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SHARED RESIDENCE AMONG PARENTS LIVING APART IN NORWAY

Ragni Hege Kitterød and Kenneth Aarskaug Wiik

Over the last decade there has been a dramatic increase in shared residence for children among parents living apart in Norway, and a related shift away from mother sole custody. Currently, three in ten children in separated families have shared residence, compared to less than 10 percent at the beginning of the century. This likely reflects several factors, including more symmetrical parenting practices in intact families in Norway, policy measures that promote a more equal division of practical care and economic provision among separated parents, and pressure from fathers groups. Shared residence is most widespread among those from high socioeconomic backgrounds. Parents living apart with shared residence generally report better cooperation and less conflict than sole custody parents; typically agree on shared residence without the use of mediation or the involvement of the court; and report gender-equal caring practices prior to separation. There are no indications in Norway that shared residence is a less stable residential arrangement than mother or father sole custody – but the data are somewhat limited.

Key points for the Family Court Community:

- In the 2000s there has been a dramatic increase in shared residence for children among parents living apart in Norway, and a related shift away from mother sole custody.
- Shared residence after separation has typically been exercised by parents with higher socioeconomic resources who report low levels of inter-parent conflict. Recently, however, shared residence has become more widespread in most groups of Norwegian parents.
- In 2012, around one in four shared residence parents in Norway reported a moderate or high level of inter-parent conflict.
- Shared residence appears to be a relatively stable post-separation parenting arrangement in Norway, and 80% of mothers and 86% of fathers with shared residence reported no change in their parenting arrangement after separation.
- More equal parenting roles among separated parents is an important political ambition for the current Norwegian Government.

Keywords: Contemporary families, family policy, parents living apart, shared residence, joint custody

I. INTRODUCTION

In Norway, as elsewhere, shared residence has become more common among parents living apart (Cancian, Meyer, Brown, & Cook, 2014; Fransson, Låftman, Östberg, Hjern & Bergstöm, 2017; Kitterød, Lidén, Lyngstad & Wiik, 2016; Smyth, Chisholm, Rodgers, & Son, 2014; Sodermans, Matthijs, & Swicegood, 2013).¹ By contrast, mother sole custody is declining while father sole custody continues to remain relatively uncommon. Currently, one in four Norwegian children in separated families have shared residence, compared to less than 10 percent at the beginning of this century (Kitterød & Lyngstad, 2014a). If we exclude parents who have never lived together, either formally married or cohabiting, the percentage of children with shared residence is even higher, about 30 percent. As with other Nordic countries, the symmetrical family model, where women and men in intact families share paid and unpaid work equally between them, has been – and remains – a central political ambition in Norway (Kitterød & Lappegård 2012). And indeed time use surveys reveal a considerable convergence of mothers' and fathers' time use patterns (Kitterød & Rønsen, 2014). Married and cohabiting fathers are increasingly involved in housework and childcare, and typically continue their involvement with their children after union dissolution. Mothers too appear to be more positive to shared parenting than previously, and tend to have more trust in the father's capacity to care for children. They are also likely to collaborate with the father to be able to participate in the labour market full-time (Kitterød & Lyngstad, 2014a).

With around 25% of children below 18 years of age living apart from one of their biological parents (mostly their father) (Statistics Norway, 2016a), improved understanding of the residential arrangements of these children remains an important policy focus. It has been increasingly emphasized in the Norwegian policy context that parents living apart are equally

responsible for the practical and economic support of their children. However, whether shared residence should be the norm if parents separate, remains controversial.

In Norway, as in many Western countries (see e.g., Cancian et al., 2014; Juby, Le Bourdais, & Marcil-Gratton, 2005; Smyth et al., 2014), shared residence has typically been practiced primarily by a small select group of separated parents: those with a high socioeconomic standing, who report low levels of inter-parental conflict (Kitterød & Lyngstad, 2012). But with the prevalence of shared residence steadily increasing, there has been concern that parents in high conflict and with less socioeconomic resources are now also opting for a shared residence arrangement. Several Norwegian studies (e.g., Haugen, 2010; Skjørten, Barlindhaug, & Lidén, 2007) suggest that although shared residence works well for many children, it may not be the best solution for everyone. In particular, mediators and the Ombudsman for Children in Norway emphasize that the guiding principle concerning children's residence when parents separate should be to ensure the best interest of each child, rather than equality and fairness between parents (Groven & Severinsen, 2015; Lindboe, 2015). The Norwegian debate on shared-time parenting became particularly intense in 2015–16 when shared residence was suggested as a guideline for parents in preparation for changes to the Children's Act (Ministry of Children and Equality, 2015).

In the present paper we provide a brief overview of the policy context for separated families in Norway, and describe some important changes in the prevalence and demography of post-separation patterns of parenting – with a particular focus on shared residence as an emerging family form. In addition, we present results from analyses of inter-parental conflict among shared residence parents as compared with their sole custody counterparts.

II. THE NORWEGIAN POLICY CONTEXT

With its active work–family policies promoting mothers' labour market participation and fathers' involvement at home, Norway, like other Nordic countries, has long been considered

the egalitarian ideal for realizing the dual-earner/equal-sharing family model in intact families (Gornick & Meyers, 2008). Family policy measures, such as a high coverage of affordable high-quality public childcare, and generous (paid) parental leave rights with a quota reserved for the father (currently 10 weeks), have eased the combination of employment and children for both mothers and fathers. Fathers' housework and childcare time has risen significantly in recent decades, particularly in the 2000s, and more active and involved fathering practices are found in most groups of fathers in present day Norway (Kitterød & Rønsen, 2014). Combined with an increase in mothers' paid employment, this has brought about more equal parenting roles – although in most couples, men still do less family work than women, and work more for pay (Bergsvik, Kitterød, & Wiik, 2016; Kitterød & Lappegård, 2012).

Consistent within this context, fathers are encouraged to continue their involvement with their children if parents separate. As elsewhere (see other articles in this issue), fathers groups (largely comprising non-resident fathers) have campaigned at the political level for more support for father–child contact. Also, several policy measures have been implemented to promote more equal parenting practices in separated families, both in terms of practical care and economic provision. For example, since 2002, separated parents have been obliged to share the children's travelling expenses in order for fathers' contact costs to be reduced. More recently, policy stipulates that transport costs for changeovers are to be divided proportionally between the parents according to their income (Ot.prp. 69 (2007-2008)).

More broadly, in 2003, a new formula for regulating child maintenance was introduced, allowing the stipulated financial costs of parent–child contact to be deducted from the child maintenance payment (Meld. St. 19 (2006-2007)). The new formula takes account of parents' relative income whereas before, child maintenance was calculated as a percentage of the non-resident parent's income (i.e., the original 'percentage-of-father's-income' model was replaced by an income-shares approach). Further, under the old system, child maintenance

was usually calculated by the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV). But parents are now encouraged to make the calculations themselves. If parents have a written agreement on shared residence, NAV presupposes that they spend the same amount of money on the child. However, if the income of one parent significantly exceeds that of the other, he/she may still have to pay child maintenance.

In 2010, the definition of the non-resident parent's "ordinary right of access" was extended in the Children Act so that it now entails: (a) visitation one afternoon per week with an overnight stay every-second-weekend; (b) three weeks during the summer holidays; and (c) every second autumn-, Christmas-, winter-, and Easter holiday (Ot.prp. 104 (2008-2009)). Parents with sole physical custody may move to another place in Norway without the consent of the other parent, but they are obliged to notify the other parent at least six weeks in advance if they plan to relocate (ibid). In a bill on gender equal parenthood which is currently being discussed in Parliament, the Government suggests that the non-resident parent should be notified at least three months in advance if the resident parent wants to relocate; if the parents do not agree, they then need to see a mediator in order to achieve a new agreement on the child's residence and visitation-arrangements (Prop.161 L (2015-2016)). Separated parents with shared residence, on the other hand, cannot move without the other parent's consent.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR SEPARATED FAMILIES

Although separated parents are encouraged by the authorities to collaborate in their children's upbringing, policies concerning shared residence have usually been more ambiguous – especially in relation to government income support. There is a rather extensive income package for single parents in Norway, with the aim of securing the economic well-being of children. Sole physical custody parents are entitled to social benefits, such as a transitional benefit for a certain number of years and support for child care costs and for the parent's own education – as long as she/he does not live with a new partner. Sole physical

custody parents are also entitled to additional children's allowances and a certain tax deduction. When parents opt for shared residence, however, neither of them qualifies for transitional benefits, nor support for childcare costs or their own education. However, separated parents with shared residence receive additional children's allowances which may be divided equally between them; and they may each have a tax deduction in alternate years.

In spite of cultural expectations of shared parenting practices for parents living apart, parents with primary care (mostly mothers) may be opposed to substantially sharing the care of children if they are economically disadvantaged because of the potential loss of child support, transitional benefits etc. Conversely, for non-resident parents (mostly fathers), shared residence may be financially advantageous because they do not have to pay child maintenance unless their income considerably exceeds that of the other parent (Meld. St. 29 (2002-2003)).

To sum up: Norway's extensive package of financial support for separated families means there may be a financial disincentive for some (resident) parents to opt for shared residence and a financial incentive to do so for others (non-resident parents). Strategic bargaining over access and child maintenance has so far received little research attention in Norway, but has been debated by politicians, mediators, and separated parents.

CURRENT POLICY DEBATES

More equal parenting roles among separated parents as well as in intact families is an important political ambition for the current Norwegian Government and there is also a belief that shared residence may reduce parental conflict. The Government therefore wants to increase the number of parents who opt for shared residence after separation. In 2015 the Ministry of Children and Equality sent consultative bodies a suggestion for changes in the Children Act with two alternative suggestions regarding shared residence for children; (1) shared residence should be the main rule, and (2) shared residence should be highlighted as a viable alternative when parents split up. The first alternative was opposed by most

consultative bodies. In the bill on equal parenthood that is currently before Parliament, the Government suggests that shared residence should be highlighted by being mentioned first in the list of parental arrangements that parents can opt for if they separate (Prop.161 L (2015-2016)). The parents are, of course, free to choose the parental arrangement that best suits them and that they believe is in the best interest of the child. However, from 2010, courts have the power to rule that the child shall have a shared residence arrangement in Norway, when special reasons so indicate (The Children Act, section 36). What is meant by “special reasons” is not clarified in the law.

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY AND SHARED RESIDENCE

In Norway, the Children Act distinguishes between *joint parental responsibility* and *shared residence* (i.e., joint legal and joint physical custody). *Parental responsibility* confers the right and obligation to make decisions for the child in personal matters, such as the child’s upbringing, where the child is to live, and which school she or he should attend. Parents living apart now usually have joint parental responsibility in Norway; joint parental responsibility is a *prerequisite* for shared residence arrangements. Moreover, shared residence usually implies that the child lives with each parent for about half the time, and also gives both parents an equal say concerning the child’s daily life. Sole custody or shared residence parents have greater power to decide on matters regarding the overall well-being of the child than what is warranted by parental responsibility alone (e.g., the use of external childcare arrangements). Separated parents with shared residence cannot move without the other parent’s consent.

Fathers have traditionally gained legal rights to their children through marriage in Norway. Cohabiting fathers therefore used to face more obstacles than married fathers if they wanted shared residence or father sole custody following partnership dissolution (Jensen & Clausen, 2003). However, application procedures for joint parental responsibility were simplified in 1998, and new rules applying to children born after January 1, 2006 state that parents living

together when paternity is established shall have joint parental responsibility for common children. This is important in a country like Norway, where more than 40 per cent of children are now born to cohabiting parents (Statistics Norway, 2016b). In the bill on gender equal parenthood currently being discussed in Parliament, the Government suggests that parents who are not living together when the child is born shall also have joint parental responsibility (Prop.161 L (2015-2016)).

DEFINING SHARED RESIDENCE: COMPARABILITY ACROSS COUNTRIES

In Norway, an agreement on shared residence for children (meaning that both parents have an equal say over children's daily life) does not necessarily presuppose an equal division of parenting time. Recent survey data nevertheless indicate that shared residence arrangements in Norway typically involve 50/50 time splits (Kitterød & Lyngstad, 2014a). Although it is possible for separated parents to spend roughly equal amounts of time with their children without having an agreement on shared residence, this is not particularly common according to recent survey data. Thus, the definition of shared residence in Norway differs from definitions used in studies in many other countries where the shared residence is defined based on the amount of time (typically number of overnights) children spend with each parent. For instance, in the US and Australia, researchers generally define shared residence as an arrangement in which children are with each parent at least 30% of the time (Berger, Brown, Joung, Melli, & Wimer, 2008; Bjarnason & Arnarsson, 2011; Smyth et al., 2014).

Because shared residence is defined somewhat differently in studies in Norway than in many other countries and usually entails a 50/50 time split with the child, the proportions of children with shared residence in Norway are not directly comparable with other countries.²

MEDIATION

In Norway, all parents who separate must attend at least one hour of parental mediation if they have at least one common child younger than 16 years of age. Mediation is offered for

free by the family counselling offices, and seeks to achieve custody agreements that ensure the child's best interest (Ådnanes, Haugen, Jensberg, Rantalaiho, & Lossius, 2011; Tjersland & Gulbrandsen, 2010). Recent Norwegian research suggests that mediation typically generates better results than litigation for parents who separate (Gulbrandsen & Tjersland, 2013). For a long time only formally married parents were obliged to see a mediator in order to agree on child-care arrangements on separation. But from 2007, these rules also apply to cohabiting parents with common children (Ot.prp. 103 (2004-2005)). Another important change implemented in 2007 was a reduction in the mandatory number of hours with parental mediation – from three to one hour – while those who needed more time to achieve a custody arrangement or to solve other child-related conflicts could have as many as seven hours of mediation for free. The aim was to provide more targeted mediation for those in need.

Evaluating the reform, Ådnanes et al. (2011) found that most parents had only one hour of mediation; few used the opportunity to have many hours. The evaluation also identified some major challenges: namely that mediation is less likely to bring about custody agreements among certain groups, such as parents in entrenched high conflict relationships; parents with very young children; and where one parent had a non-western immigrant background (Ådnanes et al., 2011; Gulbrandsen & Tjersland, 2010, 2013). The Ministry of Children and Equality has recently stressed the need for more targeted services for parental mediation (Meld. St. 24 (2015–2016)). The Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir) is currently working with differentiation of the mediation services so that parents can get a more targeted offer. For instance, parents who report different levels of conflict may need different mediations schemes in terms of content as well as the number of hours offered. The changes are being prepared within the existing regulations.

According to the Children Act, children have the right to have a say on issues regarding themselves from the age of seven, including matters such as visitation and residential

arrangements when parents live apart. The mediator has the duty to inform the parents about the child's right to be heard, but the parents themselves are responsible for ensuring that this right is respected. According to Ådnanes et al. (2011) few children actually participate in the mediation process, which is consistent with results from previous studies (Gulbrandsen & Tjersland, 2010). However, in a recent survey among parents living apart with at least one child below 18 years of age, about one third of parents reported that the child had had some or a large degree of influence on decisions regarding their residential arrangement, but this was not necessarily linked to the mediation process (Haugen, Dyrstad, & Ådnanes, 2015). Older children (12 to 17 years of age) were more likely to have had an influence than younger children, and only a small minority of children below seven years of age (~2%) had had any influence on their residential arrangement. Children with shared residence more often had an influence than those in mother sole custody (Haugen et al., 2015).

AIMS

In this article, we combine new and prior analyses to explore four important questions: (a) Has the prevalence of shared residence changed over time? (b) Who opts for shared residence? (c) Is shared residence any less stable than sole residence? and (d) Do parents who exercise shared residence differ from those with sole residence with respect to parental conflict, type of agreement, satisfaction with the level of contact, and agreement between households on rules for children?

III. DATA AND MEASUREMENT

Results presented below are based on data from a nationally representative survey, the *Contact Arrangements and Residential Arrangements 2012* survey, with some linked register information.³ The sample was drawn from the population of parents who were registered living together with a child below 18 years of age, but not together with the child's other biological parent. The child's other parent was then added, so that both parents were included

in the sample, regardless of whether the parents had actually been married or cohabiting.⁴ Out of a total sample of 4,354 parents, 2,604 parents (60%) were interviewed.⁵ In the present paper we analyze questions that apply to the youngest child and we look at parents that had been married or cohabiting.⁶ To illustrate changes in children's residential arrangement we make use of data from two related earlier surveys: one conducted in 2002; the other, in 2004.⁷ Four dependent variables were used: (a) children's living arrangement (sole mother; sole father; shared residence; other); (b) type of agreement (verbal vs written), and whether it was reached informally or with the involvement of mediation, the court, or a Judge; (c) level of parental conflict ('a great extent'; 'a certain extent'; 'a small extent'; 'not at all'); and (d) degree of agreement on the rules for the child's daily life ('fully agree'; 'quite agree'; 'quite disagree'; 'very disagree') (see Appendix 1 for a detailed description of each dependent variable). Appendix Table 1 contains a list of the independent variables included.

IV. RESULTS

CHANGES IN RESIDENTIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Differential reporting by mothers and fathers is a common pattern in studies of parents living apart in Norway and internationally (Kitterød & Lyngstad, 2014b), and consistent with this pattern, separated mothers appeared to report slightly lower levels of shared residence than fathers. Notwithstanding these small differences, a considerable increase in shared residence occurred in Norway in the 2000s. In 2012, 25% of the separated mothers reported that their youngest child was in shared residence (Table 1).⁸ This represents more than a three-fold increase in a decade, albeit from a low base (7% in 2002). The percentage with mother sole custody declined in a similar proportion: from 86% in 2002 to 68% in 2012. The percentage of separated parents with father sole custody remained around 6–7% in the same period. According to fathers' reports, shared residence increased from 11% in 2002 to 33% in 2012; mother sole custody decreased from 80% to 57%; and father sole custody remained

stable at 10–11% in the same period. The increase in shared residence is considerable and applies also in a multivariate framework where compositional changes (e.g. older and more highly educated parents in the latter survey) are taken into account (see Kitterød et al., 2014).

– TABLE 1 HERE –

As shared residence arrangements have become more common, practitioners and researchers in Norway, as elsewhere, have been concerned that more high-conflict parents, parents with very young children, and parents with fewer economic resources exercise shared residence (Ådnes et al., 2011; Haugen, 2010; Skjørten et al., 2007). The concern is that shared residence in these situations is least likely to be beneficial to children.

Kitterød et al. (2016) found that shared residence for children has become more widespread in most groups of Norwegian parents. According to both mothers' and fathers' reports, the proportion with shared residence was clearly higher in 2012 than in 2004⁹ among high-conflict parents as well as low-conflict parents, among parents with young children as well as parents with older children, among less educated as well as highly educated parents, and in low-income as well as high-income groups. This pattern also holds in a multivariate framework with several relevant control variables included (see Kitterød et al., 2016), and probably reflects a general trend towards more involved fathering practices among parents living apart in Norway.

CORRELATES OF SHARED RESIDENCE AND FATHER SOLE CUSTODY

To gain a better understanding of the factors associated with shared residence for children in Norway, Kitterød and Lyngstad (2014a) ran separate logistic regressions based on both mothers' and fathers' reports from the 2012 survey data (see Table 2).¹⁰ It is important to note that the results from mothers' and fathers' reports are not completely comparable because the independent variables refer to the *reporting parent's* situation. For instance, the analyses based on mothers' reports show the associations between the child's residential

arrangement and the mother's age, health education etc., while the analyses based on fathers' reports show the associations between the child's residential arrangement and the father's age, health education etc. Kitterød and Lyngstad (2014a) found that, compared to mother sole custody, shared residence in Norway was more likely: (a) among highly educated parents (i.e., five or more years at university) than those with little education (i.e., only primary school education); (b) among those who had lived together for a longer period (8–10 years) than shorter periods (0–4 years); (c) among those who had separated more recently; and (d) among parents who had shared childcare tasks equally between themselves prior to separation (i.e., the father had been heavily involved in raising children prior to separation) – as reported by mothers, and by fathers.

In addition, mothers – but not fathers – reported that shared residence was more likely when the focal child was aged 5–9 years than when the child was younger. By contrast, fathers – but not mothers – reported that shared residence was most likely when they themselves were 35 years or younger. Fathers who reported rarely experiencing financial problems in the past year were also more likely to opt for shared residence than those reporting financial difficulties. Moreover, fathers were less likely to have shared residence if the youngest child was a girl rather than a boy, and if the father was born in a non-Western country than in Norway or another Western country – as reported by fathers.

– TABLE 2 HERE –

The positive relationship between parents' education and shared residence warrants brief comment. Several Norwegian studies have documented that highly educated parents have more gender equal practices than less educated parents in terms of the division of paid and unpaid work, as well as the partner's income (Bergsvik et al., 2016; Kitterød & Lappegård, 2012). Couples in which the female partner holds a master's degree stands out as the most gender equal. Women with a bachelor's degree typically work in female dominated

occupations in the public sector in Norway (e.g., human health, social work and education), which usually attract lower wages than many male dominated occupations, and also have higher part-time rates. The positive relation between parents' education and shared residence in Table 2 could imply that highly educated parents are more eager to practice gender-equal parenting than less educated parents when they separate. Similar results appear in multivariate analyses with controls for the parents' income rather than the subjective measure of financial problems included in the analyses in Table 2 (see Kitterød et al., 2016).¹¹

It is also noteworthy that gender-equal practices prior to separation appear to be strongly related to parents' choice of post-separation parenting arrangement irrespective of the parents' educational attainment and whether they report facing financial problems.

Full-time work and particularly long working hours are more common among highly educated than less educated mothers in Norway (Kitterød & Lappegård, 2012). We ran an additional model (based on mothers' reports) in which we added the mother's weekly working hours to explore whether the effect of mother's education was attenuated (results not shown). This was hardly the case. As for the mother's weekly working hours, there appeared to be a positive effect of working long hours (41 hours or more), compared to being non-employed or to working part-time. Although the effect was not statistically significant at conventional levels (only at the 11% level), this pattern suggests that shared residence may be convenient or necessary for mothers who want to pursue their careers. We note, however, that no controls for income were included in these analyses. The latter finding would nonetheless be consistent with results from a qualitative study of parents living apart in the Netherlands (Bakker & Karsten, 2013). It may also be the case that some shared-residence mothers need to work long hours for economic reasons since they are not entitled to some of the benefits that sole-custody parents may receive (discussed above).¹²

STABILITY OF SHARED RESIDENCE

Little is known about the stability of post-separation residential arrangements for individual children in Norway. The limited data available nonetheless suggest that there is considerable temporal stability in residential arrangements – including for shared residence (Lyngstad, Kitterød, & Wiik, 2014). Internationally, there is some evidence that mother-residence is most durable whereas shared residence is the most unstable arrangement and that children with shared residence progressively spend more time with the mother and less with the father (Cloutier & Jacques, 1998; Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992; Smyth et al., 2008). According to other studies, however, there is little evidence that so-called “maternal drift” is a widespread phenomenon (Berger et al., 2008; Smyth et al., 2014). In the 2012 survey in Norway, parents were asked about the child’s residential arrangement at the time of interview, whether the child had been in this arrangement since separation – and if not, what type of arrangement he/she had prior. Only 13 percent of the fathers and 11 percent of the mothers reported a change in the child’s residential arrangement after the union dissolution (Lyngstad et al., 2014). The figures apply to all parents, irrespective of the child’s resident arrangement. Some of the parents had separated fairly recently, while others had done so more than 10 years ago (mean=6.5 years, SD=4.02 years; range: 0–18 years since separation).

– TABLE 3 HERE –

The cross-tabulation of the child’s past and present residential arrangement provided in Table 3 suggests that a sizeable minority of children in all post-separation residential arrangements changed their arrangements, as reported by both mothers and fathers. However, there is some evidence that children in the small group who initially had father sole custody were slightly more likely to have altered their residential arrangement than those in the much larger group who initially had mother sole custody. Moreover, fathers reported that shared residence was a somewhat more stable arrangement than mother sole custody. But this was

not consistent with mothers' reports. The patterns observed in Table 3 were corroborated in multivariate models with controls for variables that may be associated with the child's present resident arrangement and the likelihood of having changed arrangement since the parent's broke up, such as the time since breakup and the child's age.¹³ (see Lyngstad et al., 2014).

In spite of some indication of shared residence being slightly more stable than mother sole custody in Norway, the major picture emerging from existing research is one of great stability across residential arrangements. However, there is nonetheless a degree of concern among researchers that some parents who opt for shared residence may be unresponsive to the children's wishes for a more flexible arrangement and unwilling to make changes if the child so wishes (Skjørten et al., 2007).

COOPERATION OR CONFLICT?

We further set out to investigate cooperation among parents living apart and possible differences across residential arrangements. Descriptive statistics on four measures of parental cooperation are provided separately for mothers and fathers in Table 4 (see Appendix 1 for details on operationalization): (a) type of parenting agreement; (b) satisfaction with parent-child contact; (c) current level of parental conflict; and (d) degree of agreement on rules for children. On all dimensions, parental cooperation was generally better among parents who practiced shared residence than among those whose children were living with the mother. For instance, separated parents with shared residence (particularly fathers) were more likely than parents who reported mother sole custody to reach a private contact agreement (written or verbal). Parents exercising mother sole custody on the other hand, more often tended to report that their agreement was made by court settlement or required a judicial determination, or that they did not have any agreement.

– TABLE 4 HERE –

Table 4 shows that sole custody mothers more often than separated mothers with shared residence reported being satisfied with the amount of parent–child contact (86.6% vs 65.2%). In marked contrast, separated fathers with shared residence were more likely than separated fathers whose children were primarily in the care of the mother to report being satisfied with the amount of contact they had with their children (70.8% vs 38.7%).

Mothers and fathers with shared residence were less likely to report a great extent of inter-parental conflict than parents who reported a mother sole custody arrangement (mothers: 9.6% vs 14.6%; fathers: 8.4% vs 18.0%). This, of course, might reflect the tendency for cooperative families to opt for shared custody (i.e., a selection effect).¹⁴ Nonetheless, even parents with sole custody rarely reported a ‘great’ deal of conflict.

Turning to agreement on rules for children, mothers with shared residence were more likely than mothers who reported maternal sole custody to say they ‘quite agreed’ about rules for children with the child’s father (53% vs 43%). Among separated fathers, 35% of those with shared residence ‘fully agreed’ with the mother on rules for the children, compared with 25% of fathers who reported mother sole custody. Taken together, 78% of mothers and 84% of fathers with shared residence fully agreed or quite agreed with their former partner on rules for children, compared with 69% and 71% of mothers and fathers who reported mother sole custody. Put another way, mothers and fathers with mother sole custody arrangement more frequently reported that they highly disagreed on rules for children compared with their shared residence counterparts.

– TABLE 5 HERE –

Results from ordinal logistic regression models of parental conflict and agreement on rules for children are presented separately for mothers and fathers in Table 5. All four models include controls for several relevant variables.¹⁵ As can be seen from the first set of models predicting inter-parental conflict, fathers practising shared residence were 39% less likely to

report a higher level of parental conflict compared with those with mother sole custody ($p \leq 0.001$), net of the other variables included. A similar negative association between shared residence and inter-parental conflict was found among mothers.

Turning to the multivariate results for agreement on rules for children in Table 5, we first note that mothers practising shared residence were 28% more likely to report a higher level of disagreement on rules for children than mothers with sole custody ($p \leq 0.10$). Among fathers, on the other hand, there was a strong negative relation between practicing shared residence and disagreement on rules for children. More precisely, shared residence fathers were 36% less likely to report a higher level of disagreement on this item compared with fathers in mother sole custody arrangements, controlling for the other included variables.

V. DISCUSSION

In Norway, as in many other countries, there has been a marked increase in shared residence for children among parents living apart in recent decades – particularly in the first decade of the 21st century – and a corresponding decrease in mother sole custody. This development probably reflects more active fathering practices in intact families combined with more paid work for mothers, as well as policies that promote more equal parenting roles in separated and intact families. Income support policies concerning shared residence of children have, however, been somewhat ambivalent in that the residential arrangement has, for some, been economically disadvantageous compared to being a primary parent. Nevertheless, the present Government wants more parents to opt for shared residence after separation.

As in many other western countries, shared residence for children is still most common among separated parents with a high socioeconomic standing who report little parental conflict. It is also more prevalent among those who have lived together for a longer rather

than a shorter period of time, and among those who have separated fairly recently rather than several years ago.

With shared residence becoming more common, there has been concern that parents with more conflicted arrangements and less socioeconomic resources are opting for shared residence, and also that parents may be placing more emphasis on fairness and equality between themselves than on their children's needs. In fact, shared residence has become more widespread in most groups of parents living apart in Norway. (Meyer, Cancian and Cook in this issue report a similar demographic shift in the U.S.)

Gender-equal practices prior to separation may in part promote shared residence, and shared residence is more often practiced by younger than older fathers. If this pattern holds, this would suggest a further increase in shared residence in the years to come.

Although father- and mother-reported data appear to differ slightly, parents with shared residence generally report less conflict than parents with a sole custody arrangement. They also tend to reach agreement about their parenting without court involvement than parents with mother or fathers sole custody. This pattern is found in most studies in Norway, as well as in other countries (see e.g., Lyngstad et al. 2014; Sodermans et al. 2013). The research literature suggests that parents with fewer conflicts tend to opt for such an arrangement more often than those who report higher levels of conflicts. In some cases, it is also possible that shared residence helps to moderate possible conflict since parents have to cooperate, but so far there is little research to support this in Norway (Andenæs, Kjøs & Tjersland, 2017). Unfortunately our cross-sectional data and analyses offer no clarity here. The extent to which shared residence can help reduce parental conflict remains an open question to be answered in the Norwegian context.

We have drawn heavily on data from parents in our analysis. There is, however, a need for more research on children's perspectives on shared residence in Norway. Based on qualitative

interviews with children, Haugen (2010) and Skjørten et al. (2007) concluded that although shared residence may be a good solution for many children, it is not necessarily the best option for all children. They further underline the importance of parents' willingness to be flexible and responsive to the needs of each individual child. These studies were undertaken during a period when shared residence was still practiced by a small minority in Norway and there is clearly a need for more contemporary research on how children experience shared residence compared to children in mother or father sole custody.

Children and parents may differ in their perceptions of shared time arrangements, even when parents report little parental conflict (Sadowski & McIntosh, 2016). According to a recent Swedish study (Fransson et al., 2017), children with shared residence scored higher than children in sole custody arrangements on several outcomes, including social relations with peers and parents, health and health behaviours, and culture and leisure activities. Given the similarity of Norwegian and Swedish family policy measures for intact and separated families, it is reasonable to assume that similar associations apply to Norway as well. But there is certainly a need for more research on the relationship between shared residence and various types of outcomes for children in Norway. Future Norwegian studies should also attempt to disentangle whether the positive association between shared residence and parental conflict is a result of selection or whether shared residence in itself helps remedy or modify conflicts. There is also a need to investigate mediation practices in Norway, and how these can better support the high-conflict shared residence family, as well as families with very young children, and families from a non-western immigrant background considering a shared residence arrangement.

Table 1. Children's residence based on mothers' reports and fathers' reports in 2002, 2004 and 2012. Percent

	Shared residence	Mother sole custody	Father sole custody	Total	N
Mothers' reports					
2002	7	86	7	100	913
2004	11	83	6	100	1069
2012	25	68	6	100	1051
Fathers' reports					
2002	11	80	10	100	877
2004	12	76	11	100	1026
2012	33	57	11	100	1027

Note: Weighted percentages. Results for formerly married or cohabiting parents. Some parents reported that their children had another residential arrangement, but this applied to less than one percent in each year.

Table 2. Results from two logistic regression analyses of shared residence rather than mother sole custody, based on mothers' reports and the fathers' reports in 2012. Odds ratios

	Mothers' reports (N=1,030)	Fathers' reports (N=959)
Respondent's age (ref: 19–34 years)		
35–39 years	0.67	0.39*
40–44 years	0.74	0.68
45 years +	0.64	0.46(*)
Respondent's education (ref: primary school)		
Secondary school	1.02	1.50
University, 1–4 years	0.82	1.82
University, 5 years +	1.94*	2.40*
Unknown	0.65	0.88
Respondent had financial problems last year (ref: never/ rarely)		
Often	0.67	0.33***
Sometimes	0.98	0.55**
Unknown	0.59	8.27***
Respondent's health (ref: excellent, very good, good)		
Fairly good	0.62	1.07
Bad	0.39	0.47
Civil status at breakup (ref: married)		
Cohabiting	0.93	1.06
Duration of relationship (ref: 0–4 years)		
5–7 years	1.81	1.86(*)
8–10 years	3.69*	1.99*
11 years +	3.11	2.28*
Unknown	3.85	0.33(*)
Division of childcare when the parents lived together (ref: the mother most)		
Equal share/the father most	1.90***	1.89***
Time since breakup (ref: 0–4 years)		
5–7 years	0.85*	0.75
8–10 years	0.67	0.77
11 years +	0.30***	0.46*
Number of children in relationship (ref: one child)		
Two children	0.84(*)	0.83
Three children +	1.55	1.00
Age of focal child (ref: 0–4 years)		
5–9 years	2.48*	1.34
10–14 years	2.05	1.26
15 years	1.74	0.95
Sex of focal child (ref: boy)		
Girl	0.84	0.73*
Respondent's current union status (ref: married)		
Cohabiting	1.04	1.36
Single	0.88	1.41
Respondent's country of birth (ref: Norway)		
Western countries	0.88	1.19
Non-western countries	0.55	0.39*

Note: Results for formerly married or cohabiting parents.

*** $p \leq 0.001$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, * $p \leq 0.05$, (*) $p \leq 0.10$

Table 3. Children's residence at the time of the interview by their previous residence, based on the mothers' reports and the fathers' reports in 2012. Percent.

Children's previous residence on separation	Children's residence at interview			Total	N
	Shared residence	Mother sole custody	Father sole custody		
Mothers' reports					
Shared residence	80	15	5	100	291
Mother sole custody	4	93	3	100	728
Father sole custody	9	11	79	100	52
Fathers' reports					
Shared residence	86	10	4	100	336
Mother sole custody	6	90	4	100	590
Father sole custody	12	18	71	100	93

Note: Weighted percentages. Results for formerly married or cohabiting parents.

Table 4. Agreement on parent-child contact, satisfaction with the amount of contact, parental conflict and agreement on daily rules for children, by children's residence arrangement. Based on mothers' and fathers' reports in 2012. Percent.

	Mothers		Fathers	
	Shared residence	Mother sole custody	Shared residence	Mother sole custody
Contact agreement				
Agreement without mediation	48.0	40.3 *	54.1	43.2 *
Agreement during mediation	39.9	35.0	34.1	30.0
Agreement by court settlement	1.4	3.8 *	3.2	5.8 *
Agreement by judicial judgement	0.8	2.7 *	0.6	2.8 *
No agreement	9.5	18.1 *	8.0	17.9 *
Do not know/no answer	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.3
Satisfied with contact				
Satisfied	65.2	86.6 *	70.8	38.7 *
Would like more contact	34.2	8.4 *	29.0	60.8 *
Would like less contact	0.0	4.5	0.0	0.0
Do not know/no answer	0.6	0.4	0.3	0.6
Parental conflict				
To a great extent	9.6	14.6 *	8.4	18.0 *
To a certain extent	17.3	21.6	14.5	17.4
To a small extent	31.9	30.4	34.3	29.9
Not at all	40.6	31.1 *	42.0	32.9 *
Do not know/no answer	0.6	2.4 *	0.9	1.7
Agree on rules for children				
Fully agree	25.5	25.6	35.3	24.7 *
Quite agree	52.8	43.1 *	49.3	46.0
Quite disagree	14.2	13.4	12.6	14.4
Highly disagree	5.6	7.8	2.3	9.3 *
Do not know/no answer	2.2	10.1 *	0.5	5.6 *
<i>N</i>	283	778	350	630

Note: Weighted percentages. Results for formerly married or cohabiting parents.

* Associations between shared residence and sole custody were statistically significant at $p \leq 0.05$ (chi-square tests).

Table 5. Results from four ordered logistic regression analyses predicting the level of parental conflict (1=not at all to 4=to a great extent) and agreement on rules for children (1=fully agree to 4=highly disagree). Based on mothers' and fathers' reports in 2012. Odds ratios

	Parental conflict		Rules for children	
	Mothers	Fathers	Mothers	Fathers
Children's residence arrangements				
Mother sole custody (ref.)	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Shared residence	0.70**	0.61***	1.28(*)	0.64***
Adj R ²	0.08	0.09	0.09	0.07
N	1,042	967	976	945

Note: Results for formerly married or cohabiting parents with valid answers on the two questions. Models controlled for all variables included in Table 2.

***p ≤ 0.001, **p ≤ 0.01, *p ≤ 0.05, (*)p ≤ 0.10

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Appendix 1: Operationalization of Dependent Variables

The child's residence – based on the question: “We would like to know who (name of child) lives permanently with now, that is, who has the day-to-day care for the child now. Is it you, the other parent, both or others?” The question was followed by an explanation of the legal meaning of “live permanently with” and “day-to-day care of the child”, which the interviewer was supposed to read for the respondent upon request. Both parents were asked this question, and based on their answers we constructed the variable “child's residence”, with four categories: (1) shared residence (2) mother sole custody (3) father sole custody and (4) other.

Agreement on parent–child contact – based on the question: Do you and the child's other parent have a written or verbal agreement that regulates the contact/visitation between each parent and the child? Was the agreement made privately (without mediation), during mediation, by court settlement or by judicial judgement?

Satisfaction with extent of parent–child contact – based on the question: Would you like to have more or less contact with (name of focal child) than you actually have, or are you satisfied with the extent of the contact?

Level of parental conflict – based on the question: To what extent would you characterize the relationship between you and the (focal) child's other parent as conflictual?

Agree on rules for the child's daily life: To what extent would you say that you and the (focal) child's other parent agree on rules that apply to the child's daily life?

Appendix Table 1. Definition of independent variables/covariates used in the analyses.

Variable	Definition
Respondent's (mother's/father's) age	Register information on date of birth.
Respondent's education	Register information on the highest level completed at the time of the survey.
Respondent had financial problems last year	Based on a survey question on how easy or difficult it was for the respondent's household to make ends meet, with the following categories: (1) often, (2) sometimes, (3) rarely, and (4) never.
Respondent's health	Based on a survey question on how the respondent would describe his/her health.
Respondent's country of birth	Register information. We distinguish between (1) Norway, (2) the EU/EEA region + USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand (termed Western countries in table 2), and (3) Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe outside the EU/EEA region (termed non-Western countries in Table 2).
The parents' civil status at breakup	Based on survey questions. We distinguish between (1) formally married and (2) cohabiting.
Duration of the parents' relationship	Based on survey questions on when the parents moved together and when they split up.
Division of childcare when the parents lived together	Based on a survey question on how the respondent and the child's other parent divided childcare activities between themselves when they lived together.
Time since breakup	Based on survey questions on when the partners split up.
Respondent's current union status	Register information, supplemented with survey questions.
Age of focal child	Register information.
Sex of focal child	Register information.
Number of common children	Register information.
Respondent's labor market participation	Based on survey question. We separate between those who were active on the labour market (1) and those who were not (0).

NOTES

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² Using a survey from 2012, Kitterød and Lyngstad (2014a) compared the percentage of parents with shared residence in Norway based on (a) the legal definitions (equal say for parents) and (b) where the child stays with

each parent at least one third of the time, with the latter resulting in a higher proportion of parents with shared residence.

³ The survey was conducted by Statistics Norway on commission from the Ministry of Children and Equality. For documentation about the survey, see Høstmark (2013).

⁴ To address the statistical issue of correlation of error terms related to the collection of dyadic data, we report results for males and females separately.

⁵ A weight was calculated to correct for the overrepresentation of certain groups in the sample, and for the disproportionate non-response rates in certain groups. In a significant number of cases, only one of the parents of a former union participated in the survey. We include all parents in the analyses irrespective of whether the other parent participated or not. The parents reported on residential and visitation arrangements for all their common children, but more detailed information was captured for the youngest child than for older children.

⁶ Formerly married or cohabiting parents constitute about 85 percent of the sample. Some results for all parents in the survey are presented in Kitterød and Lyngstad (2014a).

⁷ Both surveys included less background information on the parents than the 2012 survey.

⁸ When parents who have never actually lived together with the focal child's other parent are included in the analysis, the percentage of children with shared residence is somewhat lower.

⁹ Data from 2004 were used as these are more comparable with the 2012 data than are the 2002 data. In 2002, data were collected by a postal survey. By contrast, telephone interviews were conducted in 2004 and 2012.

¹⁰ The odds of shared residence rather than mother sole custody are reported. The reference group for each variable is set to one, so that coefficients above one indicate a positive association, while coefficients below one indicate a negative association.

¹¹ In analyses based on mothers' reports, there is a notably and statistically significant effect of holding a master's degree in analyses controlling for the mother's income after tax as well as in analyses controlling for the total household income after tax. Analyses based on the fathers' reports produce a statistically significant effect of holding a master's degree when total household income is controlled for, but not when only the father's income is controlled for.

¹² As in many other countries (Cancian et al., 2014; Juby et al., 2005), father sole custody in Norway is partly linked to other factors. For instance, compared to mother sole custody, father sole custody is particularly likely when the mother has health limitations or financial problems and when the father has no problems with the household finances (Kitterød & Lyngstad, 2014a).

¹³ Separate analyses were undertaken on mother- and father-reported data. In addition to the control variables included in Table 2, the analyses included a control for which of the parents retained the common home when the parents separated.

¹⁴ Analyses conducted by Kitterød et al. (2016) suggest that the percentage of shared-residence parents reporting a ‘great extent’ or a ‘certain extent’ of parental conflict remained fairly stable from 2004 to 2012 in spite of more parents opting for shared residence.

¹⁵ In these models ‘don’t know’ responses were coded as missing values: $n=32$ (parental conflict); $n=120$ (agreement on rules for children). The controls include: respondent’s age, time since the breakup, current union status, union status at breakup, number of common children, gender and age of the youngest child, education level, employment, health, any financial problems, division of childcare when the parents lived together, and parents’ country of birth.