 12 years now – our relationship has become friendlier.’ [Jack, a shared residence father with a 13-year-old son and a 17-year-old daughter]

Other respondents did not have a problem with maintaining a friendly relationship with their former partner after their separation, but some of them described how other family members did have a problem with this:

‘We decided together to separate, but some family members need to say: “It is all her or his fault.” It is the same with some friends. From the moment they decide to choose someone’s side, it is difficult to be in the same room together or to have a nice day when we are both present’. [Alice]

Although this type of post-separation family might give the impression that it is an ideal situation, not all of the children benefited from this family type. A continuing family life and parental relationship can raise children’s hopes that their parents will eventually reunite as a couple or bring about the question as to why their parents got separated in the first place. These dilemmas are described in earlier studies on shared residence arrangements and co-parenting parenting styles (Smart and Neale, 1999; Smart et al., 2001; Haugen, 2010), and might exist even more often in families where the former family unit is reunited on a regular basis:

‘Our son thinks it is madness; the way I have contact with his mother [drinking coffee together on a regular basis, being friends]. “You could as well have stayed together with her!” he says when he is angry’ [Alexander].

The parents involved in this type of post-separation family also described difficulties in combining the goals of continuing family life after separation with building a new life. New partners seemed to form a big threat to this type of post-separation family. Some of the new partners had a problem with the fact that the
respondent was still attached to his or her ex-partner.

‘We would really like to go on holiday with the three of us [respondent, ex-partner and their son], but my new partner does not think that is a good idea. Yes, the biggest problem is my new partner, who has a problem with me having such an intensive relationship with my ex-partner. That’s why we do fewer things together than I actually would like to do. I understand I have to make concessions like this.’ [Rose]

Moreover, new partners might entail the formation of a ‘new’ family. Some respondents started living together with their new partners and even had children together. These new families competed for the respondents’ time and energy with the post-separation family. Earlier studies have also shown that remarriage of one of the parents decreases the contact between the non-resident father and his children (Smyth, 2004; Kelly, 2007). Indeed, for some respondents, the routines and rituals that sustained the existence of the post-separation family were replaced by those of the newly formed family:

‘We used to go to an amusement park together or things like that, but nowadays we do these things ... these things fade away.... See, nowadays we do these things with the three of us [respondent, new partner and child]. That is how it goes.’ [Elizabeth, a resident mother with a nine-year-old son]

It can be expected that this type of family is most common among those parents who have recently separated. Six of the 12 respondents belonging to this type of family separated less than five years prior to interview. Two respondents emphasized that they did not expect their intensive relationship with their ex-partners to endure now that they had found a new partner:

‘There was my daughter’s birthday. We had dinner together with her father, his new partner with her children and me sitting there on my own. My new partner does not want to come. So these moments are no longer as nice as they were before. Afterwards I asked myself: “Why am I still doing this?”’ [Susan, a shared residence mother with an eight-year-old daughter and a 14-year-old son]
Most of the respondents in this type of family maintained contact with the extended family of their ex-partners, or at least some of its members. The children played an important role in their sustained contact. For instance, former parents-in-law could provide childcare and children’s birthdays could still be celebrated with the extended family.

**Type 2: ‘Building a new life’**

Seventeen of the interviewed parents belonged to the second type of post-separation family. This type of family seemed to be most common among families involved in a resident mother arrangement, in which the children lived with their mother and visited their non-resident father on a regular basis. Six parents who were involved in a shared residence arrangement belonged to this type of family. Instead of being in a dual-location post-separation family, the children in these families alternated between each parent’s new families. Although these parents acknowledged the fact that their children affirmed ongoing relationships with their former partners that involved mutual obligation, all of them emphasized, first and foremost, that they had built a new life after separation (and sometimes even formed a new family) in which the former partner did not play a role. Gradually, the former family faded away:

‘If we had no child together, I no longer wanted to see him [ex-partner]. It is just for our child that we still have contact; otherwise we would not have any contact. I do not have that need. Too much happened between us.’ [Lisa, a resident mother of an eight-year-old daughter]

‘In the beginning you try to keep those family things. Birthdays are important days, so you try to celebrate them together. But it does not work that way. Or at least, that is my experience. It faded away. You cannot mix two separate families. That may be the perfect picture, but at the moment of separation you decide to live our own life.’ [Olivia, a resident mother of 16- and 19-year-old sons]

Seven of the respondents involved in this type of family were living together with a new partner. Among these respondents, two of them also lived with the children of their new partner from previous relationships and two were living with a newborn child. In particular for respondents living together with a new partner, the new family seemed to replace the former family. Sally, a resident mother, who has a 13-year-old daughter and a 12-year-old son with her ex-partner and a six-year-old son with her new partner, described her family life as follows:
‘Sometimes I forget that part of the story [the part of the former family life]. My family feels as a normal family. Because my new partner and I make the decisions, it feels like we have three children together [they only have one biological child together and the other two are from her ex-partner].’[Sally]

To integrate the children into both new families, family rituals, such as birthdays, St. Nicholas evening and Christmas, were often celebrated twice with the children – separately in each family – and the holidays were split up between the new families:

‘We celebrated birthdays together, until he had a new partner and moved to another city. Now the children celebrate their birthday twice. One time here and one time there. And with St. Nicholas it is the same’ [Olivia].

In some of the families that belonged to the ‘building a new life’ type, especially those involved in a shared residence arrangement, routines were also separately practised in both new families. However, there were also some families in which the routines were mainly practised in the family of the resident parent:

‘During the weekends when my youngest daughter is with her father, she does not take a shower or a bath. He does not take responsibility in that. Last time, she was with him for four days, and she had not taken a shower. Of course that bothers me.’ [Violet, a resident mother of six- and nine-year-old daughters]

To live their own life and to create a new family life, most respondents described how they tried to minimize communication with their ex-partners. Examples of the kinds of strategies used to minimize communication included writing messages in a notebook that the child passed on, using emails instead of telephone calls or face-to-face conversations and, at the most extreme, not engaging in any form of communication at all:

‘He picks her [daughter] up and brings her back home again. There is “good” [sarcastic] communication: he uses the car horn when he arrives and then we know he is there. Sometimes it turns out that it is someone
else using a car horn.’ [Emily, a resident mother with five daughters ranging from eight to 23 years old and a 10-year-old son]

‘We communicate by exchanging written messages in a notebook, but since she stopped writing in it a while back, we do not communicate at all at this moment.’ [Bruce, a shared residence father with two 11-year-old daughters and an eight-year-old son]

After the separation, the interviewed parents involved in this type of family no longer had contact with their ex-partner’s extended family. Family members of the ex-partners did not fulfil any kind of role in the new families. Former parents-in-law were an exception because they often continued to provide childcare on a regular basis. As one interviewed parent described:

‘My former mother-in-law had an especially hard time in the beginning. She thought: “I will no longer see my grandchild.” And even now, my new partner is a real threat to her, because she thinks that she will not be welcome once I start living together with him. I do not know why she thinks this since she will always be welcome.’ [Naomi, a resident mother of an 11-year-old daughter]

Although the interviewed parents had minimal contact with the family members of their ex-partner, most of their children maintained contact with relatives in both families:

‘They have contact with both families, but never at the same time. They have only contact with the family of the parent with whom they are staying at that moment. It is not the case that his family visits the children when they stay with me, or the other way around.’ [Fiona, a shared residence mother of nine-, 12- and 14-year-old sons]

Type 3: ‘Only one parent involved’
Seven of the interviewed parents were involved in the third family type – where only one parent was actively involved in family life. All seven respondents were involved in a resident mother arrangement. Most of the interviewed mothers involved in this type of family no longer considered their ex-partner as a member of the post-separation family. Frequently mentioned explanations included the large geographical distance
between them and their ex-partner, the low level of contact and the absence of their ex-partner’s involvement in their children’s lives. The geographical distance between the ex-spouses is an important factor in practising family life. Not sharing a common residence complicates the functioning of the post-separation family. If one parent lives far away from the child, not only may asymmetries in the division of care routines arise between the parents, but also the frequency of contact and communication between them may decrease. Expectedly, then, the larger the distance between ex-partners, the more difficult it is to construct social ties by facilitating contact and care exchange and the more complicated it is to retain former family routines and rituals.

In this type of family, both family routines and rituals are practised with the resident parent mainly or only. Even birthdays are sometimes not celebrated with the non-resident parent:

‘When she stays with her father for a week, he does not cut her nails, for example. I mean, he is only involved in the fun part. When she stayed with him, she needed a salve from the doctor, and I said: “You can go to a doctor and buy it for her.” But he did not want to pay for the salve. I am the one who is responsible for her health; he is only there for the fun part.’ [Lucy, a resident mother, who has a seven-year-old daughter with her ex-partner and three- and five-year-old daughters with her new partner]

On the one hand, the interviewed mothers involved in this type of family described how minimizing the level of contact with their former partners could minimize the level of conflict. On the other hand, they thought that it was important to keep lines of communication with their former partners open for their children’s sake. For most of the respondents, the contradiction of these goals posed a challenge:

‘The less I talk to him, the easier it is for me. On the other hand, the less you talk to each other, the less you know from each other, if something is going on. When I am aware of something, for example, when the youngest had a nosebleed, I tell him about it and I want to know if he [son] has it again. But even when I told him about it beforehand, I have to remind him to tell me after the visit.’ [Beth, a resident mother with three- and seven-year-old daughters]
4.5 Family life over time

The type of post-separation family is not static, but might change over time for a given family. Other scholars (Smart and Neale, 1999; Smart et al., 2001; Smyth, 2004) have also emphasized that post-divorce parenting and post-divorce residential arrangements are in a constant state of flux. Our findings reveal two common pathways. First, there are families who adhere to a ‘continuing family life’ type in the first few years after the separation but become a ‘building a new life’ type after this time. Finding a new partner and creating a new family are often mentioned as an explanation for this transition. Second, there are families who adhere to an ‘only one parent involved’ type or a ‘building a new life’ type immediately after the separation, but former partners gradually begin to share more routines and rituals afterwards. For families who undergo that transition, the negative emotions during the separation might make it difficult to continue sharing family life immediately after the separation. However, over time, changes in the relationship of the ex-partners – notably a decline in the level of conflict – have a huge influence on the type of family maintained after separation.

4.6 Conclusion and discussion

Separation always changes family life (Moxnes, 1999). Although aspects of the former family life are likely to remain the same after separation, separation will inevitably disrupt family routines and rituals to some degree. In this article, we have focused on the extent to which family rituals and routines continue after separation, in which way and with whom. Based on the narratives of 35 separated parents, we explored diversity and differences among the respondents and distinguished three types of post-separation families: ‘continuing family life’, ‘building a new life’ and ‘only one parent involved’.

For all three types, family routines with the children are practised separately with each parent or mainly with the resident parent. While in most non-separated families, at least some routines are practised with both parents together, in post-separation families no routines are practised with all the members of the former family present. Family routines seem to be highly household-based. The instrumental or functional character of family routines might explain this pattern. Family routines often occur under time pressure and in certain time–space parameters, which do not easily accommodate different schedules, especially after separation. Fiese et al. (1993) stated that all families practise routines and rituals. Based on our findings we would like to rephrase this statement into: all families practise rituals and all households practice routines.
When a certain routine becomes so important that separated parents try to engage in that routine at the same moment, the routine becomes a ritual. An example is two parents escorting their son to his first holiday without his parents or to his first day at school. This may seem a functional routine, but might be experienced and interpreted as a ritual when the act is accompanied by symbolic meaning (ie, being together as a family at moments that symbolize growing up and conveying to themselves and relevant others that they are still a family).

The main difference between the three types of post-separation family can be found in the way they organize family rituals after separation. In the first family type – ‘continuing family life’ – at least some of the pre-separation family rituals take place with both parents present. Sometimes, even new rituals are created. In the second family type – ‘building a new life’ – the pre-separation rituals still occur with both parents, but not with the presence of both parents together. Although the parents involved in this type of post-separation family emphasize the fact that having children together entails certain obligations, building a new life without their ex-partner hinders the continuation of family rituals together. In the third family type – ‘only one parent involved’ – family rituals mainly or only occur with the resident mother. Although the children still visit their non-resident father, they do not share family life together.

Our findings show that rituals have an important role in family displaying after separation. In all three family types, rituals are used to display the family as a coherent unit. Whereas in the first family type the message is ‘we are still family’, in the second and third family types the message is ‘this is my new family’. As far as we know, rituals have not been recognized before as a tool for family display. Likely, this applies not only to families after separation, but also to other types of dual-location families, such as commuter partnerships.

As earlier studies revealed (Smart and Neale, 1999; Smart et al., 2001; Smyth, 2004), the post-separation family is not static but might change over time. Our study also shows that the type of post-separation family might change. We distinguished two common pathways: from a ‘continuing family life’ post-separation family type to a ‘building a new life’ family type after the first few years of separation and from an ‘only one parent involved’ post-separation family type immediately after separation to a ‘building a new life’ or a ‘continuing family life’ family type. Both the level of conflict and the start of a new romantic relationship seem to post a real threat to the continuation of family life after separation.

The fact that the type of post-separation family is not necessarily consistent with the custodial or residential arrangement of the post-separation family,
emphasizes the importance of looking further than those two aspects in order to gain insight into the growing diversity and complexity among post-separation families. Some children who primarily live with their mothers and occasionally see their fathers, practise family rituals with both parents present, whereas some shared residence parents do not necessarily partake in family rituals together.

This qualitative, explorative study made it possible to study non-standard families and their everyday experiences of family routines and rituals. Although some families follow the standard pathways, contemporary families have become more complex and diverse, with separation and remarriage complicating family relationships. Therefore it is likely that family display will become more intense and family rituals more important in everyday family life.

Our findings show that certain aspects of family life may remain unchanged after separation, but this is not necessarily the case. Furthermore, the different kinds of post-separation Familial arrangements and practices discussed by our respondents highlight the existence of a variety of post-separation families, rather than just one type. We therefore underline the need for more research that acknowledges the variations in post-separation families. Additional comparative research will help us to explore the factors that influence family life after separation further. Our study identifies at least three factors that influence everyday post-separation family life: the geographical distance between the ex-partners, the level of conflict and the presence of a new partner.

The question arises as to how important it is that family routines and rituals are continued after separation. In some post-separation families, family rituals might create a strong sense of belonging that buffers against the negative consequences of separation for children. At the same time, the level of conflict between ex-parents exacerbates the consequences of separation for children. When there is a lot of conflict between former partners, not sharing family routines and rituals might be the better strategy for the well-being of some or all of the family members.
Children living dual-locally: Parental perceptions of children’s residential experience after separation
5. Children living dual-locally: Parental perceptions of children’s residential experience after separation

ABSTRACT - Most children with separated parents live to some extent dual-locally. This article aims to acquire insight into separated parents’ perceptions of their children’s residential experiences. Empirical evidence is drawn from a qualitative study among 35 separated parents in the Netherlands. Five parents stated explicitly that they had taken into account where their children would feel at home, while negotiating a post-separation residential arrangement. All five preferred for their children to experience one residence as home. However, this preference resulted in different residential arrangements. Residential mothers (with whom the children live most of the time) in particular perceived their children to experience their residence, more than that of their ex-partners, as home. Shared residence parents (whose children alternate between their and their ex-partners’ homes) more often perceived their children to experience both residences as home. These differences in perception can be explained by elements of the temporal, physical and social dimensions.

5.1 Introduction

According to the dominant, western ideology of childhood, home has a central meaning in children’s everyday life (Forsberg and Strandell, 2007; Harden et al., 2013). ‘The significance of home cannot be ignored, nor can day care, hobbies or school ever replace home totally’ (Kyrönlampi-Kylmänen and Määttä, 2012: 82). However, what one sees as ‘home’, is not easily defined and the meanings and lived experiences are diverse (Blunt and Varley, 2004). The concept of home is historically, socially and culturally constructed, and formed and reformed over time. In the post-modern debate, ‘home’ is seen as a multiple, situational, individual and transitory concept (Rapport and Overing, 2000). Consequently, the concept of home has been detached from a distinct, physical location and has become mobile (Ni Laoire et al., 2010). This notion of mobile home suggests that the concept of home has become footloose, or that place is no longer related to ‘home’. However, as Ursin (2011: 223) stated: ‘The
contemporary notion of ‘home’ as mobile does not indicate that one is at home everywhere, but rather that one may feel at home anywhere, depending on the circumstances.’ In other words: one could bring ‘home’ along to other places (Van der Klis and Karsten, 2009a).

In European countries 67 to 90% of the children live with both of their parents, usually residing at one location (see for percentages per country Currie et al., 2004: 28). Considering the high divorce rates\(^\text{12}\), the number of children living at two different physical locations is expected to be substantial in European countries, the United States and Australia. As far as I know, there are no exact numbers available on children living dual-locally.

In the Netherlands, 30% of all children under age 18 have separated parents (Spruijt and Kormos, 2014). Most of these children live with their mother and have contact with their non-resident father on a regular basis (66% of the children of separation in the Netherlands: Spruijt and Kormos, 2014; 80 to 85% in the United States: Kelly, 2007). Approximately 32% of the non-resident fathers who divorced after 1979 have their children sleep over at least once a week (Kalmijn and De Graaf, 2000). Furthermore, there is a growing group of parents who maintain a shared residence arrangement, in which their children live with both parents alternately on an (nearly) equal basis (27% of the children of separation in the Netherlands: Spruijt and Kormos, 2014; 9 to 12% in the United Kingdom: Peacey and Hunt, 2009).

Both children who regularly stay with a non-resident parent and children who are involved in a shared residence arrangement live to some extent in two parental households and therefore live dual-locally. Having children who live at two residential locations has consequences not only for separated parents’ daily life (Bakker and Karsten, 2013; Bakker et al., 2014; Stjernström and Strömgren, 2012) but also, likely, for their children’s everyday life and experience of home.

For dual-local children (as well for migrant or nomadic children), the concept of mobile home might be a daily reality. Neale et al. (2003) stated that feeling at home at both parental residences is one of the key elements of children feeling positive about being involved in a shared residence arrangement. However, children’s residential experience is important not only to shared residence parents. According to Fleming and Atkinson (1999) children’s residential experience is also important to non-resident parents, who want their children to feel at home and to enjoy visiting them.

In their study on the consequences of divorce, Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989)

\(^{12}\) 2.0 divorces per 1,000 inhabitants in the Netherlands in 2011; 3.7 divorces per 1,000 inhabitants in the USA in 2011; 2.2 divorces per 1,000 inhabitants in the England in 2011, for more numbers see Eurostat Yearbook, 2013.
stated that many children experience a lasting discrepancy between their mothers’ and fathers’ homes. Common complaints of parents about shared residence arrangements include the lack of one place where children feel at home, difficulties experienced by the children with belonging in two places and the need for the children to frequently commute between two residences (Gilmore, 2006; Jensen, 2007).

Qualitative studies on the child’s perspective have shown a more nuanced image (Haugen, 2010; Neale et al., 2003; Schier and Proske, 2010; Smart et al., 2001). According to Haugen (2010) many children of divorce report having two parental homes without suggesting that either place is more ‘home’ than the other. Smart and colleagues (2001) reported that children have both positive and negative experiences of moving between two homes after a parental separation. In general, children’s residential experiences after separation seem to vary widely. Studies on the child’s perspective on residential experiences are important, because it is the children of separation who actually have two residences and must commute between them.

At the same time, in general it is the parents who are primarily responsible for creating (or at least trying to create) a home for their children. They are the ones who actual arrange the post-separation residential arrangement and it is mostly their decisions that determine whether the child has to commute. The parents’ perceptions of their children’s residential experiences are therefore also highly relevant.

Accordingly, the aim of this article is to gain insight into the perceptions of separated parents on their dual-locally living children’s residential experience. Separation is defined as the dissolution of a co-residential union, either married or unmarried, by moving apart, regardless of whether a legal divorce took place. The following three questions are addressed: (1) Do parents report they took into account their children’s (future) residential experience while negotiating the post-separation residential arrangement, and what were their considerations about this issue; (2) How do separated parents perceive their children’s residential experiences; and (3) What elements (of the physical, social and temporal dimensions) are perceived by parents to affect their children’s residential experience. The empirical evidence is drawn from in-depth interviews with separated parents who live in the Netherlands and have children who are younger than 18 years of age. More detailed information about the respondents can be found in the methodological section of this article.

5.2 An experience of home: three dimensions
A house or residence can be experienced in many ways. An experience of home is one of them. In their study on the meaning of home for dual-residential commuter couples (households in which one partner lives near his or her work and away from the family
home part of the time), Van der Klis and Karsten (2009a) distinguish a continuum of levels of experiencing a residence, scaled from space, through place, to home. Space is the anonymous and functional experience of a residence, place is the well-known and familiar experience of a residence and home is the intimate or personal experience of a residence. This distinction is based on earlier studies by Tuan (1977) and Taylor (1999) and emphasises that instead of a dichotomy between ‘home’ and ‘not home’, there is a scale of different experiences that fall in between the two.

For both adults and children, home has different connotations (Blunt and Dowling, 2006) and is not restricted to one place, but can refer to a number of places at the same time (Ellingsen and Hidle, 2012; Sixsmith, 1986). In their study on the home experiences of Finnish children between 5 and 7 years old, Kyrölä-Kylmänen and Määtä (2012: 75-78) report that for children home can be a place ‘where all his/her nearest and dearest people are: a mum, a dad, siblings and possibly the pets’; ‘a place where a child has his/her own place’; ‘a place for play’; and ‘sometimes also a place of worries and distress’. Therefore, home should be understood as a multi-dimensional concept.

Previous studies on the residential experience of persons who live dual-locally have distinguished different dimensions that can contribute to an experience of home (Kenyon, 1999; Sixsmith, 1986; Van der Klis and Karsten, 2009a). Although these studies concern different types of dual-local households (i.e., students: Kenyon, 1999 and Sixsmith, 1986, commuter partners: Van der Klis and Karsten, 2009a), there are remarkable similarities in the dimensions and elements that are found to contribute to an experience of home. Three dimensions are distinguished by all three studies.

First, all three studies find the physical dimension of a residence to be part of the experience of home. Home is much more than a place to live; it is a place that ‘affords opportunities for doing things that are personally highly valued’ (Sixsmith, 1986: 292). Not only the residence itself (e.g., the space available) but also the presence of personal objects and decorations in it can create a sense of belonging or familiarity and can transform a house into a home (see also Easthope, 2004). Objects can have both a functional and an emotional value. To experience a residence as a home it is not only the practical aspects of a residence but also the personalisation of a residence through objects that is important.

Second, all three studies distinguish a social dimension of home. Residential-based social interaction with others, such as relatives and friends, contributes to the

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13 Van der Klis and Karsten (2009a) discuss the physical elements of home as part of the material dimension.
experience of a place as a home\textsuperscript{14}. A home is often shared with relatives and should allow both entertainment and the enjoyment of other people’s company. In addition to positive experiences, there can be negative experiences of other people’s company. In her study of children involved in shared residence arrangements, Haugen (2010) concludes that the presence of stepfamily in a household could be an explanation for experiencing a residence as not only more but also less of a home. Furthermore, according to British students, a home should provide a supportive atmosphere where social and emotional needs are met and also should be located in a friendly neighbourhood (Kenyon, 1999).

Third, Kenyon (1999) distinguishes the temporal dimension of the experience of home. Although Sixsmith (1986) and Van der Klis and Karsten (2009a) do not distinguish a temporal dimension, both discuss this aspect in their studies and underline time as an important element in the experience of home. A residence can become a home when it is a permanent and stable base or when it has the potential to become a stable base (Keynon, 1999). Van der Klis and Karsten (2009a) also describe stability as an element of the experience of home. Other elements of time that they describe are the actual period that a home is used, along with the frequency of use.

5.3 Respondent selection and methods

Thirty-five separated parents took part in an individual, in-depth interview, carried out by the author of this paper. Respondents were selected from the \textit{Netherlands Kinship Panel Study} (NKPS) (Dykstra et al., 2005; 2007), the first wave of which contains information on 8,161 Dutch inhabitants between 18 and 79 years of age who were not living in institutions. The respondents were selected through purposive (also known as theoretical) sampling (Mason, 1996). All selected respondents had experienced a divorce or the dissolution of an unmarried, cohabiting union; had at least one child with the ex-partner, where at least one of those children was less than 18 years of age and lived with the respondent for at least half the time; and the ex-partner was still living. At the moment of separation all 35 interviewed parents were in a heterosexual relationship. In two cases the relationship ended because one of the parents ‘came out’ as homosexual. The respondents’ children living in resident-mother arrangements stayed with their non-resident fathers two to six nights every four weeks (excluding holidays). The respondents’ children living in shared residence arrangements stayed

\textsuperscript{14} Van der Klis and Karsten (2009a) also distinguish an activity dimension. Whereas the social dimension of home not only implies the presence of relatives (and friends) but also interaction with them, there is a considerable overlap between the activity and the social dimensions. Therefore, in this article the activity dimension is considered part of the social dimension.
with each parent alternately for at least twelve nights every four weeks. The selection contained 20 resident mothers, 15 shared residence parents (7 fathers, 8 mothers) and no resident fathers. In the Netherlands, the number of resident fathers is small (7% of all children with separated parents live with their fathers: Spruijt and Kormos, 2014). Within the selection, we aimed for variations in place of residence, respondents’ educational levels, number of children and children’s ages. The ability to select interviewees from the NKPS survey made it possible to choose separated parents with adequately varied characteristics. Unfortunately, the agreement concerning the collection of interview data from NKPS respondents did not allow us to interview either the children or the ex-partners of the respondents.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted in 2008 and 2009 and focused on separated parents’ experience of daily life. To give the respondents ample time to tell their narratives in their own words, the role of the interviewer was limited to raising topics from the topic list. The interviews lasted between 60 and 100 minutes. They were recorded and fully transcribed.

The interview data were coded, classified and analysed thematically with the help of ATLAS.ti. The analyses were conducted using a top-down approach over the three dimensions, which can contribute to an experience of home taken from the literature, and a bottom-up approach, which involved relevant themes derived from the interview material. The analyses focused on respondents’ narratives of their perceptions of their children’s residential experiences. Exploration, rather than generalisation, was the focus.

5.4 Creating home as part of the negotiations after separation

When parents separate, they must decide where and with whom their children will live. The Dutch law promotes continued parenting after divorce (Spruijt and Kormos, 2014) and obliges parents with children below the age of 18 years to formulate a parenting plan as a precondition for the request to separate. The plan must contain a description of the consequences of the separation for the children and agreements between the parents on how parenting will continue after the separation. According the Dutch law the default situation is that parents have joint legal custody after separation. In general, when parents come to an agreement the juridical court will take over the agreement. When parents cannot come to an agreement, juridical court will decide.

During the interviews, 5 out of the 35 interviewed parents explicitly emphasised that creating one home for their children was a precondition to negotiating a post-separation residential arrangement. For two out of those five parents, this
precondition indeed resulted in an arrangement that accommodates children living in one house most of the week: the resident-mother arrangement. For them, a shared residence arrangement was out of the question because the children would not have one stable home and would have to live in and commute between two homes.

I: ‘Did you ever consider a different arrangement?’
R: ‘With respect to the children, no, because I think it is good to have one home. In principle, I am not a proponent of a shared residence arrangement because I think it is really turbulent. Even though it is a pity, however, that they miss their father part of the time.’ [Sally, a resident mother of a 13-year-old daughter and a 12-year-old son with her ex-partner and a 6-year-old son with her new partner]

To such parents, creating a home at the mother’s residence and a visiting address at the father’s residence was considered to be a good solution to their desire to establish one home for their children.

The other three of the five respondents who explicitly emphasised that establishing one home for their children was a precondition initially tried to arrange a shared residence arrangement in which the children stayed at one residence and the parents moved in and out. One of the ex-couples actually tried this type of arrangement for three months, but it did not work out. At the time of the interview, they were still searching for a solution:

‘When we separated two years ago, we initially hired a second apartment together. We lived there alternately. So my ex-partner stayed in the apartment for three days when I stayed with the kids in the former family home and then we switched. So the children stayed in our communal home and we commuted between the two residences. It is a solution that is used sometimes, but the two of you have to be on speaking terms. For us, it did not work out to share a house. So we decided that the most quiet and elegant solution would be for the children to stay with my ex-partner in the former family home. At the moment, I have my own residence and three days per week I stay at their place during daytime. I leave after dinner, when my ex-partner gets home from work.’ [Pauline, a shared residence mother of three sons, aged five, eight and nine]
The second ex-couple had just arranged a shared dwelling when the mother found a new partner and cancelled the arrangement. The third ex-couple gave the option much thought but decided that their privacy was more important. Ultimately, providing the children with an equal amount of contact with both parents, combined with making the children feel at home at both residences, was considered to be more important than the children actually having one home.

The other 30 interviewed parents did not explicitly mention that a desire for their children to experience one or both residences as a home was part of the negotiation while arranging a post-separation residential arrangement. This does not necessarily imply that those parents did not think it was important for their children to experience one (or both) residence(s) as a home. It is possible that those parents did not mention the importance of their children’s experience of one or both residence(s) as a home because it is so obvious and embedded in everyday life that they did not even think of mentioning it. However, it is also possible that they did not give this issue much thought at the time of separation, or that it was a painful issue to them that they did not want to bring up in an interview setting.

5.5 Parental perceptions of their children’s experience of home

Although most children of separation live in two residences to some extent, not all respondents perceived that their children experience both residences (equally) as home. The narratives of the respondents revealed four types of parental perceptions of children’s residential experiences. Table 5.1 provides an overview of some of the characteristics per dimension for these four groups.

First, most of the respondents (17 out of 35) perceived that their children experienced their own residence as more of a home than the residence of the ex-partner. All of these respondents were mothers. Second, four of the respondents (two fathers and two mothers) perceived that their children experienced their own residence as less of a home than the residence of the ex-partner. Third, ten of the interviewed parents (four fathers and six mothers) perceived that their children experienced both residences equally as home.

Fourth, four parents (one father and three mothers) stated that they did not know whether their children experienced both residences as a home. All four had a tendency to believe that their children felt at home at both residences, but explicitly emphasised that they did not know for certain. Parents who perceived that their children experienced one residence as more of a home than the other residence were more likely to have children younger than 12 years of age.
Table 5.1 Characteristics of the respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal characteristics</th>
<th>Parental perception of their children’s home experience</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>At home at both residences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>women</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>men</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of youngest child at moment of interview</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>&lt; 4 years</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 - 12 years</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 12 years</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical dimension</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedroom for themselves</td>
<td>at both residences</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>at respondent’s only</td>
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<td></td>
<td>at ex-partner’s only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>not mentioned</td>
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<tr>
<td>Distance between residences</td>
<td>≤ 1 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; 1 and &lt; 10 km</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>≥ 10 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and activity dimension</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Presence of new partner</td>
<td>at both residences</td>
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<td></td>
<td>at respondent’s only</td>
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<td></td>
<td>at ex-partner’s only</td>
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<td></td>
<td>neither</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presence of siblings</td>
<td>at both residences</td>
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<td></td>
<td>at respondent’s only</td>
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<td></td>
<td>at ex-partner’s only</td>
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<td></td>
<td>neither</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presence of half siblings</td>
<td>at both residences</td>
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<td>at respondent’s only</td>
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<td></td>
<td>at ex-partner’s only</td>
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<td></td>
<td>neither</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presence of stepsiblings</td>
<td>at both residences</td>
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<td></td>
<td>at respondent’s only</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>at ex-partner’s only</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>neither</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports, hobbies, friends</td>
<td>at both residences</td>
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<td></td>
<td>at one residence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Temporal dimension</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living in former family dwelling at moment of interview</td>
<td>respondent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ex-partner</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>neither</td>
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<tr>
<td>Since when separated</td>
<td>&lt; 5 years</td>
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<td></td>
<td>≥ 5 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Residential arrangement</td>
<td>shared residence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>resident mother</td>
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</table>
To gain more insight into separated parents’ perceptions of their children’s residential experiences, the physical, social and temporal dimensions of the residential arrangement were explored. What elements of these three dimensions did the parents perceive as affecting their children’s residential experiences?

**The physical dimension**

Elements of the physical dimension that were mentioned by the respondents in relation to the residential experience of their children included whether the children had their own bedrooms, the distance between the two residences and the presence and moving of personal belongings between the two residences.

The respondents’ narratives showed that most of the respondents had only limited personal experience with their children’s other residence. This is in line with earlier studies that conclude that divorced parents have limited knowledge of the other parent’s family situation (Fleming and Atkinson, 1999; Wallerstein and Blakeslee, 1989). Most parents mentioned practical aspects of the physical dimension of the other residence, such as the location and type of residence and the availability of a private bedroom for the children. However, not all parents knew exactly how their children’s bedrooms were furnished or personalised. Not all respondents were welcome at the ex-partner’s residence. Asking children (especially young children) about the ex-partner’s residence did not always result in clear answers. Sometimes, parents decided not to ask too many questions:

‘Sometimes, she is reluctant to talk, particularly about what happens here or what happens there [at her mother’s residence]. She tries to be discreet... when you ask her how things went over there, she stays quiet. So I cannot get an impression of how things go over there. That is her protection, I guess.’ [Ted, a shared residence father who is uncertain whether his nine-year-old daughter experiences both residences equally as home].

The respondents often mentioned whether children had their own bedroom as important for those children to experience a residence as a home:

‘I do not have a sense that they do not feel at home in one of the residences. They have their own rooms. My daughter has the smallest room over here and the biggest room at her mother’s residence, and for my son it is the other way around.’ [Jack, a shared residence father who
has the perception that his 13-year-old son and 17-year-old daughter experience both residences as home]

In practice, however, the children of parents who perceived them to experience both residences as home were as likely to have a room to themselves in both homes as were children of parents who perceived them to experience one residence as more of a home than the other (table 5.1).

Another frequently mentioned element of the physical dimension was the distance between the two residences. Table 5.1 shows that most of the interviewed parents who lived within one kilometre of the ex-partner perceived their children to experience both residences equally as home. Respondents who lived a short distance from the ex-partner, often emphasised that living in one social environment explained why the children experienced both residences as home. However, three of the four respondents who perceived their children to experience the ex-partner’s residence more as a home also lived within 1 kilometre from the ex-partner. For those respondents, living in close proximity did not seem to be an important element of the experience of home. Respondents who lived further than one kilometre from the ex-partner more often perceived their children to experience their own residence as more of a home than the residence of the ex-partner. Irene, a resident mother, who perceived her 16- and 18-year-old daughters to experience her residence as more of a home than their father’s residence, explained as follows:

‘The children would be better off when I had lived closer to my ex-partner. Going to school, going to friends’ houses and going out at night, living close by makes all these things easier. Now, when they go to their father’s house, they are really pulled out of their familiar residential environment. My older daughter still has friends over there but my younger daughter does not. She gets really bored over there… it is a big change for her.’

Moving personal belongings —such as clothes, books and toys— is an issue that must be addressed by all children of separated parents. Even when both residences are fully ‘equipped’, there are belongings that must be moved. There is a wide variety in how parents interpret this routine ‘migration’ of belongings and how it influences their perceptions of their children’s residential experiences. Some parents interpreted moving personal belongings as a burden on the children negatively affected their residential experiences. Consequently, some parents tried to minimise the amount of
belongings to be moved. Other parents interpreted moving personal belongings as a service that they were obliged to offer their children to make their stay at both residences as comfortable as possible.

‘The funny thing is that during the first years after the divorce, I was proud that we only had to move a small backpack containing some medication and stuffed animals. Clothes and toys were present at both residences. But we had to move more and more things. It started with two little backpacks. Nowadays, my daughter’s whole wardrobe must be moved because she does not want to choose. All of her clothes, her laptop, her books and her shoes. [...] We still bring or pick up their stuff, so they do not have to worry about it. I see it as... Yes, we are separated, so it should not be their problem. So we have to take responsibility for moving their stuff.’ [Jack, a shared residence father who perceives his 13-year-old son and 17-year-old daughter to experience both residences as home]

The social dimension
The structure of the post-separation families, the presence or absence of friends and the opportunities to participate in sports and hobbies are elements of the social dimension that were mentioned during the interviews in relation to children’s residential experiences. Only two of the interviewed parents, both mothers, explained their children’s residential experiences in terms of their own presence:

‘Home is where the heart is. In particular, for my youngest child, this is where Mama lives, here it is pleasant, so this is home.’ [Pauline, a shared residence mother who perceives her oldest son to experience his father’s residence as more of a home and her youngest son to experience her residence as more of a home]

Apparently, the presence of a parent in a residence does not automatically transform a residence into a home for the children. Furthermore, the absence or presence of a new partner in one of the households was never mentioned as an explanation for the children’s residential experiences, whether positive nor negative.

Respondents mentioned both positive and negative effects of the presence of half- or stepsiblings on their children’s residential experiences. Sally, a resident mother who perceived her 13-year-old daughter and 12-year-old son to experience her
Children living dual-locally

residence as more of a home than their father’s residence described their complex family situation and its mixed consequences as follows:

‘My family consists of my husband and our three children, of which the youngest is our biological son and the oldest two are the children of my ex-partner and me. [...] For many years now, their father has had a new partner, who has two daughters with her ex-partner. [...] I have noticed that our son did not like that he was never alone with his dad. There were always three girls hanging around them, being really chatty. For that reason, they now organise private time together on Wednesdays. [...] Our daughter is friends with the two daughters of my ex’s new partner. Those girls are really nice and they really like each other. That makes it easier. She visits them on her bike and they go shopping together, stuff like that.’

A good relationship between children and their step- or half-siblings seems to have a positive effect on the residential experience. However, having step- or half-siblings and living dual-locally always implies that you will not live together all of the time:

‘In general, when children of divorce stay with their father—for example, for three weeks during the summer holidays—they miss their mother. But my two daughters (who are half-siblings) also miss each other. That makes it even more difficult.’ [Violet, a resident mother with 6- and 9-year-old daughters from two different ex-partners]

In addition to the narratives of the respondents, table 5.1 shows no clear relationship between post-separation family structure and parental perceptions of their children’s residential experiences.

The interviewed parents often mentioned everyday activities and routines as an aspect of their children’s experiences of home. The possibility of continuing daily activities independently at both locations was often mentioned as one of the reasons why children experienced both residences as home. Table 5.1 also shows that most of the parents who said that their children have sports, hobbies and friends at only one of the two locations perceived their children to experience one residence as more of a home than the other. Many resident mothers perceived that their child(ren) were
bored during days with their father because the children could not live their everyday lives with their friends.

‘Initially, they (two daughters) visited their father every other weekend. But after a while some problems emerged. They wanted to join a hockey team, and wanted to play hockey at weekends. Their dad lives in Belgium and he said that they could not play hockey on the weekends when they stayed with him. So when they reached puberty, they decided that they would rather go to hockey and have fun with friends than visit their father every other weekend. Nowadays, they visit him once per month.’ [Ruth, a resident mother who perceives her daughters to experience her residence as more of a home than their father’s residence]

Their children’s dependence on activities planned by the father for his days with the children gave some of the interviewed resident mothers the impression that their children were visitors to be entertained, not family members who participated in daily routines. In particular, when the distance between the residences was large, everyday routines and social activities were often restricted to one residence.

A few parents mentioned that they had tried to arrange two social environments for their children to make them feel at home at both locations. For example, they encouraged their children to join a sport or hobby clubs at both locations. However, it is difficult to be a club member when one is not present at one location on a full-time basis. Parental separation influences not only weekend activities with the non-resident parent but also activities with the resident parent. To some children, being somewhere else every other weekend is a reason not to become a member of a sports club or to get a weekend job.

‘Horse riding, for example, takes place on Wednesdays and Fridays, but on Friday my daughter leaves to go to her father’s house. So we tried several hobbies, but none of them fit her schedule. Classmates’ birthday parties are always a problem; they are often thrown on the weekend. For my youngest it is easier because her father lives in the neighbourhood.’ [Violet, a resident mother who perceives her 6- and 9-year-old daughters to experience her residence as more of a home than their fathers’ residences]
The temporal dimension

The two elements of the temporal dimension (i.e., a linear and a cyclical element), described in the study by Van der Klis and Karsten (2009a), were also mentioned by the respondents as part of the explanation for the respondent’s residential experiences.

First, the actual period that a child had lived in a particular residence (i.e., the linear element of time) was often mentioned by the respondents. In 31 of the cases, one of the parents stayed in the former family residence after separation. At the time of the interviews, in 21 cases one of the parents (12 mothers and 9 fathers) still lived in the former family residence. In their quantitative study based on the first and second waves of the NKPS, Mulder and Wagner (2012) showed that in 97% of separations in the Netherlands one of the ex-partners stayed in the former family dwelling. In Sweden (Mulder and Malmberg, 2011) and Denmark (Gram-Hanssen and Bech-Danielsen, 2008) these percentages seem to be a bit lower (respectively 76 and 70%).

However, these differences are difficult to interpret. The Swedish and the Danish studies are based on register data, in which places of residence are observed only once a year and only if they are reported to the population register. Moves to temporary accommodation are frequently not recorded. The question in the Dutch survey pertained to the situation at the moment of separation. It is likely that many of the respondents moved out after a few months.

Many respondents who perceived their children to experience one residence as more of a home than the other (including all four respondents who perceived their children to experience the ex-partner’s residence as more of a home) mentioned as part of the explanation that one residence was the former family home or even the home where the children were born.

‘Of course the former family residence is somehow more of a home. They were born there and they have more things there that belong to them. That is something that I cannot change. You can try to make them feel at home by creating a personal place for them, but it will never be the same as it is at home.’ [Bernard, a shared residence father who perceives his 12- and 16-year-old sons and his 15-year-old daughter to experience their mother’s residence as more of a home]

However, in the cases where the respondents perceived their children to experience both residences equally as home, the frequency with which one of the parents still lived in the former family residence was nearly the same (see table 5.1).
The importance of stability to the residential experience, i.e., knowing that a residence will be a stable and permanent base or can become one, has been described by Keynon (1999) and Van der Klis and Karsten (2009). In the case of separated families, an important role was played in the experience of stability not only by the actual time that they had lived in the residence but also by the time since the parents’ separation.

‘My oldest son still has problems with seeing this place as his home. It becomes more and more of a home; it is just one and one-half years since we moved here. That is a short period, of course. And he says: ‘There [his father’s residence] is where I was born’. That’s okay; I let him express this freely. But I hope that in the future, he will feel at home here.’ (Pauline, a shared residence mother with three sons, separated for one and one-half years).

Table 5.1 shows that almost all parents (9 out of 10) who perceived their children to experience both residences as home have been separated for more than five years.

Second, the frequency and length of stays were mentioned (i.e., the cyclical element of time). In particular the residential arrangement —shared residence versus resident mother— seems to have consequences for parental perceptions of their children’s residential experiences. Table 5.1 shows that most shared residence parents (four fathers, two mothers) perceived their children to experience both residences equally as home. In line with this, most resident mothers (16 out of 20) perceived their children to experience their residence as more of a home than that of the father:

‘I do not think that she experiences her father’s residence as a home. Home is here, because she is here most of the time.’ [Naomi, a resident mother with an 11-year-old daughter].

One resident mother explicitly mentioned the length of stays. She perceived her daughter to feel at home at her father’s place during the summer holiday, during visits of a few weeks in duration. However, during the winter, when the daughter only visited the father for a few days per month, she did not have enough time to make herself comfortable and feel at home at her father’s residence.

Furthermore, table 5.1 shows that all four of the parents who perceived their children to experience the ex-partner’s residence as more of a home than their own, along with all four of the parents who did not know for certain whether their children
experienced both residences as a home, were parents with a shared residence arrangement. Therefore, it can be concluded that shared residence parents hold a wider variety of perceptions of their children’s residential experiences than do resident mothers. This can be explained by the fact that children involved in a shared residence arrangement live at both residences on a nearly equal basis. In other words, such children truly do live dual-locally. Parents of children involved in a resident-mother arrangement might perceive their children to live single-locally and consider the fathers’ house as only a visiting address for their children.

5.6 Conclusion and discussion
This article aims to gain insight into separated parents’ perceptions of the residential experiences of their dual-locally living children. The first question addressed is; Do separated parents report they took into account their children’s (future) residential experiences while negotiating the post-separation residential arrangements, and what were their considerations about this issue? The five respondents who did explicitly mention that they took into account their children’s (future) residential experiences all preferred their children to experience one residence as home. This shared preference however resulted in different residential arrangements. Some perceived the resident mother arrangement as best accommodating the one-home option. Others tried the option of a shared resident arrangement with children staying at one address and parents moving in and out. The finding that most interviewed parents (30 out of 35) did not explicitly mention considering their children’s (future) residential experiences, while arranging the post-separation residential arrangement does not necessarily imply that those parents did not consider their children’s residential experiences to be important. It is possible that parents consider this as a matter of course and thus would forget to mention it. It is also possible that the interviewed parents did not give this issue much thought at the time of separation, or that it was a painful issue to them that they did not want to bring up in an interview setting.

The second question addressed is how separated parents perceived their children’s residential experiences. When asked, all of the parents interviewed had a perception of their children’s residential experiences. Whereas earlier studies (Haugen, 2010; Neale et al., 2003; Schier and Proske, 2010; Smart et al., 2001) find that children’s residential experiences vary widely after separation, this study revealed that the perceptions of separated parents on their children’s residential experiences also vary widely. This study shows that about half of the interviewees (17) perceived that their children experienced their own residence as more of a home than the residence of the ex-partner. Based on the narratives of the respondents, three other types of
perceptions were distinguished: the perception that the children experienced both residences equally as home; the perception that the children experienced the respondent’s residence as less of a home than the residence of the ex-partner; and last the perception of not knowing for certain whether the children felt at home at one or both residences.

To gain more insight into parental perceptions, the third question addressed in this article is what elements parents perceived to affect their children’s residential experiences. Three dimensions were explored: physical, social and temporal.

The narratives of the separated parents showed that elements of all three dimensions play a role in parental perceptions of their children’s post-separation residential experiences. The post-separation residential arrangements were strongly associated with the parental perceptions of their children’s residential experiences. Most resident mothers perceived their children to experience their residence as more of a home than that of the father. Although the shared residence parents showed a wider variety of perceptions of their children’s residential experiences, most of them perceived their children to experience both residences as a home. A shared residence arrangement seems to combine several elements of the physical, temporal and the social dimensions that parents perceived to contribute to their children’s experience of home.

The physical dimension stands for the bedroom situation, personal belongings and the distance between both paternal residences. Parents who perceived their children to experience both residences as home more often lived within 1 kilometre of the ex-partner than did parents who perceived their children to experience one residence as more of a home than the other. As was shown previously (Bakker and Mulder, 2013), in the Netherlands, there is a strong association between being involved in a shared residence arrangement and living within a distance of 1.5 kilometres of ones ex-partner. The interviewed shared residence parents explicitly mentioned living in really close geographic proximity to each other, preferable in the same neighborhood, as a precondition for maintaining a shared residence arrangement.

The social dimension (i.e. everyday activities and routines) is perceived by the parents to provide an experience of home for their children. Those routines and activities, along with friendships, are formed and located in neighbourhoods. The social and the physical are related. Both adults (Van der Klis and Karsten, 2009a) and children who live dual-locally have difficulties in bridging the gap between two geographically distinct social environments.
Furthermore, the temporal dimension becomes evident in the actual time children spent in each residence. Children involved in a shared residence arrangement live at both residences on a nearly equal basis in terms of time. In other words, such children really do live dual-locally. Parents of children involved in a resident-mother arrangement might perceive their children to live single-locally and to only visit the fathers address frequently.

The empirical findings in this article contribute to the post-modern debate on the concept of home. The findings support the concept of mobile home, but also emphasize the importance of place to the concept of home. It seems to be true that one can ‘bring along home’ to other places, but —according to their parents— for children, the distance between those places has to be limited. As Jensen (2009) stated, children’s everyday life is located in space, in one neighbourhood, one school or one kindergarten.

There are some limitations of this study that should be mentioned, which at the same time suggest some avenues for further research. First, the agreement on the collection of interview data from NKPS respondents did not allow interviews of the respondents’ children. Interviewing both parents and children would provide highly relevant information on the coherence or discrepancy between the perceptions of parents and those of their children. Second, the primary topic of this article —parental perceptions of their children’s residential experiences— is sensitive. Stating that you perceive that (one of) your children do not experience your residence as a home can be difficult or even unbearable for some parents. The fact that four respondents stated that they perceived their children to experience their residence as less of a home than the residence of their ex-partner, and that four parents stated that they did not know for sure whether their children experienced both residences as a home, suggests that at least those respondents felt confident enough to be honest about their thoughts.

The significance of home for children should not be ignored, especially when parents separate and must decide where and with whom their children will live. What is good for children will differ according to each situation and family, but it is important that separated parents consciously take into account their children’s everyday residential experience. This article shows that shared residence parents more often perceived their children to experience both residences as home, but also held a wider variety of perceptions, than resident mothers do. It seems likely that both shared residence parents and their children demonstrate a wider variety of residential experiences. The population of children living dual-locally is increased not only by high separation rates but also by the growing popularity of shared residence arrangements. Therefore, parental perceptions of their children’s residential experiences will become
even more relevant in the near future and should be an important topic both in studies on the consequences of separation and in political and social debates on separation.
Conclusion and discussion
6. Conclusion and discussion

This dissertation focused on separated parents and their children, their decision on the residential post-separation arrangement, and on the organization and practising of their everyday post-separation (family) life. The main research question addressed in this study was: How can the choice of a particular post-separation residential arrangement be explained, and how do separated parents involved in different types of post-separation residential arrangements organize and practise everyday (family) life? This question was explored in four empirical studies, each addressing a different part of the research question, that were presented in separated chapters in this dissertation. Having arrived at the end of the study, the final task is to answer the research question by recapturing the findings of the previous chapters, to reflect on the findings in light of the literature and important political and social debates, to reflect on the used data and methods and to discuss an agenda for future research.

6.1 Summary of main findings

The aim of this dissertation was twofold. The first objective, addressed in chapter two, was to acquire a better understanding of the choice of a particular post-separation residential arrangement by looking into the life course characteristics of separated parents. Chapter three, four and five focused on different, but all essential, elements of everyday live; organizing and balancing daily activities, family routines and rituals and residential experiences. Together, these three chapters address the second objective of this dissertation: gain insight into the organization and practising of everyday (family) life of post-separation families involved in different residential arrangements.

The choice of a post-separation residential arrangement

All separated parents have to choose and organize a post-separation residential arrangement for their children. A resident mother arrangement, in which the children live with their mother and have regular contact with their father, is still the most common post-separation residential arrangement. However, since the year 2000, the popularity of the resident mother arrangement is diminishing and other arrangements, in particular shared residence arrangements, gained popularity. Children involved in a shared residence arrangement live with both parents alternately. The parental care for these children – in terms of (financial) responsibility, care giving, supporting school-
related activities and spending leisure time – is divided on an equal basis. In 2001 5% of all Dutch children with separated parents were involved in a shared residence arrangement, in 2005 this group consisted of 15% of all Dutch children with separated parents and nowadays it is even 27% (Spruijt and Kormos, 2014).

The popularity of shared residence arrangements is remarkable, because shared residence arrangements are in contrast with the more conventional, gendered Dutch culture of maternal care by which arrangements in which children do not live fulltime with their mother used to be an exception, while having a visiting arrangement with their father used to be typical after separation. The questions arise who those shared residence parents are and why they opt for a shared residence arrangement. Therefore, in chapter two of this dissertation the focus was on understanding the choice of a particular post-separation residential arrangement by looking into the life course characteristics of separated parents. A comparison was made between the two most common types of post-separation residential arrangements: parents involved in a shared residence arrangement and mothers involved in a resident mother arrangement. The research question addressed in chapter two was: What life course characteristics of separated parents are associated with the two most common types of post-separation residential arrangements?

In chapter two, a life course approach (Elder, 1978; Hareven, 1978; Willekens, 1991) was used to provide a theoretical framework to explain the choice of a particular post-separation residential arrangement. The choice of a post-separation residential arrangement can be understood as an outcome of preferences, resources and restrictions arising from people’s life course trajectories. Individuals are active agents who shape their own life course in relation to their preferences and the extent to which these preferences can be put into practice, depending on the resources and restrictions inherent in their life course on the one hand (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Giddens, 1991; 1994; Stets and Burke, 2000) and, on the other hand, the opportunities and constraints structured by social institutions, culture and normative patterns (Stryker, 1968; Stryker and Burke, 2011).

The findings reported in chapter two revealed that shared residence parents are a typical modern category of separated parents with a specific set of life course characteristics belonging to the residential, educational, occupational and family careers. Being involved in a shared residence arrangement is associated with highly educated, dual-career ex-couples with a high income level, who previously practised a symmetrical task division during their partnerships.

These findings provide a better understanding of the growing popularity of shared residence arrangements. Since the 1960s, in the Netherlands, as in many other
Western countries, there has been a growing group of dual-career couples. The traditional breadwinner earning model has gradually been replaced by the dual-earner model, due to the massive entrance of women on the paid labour market. These dual-career couples prefer a symmetrical task division both in paid work and in unpaid (household) tasks (De Meester, 2010). This dissertation demonstrated that when dual-career couples separate, a shared residence arrangement seems to be the arrangement that best fits their preferences. The interview data presented in chapter two showed that shared residence parents indeed had a high level of symmetry in task division during their marriage. In order to maintain the symmetrical care division that they had during their partnership, and to combine commitments in the work and care domains as they did before, the dual-career ex-couples preferred to be in a shared residence residential arrangement after separation. Another part of the explanation of the high prevalence of shared residence arrangements among dual-career ex-couples might be that these ex-couples are more likely to have the resources to overcome restrictions and constraints imposed by being involved in a shared residence arrangement. For example, two suitable dwellings close to each other might be easier to obtain for couples with a higher income level.

In chapter two of this dissertation, a strong association was also found between the geographical distance between the dwellings of both ex-partners and the likelihood of maintaining a shared residence arrangement. The quantitative analyses showed that parents who lived within a distance of 1.5 kilometres or 10 minutes traveling time from their ex-partner are much more likely to be in a shared residence arrangement than are separated parents living further away. The importance of living in really close geographic proximity to each other, preferably in the same neighborhood, was also often explicitly mentioned by the interviewed shared residence parents as a precondition for maintaining a shared residence arrangement. Twelve of the 15 interviewed shared residence parents actually lived in the same neighborhood (within 1 km distance) as their ex-partner. Most of these parents had made a conscious choice to live in the same neighborhood in order to maintain a shared residence arrangement while providing one social environment for their children.

In the Netherlands, households with a symmetrical division of paid work and household tasks are overrepresented in inner cities and urban contexts. Those residential areas are attractive because of their central location and variety of amenities (Boterman, 2012; De Meester et al., 2007). Therefore, it is surprising that no association between degree of urbanization of the residential environment and shared residence arrangements was found in this study. An explanation might be that in the
Netherlands less urbanized residential areas offer different opportunities than urbanized residential areas, which also enable ex-partners to organize a shared residence arrangement. Less urbanized residential areas, for example, often have a less tight (social) housing market and therefore lower housing prices, which make it easier and also more affordable for parents to obtain two dwellings in the same neighborhood.

Chapter two furthermore demonstrated that maintaining a shared residence arrangement holds different meanings for men and women. Compared with the most common resident mother arrangements, shared residence arrangements are an expression of increased paternal involvement and decreased maternal involvement. This explains the finding that having a new partner is associated with a lower likelihood for men, but a greater likelihood for women, of being involved in a shared residence arrangement. For women, being in a shared residence arrangement instead of in the most common arrangement with a resident mother is associated with less time spent with the children, which makes spending time with a new partner easier. For men, being in a shared residence arrangement increases the time spent with the children compared with being a non-resident father, which makes spending time with a new partner more difficult.

**Organizing everyday life after separation**

Chapter three of this dissertation aimed to explain the differences between single resident mothers and single shared residence parents in organizing everyday post-separation life. In this chapter, the focus was on single separated parents maintaining a one-parent household. Those parents in particular run the risk of becoming overburdened by the time demands of employment, childrearing and homemaking, because they do not have a residential partner to share the ‘burden’. The research question in chapter three was: *How do separated parents shape and balance post-separation life, with what results in terms of work, care and leisure, and how can we explain the differences between single resident mothers and single shared residence parents?*

In chapter three, organizing everyday life was interpreted as balancing the social roles and corresponding commitments in the work, care and leisure domains in a 24/7 schedule. These domains are differentiated by physical, temporal and psychological boundaries (Ashforth et al., 2000; Clark, 2000; Nippert-Eng, 1996). In daily life, people make transitions between the different domains by crossing the borders (Clark, 2000). How easily the borders can be crossed depends on one’s commitments, which influence the permeability and flexibility of the demarcations.
The qualitative analyses presented in chapter three revealed that the post-separation residential arrangement has considerable consequences for the organisation of the everyday life of separated single parents. The commuting rhythm of the children not only defines the time demands of the care domain, but also for the scheduling of activities in the work and leisure domains. Compared to the traditional group of single resident mothers who experience many constraints in combining work, care and leisure, single shared residence parents succeed better in balancing their post-separation commitments. The differences between these two categories were explained by the parents’ social roles and commitments in the work and care domains.

Most single shared residence parents value their identity as a primary wage earner as highly as their identity as a parent. After separation, shared residence parents continue to share the commitments in the care domain with their ex-partners. When the children stay with one parent, the other parent is free of commitments related to their social role as parent. This unscheduled time can be dedicated to catching up on paid work, to domestic work or to the leisure domain. As a result, the care domain is clearly temporally and physically demarcated by the presence or absence of the children. The clear demarcation between the work and care domains contributes to a more balanced everyday life (Clark, 2000). Although most shared residence parents do not approve of seeing their children only half the time, the temporal and physical demarcations of the care domain by the presence or absence of the children enables them to succeed better in balancing everyday life than most single resident mothers do.

Most single resident mothers increase their involvement in paid work after separation, while they continue to give priority to commitments in the care domain. Because the work and care domains impose approximately similar time demands on the resident mothers (for instance, being available during daytime), the temporal, physical and psychological borders between the work and care domains must be highly flexible and permeable. As a result they experience the feeling of always being on call. There is seldom any leisure time.

The differences found between both categories of parents are not solely matters of choice. Single resident mothers are on average less highly educated, have lower incomes and work fewer hours than shared residence parents, and therefore have fewer resources with which to arrange or negotiate the balanced daily life they strive for. Some of the interviewed resident mothers made remarks on the structural constraints they were facing in balancing their daily lives. A lack of financial resources, normative ideas on motherhood and the preferences and decisions of the ex-partner were frequently mentioned constraints.
Practising post-separation family life

Getting separated as partners is about breaking up with your partner and making a new start. Getting separated as parents, however, is for a great deal about creating a new post-separation relationship together and finding ways to maintain the continuing obligations of parenting. These obligations keep ex-partners together as parents. Although it is likely that separation will disrupt family life to some degree, part of the former family life is likely to remain. Therefore, in chapter four the research question was: Which family practices of the pre-separation family continue after separation, how are they conducted and with whom?

The focus in chapter four was on two central elements of family life: routines and rituals. Routines are practices that are instrumental to family organization. Rituals are practices that provide a sense of belonging and emotional exchange among family members. A routine can become a ritual once it shifts from being an instrumental family practice to an act imbued with symbolic meaning (Fiese et al., 2002). Whereas in non-separated families, both parents, simultaneously or alternately, are involved in routines and rituals to a certain extent, this is often not the case in separated families.

The results presented in chapter four showed that in post-separation families no routines are practised with all the members of the former family present. Family routines turned out to be highly household-based. The instrumental or functional character of family routines might explain this pattern. Family routines often occur under time pressure and in certain time-space parameters, which do not easily accommodate different schedules, especially after separation.

Based on the way they organize family rituals after separation, in chapter four three types of post-separation families were distinguished: ‘continuing family life’, ‘building a new life’ and ‘only one parent involved’. In the first family type – ‘continuing family life’ – at least some of the pre-separation family rituals take place with both parents present. Sometimes, even new rituals are created. In the second family type – ‘building a new life’ – the pre-separation rituals still occur with both parents, but not in the presence of both parents together. Although the parents involved in this type of post-separation family emphasize the fact that having children together entails certain obligations, building a new life without their ex-partner hinders the continuation of family rituals together. In the third family type – ‘only one parent involved’ – family rituals mainly or only occur with the resident mother. Although the children still visit their non-resident father, they do not share family life together.

Furthermore, chapter four revealed that rituals have an important role in family display after separation. Finch (2007) introduced the concept of ‘family display’. She
argued that families not only need to be ‘done’, but also need to be ‘displayed’. Finch (2007: 67) defines display as ‘the process by which individuals, and groups of individuals, convey to each other and to relevant other audiences that certain of their actions do constitute “doing family things” and thereby confirm that these relationships are “family” relationships’. Today’s diverse, fluid and complex character and structure of family relationships increase the need for family display, because relationships become less recognizable as constituting family relationships. Family display might be even more important for dual-location households, such as shared residence families, because, as Finch described in her study (2007), the distinction between household and family requires an element of display and might even intensify the need for display.

The results presented in chapter four showed that in all three distinguished family types, rituals are used to display the family as a coherent unit. Whereas in the first family type ‘continuing family life’ the message is ‘we are still family’, in the second and third family types the message is ‘this is my new family’. As far as I know, rituals have not been recognized before as a tool for family display. Likely, this applies not only to families after separation, but also to other types of dual-location families, such as commuter partnerships. Although some families follow the standard pathways, contemporary families have become more and more complex and diverse, with separation and remarriage complicating family relationships. Therefore it is likely that family display will become more intense and family rituals more important in everyday family life.

**Residential experiences after separation**
In chapter five of this dissertation, everyday life of post-separation families was studied by looking into the parental perception of their children’s residential experience after parental separation. Most children with separated parents live dual-locally. Although the post-separation residential arrangements, schedules of overnight stays and commuting rhythms of children with separated parents are divers, most of them live to some extent in two alternate parental residences.

Studying the parental perception of their children’s residential experience is relevant because parents are the ones who are primarily responsible for creating a home for their children. Parents arrange the post-separation residential arrangement and it is mostly their decisions that determine whether the child has to commute or not. Therefore, chapter five aimed to gain insight into the perceptions of separated parents on their dual-locally living children’s residential experience.
The first question addressed in chapter five was: Do parents report they took into account their children’s (future) residential experience while negotiating the post-separation residential arrangement, and what were their considerations about this issue? Five respondents did explicitly mention that they took into account their children’s residential experiences. They all preferred their children to experience one residence as home. This shared preference however resulted in different residential arrangements. Some parents perceived the resident mother arrangement as best accommodating the one-home option. Others tried the option of a shared resident arrangement with children staying at one address and parents moving in and out.

The second question addressed was: How do separated parents perceive their children’s residential experiences? The findings presented in chapter five revealed that the perceptions of separated parents on their children’s residential experiences vary widely. The post-separation residential arrangements were strongly associated with the parental perceptions of their children’s residential experiences. Residential mothers in particular perceived their children to experience their residence, more than that of their ex-partners, as home. Shared residence parents more often perceived their children to experience both residences as home than resident mothers do. It seems likely that both shared residence parents and their children demonstrate a wider variety of residential experiences.

To gain more insight into the parental perceptions, the third question addressed in chapter five was: What elements parents perceived to affect their children’s residential experiences? Three dimensions were explored: the physical, social and temporal dimensions. The narratives of the separated parents showed that elements of all three dimensions play a role in parental perceptions of their children’s post-separation residential experiences. A shared residence arrangement combines several elements of the physical, temporal and the social dimensions that parents perceived to contribute to their children’s experience of home. Shared residence parents more often live within one kilometre of their ex-partner, their children’s everyday activities and routines are located in one neighbourhood and their children live at both residences on a nearly equal basis in terms of time. These aspects all contribute to the parental perception that their children experience both parental residences as home.

The results presented in chapter five contribute to the post-modern debate on the concept of mobile home. Although it seems possible for children to ‘bring along home’ to other places, the distance between those places is important and has to be limited.


6.2 Diversity, change and continuity

In this dissertation, diversity, change and continuity were recurring themes. Besides the differences between the two types of post-separation residential arrangements studied in this dissertation, a great variety exists among post-separation residential arrangements of one kind. In this dissertation a distinction was made between shared-residence parents and resident mothers based on the number of nights the child(ren) spend with both parents alternately. However, it should be noted that there is not such a thing as ‘one shared resident arrangement’ or ‘one resident-mother arrangement’. The analysis of NKPS survey data revealed that there was a category of parents whose children spent between 30% and 40% of their time in the other parent’s household, but who did not report being involved in a shared residence arrangement. For example, these parents’ children stayed with their father every weekend (Friday evening to Monday morning), but lived solely with their mother throughout the week.

Whereas in most other studies the definitions of shared residence arrangements involve at least 30% of the child’s time spent in each household (Baker and Townsend, 1996; Masardo, 2009), this dissertation took into account this grey area by classifying this particular group of households, in which the children stay with their non-resident parent for nine to eleven nights per four weeks (32–39% of a year), as a shared residence arrangement or a resident mother arrangement based on the respondents’ reports about whether or not they regarded themselves as being involved in a shared residence arrangement. Not only the division of number of nights with both parents can be different within the same type of arrangement, chapter three showed that parents with the same residential arrangement also maintained very different schedules, for example schedules with specific commuting days and lengths of stays with the child(ren). Furthermore, chapter four showed that families with the same type of residential arrangement could practise family life in very different ways.

These findings show that post-separation residential arrangements are not pre-fixed or one size fits all arrangements, but rather design it yourself arrangements. Although there are lots of parents who get separated and all face (at least partly) the same issues, parents experience this transition in family life as an individual one, which needs an individual customized solution. All separated parents have to find out what works for them and their children. In contrast to the nuclear family, who can follow the standard pathways, separated parents (as well as other non-standard families) challenge the often taken-for-granted family arrangements and practices and, in so doing, create their own particular ways of doing family. This dissertation supports the ideas of contemporary family researchers (e.g. Morgan, 1999; Smart, 2000) who claim that ‘being family’ is replaced by ‘doing family’.
The diversity found in this dissertation can be understood in light of life course theory, by which individuals are seen as active agents who shape and reshape their own life course (Giddens, 1991; 1994). Separated parents are making conscious decisions and reflect on these decisions (reflexivity), resulting in different individual arranged residential arrangements. The interviewed separated parents were making morally difficult decisions when they decided and planned how to care for their children after separation. All interviewed parents, irrespective of their post-separation residential arrangement, believed that they searched for the best solution under the circumstances they were in and felt personally responsible for their decisions.

An inevitable consequence of the (above described) process of conscious decision-making and continuous reflection on these decisions is change. This study demonstrated how post-separation families and their residential arrangements are constantly in flux and change over time to meet changing circumstances, needs or preferences of one or more of the family members involved.

The findings presented in this dissertation also showed that along with the diversity and change in the different domains of life, separated parents are in search of continuity in their everyday practices. This might seem a contradiction, but whereas the separation and the post-separation residential arrangement led to a decrease in continuity over the life course, separated parents try to maximize continuity in everyday life. They do this, for example, by continuing their pre-separation division of care or holding on to certain pre-separation family rituals.

6.3 Reflection on theory
The life course approach (Elder, 1978; Hareven, 1978; Willekens, 1991) has a central role in this dissertation. In chapter two a life course approach provided an explanation for the choice of a particular post-separation residential arrangement. The diversity found between different post-separation families can be understood as an outcome of preferences, resources and restrictions arising from people’s life course trajectories. In chapter three, organizing everyday life was interpreted as balancing the social roles and corresponding commitments in different domains of life. A great advantage of life course theory is its focus on the interrelation of the different domains of life. A choice or change in one domain affects other domains of life.

In a life course approach individuals are seen as active agents who define and redefine their own life course by making conscious decisions in the different domains of life. Therefore this approach is a very useful (social) theory to explain the different choices made by post-separation families, resulting in different life course trajectories. While using a life course approach, that emphasizes the active involvement of people
in shaping their own lives and their individual responsibilities in them, one should be aware of the (limited) extent to which separated parents are reflexive agents who actively, consciously and reflexively affect their own lives. Not all individuals are able to change the circumstances in which they find themselves. The separation itself may have been a consequence of a deliberate action to escape from an unsatisfactory marriage for some, but an unpleasant surprise for others. After the separation, in particular residential mothers, who are less highly educated, work fewer hours and have lower incomes than shared residence parents, have fewer resources with which to arrange or negotiate the life course they prefer. Furthermore, opportunities and constraints structured by social institutions, culture and normative patterns should not be neglected while using a life course approach.

Theories on doing family and on displaying family provided a useful framework to understand the organization and the practicing of post-separation family life. First of all, the theory on doing family legitimizes the fact that parents and their children are studied as family-units in this dissertation, although they have been separated and do not live in one residence anymore. Furthermore, the concepts of family display explained the importance of family rituals in practicing post-separation family life. As far as I know, rituals have not been recognized before as a tool for family display. Likely, the importance of family rituals applies not only to families after separation, but also to other types of non-standard families. This might be true in particular for families who live dual-locally and cannot be recognized by common residency, like commuter partnerships.

Although Hägerstrand (1970) was not mentioned explicitly throughout this dissertation, his time-space geography plays an important role in understanding the findings in this study. As one of the first geographical scholars, he focused on the importance of locality and proximity in everyday life by introducing *time-geography*. Hägerstrand conceptualized every individual as on a path through space within time. Each activity takes place on a certain location, at a certain time, and during a certain amount of time. Distances between locations where activities take place need to be bridged, take time and limit the amount of activities.

In this dissertation the importance of place in general, and proximity in particular, in everyday life of parents and their children is being highlighted in several ways. Chapter two showed the importance of living really close to one’s ex-partner, preferably in the same neighborhood, for organizing and maintaining a shared residence arrangement. In chapter four, proximity between both parental residences was identified as a key factor in practising post-separation family life. Not sharing a common residence complicates the functioning of the post-separation family. If one
parent lives far away from the child, not only may asymmetries in the division of care routines arise between the parents, but also the frequency of contact and communication between them may decrease. Furthermore, the findings presented in chapter five revealed that parents who perceived their children to experience both residences as home more often lived within 1 kilometre of the ex-partner than did parents who perceived their children to experience one residence as more of a home than the other.

Although there are scholars (e.g. Castells, 1996) who suggest that in post-modern society people have become footloose and place has lost its importance - intensified by the integration of Internet in everyday life -, the findings presented in the dissertation support the ongoing importance of locality in everyday life of children and their parents. Both adults (Van der Klis and Karsten, 2009a) and children who live dual-locally have difficulties in bridging the gap between two geographically distinct social environments. As Jensen (2009) states, children’s everyday life is located in space usually comprising just one neighbourhood, and one school or kindergarten.

### 6.4 Social and policy implications

This dissertation provided insight into the growing diversity among post-separation families and contributed to our understanding of how different types of post-separation families arrange and organize their everyday lives. The concept of family is not only interesting and relevant for family and social researchers, but also in policy frameworks or in important social debates on separation.

In the last few years shared residence arrangements got a lot of both positive and negative attention in Dutch society. One the one hand shared residence arrangements are seen as having less negative outcomes for children with separated parents than other arrangements (Westphal, 2015). On the other hand, in 2014 a family-drama in the Netherlands, involving a shared residence father who killed his children, led to a broad discussion about the pros and cons of shared residence arrangements and the consequences of on-going parental conflict for the well-being of children.

The specific life course characteristics of shared residence parents found in this dissertation, raises the question if the impacts of a shared residence arrangement on children’s well-being are due to the arrangement as such or due to the specific characteristics of the parents involved in the arrangement. A recent study from Belgium (Mortelmans et al., 2011) stated that the socio-economic advantage of parents in a shared residence arrangement compared to parents in a resident mother arrangement is becoming less evident since shared residence arrangements are
becoming more widespread. Therefore, the consequences and impacts of different types of post-separation residential arrangements might also become less divergent. In order to answer the question about what residential arrangement is in best interest of children, this question would merit further research.

The Dutch political framework has become more pro shared residence arrangements in recent years. In 2009, a new law on promoting continuing parenting after separation was adopted (Spruijt and Kormos, 2014). This law obliges parents with children below the age of 18 to formulate a parenting plan as a precondition for the request to divorce, and mediation or counseling is strongly recommended. The plan must contain a description of the consequences of separation for the children and agreements that have been made between the parents on how to continue parenting after divorce.

The findings of this dissertation made it clear that in particular a short geographical distance between the ex-partners can make a difference in post-separation family life. Living close to each other increases the involvement of the father after separation, increases the likelihood to maintain a shared residence arrangement, makes it easier to organize and balance everyday commitments in the work and care domains, makes it easier for both parents to be involved in daily routines with the children and parents who live close to each other have more often the perception that their children experience both parental residences as home. Although these findings make clear that ex-partners with children living close to each other really can make a difference in post-separation everyday life for both children and their parents, for a lot of separated parents with a wish to live close to each other it is not that easy to obtain two residences close to each other.

The constraints that (might) complicate the realization of the optimal residential arrangement after separation should get more attention in both scientific and social debates. In the cities, but also in most small municipalities, separation no longer guarantees parents priority on the social housing market. Housing policies could be an interesting instrument in promoting continuing parenting after separation. In 2013, a social housing association in Amsterdam (de Key) opened a so called *parentshouse*, offering parents (temporarily) a place to live in close proximity of their children during the first year after separation (see www.parentshouse.nl). The popularity of this initiative showed that there is a need for housing opportunities for separated parents who want to live nearby the former family home.
6.5 Reflection on data and methods

The explanatory mixed methods research design of this study has proved valuable. In chapter two, besides finding associations by quantitative analyses, the qualitative Minipanel data made it possible to gain more insight into the mechanisms underlying these associations and contributing to their explanation.

The possibility to combine survey data and qualitative data gathered among the same respondents was a great opportunity and provided several advantages. The NKPS survey data is a unique and very rich dataset, which contains a wealth of information about family relations in the Netherlands. Besides many important background variables such as socio-economic and household characteristics, the dataset includes the required detailed information about the residential arrangements of separated parents and their children at the time of the interview: co-residence, locations, the number of nights spent in the maternal and paternal residence and frequency of contact between the child and his/her non-resident parent. Selecting respondents from NKPS survey respondents made it possible to choose separated parents with an adequate variation in post-separation residential arrangements and several other background characteristics. Furthermore, information from the survey was used to prepare the interviews and tailor them towards the situation of the respondent. This was a strong aspect of this study.

There were weaknesses as well. Unfortunately, wave one of the NKPS data did not include information about the number of nights the children stay at the residence of the mother and the father. This information is necessary to identify the type of post-separation residential arrangement of the family. Therefore, only respondents who were represented in both wave one and wave two could be included in the analysis of this study. The selection of separated parents contained 295 respondents. Pooling the NKPS dataset with the SIN dataset made it possible to increase the number of respondents and thereby the statistical power of the pooled dataset. A disadvantage was some loss of information owing to differences in measurement of the variables. Furthermore, the data were collected a few years apart, and practices of separated parents might have changed between the surveys. However, I considered the advantage to outweigh the disadvantages of pooling the datasets together. The final pooled dataset contained 675 respondents.

Another weakness was that the survey data did not include information about matched pairs of ex-partners from the same couples. Information on matched pairs would be highly instructive in gaining further insight into which combinations of characteristics of ex-partners lead to specific post-separation residential arrangements and into how pairs of ex-partners reach their decision as to the type of arrangement.
Neither did the agreement concerning the collection of interview data from the NKPS respondents allow the interviewing of respondents’ ex-partners or children. Interviewing both parents and children could provide highly relevant information on the discrepancy or coherence between the perceptions of both parents and those of their children.

6.6 Agenda for further research

Research comparing post-separation families with other (non-traditional) family arrangements

The findings presented in this dissertation underline the need for more research that acknowledges the variations in post-separation families and their residential arrangements. Throughout this dissertation, parents involved in the two most common types of post-separation residential arrangements were studied and compared: parents involved in a shared residence arrangement and mothers involved in a resident mother arrangement. The findings in this dissertation provide several avenues for further comparative research with other (non-traditional) family and residential arrangements.

One line of further research would be to study parents who are involved in a resident father arrangement. In the Netherlands only 7% of children are involved in this type of post-separation arrangement (Spruijt and Kormos, 2014), which is even more in contrast with the normative Dutch culture of maternal care than shared residence arrangements. It is likely that also parents involved in residential father arrangement are characterized by a specific set of life course characteristics. Whereas this group of parents is not frequently observed in survey datasets, qualitative research methods are particularly suited for adding to this type of research.

Another line of comparative research would be to compare working shared residence parents with dual-career couples with children. Compared to the traditional group of single resident mothers who experience many constraints in combining work, care and leisure, single shared residence parents succeed better in balancing their post-separation commitments. This finding, presented in chapter three of this dissertation, raises the question whether the daily life of shared residence parents is also less constrained than the daily life of dual-career parents.

The findings on the practising of everyday family life and the parental perceptions of the residential experience of their children made clear that it would be interesting to further investigate dual-location households. Although there are several types of dual-location households in the Netherland, not much is known yet about...
these types of families. With the dissertation of Van der Klis (2009) on commuter partnerships and the current dissertation on shared residence post-separation arrangements a good start was made, but there are yet other types of dual-location households who challenge the traditional ways of being family, for example transnational families. Therefore I would like to emphasise the on-going need to study the practises of doing family, commuting and home-making of dual-location families.

Avenues for further research using the NKPS data
The NKPS dataset is a very rich dataset, which contains a lot of information on families and relationships in the Netherlands. At the time the analysis for this study took place, the NKPS survey data consisted of two waves. In 2012 the third wave became available. The occurrence of this new wave further enriches the possibilities for further research of this large-scale longitudinal dataset. Studying the three waves would make it possible to follow separated families and their residential arrangements through time, which is especially interesting in the light of this dissertation’s finding that post-separation families are continuously in flux and change over time. In this light, it would also be very valuable to conduct follow-up interviews with those respondents from the NKPS Minipanel who are present in the third wave.

The NKPS Minipanel conducted for the research project underlying this dissertation contains a lot of qualitative information. This qualitative information is accessible to other academic researchers (for more information see www.nkps.nl). The available data include the research proposal and design, the interview instructions, background information, correspondence with respondents and the transcripts of the interviews (rendered anonymous). Although a large part of the topics in the interviews has been analysed for this research project, there are still topics left that did not get any or much attention. For example, the interviews contain detailed information on decision-making processes in families, newly formed stepfamilies and the organisation and practises of the children’s travelling from one parent to the other. Such travelling is a regular activity that many children in the Netherlands, as well as in other countries, practise every week after school hours or in the weekends, by car, foot or bicycle, in the company of their parents, siblings, dogs or alone, bringing a lot of stuff or hardly any. There is still a lot of detailed information left in the interview data and therefore I encourage those researchers who are interested in these data to use them in further research. The topic list of the interviews is the appendix of this dissertation.
References


References


References


I. Overview articles dissertation

This dissertation is based on four articles with the following references:


The majority of the work for all chapters was done by the first author, who was responsible for conducting the quantitative and qualitative research and writing the articles. The co-authors guided the conducted research and provided comments, additional ideas, small text fragments and text editing.
II. Topic list interviews separated parents

A. Current household situation

Opening question: Can you describe your household, who belongs to it and where do they live?

- Description household: who belongs to it
- Where do the members of the household live; distance in between
- Division of stays: days/nights children
- Other moments of parent-child contact: telephone, email etc.
- Division of child-related stuff; bedroom, school-items, toys
- Where is home for the children and why
- Division of costs
- How are agreements formalized

Follow up question: How did you decide on the residential arrangement?

- What concerns or aspects played a role
- Who moved after separation
- Consequences of moving
- What alternatives were discussed
- Arrangement of first choice; respondent, child(ren) and ex-partner
- Why not arrangement of first choice

Follow up question: Did the child(ren) have a say in the decisions that were made?

- Who initiated it
- When did they have a say and on what topics

B. Weekly time-budget and task division

Opening question: Can you describe what a normal weeks look like, for you, your child(ren) and how the parental tasks are divided.

Schedule child(ren): Residential:  
- commuting patterns; when
- travel time and means of travel
- stuff being moved
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<th>Details</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| School/day-care           | □ schedule and location  
                            □ travel time, means of travel, with whom  
                            □ school-related activities: who’s involved  
                            □ help from others |
| Household tasks           | □ schedule household tasks |
| Leisure                   | □ schedule hobby’s, sports, friends etc.  
                            □ travel time, means of travel, with whom  
                            □ help from others |
| (Ex-)family contact       | □ When, how and with whom  
                            □ travel time, means of travel, with whom  
                            □ help from others |
| □ description day with father and day with mother |
| □ description day at school and weekend day |
| □ division parental tasks |
| □ holidays and birthdays |
| **Schedule respondent**   |                                                                          |
| Work                      | □ schedule and location  
                            □ travel time and means of travel  
                            □ experience and contentment |
| Leisure                   | □ schedule and location  
                            □ travel time and means of travel  
                            □ experience and contentment |
| Household tasks           | □ schedule household tasks  
                            □ help from others  
                            □ experience and contentment |
| Parenting tasks           | □ schedule tasks and division  
                            □ help from others  
                            □ experience and contentment |
| (Ex-)family contact       | □ When, how and with whom  
                            □ travel time and means of travel |
| □ description day with or without the child(ren) |
| □ description working day and weekend day |
Follow up question: What changes occurred after separation (considering a normal week) and what problems or constraint did you and your family members face?

- □ changes in normal week
- □ constraints
- □ solutions

C. Division responsibilities ex-partners

Opening question: How are the parental responsibilities divided, who takes the decisions and how do you communicate on this?

- □ division parental responsibilities
- □ communication about well-being and upbringing child(ren)
- □ synchronization agenda
- □ synchronization rules
- □ contact with ex-partner; frequency and how
- □ obligations towards ex-partner
- □ changes after separation
- □ experience and contentment

D. Residential and working domain

Opening question: Did you consider moving (changing place of residence) after separation?

- □ moving an option for respondent or ex-partner
- □ what consequences
- □ changing jobs an option for respondent or ex-partner
- □ what consequences

E. Contentment and experience

Opening question: How do you, you children and your ex-partner experience the current residential arrangement?

- □ advantages and disadvantages
- □ how do you picture the future
- □ do you know others with the same type of arrangement
- □ problems and solutions
- □ changes in arrangement through time: reasons
- □ satisfaction
F. Personal data

Respondent:
- □ year of birth
- □ educational level
- □ year of separation
- □ duration of relationship

Child(ren) respondent:
- □ number of children
- □ gender
- □ year of birth
- □ place of residence
- □ biological father
- □ age at moment of separation

Ex-partner(s) father(s):
- □ number of children
- □ year of birth
- □ educational level
- □ job; working hours
- □ new partner/children

New partner respondent:
- □ year of birth
- □ distance
- □ educational level
- □ job: working hours
- □ duration of relationship
- □ children with respondent
- □ other children
Summary

Introduction
This dissertation is about post-separation families, their residential arrangements and the organization and practising of their everyday post-separation (family) life. Divorce and separation are common life events in most Western countries. In the Netherlands, 30% of all children under age 18 witness the separation of their parents. There are two common residential arrangements after parental separation. The dominant post-separation residential arrangement is still the resident mother arrangement in which the children stay with their mother and have contact with their non-resident father on a regular basis. Over the last decade, however, the popularity of the resident mother arrangement has diminished and shared residence arrangements have gained popularity.

Nowadays, 27% of Dutch children with separated parents live with both parents alternately on an equal or nearly equal basis. In other words; those children live dual-locally. In these shared residence arrangements parental care is divided equally in terms of residential arrangement, (financial) responsibility, caregiving, supporting school-related activities and spending leisure time.

The aim of this dissertation is twofold. The first objective, addressed in chapter two, was to acquire a better understanding of the choice of a particular post-separation residential arrangement by looking into the life course characteristics of separated parents. Chapters three, four and five focus on different, but all essential, elements of everyday live; organizing and balancing daily activities, practising family routines and rituals and creating an experience of home for the child(ren). Together, these three chapters address the second objective of this dissertation: gain insight into the organization and practising of everyday (family) life of post-separation families involved in different residential arrangements. These aims are related to two gaps that were identified in the literature on separated families.

Firstly, relatively little is known about the families who opt for or maintain a shared residence arrangement. The popularity of shared residence arrangements is remarkable, because shared residence arrangements are in contrast with the more conventional, gendered Dutch culture of care by which arrangements in which children do not live fulltime with their mother used to be an exception, while having a visiting arrangement with their father used to be typical after separation. The questions arise
who these parents are and why they opt for a shared residence arrangement. These questions are addressed by comparing the life course characteristics of separated parents in the Netherlands involved in different residential arrangements.

Secondly, although considerable scholarly attention has been paid to the consequences of separation for ex-partners and their children it is still relatively unknown how separated parents organize and practise everyday (family) life. The type of residential arrangement chosen after separation has considerable consequences for the organisation of everyday life of the post-separation family. Although separation will disrupt family life to some degree, the presence of the children makes it likely that part of the former family life remain. Because there are no prescribed guidelines on how to organize and practise post-separation family life, separated families challenge the often taken-for-granted family practices and, in so doing, may create their own particular ways of ‘doing family’.

The main research question addressed in this dissertation is: How can the choice of a particular post-separation residential arrangement be explained, and how do separated parents involved in different types of post-separation residential arrangements organize and practise everyday (family) life? This question was explored in four empirical studies, each addressing a different part of the research question, that were presented in separated chapters in this dissertation. The empirical evidence presented in this dissertation is derived from a mixed methods research, combining data from large-scale longitudinal surveys – Netherlands Kinship Panel Study (NKPS) and Divorce in the Netherlands 1998 – with data from 35 in-depth interviews with a selection of relevant respondents from the NKPS survey (NKPS Minipanel).

The choice of a post-separation residential arrangement

In chapter two, a life course approach provided an explanation for the choice of a particular post-separation residential arrangement. The diversity found between different post-separation families can be understood as an outcome of preferences, resources and restrictions arising from people’s life course trajectories. Individuals are active agents who shape their own life course in relation to their preferences and the extent to which these preferences can be put into practice, depending on the resources and restrictions inherent in their life course on the one hand and, on the other hand, the opportunities and constraints structured by social institutions, culture and normative patterns.

The findings reported in this dissertation revealed that shared residence parents are a typical modern category of separated parents with a specific set of life
course characteristics belonging to the residential, educational, occupational and family careers. Being involved in a shared residence arrangement is associated with highly educated, dual-career ex-couples with a relatively high income level, who previously practised a symmetrical task division during their partnerships. After separation the symmetrical division between the parents is continued.

This finding provides a better understanding of the growing popularity of shared residence arrangements. Since the 1960s, in the Netherlands, as in many other Western countries, there has been a growing group of dual-career couples. This dissertation demonstrated that when dual-career couples separate, a shared residence arrangement seems to be the arrangement that best fits their preferences and (pre-separation) practices. Furthermore, these ex-couples are likely to have the resources to overcome restrictions and constraints imposed by being involved in a shared residence arrangement.

Organizing everyday life after separation
The qualitative analyses presented in chapter three of this dissertation revealed that the post-separation residential arrangement has considerable consequences for the organisation of the everyday life of separated single parents. The commuting rhythm of the children not only defines the time demands of the care domain, but also for the scheduling of activities in the work and leisure domains. In particular the group of single resident mothers, experience many constraints in combining work, care and leisure. Single shared residence parents succeed better in balancing their post-separation commitments.

After separation, shared residence parents continue to share the commitments in the care domain with their ex-partners. When the children stay with one parent, the other parent is free of commitments related to their social role as parent. This unscheduled time can be dedicated to catching up on paid work, to domestic work or to the leisure domain. As a result, the care domain is clearly temporally and physically demarcated by the presence or absence of the children. The clear demarcation between the work and care domains contributes to a more balanced everyday life.

Most single resident mothers increase their involvement in paid work after separation, while they continue to give priority to commitments in the care domain. Because the work and care domains impose approximately similar time demands on the single resident mothers (for instance, being available during daytime), the temporal, physical and psychological borders between the work and care domains must be highly flexible and permeable. As a result they experience the feeling of always being on call. There is seldom any leisure time.
The differences found between both categories of parents are not solely matters of choice. Single resident mothers are on average less highly educated and have lower incomes than shared residence parents, and therefore have fewer resources with which to arrange or negotiate the balanced daily life they strive for.

**Practising post-separation family life**

The focus in chapter four was on two central elements of family life: routines and rituals. Routines are practices that are instrumental to family organization. Rituals are practices that provide a sense of belonging and emotional exchange among family members. A routine can become a ritual once it shifts from being an instrumental family practice to an act imbued with symbolic meaning.

The results presented in this dissertation showed that in post-separation families no routines are practised with both parents present. Family routines, such as washing the dishes together or escorting the children to school, turned out to be highly household-based. The instrumental or functional character of family routines might explain this pattern. Family routines often occur under time pressure and in certain time-space parameters, which do not easily accommodate different schedules, especially when parents do not longer live together.

Based on the way they organize family rituals after separation three types of post-separation families were distinguished: ‘continuing family life’, ‘building a new life’ and ‘only one parent involved’. In the first family type – ‘continuing family life’ – at least some of the pre-separation family rituals take place with both parents present. Sometimes, even new rituals are created. In the second family type – ‘building a new life’ – the pre-separation rituals still occur with both parents, but not in the presence of both parents together. Although the parents involved in this type of post-separation family emphasize the fact that having children together entails certain obligations, building a new life without their ex-partner hinders the continuation of family rituals together. In the third family type – ‘only one parent involved’ – family rituals mainly or only occur with the resident mother. Although the children still visit their non-resident father, they do not share family life together.

Furthermore, this dissertation revealed that rituals have an important role in family display after separation. Today’s diverse, fluid and complex character and structure of family relationships increase the need for family display, because relationships become less recognizable as constituting family relationships. In all three distinguished family types, rituals are used to display the family as a coherent unit. As far as I know, rituals have not been recognized before as a tool for family display. Likely, this applies not only to families after separation, but also to other types of dual-
location families, such as commuter partnerships. Although some families follow the standard pathways, contemporary families have become more and more complex and diverse, with separation and remarriage complicating family relationships. Therefore it is likely that family display will become more intense and family rituals more important in everyday family life.

Residential experiences after separation
Most children with separated parents live dual-locally. Although the post-separation residential arrangements, schedules of overnight stays and commuting rhythms of children with separated parents are diverse, most of them live to some extent in two alternate parental residences. In this study, everyday life of post-separation families was studied by looking into the parental perception of their children’s residential experience after parental separation.

The findings presented in chapter five of this dissertation revealed that the perceptions of separated parents on their children’s residential experiences vary widely and were strongly associated with the post-separation residential arrangements. Residential mothers, with whom the children stay most of the time, perceived their children to experience their residence, more than that of their ex-partners, as home. Shared residence parents, whose children live in both residences for (nearly) the same amount of time, more often perceived their children to experience both residences as home than resident mothers did.

The physical, temporal and the social dimensions of a shared residence arrangement contribute to the parental perception that their children experience both parental residences as home. Shared residence parents often live nearby their ex-partner, and their children live at both residences on a nearly equal basis in terms of time. Therefore, their children’s everyday activities and routines are located in one neighbourhood. As a consequence both residences can have a central role in (social) activities and daily routines.

Reflection on the findings
In the four empirical chapters presented in this dissertation, diversity, change and continuity play an important role in relation to the post-separation residential arrangements. Besides the differences between the two types of post-separation residential arrangements studied in this dissertation, a great variety exists among post-separation residential arrangements of one kind. The findings showed that post-separation residential arrangements are not pre-fixed or one size fits all arrangements, but rather design it yourself arrangements. Although there are lots of parents who
separate and all face (at least partly) the same issues, parents experience this transition in family life as an individual one, which needs a tailor-made solution. All separated parents have to find out what works for them and their children.

In contrast to the nuclear family, who can follow the standard pathways, separated parents challenge the often taken-for-granted family arrangements and practices and, in so doing, create their own particular ways of doing family. This dissertation supports the ideas of contemporary family researchers who claim that ‘being family’ is replaced by ‘doing family’.

The diversity found in this dissertation can be understood in light of life course theory, by which individuals are seen as active agents who shape and reshape their own life course. Separated parents are making conscious decisions and reflect on these decisions (reflexivity), resulting in different individually arranged residential arrangements. An inevitable consequence of this process of conscious decision-making and continuous reflection is change. This dissertation demonstrated how post-separation families and their residential arrangements are constantly in flux and change over time to meet changing circumstances, needs or preferences of one or more of the family members involved.

The findings presented in this dissertation also showed that along with the diversity and change in the different domains of life, separated parents are in search of continuity in everyday life. This might seem a contradiction, but the interviews revealed that, for the sake of the children, parents try to maximize continuity after separation. Routines and rituals play an important role in this continuity. Furthermore, the pre-separation arrangements and practices play an important role in the choice and the organization of the post-separation residential arrangement. Therefore, the post-separation residential arrangement can to some extent be seen as a continuation of the pre-separation practices.

The findings presented in this dissertation underline the need for more research that acknowledges the variations in post-separation families and their residential arrangements. Throughout this dissertation, parents involved in the two most common types of post-separation residential arrangements were studied and compared: parents involved in a shared residence arrangement and mothers involved in a resident mother arrangement. The findings in this dissertation provide several avenues for further comparative research with other (non-traditional) family and residential arrangements. Also children’s experience with their post-separation residential arrangement and post-separation everyday life should get more scholarly attention.
In this dissertation the ongoing importance of place in general, and proximity in particular, in everyday life of parents and their children is being highlighted in several ways. A short geographical distance between the ex-partners can make a difference in post-separation family life. Both adults and children who live dual-locally have difficulties in bridging the gap between two geographically distinct social environments. Living close to each other increases the involvement of the father after separation, increases the likelihood to maintain a shared residence arrangement, makes it easier to organize and balance everyday commitments in the work and care domains, makes it easier for both parents to be involved in daily routines with the children and parents who live close to each other have more often the perception that their children experience both parental residences as home.

Although these findings make clear that ex-partners with children living close to each other really can make a difference in post-separation everyday life for both children and their parents, for a lot of separated parents with a wish to live close to each other it is not that easy to obtain two residences at a short distance from each other. Therefore, the constraints that complicate the realization of the optimal residential arrangement after separation should get more attention in both scientific and social debates.
Samenvatting

Introductie

Dit proefschrift gaat over scheidingsgezinnen, de woonarrangementen van ouders en hun kinderen en de organisatie en het vormgeven van het dagelijks leven na de scheiding. In de meeste Westerse landen is een echtscheiding (of het uit elkaar gaan van een samenwonend stel) een veel voorkomende gebeurtenis. Dertig procent van de Nederlandse kinderen maakt voor zijn of haar 18e levensjaar de scheiding van zijn of haar ouders mee. Na de scheiding zijn twee typen woonarrangementen het meest gangbaar. Het meest voorkomende woonarrangement na scheiding is nog steeds het moedergezin, waarbij de kinderen bij hun moeder wonen en op meer of minder regelmatige basis contact hebben met hun niet-inwonende vader. In de afgelopen tien jaar is de populariteit van het moedergezin echter afgenomen en heeft een tweede type woonarrangement, het co-oudergezin, aan populariteit gewonnen.

Het co-oudergezin is tegenwoordig voor 27% van de Nederlandse kinderen met gescheiden ouders de dagelijkse praktijk. Zij wonen dus afwisselend en voor een ongeveer gelijk aantal dagen en nachten per week bij beide ouders. Met andere woorden, deze kinderen hebben twee woonadressen. Bij dit co-ouderschap is het ouderschap over beide ouders gelijk verdeeld, zowel in termen van verblijf, als in termen van (financiële) verantwoordelijkheid, ouderlijke zorg, de ondersteuning van aan school gerelateerde activiteiten en de vrijetijdsbesteding van de kinderen.

Het doel van dit proefschrift is tweeledig. De eerste doelstelling, behandeld in hoofdstuk twee, is het verkrijgen van meer inzicht in de keuze van gescheiden ouders voor een bepaald woonarrangement aan de hand van de levensloopkenmerken van de ouders. In hoofdstuk drie, vier en vijf staan verschillende essentiële elementen van het dagelijks leven centraal: het organiseren en balanceren van dagelijkse activiteiten, het uitvoeren van familie routines en rituelen en het creëren van een thuisgevoel voor de kinderen. Samen richten deze drie hoofdstukken zich op de tweede doelstelling van dit proefschrift: Het verkrijgen van inzicht in de organisatie en het vormgeven van het dagelijks (gezins)leven van scheidingsgezinnen in verschillende woonarrangementen. De doelstellingen van dit proefschrift komen voort uit een tweetal leemtes in de literatuur over gescheiden gezinnen.
Ten eerste is relatief weinig bekend over families die kiezen voor een co-oudergezin of voor wie het co-oudergezin de dagelijkse praktijk is. De populariteit van het co-oudergezin is opmerkelijk, omdat het gedeeld ouderschap in contrast staat met de meer conventionele zorgcultuur in Nederland, waarin de moeder de belangrijkste rol krijgt toegedicht. Woonarrangementen waarin kinderen niet voltijd bij hun moeder wonen zijn in de Nederlandse zorgcultuur van oudsher een uitzondering. De recente opkomst van het co-ouderschap is nog weinig onderzocht. Wie zijn deze ouders en waarom kiezen ze voor een co-oudergezin? In dit proefschrift wordt op deze vragen ingegaan door de levensloopkenmerken van gescheiden ouders met verschillende woonarrangementen met elkaar te vergelijken.

Ten tweede is er veel wetenschappelijke aandacht voor de gevolgen van scheiding voor ouders en hun kinderen, maar vooralsnog is het relatief onbekend hoe gescheiden ouders hun dagelijks (gezins)leven organiseren en vormgeven. Het woonarrangement na de scheiding heeft aanzienlijke gevolgen voor de organisatie van het dagelijks leven van scheidingsgezinnen. Hoewel een scheiding het gezinsleven in zekere mate verstoort, zal door de aanwezigheid van kinderen een deel van het voormalige gezinsleven noodzakelijkerwijs gecontinueerd worden. Voor de wijze waarop het gezinsleven na scheiding wordt voortgezet bestaan geen voorgeschreven regels. Gescheiden gezinnen worden daarom uitgedaagd om hun eigen specifieke gezinsleven vorm te geven. De centrale onderzoeksvraag in dit proefschrift is: Hoe kan de keuze voor een bepaald woonarrangement na scheiding worden verklaard, hoe organiseren gescheiden ouders in verschillende woonarrangementen het dagelijks (gezins)leven en hoe geven zij dit vorm?

Deze vraag is onderzocht in vier empirische hoofdstukken, die elk een ander deel van de onderzoeksvraag beantwoorden. De empirische bevindingen die gepresenteerd worden in dit proefschrift komen voort uit mixed methods onderzoek, gebaseerd op een combinatie van longitudinale onderzoeksgespreksgegevens uit grootschalige databestanden – de Netherlands Kinship Panel Study (NKPS) en Scheiding in Nederland 1998 – en kwalitatieve gegevens uit 35 diepte-interviews met een selectie van relevante respondenten uit de NKPS-enquête (NKPS-Minipanel).

**De keuze voor een woonarrangement na de scheiding**

In hoofdstuk twee wordt aan de hand van de levensloopbenadering een verklaring gegeven voor de keuze van een bepaald woonarrangement na de scheiding. De gevonden diversiteit onder verschillende scheidingsgezinnen is te begrijpen als een
uitkomst van voorkeuren, middelen en beperkingen die samenhangen met de verschillende *levenslooptrajecten* van een individu. Volgens de levenslooptheorie geven individuen actief vorm aan hun eigen levensloop. Zij doen dit op basis van hun persoonlijke voorkeuren, maar zijn voor de mate waarin ze deze voorkeuren in praktijk kunnen brengen afhankelijk van de middelen en beperkingen die zijn ingebed in de levenslooptrajecten enerzijds en de kansen en de beperkingen opgelegd vanuit sociale instituties, culturen en normatieve patronen anderzijds.

De bevindingen in dit proefschrift laten zien dat co-ouders een eigentijdse categorie van gescheiden ouders zijn met een specifieke set aan levensloopkenmerken. Co-oudergezinnen komen vooral voor onder hoog opgeleide, tweeverdienende ek-koppels met een relatief hoog inkomen, die voorafgaand aan de scheiding al gewend waren zorg en betaald werk te verdelen. De (min of meer) symmetrische taakverdeling tussen de vaders en de moeders wordt na de scheiding zo goed en zo kwaad als het gaat voortgezet. In deze constatering ligt tevens een verklaring voor de gegroeide populariteit van co-oudergezinnen in Nederland. Sinds de jaren zestig kent Nederland een groeiend aantal tweeverdienende ouders. Dit proefschrift toont aan dat als tweeverdienende ouders gaan scheiden een co-oudergezin het woonarrangement is dat het beste past bij hun ervaringen en voorkeuren. Daarnaast beschikken deze tweeverdienende ouders over de middelen die noodzakelijk zijn om een co-oudergezin te bewerkstelligen.

**Organisatie van het dagelijks leven na scheiding**

De kwalitatieve analyse in hoofdstuk drie van dit proefschrift toont aan dat het woonarrangement na scheiding aanzienlijke consequenties heeft voor de organisatie van het dagelijks leven van alleenstaande ouders. Het ritme waarin de kinderen tussen beide ouders heen en weer pendelen definieert niet alleen de tijdsbesteding binnen het zorgdomein, maar ook de organisatie van activiteiten in het werk- en vrijetijdsdomein van de ouders.

Het zijn met name de alleenstaande moeders (in een moedergezin) die veel beperkingen ervaren bij het combineren van werk, zorg en vrijetijd. Zij slagen er minder goed in om zorgtaken te scheiden van werkverplichtingen en vrijetijdsactiviteiten. Co-ouders zijn beter in het balanceren van hun activiteiten en inspanningen in de drie levensdomeinen en vooral ook in het daadwerkelijk delen van de zorgtaken met hun ex-partner.

Co-ouders continueren na de scheiding het gedeelde ouderschap. In de tijd dat de kinderen bij de ene ouder verblijven, is de andere ouder vrij van inspanningen gerelateerd aan het ouderschap. Deze ‘vrije tijd’ kan toegewijd worden aan (het
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inhaLEN van) werK, huishoudelijke taken of persoonlijke ontspanning. Met de
wisselende aan- en afwezigheid van de kinderen is het zorgdomein duidelijk
afgebakend in tijd en ruimte. De duidelijke begrenzing tussen het werk- en zorgdomein
dragen bij aan een meer gebalanceerd dagelijks leven.

De meeste alleenstaande moeders met een moedergezin gaan na de scheiding
meer uren werken, terwijl ze daarnaast prioriteit blijven geven aan de inspanningen in
het zorgdomein. Doordat het werk en de zorg voor de kinderen vaak ook nog eens in
dezelfde tijdsspanne (overdag) plaatsvinden, is er nauwelijks een scheiding tussen de
verschillende domeinen, zowel wat betreft tijd, ruimte als in psychische zin. Als gevolg
hiervan hebben alleenstaande moeders in een moedergezin het gevoel dat ze altijd
oproepbaar zijn en dat er nauwelijks tijd is voor persoonlijke ontspanning.

De aangetoonde verschillen tussen de twee groepen alleenstaande ouders zijn
niet alleen maar een kwestie van vrije keuze. Alleenstaande moeders in een
moedergezin zijn gemiddeld lager opgeleid en hebben lagere inkomens dan
alleenstaande co-ouders. Zij hebben daardoor minder middelen en mogelijkheden om
een meer gebalanceerde leven te organiseren of uit te onderhandelen met hun ex-
partner.

Het gezinsleven na de scheiding

In hoofdstuk vier van dit proefschrift staan twee elementen van het gezinsleven
centraal: routines en rituelen. Routines zijn handelingen die belangrijk zijn voor de
organisatie van het gezinsleven. Rituelen zijn handelingen die een gevoel geven van
‘erbij horen’ en een emotionele uitwisseling tussen gezinsleden bewerkstelligen. Een
routine kan een ritueel worden als het van een functionele handeling verandert in een
handeling met symbolische betekenis.

De resultaten in dit proefschrift laten zien dat in scheidingsgezinnen routines
niet langer plaatsvinden in de aanwezigheid van beide ouders. Gezinsroutines, zoals
het gezamenlijk afwassen na het eten of het naar school brengen van de kinderen,
blijken in hoge mate functioneel van aard te zijn en gericht op het uitvoeren van
huishoudelijke en zorgtaken. Deze routines vinden ook in tweeeoudergezinnen vaak
plaats onder hoge tijdsdruk en binnen bepaalde tijd-ruimtelijke begrenzingen, die niet
gemakkelijk passen in de verschillende planningen en ritmes van beide ouders. Dit
geldt des te meer als de ouders niet meer bij elkaar wonen. Gezinsrituelen hebben een
ander, meer symbolisch karakter dan gezinsroutines. Het gaat hierbij zowel om
belangrijke gebeurtenissen zoals het vieren van verjaardagen of het Sinterklaasfeest,
maar ook om kleinere handelingen die dagelijks terugkomen, zoals rituelen rondom
het naar bed brengen van de kinderen en het avondeten.


Woonervaring na de scheiding
Hoewel de wonenarrangementen na scheiding, de verblijfschema’s en de pendelritmes divers zijn, verblijven de meeste scheidingskinderen met zekere regelmaat in twee verschillende ouderlijke huizen. In hoeverre worden deze twee ouderlijke huizen ook als thuis ervaren? In dit onderzoek zijn ouders gevraagd naar hun perceptie met betrekking tot de thuiservaring van hun kinderen.

Hoofdstuk vijf van dit proefschrift toont aan dat de ouderlijke perceptie met betrekking tot de woonervaring van hun kinderen na de scheiding sterk gerelateerd is
aan het type woonarrangement na de scheiding. Moeders met een moedergezin, waar de kinderen een groter deel van de tijd verblijven dan bij de vader, hebben ook vaker de perceptie dat de kinderen hun huis meer als thuis ervaren dan het huis van hun ex-partner. Co-ouders, van wie de kinderen op min of meer gelijke basis in beide ouderlijke woningen verblijven, hebben vaker de perceptie dat de kinderen beide huizen als thuis ervaren. De fysieke, temporele en sociale dimensie van het co-ouder woonarrangement dragen volgens de ouders alle drie bij aan de ‘dubbele thuiservaring’ van de kinderen. Co-ouders wonen vaak vlakbij hun ex-partner, waardoor de dagelijks activiteiten en routines van de kinderen in een en dezelfde buurt plaatsvinden en de kinderen wonen in beide woningen een even groot deel van de tijd. Hierdoor kunnen ze vanuit beide woningen hun vriendjes zien en lid zijn van dezelfde clubjes. Allebei de woningen kunnen in gelijke mate worden gebruikt als uitvalsbasis voor dezelfde buurtgebonden activiteiten.

*Reflectie op de bevindingen*

De vier empirische hoofdstukken beschreven in dit proefschrift leiden tot een drietal conclusies over de diversiteit, verandering en continuïteit van woonarrangementen na scheiding.

Dit proefschrift toont aan dat achter de twee in dit proefschrift onderscheiden typen woonarrangementen na scheiding een grote diversiteit schuil gaat. Woonarrangementen na scheiding zijn geen kant-en-klare arrangementen, maar eerder *doe-het-zelf*-arrangementen. Ondanks dat er veel ouders zijn die scheiden en ze allemaal geconfronteerd worden met (gedeeltelijk) dezelfde kwesties, ervaren ouders deze transformatie in het gezinsleven als een individueel probleem, waarvoor een individuele oplossing nodig is. Alle ouders moeten zelf uitvinden welk woonarrangement het beste bij hen en hun kinderen past en wat in de dagelijkse praktijk haalbaar is. In tegenstelling tot het ‘standaard gezin’, die grotendeels de gebaande paden kan volgen, worden scheidingsgezinnen uitgedaagd om hun eigen woonarrangementen en bijbehorend gezinsleven vorm te geven. Dit proefschrift onderschrijft hiermee het idee van hedendaagse gezinsociologen dat vandaag de dag *‘being family’* heeft plaatsgemaakt voor *‘doing family’*.

De in dit proefschrift aangetoonde diversiteit kan verklaard worden aan de hand van de eerder genoemde levenslooptheorie. Volgens deze theorie geven individuen in onze post-traditionele samenleving actief vorm aan de eigen levensloop. Tradities en vaste regels zijn hierbij minder belangrijk geworden. Gescheiden ouders maken bewuste keuzes over hoe te wonen na de scheiding en reflecteren op deze keuzes, wat resulteert in verschillende, individueel garrageerde
woonarrangementen. Een onvermijdelijk gevolg van dit proces van maken van bewuste keuzes en voortdurende reflectie daarop is verandering. Aangetoond wordt dat scheidingsgezinnen en hun woonarrangementen constant in beweging zijn en door de tijd heen veranderen om zo tegemoet te komen aan de veranderende omstandigheden, behoeften en voorkeuren van één of meerdere gezinsleden.

Naast de diversiteit en veranderingen in de verschillende domeinen van het leven, zijn scheidingsgezinnen op zoek naar continuïteit in het dagelijks leven. Dit lijkt een contradictie, maar de interviews maken duidelijk dat juist met het oog op de kinderen een zekere mate van continuïteit na de scheiding gewenst wordt. Routines en rituelen worden hierbij gekoesterd. Bovendien blijkt dat bij de keuze van het woonarrangement de ervaringen en praktijken van voor de scheiding mede bepalend zijn voor de vormgeving van het nieuwe woonarrangement. Het woonarrangement na de scheiding is daarmee gedeeltelijk een voortzetting van de oude situatie.

De belangrijkste beperking van dit onderzoek is dat het zich richt op één van de gescheiden ouders en het perspectief van de andere ouder en de kinderen niet kon worden meegenomen. De bevindingen in dit proefschrift onderschrijven de noodzaak van meer onderzoek dat recht doet aan de grote variatie onder scheidingsgezinnen, de verschillende woonarrangementen na scheiding en de verschillende perspectieven van ouders en kinderen. In dit onderzoek zijn de twee meest voorkomende typen woonarrangementen na scheiding onderzocht en met elkaar vergeleken: moedergezinnen en co-oudergezinnen. De resultaten geven meerdere aanknopingspunten voor toekomstig vergelijkend onderzoek met andere niet-traditionele gezins- en woonarrangementen. Daarbij zal ook het onderzoek naar de ervaringen van scheidingskinderen met hun nieuwe leef- en woonsituatie meer aandacht moeten krijgen.

Dit proefschrift benadrukt op verschillende manieren het voortdurende belang van *plaats* in het algemeen, en *afstand* in het bijzonder, in het dagelijks leven van ouders en hun kinderen. Een korte geografische afstand tussen ex-partners met kinderen kan een groot verschil maken in het dagelijks leven van scheidingsgezinnen. Zowel volwassenen als kinderen hebben moeite met het overbruggen van het gat tussen twee afzonderlijk gelegen (sociale) omgevingen. Dicht bij elkaar wonen vergroot de betrokkenheid van de vader bij zijn kinderen na de scheiding, vergroot de kans op het hebben van een co-ouderschap, maakt het eenvoudiger om alledaagse inspanningen in het werk en zorgdomein te organiseren en balanceren en maakt het eenvoudiger voor ouders om bij de dagelijkse gezinsroutines met de kinderen betrokken te zijn. Daarnaast hebben ouders die dicht bij elkaar wonen na de scheiding vaker de perceptie dat hun kinderen beide woningen als thuis ervaren.
Hoewel deze resultaten duidelijk laten zien dat het dicht bij elkaar wonen na de scheiding een positief verschil kan maken in het dagelijks leven na de scheiding voor zowel de ouders al hun kinderen, is dicht bij elkaar wonen na de scheiding lang niet voor alle ouders een haalbare kaart. De problemen die een optimale woonsituatie na scheiding in de weg kunnen staan, behoeven meer aandacht in wetenschap en maatschappij.