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How to belong in more than one home?

A geographical perspective on a sense of belonging amongst children of divorce in shared residence in the Netherlands



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Abstract

A considerable number of children all over the world face divorce or separation of their parents each year. In the Netherlands, an estimated 70.000 children face the consequences of divorce annually. As parental divorce drastically changes the home and social environment of adolescents, it begs the question how this affects a child's sense of belonging, especially when parents opt for a shared residence agreement, spreading a child's daily life over two different homes instead of one. In the field of geography, however, not much is known about the workings of divorce on the sense of belonging of a child, even though the spatial ramifications of divorce and a consequential shared residence agreement leaves plenty of questions and considerations on this matter. In this qualitative research concerning the sense of belonging and the feeling of being at home of children who went through divorce and grow up in a shared residence arrangement in the Netherlands, an attempt is made to shed a light on the aspects that influence this sense of belonging of children who are raised in more than one home.

The explorative nature of this research with many different aspects of a child's daily life under review is carried out by performing in-depth interviews with fifteen adolescents between the age of twelve and nineteen. To gain access to this particular research group, a collaboration between the researcher and the interdisciplinary research group 'Dynamics of Youth' of Utrecht University was formed. In the past few years this research group performed longitudinal surveys accompanied with written journals of the children that participated to gain additional insights on the matter and this master thesis adds to their project from a geographical point of view. Existing literature on a shared residence agreement after divorce is extensive, but predominantly focused on the experiences of parents and professionals. Within contemporary Western and Scandinavian societies, opting for a shared residence agreement after divorce is gaining popularity, but whether this form of shared responsibility of raising children is as beneficial for the children as it is to the parents is still up for debate. Therefore, this research will focus on the experiences of the children, aiming in reducing the gap within the literature.

To gain insights in all daily aspects of the child's life, the research will focus on three different aspects of their weekly routine. First, on what children perceive as being of influence on their feelings of home and sense of belonging based on the families and living conditions in the households, they currently live in. It is concerned with the effects of living and moving between two homes, possible new partners of either parent and possible new stepbrothers and/or stepsisters, and the effect of these new family compositions on their living arrangements in both homes, such as having a private bedroom, preferences in households and the influence of the neighborhood on their living situation. Second, the children's social networks will be under review, the maintenance of previous social ties and friendships and how this changed because of the move to another house and/or neighborhood. The final focus within this research is concerned with the daily activities of the children in the changed living conditions.

Although a sense of belonging is closely related to one's identity, and unique for any individual, there is conformity in what makes these children feel at home. Where younger children usually prefer one of the households, older children see benefits to both homes, making age a relevant factor. For a sense of belonging, specifically autobiographical, relational, and cultural factors are important in making the children feel at home. The role of self-efficacy seems to be the most significant aspect in the child's life and the importance increases with age. As previous literature suggested, children value having a say in what goes on in their life, whether this is about their residential distribution, social networks, or daily activities. This liberty was also made possible for this particular group of respondents because of the fact that even after many years since the divorce, most parents still lived close to one another, and all children owning a bicycle decreases the relative distance experienced, which might be specific for the Dutch context compared to future results elsewhere.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

'Nog snel even scheiden voor het einde van het jaar: het gaat om grote bedragen', which roughly translates to 'let us divorce quickly before the end of the year, it is concerned with a lot of money' was a news article headline that turned some heads within Dutch society at the end of 2019. The premise was that many lawyers in the Netherlands saw an increase in the requests for divorce because new laws concerning partner alimony came in effect from the 1st of January 2020 onwards that drastically sobered the amount of time an ex-partner has to provide alimony to his or her family (Algemeen Dagblad, 2019). The first Dutch laws concerning divorce and providing for the family stem from the early nineteenth century and required the husband to take care of his spouse for his entire life. In 1994 these laws were revisited and reduced the amount of time that alimony has to be given to twelve years. The new law that came to be on the first of January 2020, further reduces the alimony period to five years, with an exception when the divorce concerns small children, in which case the family needs to be supported until the children reach the age of twelve (Rijksoverheid, 2020). Although the laws concerning alimony have been cut down, exceptions are made for the wellbeing of smaller children, which also becomes visible in the choices parents make after the divorce concerning relocation and living arrangements.

Most parents in the Netherlands with children that get a divorce, around 75%, do relocate within ten kilometers of each other within the first three years, especially when the children still attend primary school and when the parents have a relatively high income (CBS, 2020). Parents with either lower incomes or outside urban areas move away further from their previous partners. Recently divorced adolescents do tend to move around more and the distance between the parents usually increases after three years, especially when the parents have found new partners (CBS, 2020). Around 27% of the parents choose to raise their children with shared residence, meaning that the children spend a similar amount of time with both parents, often week by week, in two different homes (CBS, 2017). Shared residence is most likely with highly educated parents; sole father custody is unlikely when the mother is highly educated and sole mother custody is unlikely when the father is highly educated, which can be attributed to more egalitarian gender-role views of the parents (Poortman and van Gaalen, 2017, p.537).

According to Poortman and van Gaalen (2017, p.534) the parents that opt for shared residence usually share the socio-demographic characteristics of being native Dutch, having older children (especially early teens), having larger families and finally when the mothers often have found a new partner while the fathers have not. The choice of shared residence is growing in demand in several countries as a post-divorce living arrangement (Haugen, 2010, p.112). Other forms of shared residence, such as 'birdnesting' (children living in the same parental home, while the parents move around) are also gaining popularity as it is understood as being the better option for the child's wellbeing and development. The question remains if this is the case and how the children experience this type of living arrangement. As a novel phenomenon, not much is known about its workings, but when a respondent in this type of living arrangement can be found, it will be incorporated within the research as well.

Societal and geographical relevance

In the contemporary world, divorce becomes more common, for instance in the Netherlands 70.000 children go through divorce each year (Dynamics of youth, 2018). In 2015, this accounted for 600.000 children under the age of seventeen that did not live with both their parents in the same home (CBS, 2017). Within Western and Scandinavian societies, a trend is visible that forms of shared residence are becoming more prominent as this form of post-divorce living arrangement is perceived as being in the best interest of the children. Whether or not this holds true or if it is mainly in response to the wants and needs of either parent is a topic of debate (Mason 2002; Smart 2002). The theories pertaining to this topic originate mostly

from the field of sociology and social psychology. The same holds true with the development of children after a traumatic experience such as a divorce and how they deal with different households and meeting needs and expectations of their families (Poortman & van Gaalen, 2017; Schilling et al., 2008; Butler et al. 2003). Furthermore, for the more technical aspects concerning shared residence, such as the process after parents deciding to separate and matters of alimony and custody are extensively researched within the discipline of law (Kurki-Sounio 2000). Theory concerned with how this affects a child's daily life in spatial terms or their feelings of belonging and home in their new houses, families, and neighborhoods, however, remains unclear. The same holds true for their social networks, although there are theories within geography about how children perceive these phenomena, it is not specified to children of divorce, the exception being the research of Haugen (2010) who looks at time and agency dilemmas within the shared residence of children in Norway. This gap in the literature leads to the following problem statement to be researched in the Netherlands.

Research question

How does relocating from home to home of children of divorce with shared residence affect their sense of belonging and participation in daily life in the Netherlands?

Sub questions

- 1. To what extent do children feel more at home in either one of their households and how do they perceive feeling at home?*
- 2. Which factors are important in maintaining their social networks?*
- 3. To what extent are their daily activities influenced by the amount of moving between houses (or by remaining in the original parental home)?*

1.1 Research objectives

The research question and sub questions are devised to explore which factors influence the child's feeling at home and sense of belonging. Besides the possible geographical factors, such as the influence of distance between the homes and the influence of that distance on their social networks, factors like parental cooperation and the presence of new partners and family members, and perhaps a 'new' environment will be studied to answer the questions that are posed within this research (Skjorten, 2007; Christensen, 2002). A qualitative approach will be used with in-depth interviews that focuses on the children's individual experiences to gain insight in the abstract concepts like a sense of belonging and what feeling at home means to them. These abstract notions and the multitude of possible answers that could be given on these concepts are hard to capture within the answers of a survey and because of the gap in the literature on this matter within the field of geography, a qualitative approach is best suited for the explorative nature of this research.

The research will focus on the above-mentioned research questions in which the children's perspective is key. Because a sense of belonging and feeling at home is researched by looking into the two household situations, the child's social network and their daily activities, it is important that the research is well-structured to not lose sight of the many different aspects that might influence the sense of belonging of the respondents. The next chapter concerning the theoretical framework will focus on a sense of belonging in general, the different dimensions of belonging and more specifically what is known about belonging amongst children. Subsequently theory about shared residence and children's neighborhood satisfaction will be discussed before moving on to the methods, which will explain the choices made within this research. After the general characteristics, three separate chapters of the results will discuss the three sub questions concerning the home situation, social networks, and daily activities, each with their own conclusion before moving to a general conclusion based on the research question and subsequently the discussion and reflection.

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework

To get a grip on an abstract concept as a child's feelings of belonging, this chapter will start off with an analysis on the meaning of a sense of a belonging in general and what has been written on the matter so far. Concepts such as familiarity and place belonging will be discussed, and the most applicable theories will be explained and worked out in the second part. To underline the geographical focus of this research, the different dimensions of belonging and the multiple scale levels within the concept will be highlighted. The third paragraph will have a predominant focus on how a sense of belonging amongst children differs from adults and part four will focus on what is known in the literature about living in a shared residence. The chapter concludes with a paragraph concerning children's neighborhood satisfaction and general assumptions and expectations that could not be based on existing literature because it has not been researched in this fashion yet.

2.1 Sense of belonging

A concern that is rooted in humans since the dawn of time is establishing and maintaining their relatedness to others, and connecting oneself to surrounding people, places, and things; in other words, a sense of belonging, which Maslow already included in his pyramid of human needs as the third pillar in 1954 (Hagerty et al., 1992, p.173). A sense of belonging, therefore, has long been recognized as an important aspect of human life and deemed as necessary for a human being to have a fulfilling life. It is closely related to the formation of identity. Within geography, the role of belonging is important and frequently used within research on identity, but like other concepts such as gentrification and globalization, the concept does not have a single definition or entry within the field. Gregory (et al, 2009) even goes as far as stating that belonging has no place within geography despite efforts within the field to bring it back on the research agenda. This chapter will therefore discuss and review multiple definitions concerning belonging before picking the most suitable definition for researching this subject.

According to Levermore and Millward (2007, p.147) 'identity is used when we refer to a more official sense of collective belonging on territory whilst sense of belonging replaces identity when we consider a more informal multi-layered and transversal aspect of identification. According to Delanty (2004) the difference between identity and a sense of belonging can also be found in the fact that a sense of belonging is not necessarily bound to a certain territory, while identity formation usually is. Duyvendak (2011, p.112) states that the concept of a sense of belonging can be best explained with the feeling of being at home, whether this is in an actual physical location such as the parental home but also within a society. Feeling at home can be stimulated by familiar brands, stores architecture and nature, but also by social contact with familiar people:

'Few people will dispute other people's right to feel at home with fellow citizens who share their interests, affinities, longings, histories, hobbies, etc.' (Duyvendak, 2011, p. 83).

This is closely related to the definition of belonging proposed by Gaferty et al. (1992, p.173) who define a sense of belonging as the experience of personal involvement in a system or environment in which the individual feels as an integral part of that system. The system can be a relationship or organization and the environment can be natural or cultural. It is concerned with the experience of feeling valued, needed, and accepted on the one hand and that an individual's characteristics fit within and complement the system or environment on the other hand. According to Kestenberg and Kestenberg this works similar for children; *'As the child grows, he develops a sense of belonging not only to the family, but to the community, the nation, and a cultural group.'* (Kestenberg and Kestenberg, 1988, p. 536).

According to Antonsich (2010, p.2) the notion of belonging is understood as intuitive and its definition part of common sense. When an individual explains their belonging and what they associate with it, it is hardly questioned what they mean by it. Moreover, belonging is also used as a synonym for identity and often linked with citizenship and the right to be somewhere. Scholars within geography and social sciences therefore have multiple definitions and meanings for belonging and it remains unclear what it stands for and how it is claimed. Authors like Bhimji (2008) and Hartnell (2006) state that belonging encompasses citizenship, ethnicity, gender, and nationhood while others such as Rowe (2005) attribute it to different forms of attachment, for instance to groups, places, or cultures (Antonsich, 2010, p.3).

One of the most comprehensive analytical notions surrounding belonging is made by Fenster (2005, p.246), who makes the distinction between belonging as a personal, private sentiment, a sense of belonging that can be explained as place attachment on a personal level on the one hand and belonging in a more public, official sense that manifests itself in structure, for instance citizenship on the other hand. This view on belonging is accepted and recognized as a fruitful way to analyze a sense of belonging, and other academics such as Yuval-Davis (2006) and Antonsich (2010) continued along a similar framework with these two dimensions of belonging, the personal dimension that can be viewed as the notion of identity within belonging and the second dimension that has more to do with citizenship and being part of a greater structure within society. Both dimensions will be explained in the next paragraph along the framework of Antonsich (2010).

2.2 The two dimensions of belonging

The first analytical dimension of belonging is concerned with the personal and emotional level of belonging and entails the attachment of an individual to a particular place. Antonsich (2010, p.6) coins this attachment to a specific area as 'place-belongingness' and it is concerned with feelings of being 'at home' in a certain place. 'Home' is not necessarily meant as the domesticated material place where an individual lives, but for a symbolic space of familiarity, comfort, security, and emotional attachment (Hooks, 2009, p.213). It is concerned with the feeling of home of an individual that can take place on multiple scale levels, whether this is the actual home where someone lives, or the neighborhood or nation where they reside. It is concerned with the rootedness to a place and related to place identity, place attachment and a sense of place.

According to Antonsich (2010, p.7) a sense of belonging somewhere is reliant on self-formation and an individual's identity, as the question 'Who am I?' is inextricably linked to the question 'Where do I belong?'. This does not mean that belonging is synonymous to identity, but it is concerned with certain dimensions of identity formation as belonging is connected to in- and exclusion of others and an emotional attachment and feeling 'at home' or 'safe' in a place or community. Furthermore, in-and exclusion and this form of place attachment are part of the process of self-formation. According to Antonsich (2010) feelings of belonging, feeling 'at home', and place attachment on the individual level are influenced by five factors that generate such feelings: auto-biographical, relational, cultural, economic, and legal factors.

The autobiographical factors relate to an individual's history; it is concerned with memories, personal experiences, and memories that tie a particular person to a certain place, or in other words, as place attachment (Dixon and Durheim, 2004, p.459). According to Fenster (2005, p.247) childhood memories play a key role in this as the place where someone was born and grew up often remains a central place in the life of an individual. The experiences, emotions and childhood memories are often narrated as the 'home-place' as the location usually is the

first spot where someone feels that they belong and feel at home (Antonsich, 2010, p.8). This also has to do with the continuous presence of family members and memories of one's ancestors, which further contributes to place-belongingness.

Relational factors are concerned with the social ties that enrich a person's life in a certain place (Antonsich, 2010, p.8). They consist of strong ties with friends and family members and weak ties concerning incidental interactions with strangers that share the public space. Especially the strong ties help constitute 'the self' and feelings of belonging on the individual level, while weak ties can also assist in feelings of belonging to a certain group but also highlight what an individual is not in the form of othering (Antonsich 2010, p.8).

The latter is also closely related to the third factor which is concerned with cultural factors. Language is often highlighted as being of great influence on culture as it constructs and conveys meaning and it determines how we identify and interpret everyday situations (Theborn, 1991, pp. 182-183). Language is closely related to the politics of belonging as it highlights differences and similarities, or in other words, it demarcates 'us' from 'them' and can give a sense of community and intimacy when the individual belongs to a particular group but can also work the other way around when similarities within the group are not found (Antonsich, 2010, p.9). Besides language as cultural factor that can produce a sense of belonging, other forms of cultural expression, such as traditions, habits and cultural practices as religion and food consumption and production can generate feelings of being at home (Fenster, 2005, p.252).

The fourth factor is concerned with economic factors, creating a safe and stable material condition for an individual and his/her family, and is not only expressed in material conditions but is also concerned with the feeling that a person has a stake in the future of the place where they live (Antonsich, 2010, p.10). The fifth factor is concerned with legality; citizenship, resident permits, security to lawfully be somewhere and being allowed to belong and feel safe there. Ignatieff (1994, p.25) explains this factor as *'where you belong is where you are safe; and where you are safe is where you belong'*. The fourth and fifth factor are important in understanding belonging to its fullest extent from an adult's perspective but are less relevant to the belonging of children as they are not yet concerned with obtaining an income and a home, citizenship, or resident permits. The safety aspect of the legality factor can be of importance, but they lack the power to address potential safety concerns.

A sixth element that influences belonging and feeling at home but does not fit the aforementioned factors according to the authors, is the amount of time an individual lived somewhere, also known as the length of residence. A distinction that can be made with length of residence is the people that were born where they live and 'incomers' who move from a different place from the one where they were born for various reasons, but it usually has to do with a better quality of life (Antonsich, 2010, p.11). In the case of this research, it is expected that the move of these 'incomers' is not attributed to a better quality of life per se, but also out of necessity due to the divorce. This distinction is important as moving to another place for a better quality of life is very different in terms of a sense of belonging at the new residence compared to forced relocation, as the choice for a new residence might not be motivated out of upward mobility for a better future but the necessity to find alternative living space on short notice.

All the above-mentioned factors might lead an individual to lead a life which is meaningful, a life worth living, which, according to Hooks (2009, p.1) is what to find a place where we belong is all about. The absence of these factors leads to a sense of loneliness, isolation, alienation, and displacement. Now that the different factors relating to a sense of belonging are addressed, it is important to relate these factors to the two dimensions of belonging. As stated

before, the first dimension is concerned with the personal and emotional level of belonging and the place-belongingness of feeling at home in a certain place. The second dimension of belonging is more concerned with the politics of belonging, or rather socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion, being rejected or welcomed by the people who live in the place where you live. While the autobiographical factor is predominantly concerned with the first dimension of belonging, the relational factor is mostly influenced by the second dimension as social ties are linked to the politics of belonging and the in- and exclusion of certain individuals and whether an individual is part of the group.

The same holds true for the cultural factor, although feelings of belonging with traditions, habits and cultural practices are also dependent on whether the individual identifies with these practices on a personal level. As stated before, the economic and legal factor are not perceived as being of great influence on children and therefore are beyond the scope of this research, but briefly mentioned for the totality of the dimensions of belonging. The element of length of residence that is not viewed as a factor on its own by the authors of this theoretical framework, however, is perceived to be of value within this research due to the prevalence of divorce on relocating one or both households. It is expected that the length of residence and the relocation of families due to divorce are part of both dimensions of belonging as the individual has to become familiar and comfortable in the new home and neighborhood on a personal level, but it is also concerned with the politics of belonging as the individual needs to fit in with other residents of the new neighborhood as well.

2.3 Sense of belonging amongst children

A child's first sense of belonging is with his or her caretakers and takes on an important role in their development and wellbeing. Feelings of belonging will help the child to feel better and perform optimally, for instance in school. Besides the effect that a divorce might have on the children psychologically, this also affects their sense of belonging as they will be moving between two different houses, two neighborhoods and deal with possible new family members. The forced relocation can disrupt social networks and might create difficulties with integrating in the new neighborhood (Visser, 2019, p.2). This is important because the neighborhood has a more pivotal role in a child's life compared to adults as they are more rooted in their local environment on the neighborhood level for their social contacts and daily activities, particularly on school days (Harris, 2009). Furthermore, because children alternate between two different homes frequently or experience a longer absence from each parent, shared residence leads to instability, especially amongst younger children (Poortman & van Gaalen, 2017, p.534). Moreover, chances are those children in shared residence encounter more and higher levels of parental conflict (Harris-Short, 2010). Compared to living with either solely the mother or father, shared residence is also the least stable living arrangement in the Dutch context with twenty percent of children that started in shared residence at the time of divorce being changed to sole custody within two years (Poortman & van Gaalen, 2017, p.536).

Research with young people has identified that experiences of adversity, such as divorce, at early stages of the life-course are linked to poorer outcomes at later stages of development and across a range of different life domains and causal links have been supported between childhood adversity, psychosocial welfare, and adult functioning (Schilling et al., 2008). Emerging to adulthood is the stage of development for young people where they explore, define, and begin to solidify their roles and worldviews, and because of this identity development and a sense of belonging are crucial for this process in the developmental stage (Corrales et al., 2016, p.111). For children who have faced the adversity of family disruption, this can be different in the sense that the development trajectories towards adult roles and responsibilities are accelerated and moreover focused on more and earlier self-reliance and

self-sufficiency with a lesser focus on identity exploration (Corrales et al., 2016, p.112). Besides the fact that the children live in two different homes already due to shared residence, the event of the divorce could also lead to a lesser focus on identity exploration combined with belonging in two different houses and neighborhoods. Furthermore, during adolescence when time spent with the family decreases, engagement with peers usually increases and connectedness to peers becomes more important for healthy development, which might even become more important to children when divorce and shared residence could lead to a decrease in time spent with the family as well (Rejaän et al., 2021). Moreover, studies have shown that it can be difficult for children in a shared residence arrangement to stay in contact with peers and friends due to the physical distance and moving between two households and neighborhoods which can be experienced as even more difficult for children due to possible desires to spend time with a parent whom they have missed (Haugen, 2010).

A final important form of belonging concerning children mentioned in the literature is a sense of school belonging, which involves feelings of belonging in which students feel personally accepted, respected, included and supported by others in a school environment (Goodenow, 1993 in Rejaän et al., 2021, p.6). Especially for children that experienced divorce, school can be an important factor in their lives that remains consistent in a time that other aspects in their daily life are subject to change. Besides classmates the teacher also plays a pivotal role as negative experiences with peers or parents can be intervened and Allen et al. (2018) add that children who perceive a positive relationship with their teacher who is emphatic and helpful in resolving personal problems are more likely to experience a greater sense of belonging in school.

2.4 Shared residence

The choice of shared residence is growing in demand in several countries as a post-divorce living arrangement (Haugen, 2010, p.112). According to the Dutch Bureau of Statistics (CBS, 2017) around 27% of Dutch households in divorce chooses for shared residence and in Norway, there is a strong emphasis in parental involvement in a child's life and to secure gender equality after divorce, especially as the latter is seen as the norm in Norwegian society (Skjævik 2006; in Haugen 2010). Although some authors, like Kurki-Sounio (2000), state that joint custody in both a legal and physical sense are interpreted as being in the best interest of the child, others like Mason (2002) and Smart (2002) put forward in the case of the United States and United Kingdom respectively, that it entirely ignores the experiences of the children affected by these arrangements and is more a decision that is in the best interest of the parents. Choosing an equal time share arrangement might logically follow out of the parent's view that it is in the best interest of the children, but might also be driven out of self-interest to, for instance, avoid conflict, save money or because the parents need time for themselves (Haugen, 2010, p.112). But as Haugen (2010) rightly questions about the seemingly fair and equal distribution of time with the children amongst both parents in a shared residence arrangement, it says nothing about how the children themselves deal with moving between houses, the emotional significance attached to it and their agency in participating in this, let alone how beneficial it is for functioning in their daily life (Haugen, 2010, p.112).

Concerning the child's best interest, a study in Norway found that parental cooperation, low levels of parental conflict and living in the same community are most important in making a shared residence agreement successful (Skjærten et al, 2007). A study by Christensen (2002, p.85) further states that children in general value 'having a say' over the time they spent with one parent or another in a flexible way and furthermore that 'family time' is also time that children can spend on their own, which is important for their own development and independence, but often lacks in a shared residence agreement. Moreover, the freedom of

choice and the flexibility of the parents is an important aspect in this as studies have shown that children tend to put ahead the needs and wishes of their parents ahead of their own (Skjørten et al, 2007; Smart 2002). This argument was also made by Butler et al. (2003, p.134) who explained that children demonstrate a remarkable willingness to compromise on their own needs to continue meaningful relationships with both parents. This again shows that shared residence might not be in the child's best interest per se, as they might feel the need to please their parents in sharing time and attention while this might not be the ideal situation for themselves but are afraid to hurt their parents' feelings and expectations.

2.5 Children's neighborhood satisfaction

According to Visser and Tersteeg (2019) young people might perceive forced relocation to a different neighborhood in other ways than adults because young people have local based activities and social networks and therefore experience high levels of belonging in local settings. Furthermore, the forced relocation of children can serve as an additional stress factor besides the divorce itself, which can negatively impact their wellbeing. Studies that focus on the effects of forced relocation on social and developmental outcomes on young people show mixed results in the sense that both positive and negative results are attributed to the forced move, but these studies are mostly concerned with forced relocation from deprived to low-poverty neighborhoods, not with (forced) relocation due to divorce. It is worth mentioning, however, that moving positively influenced performances of children under thirteen, compared to children from thirteen and onwards (adolescents) because moving during adolescence is more disruptive as this group usually already has extensive social and functional ties within the neighborhood (Visser, 2019, p.444).

The former suggests that age is a relevant factor within the research as the effects of the move might differ between these age categories. What differs in these theories on forced relocation compared to the relocation of children of divorce, however, is that the latter group might only partially relocate as their childhood home might still be one of the two locations, they live in with either parent, which means that the disruption of their social networks and daily activities might be less severe compared to children who are forcefully relocated. Another interesting remark within this strand of research is that young people did loose friends and gave up leisure activities after moving to another neighborhood but were able to develop new friends and activities after moving away (Bolt et al. 2011).

But what influences a child's residential satisfaction within a new neighborhood? For adults it is known that residential satisfaction within a new neighborhood is largely based on the amount of choice they had in the relocation towards the new home (Posthumus 2013; in Visser 2019, p.444) but for children of divorce it is safe to assume that they had limited to no prevalence in the relocation choice of their parents, which coins this move towards the new residence as a forced relocation. There are some studies who address the participation of children in residential decision-making, for instance Bushin (2009) who distinguishes between parents solely deciding for a new home, notifying the children, and deciding themselves or involving the child in the decision-making, but only the latter of the three options for decision-making is concerned with the actual involvement of the children. Moreover, this article is concerned with family migration and not specifically the relocation of one or either parent after a divorce, which could work out differently than a migrant family with parents who are still together.

Visser (2019) found that whilst most adults base neighborhood choice and satisfaction on more rational and tactical factors such as socio-economic status and safety, for young people it has more to do with the different dimensions of belonging. Especially the autobiographical, relational, and cultural dimensions of belonging are important as the respondents described a lack of continuity, feeling unfamiliar in their new neighborhood and no longer having contact

with former friends and neighbors and not visiting familiar places and people in their former neighborhood anymore (Visser, 2019, p. 451). According to Carillo et al (2016) this has to do with the social ties within the neighborhood young people reside in as this provides them with a sense of safety and belonging. A lack of familiarity with the new neighborhood and its people within can prevent the child from feeling at home in the new living situation. Besides the autobiographical and relational dimensions mentioned above, the cultural dimension of belonging is also important as the culture within a neighborhood serves a powerful social function as it gives people a common language, symbols, and norms through which groups are formed and maintained (Antonsich, 2010). People find comfort when they see their own norms and values shared and reflected in their surroundings, and literature shows that this can differ between neighborhoods, especially when moving to a more deprived area (Carillo et al, 2016).

A final important dimension in neighborhood satisfaction amongst young people is self-efficacy (Visser, 2019, p.453). Self-efficacy requires that the environment that an individual resides in maintains or at least not hinders the person's lifestyle. Someone's self-efficacy is influenced by the facilities in someone's surroundings, for instance the location of schools, shops, and sporting facilities in the case of young children. This is closely related to the relational dimension of belonging as a higher level of experienced self-efficacy can make it easier to make new contacts (Visser, 2019, p.453).

To conclude this chapter, it is important to note that it is assumed that neighborhood satisfaction in a new neighborhood after relocation work out differently per individual. Compared to adults, the literature states that young people's neighborhood satisfaction is not based on socioeconomic status or safety of the area where they reside in but is based on feelings of belonging and self-efficacy. Furthermore, this is influenced by the social ties that they maintain from their previous neighborhood, or people they already know in the neighborhood where they moved to. This is further influenced by the facilities in the new neighborhood and whether they match the individual's lifestyle, which might make it easier to create new social capital and recreate a sense of belonging in the new neighborhood. It is important to note, however, that these theories are based on the experiences of young people who were (forcefully) relocated to deprived neighborhoods due to other reasons than a divorce of their parents. The results of this research will reflect on whether these theories are applicable on young people who move due to divorce, or that this subgroup is part of a gap in the literature, and it works out differently for this relatively understudied demography within the field of geography.

2.6 Assumptions based on literature review

The literature described above will serve as the foundation of this research and will be operationalized to obtain the empirical data, but the literary gap concerning this topic within the field of geography still leaves some aspects of this research without a theoretical basis. Therefore, this paragraph will make assumptions to close the gaps that are left blank within the theoretical framework concerning children of divorce.

First of all, the factor of geographical location is deemed as important in a shared residence agreement. The longer the distance between the two homes a child lives in, the more disruptive this will be for a child's daily activities and social networks. Furthermore, longer traveling times could lead to more instability as commuting between the two homes will take up more time and other aspects like packing items necessary will be more demanding as for instance forgetting needed items will take more effort to retrieve compared to living nearby.

Not much is known about the social networks of children of divorce. It is expected that children's social networks are similar to those of adults with at its base the strong and weak

ties described in the relational factors of Antonsich (2010, p.8). Strong ties being ties with family and friends and weak ties concerning incidental interactions with strangers in public space, such as other people and children living in the neighborhood or friends of friends. It is expected that a child's social network predominantly consists of classmates, friends from sports and hobbies and other children in the neighborhood if this applies to the demographics of the neighborhood.

Concerning children's daily activities, the literature states that moving away from a previous home usually leads to losing activities, but this is based on displacement theory, meaning moving away from the previous home altogether, predominantly due to financial reasons. It is expected that the loss of activities is less disruptive concerning children of divorce compared to moving away altogether due to displacement as chances are that either parent remains in the original home or the move after the divorce is near to the original home to make shared residence work, as statistics of CBS (2017) already stated concerning the relocation of parents after the first years of divorce.

Finally, it is expected that younger children, still in primary school or just starting high school attach more value to the neighborhood than older children as their activities are more locally based due to less self-efficacy than older children to do as they please, but this is also influenced by the presence of children of a similar age. For older children, late teens, it is expected that more personal space, for instance a private bedroom, becomes more important in their daily life, combined with more liberties or self-efficacy in maintaining their social networks and participating in daily activities, or more general, to do as they please.

Chapter 3: Research design

This chapter will elaborate on the methodological choices made in this research. The aim of this research is to explore which factors result in a sense of belonging or a feeling of being at home for children of divorce who grow up in a shared residence living arrangement. To provide insight in this relatively understudied subject, the research will be of an explorative nature in a qualitative form to gain first insights and discover possible themes for future research. It will be studied by addressing the different factors discussed in the theoretical framework and their influence on the respondents to address the main question; *'How does relocating from home to home of children of divorce with shared residence affect their sense of belonging and participation in daily life in the Netherlands?'*

3.1 Qualitative research

Children of divorce are a thoroughly studied part of the population within social sciences and within the field of law, due to the psychological issues a child can develop due to the possibly traumatic experience of the divorce and the plethora of issues that the parents need to arrange concerning housing and custody amongst other things. Furthermore, as stated in the introduction, about 600.000 children in the Netherlands under the age of seventeen grow up without both parents in the same home. This, in turn, has big effects spatially on the (type of) available housing and the amenities required in different neighborhoods amongst other things, which begs the question why this has not been researched before within the field of geography in the way it is attempted now. Because of this literary gap and because this research deals with perceived experiences and the abstract concept of a sense of belonging, a qualitative approach is best suited. White & Argo (2009) argue that respondents experience difficulties with concepts as identity and belonging in surveys. Furthermore, creating survey questions that entail all possible answers on personal concepts like 'belonging' and 'feeling at home' can prove to be difficult. When respondents within this research have a hard time explaining what they mean by for instance 'belonging somewhere', the interactive nature of interviews can be applied to try to find what they really mean when discussing these abstract concepts. Because of the expected individual differences between respondents and what makes them feel that they belong, semi-structured interviews will be used to explore what is perceived as important by the children in this respect but structured enough to provide a clear answer on the research question.

3.2 Respondents

Children between the age of twelve to eighteen will be approached as they are in a later stage of development than younger children, attending high school and possibly being more familiar and understanding with the aspects and consequences of growing up in a shared residence. Respondents will be found through a database of the workgroup 'Dynamics of Youth' (<https://www.uu.nl/en/research/dynamics-of-youth/research/interdisciplinary-themes/where-do-i-belong-children-in-multi-resident-families>). This is an interdisciplinary workgroup of Utrecht University focused on how vulnerable children develop in their lifetime and the difficulties they face growing up. Within in the research of Dynamics of Youth, 250 families of divorce in Utrecht and surroundings are researched with longitudinal surveys and diary's kept by the children. The children that will be approached within this research are already part of the ongoing research within this workgroup and stated in their surveys that they are open to further research.

3.3 Operationalization

The theoretical framework serves as an input for the topic list used to conduct the interviews. Every interview will use the same topic list, but additional questions will be added when the child mentions interesting topics and some questions will be asked differently.

Sub question 1; *'To what extent do children feel more at home in either one of their households and how do they perceive feeling at home?'* will focus on what children perceive as being of influence on their feelings of home or sense of belonging based on the families and living conditions in the households, they currently live in. It is concerned with the effects of living and moving between two homes, possible new partners of either parent and possible new stepbrothers and/or stepsisters, and the effect of these new family compositions on their living arrangements in both homes, such as having a private bedroom, preferences in households and the influence of the neighborhood on their living situation.

Sub question 2; *'Which factors are important in maintaining their social networks?'* will focus on the maintenance of previous social ties and friendships and how this changed because of the move to another house or neighborhood. Even if they see their previous social ties a similar amount of time compared to their previous pre-divorce living arrangement, it could be – as the existing literature showed - that the nature of these friendships has changed. Were new social ties developed in the new neighborhoods or not? What is the nature of these social ties and where did they originate? Did the changes lead to a loss of existing social ties?

Sub question 3; *'To what extent are their daily activities influenced by the amount of moving between houses (or by remaining in the original parental home)?'* focuses on the daily activities and self-efficacy of the children in the changed living conditions. How does moving between houses affect the child's attendance of (former) daily activities such as sports or hobbies? Did some activities fall through because of for instance the distance from the new household to that activity? And if certain activities are not part of the daily activities anymore, are they replaced with new ones? To bridge the possible change in distance to activities, are the children dependent on transport by their parents?

3.4 Executing the interviews

To obtain respondents for this research, a database of workgroup 'Dynamics of Youth' was used to get in touch with children of divorce who live in a shared residence agreement. The file contained names, email addresses, residence, their living situation and whether they were willing to participate in additional research. Later in the research a second version of the file consisting of new potential participants was added, in total about forty parents and children were approached for an interview. This resulted in the fifteen interviews that were held for this research. The age was unknown when approaching participants, and because it possibly concerned younger children, a letter was composed addressing both the parents and children to inform them about the research and asking permission to participate. To increase accessibility for the children, a home visit was suggested with one of the parents present to stimulate a situation where the child felt comfortable to talk freely about their living situation. The younger children preferred this option and most of the interviews were conducted this way. To reward them for participating, gift cards for visiting the cinema were awarded after conducting the interview.

Because the corona pandemic was restricting the possibilities of moving and visiting others, the data collection was halted until the first peak was over. Between the first and second peak in September and October the first eleven interviews that were planned were conducted face to face. After these first interviews took place, the second database was requested to find more children willing to participate. The first eleven interviews only contained two boys, which led

the focus to finding more who were willing to be interviewed, but this proved to be difficult as most of them declined the invite. Furthermore, some of the respondents that were approached were believed to be boys but appeared to be girls when the researcher arrived at the location of the interview. Two respondents were named 'Sam' and both were girls, which was only found out when arriving at the location of the interview, as the sex and age were not mentioned in the database. Eventually all available children of the database were contacted which resulted in the final four interviews of this research. The latter four interviews were conducted digitally because the second wave of corona restricted traveling and visiting even further. Especially with the younger children, the face-to-face interviews proved to be more valuable in the sense that they discussed the topics more freely as they felt more comfortable doing so. This because during the face-to-face interviews, time was taken to introduce the research and talk with mother and child about possible questions they had and breaking the ice by starting a more informal dialogue over drinks, for instance mentioning items present in the room of the kids, making them feel comfortable and at home instead of immediately starting the interview. All interviews were between twenty-five minutes and an hour, depending on what the children wanted to discuss and were recorded with permission of either the child or the child and parent if the respondent was younger.

3.5 Analyzing the interviews

To analyze the interviews, all recordings were transcribed and analyzed manually by using a code tree (appendix 10.2). The code tree consisted of three parts, one for each respective sub question, and each part had between five and eight code groups in which the answers within the interview were organized. Based on these code groups the statements were put together and compared to obtain the insights on every topic. Because anonymity was guaranteed when conducting the interviews, the names used within this research are fictional.

3.6 Reliability and validity

Reliability is not guaranteed within qualitative research. The answers given by the respondents are based on what they perceive to be true, but also deals with opinions and contrasting remarks compared to previous statements. Furthermore, the flexibility of a semi-structured interview that was used within this research has the drawback that it is unlikely that questions have been posed exactly the same (Boeije et al (2009, p.274). However, there are procedures within qualitative research that enhance the reliability of the research such as a thorough methodological justification and by explaining how and why choices are made, making the research controllable and replicable (Boeije et al, 2009, p.275). To meet these conditions, this chapter thoroughly described the operationalization of the theoretical framework to the topic list and information is shared about how the interviews were executed. Moreover, the topic list and code tree are added to the appendix, which enhances the reliability and validity, making it possible to replicate this research in a similar way.

3.7 General characteristics respondents

Interview	Sex	age	Years since divorce	Education	Distance between houses by bike in minutes	Residential distribution	Still living in same home as before divorce	Parents live in the same city
1 Femke	Female	14	7	MAVO 3	5	50/50 day by day	No	Yes
2 Loes	Female	14	10	VWO 3	30	50/50 week by week	Yes, mom	No
3 Claire	Female	13	2	VWO 3	1	Usually 50/50 half week, now more with mom *	Yes, dad	Yes
4 Rosa	Female	16	12	VWO 5	7	Used to be 50/50 week now mostly mom	No	Yes
5 Olivia	Female	19	10	University first year	30/35	50/50 week by week *	No	No
6 Eefje	Female	15	10	MAVO 4	10	50/50 week by week	Yes, dad	Yes
7 Mirte	Female	17	15	VWO 6	40	50/50 half week	Yes, dad	No
8 Nienke	Female	15	6	VWO 4	15	60 (m)/40(d) week by week	Yes, dad	No
9 Tom	Male	17	5	Gymnasium 6	20-30	Used to be complicated, now 50/50 week	No	No
10 Peter	Male	16	6	HAVO 5	20	50/50 week	No	No
11 Eva	Female	18	10	University first year	3	50/50 week	Yes, mom	Yes
12 Laura	Female	16	13	VWO 5	15	55(m)/45(d) half weeks	Yes, mom	Yes
13 Sara	Female	14	9	VWO 3	7	65(m)/35(d) half weeks	No	Yes
14 Merel	Female	19	8	University first year	10	70/30, 1,5 week mom half week dad	Yes, dad	yes
15 Dirk	Male	12	5	HAVO/VWO 1	2	50/50 half week	Yes, dad	yes

Table 1: General characteristics respondents (Dokter, 2020)

Chapter 4: Analysis

This chapter will discuss if the most important factors contributing to a sense of belonging amongst children of divorce growing up in a shared residence that are reviewed within the theoretical framework apply to the adolescents that are interviewed within this research. After assessing the general characteristics of the respondents in paragraph 4 this chapter will answer the three sub questions of this research subsequently.

4.1 Elaboration on general characteristics

A quick overview of table 1 already shows some interesting insights in this group of respondents that require further explanation. First, for most children their parent's divorce happened at an early age; more than half of the children already live in a shared residence arrangement for eight to fifteen years. Second, all children move between houses by bike and the distance between the homes is relatively short. Moreover, the level of education of the respondents is relatively high with nine respondents being enrolled in high school educations that prepare them for higher education and three respondents that started with their bachelor on the university this year. Furthermore, although a 50/50 divide of residential distribution is most common, the way this works out on the individual level is tailored to their specific situation and is often complicated, contested, and subject to change throughout the years as they get older. And even though the divorce happened many years ago in most families, more parents than not still live within the same city or at least in two neighboring villages. Additionally, nine out of the fifteen children also still live in the parental home that they inhabited as a family before the divorce. Before moving to the topics, related to the three main themes within this research, an elaboration on the residential distribution and how the distribution came to be are in order, together with what the children perceived as the biggest changes in their daily life when their parents got divorced.

4.2 Residential redistribution

Although most families opted for a 50/50 distinction with the shared residence living arrangement, the nature of this division and how this works out on a weekly basis differs starkly between most families. When asked about the division within the interview, some arrangements seemed straightforward, like Eefje:

'We switch every week, so this Sunday I will leave for my dad and next Sunday I will come back to my mom again' (Eefje, 15).

Nienke (15) prefers to spend a little more time with her mom and stays there for eight days and six days with her dad on a biweekly basis. Loes (14) also moves on a weekly basis on Friday afternoon after school and band practice. The same holds true for Peter (16) who explained that he packs all his belongings for school and soccer on Thursday night, which his parents bring by car to the other house the next day before he comes back from school. Dirk (12) also spends an equal amount of time with either parent, but in half weeks and he and his sister switch on Wednesday from their dad's house to their mom's. The weekends also differ on a weekly basis.

These first examples show that residential distribution does not need to be overly complex, but unfortunately this is not always a given as this also depends on, for example, job characteristics of either parent or other factors as will be shown in the examples below. Interestingly, many children, like Femke, also started their sentence with 'well, that's very complicated', when asked how their residential distribution played out:

'Yes, it is very complicated, my dad is a baker, so he starts at night and works until mid-day, but when we are there, he doesn't sleep during the day like he usually does. On Mondays we

are at my dad's and in the evening, we go to my mom, and we stay there until Tuesday. On Wednesday I am at my mom's in the morning, and we go to my dad after school but return to my mom in the evening and on Thursdays I am also at my mom's, but on Friday after school I go back to my dad's. And then it depends on if my dad's girlfriend is there or not, because if they are not there, I go back to my mom again but if they are there, I can stay the night. And the weekends change every week, but we already do this for six years, so I am used to it (Femke, 14).

The argument that the schedule is complex, but not for her because she is used to it also resonates with Sara's explanation:

Well, I could explain everything to you, but everyone always thinks it is a little complicated, but I am used to it. On Monday and Tuesday night I am with my dad, Wednesdays Thursdays and usually Fridays I am with my mom, Saturdays differ and on Sunday night I usually am with my mom. But after school I mostly go to my mom because all my schoolbooks and everything are there and then I switch bags and go to my dad if I sleep there that night. (Sara, 14).

It is important to note that both Femke and Sara's parents live near one another, respectively five and seven minutes by bike, which Femke and Sara both undertake on their own, for instance when they forget things they need or feel like visiting the other parent. The same holds true for Laura (16), who also maintains a complex distribution of switching houses every other day and which days are spent in either house change weekly. But just like Femke and Sara, she does not seem to mind going back and forth as her parents live in the neighboring villages of Soest and Baarn, which takes her around fifteen minutes by bike. With others, it became clear that the original distribution was contested and changed over the years. Olivia (19) also swaps on a weekly basis since the past six years. After a few years of trying different weekly distributions, shifting on a weekly basis appeared to be most practical, but in the first years after the divorce it wasn't possible to do so:

'In the beginning my mom still studied and my dad had to work so we started with Mondays and Tuesdays at my mom's, Wednesdays at my dad's and the Thursdays until Sundays changed every week so sometimes, I stayed from Thursday until Tuesday at my mom's and sometimes from Wednesdays until Sundays at my dad's. But in the end that was a lot of going back and forth, so then it became on a weekly basis.' (Olivia, 19).

Tom (17) currently also moves between his parents on a weekly basis. He admitted that before moving to this schedule, the previous distribution caused a lot of tension; '

When they just separated, we made a schedule. It was very complicated, on Mondays and Tuesdays we would be at my moms, the Wednesday changed every week, on Thursdays and Fridays we were always at my dad's and the weekends also changed every other week. So, it was complete chaos all the time and a lot of alternating between houses and after a year or two my sisters and I resisted a lot. After that everyone felt like it needed to change' (Tom, 17).

Where Femke, Laura and Sara accepted the complex system of shared residence, Tom and Olivia resisted alternating between houses multiple times a week. A key difference in their respective situations is the fact that Tom as well as Olivia must cycle half an hour between their homes, which is a more time-consuming process. Tom also admitted that he hated the fact that he had to cycle that long to his father's house when his father moved away, so the proximity of both houses might be a factor in the disapproval of the schedule their families maintained. However, respondents like Eva (18) also explained that she and her sisters renegotiated their complicated living arrangements when they went to high school because of the inconvenience of moving school and hockey equipment between houses multiple times a week and in their case the other house is only a three-minute bike ride away:

'We just told them [their parents] that we wanted to switch on a weekly basis. Then we still need to move the same amount of stuff, but it saves us a trip and a lot of carrying around' (Eva, 18).

A higher geographical distance between both homes might contribute to a more negative experience of swapping between the houses but in the case of Eva and her sisters it had more to do with the fact that their practical and emotional needs change over time (Haugen, 2010, p.115). Literature also showed that when children either alternate between two different homes frequently or experience a longer absence from each parent, shared residence leads to instability, especially amongst younger children (Poortman & van Gaalen, 2017, p.534). In the case of Eva and her sisters it appears to have more to do with inconvenience than actual instability, but Claire's (13) explanation of her residential distribution sheds a light on the latter:

'(...) Usually we alternate in half weeks, but lately I was not feeling well when I was with my dad so now, I spend more time with my mother. My little brother still switches houses every few days, but I spend three more days with my mom and now I feel better when I am with my dad, I feel better, and our time is nicer than when I stay longer at my dad's. (Claire, 13).

Because Claire spends a few more days with her mom, which they started on a trial basis about half a year ago, she feels better about herself and enjoys spending time with her dad more than she used to do. Rosa (16) had similar motivations for spending more time in her mom's house.

'During the week we are always at my mom's and the weekends alternate between my mom and my dad. But at a certain point, when I went to high school, I needed the stuff I keep at my mom's and then I slept at my dad's, but I went back to my mom to do everything for school and other things. Eventually I never slept at my dad's anymore, but I still see him a lot' (Rosa, 16).

To compensate for seeing her dad less often, she sometimes visits him during the week and usually he stops by in the weekends or during the week, sharing a cup of coffee and to keep in touch. Merel (19) also used to swap houses on a half weekly and weekly basis, but as she got older, she also preferred to spend more time with her mom. Her brother, on the other hand, preferred it the other way around and chose to spend more time at his dad's place. Currently, they share a similar residential distribution again, which is four to five days at their dad's house every other week and the remaining nine or ten days with their mom.

Where many of the children either had a straightforward distribution or at least aimed to have so and reduce the number of movements between the two houses, others accepted it as the 'new normal' and build their daily life and activities around it, like Mirte (17) whose parents separated fifteen years ago:

'On Mondays, well it differs per week but, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays I'm always at my mom's and on Thursday night I go to my dad after work. So, I'm at my dad's from Thursdays until Friday and Friday until Saturday. On Saturdays I go to my mom's on one week and I stay with my dad on the other. When I stay with my dad in the weekend I will remain there until Monday and when I'm with my mother in the weekend I'm with my dad in Zeist on Monday because I have soccer practice on Monday night in Zeist.' (Mirte, 17).

Interestingly, with the divorce of her parents happening fifteen years ago, Mirte is not only the respondent who already lives the longest in a shared residence arrangement but by cycling 40 minutes between her two homes, she also traverses the longest distance.

4.3 Biggest perceived adjustments after the divorce

Although many of the children that were interviewed have lived in two homes for a long time, insight in what they perceived as the biggest changes because of the divorce might already highlight what they need to feel at home. Many of the answers show that multiple children faced similar challenges and difficulties after the divorce.

Although some, like Rosa (16) have no active memories of it anymore as it happened a long time ago, for others like Olivia it was a traumatic experience:

'I really had a hard time with it. I went to a psychologist because I had difficulty with the fact that my parents were not together anymore. Yeah, so my father left, and my mother initially stayed in our home and my dad moved somewhere else. But the biggest change, it was all weird and different, I am not sure how I can describe it but I just wanted them to be together but that was not going to happen, at first, I thought it might, but...' Olivia (19)

Dirk (12) found it challenging that he could not see both his parents at the same time anymore, just like Femke (14) who also added that the switching between the two houses took some time getting used to. Besides the fact that she could not see both her parents every day, Eefje (15) also had a hard time when her parents both started seeing other people. For Sara, the biggest adjustment was also to live in two houses suddenly and consequently not seeing her parents both together, but in turns.

'Out of nowhere I had to arrange for myself which things I needed during the week and in which house. I do not remember much anymore since I was eight, but I know it took some time to get adjusted. But I kind of liked decorating two bedrooms and everything in the house' (Sara, 14).

Living in two houses was heard more frequently, although Merel (19) had the feeling that not much else changed. Still, she did have a hard time with the fact that she did not have a single home anymore:

'I felt like I did not feel home anywhere anymore, there was not a single place where I felt at home. But when I gradually lived less with my dad, I felt that my mother's home really became my home again over time.' (Merel, 19).

Claire (13) also experienced the constant moving between the two houses and not seeing both her parents anymore in the evening as a harsh new reality. Packing her things every time, was very annoying to her and in the beginning, she really had to think hard about where she was staying. She also had trouble with the fact that when she was fighting with one of her parents, she could not go to the other. Loes (14) also thinks the moving between two houses took some time getting used to, although she reflects on that time differently than the others:

'Well, when my parents broke up, my other mom moved to the end of the street, the appartement is on the other side of the road, so when I forgot something, I just walked there. But I cannot really remember what I thought of that, it feels like this has always been the situation for me, it is a bit weird to realize it used to be different' (Loes, 14).

Besides living in two houses instead of one, Peter (16) had to adjust most to the evenings, as he valued having dinner with the family around the kitchen table, sharing stories from their day. Although they still do this, he feels different about it now that they are with three at his mother's house and with stepfamily at his dad's. Eva (18) had a hard time with the fact that her parents did not always know what was going on in her life:

'Or that you tell certain things twice or that you think you already told something to someone but that was not the case because you were not there when it happened because you spent a

few days with the other parent. And going back and forth between houses but that's a given' (Eva, 18).

Nienke (15) also had difficulty with having two houses and adds to that by mentioning constantly being in a different environment as well. In the beginning, it took time to get adjusted when she spent a whole week with her dad and then came back to her mom. Mirte (17) also found the transition between the two homes very difficult, she remembered having a hard time when she went from her dad to her mom, or the other way around, and that one of them left and she stayed with the other. Not unlike others, she found that especially difficult in the evening. She also experienced this during summer breaks because a long time passed without seeing one of her parents. Tom also mentioned the change in summer breaks as his biggest adjustment, albeit in a different way:

'Our holidays really changed, I did not like that. That was the only thing I really didn't want when my parents broke up. Because with our holidays we were all together and it was so much fun, it really sucked. And moving back and forth between the houses all the time, especially with our previous schedule, that was very chaotic'. (Tom, 17)

Finally, Laura (16) remembered most vividly that her dad immediately moved away to Utrecht with her and that took some time getting used to because suddenly she had to go to school by car. She just started out on school, so she found that a big adjustment. To her, suddenly having a stepmom was a close second.

Chapter 5: Feeling at home

SQ 1: To what extent do children feel at home in either one of their households and how do they perceive feeling at home?

5.1 Time needed to pack and move between houses

Most children within this research have been living and moving between two different homes for many years, and for many the distance between the two homes is relatively short. It would seem logical that the process of packing your belongings without forgetting items you need for the rest of the week becomes mundane without many errors. This is also reflected in Nienke's (15) statement on the matter who admits that it does require some attention but not a lot of time anymore as she lived in this situation for fifteen years already:

'It's not something that bothers me, it's not that I think about it all week. It usually takes me less than half an hour and mostly because I usually also must clean some things but that's not very time consuming. In a way it became the normal situation and I pass one of my houses on the way to school' (Nienke, 15).

Olivia (19) also admits that it takes her less and less time as time passes. Just after the divorce she used to forget many things she needed and then had to go back to retrieve them, but as the years passed that happened less often. Currently it takes her about half an hour to pack her bag on the night before she moves between her parents. Claire also states that forgetting her necessities is something of the past: *'In the beginning I used a packing list that kept me from forgetting the essentials but currently I just throw some clothes in a bag, and I don't even bother folding it anymore because it ends up in my closet anyway' (Claire, 13).*

Laura (16) also admitted that she is pretty used to it by now as she moves between her parents since she was three years old. She acknowledges that it is something that is always on her mind because she thinks ahead about which clothes she wants to wear when she sees certain people, and unlike others, still moves between the homes three times a week. Even though she admits that it is not as time consuming as it used to be and packing happens on autopilot, it is something that is always on her mind.

Eva (18) stated that packing is not a big deal for her anymore as she spread her belongings between the two houses and usually takes the same items back and forth. For her this mostly concerns the clothing she thinks are comfortable or matching with the clothing she has in the respective home. And what she packed but did not use stayed in the bag that she takes with her, which made the process of packing and collecting a lot faster.

Using the same bag or crate to pack for things, like Eva, is something that was mentioned more often to help standardize packing and keeps the children from forgetting things. For instance, Loes (14) Who uses a crate for her schoolbooks and violin and a bag for clothing and other items. Her parents then bring her stuff by car to the other address. In her experience this way of moving between the two houses costs her almost no time at all. Mirte and her family also concluded that this was the most practical way of moving things: *'I have a crate in which I put my clothes and I keep my schoolbooks in a bag. At my mom's I put my clothes in my closet but at my dad's I usually leave them in my bag or crate. Mostly because my mom thinks that it is supposed to be like that and because she thinks it is better for me, so she usually puts them in my closet because I do not feel like doing that. (Mirte, 17)'*

Mirte continued by stating that she does have difficulties with moving back and forth with all her belongings every few days. Besides forgetting things she needed, she feels that she cannot decorate her rooms properly the way she wants because she must take those items back and

forth with her (Mirte, 17). Sara (14) also admitted that it was quite a challenge to think about where she needed what items and the time it took to pack them, especially on days that she needed many different books or had a lot of schoolwork to do. She tackled this problem by owning a lot of items twice if she uses them frequently and in both homes. This saves her the stress and time of packing everything every other day, as she also moves between the houses twice a week.

Tom (17) also admits that packing is not something that requires a lot of thought anymore. The night before he switches between houses, he packs everything and puts it in the hallway. His parents then drop it off at the other house before he comes home from school. The only things that he still sometimes forgets are more specific things, like a schoolbook or a laptop charger, or that certain items of clothing are not in the house that he thought they would be. He also admits that he usually doesn't go back and forth to retrieve stuff he forgot, except for when it is necessary, for instance when packing for a holiday: *'A couple of times I cycled four times between the two homes because I kept forgetting things' (Tom, 17).*

Forgetting things they need and then going back to the other house to retrieve them seems to be more common for the younger children that were interviewed. Like Dirk (12), who experiences this mostly with his schoolbooks. But when he forgets something, he usually waits for the next day. It is noteworthy however that he only has to walk for a few minutes, which might also lower the bar in packing his belongings more carefully. Femke (14) also admits that it is not uncommon for her to forget some schoolbooks and sometimes she cycles back and forth to retrieve them. Eefje (15, p.3) also stated that she often forgets to pack everything she needs, and this is also mostly the case for her schoolbooks. The same holds true for Peter (16) who chooses to pack his things in the morning just before leaving for school, and this also occasionally results in a missing book or laptop charger.

Merel (19) shared that forgetting things she needed is more a thing of the past when she still attended high school. Interestingly for her this was also mostly concerned with forgetting schoolbooks:

'Now that I do not need to think about which different books I need today in class, it's more a thing of the past. It used to take me about an hour to pack my things and I often forgot something and had to go back, but now it only takes me about fifteen minutes' (Merel, 19).

5.2 New family members

The previous results showed that the divorce of their parents affected the children in many differing ways and for most it took some time getting used to, from getting adjusted to living and feeling at home in two houses to going on holidays in different family formations or even moving personal belongings between the houses and the time and effort this consumes. For many, but not all, another dimension that radically changed the way they live their daily lives is the presence of new partners and possible stepchildren or new half brothers or sisters in their family. This paragraph is dedicated to highlighting the different ways children cope and experience the expansion of their household situation.

Some children, like Femke (14), were mostly positive about the new additions in their household. Although she admitted having trouble with accepting her parents' decision to get divorced and starting to see other people, she soon perceived benefits to the divorce as well, such as getting presents twice on birthdays and holidays and having a good time with the new family formation of her father, stepmom, and stepchildren: *'I like it, it is very homy. The youngest kid knows my father since he was four years old. I know them since I was eight or nine. It went very well, we really clicked, and it is always fun to be together' (Femke, 14).* Eva also firmly stated that she never really had a problem with the new partners of her parents and

one of her parents also had a new child with their new partner: *'I'm not sure anymore how I exactly felt about it at the time, but I think I thought it was only logical and I was fine with it. I'm sure that I was okay with it, not that I was against it or anything'* (Eva, 18). The same holds true for Laura, who also has a half-sister and really enjoys being her older sister:

'She is very cute and sweet, but she also produces a lot of noise, so it also drains a lot of energy, and it adds some fuss to the household. Sometimes that bothers me a bit and then I rather spend time at my mom's because it's quieter and I have more of my own space there.' (Laura, 16).

Others, like Eefje, admit that the new family formation took some time getting used to, but overall, she has a good relationship with them. *'Sometimes it results in a fight with for instance my stepsister and then my stepbrother and stepmom chose her side, and my father chooses my stepmom's side too and then I felt very alone. But in the end, it always works out'* (Eefje, 15). The same holds true for Olivia, who had difficulties with the new partners of her dad when he started dating again:

'In the beginning it was quite hard because after the divorce, my dad initially had a new girlfriend that didn't work out very well. I found her very annoying. When my dad got into a relationship with his current girlfriend, I had some trouble getting used to that because I had a bad experience with his previous girlfriend. So, it took some time getting used to but, in the end, we really grew toward each other and now it really feels like family. My brother and I found it difficult to adjust in the beginning, for instance when we spent the weekend at her place. We would complain about her in our shared bedroom and shared that we didn't want to be there, but now it feels like family and I really view my stepmom as a new parent' (Olivia, 19).

Peter (16) also needed time to get adjusted to the new living situation with stepfamily. As the years passed, he got used to it and now his relationship with his stepmom and her kids is fine, but he came a long way since his initial response: *'I've known them for a long time now but when my dad first told that he was dating again I was really upset. Apparently, it was already a few months since the divorce, and I do not know how my mind processed this but when he told me, it felt like it was on the day right after the divorce. I was very angry when he told us.*

Besides the fact that his father started dating again, he also had a hard time relating with his stepmom's children:

'They are real 'city kids' from Utrecht you know, so they also did not like spending time here on the countryside. They have two moms and were raised differently than me and my sister and that also took some time getting used to. Sometimes it still bothers me, the things that they get worked up about or make trouble over, I sometimes do not get why they are being so difficult. But then I think that we were raised more strictly. Over time it bothered me less often, but I still sometimes think that they need to grow up and behave' (Peter, 16).

Until now, some kids like Femke are predominantly positive about the additional family members that came into their life and others like Eefje, Olivia and Peter needed some time to adjust but are comfortable or even happy with the current situation. Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, this is not the case for everyone, and this is best reflected with Tom's situation:

'When my dad's new partner is around, I don't really feel at home. I really feel like I have to be extra careful with what I say and with being polite. Of course, I can still do something on my own, but I just do not see them that often and I feel that I do not know them very well, so that could also play a part in this' (Tom, 17).

Tom's statement clearly shows that he is uncomfortable when his stepfamily is around. Later in the interview he admitted having the same issues and reservations when his mother's new

partner was around, but that was resolved when the relationship ended. Perhaps to avoid these kinds of situations, some parents also chose not to actively involve new partners in their children's lives, like in the case of Merel:

'My parents both have a new partner, and my stepmom also has children out of a previous relationship, but we never lived in the same house. My dad moved in with my stepmom but also still has his own house in Ede, where we visit him. When he is with his partner, they live in Leeuwarden, but my stepmom never lived in Ede' (Merel, 19).

Mirte also told that her father and his new girlfriend consciously chose not to live together because of their children. They wanted for their families to have their own home.

'We still saw each other a lot but just never lived in the same home. For instance, on Thursday nights we ate together with everyone. My stepbrothers and sisters also are a lot older, the oldest already works and the other two are already enrolled in university. But we all have a good relationship, it is always fun when we are together. We always played soccer together and had a great time' (Mirte, 17).

5.3 Private or shared bedroom

Although having a private bedroom is not something that all kids attach value to, for some it can be very important as it can be used as a place to do homework or be alone when the situation in the house calls for it, for instance when the presence of stepfamily puts pressure on the children or the family, as was discussed in the previous paragraph. Especially right after the divorce when a second home is needed and does not necessarily meet the wants and needs of the family yet. A good example of this was Olivia's living situation right after the divorce:

'In the beginning the house was quite full as it was not that big, and we didn't have enough rooms, so I shared a bedroom with my stepsister and my brother shared a bedroom with my stepbrother as well. But now that is all different because half of the people moved out. So, at my dad's, I shared rooms with either my brother or later my stepsister, but at my mother's, I always had my own room' (Olivia, 19).

Claire (13) shares a similar situation, and it applies to both her homes, unlike Olivia who always had her own room in her mom's house. For a long time, Claire only had her own room when her parents were still together, and it took a few years until both parents either found a different home or remodeled the current home to meet the wishes of Claire and her brother to have a private bedroom again. Rosa (16), whose parents divorced about twelve years ago, has her own room at her mom's but still shares a room with her little brother at her dad's house. Femke (14) also shares a room with her little brother at her dad's home, but she stated that she is okay with that, as she only uses her bedroom to sleep. Nienke (15) has her private bedroom in both houses as she is an only child and does not feel the need to, for instance, do her homework there as she can also do that in the living room, but it differs somewhat between the two homes:

'I have a desk in my bedroom for homework but usually I work downstairs as I am an only child. So, at my dad's I usually work downstairs as we have a lot of space there and we have an 'extra' room downstairs that does not really serve a purpose and has a big table where I usually sit. But here at my mom's I use my bedroom for homework, but I do not spend most of my days in my room, I usually relax downstairs in the living room on the couch.' (Nienke, 15).

Loes (14) Also states that not having brothers and sisters is the reason that she has her private room at both her parents and she does not really make use of it besides sleeping and doing homework. The same holds true for Laura (16) who states that she always had her own room,

when her parents were still together and after the divorce, but she also admits that she does not attach that much value to it as she only uses it to sleep. Peter also has his own room with both his parents and uses it for sleeping and homework:

'But not for much else. Most of the time I am the only one that is home, so I do not really feel the need to use it for much more than that. It's not like we're always with the six of us (Peter, 16).

Still for many of the children, their private bedroom is more than a place to sleep or do homework, Like Dirk (12) who spends a lot of time on his room for homework and gaming in his spare time. Merel (19) also admits that she spends a lot of time in her room, especially now that she is enrolled in university and especially with the current covid-19 situation. Tom also attaches more value to his room than most of the others. Tom does have two sisters but still has his own room at both his parents houses and the use of these rooms also differs between his mom's and dad's place:

'When I am home, I do use the living room sometimes, but mostly I am in my room. I like relaxing on my bed or doing homework there. But I like my bedroom at my mom's place better for that because my bedroom at my dad's is usually messier and the way it is decorated is not perfect. I have a smaller bed and desk for instance'. (Tom, 17).

For Eva, her private room is clearly also important to her in her daily life:

'I use my room a lot for homework, although I sometimes visit the library for that as well. But especially when I was younger, I did my homework in my bedroom. Just to have some peace and quiet and to make the most of my hours of studying. But also, to escape the hustle and bustle of my family, but that also depends on which house I am at that moment or if I had an off-day or was grumpy. Then I would rather spend my day in my bedroom instead of in the social pressure downstairs.' (Eva, 18).

Sara also admits to spending most of her days in her bedroom. At her mom's place she spends more time downstairs but at her dad's she usually secludes herself to her bedroom:

'My dad often works from home and then he works downstairs and spends a lot of time on the phone with co-workers. When that is the case, I rather spend my day in my bedroom, not just for homework but also to call my friends or watch something on Netflix. My room is really my own private space. At my mom's I also do my homework in my room but for relaxation I usually use the living room as my mom has a home office in the attic. So, then I can watch tv in the living room without bothering her. (Sara, 14).

5.4 Preference for one of the houses and feeling at home

Now that the influence of moving between and living in the two homes, the possible new family formations and whether the children have their private bedroom or not are discussed, the context of their living situation becomes clearer, and the children were asked more directly if they prefer living in either house. For some, like Dirk (12), his reason for a specific house is straightforward, as he prefers his father's house because he is more used to that house as this also was the family home before the divorce. Rosa (16) has a similar preference for her mom's house as most of her belongings are there and, just like Dirk, because she has spent more time in this house as this also was her family home before her parents divorced:

'When I think about my home, I immediately think of my mom's house. My dad's house as well but I have everything I need over here' (Rosa, 16).

Mirte (17) has a slight preference for her dad's house but emphasizes that this is not because she feels more at home with her dad compared to her mom. Although she does not specify what makes her feel more at home at her dad's place, it is interesting that she immediately felt the need to state that this didn't have anything to do with her relationship with her mom. That some of the children had trouble specifying as to why they feel more at home in a certain house also becomes clear when this question was posed to Tom (17). Although he states that this also depends on what he wants to do at that moment, he had trouble formulating what makes him feel at home:

'It depends on what I want or need to do. At my dad's I like tinkering with electronics and 'inventing' little things, but this also has to do with the fact that my dad has the tools and space at his house to do so. Or when I work at a project for school, I prefer my dad's home because it is quieter. But when I meet up with friends, I would rather do this at my mom's because it is closer. But my dad has a real house, and my mom has a condo. At my mom's you hear everything that happens downstairs when I am upstairs in my room'. (Tom, 17).

When asked what makes him feel at home, Tom fell silent for a while. When asked which of his parents he would go to when he had a negative experience for instance, he stated that in that case it would be his mother:

'Well, my mom and dad differ completely in how they handle that situation. I think my mother has a better understanding of how I feel about things. For instance, when I want to be alone, she leaves me alone'. (Tom, 17).

Interestingly when asked if this would differ if he had a great day or good news to share, he did not have a preference between his parents. Tom was not the only one who had trouble formulating a preference for one of his specific houses in feeling at home. Loes (14) also started formulating pros and cons for both homes and made up her mind whilst doing so:

'When it concerns going to school, I do not know, from this house it is only a ten-minute bike ride and from my other house it is about half an hour. So, in that sense... but on the other hand I do have a bigger room in the other house and therefore I prefer that room to do my homework or just hang out and over there I also have two cats to cuddle with. Yes, I think I feel most at home in my other house, because... I do not know, it has a more homely ambiance, I guess. I really have no idea. It just feels more homely to me'. (Loes, 14).

Claire also found it difficult to pick one of the houses straightaway and applied this strategy as well in her assessment of her two homes. Just like Loes, her pets are an important factor in her considerations:

'I don't know, both homes have their perks. When I am over here, I really like lying down on the couch but at my dad's I really like snoozing in my bed or playing with my guinea pigs. So, I do not really know, I think I like both homes equally but in differing ways. No, I do not know but when I arrive at my mom's, as I spend more time with my mom, when I am here, I don't need some time to get adjusted. At my dad's I always need like fifteen minutes to acclimate but after that it feels like home as well, so...'. (Claire, 13).

Peter (16) also leaned toward a preference for a certain house depending on the context. He likes his mom's house better because of the shorter distances to his school, sports, and daily activities, but he prefers his dad's farm when it concerns spending his free time as he enjoys chopping wood, taking care of the horses and their amenities or drive around on his father's tractor.

For others, the question posed no problems or hesitation at all. Like Femke (14), who immediately stated that she really likes it here at her mom's place because she has more

space, and she feels like she has her own spots in her home. Nienke (15) also immediately responded that she did not prefer one house over the other because of a particular reason. She quickly adjusted to her mom's new house, and it felt like her home soon and in her dad's house she already lived all her life. For Eefje (15) her motivation was clear as she preferred being at her mother's because her older sister also still lives with her mom but not at her dad's place anymore. At her dad's she does have a stepbrother and stepsister who do have each other, which makes her feel alone sometimes:

'Because of that I sometimes feel like I am being left out, and then I rather would like to be with my mom and sister. I do not always feel like this at my dad's but sometimes it makes me feel less at home. I think that at my mom's I feel more like I can be myself and say what I think and with my dad's I sometimes fear about how the others would react on certain things' (Eefje, 15).

For Laura (16) the presence of her little stepsister, a toddler, contributes to both the fact that she sometimes rather spends her days in the other house but also the other way around. On the one hand her little sister is very loud and high maintenance, which occasionally drains a lot of her energy and then she moves to her mom for some rest and peace. But on the other hand, she does not want to change her residential distribution with both parents because she also really enjoys being a big sister:

'I notice that when I spent too much time in either house, I get annoyed more easily anyway because I am not used anymore to being alone with either parent or family in that way. That is why I think both houses are fine and especially the variety of the two is something I am now comfortable with. Before my half-sister was born, I think I had a better connection with my mom and preferred staying there but now because of my stepsister I also want to spend a lot of my time with my dad's because I really enjoy that. But when I have a week with a lot on my plate or when I am just tired, I would rather spend time with my mom because of her' (Laura, 16).

Laura is not the only one that pointed out that she became used to the variety of her two homes and now also prefers it that way, this is also reflected in Sara's view on the matter:

'I do not think I prefer either one. Although it is sometimes more practical to be at my mom's house as most of the things I need every day are there. But that does not mean that I am rather at my mom's than my dad's, I like the variety. I spend more time at my mom's because of our distribution, I feel like I am almost always there, after school for instance. But that is also the case because I would be alone at my dad's place if I immediately go there after school. But I do not think of my mom's house as the first house and my dad's house as the second one' (Sara, 14).

With Sara being the exception, what stands out in this paragraph is that the children under sixteen usually prefer one of the homes, whilst the older children are more nuanced and see benefits to both homes in differing situations. This is also emphasized in Olivia's answer on the preference for either house in feeling at home:

'Currently I enjoy switching houses every week because I'm used to the alternation but when I was younger it sometimes went less well with one parent or the other from time to time and then I rather spent my time at the other parent. Currently I am equally content with both homes, and I do not have a favorite home. But when I was younger, I think I rather lived with my mom and I felt more at home there, also because I had my private bedroom and at my dad's, the house was always very crowded. I did not really have my own space at my dad's but that changed when others got older and moved out' (Olivia, 19).

Eva (18) also stated that she did not prefer one house over the other. In her opinion both homes offer a different setting, which makes them hard to compare. But if she really had to

pick one, she would probably pick her mom's house as that is the house where she lived all her life, also as a family before the divorce took place. Merel (19) on the other hand stated that just after the divorce, she had a hard time feeling at home in either house. Later when her dad got a new partner that also lived further away, she started feeling more at home at her mom's as she also spent most of her time there:

'My father now predominantly lives in Leeuwarden, but he still has a house here in Ede. But his house here now feels a little bit like a 'haunted house' because he only lives there when we are there, which is half a week every other two weeks. Because of that I now spent most of my time at my mom's house and therefore that house became my real home' (Merel, 19).

5.5 Perception of what makes them feel at home

As the previous chapter focused on preferences of the respondents of either home, this chapter focuses on what is needed for the children to make them feel at home. For some this results in a more general description of requirements on this matter, whereas others added to their answers of the previous chapter on why a particular home has their preference if they did not state that already. The latter becomes clear in Merel's answer as the previous paragraph concluded with her explanation of why her mom's house feels more like her home. Therefore, when asked what her perception was on feeling at home, she simply stated that this has to do with the coziness of her family, living with her mother and brother in her mom's house (Merel, 19).

The same holds true for Dirk, who simply states that his perception of what makes him feel at home is feeling good when he is there, which he feels in both his parent's homes. Femke (14) used the opportunity to reiterate the importance of her cats in her life, as she states that she also feels at home at her dad's (where she also has pets) but if she had to choose between the two homes, she prefers her mom's house because of her cats and the interaction with them, whereas the pets in her dad's home live in a cage. For Sara (14) having her own space to withdraw and not being obligated to spend all her time with other people (family members) is very important to her. She also attaches great value to having all of her belongings around her and not having to go back and forth between the houses to retrieve them. Sara further states that her pets, which she has in both homes, do not really matter in feeling at home, although she does admit that she really misses them when she is in the other house (Sara, 14).

Just like Sara, Claire (13) attaches a lot of value to her belongings being there when she needs them as well, whether this is in her private bedroom or lying around in the living room. She also thinks the house needs to be cozy in the sense that it is nicely decorated and not too much of a mess to feel comfortable. Nienke (15) thinks that it is not a matter of requirements, she just wants to feel good and has that in both her homes. Eefje (15) is more vocal about what it means to her to feel at home and states that it mostly has to do with feeling safe, in the literal sense as well as more of a safe space to be yourself and say what you feel like. When asked what she meant by safety and if she had this more at one house compared to the other, she answered that there are moments at her dad's that she does not feel that way:

'For instance, when I get in an argument with my stepsister and my stepbrother chooses her side and after that my stepmom as well. Then my dad supports my stepmom and I then sometimes feel like I am on my own (Eefje, 15).

Eefje continues by sharing that this is also the reason that she spends more time in her bedroom at her dad's. At her mom's she usually spends her time downstairs with the rest of the family, and it is always cozy, but at her dad's the family 'just' watches tv and then she needs to be quiet. Because of that, she does not really enjoy spending time downstairs.

Rosa (16) attaches a lot of value to the feeling that she gets when she gets home. The comfort and familiarity of her own house, recognizing all the sounds the neighbors make and when she hears a door opening or closing, immediately realizing which door it is, makes her feel safe. Mirte (17) thinks that a homely ambiance is very important to her to feel at home. She really likes the way this is the case in her dad's house, and to a lesser extent at her mom's as well:

'At my mom's it feels homely as well but in a different way. Maybe it is a stupid reason but what I like at my dad's is that the house is a little messier, I kind of like that, it makes it more cozy to me, if that makes sense. And he has a more comfortable couch. These things might seem little, but they make me feel more at home than when everything is neat and organized' (Mirte, 17).

For Olivia, feeling at home has more to do with a combination of the previous examples. On the one hand it is important to her that there are other people around, but on the other hand she also values a private space to withdraw:

'Having my own space is important to me but I am not very fond of being by myself all day. At my mom's, she, and my brother work during the day, but at my dad's they work from home so there are always people around to have lunch with and I think that is important to me as well' (Olivia, 19).

Eva admitted that she feels more at home in her mom's house, as she lived there all her life. The conditions that make her feel at home are similar to the motivation given by Olivia, on the one hand it is important to her that she feels familiar and comfortable with the house and her family, but on the other hand she also enjoys the privacy of her own bedroom from time to time as well. For Tom (17) it is important to him that he can be himself and does not have to worry about how to interact with someone and just being able to do what he wants. This is linked with what he shared about his relationship with his stepmother when stepfamily was discussed, as he does not feel that way with his dad's when she is around. For relaxation or doing schoolwork he therefore also prefers his mother's house, although he does admit that his mother's house is noisier. When he is in his bedroom, he hears his sisters talk in the living room.

Just like Eva, Peter (16) feels most at home at his mother's house because he lived there the longest, although he did admit that if his father did not move from their original home, he would have preferred that one over his mother's. He continues explaining that familiarity with the home and its surroundings make him feel at home:

'A familiar environment and having the feeling that you have lived there for a while, that you are not 'new' anymore. I think I felt like this more quickly at my mom's, also because we did not have new members in my family there, unlike my dad's. We have lived at my mom's for quite a while now and it feels safe, and I have childhood memories there. Memories of playing soccer on the field in front of the house. And at my dad's I have that not as much, and what I told before, that my stepfamily sometimes annoys me. Then I am like, I should not comment on this because that spoils the mood' (Peter, 16).

Besides the importance of being familiar with the home and its surroundings, Peter made a similar remark as Tom, in the sense that they both feel like they are holding back and have trouble with the way they express themselves to keep the peace within the family. Tom added to this that his sister even had more difficulties than him switching between two homes and feeling at home in both houses, especially when she wanted to deviate from the residential distribution:

'Especially my dad does not like it when we do that. He becomes grumpy and makes remarks like 'sure, leave and go to your mom, stay with your mom if you like' and you can feel that it bothers him. Out of some sort of protest my sister then ignored the living distribution we agreed on, which caused a lot of tension for us and our families (Tom, 17).

Laura (16) shared that in the past, about until she was nine, she felt most at home at her dad's, but as she grew older, she felt more at home at her mom's. Laura had some difficulty expressing what makes her feel at home:

'I do not think I am someone who attaches great value to feeling at home because I never really felt that connected to one place that I lived in. I notice I do not really care, because I lived in this house since I was one year old. Initially I did not like the idea of moving but I think that was solely based on the memories I had, but eventually I feel at home soon enough in a new place as well' (Laura, 16).

Laura thinks that she used to feel more at home with her dad's in the past because they used to have the best relationship compared to her relationship with her mom, but this changed when she got older. In her experience this is because she and her dad are more alike in personality, neater and more organized for instance. But as she got older and started to take more care of herself, her mom gave her more space to do so:

'That really changed things and our relationship became better. But I also need space, time for myself and silence, to recharge and to feel at home. I also have this when I go outside and that is also what I like at my mom's, we have a dog and I think this also makes me feel more at home' (Laura, 16).

Laura also stated earlier in the interview that she really likes her half-sister at her dad's house but that it can sometimes also be too loud and energy-draining to have her around. As she also needs alone time and peace and quiet to feel at home, this might also be part of the reason that she started to feel more at home at her mom's, besides the improved relationship with her.

5.6 Role of friends, family, or neighborhood in feeling at home

The role of the neighborhood, and friends and family within, differ starkly per child. Some, like Femke (14), immediately admit that they never really had social ties within the neighborhood, no friends living close by and no contact with any neighbors either. This usually also depends on the sports and hobby's a child has, as Femke, for instance, knows her friends through school and sports. The Same holds true for Claire (13) who lives in Utrecht but attends school in Zeist, and therefore most of her school friends live in Zeist as well. She does have friends in Utrecht too and she knows them from hockey and her primary school, which are both in Utrecht. Eefje (15) also admits to not really having friends near her home and points out that this probably has to do with the fact that she moved to a new suburb a few years back with her mom and that the neighborhood has few children of a similar age. At her dad's she has some friends in the neighborhood and explains that those ties originate from her primary school that was situated there. Because she knows these friends since the early stages of her childhood, she still sometimes keeps in touch.

Sara (14) did have friends in her neighborhood of her dad's house, which she used to play with, but as time passed those ties watered down, although she did not really know why or how that happened. Dirk (12), like Sara, also admitted seeing friends in his neighborhood more often in the past, but that he does not see them that much anymore as his homework takes up more of his time now that he attends high school. Others admit to having friends nearby in one

of the two houses, and this is usually the house they grew up in before the divorce. This is the case for Tom (17), whose friends live in Utrecht near his mom's house:

'Some friends live five minutes away from here, and others maybe fifteen minutes. They live in the inner city of Utrecht. At my dad's in Bilthoven I do not have any friends, everything happens in Utrecht' (Tom).

Nienke (15) shares Tom's situation in the sense that with her mom's she lives two minutes away from her school in Utrecht near the Wilhelmina park, just as many of her friends. Her dad moved further away although she admits that the location of that house is no obstacle to her to meet up with friends, as she does not mind cycling a bit to see them. For her everyone lives near enough, she does not mind cycling to a nearby city or village to see them. Merel (19) shares Nienke's view on the matter, although none of her friends live in the same neighborhood as she does, she does not mind cycling to them, and she thinks all her friends live close enough to maintain the ties she has with them. Olivia also has her social network in one of the two homes she lives in. Her mom lives in Zeist and her father moved to Den Dolder and her social network is situated in Zeist:

'But I also attended school in Zeist, so the friends I know there usually live close by. My best friend used to live two streets away and we saw each other a lot, also spontaneously, like 'hey, come over!'. I think this is also part of the reason I felt more at home at my mom's. Currently I also feel at home at my dad's in Den Dolder, also because it is a small village, which made it easy to get to know it better. But I was raised in Zeist, and it feels more familiar than Den Dolder'. (Olivia, 19).

Mirte (17) experiences differ from the rest as she has multiple groups of friends, some of whom live close to her dad's in Zeist and others at her mom's in Utrecht. At her mom's place in Utrecht, her friends all live approximately five minutes away whereas her friends in Zeist from school and soccer live a bit further away, it takes about fifteen minutes to visit them. As she does not mind traveling to see her friends or family, she experiences this proximity as in the neighborhood. Eva (18) also thinks her friends all live in proximity, but this is also because her parents live close to one another in Utrecht, about five minutes away. Although technically this is not the same neighborhood, she does feel that way.

Loes (14) took this opportunity to introduce a third house in Nijmegen that she lives in with the new partner of one of her mothers. She visits the house every other weekend and has stepfamily there as well:

'It is so crowded there that you can't really think and there is always a lot of noise. Except for the attic there is not really a place where you can be alone and think, but it is too cold there so that is a bit difficult. But I am only there once every two weeks and the other houses are great' (Loes, 14).

Just like Loes, Laura (16) also did not comment on her neighborhood, but also started explaining the role of her family in feeling at home. When she was younger, her friends from school only lived near her mom in Soest, as her dad moved with her to Utrecht in the first years after the divorce. Because of that, all her movements had to be by car when she was at her dad's, and although she was still young, she remembered experiencing that situation as a bit difficult. But currently her dad moved to Baarn, and she lives in the middle of everything and everywhere she needs to be. Just like in previous paragraphs, she states that both of her homes have their own benefits and drawbacks:

'My parents are very easy going about what I want to do and where I want to go. But now with my little sister, I do not mind having her around and I like it, but my parents are always home

for her and sometimes I do like to be home alone or just with a friend. So that is why I rather meet with friends at my mom's than my dad's. My sister goes to bed at seven and I do like seeing her before that, but when I meet up with friends, I do not see her that day. That is why I also prefer my mom's, I will still see her when I come home late from friends because she does not go to bed early' (Laura, 16).

Laura's view on the matter made clear that especially the self-efficacy she enjoys with her parents is very important to her in feeling at home. Because she has the liberty to choose when and where she wants to be where she prefers, she perceives her parents as being very easy-going and her relationship with them improved.

5.7 Activities in the neighborhood

Just like with the role of friends and family in the neighborhood, the activities the children have in their neighborhood differ starkly per child, not only because of the presence of friends in the neighborhood, but also because of the (lack of) amenities within the neighborhood surrounding either household. Loes (14), for instance, states that she never makes use of the amenities in her surroundings of either household, as she prefers to spend her spare time inhouse to play videogames.

Femke (14) on the other hand shares that there is a lot to do in the neighborhood as she is close to a shopping mall and the inner city of Amersfoort and likes to make use of that with her friends. Dirk (12), compared to Loes and Femke, falls somewhat in between the two as he usually starts at his or one of his friend's homes but, as the afternoon progresses, eventually goes outside to a playground or a field to play soccer. Rosa (16) also likes to meet friends outside or play soccer with them at a nearby soccer club. Meeting up and visiting a playground, however, is something she used to do when she was younger, but she currently feels that she and her friends have outgrown this way of spending the afternoon.

For others, like Merel this subject seemed less applicable:

'No, I do not meet friends to go and sit on a bench in the woods or something. We always meet up at someone's house' (Merel, 19).

For Eefje (15) it is the other way around, as she immediately stated that they rarely meet at someone's home but usually go outside. She likes to visit a supermarket with her friends for some snacks and then hangs out with others at a skatepark in the neighborhood. Claire (13) shares Eefje's interests and likes to visit a supermarket with friends as well and finding a nice spot in the neighborhood to chat with her friends:

'It is most fun to be with a large group of people and just hang around, not spend the afternoon at someone's home' (Claire, 13).

Claire (13) also enjoys occasionally playing soccer with her dad and little brother. Eva (18) remembers that when she was still in primary and high school, she liked to hang out with her little sisters or friends outside as well, playing soccer or basketball or hanging out in her schoolyard with others. Now that she grew older, she and her friends usually spend time at each other's house or meeting with friends in the city for lunch or a drink. For others, like Olivia (19) being near the inner city was not seen as something she enjoyed or that it offered things to do, but it made her spend less time outside with her friends because there was no playground or something else that appealed to her. This is in sharp contrast with the others, who do perceive the inner city as an appealing spot to meet up with others instead of deciding to meet at people's houses.

Peter (16) who lives on the countryside on a farm in Groenekan with his dad, also enjoys playing soccer in his pastime. Although currently he spends less time doing this than when he was younger, he explicitly stated that he shares fond memories of spending time outside in the neighborhood with his friends, playing soccer or other games. Just like Rosa, Dirk, and Peter, Mirte (17) also likes to go outside in the neighborhood to play soccer with her friends or stepfamily. As she became older, going out for lunch or to bars with friends at night replaced soccer somewhat, although the current pandemic, which made the latter unavailable for a long time, made her spend more time outside with her friends again:

'Behind our school is a nature reserve, and it is fun to walk there, just being in nature. So especially during this pandemic, when we could do nothing else, we walked there a lot or in Utrecht in the Wilhelmina Park. So, walking in parks and nature became a pastime again' (Mirte, 17).

Most children discussed above were not specific about a certain home of either parent to spend time outside in the neighborhood, but of course, enjoying time spent outside also has to do with the amenities in the house's surroundings. Nienke (15) for instance, states that she likes to play sports outside, but that it matters to her if she is with her mom's or dad's for what she wants to do in her pastime:

'Me and my friends do not just spend time outside, walking around. Many people live close by, so we prefer spending time at someone's house, having a drink and sitting on a comfortable couch. Or going to the city to shop. When I am at my dad's, I see more friends and we sometimes go to the Wilhelmina Park if the weather is nice. But when I want to go for a walk in the evening, I would rather do that at my dad's because there is nature nearby' (Nienke, 15).

Tom (17) also thinks the way he likes spending his spare time is dependent on which house he resides in at that moment. He stated in previous paragraphs that when he sees friends, he prefers his mom's house, but he likes the surroundings of his dad's house better:

'I really enjoy spending time outside at my dad's, I usually go out for a walk, especially during the quarantine. My dad's house is in Bilthoven near a big forest where I walk, I really like it. Cycling is fun as well in the area surrounding Bilthoven. A few times I also did this with friends, walking in the forest at my dad's, but usually I do this alone. I do go outside with friends at my mom's as well, but more to escape the noise and the crowdedness of that home with my two sisters as we do not have much space. But that is not because of the nice surroundings, just walking around with a friend, talking' (Tom, 17).

For Laura (16) the activities in the neighborhood differ per house because of the presence of other children in the neighborhood. At her mom's, the neighbors had a daughter of a similar age she used to hang out with when she was younger. She spent much of her time outside with neighborhood kids, also because they owned a trampoline and other playground amenities in her backyard at her mom's house. At her dad's this was different and therefore she used to spend time outside with others, cycling around, visiting supermarkets, and hanging out in playgrounds, just like Eefje and Claire. Sara (14) has a similar motivation as Laura and states that she used to play with her neighbor's kids at her dad's home, but at her mom's she has no other children in her surroundings that she knows of and are of a similar age.

5.8 Preference on neighborhood of households

As the previous paragraph pointed out that the importance of the neighborhood differs per kid and sometimes also per household, this paragraph will focus on the preference of a certain neighborhood or household, and whether this influences the child's feeling at home. Just like the activities in the neighborhood differed starkly per child, so does their perceived importance

of a preference of either household or neighborhood. A good example is Femke's (14) brief answer on the matter:

'I do not have a favorite, both neighborhoods are the same. I have no contact with boys or girls in the neighborhood and I am fine without it' (Femke, 14).

Loes's view on the matter is similar to the way Femke perceives the importance of her neighborhoods in feeling at home, in the sense that she states that as she does not spend much time outside of her house, she does not prefer either one. Because she feels there is not much to do, she does not make use of it and feels equally neutral about either neighborhood. Merel (19) also has no neighborhood that stands out to her, but in a more positive sense than Femke or Loes:

'I have lived in two different homes and two different neighborhoods with both my parents, so four different neighborhoods in Ede in total. But I have always felt at home in those neighborhoods' (Merel, 19).

Others did attach more value to either or both neighborhoods, like Olivia (19), who explains that she likes her mom's house better because her friends live close by, and it is close to forests and nature, and she enjoys walking there with her friends. Her dad lives in a more crowded neighborhood and when she was younger this also prevented her from enjoying spending time outside, although now this is not an issue anymore. Sara (14) also refers to the past to explain her preference for a certain neighborhood:

'When I was younger, I felt less safe in my mom's neighborhood, but this also had to do with the fact that I scared easily. Now this is not a problem anymore because I also went to therapy for that, but I think it had to do with the fact that I did not know anyone in my mom's neighborhood. It is not like I knew many people in the other neighborhood or talked to people, but it did matter. Now it does not matter anymore, and I like both neighborhoods equally, this is more a thing of the past' (Sara, 14).

Sara is not the only one who had difficulty with her new neighborhood and not knowing the people that lived there. Although she does not state this as specifically as Sara, her answer clearly reflects the importance of her sense of place within the neighborhood:

'By now I think I know everything quite well and the nice things and activities that can be done here as we are close to the inner city. So, when I want to do something or have a drink with my mom or friends, I can do this on my own and know where I need to go. And I enjoy the fact that I know these places like the skate park in the neighborhood and the nice restaurants nearby. Or the old primary school where I know many people, that you see them and just say 'hi' or think 'hey, I know you'. I really like it, for instance the place where we get French fries, and the woman behind the counter that recognizes me, I really enjoy that (Claire, 13).

The importance of a sense of place in a neighborhood also underlines Rosa's (16) preference of a neighborhood, as she states that she prefers her mom's neighborhood because of the familiar places and faces. She does not feel this way about her dad's neighborhood, although she admits that this probably has to do with the fact that she spends less time there. Eefje (15) also stated preferring her dad's neighborhood to live in because she knows where everything is and knows where to go when something is up. She does not feel that way about her mom's neighborhood and the distances she must cycle for everything there also play a part in her feeling more at home in her dad's neighborhood. Tom (17) also has a strong preference for his mom's house. Before the divorce, they lived in the same neighborhood and because of that he knows the surroundings well, unlike his dad's house and neighborhood:

'At my dad's I know the surroundings but not the people who live there, it is not a safe feeling. It is a very different environment, lots of flats. We live on the border of the neighborhood where houses revert to big apartment buildings, it is not a nice place to be' (Tom, 17).

Laura (16) also prefers her mom's neighborhood. She feels more at home there because her mom owns a detached house in a street with many families with kids. Furthermore, it is close to the local shopping street and the neighborhood has amenities like playgrounds in its vicinity. Although her dad also lives in a townhouse as well, she feels more at home in her mom's neighborhood because of the children in the neighborhood she used to play with. It is because of the memories of those times that she prefers that neighborhood, although she currently is not in touch anymore with any of those kids. These memories of playing with neighborhood kids are also an important part in the preference of Peter's living situation. Although previous paragraphs showed that he really likes his dad's farm and the activities he does there, he remembers his mom's house and the neighborhood fondly because of the memories of playing soccer and other games with the kids there.

Finally, some of the children do not have a strong preference for either house or neighborhood. Like Mirte (17) who feels at home at her dad in Zeist and at her mom's in Utrecht as well. She does have a slight preference for her mom's house, but this has to do with the fact that more of her friends, who she sees frequently, live in the neighborhood. For her it is easier to maintain her social network at her mom's in Utrecht and therefore she likes that place a bit better. The same holds true for Nienke (15) who also states she likes both homes and neighborhoods, but since her high school is close to her mom's house, so are her friends, and therefore she feels more at home there. Eva (18) has a similar response on this matter. Although she starts off with stating that a nice neighborhood is important to her in feeling at home, she clarifies that her parents live in adjacent neighborhoods and that in her view, the neighborhoods are very similar:

'I don't have a real preference for either one. Over here at my mom's we are close to my primary school, and we used to play on the schoolyard. And at my dad's we had a soccer field behind the house where we used to play, so it was more a difference of playing soccer over here and playing basketball or hockey on the schoolyard' (Eva, 18).

5.9 Concluding remarks

The first chapter of the results focused on the feeling at home and sense of belonging of the children in the new living situation after the divorce, growing up in two different homes, and was concerned with the following sub question:

To what extent do children feel more at home in either one of their households and how do they perceive feeling at home?

Before moving to answering this question, first a couple of interesting remarks will be discussed that link the children's views to the theory discussed within this research. Poortman & van Gaalen (2017, p.534) concluded in their research that children who grow up in a shared residence and therefore alternate between two homes because of their parent's divorce, often experience **instability in their wellbeing**. This statement can be supported by some of the explanation's children made about their living situation, like Merel (19) who shared that she did not feel at home anywhere anymore right after her parent's divorce. Olivia (19) also had a hard time with the divorce of her parents and needed psychological help to get over the fact that their parents were not together anymore. Mirte (17) also added that she had difficulty with seeing her parents less frequently, especially in the evening and during holidays when the

residential distribution differed from the normal situation. The same holds true for Rosa (16) who now lives exclusively with her mom, and she feels better since she made that decision. Claire (13) currently lives most of the time with her mother as well and started enjoying her time spent with her dad again because of this change.

The instability of Rosa and Claire can be related to the way their residential distribution was managed and that they did not feel comfortable with the amount of time spent in both homes. Haugen (2010, p.112) stated that **choosing for an equal time share arrangement between the two homes might seem logical out of the parent's view that it is in the best interest of their children, but it can also be driven out of self-interest of the parents** to, for instance, avoid conflict, save money or because the parents need time for themselves. That the parents preferred this option, but the children did not, also became clear out of the stories shared by Tom (17) and Olivia (19), who shared similar motivations for not wanting to go back and forth multiple times a week and resisted together with their siblings to force a different residential distribution. Even Eva (18), whose parents only live about three minutes away from one another, renegotiated together with her sisters that they switch homes once a week instead of multiple times as they did before because it was too much of an effort for them to do so. It is, however, important to note that this does not apply to everyone as there are still some like Dirk, Femke, Mirte and Laura who switch multiple times a week and are still fine with doing so, even after multiple years. But this could have to do with the argument of Butler et al (2003, p.134) that **children demonstrate a remarkable willingness to compromise on their own needs to continue meaningful relationships with both parents.**

The latter can also be highlighted with different examples found by what the children shared, for instance Femke (14), who shared on the topic of discussing private bedrooms that she does not mind sharing a bedroom with her brother at her dad's place because she only uses her room there to sleep anyway. However, later in the interview, part of the reason she feels more at home at her mother's has to do with the fact that she has more personal space to withdraw there, which she really appreciates from time to time. Or Peter (16) who shared that he was angry at his dad when he introduced his new partner. To Peter, it felt like this happened the day after the divorce. He later also shared that he is often annoyed by the additional stepchildren in the family and feels like he needs to hold back to keep the peace in the house. The same holds true for Olivia (19) who could not stand her initial father's girlfriend. Or Tom (17) who, like Peter, felt like he could not be himself in his own home anymore when the new partners were around.

In the case of Olivia (19), she made the new situation with her stepfamily work and now she likes it better than before the divorce (Butler, 2003, p.134) **compromising on her own needs** and sharing a bedroom with her brother for the benefit of the family. Finally, Harris-Short (2010) state that children who live in shared residence encounter more and higher levels of parental conflict because sharing children forces them to cooperate. Although this was not specifically mentioned as the attention of this research was mostly about the children's feeling at home and not the ties between the two parents, one example in the situation of Tom (17) comes to mind when he shared about the struggles his sister had with the residential distribution. Tom's sister chose to ignore that and spend more time with her mother, which was not appreciated by their father who could not hide the fact that this bothered him, making remarks about leaving him for their mother, which put further tension on the household for Tom and his other sister.

Now that the difficulties of growing up in two homes and the way children cope with possible stressful components and means of conflict in the residential distribution are discussed, it begs the question whether the children feel more at home in either house on the one hand and what is perceived by them to be necessary to do so on the other? For Nienke (15) it is not a matter

of liking one house over the other. She admits that she likes her mother's new home, and it did not take her much time to get adjusted. Her father's house is great as well because it is the house where she lived her whole life. The statement that **she likes her father's house because she lived there all her life**, is related to the first factor of Antonsich's (2010) five factors of belonging, namely the **autobiographical factor**. It relates to an individual's history and is concerned with past experiences and memories that tie a person to a particular place and is also known as what Dixon and Durheim (2004, p.459) refer to as **place attachment**. Nienke is not alone in this, as Mirte (17) feels the same way about her dad's house which she has a slight preference for compared to her mom's. Besides the fact that she grew up in the house and has similar motivations as Nienke, she also prefers her dad's house because it is not as neat and less organized as her mom's house, which makes it feel more homely to her.

Rosa (16) also admits that the **familiarity of her home** is very comforting to her. Rosa experiences this at her mother's house, and although this is not the house she grew up in, she addresses that recognizing the sounds of her neighbors or the doors of the apartment make her feel comfortable and safe. Although it is not the first home she lived in, she shared that when someone asks about her home, her mother's home is the place that immediately comes to mind. A description like this is closely related to what Antonsich (2010) refers to as the **'home-place'** which is usually the first place that someone feels that they belong and feel at home. According to Rosa, she has everything she needs there, in comparison to her dad's house, where she spent less and less time as she got older.

Eefje (15) prefers her mother's house as well, but because her older sister still lives there, unlike at her dad's house. Both preferring her mom's house because her sister is still there and not feeling comfortable at her dad's because of the presence of stepfamily and the feeling that she cannot fully be herself there because it causes conflict has to do with Antonsich's (2010, p.8) **relational factor of belonging**. The relational factor is concerned with strong ties of friends and family and weak ties that have to do with strangers in shared public space. In this case it is the former, in the sense that Eefje's sense of belonging is positively influenced by the presence of her mother and sister and the way she feels at home with them and negatively at her dad's where she clashes with stepfamily and has to be quiet when her dad is working or watching tv with the family. Tom's (17) sense of belonging is also dependent on the relational factor. He currently feels that this is easier at his mother's house because of the stepfamily at his dad's but admits that he also had a hard time with feeling at home when his mother's previous partner was still around. Merel's (19) statements also made clear that feeling at home is based on relational factors as well as she values the comfort of her family with her mother and brother in her mother's house. Currently she does not feel this way about her dad's house as he predominantly stays at his new partner's.

Laura's sense of belonging also has to do with the relational factor, but in a starkly differing way from Eefje and Tom. Laura (16) has no preference for and likes the variety of the two homes. She likes her father's house because of her little half-sister, and her mom's house for the peace and quiet, also because of that sister. Where Eefje feels less at home because of the presence of her stepfamily, for Laura her half-sister is a pull factor to spend more time at her dad's. The way she discusses her ties with her parents and compares them with her own personal traits is unique to this research and interesting because it is very mature for her age. This might have to do with the conclusion of Corrales et al (2016, p.112) who stated that **children who faced the adversity of family disruption can have differing development trajectories towards adult roles and responsibilities in the sense that they are accelerated and focused on earlier self-reliance and self-sufficiency**. The fact that she states that her bond with her mother became stronger because her mom gives her more space to do what she wants furthermore relates to what Christensen (2002, p.85) argues in the sense

that **children value 'having a say' over the time they spent** with one parent or another in a flexible way. Finally, private space and time alone are also important to Laura, just like the presence of her dog at her mom's house make her feel at home.

The presence of pets was heard of more frequently as a factor for preferring one household over the other. For instance, Loes (14) who mostly had practical considerations for favoring one house over the other, admitted that her two cats were important to her in feeling at home. Claire (13) also mentioned that she prefers her mother's house as she immediately feels at home when she arrives, but also argued that she really enjoyed having two guinea pigs at her dad's place. Femke (14) also prefers her mother's house, not only because she has more space and a private bedroom, but also because of her two cats residing there. For Sara (14) besides having her personal space and belongings, the presence of pets in both homes is important to her in feeling at home. Although pets are not specifically mentioned concerning the different factors of belonging, it could be argued that this is related to autobiographical, more personal, and emotional level of belonging as it fits the more symbolic sense of feeling at home as a space of comfort, familiarity, security, and emotional attachment to a certain place (Hooks, 2009, p.213), in which pets can play a role.

Apart from Sara and Nienke, **the children that were younger than sixteen usually preferred one house over the other whereas the older children perceive benefits to both homes.** This is also the case when looking at the explanation of Peter (16), who prefers his mother's house over his dad's when proximity to school and work are concerned but favors his dad's farm to spend his free time. Peter sometimes faces difficulties in his relationship with his stepfamily at his dad's place in trying not to be bothered by the stepchildren. Although this is related to the relational factor of belonging, what is interesting is that he argues that the differences between him and the stepchildren are a result of the fact that they are 'city kids', unlike him. Because he perceives this to be the cause it has to do with **the cultural factor of belonging as the differences are based on their identity**, children raised in the city compared to his rural identity, relating it to the politics of belonging and **othering** (Therborn, 1991 pp.182-183; Antonsich, 2010, p.9).

That preferring one home over the other is more common with the younger children within this research also became clear when discussing the topic with Olivia (19) who stated that a clear preference is more of the past. She used to prefer her mothers home, because of the familiarity with Zeist, where she grew up, and the fact that she had a private bedroom and a less crowded family there. Now that she is older and some of the stepfamily moved out, it is important to her to have her own space and opportunities to seclude herself from the rest on the one hand, but not being alone all day on the other. In other words, **her previous sense of belonging when she was younger had to do with autobiographical and relational factors, whereas now it is mostly relational and has to do with self-efficacy.** Visser (2019, p.453) also concluded that self-efficacy, or in other words that the environment an individual resides in maintains or at least does not hinder a person's lifestyle, is important in a child's sense of belonging. Eva (18) has a similar motivation as Olivia in the sense that she has no strong preference for either household anymore and values familiarity and comfort in her home as well, but also the privacy of her own bedroom when she needs it. Besides the autobiographical reasoning behind her feeling at home, Eva values her self-efficacy as well, just like Olivia.

Now that the role of feeling at home on the household level and what is perceived to be important in feeling at home within the house are discussed, the role of the neighborhood in feeling at home follows before concluding this paragraph. **For many of the children, the perception of the neighborhood is different from the static demarcation of parts of the city** as it is used by municipalities and adults, when for instance friends live within a 5-to-15-minute bike ride, it is supposed to be in the same neighborhood. Many of the children discuss

visiting the inner city as well when talking about activities in the neighborhood, even though this usually is not within the neighborhood in the traditional demarcation of what their neighborhood entails, it is reachable within fifteen minutes of cycling.

For many the neighborhoods of the two homes is not perceived as being as important as the home itself in feeling at home, as most do not prefer either neighborhood. Some like Loes or Femke, even go as far as stating that the neighborhood has never been that important to them as they do not spend time outside and do not have social ties within the neighborhood to spend time with. Others argue that it has to do with the fact that there are **no peers of a similar age** within the neighborhood, as some of the children live in neighborhoods where mostly younger children reside. **When other children do state the importance of the neighborhood, it is usually because of the friends that live nearby and not because of the amenities within the neighborhood.** The social ties that they have are usually based on being in the same primary or high school or meeting friends of friends they already had. The exception being Tom and Olivia, who shared that they both preferred their mom's house because of the location and the proximity of friends, but they both prefer their dad's house for the nature surrounding the neighborhood. It is interesting to note that **the children who shared that they still spend time outside with friends in the neighborhood, are the younger kids that were interviewed** like Dirk (12), Claire (13), Nienke (15) and Eefje (15), some of whom also admitted that this became a less frequent pastime than when they still attended primary school, as more time is being consumed by their current homework.

Many of the children, especially when they are older than sixteen, share their stories about their neighborhood in the past tense, in the sense that they used to make use of it but not anymore as they grew older. This was specifically mentioned by Rosa (16) who admitted that she used to like playing soccer with her friends outside but feels that she and her friends have outgrown this way of spending time together. Eva (18) stated as well that she used to play soccer or basketball with friends or her little sisters in the past. **With the older children, these activities in the neighborhood made way for meeting with friends, enjoying food or drinks at restaurants and bars.** Some of the younger kids admit to still making use of the neighborhood, like Sara and Claire, as a place to meet friends and friends of friends to hang out with. Or Dirk (12), who admitted to going outside with his friends almost every time they meet to play soccer. The children who do meet others in the neighborhood usually meet on schoolyards, skateparks or a soccer club they attend.

When children do have a preference about the neighborhood, it is usually the neighborhood of their first house where they grew up before the divorce if they still live there, which highlights **the importance of the length of residence in belonging.** Reasons for preferring this neighborhood over the other have to do with the autobiographical factors, fond memories of playing outside with others, like Peter (16) or Eefje (15) admitting to knowing where everything is and where to go if something is up. Or Rosa (16) and Claire (13) with **being familiar in the neighborhood, knowing faces and places and being recognized and greeted by others,** the weak ties in Antonsich's (2010, p.9) relational factor. With Sara and Claire, who like meeting large groups of people outside, consisting of friends and friends of friends, the cultural factor of belonging applies, having **a sense of community and intimacy** in the neighborhood and accepting friends of friends as likeminded people they have things in common with. The reason for preferring a neighborhood based on these autobiographical, relational, and cultural factors of belonging can be found in the conclusion of Visser (2019) who states that whereas adult's base neighborhood choice and satisfaction on rational and tactical factors like socio-economic status and safety, for young people it is based on the different dimensions of belonging. However, reasons for disliking a certain neighborhood are based on feeling unsafe somewhere, like Tom with the appartement buildings near his dad's or Sara (14) who admitted

she felt unsafe within her mother's new neighborhood. The new homes of Tom and Sara that made them feel unsafe are both the new homes in a neighborhood that was not known to them before, which Visser (2019) states are reasons for adults in neighborhood satisfaction, but in this case, it is important for Tom and Sara to feel like they belong as well. Some of the older children who do not prefer one of the neighborhoods over the other do admit that they had more difficulties in feeling at home in the new house after moving there, because the new area was unfamiliar to them, but as they lived there longer and got familiar with the neighborhood and its surroundings, they started feeling differently, like Olivia (19), which underlines the relational factors in feeling at home.

Chapter 6: Social networks

SQ 2: Which factors are important in maintaining their social networks?

6.1 Meeting with friends and frequency

Now that the living situation of the children within their families, households and neighborhoods are mapped, a closer look is taken to their social networks and the importance of these networks in their daily lives. For Olivia (19) meeting with friends is important to her and she usually meets with them at least once a week. She is not alone in this as others admitted to seeing their friends a lot without further explanation on for instance the frequency, like Rosa (16) and Mirte (17), whereas for others it was more conditional, like Tom (17) who finds distance to be the obstacle in this matter:

'During midweeks with my dad's, I have to cycle for about half an hour, so I usually only meet with friends when I am at my mom's house' (Tom, 17).

Peter (16) has a similar motivation as Tom, he also prefers his mother's house when he decides to spend time with friends because this is easier for him as his mom's house is closer to the school he attends and closer to Utrecht than his dad's house, where most of his friends reside. For Sara (14) the frequency of seeing her friends differs from week to week, based on how much she must do for school, but she also tries seeing them on a weekly basis. This is also the case for Dirk (12), who still needs to adjust to his first year of high school compared to his workload in primary school the year before:

'I do not see them that much anymore because I usually have a lot of homework to do now, but I think I see them about twice a week' (Dirk, 12).

Loes (14) also admits to not seeing her friends that much anymore because she became busier during the week, although she explains that it does not really matter to her as most of her friends are in her class. The time she spends with them on their long schooldays is enough for her. Still, she likes to meet up with them outside of school at least once every two weeks. Claire (13) who is of a similar age as Sara, Dirk and Loes, and therefore had a similar transition from primary school to high school and the workload that comes with it, however, still finds the time to see her friends often because most of them live close to her home. For Femke (14) seeing her friends revolves more on their availability than hers:

'If they have the time, then we meet up, but if they cannot, I am home alone again. Then I basically do nothing all day. But when they do, I am gone all day' (Femke, 14).

For Merel (19) it is more the other way around. Merel likes to spend time frequently with her friends, but it depends on how busy her weeks are as she is also part of the youth committee of leftist political party GroenLinks and she likes to do activities at the study association of her university education she recently started as well. Finally, Laura (16) states that she does not see her friends that often as she spends most of her days taking care of her own horse, and she has a boyfriend she frequently sees, who together, take up most of her time.

6.2 Origin of social network

As the previous chapter discussed the importance and frequency of the children's social networks, this chapter focuses on the origins of their social networks. For many, their social network is quite extensive, like Femke (14) who shared that she has friends from her volleyball team, swimming team and others who are in her class in high school. The same holds true for Loes (14) who stated she has friends from her music lessons, orchestra and within her class at school. Rosa (16) also knows her friends from school, soccer and predominantly her musical

group, and many of her friends are currently enrolled in the same high school as well. For Mirte (17) her musical group also consists of some of her closest friends who all live in Zeist, just like her dad. She also keeps in touch with some of her friends in Zeist she still has from primary school, but her friends from high school live in Utrecht, just like her mom.

For Nienke (15) school and sports are predominant for her social network as well, as she also plays hockey and tennis. Although she also highlights the facts that she knows others through her existing friends as well:

'School, tennis, hockey, and I know people who know my friends. Some kids of acquaintances of my parents as well. Some became good friends, others are just fine to be around but that's all' (Nienke, 15).

Knowing others through friends of their parents was also highlighted by Tom (17) who mentions his badminton friend that is a kid of one of his mother's closer friends, although he does admit that badminton is the only thing that binds them as they do not have other things in common, and if it were not for this activity, they probably would not see each other anymore.

Sara (14), like Nienke, also mentions people she knows through other friends besides her friends from school. But she adds that she has the closest ties with people who are in her class. She sometimes still sees people from primary school but admits that those ties watered down over time. That the people Sara knows through others are less close to her than her classmates and that ties from primary school water down is also reflected in Peter's answer:

'I predominantly know my friends from school and soccer. I sometimes like to play soccer with people that live in the neighborhood as well, but I do not consider them to be my friends. My actual friends are from high school and two of them from primary school as well, but that is because they also attend the same high school as I do' (Peter, 16).

The watering down of social ties is also central in Laura's view on the changes of her social network through the years. When she was still in primary school, she had two girls she was very close with, but as the years passed and when she started attending high school, they did not see each other anymore:

'From high school onwards, I made a new group of friends, but I think when I will attend university in two years, this will probably happen again, and I will lose half of this group again. I think I switch friends quickly because of me growing up and looking for others who are more compatible to me. I do not feel very attached to the friends I already have, not that I am not loyal or anything but when I have the feeling that we are not as close anymore as we used to be, I do not force keeping in touch because of the history we have as friends' (Laura, 16).

Others are less critical about the closeness of certain ties, as Dirk (12) does consider the people he met in his neighborhood to be his friends besides the people he knows from primary school. The same holds true for Claire (13) who also mentions that many of her friends live close to her home. Although she does admit that she already knew most of these friends through other aspects of her daily life, such as school or hockey. Eva also knows most of her friends via school and sports like hockey but explains that her hockey team does not consist of people she meets frequently besides her hockey training and a possible activity with the whole team afterwards (Eva, 18). She also mentioned that her social ties do not originate in the neighborhood itself because the children there are much younger than she and her sisters are. The same holds true for Eefje (15) who states that she knows her friends from school and cheerleading practice, but since the girls she knows via cheerleading live further away, she only sees them there. Just like Sara and Nienke, Eefje (15) shared that she also knows many friends through other friends she knows from school. For Olivia (19) her social ties consist solely of people she knows from high school, and this is also the case for Merel (19) although

her social network consists of people of differing primary schools and her high school, as she switched schools when her parents divorced.

6.3 Proximity of friends

As the amount of spending time with friends and the origin of the social network are discussed in the previous chapters, a closer look is needed to the proximity of the friends the children have. Although it might be logical to assume that as most schools are in the children's vicinity, so are their friends, but when growing up in two different homes this is, of course, not a given for either home. For some, however, it is that straightforward, like Dirk (12) and Eefje (15) who both simply state that all their friends live in the neighborhood. The same holds true for Claire (13) who is of a similar age and situation as Dirk, as both her parents and friends also live in the same neighborhood. As most of Dirk's social network consists of people he met on primary school and the catchment area of primary schools is usually smaller than high schools because urban areas usually have plenty of schools to choose from, it is not surprising that this is all he has to say about the matter. This argument also becomes clear in Peter's view on the matter, as his mom lives close to his school in Utrecht, he therefore also lives close to most of his friends. Nienke's friends also live across Utrecht, and from what she shared it becomes clear that this means close by or in the neighborhood to her (Nienke, 15).

Still, it is also a matter of perception, which becomes clear in Femke's answer, whose friends did not just originate from school but also from volleyball and swimming and are more spread across town. Because all her friends live in Amersfoort, she can simply cycle to all of them (Femke, 14). This is also the case for Tom (17) as all of his friends live in Utrecht, just like his mom, and he has no issue with cycling about fifteen to twenty minutes to visit them. Loes is of a similar opinion:

'Most of my friends do live further away but usually I just go by bike independently when I feel like hanging out with them' (Loes, 14).

Moving by bike across town(s) appears to be no obstacle at all for many of the adolescents, as Olivia (19) also explains that she has one friend in Zeist who lives in the neighborhood next to hers, but others live across Zeist and the neighboring town of Driebergen, but in her opinion this is all close by. Eva (18) who lives in Utrecht also has most of her friends within the city, and although she admits that some of them live further away, this is no obstacle to her as she explains that they are all easy to reach by bike. The same holds true for Laura, who explains she has most of her friends living in Soest and Baarn and she lives in between the two, which is a perfect base for her to visit them by bike. Her boyfriend lives somewhat further away, and she needs to take the train to visit him, but that is not perceived as any more of an obstacle than the friends she visits by bike, as it only takes her about fifteen minutes (Laura, 16). Merel (19) also stated that after the divorce, she had to cycle longer to her primary school, but since this was within Ede and she already was eleven or twelve, this was no problem for her. Mirte (17) who lives in Utrecht and in Zeist also has her social networks spread across these two cities but does not mind cycling between them to meet up with friends either. Furthermore, she also shared that she usually combines seeing them based on where she is that day to avoid travel time, but she does not shy away from cycling back and forth when needed.

For others, the travel time is more of an issue than the children mentioned before, as Sara (14) usually does not meet up with friends when she is with her dad's as he lives further away. Her mother lives close to her school, and so do her friends, so when she does meet with friends, she waits until she is at her mother's house again. This also becomes clear when this question was posed to Rosa (16) who states that she has some friends living in her neighborhood who

she sees, but that others like her friends from cheerleading, live too far away for her to keep in touch besides her cheerleading practice.

6.4 Activities and location of meetings (preference houses or solely at friends' homes)

Now that the frequency, origins, and proximity of the social networks of the children are discussed, this chapter focuses on the location and activities the children like to do when they are with friends. When these questions were posed, special attention was given to the preferences of where the respondents wanted to meet to see how these choices possibly influence their belonging and feeling at home. A preference for not meeting up in either parent's house could be motivated by the location like Tom (17) who prefers meeting with friends at his mother's house because she lives in Utrecht, just like his friends:

'My father in Bilthoven lives too far away. I did meet with friends there sometimes but than they had to cycle for a long time, and I needed to explain how they need to get there' (Tom, 17).

Tom further explains that he likes to game or puzzle with his friends or sometimes just strolls in the neighborhood and talks with them. Now that his father recently bought a boat, he also likes to hang out with friends there as well. Sara (14) also prefers meeting at her mother's place because of how her home is situated. According to her, her dad lives in the opposite direction of the city compared to where her friends live, so just like Tom, she prefers her mother's house based on the location. When she is with friends, she likes to watch movies, penny boarding and making TikToks. Rosa (16) also admitted that when they meet at her house, they usually are at her mom's because she currently lives there most of the time. When they meet, they like to talk, watch movies, play games, or go to the city. Olivia (19) also admitted to meeting with friends more frequently at her mother's house because it is closer to where her friends live:

'My mother's house was a popular spot because my mom works a lot, and I often was home alone. That is why my friends also preferred meeting here, because at their place one or both parents were home. At my dad's not so much because my friends did not want to cycle for half an hour to Den Dolder' (Olivia, 19).

When Olivia and her friends are together, they like to walk around, watch movies, play games, and have sleepovers. Peter (16) on the other hand, does prefer his father's house when he meets up with friends even though his mother lives closer to Utrecht, where all his friends live. Just like Olivia, he prefers it that way because he is home alone there more often and enjoys the space he has there. Of the children that had a preference of meeting up in a particular house, he is the only one that specifically stated that he has no preference in meeting at his place or his friends. When he meets with them, he likes to play videogames or soccer. Claire (13) also prefers meeting with friends at her mother's place, but this has nothing to do with the location, like most others, but because her brother spends less time there than she does. When she has friends over, she is bothered by his annoying behavior. Although she has no preference to meet at her place or her friends', they usually pick the place where the least people are home, like Peter and Olivia. When they meet, Claire likes to go outside, watch movies, or bake things. Laura (16), like Claire, also avoids meeting with friends at her dad's place because of her little half-sister. Furthermore, although she admits being fine with meeting at her place, she prefers going to others because she has the feeling that she must entertain people when she is the host. She prefers it the other way around because it is easier for her to relax when others commit to that role. Although this might sound specific, Laura was not the only one who feels this way, as Mirte (17) made a similar argument:

'I prefer hanging out at one of my friend's places because then I do not have to pay attention to everything in the house and if everybody still has drinks and things like that. But I do not mind spending time at my place. But when the weather is good, we usually go outside' (Mirte, 17).

When Mirte and her friends meet at someone's house they prefer playing games or like to get creative and paint. But they also frequent the park and go out to bars or parties. Merel (19) also prefers to meet at her friend's house instead of her own houses but has difficulty explaining why she feels that way. When she meets with friends she likes to go out and walk in the forest or do 'fun' activities together, when they meet at someone's house she just likes to hang around and drink a lot of tea. A final preference that stood out when meeting friends is explained by Eefje:

'When I meet with friends we usually go outside and hang around, not really at someone's home. But when we do I prefer spending time with my friends because my parents act weird around my friends. Especially my dad, I really hate that. He poses all kind of strange questions about their life, this one time I had a friend over and he basically started a questionnaire. What he did, what his parents did, why he was here, how he knew me, it was very uncomfortable' (Eefje, 15).

The remaining children did not really have a preference in where to meet or the conditions of that meeting, like Dirk (12) who simply stated that it did not matter to him and that they usually start of inside and game a bit and then go out in the neighborhood to play soccer or basketball. Loes (14) also stated that when she meets with her best friend, it does not matter where they are or what they do, they just hang around and game a bit. Femke (14) also thinks that the time spend together is more important than the actual location of where they meet. She just likes to go outside to the inner city of Amersfoort or just cycle around and talk all day. The same holds true for Nienke (15) who enjoys going to the Wilhelmina Park in Utrecht or to the inner city. She also likes to have dinner with friends, whether this is at her place or theirs. The opinions of the children that have no real preference can be summarized by Eva's view on the matter:

'I do not mind where we meet, we look where it is suitable at that moment or where we are nearby, all of my friends have been to my place as well. It is really no issue whether we are at my place or at my friend's' (Eva, 18).

6.5 Influence of divorce and moving from neighborhoods or cities on social networks

A divorce and multiple relocations through moving around can have a detrimental effect on the children's social network and might result in losing sight of former friends that lived nearby. This chapter will elaborate on the respondent's perceived changes in their social network through the years and whether losing friends can be related to moving around and living in multiple homes or that it just occurred naturally. For some, like Dirk (12) the divorce and relocation had no effect on his social network, because he still lives in the home that they lived in together before the divorce and his mother moved to a house in an adjacent street. But even when the children did move around and do not live in their pre-divorce home anymore, like Rosa, this does not mean that this influences their social network:

'No, I continued with everything I did before the divorce and no friendships watered down because of our relocations' (Rosa, 16).

The same holds true for Loes (14), who also did move around multiple times with her parents but because these movements were within Zeist and the adjacent village of Huis ter Heide,

where she also lived before, she could continue all her hobbies and see the people she already knew. Merel's situation is like Loes's, and although she moved around multiple times and even switched schools, all the movements took place in Ede, and it did not disrupt any activities or friendships she had before (Merel, 19). The same holds true for Nienke (15) who, like Dirk, still lives in the same house where she used to live when her parents were still together. Therefore, this was always her point of departure to go to school or meet with friends, and this did not change over the past six years. Laura (16) also perceived no changes in activities or seeing friends since her parents are not together anymore. Although she did move around with her dad to other cities that were further away compared to others, her friends kept seeing her, also at her dad's new house.

Sara (14) also felt that losing friends because of her relocations did not apply to her situation. She did share that the first question she asked her parents when they talked about the divorce was if she could stay in the same school because that really mattered to her. As her social network consists of people she knows from school, she could continue seeing everyone she liked, and no friendships watered down. Femke (14) similarly shares that she did not lose touch with anyone she knew before despite the divorce and relocations. According to her, this also had to do with the fact that she never really had social ties within the neighborhood they lived, she knew her friends from school and the activities she attends. Tom (17) also stated that the divorce and relocations had no effect on his social network because his mother found a different house in the same neighborhood that was only a few minutes away.

'I lost touch with some people, for instance people from primary school. But I just did not feel like hanging out with them anymore, it used to click but then it did not. And I know all my friends from school so moving did not influence that as I stayed in the same school' (Tom, 17).

Tom is not the only one who highlights that the divorce and relocation with his parents had nothing to do with the friends that he lost touch with. Eva (18) also stated that as they stayed in the same city, it was not an obstacle to keep seeing the people she liked. She either sees people from the past, or she does not, but explicitly states that the divorce had nothing to do with that. Claire shares the view of Tom and Eva in the sense that she did not feel that the divorce of her parents resulted in her losing touch with others:

'My parents divorced in my first year I attended high school and back then I was still in contact with some friends from primary school. But it is not because of my parents that we lost touch, I just had more than enough other friends who I liked better, so I chose not to invest time in those friends anymore because spending time with them was not fun enough anymore' (Claire, 13).

Up until now all children stated that the divorce and the resulting relocations did not affect their social networks. Mirte (17) goes even further by stating that because of the two homes she now lives in, she even met more new friends. With her dad, she still lives in the house in Zeist that she grew up in, and therefore the people she knew back then were still around. Because her mother moved to Utrecht, she also became close with a girl that lived next door in her mother's new neighborhood. And although she has lost touch with that girl as they grew older, she now has groups of friends in Zeist as well as in Utrecht.

This same positive attitude towards making new friends because of the new living situation is shared by Eefje. Although she starts off by talking about a boy that lived next door, she lost touch with because they moved away, she also stated that because of the new neighborhood she came to live in, she also made many new friends, and friends of friends she got to know (Eefje, 15). The same holds true for Peter, who started off by explaining that his former best friend lived a few houses down the road before the divorce, but at his mother's house he also

got to know a lot of new kids in the neighborhood when they played soccer. Although they lost touch as they grew older and spent less time playing outside, he shares the view of Eefje and Mirte that moving away gave him the opportunity to meet new people instead of forcing out former friends in his life. Only Olivia (19) shared a story about losing some of her friends who lived in the same flat as her mother did right after the divorce, but she also downplays the importance of losing contact with these girls as she describes them as merely being acquaintances she played with when she was younger, not 'real' friends (Olivia, 19).

6.6 Concluding remarks

The second chapter of the results focused on the children's social networks. It was concerned with the origin and proximity of their social networks, the frequency of meeting with their friends, as well as the preferential locations and the influence of the divorce and subsequent moving away on these social networks. This resulted in the following sub question:

Which factors are important in maintaining their social networks?

A sense of belonging is based on the relatedness to others and connecting oneself to surrounding people, which is needed for an individual to develop an identity. Because of this, it can logically be assumed that social networks are key in feeling that you belong. This applies even more to children as **their activities and social networks are more locally based and therefore experience high levels of belonging in the local context** compared to adults, especially on schooldays (Harris, 2009). Furthermore, a forced relocation can disrupt social networks and might create difficulties with integrating in the new neighborhood (Visser, 2019, p.2). Bolt et al (2011) similarly stated that young people did loose friends and gave up leisure activities after moving to another neighborhood. But because **most of the children within this research only partially relocated with one of their parents**, the disruption of their social networks might be less severe compared to children who forcefully relocated from one home to another.

When discussing the frequency of meeting friends with the children of this research, it became apparent that their social networks are indeed deemed important in their daily life and that they all prefer to meet with friends frequently, some even find time to do so multiple times a week. This topic highlighted again that **age is a relevant factor** within this research, as the younger kids like Dirk (12), Sara (14) and Loes (14) immediately state that they do not see their friends as often as they would like, because of the increased amount of homework that takes up more of their time than it used to do on primary school. Then again, some like Loes, also state that this does not matter to her, as most of her friends are in her class anyway, and she therefore spends time with them in class as well.

The importance of classmates also became apparent when discussing the origin of the children's social networks, as virtually all children mentioned social ties from their respective schools. This can be linked to **a sense of school belonging**, as they feel personally accepted, respected, supported and included by their peers in class (Rejaän et al., 2021, p.6). Some even mentioned ties in their social networks that originated from their primary school, although many added that these friendships were the first to water down when they became busier, for instance when starting high school and other daily activities like sports and hobbies. The watering down of social networks was especially well explained by Laura (16), who stated that she lost half her social network when switching from primary school to high school because she 'grew up' and started looking for people who were more compatible to her. She also foresaw that this would happen again when she starts university in a few years, not because she feels no loyalty or attachment to her friends, but because she does not force friendships based on the history they have together when they naturally grow apart (Laura, 16). Laura's insights on this matter highlights again what Corrales (2016, p.111) stated as the accelerated

development trajectories towards adult roles and responsibilities caused by the adversity of family disruption.

Besides school, the **children's daily activities are also an important source for many of their social ties**, if they have such activities, which most children in this research do. A final important source of friendships is **friends of other friends**, which is closely related to the cultural dimension of belonging. This dimension of belonging is important as **the culture within a neighborhood serves a powerful social function as it gives people a common language, symbols, and norms through which groups are formed and maintained** (Antonsich, 2010). It also has to do with the relational factor of Antonsich (2010) as friends of friends started off as weak ties, people who they already knew, but not well. But after spending time with them when hanging out in the neighborhood because of the presence of their friends, they sometimes eventually are perceived as friends as well. This also has to do with the possible overestimation of the role of the neighborhood in social networks within this research. The stories these children shared sometimes discussed the origin of friendships just because others where for instance kids of the neighbors, but this was mostly discussed in the past tense in the sense that this only applied to when they were younger. This is further highlighted by the remarks of Peter (16) who, just as with his stepfamily, perceived children he spent time with from his neighborhood as not being 'real friends'. This can again be linked to Antonsich's (2010) cultural factor of belonging in the sense that the neighborhood kids are being othered by Peter because they do not share the same norms in which his group of friends is formed and maintained. Other children, like Claire (13) contribute to this by stating that the children she knows from her neighborhood were already known to her through for instance school or the aforementioned friends of other friends.

Concerning the proximity of friends from either house, some of the children like Dirk (12) and Eefje (15) immediately admitted that their friends live near both their homes as their parents live near one another as well. For others, like Sara (14) one of the two houses was close to their friends whilst the other home was not, and meeting with friends logically occurs the most when they are in the home that is near to their friends. Some, like Peter (16) even prefer his dad's house to meet his friends, even though his mother's house is closer. Again, **it seems that self-efficacy is important amongst the older children** in this research. Choosing to spend time on the location that is not most proximate, but offers the best circumstances to hang out, in this case being alone compared to being in a house that is closer but has a parent present when they decide to go there. This was also true for Olivia (19) whose mom's place was a popular spot for her and her friends to hang out, and not because it was closest per se, but because they usually had the house for themselves when they met there. Even though self-efficacy is deemed important in the views of older kids within this research, concerning meeting friends this was also the case for the younger ones as Nienke (15) and Femke (14) also admitted to crossing the cities of Utrecht and Amersfoort respectively to meet with them when they felt like. Even Loes (14) who admitted that most of her friends live further away, **did not perceive the distance to be an obstacle in meeting with them** as she usually travels independently to them on her bicycle whenever she feels like. It seems that distances that can be covered by bicycle under twenty minutes are perceived to be nearby for most children, further suggesting that the combination of **owning a bicycle and enjoying the freedom of their parents to meet with friends as they please are key in maintaining their social networks** even after moving away to different homes.

These arguments can further be reiterated when discussing the preferential locations of their meeting with friends. Although some prefer one house over the other and this is sometimes because one of their houses is perceived to be too far away, it does not hinder the children in maintaining their social network and this reason was not heard frequently. Motivations for preferring one house over the other are varied, and often have to do with the presence of (step)family or preferring to meet at their friend's houses to avoid the role of being the host, watching over the house and providing others with food and drink. And a fair share of children

admitted to not having a preference of either home or their friends' home at all, what matters to them is the time spend with friends, not the location. These arguments were further underlined when posing if the divorce or moving away affected the children's social networks. **Virtually none of the children felt like the divorce or moving resulted in a loss of friends, contrary to what the literature stated.** The friends that were lost during that time was out of a loss of interest in maintaining the friendship, not because of changes in their family formation or the location of their residence. Some, like Mirte (17), Eefje (15) and Peter (16) even state that the **movements even gave them the opportunity to meet new people, increasing rather than decreasing their social network.** Only Olivia (19) shared that she lost touch with some of the girls she hung out with that lived in the same appartement building as her mom right after the divorce, but just like Peter (16) with his kids in the neighborhood, she described them as not being 'real friends' anyway, acquaintances was a more accurate description in her opinion.

Chapter 7: Influence on daily activities

SQ 3: To what extent are their daily activities influenced by the amount of moving between houses?

7.1 Weekly activities outside the houses

To get a grasp on the full day to day life of the children within this research, the daily or weekly activities they undertake are discussed in this chapter. Combined with the information discussed about growing up in two homes and the maintenance of their social networks, this is the final piece in the puzzle of what they do from week to week. Where some spend most of their time besides school in meeting up with friends, others fill their weeks with multiple hobbies and activities. Some, like Mirte (17), even manage both as she stated in the previous chapters that she has different friend groups in Utrecht as well as Zeist which she sees often, but when asked about their daily activities she shared that these activities also take up a lot of time in her week:

'I play soccer in Zeist and attend theater and work in a supermarket in Utrecht. On Monday's I have soccer practice, on Tuesday's I work on Wednesday's soccer practice again, Thursday's I work, on Friday's I have theater and on Saturday's we have a soccer match' (Mirte (17)).

Rosa's (16) situation is comparable to Mirte's in the sense that she also plays soccer and does theater. The same holds true for Loes (14) who also shared she does theater, has violin lessons, plays in an orchestra and attends scouting in the weekend. In the spare time she has left besides school and the mentioned activities, she likes to stay at home and play videogames. Dirk (12) is into basketball and judo, which he spends three times a week practicing and he has a basketball match in the weekend. Nienke (15) also enjoys an active week as she practices hockey and tennis, which she both trains for twice a week and both has a match of in the weekend. Peter (16) also has a busy week as he works two or three times a week in a local restaurant and has soccer practice twice a week and a match in the weekend as well. Eva (18) also works at the Albert Heijn three times a week, just like Mirte, and has hockey practice once or twice a week and a match in the weekend as well. Claire (13) also attends hockey and practices twice a week and has a game in the weekend. Finally, Laura (16) also shared that she likes her weeks full of things outside the house:

'I have my own horse who I share with my stepmom, I usually go there about five times a week because I have to take care of him. But I do not mind, and I still have enough time for other things like meeting friends or my boyfriend because then I go to my horse in the evening before I return home. I actually enjoy a week with a lot to do' (Laura, 16).

Although all children practice some form of activity, the remaining respondents have a less intense commitment to their sports and hobbies than the previous children, as the former spend most of their weeks doing so. For instance, Tom (17) plays badminton twice a week and sometimes babysits, although the latter is more irregular and not on a weekly basis. Eefje (15) attends cheerleading and trains once a week. They sometimes have a match in the weekend, but she also appreciates spending her spare time just being at home. Femke (14) has a paper route and Sara goes to the gym with her mom (Sara, 14).

'Especially in the holidays we usually try to visit the gym more than once, sometimes even three times a week. But now that we are both working and going to school, we try to go at least once a week. Our aim is to go twice, but that usually does not work out' (Sara, 14).

Merel (19) is active in the youth committee of Groenlinks, a leftist party in the Netherlands, who meet once every two weeks. She used to work a lot the year before, but that was because of

her gap year between high school and university, which she quit when she enrolled in the latter. Olivia (19) works twice a week in the bookstore. She admitted to having a busier week before, but now that she attends university, this is enough for her as she also wants to have time to spend with her friends as well.

7.2 (Change in) distance to activities

Relocating after the divorce can result in longer distances to traverse for school or activities and this might make the children and parents reconsider their options. This chapter focuses on the change in distance to those activities. For some, like Nienke (15), this reconsideration was the first thing on her mind when she first learned of her parents' divorce:

'My parents told me that the first thing I asked when they shared, they would not be together anymore, was if I could stay on the same school and where I was going to live. But I remained on the same primary school and only had to cycle for about ten to fifteen minutes, I luckily stayed in the same surroundings and still could attend everything I used to' (Nienke, 15).

Just as the case of Nienke, for many others, like Rosa (16) moving had no effect on these activities as she was four or five when her parents got divorced and she did not go to soccer or musical yet. Eva (18) also stated that the difference was negligible as she only had to travel to school for about two minutes longer than her previous living situation. The same holds true for Merel (19) as her parents kept living within the city of Ede, and according to her, nothing is that far away if you stay within the city limits. When their parents were still together, she had to cycle for about fifteen minutes to school, and from her new home she had to cycle for fifteen minutes to school as well. For Dirk (12) the difference was insignificant as well, as his mother relocated only a few blocks away. Dirk did share that this is about to change as his father is planning on relocating from Utrecht to Nieuwegein, but the house has not been built yet so his travel time will remain the same for the near future. For others, like Eefje (15) the new living situation became even more favorable:

'Not really, we live even closer to the things I need to go now. We used to live in Alphen aan de Rijn and I went to school in Terwijde (Utrecht), so that was quite a long trip. But now we moved back which made the travel time shorter' (Eefje, 15).

Others did perceive change from relocation, like Olivia (19) who admitted that since her father moved to a different village, she must cycle for about half an hour to get there. Since everything she has going for her in her life is still in Zeist, where she grew up, she usually plans most of her activities when she is at her mother's. But as this has been the new normal for her for a couple of years now, she also thinks that the travel time is part of living there and she does not perceive it to be an issue or obstacle in doing the things she wants (Olivia, 19). That the travel time is an acceptable part of the current living situation also resonates with Tom's view on the matter. Tom's dad also moved away to a nearby village of Utrecht, which takes him about 30 minutes of cycling to get there. But when he has plans in Utrecht when he is with his dad, for instance meeting with friends or his badminton matches in the weekend, he adjusts his schedule and stays with his mom (Tom, 17).

Mirte (17) also admits that planning became a bit more challenging when her mom moved from Zeist to Utrecht after the divorce. Especially when she has soccer training in Zeist late at night and must go back to her mom in Utrecht afterwards, or when she attends a party with friends. But, just like Tom, she usually copes with this by sleeping at the other parent's house or one of her friends when she is with them. Her mother also sometimes picks her up from soccer practice by car so that she does not have to cycle for about half an hour late at night (Mirte, 17). The same holds true for Sara (14) who used to live in the same street as her primary school and walked to class each morning. Now that they moved, she has to go by bike for

about fifteen minutes, but she does admit that where she lives now is more beneficial to her now that she attends high school compared to her former home.

Peter (16) also noticed some changes in distance when his father relocated to another village, which did not affect his traveling time to school but it did for his soccer practice and work at the local restaurant:

'I have to cycle longer to soccer practice and work now, but that does not bother me. Although when I work late in the restaurant, I prefer going to my mom afterwards. This has nothing to do with the travel time but on the route home, I cross a forest that is notorious for being a gay meeting spot at night. It is not like something ever happened, but it makes me a bit uncomfortable' (Peter, 16).

For Laura (16) moving away from her first home also complicated her weekly schedule further. Because her parents used to live farther away from one another, especially horseback riding became more difficult as her riding school was off route, and she rode there on the same day as she switched between her two homes. They tried different options to make it easier, but eventually the problem was solved when she got her own horse together with her stepmom. The previous statements of the children showed that moving to different homes did not pose many problems for the distance in activities of their daily life, and when it did, they learned to cope with that in their own way. Loes (14), however, did admit that the relocation hindered her in doing the things she wanted and still sometimes makes it more difficult for her:

'It does affect choices to do new things as well. A while back I wanted to join a sport club that was close from my house in Zeist, but it was too far away from my second home, especially at night in the dark. That is why I now look for activities that are manageable from both homes. This was also the case from my other home when I wanted to get a job at the local supermarket there. This also was not possible because it would be too far away from my house in Zeist. This would not have been a problem if both homes were in Zeist' (Loes, 14).

7.3 Terminated activities

As the previous paragraphs showed that relocating did sometimes influence the travel time to the children's activities, it could also instigate a termination of activities because fitting the activity in the weekly schedule could be too complicated. This was for instance the case in Claire's (13) situation, who used to partake in horseback riding and hockey, but because the training times changed as well, she had to pick one of the two and went with hockey. For Tom (17) attending badminton also became more complicated as he had to cycle for half an hour from his dad's new residence in Bilthoven. It was no reason for him to quit, as he now makes sure he stays with his mom or just accepts the travel time from his dad. The current living situation did give him a new appreciation for cycling, which he now views as a hobby instead of an obstacle.

Eva (18) also admitted that she stopped with some activities, but not because of the divorce or relocations but because it could not be combined with other activities, or she lost interest in them. The same holds true for Femke (14) who used to do a plethora of activities like swimming, gymnastics, dancing, and volunteer work at an animal shelter, which all used to be proximate to previous homes, but moving away was not the predominant reason for her to quit. Just like Eva, she admits to just losing interest in those activities, not because her new living situation made it impossible for her to continue. This is also reflected in Olivia's (19) statement on the matter, although her father moved further away, she could continue her activities when she was at her mom's and the sole reason that certain activities were terminated, was because of a loss of interest as well. Dirk (12) shared similar motivations for stopping with soccer, in his

case it was to free up time for basketball and judo and, to a certain extent, high school being more time consuming than primary school was to him.

For Rosa (16) and Nienke (15) their activities remained the same and they continue doing so to this day. Peter (16) did admit that he lost sight of some friends who lived in the neighborhood which he would do some of those activities with, like soccer. But that did not stop him from continuing these activities with others. The reason that many of the children did not perceive many changes on this aspect of their lives, could be linked to Laura's (16) view on the matter, who shared that her parents always made it a priority that she could continue with what she did and start new things if she felt like, because their divorce did not need to overcomplicate her life. This also became clear when these questions were posed to Eefje (15) who also stated that her parents actively tried to keep everything as 'normal' as possible. This also resonates with Mirte's (17) explanation:

'I did not need to quit anything. My parents also agreed to that together and tried to take these activities into account for me. Especially when I was younger of course, they actively made sure I could continue what I did. For instance, my mom had no issue with driving me somewhere by car. She still does sometimes, although I am now more of an age that I plan and arrange everything myself' (Mirte, 17).

Sara (14) even goes a step further than the rest by stating that she now has more activities than she used to. Although she does admit that the travel time and higher workload of high school compared to primary school does make that more challenging sometimes. Still, she admitted that if she really would want something, it is possible in her current situation.

7.4 New activities

The previous paragraph discussed whether the divorce and the subsequential moving affected the children's daily activities. But relocating can also provide new opportunities concerning daily activities and what the new area has to offer. For instance, Olivia (19) chose her parttime job close to her father in Den Dolder, which, concerning the distance, would not have been a logical step for her when both her parents would still have lived in Zeist. And Mirte (17) who grew up in Zeist but always had friends in Utrecht as well, benefits from the location of her mother's home now that she lives in Utrecht as well:

'Because of the friends I have in Utrecht, it is good and useful that I live there as well. It lowers the barrier for me to meet with them, compared to when I am with my dad. I usually look for practicalities in my planning, like meeting with my friends in Zeist when I am at my dad's and vice versa.' (Mirte, 17).

Still, Mirte added that she has picked up some new activities over the years, but not because she now lives in Utrecht. Nienke's view on the matter is closely related to that of Mirte's, although she started singing lessons, she specifically states that she did not start that because of her new living situation:

'It is not because of the divorce or the moving that I took up singing. I mean, yes, my lessons are in Utrecht but if I lived somewhere else, I probably would have found those lessons there as well. It is not because of that' (Nienke, 15).

The remaining children also started summing up the new activities they now do since their parents got divorced, and although they were not as vocal as Nienke or Mirte in stating that they did not start this because of the new opportunities they had from their new homes, it was clear this was not the predominant reason, as they were interested in it anyway. Like Eefje (15) who used to do gymnastics but switched to cheerleading and Femke (14) who now has a paper route. Peter (16) started working in a restaurant, but as he is sixteen, this was not an

option at an earlier age. And Laura (16) now shares a horse with her stepmom, but she did attend a riding school in the past before that. This might also have to do with the fact that the divorce and forced relocations did not terminate any activities they already did, as discussed in the previous paragraph. The only exception in this instance comes from Tom (17) who stated before that he really disliked his dad moving away from Utrecht to Bilthoven and cycling for about half an hour to get there. But now that he is used to it, he started seeing cycling as a new hobby:

'Because I had to cycle more because my dad lived farther away, I now also took up cycling to clear my head or escape the crowded situation at home' (Tom, 17).

7.5 Difference in activities between the households

Now that the current, terminated, new daily activities and the distance to the activities are discussed, a final consideration includes the difference in activities between the two households. For some, like Loes (14), Claire (13), Rosa (16), Nienke (15) and Merel (19) the question was not relevant as it did not matter to them where they are, their activities remained the same. Mirte (17) also stated that it did not matter to her whether she was at her dad's in Zeist, or her mother in Utrecht. Eva (18) admitted as well that to her this was not very relevant as she attended work and hockey from both homes and meeting with friends was also dependent on their availability and in which house she then resided. For Peter (16) it does not matter to him where he is either to go to work or soccer practice, although he did emphasize preferring his mother's when he gets home late because of the forest he needs to cross to get to his dad's he mentioned earlier.

For Femke (14) however, it did matter as she stated that she always does her paper route when she is with her father, as it is closer to home, and she always spends her Wednesdays there anyway. Laura (16) also prefers going to her horse from her dad's as it is closer and as she shares the responsibility with her stepmom it is more convenient. For Tom (17) his activities are also dependent on his location as his mother still lives in Voordorp, where his school, friends, and badminton are nearby. Concerning badminton, he makes sure he is at his mother's but for maintaining his social network, which is not as structured as weekly training sessions, it is dependent on where he is now. He admitted, however, that when he is at his dad's, he is less likely to meet with friends because of the traveling distance. The latter also applies to the case of Olivia, whose dad also lives half an hour away of her activities and friends:

'When plans are suggested last-minute, I tend to say no when I am with my dad because it takes too much time to go back and forth, and I need to leave early because otherwise it gets too late before I am home again. But when it is planned, it does not matter where I am. (Olivia, 19).

Olivia further mentioned that she likes to walk with her dog at her dad's, which they do not have at her mother's. Sara (14) also prefers meeting friends from her mom's as it is closer. She only attends the gym when she is with her mom as well because it is their shared activity. For Eefje (15) where she is matters in how she is spending her spare time in the sense that she likes to be in the living room with the rest of the household at her mom's, whereas she prefers to spend her free time in her bedroom at her dad's house. She feels more at home and is more comfortable when spending time at her mothers. Finally, for Dirk (12) concerning activities and seeing friends he has no preference for one of his households but prefers to spend the weekend at his dad's because they go out and do things like getting ice cream or visiting his grandparents whereas most weekends with his mother are spend at home.

7.6 Dependence on transport by parents

In the first paragraph of the results chapter concerning growing up in and the movement between two houses, many children already stated that the items they packed for the next days with the other parent is often brought by car to the other residence. Many explained that they traveled between the homes on their own by bicycle. This final chapter focuses on the children's dependence on their parents or public transport for their movement to activities during their week. Some Like Rosa (16) mentioned that this did not differ from moving between the houses as she travels on her own by bike to all locations she needs to go during the week. The same holds true for Peter (16). Others like Claire (13) and Nienke (15) admitted to cycling with their friends to many of the activities, like hockey training and matches. For others, like Eefje (15) this dependence changed over the years. Right after the divorce, Eefje moved further away to Alphen aan de Rijn with her dad, which made her dependent on her mother and stepfather to go to school there, as her school was too far away from her other house to go independently by bicycle, but after a few years, she and her dad moved closer to her mother's home again and she can currently travel on her own.

For Loes (14) being dependent on her parents for transport is still part of her daily life as her weekly activities are more spread across the region, for instance her violin lessons and scouting are on the same day and her scouting starts right after her violin lessons. It would not be manageable for her to travel by bicycle as they are too far away from one another and the activity would otherwise be over before she reached her destination, which is why her parents drop her off by car. The orchestra she attends is in Utrecht and she takes the bus each week for this activity. Her theater lessons can be attended by cycling to it from both homes. Mirte (17) also admits that her mother still takes her to soccer practice by car, not because it is necessary to do so, but because it is easier as practice is late in the evening now that she is older, and she has a lot of training gear that she must travel back and forth with. She admitted to being dependent on transport from her parents more often when she was younger, but currently she is more independent and more in charge of her own plans and activities and to combine the right residence with those activities as she sees fit as well. Finally, Tom (17) also admitted to preferring being brought by car to his father's boat as it is far away from both his homes.

7.7 Concluding remarks

The third chapter of the results focused on the children's daily activities. It was concerned with the weekly activities outside the house, the (change in) distance to activities, terminated activities, new activities, the difference in activities between the two households and the dependence on transport by the parents. This resulted in the following sub question:

To what extent are their daily activities influenced by the amount of moving between houses (or by remaining in the original parental home)

The literature states that children's activities and social networks are more locally based and therefore they experience higher levels of belonging in the local context compared to adults, especially on schooldays (Harris, 2009). Discussing the activities of the children within this research showed that this holds true for this group as they all have weekly activities and most of these activities are close to their homes. When they are not, like in the case of Mirte (17) with her activities spread across Utrecht and Zeist, or Tom (17), whose activities are further away when he stays at his dad's, the children have differing ways to cope with the distance such as making sure they are at their home that is closest to their activity before it starts, staying with friends or arranging for parents to drive them to their activity or pick them up afterwards. Like before, **it can be concluded that self-efficacy of the children is key in**

making it work as many of the children undertake their activities alone and prefer having a say in including it in their weekly schedule.

Another result mentioned in the literature by Bolt et al. (2011) is that young people did lose friends and gave up leisure activities after moving to another neighborhood. The **children within this research did not experience giving up leisure activities because of the divorce** and this can be explained because of a few key differences compared to the children within the literature. First, the research of Bolt et al (2011) is concerned with children that experienced forced relocation, moving with their family from one house to another, usually out of a financial necessity. The children within this research moved away to a second home because of divorce and most of them stayed in their homes they already lived in before the divorce as well, making the transition less disruptive as a part of their week is still spent in the same environment as before. Second, it is important to note that even after the divorce happening ten to fifteen years ago, **many of the children still live close to where they grew up**, even with their second home for most, and some shared that their parents actively sought ways to make sure they could continue their activities because the divorce resulted in enough changes in their daily life already. Finally, it is common within the Dutch context for everyone to own a bicycle, especially for children this is their predominant mode of transport. **Owning a bicycle enhances mobility, makes distances relatively shorter and it increases autonomy and self-efficacy**, being less dependent on transport by their parents and making it possible to continue with activities that are now further away because of the divorce. With these arguments in mind, it is not surprising that none of the children had to quit an activity because of the divorce, the activities that were quit over the years were predominantly terminated because of a loss of interest or a lack of time.

A final argument from the literature that applies to the results in this research is the fact that a sense of belonging, whether this originates from the family/home, social networks, or daily activities, is needed for an individual to lead a life which is meaningful, a life worth living. The absence of these factors leads to a sense of loneliness, isolation, alienation, and displacement (Hooks, 2009, p.11). This necessity was highlighted by Femke (14) whose social networks were based on the many different activities she attended and quit over the years for varying reasons, but often because her friends there moved on or quit the activities as well. As a result, she mentioned multiple times within the interview that she often spends the time she previously reserved for those terminated activities being bored and alone again.

To conclude the sub question, **the children's daily activities are influenced by relocating and the amount of moving between houses, but not in a way that makes it impossible for them to continue the activities they did before.** Although the distance to the activities did change for many, the effort parents made to make sure the children could continue their activities, combined with the increased autonomy and self-efficacy that comes with a bicycle as primary mode of transport within the Dutch context, **activities could be continued and were predominantly terminated because of a loss of interest.** For new activities, however, it was mentioned that some activities were not a viable option for some because of how it was situated from either home, as was the case for Loes (14) and the parttime job in a local supermarket she desired. But this is something that is considered when looking for new activities, rather than an obstacle to do so.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

8.1 Conclusion research question

This research focused on the sense of belonging of children of divorce in shared residence and whether their sense of belonging was affected by moving between the two homes. This was done by analyzing the two household formations and the differences between them and by taking a closer look at the children's social networks and daily activities to obtain an all-encompassing overview on possible factors that influences what makes these children feel at home. This resulted in the following research question:

How does relocating from home to home of children of divorce with shared residence affect their sense of belonging and participation in daily life in the Netherlands?

Within the literature, Duyvendak (2011, p.112) states that the concept of a sense of belonging can be best explained with the feeling of being at home, whether this is in an actual physical location such as the parental home but also within society. Feeling at home can be stimulated by familiar brands, stores, architecture, and nature, but also by social contact with familiar people: *'Few people will dispute other people's right to feel at home with fellow citizens who share their interests, affinities, longings, histories, hobbies, etc.'* (Duyvendak, 2011, p. 83). The fact that this definition on a sense of belonging has many different factors that influence feeling at home can also be concluded when looking at the results of this research, a sense of belonging is closely related to one's identity, which is unique and expressed and affected differently per individual. However, there is conformity and common ground in what makes these children feel at home as well, which will be discussed below.

Younger kids (under sixteen) are more likely to prefer one of the homes in feeling at home. Autobiographical factors and having their belongings are perceived to be important. The importance of pets is also highlighted in feeling at home for multiple children. The younger kids make more use of the neighborhood as well, but this requires social ties and suitable locations in the neighborhood, whether these are friends or friends of friends and whether there are places like skateparks, soccer fields or schoolyards.

The older children within this research usually have no strong preference for either household or neighborhood and feeling at home is perceived to be a combination of autobiographical and relational factors, as well as 'having a say' in things that concern them like residential distribution and self-efficacy in the things they do during the week. When discussing neighborhood activities, the older children usually speak in the past tense, as many perceive spending time outside with friends is something they have outgrown, except for walking and talking in nature. What also stood out was that many of the girls within this research tend to feel more at home at their mother's, especially when they become older. The assumption made in the theoretical framework that age is a relevant factor in belonging and the wants and needs necessary for them to feel at home seems to be true when looking at these results.

Stepfamily, as expected, sometimes causes friction in the family dynamic and is on some occasions leading in preferring the other home, but not always as some like the new family formation better than the predivorce family formation

Just like belonging in the homes, autobiographical and relational factors of belonging are important for belonging in the neighborhood, just as cultural factors are important when groups of friends are concerned. The neighborhood where children grew up in, is usually preferred over the new neighborhoods. For younger kids what consists as being part of the neighborhood is based on the proximity and travel time, if it is cyclable within fifteen minutes, it is in the neighborhood. The factors that make children like a neighborhood are consistent with Visser's

(2019) findings that this has to do with belonging as well, mostly the autobiographical, relational, and cultural factors of belonging, in contrast with adults who base their neighborhood satisfaction on socio-economic status and safety. However, disliking a neighborhood had to do with feeling unsafe and unfamiliar in the neighborhood for some of the children, similar to adults.

Because a sense of belonging is based on the relatedness to others and connecting oneself to surrounding people, the literature states that social networks are key in belonging. This applies even more to children as their activities and social networks are more locally based and therefore experience higher levels of belonging in the local context compared to adults, especially on schooldays (Harris, 2009). This also became clear within this research as all children perceived meeting with friends as important and an integral part of their weekly lives which they actively made time for. The predominant origin of the children's friendships are the schools they attend or sometimes attended in the past, adding a sense of school belonging to the equation. Schools are the main source where friendships are formed, on multiple occasions within the interviews, children admitted that their first question to their parents after learning about the divorce was whether they stayed in the same school or not. Another important origin of the children's social networks is the daily activities they attend, and to a lesser extent other children in the neighborhood, but only if they are already friends of other friends.

The literature on forced relocation that stated that forced relocation can disrupt social networks and leads to a loss of friends (Visser, 2019; Bolt et al 2011) is less applicable to this research because the children's parents mostly still live close to one another, and more importantly, many of the children remained in the same home with one of their parents, making the move less disruptive for their social networks. Just as with their social networks, most children within this research did not perceive a loss of activities because of the divorce or by moving away. The activities the children terminated were predominantly quit because of a loss of interest and many children specifically stated that it had nothing to do with either the divorce or living in two different homes.

The most important observation within this research is the crucial role of self-efficacy for children to make them feel at home. The importance of being able to make their own schedules and plan their own activities is mentioned frequently, especially amongst the older children in this research. Within the literature, Visser (2019) already stated that this is important for a child's neighborhood satisfaction, but based on these results, it can be argued that it is vital for their sense of belonging at home, their social networks, and daily activities as well. Whether it is concerned with for instance the residential distribution between the two homes, to meet with friends or attending, starting, or terminating daily activities, it was often mentioned as one of the liberties they valued greatly, regardless of age, and sometimes also the reason they preferred one home or parent over the other.

Finally, it is important to note that even after the divorce happening eight to fifteen years ago, many of the children still live close to where they grew up and some shared that parents actively sought ways to make sure they could continue their activities because the divorce resulted in enough change already. The fact that most parents were able to relocate near the other parent after the divorce is heavily influenced by the level of education and wealth of the parents within the group of children in this research. Combined with the enhanced mobility of the bicycle in the Dutch context which raises the children's autonomy and self-efficacy, these results might differ from results elsewhere.

8.2 Discussion and reflection

This chapter focuses on the strong and weaker aspects within this research. Afterwards the role of the researcher will be discussed and finally, recommendations for further research will be suggested.

First, the results within this research are of great scientific value in closing the literary gap within the field of geography concerning children of divorce who live in shared residence. Although statistics of the CBS (2017) showed that over 600.000 children under the age of seventeen did not live with both parents in the same home in the Netherlands, and around 70.000 children go through divorce each year, surprisingly little was known about how this affects the child's daily life and their sense of belonging and feeling at home in two different homes, which currently affects about 27% of the group of children that have to deal with divorce in a shared residence living arrangement.

Furthermore, because of the literary gap, the way these children were interviewed was based on many assumptions about what was supposed to be important and of influence in a child's life. By focusing on the two different households and the sense of belonging within the homes, families and neighborhood, combined with an analysis on their social networks and daily activities, it is believed that a thorough representation of most aspects of the children's life could be mapped, reviewed and discussed to create a representative image of what is deemed to be important to feel at home for this particular group of children, which could be repeated on other groups of adolescents to see if similar findings will result from future research. As much of the literature on this matter is based on the perspective of parents or professionals, the focus on the perspective of the child is an interesting one to compare with what is already known. A shared residence arrangement is an increasingly popular choice after divorce in western societies and the benefits for the parents are obvious but how beneficial this form of living is for the children is still a subject of debate. Perhaps if more research will follow in a similar fashion, eventually more insight on the child's experiences with this form of living arrangement can provide answers on whether a shared residence is beneficial for children in general as well.

A final strong aspect within this research is the diversity within the group of respondents. Fifteen children of fifteen different families were interviewed, providing insight in the workings of a shared residence living arrangement in as many different families. The differing ages of the children that were interviewed, all between the age of twelve and nineteen, also proved to be interesting as some of the most significant results are based on the difference in age and maturity as well. Moreover, the children within this research proved to be good conversation partners who understood perfectly well what was asked of them and sometimes even provided additional information that was not directly linked to what was asked of them but proved to be valuable in the end. They are very capable in describing their home situation and their experiences with it and are aware of more that goes on in the two households than was initially expected, even the younger children within this research.

Still, the research also has its drawbacks, which amongst other things, are also related to the specific respondents interviewed within this research, the first being the fact that only three of the fifteen respondents are boys. As discussed in the methods concerning executing the interviews, respondents were approached through a database of 'Dynamics of Youth' and because of privacy concerns, factors like age and sex were not a given. About 40 potential respondents that met the parameters of this research were available and they were all approached which resulted in the current respondents. Although all children in the database that were contacted stated in previous research that they were willing to cooperate in future research, many declined, especially boys. Reasoning behind the decline can only go as far as

an educated guess, but it could be related to the fact that teenage boys are less willing to talk about their feelings concerning divorce and feeling at home, especially to a stranger they never met before.

Another drawback of the research that has to do with the nature of the respondents is the socioeconomic class and level of education most respondent's parents enjoyed. Visiting most of the homes for the interview and meeting some of the parents of the younger children made clear that most parents are well-off, which heavily influences the relocation of either parent right after the divorce. Many parents were able to maintain their post-divorce home and the partners usually were able to relocate nearby, making the shared residence arrangement less disruptive for, for instance, the child's social networks and daily activities. In that sense these results probably differ strongly from future research that focusses on children with parents of lower socioeconomic classes or who live more rural or in cities with more urban sprawl.

A final drawback within this research has to do with the consequences of the covid-19 pandemic that is currently still disrupting life and our society as we know it. Especially during the data collection this influenced the way interviews were conducted and possibly the data obtained in the interviews as well. The data collection started in between the first and second wave of a high amount of corona cases in the Netherlands, forcing people in quarantine, restricting travel, and moreover restricting the way the interviews were held. The first eleven interviews were held face-to-face at the children's homes to increase accessibility for the children, with one of the parents present if they were younger, to stimulate a situation where the child felt comfortable to talk freely about their living situation. However, the second peak in corona cases made it irresponsible to continue interviewing face-to-face, and therefore the latter four interviews were held online. Especially amongst the younger children, this resulted in less valuable data from the interviews as it proved more difficult to make them feel comfortable and willing to talk about their living situation. The answers that were given were briefer and it was harder to get through to them.

Before moving on to the recommendations for further research, a reflection on the role of the researcher is in order. One of the key characteristics of qualitative research is the interpretation of the results by the observer, which must be as objective as possible. As a 28-year-old male who has no experience in the divorce of his parents, the researcher knew it could be difficult to place oneself in the child's position, understanding the consequences of the divorce and having two homes instead of one. To better prepare for the interviews, a sister-in-law who studied pedagogy was approached to review if the questions were suitable for the children and to gain insights in the best way to make a child feel comfortable during the interview. This for instance resulted in the decision to make sure that a parent was present when interviewing younger kids. Furthermore, the topic list beforehand, and in the end the results, were reviewed by a fellow student who did go through divorce and a shared residence living arrangement when she was younger to make sure that the researcher thought of all the relevant aspects of a child's life in that particular situation. The incorporation of these opinions of people who have more experience in these matters than the researcher did prove to be successful in the sense that the researcher is pleased with how the interviews went and with the data that came out of it. Still, that does not mean that no mistakes were made. For instance, in the researcher's early years during primary school, he grew up in a rural town in the east of the Netherlands where a half hour commute by bicycle to the primary school was needed. This meant that the social network of the researcher was locally based and consisted predominantly of neighborhood kids instead of children he attended school with. Within this research this led to an overestimation of the importance of the neighborhood, at least for this group of children that were interviewed.

Finally, the results of this thesis provided different aspects that proved to be interesting for additional research. The parameters that were used, focusing on the two households, social networks, and daily activities of the children, contributed to interesting conversations with the respondents in which the researcher believes to have obtained a clear view on the daily lives of the children interviewed. It would be interesting to repeat the research in a similar matter, but with a few key changes to the characteristics of the respondents, for instance a better representation of both boys and girls. Another characteristic of these respondents was that the divorce of their parents happened a long time ago, for a majority between eight and fifteen years. It would be interesting to see if children have similar views if the divorce took place more recently, for instance a research that compares children who went through divorce more recently to children that experienced divorce in the past, like the children within this research. Furthermore, as age proved to be a relevant factor in feeling at home in differing ways within this research, a comparison between older and younger children might provide interesting insights as well. Concerning additional research within the parameters of this research, a final suggestion has to do with the distance between the two homes the children grow up in. As stated before, the children within this research all live near the other parent and often still live in the same home as before the divorce. It would be interesting to look for respondents with parents that live further away from one another to get a better grip on how disruptive this could work out for their social networks and daily activities for instance, as not every parent can afford the luxury of keeping their family home after divorce.

Additional research beyond the scope of this research can also be interesting to bridge the gap within the field of geography concerning divorce, for instance how parents fare with finding a new home, right after the divorce or beyond. This is not only concerned with the availability of the housing market, in cases where parents do move away over longer distances from their previous partner, other amenities such as schools, sport associations and other activities might also need to have an alternative compared to the previous living situation. Overall a better understanding of what makes the children feel at home and what is necessary for them to make this happen is beneficial for a wide array of professionals as well. As divorce becomes more common in contemporary western societies and shared residence and other forms like bird nesting become more prominent, it is key for judges, social workers, policymakers, municipalities, housing associations and schools amongst others to understand what is needed for parents and children of divorce to adapt to the 'new' normal situation afterwards.

Chapter 9: Bibliography

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Chapter 10: Appendix

10.1 Topic list interviews

Introductie: voorstellen, uitleggen doel onderzoek, tijd interview, onderwerpen, opname en transcript, anonimiteit, vertrouwelijk, verdere vragen?

Kenmerken respondent:

- Hoe oud ben je? Waar ben je opgegroeid? Woon je daar nu nog steeds?
- Opleiding middelbare school? Ben je op dezelfde school gebleven?
- Hoe lang is het geleden dat je ouders uit elkaar gingen?
- Hoe zien de gezinnen er uit bij je vader en moeder? Stieffamilie? Huisdieren?
- Wanneer woon je bij je vader en wanneer bij je moeder? Verdeling?
- Hoe ver wonen je ouders van elkaar af? Welk vervoersmiddel gebruik je meestal?
- Wat doe je in je vrije tijd? Sport, hobbies, overig?
- Woon je nog in het huis van voor de echtscheiding?
- Hebben je ouders nog gevraagd bij wie je wilde wonen?
- Wat was voor jou de grootste verandering toen je ouders uit elkaar gingen?

Deelvraag 1: To what extent do children feel more at home at either household and how do they perceive feeling at home?

- Kost het veel tijd om steeds tussen de woningen te wisselen? Pakken van spullen etc
- Woon je met (stief)broertjes en zusjes?
- Heb je je eigen slaapkamer in beide woningen of deel je die?
- In welk huis ben je het liefst? Voel je je daar ook het meest thuis?
- Wat is voor jou belangrijk om je ergens thuis te voelen? Gezin, vrienden, buurt, activiteiten
- Doe je vaak dingen buiten de deur, in de buurt bijvoorbeeld?
- Voel je je thuis in de buurten waar je ouders wonen? Meer/minder in de één, waarom?

Deelvraag 2: Which factors are important in maintaining their social networks?

- Spreek je wel eens af met vrienden/vriendinnen? Frequentie?
- Waar ken je je vrienden van? School, sport, buurt etc?
- Wonen ze bij je in de buurt?
- Wat doe je graag met vrienden wanneer je met ze afspreekt?
- Nodig je ze ook bij jou thuis uit? Voorkeur voor een bepaald huis of liever bij vrienden?
- Heb je nog nieuwe vrienden gemaakt sinds de verhuizing(en)?
- Hoe heb je ze ontmoet?
- Zijn er nog vrienden/vriendinnen die je uit het oog bent verloren door echtscheiding, verhuizingen?

Deelvraag 3: To what extent are their daily activities influenced by the amount of moving between houses?

- Wat voor activiteiten doe je naast school nog meer in een week? Buiten de deur?
- Ben je nu langer onderweg naar school/sport/hobbies/vrienden sinds de verhuizing(en)?
- Zijn er nog sporten/hobbies/activiteiten waar je mee moest stoppen door de verhuizing(en)?
- Zijn er nieuwe activiteiten bijgekomen sindsdien?
- Verschillen de activiteiten die je doet als je bij je vader of moeder bent?
- Ga je zelf naar je activiteiten of ben je afhankelijk van je ouders om gebracht/gehaald te worden?

Afsluiting

- Zijn er nog dingen die niet besproken zijn maar waarvan je denkt, dat is interessant voor dit onderzoek?
- Bedanken, uitleg wat er met de resultaten gebeurt.

10.2 Code tree

1. To what extent do children feel more at home in either one of their households and how do they perceive feeling at home? **Color code: yellow**
 - A. Time needed to pack and move between homes
 - B. New family members
 - C. Private or shared bedroom
 - D. Preference on one of the households and feeling at home
 - E. Perception of what makes them feel at home
 - F. Role of friends, family, neighborhood in feeling at home
 - G. Activities in the neighborhood
 - H. Preference on neighborhoods of households

2. Which factors are important in maintaining their social networks? **Color code: red**
 - A. Meeting with friends and frequency
 - B. Origin of friendship
 - C. Proximity of friends
 - D. Activities and locations of meetings (preference houses or solely at friends)
 - E. Influence of divorce and moving between neighborhoods or cities on social networks

3. To what extent are their daily activities influenced by the amount of moving between homes (or by remaining in the same home) **Color code: green**
 - A. Weekly activities (outside the house)
 - B. (Change in) Distance to activities
 - C. Terminated activities
 - D. New activities
 - E. Difference in activities between the two homes
 - F. Dependence on transport by parents

All relevant answers in the interviews get one or multiple code combinations of a number with a letter and are further categorized to compare with the other codes in the interviews.