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Close but far away: Intergenerational relationships between retirement migrants and adult children

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Abstract

Objective: This paper examines variations in how international retirement migrants maintain intergenerational relationships with adult children residing in the country of origin.

Background: Despite a greater need for support from family members in the later life course, many retirement migrants move away from their adult children. Prior studies have described retirement migrants' family ties, but often using non-representative samples and without examining factors that could explain variations.

Method: We collected data on a stratified representative random sample of Dutch nationals aged 66-90 who migrated after age fifty to one of 40 different destination countries (N = 2,849). Ordered logistic regression models are performed on three dimensions of retirement migrants' relationship with adult children.

Results: Retirement migrants are emotionally close to their adult children despite little face-to-face contact and not particularly frequent digital contact. Female and married retirement migrants have more contact and closeness with adult children than males and divorced or widowed people. Fewer opportunities for contact, such as a greater geographical distance and a lower socioeconomic status, mainly predict lower contact frequencies but not variation in emotional closeness. Evidence for the need for contact is mixed and the role of cultural norms is limited.

Conclusion: The maintenance of family ties over longer distances challenges the view that frequency of contact is a prerequisite for emotional closeness and shows how parents adapt to a new family context.

Key words: intergenerational solidarity, international retirement migration, parent-child relationships, ageing families, transnationalism, lifestyle migration

1. Introduction

The geographic proximity between parents and adult children is a measure of past and current intergenerational relationships but also a conditioning factor for future relationship opportunities. A greater geographical distance between family members affects some key aspects of intergenerational family solidarity, such as the frequency and type of contact between family members of different generations (Bengtson & Roberts, 1991). The exchange of instrumental support has been shown to bind families in geographical locations (Hünteler & Mulder, 2020). However, advances in internet technologies and mobility have facilitated and encouraged the maintenance of family ties over longer distances and across international borders (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007; Schiller et al., 1992). In other words, geographical proximity may no longer be as important to maintain close family relationships as before (Baldassar et al., 2016).

Since the 1970s, a growing number of older adults from high-income countries migrate to a new country after retirement (Warnes, 2009). Examples include British retirees residing in Spain, north American older adults retiring in Mexico, or retired Japanese migrating to Malaysia (Savaş, Spaan, et al., 2023). Retirement migrants benefit from increases in life expectancy and attainment of wealth during their life time, and migrate to foreign countries to improve life conditions (Benson & O'Reilly, 2009; King et al., 2000; O'Reilly, 2000). Simultaneously, however, retirement migrants face the challenge of ageing in a foreign country, often without speaking the language, while being away from their support network in the country of origin (Repetti & Calasanti, 2023). Parents and children who live in different countries have fewer possibilities for interaction, even though close kin relationships, like the parent-child relationship, gain relative importance in later life (English & Carstensen, 2014; Neyer & Lang, 2003). In this article, we examine intergenerational relationships in the context of international retirement migration. More specifically, we answer the research questions: How much face-to-face contact, digital contact, and emotional closeness do retirement migrants have with adult children in the country of origin, and what explains variation between retirement migrants in parent-adult child relationships?

Many studies have examined intergenerational relationships (Bengtson & Roberts, 1991; Silverstein et al., 2002; Szydlik, 2008), including the role of geographical distance (Hank, 2007; Shelton & Grundy, 2000). However, studies on intergenerational relationships of retirement migrants are scarce. The few quantitative studies that investigated retirement migrants' relationships with children mainly reported descriptive statistics on contact patterns rather than providing an in-depth analyses using explanatory models (Lardiés-Bosque et al., 2016; Rojas et al., 2014; Williams et al., 2000). As a result, little is known about the variation in retirement migrants' intergenerational relationships and what explains these differences (Casado-Díaz, 2006). Qualitative studies draw attention to retirement migrants' transnational ties as well, but primarily to understand their social integration or coping with aging (Ahmed & Hall, 2016; Casado-Diaz, 2009; Repetti & Calasanti, 2020). In both qualitative and quantitative studies, the use of convenience samples in combination with the focus on single countries, such as Spain and Mexico, make it difficult to generalize their findings.

To address these limitations, we collected data from a large representative sample of Dutch nationals aged 66-90 residing 40 different destination countries who were born in the Netherlands and migrated after age fifty (Henkens et al., 2022). Our contribution is threefold. First, our study includes people from less well-known destinations or more difficult-to-reach retirement migrants, which helps to assess whether previous findings are representative for the wider retirement migrant population. Second, we investigate multiple dimensions of intergenerational relationships. By differentiating face-to-face contact, digital contact and emotional closeness, we aim to capture nuances and ambiguities in parent-child relationships that remain invisible when looking at a single indicator. Distinguishing between different dimensions of the family relationship is becoming increasingly important because normative obligations to provide family support are becoming more ambiguous and lose significance in favour of feelings of affection (Kalmijn, 2014). Third, we consider a rich set of structural and contextual factors to develop hypotheses on how contact opportunities, contact needs, family structures, and cultural norms explain differences in parent–child relationships of retirement migrants. Doing so provides a first opportunity to test explanations about variations in relationship outcomes. This case study's detailed examination of late-life parent-child relationships contributes to our general understanding of the opportunities and constraints in maintaining intergenerational ties across greater geographical distances.

In the Netherlands, it is estimated that there are about 24,000 retirement migrants: older adults who were born in the Netherlands and migrated internationally after having lived the majority of their working lives in the Netherlands (Henkens et al., 2022). There is substantial diversity within the retirement migrant group.

There is diversity in retirement migrants' destination countries, their motives for emigration, varying from a warmer climate, cultural reasons and a lower cost of living, and in terms of their individual backgrounds (Savaş et al., 2023; Spaan et al., 2023). Dutch older adults were most likely to migrate when they were between the ages of 65 and 70, had no chronic health conditions, and were in higher professional occupations before retirement (Savaş et al., 2023). Retirement migrants were also more often partnered and without children or grandchildren than those who did not migrate. However, most retirement migrants had children residing in the country of origin (Savaş et al., 2023). It is possible that older adults who migrated were less emotionally close with their children before migration than people of similar ages who did not migrate in retirement (Gustafson, 2008). We make some comparisons with Dutch retirees who did not migrate, and consider parents' preference for face-to-face contact. However, lacking a longitudinal design, it is obviously not possible to estimate migration effects. While it is important to keep in mind the possible selectivity of retirement migrants, our study does not and did not aim to address the causal effect of migration and instead focuses on heterogeneity in the migrant population.

2. Background and hypotheses

The parent-child tie is one of the most significant relationships in a person's life, particularly in relation to the exchange of care and support (Szydlik, 2016). Older parents receive support from adult children, but also provide support, for example, financially or by providing grandparental care. The intergenerational solidarity literature distinguishes different dimensions of intergenerational relationships. Whereas frequencies of contact reflect the dimension of associational solidarity, emotional closeness is a form of affectional solidarity (Bengtson & Roberts, 1991). For retirement migrants, contact takes place digitally, or face-to-face, by making visits to and receiving visits from adult children. Although contact is distinct from support, contact is an important prerequisite for the exchange of support. Drawing upon theories and findings in the intergenerational solidarity literature, four sets of variables are deemed important to explain differences in how people maintain the parent-child tie: the opportunities for contact, the needs for contact, family structure, and cultural norms (Silverstein & Bengtson, 1997; Szydlik, 2016). These notions are known to be important for understanding intergenerational ties between parents and children who reside in the same country; we examine how they play a role when older adults and their adult children reside in different countries.

2.1 Opportunities for contact

The opportunity structure of intergenerational solidarity affects the frequency and type of contact between non-residential family members (Szydlik, 2016). European retirement migration is often associated with popular destinations, such as France and Spain, but constitutes a more global phenomenon and distances vary considerably between migrants in different destinations (Spaan et al., 2023). In the intergenerational solidarity literature, it is well established that when the geographical distance between family members is greater, there is less exchange of instrumental support and less face-to-face contact (Hank, 2007; Mulder & van der Meer, 2009). In the Netherlands, about half of parents see their children at least once a week (Kalmijn, 2019a), but because of the costs, time, and efforts of international travel, such frequent contact is unlikely for retirement migrants and their children. However, digital communication technologies have enhanced the possibility of maintaining ties transnationally (Peng et al., 2018; Schiller et al., 1992). Indeed, retirement migrants have been found to receive and provide emotional support through telephone and internet contact (Baldassar, 2007; Hall & Hardill, 2016; Rojas et al., 2014). We expect that retirement migrants who live at a greater geographical distance are less likely to make visits to and receive visits from adult children, but have more digital contact compared to migrants who live more nearby (hypothesis 1a).

Opportunities for contact are also affected by people's socioeconomic status. The exchange of support between parents and children is associated with parents' socioeconomic status, as it relates to people's financial and cognitive resources (Kalmijn, 2023b). Parents with a higher socioeconomic status have been shown to provide more informational and financial support, but the socioeconomic gradient for face-to-face contact is less clear (Bucx et al., 2012; Kalmijn, 2023b; Tomassini et al., 2004). However, in the case of retirement migration, having a higher income is salient for face-to-face contact, because costs and efforts to travel internationally are more substantial than the costs of travel within a country. People's cognitive abilities

may affect the opportunities for maintaining digital contact (Peng et al., 2018). These studies suggest that people with a higher socioeconomic status have more opportunities to physically or digitally bridge the geographical distance to their children. Therefore, we expect that retirement migrants with a higher socioeconomic status are more likely to make visits to, receive visits from, and have digital contact with adult children compared to migrants with a lower socioeconomic status (hypothesis 1b).

2.2 Needs for contact

The interaction pattern between family members responds to the needs of family members involved (Glaser & Tomassini, 2000; Szydlik, 2016). Although most retirement migrants migrated when they were relatively young and in good health, retirement migrants who stay will eventually experience age-related changes, such as health decline and frailty (Baltes & Smith, 2003; Laslett, 1996). There is evidence of a flow reversal of support when parents age. Around age 75, parents transition from being net providers of support to children to being net receivers (Kalmijn, 2019b). It has been shown that older parents' frailty challenges their mobility and support provision (Fokkema et al., 2008; Kalmijn, 2023b), and that adult children provide more support in response to parents' ageing and health problems (Gans & Silverstein, 2006; Grundy, 2005). Moreover, the perceived scarcity of time could result in greater efforts from children to keep in touch. Research has shown that particularly when retirement migrants need access to healthcare services only available in the local language, retirement migrants' need for support from children increased (Hall & Hardill, 2016; Kohno et al., 2016). We expect that retirement migrants with health problems (hypothesis 2a) and older retirement migrants (hypothesis 2b) are less likely to make visits to adult children but are more likely to receive visits from and have digital contact with children compared to retirement migrants with fewer health problems and younger retirement migrants.

The reliance on family members for support may be greater when there are fewer alternative sources of support on which people can rely, such as neighbours or acquaintances. Adult children often share the provision of informal care with neighbours and non-kin others in the social network of older adults (Broese van Groenou & De Boer, 2016). When retirement migrants are more socially integrated, for example through having more interactions with locals or fellow-migrants, they have better access to potential resources, such as valuable information or advice (Ryan, 2011). Prior studies have shown that community ties often become part of retirement migrants' support system (Casado-Diaz, 2009). Less socially integrated retirement migrants have fewer alternative sources of support, so their reliance on children may be greater. In addition, parents who are less socially integrated could have more resources, time and a greater desire to visit their children. We expect that retirement migrants with less social integration are more likely to make visits to, receive visits from, and have digital contact with adult children compared to retirement migrants with more social integration (hypothesis 2c).

2.3 Family structure

The parent-child relationship exists within a broader network of family relations and structures (Szydlik, 2016). Many studies have shown that mothers have more contact and closeness with children than fathers and that mothers facilitate intergenerational ties by performing kinkeeping behaviours (Fingerman et al., 2020; Hornstra & Ivanova, 2023; Rosenthal, 1985). As maintaining family ties requires more time and effort at a greater geographical distance, retirement migration could strengthen these gender differences. Indeed, studies have shown that female retirement migrants more often returned to the country of origin than their male partners (Repetti & Calasanti, 2020). We expect that female retirement migrants are more likely to make visits to, receive visits from, have digital contact, and emotional closeness with adult children compared to male retirement migrants (hypothesis 3a).

It is well established that intergenerational relationships tend to be weaker after divorce (Kalmijn et al., 2019). Married fathers benefit from their female partner's kinkeeping efforts, but divorced fathers do not have this advantage (Grundy, 2005; Kalmijn, 2007). In addition, adult children's normative obligations to provide support to divorced parents have been found to be weaker than to continuously married parents (Van Houdt et al., 2018). Most retirement migrants have a partner, but many experienced divorce before the start of their current relationship (Casado-Diaz, 2009). Considering the age of retirement migrants, it is likely that some experienced widowhood (Hall & Hardill, 2016). Although widowed women have been shown to receive more

support, widowed men often have weaker ties (Kalmijn, 2007; Tomassini et al., 2004). We expect that married and widowed retirement migrants are more likely than separated retirement migrants to receive visits from, make visits to, have digital contact, and emotional closeness with adult children (hypothesis 3b).

The family structure also relates to the characteristics of the adult child, such as their gender and marital status. The patterns of support provision in terms of gender and marital status of children are similar to those of parents. Daughters have been found to provide and receive more advice and practical support to and from parents than sons (Bucx et al., 2012; Fingerman et al., 2020). Therefore, we expect that retirement migrants with daughters are more likely to make visits to, receive visits from, and have digital contact and emotional closeness compared to retirement migrants with sons (hypothesis 3c). In addition, partnered children have been shown to provide and receive less support from parents than single children of the same age (Bucx et al., 2012; Min et al., 2022). This suggests that married children are less reliant on their parents (Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2008). We expect that retirement migrants with single adult children are more likely to make visits to, receive visits from, and have digital contact and emotional closeness compared to retirement migrants with partnered adult children (hypothesis 3d).

Family members outside the parent-child dyad play a role, too. The presence of grandchildren has been shown to strengthen the bond between parents and adult children (Bucx et al., 2012). Providing grandparental care is an important part of family life after retirement (Grunwald et al., 2021). Retirement migrants often continue to enact their grandparental role by visiting or receiving their grandchildren or through digital contact (Repetti & Calasanti, 2020). We expect that retirement migrants with grandchildren are more likely to make visits to, have digital contact, and emotional closeness with adult children compared to retirement migrants without grandchildren (hypothesis 3e). Other children in the family – the adult child's siblings – are alternative support providers and receivers (Tolkacheva et al., 2010; Ward et al., 2009). Prior studies have shown that parents who have more children have less contact with individual children, which suggests that multiple children place competing demands on parents time allocation (Deane et al., 2016; Szydlik, 2016). However, when retirement migrants have multiple children who reside in the Netherlands, they have more reasons to visit the Netherlands. During their stay, visits to multiple children can be combined (Baldassar, 2007). Therefore, we expect that retirement migrants with more children are more likely to make visits to adult children compared to retirement migrants with fewer children (hypothesis 3f).

2.4 Cultural norms

Cultural norms and values shape intergenerational support behaviours. Traditional family norms such as 'children should love and respect their parents' are embedded in religious ideologies (Gans et al., 2009). Parents with a religious background were found to feel more strongly that children should support their older parents (Fokkema et al., 2008). Although religiosity is a personal matter, through socialisation, parents transfer their values and beliefs to children (Copen & Silverstein, 2008; Diederich et al., 2023). We therefore expect that more religious retirement migrants receive more visits from, make more visits to, and have more digital contact with adult children compared to non-religious retirement migrants (hypothesis 4a).

However, some individuals in the current generation of older adults have undergone a change in value systems, moving from traditional beliefs to more postmodern attitudes. These postmodern values are characterised by a greater focus on autonomy and self-development instead of economic and physical security (Gilleard & Higgs, 2007; Strenze, 2021). Baby boomers' values have been shown to shape decisions on support to family members, for example, based on how personally rewarding baby boomers considered providing care to be (Fingerman et al., 2012). We expect that retirement migrants with more postmaterialist values are less likely to make visits to, receive visits from, and have digital contact with adult children compared to retirement migrants with less postmaterialist values (hypothesis 4b). An overview of our hypotheses can be found in Table 1.

Table 1: Hypotheses explaining variation in Dutch retirement migrants' intergenerational relationships with adult children in the Netherlands

	Variables	Visit to children	Visit from children	Digital contact	Emotional closeness
	Opportunities				
Hypothesis 1a	Geographical distance	-	-	+	
Hypothesis 1b	Socioeconomic status	+	+	+	
	Needs				
Hypothesis 2a	Chronic health conditions (ref. = none)	-	+	+	
	One CHC	-	+	+	
	More than one CHC				
Hypothesis 2b	Age 80+	-	+	+	
Hypothesis 2c	Less social integration	+	+	+	
	Family structure				
Hypothesis 3a	Gender (ref. = male)	+	+	+	+
Hypothesis 3b	Marital status (ref. = married)				
	Separated	-	-	-	-
	Widowed				
	Dissolved	-	-	-	-
Hypothesis 3c	Child's gender (ref. = male)	+	+	+	+
Hypothesis 3d	Child's marital status (ref. = married)	+	+	+	+
Hypothesis 3e	Grandchildren (ref. = none)				
	Below age 18	+	+	+	+
	Age 18+	+	+	+	+
Hypothesis 3f	Number of children	+			
	Cultural norms				
Hypothesis 4a	Religiosity	+	+	+	
Hypothesis 4b	Postmaterialism (ref. = materialist)				
	Mixed				
	Postmaterialist	-	-	-	

3. Data and methods

3.1 Data and sample selection

We collected data on a stratified representative random sample of Dutch retirement migrants (Henkens et al., 2022). The sample was drawn by the Dutch Social Insurance Bank (SVB), which distributes public pension to all entitled persons in the Netherlands and abroad. The survey targeted individuals who were between 66 and 90 years old, born in the Netherlands, and who migrated to one of the 40 most popular destinations for retirement migration (covering 98% of the population). They had lived in the Netherlands for at least 35 years between the ages of 15 and 65. In total, 6,110 respondents in 40 destinations completed the combined self-administered paper-and-pencil and online survey, accumulating to a response rate of 45.1 per cent. This response rate is considered high for a self-administered survey, as responses have declined since the 1990s (Beullens et al., 2018; Massey & Tourangeau, 2013). A detailed nonresponse analysis in the codebook of the data showed that the degree of selectivity was modest (Henkens et al., 2022).

For this analysis, first, we excluded respondents below age 66 or over 91 (n = 15) or who lived in the Netherlands, Belgium, or Germany (n =13), as they did not fit the target population. Second, we excluded people who migrated before age 50 to restrict the sample to people who already retired or were planning for retirement (n = 523). Third, we dropped respondents who did not have children (n = 1349), a child below age 18 (n = 127), or when the child lived in another country than the Netherlands (n = 835), because the study focused on the long-distance relationship between parents and independent adult children. Respondents with

missing values on all four outcome variables were excluded (n = 219). In total, our sample consisted of 2,849 retirement migrants.

In addition, a comparative nationally representative sample of older adults between ages 66 and 90 who lived in the Netherlands were approached (Henkens et al., 2022). This survey was carried out via the LISS panel (Longitudinal Internet Studies for the Social Sciences) administered by CentERdata (Tilburg University, The Netherlands). From the 1,364 respondents (response rate of 89%), we focused on the respondents with children in the Netherlands (N = 1,051; mean age 74, 51% female).

3.2 Measures

We examined three types of intergenerational relationships between retirement migrants and one focus child: face-to-face contact, digital contact and emotional closeness. Questions were asked for the child who had the first upcoming birthday. Throughout the article, we examine the relationship with this particular child (mean age = 45, min = 18, max = 74). Data was collected in the autumn of 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic. As we were interested in the general interaction patterns of retirement migrants with their children, questions on face-to-face contact and digital contact focused on the 12 months before the pandemic, approximately between March 2019 and March 2020. Emotional closeness concerned current closeness because feelings are more difficult to recollect than countable occurrences and general patterns (Tourangeau et al., 2000).

For face-to-face contact, respondents were asked how often they made visits to and received visits from adult children in the 12 months before the COVID-19 pandemic. The answer options for both questions were: (1) “no”, (2) “yes, once”, (3) “yes, 2-3 times”, and (4) “more often”. Digital contact was measured by the frequency of telephone or internet contact in the 12 months before the COVID-19 pandemic, from (1) “never”, (2) “less than once a month”, (3) “once or more times a month”, to (4) “once or more times a week”. For emotional closeness, respondents were asked how close they currently were with their child on a 5-point scale from 1 (*very close*) to 4 (*not close at all*), which we coded in reverse.

The opportunities for contact were measured by respondents’ geographical distance to the Netherlands and socioeconomic status (education and income). The geographical distance was estimated based on the distance in kilometres from the centroid of the Netherlands to the centroid of the country of destination. We included respondents’ highest attained level of education coded in the international standard level of education (ISLED) scale (Schröder & Ganzeboom, 2014). Respondents’ income was measured as the net monthly household income with eight categories recoded to midpoints. We equivalized income by taking the square root of two when respondents had a partner (Atkinson et al., 1995).

The needs for contact were measured by respondents’ chronic health conditions, age, and social integration. Chronic health conditions (CHC) were based on whether a respondent had any longstanding diseases and how restrictive they were perceived to be in their daily activities: (1) no chronic health conditions or not restrictive, (2) moderately restrictive CHC, or (3) severely restrictive CHC (Bajekal et al., 2004, see Appendix). We coded respondents' ages as (1) below age 70, (2) age 70 to 80, or (3) age 80 or older. We included age categorically because of the uneven distribution of people, especially in older ages. The level of social integration was included as a scale of how often respondents interacted with locals and fellow migrants in the twelve months before the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically (a) had contact in the neighbourhood, (b) went to a restaurant or café/bar, or (c) made or received visits ($\alpha = 0.63$). Each item was asked for locals and fellow migrants separately and had answer categories (1) “never”, (2) “less than once a month”, (3) “once or more times a month”, (4) “once or more times a week”, and (5) “almost daily”.

For family structure, we included respondents’ gender and marital status, child’s gender and marital status, presence of grandchildren, and number of children. Respondents’ marital status was constructed from a set of variables, as respondents were not asked directly about the relationship with the other parent of the child. We coded respondents’ marital status into four categories: (1) married, when the adult child was born during the respondent’s current union; (2) widowed, when the respondent was widowed from the other parent after age 50 and currently single; (3) separated, when the respondent separated from the other parent after age 50 and was currently single; and (4) dissolved, when the adult child was from an earlier union that ended before the respondent was 50 years old. For the dissolved category, we did not have information on whether the union was dissolved via separation or widowhood. Given that these relationships ended before age 50, separation is expected to be more common than widowhood. The adult child’s marital status was dummy-coded to partnered when the child was in a cohabiting relationship. We included three categories for

the presence and age of grandchildren: (1) none, (2) age 0-17, and (3) age 18+. We included the respondents' number of children and coded more than five children to five.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of independent variables for retirement migrants' intergenerational relationships with adult children in the Netherlands

Variable	N	Mean/%	Std. Dev.	Range
Opportunities				
Geographical distance (km)	2849	3126.3	3680.7	279.5 - 18573.5
Geographical distance (log)	2849	7.5	1.0	5.6 - 9.8
Household income (net, equivalized)	2460	2341.8	1366.4	615.2 - 8610
Level of education (ISLED)	2828	60.7	20.8	23 - 87.1
Needs				
Chronic health conditions (CHC)				
None or not restrictive CHC	1704	60.1%		
Moderately restrictive CHC	940	33.2%		
Severely restrictive CHC	191	6.7%		
Age category				
Below age 70	546	19.2%		
Age 70-80	1969	69.2%		
Age 80+	334	11.7%		
Less socially integrated	2840	3.5	0.6	1 - 5
Family factors				
Gender				
Male	2060	72.5%		
Female	781	27.5%		
Marital status				
Married	1019	36.0%		
Widowed	240	8.5%		
Separated	608	21.5%		
Dissolved	965	34.1%		
Child's gender				
Son	1473	52.1%		
Daughter	1353	47.9%		
Child's marital status				
Single	758	27.3%		
Partnered	2022	72.7%		
Grandchildren				
None	904	32.2%		
Age 0-17	1221	43.5%		
Age 18+	684	24.4%		
Number of children	2849	2.3	0.9	1 - 5
Cultural norms				
Religiosity	2674	1.4	0.9	1 - 4
Postmaterialism				
Materialist	334	13.7%		
Mixed	1416	58.0%		
Postmaterialist	691	28.3%		
Control variables				
Duration of residence	2809	11.5	7.1	0 - 39
Popular tourist destination				
France, Spain, Italy, Greece, United Kingdom, Portugal, Austria or Croatia	1514	53.1%		
Other destination	1335	46.9%		
Housing quality	2799	5.3	2.4	1 - 10
Prior family ties in destination				
Had no prior family ties	2649	93.5%		
Had prior family ties	184	6.5%		

Source: DRM 2021, own calculations; percentage totals can exceed 100% due to rounding

Cultural norms were measured by parent's religiosity and postmaterialist values. For religiosity, we asked whether respondents attended religious services between the ages of 50 and 65 while residing in the Netherlands. Answer options were (1) "never", (2) "occasionally", (3) "sometimes", or (4) "often". To assess postmaterialism, we utilised a measurement created by Inglehart and Abramson (1999), in which respondents were given four statements and asked to rank them in order of importance (see Appendix). We categorised respondents into three groups depending on their choices for the most and second most important statements: (1) materialist when they prioritised two material statements; (2) mixed if they selected a combination of one material and one postmaterialist statement; and (3) postmaterialist when they prioritised two postmaterialist statements (Halman, 2009).

3.3 Control variables

We controlled for some factors related to the migration context, namely duration of residence, the attractiveness of the destination, and prior family ties in the destination. When people had a longer duration of residence, there were fewer opportunities to invest in the parent-adult child relationship, which may translate into weaker ties (Silverstein et al., 2002). Duration of residence was calculated by substracting the year of emigration from the year of the survey. For adult children, the costs of providing support could be balanced by the attractiveness of visiting the destination country. We included a dummy variable for whether the country of destination was in the Netherlands' top 10 most popular summer holiday destinations (Statistics Netherlands, 2023). We also summed the respondent's residence characteristics to determine housing quality, such as whether it had three or more bedrooms or a shared or private pool (see Appendix). Some retirement migrants moved to a country where other family members resided before they arrived, which could make it more appealing for children to visit as well (Zentveld, 2023). We dummy-coded prior family ties in the destination when the respondent's parents or children were residing in the country of destination before the respondent migrated. Descriptive statistics for independent variables can be found in Table 2.

3.4 Analysis plan

To explain differences in face-to-face contact, digital contact, and emotional closeness, we employed ordered logistic regression models. Ordered logistic regression models are suitable for ordered outcome variables where the difference between answer categories is inconsistent. For example, the distance between not close and fairly close may be larger than the distance between close and very close. For the regression analyses, all continuous variables were standardised at the mean. As the outcome variables have the same number of categories and all models have the same explaining variables, we occasionally compare effect sizes across models.

Missing values were low for independent variables (less than 2%), but slightly higher for religiosity (6%), income (14%) and postmaterialism (14%). Missing values were imputed using the Multiple Imputation of Chained Equations (MICE) technique (White et al., 2011). Our percentage missing values are well below a suggested maximum of between 30 to 50 per cent missing values for multiple imputation, under the assumption that values are missing at random (White et al., 2011). For income, multiple imputation has been shown to reduce bias (Schenker et al., 2006). We ran 25 imputations and applied Rubin's rule to pool the results from each model into a single set of estimates and standard errors (Rubin, 1987).

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive findings

Table 3 shows a frequency table of face-to-face contact, digital contact, emotional closeness and wish for contact with adult children for retirement migrants and retirees in the Netherlands (non-migrants). For retirement migrants, making multiple visits to their child in the country of origin was common: 33 per cent made two or three visits to their child, and another 30 per cent made more than three visits. However, a

sizeable minority did not visit their child (17%). Retirement migrants also received visits from children, but on average, not as often as they made visits: 26 per cent received two or three visits from their child and 14 per cent more than three, but 31 per cent were not visited by their children. In comparison, 37% of the non-migrating retirees had face-to-face contact once or more times a week. Although these contact frequencies are not directly comparable because of different scales, it is clear that face-to-face contact frequencies are considerably lower for retirement migrants than for retirees in the Netherlands.

Table 3: Parent-adult child relations of Dutch retirement migrants and Dutch retirees in the Netherlands

	Retirement migrants	Non-migrants	F-test[a]
Visits to child			
None	16.9%		
Once a year	20.4%		
Two or three times a year	32.5%		
More than three times a year	30.2%		
Total	2807		
Visits from child			
None	30.7%		
Once a year	29.3%		
Two or three times a year	25.6%		
More than three times a year	14.4%		
Total	2817		
Face-to-face contact			
None		3.6%	
Less than once a month		17.9%	
One to three times a month		42.1%	
Once or more times a week		36.5%	
Total		1051	
Phone or internet contact with child			6.6**
None	10.2%	7.2%	
Less than once a month	12.1%	9.2%	
One to three times a month	36.8%	36.1%	
Once or more times a week	40.9%	47.5%	
Total	2824	1051	
Closeness with child			22.3**
Not close	13.8%	5.9%	
Fairly close	20.2%	15.7%	
Close	36.2%	40.0%	
Very close	29.8%	38.4%	
Total	2825	1051	
I would like to see children more often			85.5**
Strongly disagree	2.8%	4.8%	
Disagree	5.4%	18.2%	
Neither agree nor disagree	25.9%	41.7%	
Agree	47.7%	30.3%	
Strongly agree	18.2%	5.1%	
Total	2810	1051	

Source: DRM 2021, own calculations; percentage totals can exceed 100% due to rounding.

[a]Pearson $\chi 2$ statistic weighted for gender with the second-order correction of Rao and Scott (1984); ~ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

The restricted opportunities for face-to-face contact highlight the potential importance of digital contact. Most retirement migrants had frequent digital contact: 37 per cent one to three times a month and 41 per cent once or more times a week. However, even though digital contact is arguably a more important tool for family interaction for retirement migrants, retirees in the Netherlands had more frequent digital contact than retirement migrants (48 per cent once or more times a week).

Despite residing in different countries and its implications for face-to-face contact, many retirement migrants were close or very close with their adult children (67%). However, their non-migrating counterparts were more often close or very close (78%). In addition, 14% of the retirement migrants were not close to their children, which was very uncommon among retirees in the Netherlands (6%). These findings indicate that retirement migrants are less close to their children on average than non-migrants.

Interestingly, the differences between retirement migrants and non-migrants were smaller in terms of emotional closeness than face-to-face contact, suggesting there might be a deficit in terms of face-to-face contact. To investigate whether there is a discrepancy between the reported and preferred frequency of contact, we examined to what extent retirement migrants agreed with the statement "I would like to see my children more often". A majority of retirement migrants (66%) agreed or strongly agreed. In comparison, 35% of older adults in the Netherlands wished to see their children more often. This finding illustrates that retirement migrants' contact frequencies with children do not always reflect the preferred contact frequency. Although some retirement migrants may have had weaker relationships with their adult child before migration, the wish for more contact suggests that less contact can be perceived as a negative aspect of the migration decision.

4.2 Opportunities for contact

To explain differences in retirement migrants' intergenerational relationships, we estimated ordered logistic regression models (Table 4). We expected that retirement migrants who lived at a greater geographical distance would have less face-to-face contact with their child but more digital contact (hypothesis 1a), for which we found partial support. People with a one-unit increase in geographical distance had 0.29 and 0.31 lower odds of making more frequent visits to and receiving from their children, respectively. Thus, retirement migrants and children who live further apart, visit each other less frequently. However, we found an opposite association between living further away and frequency of digital contact. In other words, retirement migrants who live further away have less digital contact instead of more digital contact with their adult children. Geographical distance did not significantly affect how emotionally close retirement migrants were with their children. Our results suggest that despite having lower contact frequencies at greater distances, living further away does not challenge the emotional bond between parents and children.

A higher socioeconomic status was expected to positively affect the frequency of face-to-face and digital contact, for which we found partial support (hypothesis 1b). People with a higher income level were more likely to make visits to, receive visits from, and have digital contact with adult children. A higher income was also associated with more emotional closeness with adult children. More education was only associated with more digital contact and not with face-to-face contact. These results suggest that people's socioeconomic status primarily limit or enhance the frequency of contact, which is not unexpected given international travel costs and the importance of digital contact means in the migration context.

4.3 Needs for contact

We examined how care needs related to relationships with adult children. We found partial support for hypothesis 2a, as retirement migrants with severe chronic health conditions were less likely to visit their children. However, people with moderate or severe chronic health conditions did not receive more visits from children than people without chronic health conditions. Instead of having more digital contact, people with moderate and severe chronic health conditions had less digital contact. Retirement migrants with chronic health conditions were also less emotionally close to their adult children. Additional analyses (see appendix) show that this lack of contact is not preferred because retirement migrants with severe chronic health conditions are more likely to report that they want to see their child(ren) more often.

We found support for the hypothesis that younger retirement migrants make more visits to children, whereas older retirement migrants receive more visits (hypothesis 2b). However, not older retirement migrants but younger retirement migrants were more likely to have more digital contact, which could relate to the necessary technological skills that older retirees may lack.

Table 4: Estimation results of ordered logistics regression models for retirement migrants' intergenerational relationships with adult children

	Visits to child		Visits from child		Digital contact		Emotional closeness	
Opportunities for contact								
Geographical distance (log)	-0.29**	(-5.65)	-0.31**	(-6.74)	-0.09*	(-2.00)	-0.07	(-1.25)
Household income (net, equivalized)	0.27**	(6.16)	0.14**	(3.44)	0.18**	(4.30)	0.10*	(2.41)
Level of education (ISLED)	0.01	(0.19)	0.03	(1.14)	0.12**	(2.68)	0.03	(0.76)
Needs for contact								
Chronic health conditions (ref. = none)								
Moderately restrictive	-0.10	(-1.31)	-0.12	(-1.30)	-0.17**	(-2.82)	-0.32**	(-6.55)
Severely restrictive	-0.61**	(-3.64)	-0.33~	(-1.84)	-0.39**	(-2.97)	-0.41*	(-2.30)
Age (ref. = between age 70-80)								
Below age 70	0.23**	(2.61)	0.03	(0.36)	0.26*	(2.23)	0.07	(0.75)
Above age 80	-0.17	(-1.20)	0.35**	(3.46)	0.21	(1.57)	0.23~	(1.94)
Less social integration	-0.14**	(-4.16)	-0.11**	(-3.45)	-0.23**	(-7.17)	-0.10**	(-4.01)
Family structure								
Gender (ref. = male)	0.31**	(3.50)	0.41**	(5.85)	0.72**	(6.05)	0.64**	(7.76)
Marital status (ref. = married)								
Widowed	-0.40**	(-2.65)	-0.43*	(-2.39)	-0.43**	(-3.14)	-0.49**	(-3.03)
Separated	-0.54**	(-5.75)	-0.74**	(-5.76)	-0.95**	(-11.56)	-0.66**	(-6.22)
Dissolved	-0.61**	(-8.55)	-0.76**	(-7.75)	-0.96**	(-11.73)	-0.89**	(-12.42)
Child's gender (ref. = son)	0.14*	(2.34)	0.14*	(2.30)	0.34**	(4.79)	0.32**	(6.02)
Child is single (ref. = married)	0.07	(0.74)	-0.02	(-0.14)	0.02	(0.21)	0.07	(0.81)
Grandchildren (ref. = none)								
Age 0-17	0.19*	(2.16)	-0.05	(-0.49)	0.20~	(1.89)	0.14~	(1.76)
Age 18+	0.08	(0.73)	0.00	(0.00)	-0.10	(-1.08)	-0.05	(-0.45)
Number of children	0.13**	(3.74)	-0.02	(-0.61)	-0.11*	(-2.47)	-0.01	(-0.21)
Cultural norms								
Religiosity	0.04	(0.82)	0.11*	(2.32)	0.08*	(2.22)	0.04	(1.07)
Postmaterialism (ref. = materialist)								
Mixed	0.13	(1.15)	-0.07	(-0.63)	0.09	(0.73)	0.12	(1.02)
Postmaterialist	0.15	(1.22)	0.04	(0.29)	0.05	(0.40)	0.11	(0.86)
Control variables								
Duration of residence	-0.00	(-0.11)	0.08	(1.62)	0.09*	(2.13)	0.07	(1.63)
Popular tourist destination (ref. = no)	-0.11	(-1.30)	0.16*	(2.12)	0.05	(0.62)	0.09	(0.95)
Housing quality	0.01	(0.29)	0.11**	(2.79)	0.08*	(2.36)	0.11*	(2.47)
Prior family ties in destination (ref. = none)	-0.11	(-0.77)	0.21	(1.45)	0.14	(1.15)	0.21	(1.40)
Cut point 1	-1.69**	(-10.81)	-0.99**	(-5.87)	-2.28**	(-13.94)	-1.77**	(-11.85)
Cut point 2	-0.53**	(-3.72)	0.33	(1.58)	-1.29**	(-8.40)	-0.53**	(-3.19)
Cut point 3	0.91**	(5.09)	1.81**	(7.52)	0.58**	(3.65)	1.09**	(6.21)
Observations	2814		2825		2832		2833	

Note: t statistics in parentheses; ~ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$;
Source: DRM 2021, own calculations

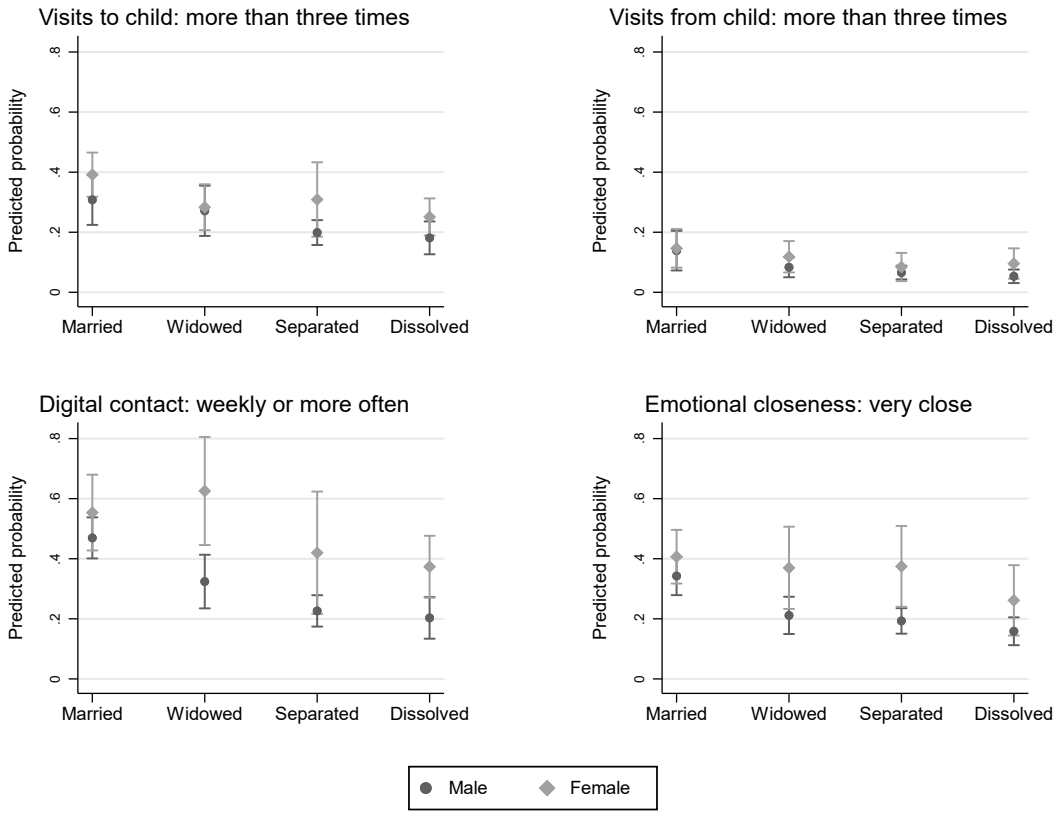
We examined the social need for contact by retirement migrants level of integration in the country of destination. Our results were not consistent with hypothesis 2d, as retirement migrants who were less socially integrated had less instead of more frequent face-to-face contact, digital contact and emotional closeness with their adult children. Possibly, living in different countries (regardless of the geographical distance) limits how much parents can call upon children in the country of origin in case of a lack of support in the country of destination.

4.4 Family structure

We expected women to be kinkeepers in the relationship with children. In line with hypothesis 3a, female retirement migrants made more visits to, received more visits from, and had digital contact and emotional closeness with their children. Consistent with hypothesis 3b, separated retirement migrants made and received fewer visits from children and had less digital contact and emotional closeness. Contrary to our

expectations, widowed retirement migrants also had less frequent face-to-face contact, digital contact, and closeness than married people, but the differences were smaller. Findings for retirement migrants in the dissolved category were similar to separated individuals, which suggests that most of these relationships dissolved as a result of separation rather than widowhood.

Figure 1: Predicted probabilities for retirement migrants' intergenerational relationships with adult children by gender and marital status (n = 2,849)



Note: Controlled for all variables in main models (see Table 4). Source: DRM 2021, own calculations

Figure 1 shows the predicted probabilities for having the most frequent contact or closest relationship by marital status and gender. It shows substantial differences for marital status depending on people's gender. Separated men had less frequent digital contact and less close relationships with their children than separated women. Even though in other studies of intergenerational relations, separated women are often more similar to married women than separated men, in our data, we did not observe a significant difference in terms of face-to-face contact between separated men and women (Kalmijn, 2007). Although widowed men and women were about equally likely to visit their child more than three times, widowed men were much less likely to have weekly or more digital contact or to be very close than widowed women. Whereas widowed women were similar to married women in their levels of digital contact and closeness, widowed men were more similar to separated men. Gender differences for retirement migrants in a dissolved union were most similar to separated retirement migrants.

The characteristics of the adult child were expected to play a role as well. In line with previous studies on adult intergenerational relationships, retirement migrants had more face-to-face contact, digital contact, and emotional closeness with daughters than with sons (hypothesis 3c). However, we did not find an effect of the child's marital status, meaning that single children do not have more face-to-face contact, digital contact, or closeness than partnered children (hypothesis 3d).

We also considered how the presence of other family members would affect the parent-child relationship. As expected, retirement migrants with grandchildren below age 18 visited their adult child more often and

had more digital contact, although they were not more emotionally close (hypothesis 3e). When grandchildren were older, relationships between retirement migrants and children did not differ from retirement migrants who did not have grandchildren. Retirement migrants with multiple children were expected to make more visits to their adult child (hypothesis 3f), for which we found support. In addition, retirement migrants with more children had less digital contact. Our results reiterate earlier studies that emphasise the importance of considering the wider family network.

4.5 Cultural norms

It was expected that people with a religious background would receive more visits from and have more digital contact with adult children (hypothesis 4a). Our findings supported this hypothesis, suggesting that religiosity and the more traditional family norms associated with it may shape family support behaviour. We also considered the other pole of the value continuum, namely whether people had postmaterialist values. However, we did not find support for hypothesis 4b, as there was no significant effect of people's materialist and postmaterialist values on face-to-face, digital contact frequencies or emotional closeness.

4.5 Control variables

We controlled for the duration of residence, the attractiveness of the destination, and the presence of family members in the destination before migration. Retirement migrants with a longer duration of residence had more digital contact, and people who migrated to a popular holiday destination or had better housing quality received more visits from children. Prior family ties had no effect.

5. Discussion and conclusions

The later life course is characterised by greater needs for support from family members. In this article, we drew attention to the case of older adults who retired in a new country, away from their support network in their country of origin. For many retirement migrants, the benefits of migration are apparent: better weather, more tranquillity, and experiencing a new culture (Spaan et al., 2023). However, an often considered and major disadvantage is being far away from family. Particularly when people age and the social network grows smaller, parents increasingly appreciate the close relationships with their children (English & Carstensen, 2014). Maintaining the parent-child tie and exchanging support is obviously a challenge when living abroad.

We described different aspects of the relationship between retirement migrants and their adult children, focusing in-depth on one randomly chosen child. By comparing retirement migrants with older adults in the Netherlands, we could contextualize the frequencies of contact and strength of the relationship in the special case in which parents moved abroad. Most retirement migrants visited their child twice or more often in a year and were visited at least once by their adult child. Considering that one in three parents in the Netherlands saw their children weekly or more often, it becomes clear that migration seriously challenges face-to-face contact. Even though digital contact could be an attractive alternative form of contact, our findings did not suggest that retirement migrants strongly invested in digital contact, as parents who did not migrate had somewhat higher levels of digital contact. Although retirement migrants were also less close with adult children than retirees who did not migrate, the majority of retirement migrants considered their relationship with children to be close. In this sense, frequent physical or digital contact was no prerequisite for being emotionally close with children in these long-distance relationships.

We explained differences between retirement migrant in terms of their intergenerational relationships. The opportunities for contact, with geographical distance and socioeconomic status as indicators, were shown to be important predictors of intergenerational relationships. When retirement migrants lived at a greater distance, they made and received much fewer visits, which is unsurprising considering the high costs and efforts of international travel. Especially for retirement migrants who reside outside of the EU, there might be mobility barriers that limit face-to-face contact (Gehring, 2019; Winter & de Valk, 2018). Interestingly, even though retirement migrants and children had less face-to-face contact when living further apart, greater

distances did not translate into less emotionally close relationships or more digital contact. Retirement migrants with higher incomes had much more face-to-face and digital contact, and people with less education had less digital contact. Fewer resources thus primarily affected the frequency of contact rather than emotional closeness with children. Our findings show that opportunities and resources are crucial to understanding how often parents and children have contact over longer distances. However, they also reiterate our earlier conclusion that emotional closeness goes beyond keeping in touch. It fits the idea of a shift from normative to affective relationships, in which feelings of affection gain favour over feelings of obligations in guiding family relationships (Kalmijn, 2014).

We examined the role of parents' needs for contact in relation to their intergenerational relationships but found mixed evidence. We showed that retirement migrants below age 70 made more visits to children and had more digital contact, whereas retirement migrants in their eighties received more visits and were emotionally closer to their children. We hypothesised that children would respond to parental care needs, but this was not true for retirement migrants with severe health problems or the ones who were less socially integrated. Retirement migrants with severe health problems had less digital contact and closeness with children. Possibly, these retirement migrants might be selective on weaker intergenerational relationships, because retirement migrants with severe health problems are more likely to return to their country of origin (Dwyer, 2001). Interestingly, additional analyses show that migrants with severe health problems were more likely to report that they wanted to see their children more often, indicating that little contact is not preferred. The constraint of living in different countries could play a role. If there is less frequent contact due to greater distances, it is more difficult to be aware of parents' support needs (Dykstra & Fokkema, 2011). Even if parental care needs are known by children, it is difficult to provide support when parents and children reside in different countries (Baldock, 2003). When children's support provision is absolutely necessary, children could expect their parents to return.

Factors relating to the family structure were shown to be vital to understanding retirement migrants' relationship with children. Women's central role in kinkeeping (Hornstra & Ivanova, 2023; Rosenthal, 1985) was shown to be reproduced in long-distance relationships. Women and daughters had more face-to-face contact, digital contact, and emotional closeness than fathers and sons. Particularly separated men had weaker intergenerational ties, but also widowed men and separated women had much weaker relationships. Whereas separated women more often avoid a divorce penalty through their kinkeeping behaviours (Kalmijn, 2007), our results suggest this is more difficult when retiring abroad. Our findings also reiterated how life events such as divorce and widowhood have strong implications for the parent-child relationship. Interestingly, retirement migrants with grandchildren did not make more visits to their children, even though the presence of grandchildren could be an indicator of children's support needs. However, this may be partially explained by the wide age range for grandchildren in our model. The effect may have been stronger for younger grandchildren, as contact between grandparents and grandchildren has been shown to decline in adolescence and early adulthood (Duflos et al., 2022). Overall, our findings were consistent with the intergenerational solidarity literature and point to persistent gendered kinship practices and long-term consequences of parental separation – also over great geographical distances.

Cultural norms play an important role in views on the support exchange between parents and children. In the second half of the twentieth century, Dutch society underwent major changes, such as the rise of secularism and transformation into a consumer society. Despite the process of secularisation among the baby boom generation, the continuing importance of religion in shaping family norms and behaviour was apparent. Religious retirement migrants received more visits from children and had more digital contact than secular migrants; however, they were not more emotionally close. The rise in affluence that characterised the postwar period led some people's values to shift to a greater focus on autonomy and self-expression instead of economic and physical security. Interestingly, people with postmaterialist values did not have less contact or closeness, which suggests that valuing autonomy does not necessarily translate into more autonomous family relations.

By examining three aspects of intergenerational relationships, our results provided some extra insights into the ambiguities in late-life parent–child relationships. The picture for face-to-face contact is clear: retirement migration severely limits physical contact between parents and children. However, our examination of emotional closeness reveals that many retirement migrants have strong intergenerational relationships despite residing in different countries. In other words, it is possible to be close but far away. From this perspective, retirement migration can be seen as an extension of the long-term trend of the dispersion of the family network (Kalmijn, 2021). This interpretation is consistent with other studies that

examined intergenerational ties in a context of migration, which documented high levels of commitment between parents and children despite residing in different countries (Baldock, 2003; Karpinska & Dykstra, 2019). Retirement migration possibly relieves some family obligations and might lower support expectations because it was the parent's choice to migrate. However, a small but substantial group of retirement migrants was not close at all to their children in the Netherlands, and some migrants were less equipped to maintain a long-distance tie than others. These types of relationships have been earlier characterised 'detached', reflecting little contact and closeness (Karpinska & Dykstra, 2019). Whether the relationship was poor before migration or weakened after is not clear. However, these people have a smaller support network to fall back on, which makes them vulnerable to age-related changes or unexpected events.

This study has some noteworthy strengths. Using unique representative data on international retirement migrants from the Netherlands in forty destinations, we could link retirement migrants' relationships with adult children to a rich set of structural and contextual factors on a country- and individual-level to explain differences. In assessing the findings of this study, some limitations should be considered. First, a question our paper does not address is how the migration experience itself affects intergenerational ties. Long-distance contacts are more difficult to maintain and may therefore decrease. Given the small numbers of international retirement migrants it is evident that no existing panel data can tackle this question. Second, we provided a comprehensive but not exhaustive picture of retirement migrants' intergenerational relationships. Our study focused on parent-child relationships but was based on parents' reports on the relationship with one focus child. However, prior studies have shown that reports from adult children often deviate from that of parents (Mandemakers & Dykstra, 2008). The theoretical model in this paper emphasized the needs of aging parents for support from their children. The needs of children as predictors of contact with migrated parents are an important area for future research (Kalmijn, 2019b). We also did not directly measure actual support provision and do not know to what extent support provision takes place during visits to and from children. Future studies that include the perspective of adult children and the actual support provision would be a valuable addition to the study of intergenerational relationships of retirement migrants.

The emergence of international retirement migration relates to the accessibility of transnational mobility following globalisation processes as well as older adult's active aging (King et al., 1998). This study has shown that retirement migration has major implications for the parent-adult child relationship. On the one hand, there is much less face-to-face contact, which challenges the exchange of practical support. As practical support needs of both parents and children may change over the life course, for example in response to health decline or grandparenthood, it might be of particular importance for retirement migrants and their children to consider the long-term consequences of the migration decision. On the other hand, the emotional closeness between parents and children is strong despite residing in different countries. For many retirement migrants, the opportunities that migrating in later life has to offer appear to outweigh the disadvantage of having less contact with children. The way retirement migrants and their children succeed in maintaining their relationship over longer distances challenges the view that having frequent contact is a prerequisite for feeling emotionally close to one another. Although international migration disrupts interaction patterns, parents and children are generally capable of adapting to a new family context.

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Data availability

The data supporting this study's findings are available upon request at https://easy.dans.knaw.nl/ui/datasets/id/easy-dataset:278186.

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Information in German

Deutscher Titel

So nah und doch so fern: Generationenübergreifende Beziehungen zwischen Migranten im Ruhestand und ihren erwachsenen Kindern

Zusammenfassung

Fragestellung: Im Rahmen dieser Arbeit wird untersucht, wie internationale Ruhestandsmigranten die Beziehungen zu ihren im Herkunftsland verbleibenden erwachsenen Kindern aufrechterhalten.

Hintergrund: Obwohl im späteren Lebensverlauf ein größerer Bedarf an Unterstützung durch Familienmitglieder besteht, ziehen viele Ruhestandsmigranten von ihren erwachsenen Kindern weg. Frühere Studien haben die familiären Bindungen von Ruhestandsmigranten beschrieben, allerdings häufig anhand nicht repräsentativer Stichproben und ohne Untersuchung von Faktoren, die mögliche Unterschiede erklären könnten.

Methode: Wir haben Daten einer repräsentativen geschichteten Zufallsstichprobe niederländischer Staatsangehöriger im Alter von 66 bis 90 Jahren erhoben, die nach ihrem fünfzigsten Lebensjahr in eines von 40 Zielländern ausgewandert sind (N = 2.849). Es wurden ordinale logistische Regressionsmodelle zu drei Dimensionen der Beziehung von Migranten im Ruhestand zu ihren erwachsenen Kindern geschätzt.

Ergebnisse: Ruhestandsmigranten stehen ihren erwachsenen Kindern emotional nahe, obwohl sie nur wenig persönlichen Kontakt haben und nicht besonders häufig digital kommunizieren. Weibliche und verheiratete Migranten im Ruhestand haben kontaktreichere und emotional engere Beziehungen zu ihren erwachsenen Kindern als männliche und geschiedene oder verwitwete Personen. Geringere Kontaktmöglichkeiten, etwa aufgrund einer größeren geografischen Entfernung und eines niedrigeren sozioökonomischen Status sind in erster Linie für eine geringere Kontakthäufigkeit, nicht aber für das Ausmaß emotionale Nähe prädiktiv. Die Befunde für die Bedeutung des Bedürfnisses nach Kontakt sind uneinheitlich und die Rolle kultureller Normen erwies sich als gering.

Schlussfolgerung: Die Aufrechterhaltung familiärer Bindungen über größere Entfernungen stellt die Ansicht in Frage, dass die Kontakthäufigkeit eine Voraussetzung für emotionale Nähe ist, und zeigt, wie sich Eltern an einen neuen Familienkontext anpassen.

Schlagwörter: Intergenerationale Solidarität, internationale Ruhestandsmigration, Eltern-Kind-Beziehungen, alternde Familien, Transnationalismus, Lifestyle-Migration

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