

This thesis examines the responsibilities and roles of fathers who practise a shared care arrangement in order to get a better understanding of how traditionally perceived women's and men's tasks are divided between the father and the mother after separation. Special emphasis is given to gender equality in responsibilities and roles traditionally ascribed to women and men, to decide in which aspects, fathers who practice shared care can be seen as 'new fathers'. Previous research projects on fatherhood have indicated that in two-parent families it is typically the mother who takes the major responsibility for private sphere duties such as nurturing or domestic labour, while the father's role lies in providing and financial support (Cohen 1993) (Ranson 2001) (Segal 1990). For this reason the actual existence of the 'new father' in society has been doubted. In-depth interviews conducted in New Zealand with fathers who were in a shared care situation showed that their responsibilities and roles changed after separation and became equalized between both parents. New circumstances, a gender equal attitude and a wish to be a part of the children's lives made the fathers become responsible for nurturing aspects of parenting and day-to-day care. This thesis suggests that study of 'non-traditional' family arrangements where 'conditions' have changed challenge the current scepticism of the 'new father' and brings new perspectives to the discussion about changes in gender division of roles and responsibilities within the family.