

# How does the division of childcare tasks influence fairness perceptions

And does relationship type and spousal time moderate this effect

*Research on the division of unpaid labour has typically examined the role of housework. This research explores how the division of childcare tasks influence perceptions of fairness using the New Families in the Netherlands data (NFN). The effects spousal time and relationship type have on this possible influence will also be examined. Results showed that a division that is unequal for the female partner is perceived as unfair and that this effect is stronger when couples spent little time together. No support was found for the expected effects of relationship type.*

Keywords: Childcare tasks, fairness perceptions, spousal time, relationship type, Equity Theory, Distributive Justice Framework

## Introduction

The emancipation monitor for 2020 published by Statistics Netherlands (CBS) and the Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau (SCP) reports that the number of women working has been steadily increasing since 2009. However, they also note that while six in ten parents with a child under the age of eighteen would prefer an equal division of labour. In practise only one in four of those parents actual achieve this. This means that women still perform a large portion of the household and childcare tasks. This discrepancy in how couples want to divide paid and unpaid work and the actual division has puzzled scholars for years as can be seen by the large amount of research done into the division of household tasks and paid work (Baxter, 2000; Baxter, Haynes, Western & Hewitt, 2013; Coltrane, 2000; DeMaris & Longmore, 1996; Greenstein 1996;). To better understand why this unequal division of labour still persists researchers have focus on fairness perceptions. Women are steadily working more and more and are still performing the majority of the unpaid labour. Based on this the division might be even more unequal than it used to be before women started working more. It is possible that an unequal division in unpaid labour is not perceived as unfair by partners. Research into the division in unpaid labour has found that an unequal division does not equal perceptions of an unfair division (Baxter, 2000; Baxter, Haynes, Western & Hewitt, 2013; Coltrane, 2000; DeMaris & Longmore, 1996; Greenstein 1996; Lennon & Rosenfield, 1994; ). However, this research has mainly reduced unpaid labour to housework. And the little research that has included childcare in unpaid work (Baxter, Hewitt & Haynes, 2008) has disregarded that according to some research housework and childcare tasks are distinctly different (Ishii-Kunts & Coltrane, 1992; Coltrane, 2000). Besides the fact that housework and childcare tasks are very different, Craig and Mullan found (2011) that while housework has become increasingly more equal, this cannot be said about childcare tasks (Craig & Mullan, 2011). If unpaid work is measured as housework and childcare tasks in research this might lead to the incorrect conclusion that all unpaid work has become more equal. It is useful to look at fairness perceptions as feelings of unfairness can have negative effects on relationships, such as a decreased satisfaction with one's relationship (Dew & Wilcox, 2011; Greenstein, 1996; Lennon & Rosenfield, 1994; Mikula, 1998;). This could lead to an increase in divorces or separations which are already higher than they used to be (CBS, 2015).

This research will contribute to existing research as its focus will be aimed at childcare tasks instead of housework. This will decrease the gap in the current knowledge as there has been relatively little research into childcare tasks (Baxter, 2000) even though research has shown that they are distinctly different from housework. Baxter (2000) found that for both housework and childcare tasks the division is unequal, with women performing more of the tasks. However, she also notes that the majority report that they perceive this division as fair. Moreover, research has shown that attitudes towards childcare tasks are higher than those towards housework (Poortman & van der Lippe, 2009). Based on this the effects of un unequal division might differ for childcare tasks when comparing them to housework.

Moreover, this research will explore if relationship type or the amount of time someone spends with their partners influences whether an unequal division will lead to perceptions of unfairness. Research into if relationship type influences this effects is scientifically relevant as contrasting effects have been found for the division of housework. While Baxter (2001) and Dew and Wilcox (2011) found that cohabitating couples were more likely to perceive an unequal division of tasks as unfair. Baxter, Haynes, Western and Hewitt (2013) found no significant effect on the perceptions of fairness for the division of housework for the type of relationship a couple had. All three of these studies looked at the direct effect relationship type has on perceptions of fairness. As the direct effect has resulted in contrasting effects, this research will use relationship type as a moderator. Socially it is relevant to explore this because an increasing number of people don't marry (CBS, 2018; Hogerbrugge & Dykstra, 2009; Manting, 1996). The question whether the amount of time partners spent together influences how the division of tasks effects the perceptions of fairness is socially relevant as the reason why people commit to a relationship are different in our modern society than they were for previous generations. While people used to commit to their relationship for instrumental reasons, nowadays people commit for more emotional reasons as found by Dew and Wilcox (2011). And spending time with one's partner allows for a deeper and more emotional relationship. Moreover, research has shown that with parenthood partners have less time (Dew & Wilcox, 2011; Dribe, Standors & Buehler, 2009; Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2004). As relationships are formed for more emotional reasons the amount of time spent with one's

partner can influence whether they perceive an unequal division of labour as unfair. And no research has explored this link previously.

The two questions this research aims to answer are 'Does an unequal division of childcare tasks lead to perceptions of unfairness?' and 'Do the type of relationship and the time spouses or partners spent together influence the effects division of childcare tasks on fairness perceptions?'. To research these questions Data from the New Families in the Netherlands (NFN) survey (Poortman, Van der Lippe, & Boele-Woelki, 2014) will be used in this research. A strong point of this dataset is that the division in childcare tasks are measured along with whether the division respondents report are perceived as fair, which allows this research to focus on this.

## Theory

### *Division of tasks*

It is expected that the division of childcare tasks influences how fair this division is perceived. One theory that is often used to explain how unequal division of labour relates to fairness perceptions is Equity theory. According to Equity theory, equity is achieved if the outcomes one achieves are proportional to the inputs they provide. In a relationship this would mean that a wife's input is the husband's outcome and vice versa (DeMaris & Longmore, 1996). Although practise shows that in general the division of labour is perceived as fair, the principle of equity still applies. Meaning that a more unequal division will lead to stronger unfairness perceptions. It should be noted that input in a relationship can take various forms, either as paid labour or unpaid labour such as housework and childcare tasks. In general partners make some contributions to both paid and unpaid work. However, it is unusual that an equal input is provided by both partners into both domains. Which means that equity cannot be achieved in either domain. Equity can be achieved nonetheless when this unequal ratio from one domain is balanced with an unequal ratio in the opposite direction in the other domain (DeMaris & Longmore, 1996; Lennon & Rosenfield, 1994). However, This research focuses on the domain of childcare tasks. without taking paid labour and housework into account. This is one of the domains of unpaid work, as such Equity theory applies. It is expected that an unequal division in childcare tasks will lead to an increase in unfairness perceptions.

DeMaris and Longmore (1996) found support for the influence equity has on the perceptions of fairness with regards to unpaid labour. They also found that higher contributions by husbands to both housework and childcare, whether sporadic or not, led to either partner being less likely to say the division is unfair. Additionally, a larger disparity between husbands and wives time spent working led to less women reporting an unjustly division of labour. While Equity theory is often used to explain perceived fairness of the distribution of housework this either disregards the role childcare tasks have within unpaid labour or combine housework and childcare tasks. This can be seen in Coltrane's research (2000). They noted that household labour is often ambiguous in research which can lead to questions of whether childcare is included. Coltrane also mentions that household labour is often only defined by the variables with which it is measured. However, he notes that a fairly consistent conceptualization in literature for household labour is the unpaid work done to maintain family members and/or a home, which can include childcare. Even though research has indicated that there is a clear distinction between both housework, such as cooking and cleaning, and childcare tasks. Moreover, Dribe, Standors and Buehler (2009) found that the presence of children in a household increases the time spent on both housework and childcare tasks, in addition to a decrease in leisure time for the parents. Additionally, Poortman and van der Lippe (2009) found that while attitudes towards housework are relatively low for both men and women, with between 10 and 20% liking cleaning and between 55 and 60% liking cooking. These attitudes are far higher for childcare tasks, with nearly 90% of women and 77% of men liking these tasks. They also noted that these attitudes show whether people evaluated these tasks as positive or negative. Research into division of labour notes that the unequal division of labour, especially housework and childcare tasks is often skewed such that women perform more of the unpaid work when compared to men.

Based on the Equity theory and the assumption that women perform more of the childcare tasks the derived hypothesis that will be tested in this research is that an increasingly unequal division, for women, of childcare tasks leads to an increase in the perceptions of unfairness of this division.

### *Relationship type*

In the second research question two interactions are noted. It is expected that the type of relationship influences how the division of childcare tasks effects the perceptions of fairness of this division. This is in line with the assumptions from Joyner (2009). She states that married couples showed more cohesion than cohabiting couples. As such cohabiting couples look more at how equitable the division of labour is than married couples, because married couples view this as damaging to each other's trust. The Distributive Justice Framework is another theory that is often used to give insight into why an unequal division of labour does not have to lead to perceptions of unfairness (Baxter, Haynes, Western & Hewitt, 2013). One of the elements this framework uses is the justifications, these are used to judge how suitable the perceived arrangements are. The fact that married couples see themselves as a unit can be seen as a justification as to why an unequal division of childcare tasks might not be perceived as unfair.

A different element this framework uses is outcome values, these are the aspects people want from a relationship. These values might be either an equal division or an equitable division. Moreover, coercion or the avoidance of disliked tasks can also be viewed as outcome values (Baxter, 2000; Baxter, Haynes, Western & Hewitt, 2013; Coltrane, 2000; Dew & Wilcox, 2011; Greenstein 1996; Mikula, 1998). As no one outcome value is independently responsible for the perceived fairness it can be assumed that interactions between different outcome values influence the perceive fairness of the division of childcare tasks. Moreover, Baxter (2001) found that cohabitating couples have a more equal division of labour than married couples, which is corroborated by Poortman and van der Lippe (2009).

The different elements of the Distributive Justice framework interact with each other to determine whether a division in tasks is perceived as fair. Based on the justification and outcome values discussed above it can be hypothesised that for cohabiting couples an increasingly unequal division, for women, leads to an stronger increase in the perceptions of unfairness when compared to married couples.

### *Spousal time*

It is expected that the amount of time spouses or partners spent together influences how the division of childcare tasks effects the perceptions of fairness of this division. Dew and Wilcox (2011) found that the reason people marry has become different. In the past the reasons why couples married were childrearing, social support, and economic cooperation, which in and of themselves are already outcome values (Baxter, Haynes, Western & Hewitt, 2013). Nowadays people marry for emotional intimacy. Because of the time one spends with their spouse or partner has become increasingly more important, as it can deepen and sustain an emotionally intimate relationship. Based on this finding it can be argued that spending time with one's spouse or partner has become increasingly more important as an outcome value. Moreover, Dew and Wilcox (2011) also noted that time with one's spouse or partner decreases due to parenthood. It can be said that this is in line with findings by Dribe, Standors and Buehler (2009) as they found that having children decreases the leisure time couples have. Additionally, Goldberg and Perry-Jenkins (2004) found that working-class couples are more likely to work opposite shifts, which leads them to have less time together. As the outcome values for why people are in a relationship have changed, the time one spends with their spouse or partner has become more important in assessing the fairness perceptions of the division of labour within a relationship. When looking at the effects the amount of time spouses or partners spend together has and the effect outcome values have on fairness perception it is hypothesized that spouses or partners that spend no or little time together will perceive an increasingly unequal division, for women, as unfairer when compared to couples that spent more time together.

## **Methods**

### **Data**

The data used for this research is the New Families in the Netherlands (NFN; Poortman, Van der Lippe, & Boele-Woelki, 2014) data. The main focus of NFN was '*broken*' families. They used three control groups in their research. Two of these control groups from the first wave will be used. These two groups focus on '*intact families*'. The first group consisted of heterosexual parents, that were married before January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010, and had at least one child that was a minor. The second group consisted of heterosexual parents, who were cohabitating before January 2010, and had at least one child together, determined by

legal parenthood, whom was a minor. For both groups both parents had to live in the Netherlands at the time of the sampling, January 2013, and should not have had a prior marriage or registered partnership that involved minor children.

The sampling method used for the control groups were stratified random samples without replacement. This method was used to increase compatibility with the '*broken*' families that were the main focus of the NFN. The stratification was based on the age of the youngest child. The data was collected by staff and students of the faculty of social sciences of Utrecht University. Help was provided for the data collection by the CBS. 2400 households were approached via an introduction letter to participate, for a total of 4800 respondents. The data for the control groups, used in this research, was collected through the use of online questionnaire. These questionnaires used routing. Due to this routing respondents only received questions that applied to them. Three reminders were sent in total, the last containing a paper version of the questionnaire. Of all '*intact families*' that responded a total of 17% used the paper questionnaires.

The response rate on the individual level hardly differed for married and cohabitating parents. With 46% for married parents and 44% for cohabitating parents. On the household level there is even less difference between married and cohabitating parents, collectively there was a response rate of 56% for the '*intact families*'. On the individual level this leaves a sample size of 2173 respondents, while on the household level this leaves a sample size of 1338 households.

The sample has an overrepresentation of cohabitating parents. This is mainly due to the sampling design used. Moreover, due to the stratified nature of the design there is an underrepresentation of parents with very young children, those under 4 years of age, and an overrepresentation of parents with children between the ages of 4 and 11. Additionally the CBS looked at several other factors for the representativeness of the samples. Some of these factors were gender, age, and ethnicity. They found that there was an underrepresentation of men and those of non-western decent. Moreover, those that have relatively low incomes were also underrepresented. While there is an overrepresentation of those of Dutch descent and those with the highest incomes.

The sample used for this research are the heterosexual parents that are still married or cohabitating and have a child that is a minor. After checking for errors in the data regarding the genders of the respondents and their partners 10 cases were filtered out as

they had reported a partner with the same gender as themselves. An additional 25 respondents were excluded as they reported their youngest child was no longer a minor. For a total of 2138 respondents, as only respondents with a valid value for the dependent variable can be used and the dependent variable has 6 missing this left 2132 respondents. After checking for missing values on the independent and control variables, the range of which is between 0 and 24 missings, 2036 respondents are left. As such, the final sample used in this research consists of 2036 respondents from 1302 households.

### **Operationalisation**

#### *Dependent variable*

Perceptions of fairness (childcare). The dependent variable is perceptions of fairness. This variable is measure using the question '*In a family with children, choices need to be made. How fair do you consider the way you and your partner have arranged the following matters?*', specifically the subsection '*The division of care and supervision of the child/children*' this variable shows the respondents perception of fairness of the division. This variable is measured on a scale from 0 to 6, with 0 being '*very unfair for me*', 3 being '*fair for both*' and 6 being '*very unfair for my partner*'. When looking at the frequency of this variable it can be noted that relatively few respondents report that they perceive the division of childcare as unfair, either for themselves (14.4%) or their partner (8.9%). With 76.7% of respondents report they perceive the division as fair for both partners. Lastly, this research only focusses on whether respondents do perceive an unequal division as unfair, not whether this perceived unfairness is skewed towards either themselves or their partners (Dew & Wilcox, 2011). As such, this scale will be recoded so that 0 will be '*fair for both*', 1 will be '*a little unfair for me/partner*', 2 will be '*moderately unfair for me/partner*' and 3 will be '*very unfair for me/partner*'. This means that the new variable will measure if the division is seen as unfair by the respondent regardless of if this unfairness is skewed towards themselves or their partner. The direction in which the variable is coded will mean that a higher value will mean a higher perception of unfairness.

### *Independent variables*

Division of childcare (relative). To measure the relative division of childcare tasks the questions '*Who does or did the following tasks more often: you or your partner?*' was used. This question uses six different tasks. The six tasks are diaper changing, washing and bathing, putting to bed, playing games or crafting at home, talking to the child and outings with the child, such as the playground, the zoo or the cinema. For each of these items whom performs this task most often is measured on a 5-point scale. In this 5-point scale 1, '*You much more often than your partner*', is used as one end of the scale. 3, '*Equally*', is used as the midpoint of the scale and 5, '*Your partner much more often than you*', is used as the other end of the scale.

The 5-point scale will be recoded with the value 0 as '*Men perform task more often than Women*', 2 as '*Both perform task equally*' and 4 as '*Women perform task more often than Men*'. After checking reliability all six items will be used to combine into one variable as the Cronbach's alpha is .785. A new variable will be created which measures the relative division of childcare tasks. To create this variable the mean for all six items will be combined into a new variable. This means that 0 means that the respondent reported that the male partner in the relationship performs all 6 of the childcare tasks more often than the female partner and for respondents whom score a 4 on this variable will be in a relationship where the female partner perform most of all the six childcare tasks. After this, this variable was further transformed by multiplying it by 25 to create a scale that gives the relative division of labour in percentages. In this new variable 0 will have the value '*Men perform tasks more often*' and 100 will have the value '*Women perform tasks more often*', with 50 as midpoint having a value '*Both partners perform tasks equally*' (Baxter, 2000; Demaris & Longmore, 1996; Craig & Mullan, 2011; Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2004). If evidence for the first hypothesis is found this will mean that respondents who report that women perform more of the childcare tasks will score higher on the variable measuring perception of unfairness.

Type of relationship. This variable was measured by asking the respondents '*Are you married, have you registered your partnership or are you cohabiting?*' will be used. This variable is measured on a scale of 3. With 1 being '*Married*', 2 being '*Registered partnership*' and 3 being '*Cohabiting*'. As the frequency for registered partnerships is below 10% and there is legally relatively little difference between marriages and registered partnerships in the Netherlands at the time of data collection registered partnerships will be combined with

married. This variable will be coded so that 0 is '*Married/Registered partnership*' and 1 is '*Cohabiting*'.

Spousal time. The question used to measure this variable was '*How often have you, during the previous year, together with your partner: Had time for each other at home*'. The variable is measured on a scale from 1 to 7, with 1 being '*Various times per week*' and 7 being '*Never*'. This will be recoded into a scale from 0 to 6. The value for 0 will be coded for 0 and the value for 2 will be assigned to 1 up to coding the value 7 for 6.

### *Control variables*

Age respondent (Baxter, Haynes, Western & Hewitt, 2013), gender respondent (Baxter, Haynes, Western & Hewitt, 2013; Lennon & Rosenfield, 1994), education respondent and partner (Baxter, Haynes, Western & Hewitt, 2013), gender attitudes (Baxter, Haynes, Western & Hewitt, 2013; Lennon & Rosenfield, 1994) and worked hours (Baxter, Haynes, Western & Hewitt, 2013; Lennon & Rosenfield, 1994) will be used as standard control variables, as is usually done in fairness research. Relationship length will also be used as a control variable, this will be measured by the amount of time a couple has lived together (Poortman & van der Lippe, 2009). Moreover, number of children will also be used as a control variable, as with more children the amount of time spent on childcare tasks increases (Poortman & van der Lippe, 2009).

Gender respondent will be measured using the question '*What is your gender?*'. For this question the value 1 is '*Male*' and 2 is '*Female*', this will be recoded so that '*Male*' will have the value 0 and '*Female*' will have the value 1.

Relationship length will be measured by the length a couple has lived together. This will be calculated using the question '*When did you and your partner start living together? Indicate the year (e.g., 2008).*'. To calculate how long the couple lived together a new variable was computed where the year they started living together was subtracted from the year the questionnaire was submitted.

Age respondent. For this variable a measure made by NFN using the question '*What is your date of birth?*' will be used, this is a continuous variable showing age in years.

Education respondent and partner will be measured using the questions '*What is your highest attained level of education?*' and '*What is your partner's highest attained level of*

*education?*', these question are measured on a scale from 1 'Incomplete elementary' to 10 'Post-graduate'.

Number of children will be measured using the question '*How many children have you had or adopted with your partner?*', this is a continuous variable.

Gender attitudes. The questions used to measure Gender attitudes are '*Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements?*', in this question the respondent can answer on a scale from 1 'Completely agree' to 5 'Completely disagree'. The four statements given for his question are '*A woman is more suitable for bringing up small children than a man*', '*Mothers are just as responsible as fathers for earning a decent family income*', '*It is more important for men than for women to have a job*' and '*Fathers are just as responsible as mothers for the upbringing of children*'. *Mothers are just as responsible as fathers for earning a decent family income*' and '*Fathers are just as responsible as mothers for the upbringing of children*' will be reversed, this way all questions are coded in the same direction. As the Cronbach's alpha is .634 these four items can be combined in a new variable by taking the mean score of all four statements.

Worked hours will be measured with the question '*How many hours per week do you currently work according to your contract?*' which is a continuous variable, those who reported that they were not currently employed were given the value 0. Moreover, those who reported to work more than 80 hours were recoded to work 80 hours to reduce the effects of outliers. Moreover, those who work more than 80 hours per week would only have around twelve and a half hour per day to sleep, travel, eat and have leisure time.

For the descriptive statistics the mean, standard deviation and the range for the dependent and independent variables will be given

**Table 1***Descriptive statistics*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
Perception of fairness (Childcare)	0	3	.295	.589	
Division of childcare (Relative)	0	100	60.159	12.822	
Married/Registered Partnership	0	1	.738		
Cohabitating	0	1	.262		
Spousal time	0	6	1.011	1.350	
Age respondent	25	66	43.180	6.317	
Female	0	1	.558		
Male	0	1	.441		
Education respondent	1	10	6.750	1.959	
Education partner	1	10	6.630	2.048	
Relationship length	0	45	17.361	6.339	
Number of children	1	9	2.080		
Gender attitudes	1	5	3.588	.673	
Hours worked	0	80	27.651	14.564	
Valid N	2036				

SD number of children = .846.

### Analytical Strategy

For the descriptive analysis fairness perception and the division of childcare tasks will be recoded. This recoding is done to make it easier to interpret whether an unequal division does lead to more respondents reporting perceived unfairness and whether an equal division leads to more respondents reporting perceived fairness. To look if gender will influence this the cases will be split by gender. To test the hypotheses of this research a multiple linear regression will be used. In the first model, the influence of the division of childcare tasks on the perceptions of fairness, will be tested. Relationship type and spousal time will be added stepwise along with the control variables. To test whether both interaction terms can be added in one model an incremental F-test will be used. If the incremental F-test is significant a second model will be used to test both interaction terms, but if the incremental F-test is not significant the interaction terms will be tested in two separate models. In the model(s) to test the interaction terms the variables perception of

fairness, the division of childcare tasks, relationship type and spousal time will be added along with the interaction term(s).

## Results

### *Descriptive analysis*

The fairness perception will be recoded as such that 0 will represent a fair perception and 1 will represent an unfair perception. The division of childcare tasks will be recoded into three categories. 1 being respondents where the male partner performs most of the childcare tasks, everything below 45 on the original scale. 2 being respondents where both partners perform a near equal amount childcare tasks, between 45 and 55 on the original scale. 3 being respondents where the female partner performs most of the childcare tasks, everything above 55 on the original scale. Table 2 shows the crosstabs of the division of childcare tasks and the perceived fairness without splitting the files based on gender. 81.6% of the respondents perceive a relatively equal division as fair. Moreover, Table 2 shows that if the female partner performs more of the childcare tasks a larger portion, 30.6%, of the respondents perceive this as unfair. Table 3 shows the same crosstabs as Table 2 with the cases where respondent is female are filtered out and Table 4 shows the crosstabs with the cases where respondent is male are filtered out. It is noteworthy that all male respondents report that they perform a relatively equal amount of the childcare tasks as their partner. Moreover, the majority , 79.7%, perceive this as fair. When looking at Table 4 it can be seen that when comparing female respondents whom report a unequal division for them to female respondents whom report an equal division, the group that report an unequal division perceive this as unfair in larger numbers, 30.6% in comparison to 12.0%.

**Table 2**

*Fairness perception \*Division of childcare tasks Crosstabulation*

		Fairness perception	
		Fair	Unfair
Division of labour	<45	94.1%	5.9%
	45-55	81.6%	18.4%
	55>	69.4%	30.6%

**Table 3***Fairness perception\*Division of childcare tasks Crosstabulation for Male respondents*

		Fairness perception	
		Fair	Unfair
Division of labour	<45	0%	0%
	45-55	79.7%	20.3%
	55>	0%	0%

**Table 4***Fairness perception\*Division of childcare tasks Crosstabulation for Female respondents*

		Fairness perception	
		Fair	Unfair
Division of labour	<45	94.1%	5.9%
	45-55	88.0%	12.0%
	55>	69.4%	30.6%

### *Regression analysis*

The results for the regression analysis can be seen in Table 5. In Model 1 a positive statistically significant effect ( $B = .016$ ;  $p < .001$ ) was found for the influence the relative division of childcare has on the unfairness perceptions of this division. This means that the higher women's relative contributions to childcare tasks are, the higher the unfairness perceptions of parents are. However, as the Cohen's effect size is .027 this means that the found effect has a small effect size. These results support the hypothesis that an increasingly unequal division, for women, of childcare tasks leads to an increase in the perceptions of unfairness of this division. As the higher women's contribution to childcare tasks are the more unfair this is perceived.

For both the type of relationship and spousal time a direct statistical significant effect on fairness perception was found. For both the type of relationship parents have ( $B = .058$ ;  $p < .05$ ) and the amount of spousal time a couple has ( $B = .066$ ;  $p < .001$ ) a positive statistical effect was found. Which means that with an increase in the variable spousal time, which means spouses or partners spent less time together, the division of labour is perceived as less fair.

Model 1 from Table 5 also shows the effects the control variables have on the fairness perceptions. No statistical effect was found for the educational level of the respondent or the partner, the gender attitudes of the respondent towards childcare tasks,

number of children or length of the relationship. For the age of the respondent ( $B= .007$ ;  $p < .05$ ) and the worked hours ( $B= .003$ ,  $p < .01$ ) a positive statistically significant effect was found. For the gender of the respondent ( $B= -.077$ ;  $p < .05$ ) a negative statistically significant effect was found. This means that women perceived the division as fairer than men. Moreover, an increase in age or worked hours leads to an increase in the unfairness perceptions. Model 1 has an adjusted R square of .127 which means that this model explains 12,7% of the variance.

As the incremental F-test is statistically significant ( $F= 5,881$ ;  $p < .01$ ) this means that both interactions improve the model fit and can be added in one model. This is done in Model 2, the results are also depicted in Table 5. The interaction term for the relative division of labour and the type of relationship a couple has is not statistically significant ( $B= .004$ ;  $p= .084$ ). This means that the interaction between these two variables does not influence the fairness perception of the division. As such, no support is found for the hypothesis that for cohabiting couples an increasingly unequal division, for women, leads to a stronger increase in the perceptions of unfairness when compared to married couples.

The interaction term for the relative division and spousal time is statistically significant ( $B= .002$ ;  $p < .01$ ). The main effect of the relative division of childcare tasks on the fairness perception of this division is still statistically significant ( $B= .007$ ;  $p < .001$ ). This means that when partner spent various time per week together an increase in the relative division of childcare tasks will lead to an increase in unfairness perception. Moreover, when partners spent less time together an increase in relative division of childcare tasks will lead to a larger increase in unfairness perception. An additional analysis was conducted to check the effect that was found, by recoding the direction of spousal time and the interaction term between the division of childcare tasks and spousal time. In the additional analysis the effect the division of childcare tasks has on the unfairness perceptions when partners spent various times per week together is .020, this is .002 lower than for partners that never spent time together. Corroborating the fact that while partners that spent more time together still perceive an unequal division as unfair, they will perceive this as fairer than partners that never spent time together. Based on these findings the hypothesis that spouses or partners that spend no or little time together will perceive an increasingly unequal division, for women, as unfairer when compared to couples that spent more time together.

**Table 5***Regression analysis*

	Model1		Model 2	
	B	SE	B	SE
Constant	-1.016***	.149	-.341***	.084
Division of childcare (Relative)	.016***	.001	.009***	.001
Type of relationship	.058*	.029	-.188	.134
Spousal time	.066***	.009	-.053	.042
Age respondent	.007*	.003		
Gender respondent	-.077*	.036		
Education respondent	-.000	.007		
Education partner	-.006	.007		
Relationship length	.000	.003		
Number of children	-.007	.015		
Gender attitudes	-.027	.020		
Worked hours	.003**	.001		
Division*Relation type			.004	.002
Division*Spousal time			.002**	.001
R		.127		.113

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

**Discussion and conclusion**

As previous research either excludes the effects of the division of childcare tasks on fairness perceptions or combined housework and childcare tasks it is important that this research will look into the effect the division of childcare tasks has on the fairness perceptions of this division in an effort to close this knowledge gap. Because housework and childcare tasks are distinctly different. Moreover, perceptions of unfairness can have negative various negative effects on a relationship. Additionally this research will look at whether the type of relationship or the time a couple spend together leads to stronger perceptions of unfairness, if the division of childcare tasks are unequal. This research looks at this as changes in society have led to a decrease in the amount of marriages when compared to couples that cohabit. Moreover, the reason why people get into relationships has changed to be more emotional. Additionally, previous research into the effects of the relationship type has looked at its direct effects on fairness perceptions and this research explores whether looking at relationship type as a moderator will provide a clearer answer.

First, evidence was found to support the hypothesis that an increasingly unequal division, for women, of childcare tasks leads to an increase in the perceptions of unfairness of this division. This means that when women provide a larger part of the input for childcare this will be perceived as unfairer as their input is not equitable with the outcomes they receive. This finding is in line with the findings about the effect the division of housework has on fairness perceptions. Secondly, no support was found for the hypothesis that relationship type influences the effects divisions of childcare tasks have on perceptions of fairness. Therefore, an increasingly unequal division, for women, leads to an equal increase in the perceptions of fairness for both married and cohabiting couples. As this data was collected in the Netherlands, a fairly emancipated country, it is possible that gender attitudes, a factor that is often used as a justification in the Distributive Justice Framework, are relatively equal in both married and cohabiting couples. Thirdly, evidence was found to support the hypothesis that spouses or partners that spend no or little time together will perceive an increasingly unequal division, for women, as unfairer when compared to couples that spent more time together. Based on this, couples that spent more time together will perceive an unequal division as less unfair than couples that spent very little to no time together. Based on this finding it can be concluded that the societal changes with regards to why people form romantic relationships are large enough that the amount of time a couple spends together is a valid outcome value and thus can be used in the Distributive Justice Framework.

The first limitation of this research is the sampling method used by the NFN to collect the control groups. Because this sampling method has led to an overrepresentation of cohabiting couples. As this research looks at the moderating effect of relationship type the fact that cohabiting couples are overrepresented might have skewed the results. Future research that wishes to explore either the direct or moderating effect of relationship type should either use a dataset which is more representative or conduct a new survey with a sample that is representative for their target population. The second limitation of this research is the use of cross-sectional data over longitudinal data. As cross-sectional data can lead to false reports of causality. Moreover, if future research uses longitudinal data the effects of relationship type and spousal time can be better tested. As differences could be observed for couples that are have been married or cohabiting in multiple of the observations when compared to couples that were cohabiting but married

between two observations. Additionally, Dew and Wilcox (2011) noted that couples that had higher amounts of spousal time prior in their relationship keep higher satisfaction with their marriage. If a couple has spent relatively more time together early in their relationship this might mean that when they spent less time together later in their relationship this would cause them to perceive an increasingly unequal division, for women, as unfairer when compared to couples that spent more time together. A third limitation of this research is the way fairness perceptions was operationalized. By operationalizing perceptions of fairness in the way it was interpretation was easier to generalize. However, other research into fairness perception usually uses a scale from 'unfair for partner' to 'unfair for me' or variations hereof.

This research is relevant as insights into unfairness perceptions, especially perceptions about childcare tasks as these are researched insufficiently, could help decrease relationship dissatisfaction and divorce and separation rates. As research into both Equity theory and the Distributive Justice Framework shows that while an unequal division is more likely to result in perceptions of unfairness other factors such as spousal time are able to reduce the effects of an unequal division.

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