Family solidarity in the Netherlands

Pearl A. Dykstra, Matthijs Kalmijn, Trudie C.M. Knijn, Aafke E. Komter,

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The Netherlands Kinship Panel Study: an introduction

Pearl A. Dykstra & Aafke E. Komter

Family relationships are an important part of the glue that holds society together and they have traditionally been regarded as one of the key determinants of social cohesion. But important social developments — such as the increasingly 'fragile' nature of relationships, decreasing family size, social and spatial mobility, and individualisation — have had a major impact on the position of the family within society. Family issues are the subject of frequent and ongoing debate, particularly in the political arena. Though social scientists have made progress in the way they describe how and to what extent family relationships are changing, many questions remain and little is understood about the causes and potential implications of changing family patterns (Allan, Hawker, & Crow, 2001; Dykstra, 2004; Seltzer et al., 2005; Teachman, Tedrow, & Crowder, 2000; Zwaan, 1993).

The importance of the family has come under renewed scrutiny, a move prompted in part by the acknowledgement that the embedment in mutually satisfying family relationships can help promote social cohesion and prevent social exclusion (Furstenberg, 2005; Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports, 2006). The family is, after all, the most important institution in which future generations are raised, in which norms and values are transferred, where the foundations are laid for future generations' position within society and where informal support and care are exchanged. The nuclear family is also the context in which people share a home that is not simply the private domain of the cohabiting family members but also the base from which they participate in society.

Family relationships are also bound up with social inequality. Resources are initially divided up amongst households but they are also subsequently divided up amongst individuals within households and nuclear families. The impact family relationships can have on inequality is evident in various areas, such as in the connection between living arrangements and poverty as evidenced by divorced women on welfare (Knijn & Van Wel, 2001; Kurz, 1995; Van Drenth, Knijn, & Lewis, 1999; Poortman & Kalmijn, 1999), and the low incomes of single elderly women (Fokkema & Van Solinge, 2000; Price & Ginn, 2003). There is also inequality across households related to issues concerning dual-income households and educational homogamy (Blossfeld & Tim, 2003; Kalmijn, 1998; Uunk, 1996). Finally, there is inequality *within* households, where some nuclear family members are breadwinners and others are economically dependent (Blossfeld & Drobnic, 2001). Resources are passed down from one generation to the next, in the form of gifts or inheritances, for example, or in the form of financial support, such as parents helping children to buy a home of their own (Hagestad, 2000; Kohli, Künemund, Motel, & Szydlik, 2000). There are also non-material transfers, such as the transfer of educational and professional opportunities, cultural and social capital, and norms and values (Furstenberg, 2005; Liefboer, 2005a and b). The scale of intergenerational transfers is partly dependent on the nature of the family relationships. Parents who are divorced or whose children live with a stepfamily may, for example, transfer less economic, cultural and social capital to their children than parents who (still) live together (Dronkers, 1997; Fischer, 2004; Hanson, McLanahan, & Thomson, 1996)

The importance of nuclear and extended family relationships is often underlined in the public debate on social cohesion and inequality, but the family is not what it used to be. People's private lives have changed dramatically over the past few decades (Liefbroer & Dykstra, 2000; McLaughlin et al., 1988; Ravanera, Rajulton, & Burch, 1998) in terms of the way relationships are formed and dissolved and how they are structured. These changes have been brought about by two major cultural developments — individualisation (Felling, Peters, & Scheepers, 2000) and secularisation (Van de Kaa, 1987; Lesthaeghe & Surkyn, 1988) – and

a number of structural developments, such as the creation and subsequent modernisation of the welfare state, the expansion of education, and changes in the labour market (Hagestad & Dannefer, 2001; Knijn, 1994; Leisering & Leibfried, 1999 [1995]; Mayer & Müller, 1986). The changes the family has undergone over the past few decades have had a major impact on social cohesion and inequality within Dutch society (Komter, 2000; 2005). Which changes have occurred in particular types of family relationships, and how might they affect these relationships?

Partner relationships

Partner relationships have undergone a clear change over the past few decades. Increased female labour force participation has meant that more and more women living with a partner have jobs. This has put pressure on the traditional gender-specific division of labour (Blossfeld & Drobnic, 2001; MacDonald, Philips, & Lethbridge, 2005; Van der Lippe, 1993). It also means that couples are less free to choose where they live (Smits, Mulder, & Hooimeijer, 2004). Some partners even live apart during the week in order to be nearer their place of work. There is also evidence to suggest that interaction between partners is becoming more of a matter of negotiation than it used to be (Giddens, 1991; Lewis, 2001). Things that were formerly taken for granted are now a matter of personal choice, such as the decision to postpone parenthood or forego having children altogether (Hakim, 2000; Corijn, M., Liefbroer, A.C., & De Jong Gierveld, J., 1996). Another example is the decline in the importance of the social origin of prospective partners (Uunk, 1996; Kalmijn, 1998). But the nature of partner relationships is not the only thing that has changed. People have also become much more 'hesitant' to enter *into* relationships. This is borne out by the growing popularity of extramarital cohabitation and the fact that people wait until they are older before cohabiting with a partner (Cherlin, 2004; Cooney & Dunne, 2001; Kiernan, 2004; Liefbroer, 1991; Manting, 1994). The risk of partner relationships ending in failure has also increased and it has become more common for people to have a succession of partner relationships (Cooney & Dunne, 2001; Liefbroer & Dykstra, 2000). In short, partner relationships are formed later in life and dissolved sooner by divorce. Dissolution due to the death of the partner generally occurs later, however, because of the sharp rise in life expectancy. Many of the changes outlined above can be interpreted as examples of the shifting significance attached to partner relationships (Allan et al., 2001). There has been a growing tendency to place ever more emphasis on the emotional side of relationships with the result that greater demands are now being placed on this aspect of relationships. If a relationship is not emotionally fulfilling, its foundations crumble (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2004).

Parent-child relationships

Relationships between parents and children who live within the same household are now characterised by a greater degree of equality and respect for each other's autonomy than they were in the past. The interaction between parents and children is more intimate, there is a greater recognition of the psychological needs of children and a greater willingness on the part of parents to satisfy them (Koops & Zuckerman, 2003). Contrary to popular belief and despite the increase in the proportion of women who continue to work after having children, there has been no decline in the number of hours per week that parents spend on child-centered activities (Sayer, Bianchi, & Robinson, 2004; Van den Broek, Knulst, & Breedveld, 1999).The father's role within the household is changing, with fathers showing greater involvement in the upbringing of their children and in parenting activities (Eggebeen & Hawkins, 1990; LaRossa, 1998; Kalmijn 1999). Nevertheless, the majority of child-rearing

tasks continue to be performed by mothers. Parent-child relationships have become less hierarchical and authoritarian; a shift has occurred from households based on 'authority' to ones based on 'negotiation' (De Swaan, 1979). Parent-child relationships are increasingly characterised by freedom of choice, thereby acquiring their own unique content. The last decade has seen a slight increase in the length of time children remain living at home with their parents after several decades during which there was a tendency for children to leave the home at ever younger ages (Baanders, 1998; Mulder & Hooimeijer, 2002; Van Hoorn, 2001; Iedema, Becker & Sanders, 1997; De Jong Gierveld, Liefbroer & Beekink, 1991; Mulder, 1993). Although the lowering of the age of consent has meant that children now become legally independent of their parents at a younger age, the trends of recent decades seem to have resulted in them postponing their financial and residential independence. Uncertainties about the future mean that more and more of today's young people are keeping their options open (Liefbroer, 2005a).

Relationships with family living outside the household

Relationships with parents, children, brothers/sisters, grandparents and grandchildren who live outside the household are also changing (Connidis, 2001). It is becoming increasingly common for parents not to live with their dependent children (Clarke & Jensen, 2004; De Graaf, 2001; Martinson & Wu, 1992). Complicated domestic arrangements are already appearing here and there as a result of the growing incidence of divorce. Providing practical support to frail elderly parents is becoming more and more difficult due to increased geographical distances between parents and children and the labour force participation of sons and daughters (Dooghe, 1992; Evandrou & Glaser, 2004; Penning, 1998; Rosenthal, Martin-Matthews, & Matthews, 1996). The issue of providing support is also under pressure due to the fact that children no longer automatically regard this as their responsibility. Nor do parents themselves always want their children to shoulder the burden of providing instrumental support because doing so is at odds with the freedom of choice and emphasis on emotional reciprocity, which is increasingly coming to characterise the parent-child relationship (Finch & Mason, 1993; Dykstra, 1990). This increased freedom of choice also means that family relationships now have to compete for time and attention with other relationships, such as those with friends, neighbours, colleagues and acquaintances. The 'breadth' of family networks (i.e. the number of brothers, sisters, cousins, nephews, nieces, uncles and aunts) has diminished as a result of the decline in fertility rates, but because of increased life expectancy, family networks now consist of more generations and there is evidence of 'verticalisation' in families (Dykstra & Knipscheer, 1995; Bengtson, 2001).

How does the general public view these developments (Schnabel, 2004)? One school of thought is strongly in favour of individualisation. After all, not only did it pave the way for women's liberation but it also provided people in general with a greater degree of autonomy and as such should generally be regarded as a positive development. This optimistic attitude was particularly prevalent in the public debate in the 1970s and 1980s, an era which was characterised by a generally critical attitude towards the past and in which individualisation was regarded as a way of breaking free from oppressive traditional bonds and institutions.

A second school of thought places particular emphasis on the drawbacks of the process of individualisation. The fact that traditional sources of social cohesion such as the Church and the local community have become less important has created a vacuum which family relationships can help to fill. In an individualistic society characterised by a high degree of spatial and social mobility, family relationships are among the few relationships capable of being sustained across spatial and social divides. The nuclear family should therefore form the bedrock of social cohesion and its ability to fulfill this function has been

much debated. This point of view has become more prevalent in the public debate in recent years and is also being articulated by government. In its 2006 Government Paper on the Family (Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports, 2006), for example, the Dutch cabinet posits that "[A] well-functioning nuclear family provides a positive contribution to society" (p. 1).

In the Netherlands, public attitudes towards the family have mirrored a shift in the debate in the public arena. The 1970s and 1980s saw a decline in the perceived importance of the family, but since the 1990s there has been a renewed appreciation of the importance of the family and the virtue of having an effective national family policy (Social & Cultural Planning Agency, 1996). The following illustration is a case in point: between 1990 and 2000 the proportion of people who thought it was very bad "that so many marriages ended in divorce" rose from 33 percent to 39 percent (Liefbroer, 2003).

But regardless of which side of the debate one is on, the fact remains that family relationships have undergone a dramatic transformation. The potential consequences of these changes are much less obvious. Whether or not these changes are actually indicative of a decline in solidarity within family relationships has yet to be ascertained, and even if family bonds have eroded, there is still no certainty about the impact this could have on the way people function within society. The implications for social cohesion and inequality are therefore equally unclear. Nor is very much known about the factors that cause changes to modern family life. In order to reliably assess the potential impact family relationships have on social cohesion, it is essential to gain insight into the underlying processes that shape these types of relationships. After all, understanding these processes is essential in framing policies to safeguard the solidarity the family helps to provide. Therefore, the authors of this book are very happy to have received funding from the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) to carry out a large-scale investigation into family ties and solidarity.

Data: multi-actor and multi-method

This volume offers a first overview of empirical research results of the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study (Dykstra, Kalmijn, Knijn, Komter, Liefbroer & Mulder, 2005). The sample consists of over 8150 individuals between 18 and 79 years of age with whom computer-assisted personal interviews were conducted between 2002 and 2004. Self-completion questionnaires supplemented these interviews. Data were not only collected from primary respondents but also from selected family members, some of whom were members of the primary respondent's household. This allows for the examination of family and kinship from a multi-actor perspective. The response rate was 45 percent, which is comparable to that of other large-scale family surveys in the Netherlands (Dykstra et al., 2005). Response rates in the Netherlands tend to be lower than elsewhere and they seem to be declining over time (De Leeuw & De Heer, 2001). A special asset of the NKPS dataset is that, in addition to the main sample, data have been collected among members of the four largest migrant communities in the Netherlands: Turks, Moroccans, Surinamese, and Dutch Antilleans; a total of 1402 migrant respondents have been interviewed. The response rate varied between 40 percent for the Surinamese and 52 percent for Moroccans (for additional information, see Dykstra et al., 2005). The dataset is a multi-method in that it uses not only structured interviews but also in-depth open interviews. The NKPS is a panel study: respondents and family members are interviewed on more than one occasion, yielding a prospective longitudinal design. Only quantitative data from the first wave of data collection will be used for this volume.

This volume

The key concept used is family solidarity. We define solidarity as 'feelings of mutual affinity within family relationships and how these are expressed in behavioral terms' (Dykstra et al., 2004, p.11). The central question we will attempt to answer is: 'Which patterns of family solidarity can be distinguished, and how can variation in these patterns be explained?' Our main focus will be on the way solidarity in families is expressed in attitudes and beliefs about the family and in concrete behaviour such as contact and support, as well as on the socio-structural and cultural determinants of family solidarity.

To provide a context for our analyses on family solidarity, Chapter 1 gives a description of demographic and structural characteristics of contemporary families in the Netherlands: what are the consequences of the rise in life expectancy, the decline in the birth rate, the postponement of childbearing and the rise in divorce for the size and composition of Dutch kin networks? Another dimension of the context in which families live is geographical distance. In Chapter 2 the focus is on the geographical location of families: at what distances do people live from their family members, and how do socio-structural characteristics affect these distances? Chapter 3 addresses the frequency of contact between various family members. How frequent is the contact between parents and their adult children, and how are contact patterns structured according to socio-economic status, cultural and demographic differences? Both the perspective of the child and that of the parent are taken into account. The exchange of support between family members is the theme of Chapter 4. If it is true that, under the influence of individualisation processes, instrumental support exchange within the family is no longer self-evident, how are the giving and receiving of support conditioned by factors such as a person's position in the household (e.g. having a partner or not, living with children or not), the availability of material resources, or the actual or perceived need for support? Chapter 5 examines the strength of family ties by looking at the respondents' perception of the cohesion, atmosphere and support exchange in their families, and the quality of their family relationships. In addition, concrete behavioural manifestations of the strength of family ties are investigated: to what extent do family members participate in shared family events, celebrations and holidays? Chapter 6 focuses on feelings of obligation among family members. Various types of obligation are distinguished: obligation felt towards the family in general, towards parents, and towards children. An interesting question is to what extent migrants differ from the native Dutch in the obligations they feel towards their families, as the literature suggests. Special attention will therefore be paid to ethnic differences in feelings of obligation. In Chapter 7, we summarise the main characteristics and solidarity patterns found within Dutch families, as described in the preceding chapters, and address the socio-structural and socio-cultural differentiation in these patterns. Finally, conclusions are drawn about the current state of solidarity in Dutch families.

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Chapter 1

Structural characteristics of Dutch kin networks

Pearl A. Dykstra & Aafke E. Komter

Introduction

Kin networks are shaped by the demographic behaviour of individuals in several proximate generations. Kin are formed through partnerships and birth, and lost through divorce and death. The past few decades have witnessed major demographic changes in industrialised countries: extension of life expectancy, delay of marriage and parenthood, decline in the birth rate, increasing instability of partner relationships, and so forth. Demographic trends in the Netherlands are no exception to this pattern. In 1950 life expectancy at birth was 70.4 years for men and 72.7 years for women; by 2000 life expectancy at birth had risen to 75.5 years for men and 80.6 years for women (Ekamper et al., 2003). The average number of children born to women (total fertility rate) dropped from 3.1 in 1950 to 1.5 in the mid 1980s, and is currently around 1.7 (Statistics Netherlands, 2005). Women's age at first birth has steadily risen from 26.4 in 1950 to 29.0 in 2004 (Statistics Netherlands, 2005). For people marrying in the 1950s, the divorce rate was approximately ten percent; in the early nineties, one in three marriages contracted were expected to break up (Beets, 1993). The most recent estimates are that one in four marriages will end in divorce (Van Huis, De Graaf, & De Jong, 2001). The stabilisation of the divorce rate in recent years may be attributed to the increased prevalence of unmarried cohabitation.

The conventional portrayal of family change under the influence of demographic trends is that an extension of life and a drop in birth rates result in so-called beanpole families with a relatively large number of vertical ties and comparatively few horizontal ties, while an increase in divorce and remarriage result in increased complexity of family ties (Bengtson, 2001). When the implications of these developments are considered, negative messages prevail. The following arguments tend to be put forward. Persistent low fertility means fewer children and siblings to call on for help. The concentration of a need for help in the oldest-old category means that children and siblings are too old to provide help by the time they are called on to do so. The extension of life expectancy means that during several decades of adulthood individuals have family generations above and below them with competing needs. The rise in divorce means that more adults have histories of broken ties and therefore fewer adults have partners to provide assistance. Though these arguments are intuitively appealing, they are misleading and inaccurate, and lack a sound empirical basis (Rosenthal, 2000; Soldo, 1996; Uhlenberg, 1993).

In this chapter, our aim is to improve the empirical evidence regarding the consequences of demographic changes for family constellations in the Netherlands. We focus on the structural characteristics of kin networks, looking at the ties of which they are composed. To describe kin networks, one cannot rely on demographic statistics. One reason is that standard demographic measures are individual-based, making analysis of patterns across successive generations, clustering in families, and so forth, difficult. Another reason is that the joint effect of demographic trends is not always obvious (Watkins, Menken, & Bongaarts, 1987). The opposing effects of increasing longevity and postponed childbearing on the generational structure of families are a good example. Whilst the extended life span means that older family members are living longer than they did in the past, which increases the likelihood that three, four or even five generations may be alive at the same time, delayed childbearing means that the age gap between generations is relatively large, which reduces the

likelihood that multiple generations will be alive at the same time. A third reason is that demographic statistics are based on registry data, which provide no information about 'new' forms of partnership and parenthood. In other words, demographic statistics have not kept pace with the increased informalisation of family ties (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2004; Latten, 2004).

To overcome the limitations of demographic statistics we have made use of survey data collected in the context of the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study (Dykstra et al., 2005a; , 2005b). We examined the size, composition and generational structure of kin networks, focusing on biological ties, to gain insight into the consequences of changes in fertility and mortality patterns. We subsequently addressed various forms of partnership, divorce, and step ties to shed light on the consequences of changes in marriage patterns. Whereas the descriptive results presented in this chapter are based on weighted data, unweighted data served as the input for multivariate analyses. The purpose of the multivariate analyses is to find out whether kin network characteristics differ along the social structural divides of gender, age, educational attainment and religiosity. Where possible, we have compared our results with those from other nationally representative data sets for the Netherlands.

Biological ties

Size and composition of kin networks

Changes in fertility and mortality patterns are reflected in the size and composition of kin networks. These networks are relevant in view of support responsibilities and support provision. Whereas members of the immediate family (parents and children) tend to be highly supportive, grandparents, siblings and cousins are more likely to serve as back-up supports (Dykstra, 1993; Wellman & Wortley, 1989). Knowledge about numbers and types of family members thus provide an indication of support potential. Care burden, on the other hand, can be conceived in terms of the balance between the number of very young and very old family members (dependents) and the number of members of the middle generations (carers). An inventory of family members can be used to identify persons at risk of being without the support they need, or at risk of being burdened by family obligations.

In the NKPS survey, information was collected about parents, grandparents, partners, children, brothers and sisters, grandchildren, aunts and uncles and cousins. Although the questions covered not only biological but also adoptive, step- and half family, we will here restrict ourselves to biological ties.

Not all our respondents were completely sure about whether their family members were still alive. Interestingly, respondents more often indicated not knowing about kin on the paternal side than on the maternal side. For example, whereas 0.8 percent of respondents did not know whether their father was alive, 0.1 percent indicated not knowing whether their mother was alive. Likewise, whereas 0.8 percent did not know whether their paternal grandparents were alive, 0.5 percent did not know this about their maternal grandparents. The further removed the family category was from the family of origin, the more likely respondents were not to know about them. For example, the percentage 'don't know' answers was 2.5 percent for paternal aunts and uncles, 1.5 percent for maternal aunts and uncles, 10.5 percent for paternal cousins and 7.6 percent for maternal cousins. The percentage 'don't know' answers was 0.2 percent for children, 0.2 percent for grandchildren, and 1.1 percent for siblings. Figure 1.1 depicts the size and composition of the kin network. [1] The numbers on which the figure is based, are presented in Appendix A. In the computation of the number of

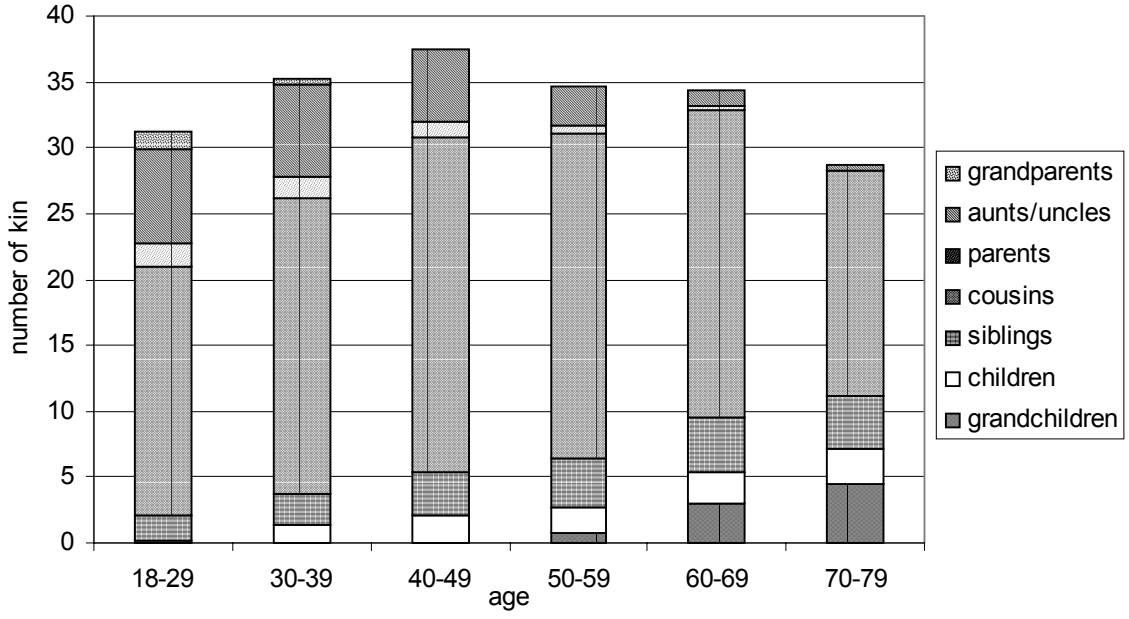
[1] To determine the number of surviving cousins, respondents were presented with the answer categories '0 to 5', '6 to 10', '11 to 15', '16 to 20', and '20 or more' during the interview. In our computation of the number of surviving cousins, we used the median of the respective categories, and rounded the highest category to 25.

surviving kin, we replaced the 'don't know' answers for a particular kin category with the mean number of surviving kin in that category for the respondent's age group.

People in the age group 40-49 have the largest families, 37.5 family members on average. They tend to have at least one parent, two children, between three and four siblings, and in some cases a grandparent. The 40 to 49-year-olds have not only between five and six aunts or uncles (slightly less than the youngest age group who are champions with 7.1 aunts and uncles on average), but also the largest number of cousins of all age groups: 25.5. The next in the order of network size is the 30-39 age group; they have an average number of 34.6 family members, among whom a large number of cousins (22.4 on average). People between 50 and 60 years old also have relatively large families (34.6 family members on average) as do the 60 to 69-year-olds (34.4 family members on average).The family networks of the 18 to 29-year-olds are relatively small (31.3 family members on average), but still larger than those of the oldest age group (28.7 family members on average). Not surprisingly, the size of families of people between 70 and 80 years old are considerably reduced. Their own parents and grandparents are likely to have died, only a very small number of their aunts and uncles are still alive, and the number of living cousins is relatively small; in fact, they have the smallest mean number of cousins of all age groups (17.2). The oldest age group has the largest mean number of children, however.

Family networks reflect demographic processes that have taken place in society at large. The drop in the birth rate is evident, for example, in the mean number of children born to people aged 40 and over (the younger respondents are expected to have more children in the years to come). The mean number of children in the older age categories is higher than in the younger age categories. Family networks also reflect the effects of the baby boom. The large post-World War II birth cohorts show up in the relatively large number of aunts and uncles among 18 to 29-year-olds, and the relatively large number of cousins among 40 to 60-year-olds.

Figure 1.1. Size and omposition of the kin network



We carried out an analysis of variance to find out to what extent background characteristics account for differences in kin network size. The results show (see Appendix B) that the networks of men and women do not differ in size. The analysis of age differences shows that

the 30 to 39-year-olds and the 40 to 49-year-olds have relatively large family networks, whereas the other 18 to 29-year-olds and the 70 to 79-year-olds have relatively small networks. The results also show that men and women with a religious affiliation have larger families on average than people without a religious affiliation. Finally, the results show that total family size is inversely related to the attained level of education: the higher educated tend to have smaller kin networks than the lower educated.

Generational structure of kin networks

Social scientists tend to look at partnerships or at parent-child relationships in isolation, rather than as being embedded in a generational structure (Hagestad, 2003). Generational structure refers to the family generations above and below an individual's generation. Addressing generational structure can contribute to an understanding of the way family roles are enacted, e.g. in terms of competing commitments, chains of attachment, and continuity across generations. The generational position people occupy in their families is an indicator of the resources available to them (e.g. the back-up support of an older generation) and of the responsibilities they have.

Table 1.1. Respondents by age and number of generations in kin network

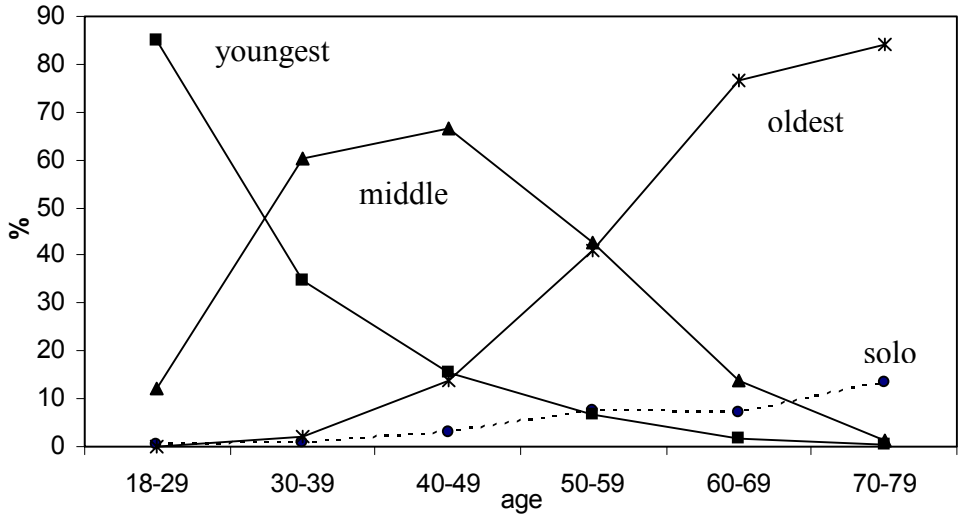
	Age of respondent						
	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	All
Number of generations	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
One	0.5	1.0	3.0	7.7	7.0	13.2	4.2
Two	21.5	25.1	27.1	31.6	18.5	6.9	23.6
Three	67.1	54.0	62.8	47.4	63.3	77.8	60.3
Four	8.5	18.0	5.4	11.7	10.2	0.9	10.1
Five	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Does not know	2.4	2.0	1.6	1.6	1.0	1.3	1.7

Table 1.1 shows the number of generations in the respondents' kin networks. A three-generation kin network means, for example, that at least one grandparent and at least one grandchild are alive. As the table shows, three-generation families are the norm in the Netherlands, not four generations as many people believe. Since Dutch women tend to have children at a relatively advanced age (European Communities, 2004), the age gap across generations tends to be relatively large. Over 60 percent of Dutch 18 to 79-year-olds have a family network in which three generations live side by side, almost 24 percent are part of a two-generation family, 10 percent belong to a family comprising four generations and approximately four percent are so-called solo individuals (Hagestad, 2000), that is to say that they have no descending or ascending kin. Solos are not necessarily familyless; over 90 percent have one or more siblings, and almost 50 percent have a partner. The older a person is, the more likely he or she is to be in a solo position. Solos are, by definition, childless. Twelve percent of men, and 14 percent of women aged 40 to 79 are childless. Previous analyses using census and registry data also show a 14-percent childlessness rate for Dutch women born between 1925 and 1959 (Dykstra, 2004).

Very few Dutch adults (less than 0.1 percent) are members of five-generation families. Mid-life adults are most likely to be part of a five-generation family. In a sample with a wider age range (i.e. a sample including the very young and the very old), the proportion four- and five-generation families would probably be higher (Van Imhoff & Post, 1998). Note furthermore that the proportion of four- and five-generation families has probably been

underestimated in the NKPS: the survey did not include any questions about the existence of either great-grandparents or great-grandchildren.

Figure 1.2. Respondents by age and generational position



Whereas Table 1.1 shows the distribution of the number of kin generations by age, Figure 1.2 shows the generational position respondents occupy in their kin networks. Between the ages of 40 and 60 it is most common for people to occupy a middle position, that is, to have both descending and ascending kin. The figure shows the ages at which people shift generational positions. The first shift is around age 30, when people become parents and a new generation arrives. This first generational shift is also evident in Table 1.2 where we see that the proportion with one or more living children jumps from 12.7 percent in the age group 18-29 to 63.3 percent in the age group 30-39. The second generational shift is around age 50, when people become the oldest generation in their families due to the loss of parents. Table 1.2 shows, however, that over 25 percent of 60 to 69-year-olds still have one or more surviving parents.

As shown in Table 1.2, 22 percent of Dutch 18 to 79-year-olds have one or more living grandparents, and 21 percent have one or more grandchildren. Less than one percent do not know whether they have living grandparents or living grandchildren. Almost all respondents whose grandparents are still alive are younger than 40 years old; a majority are in the 18-29 age group. Having said that, we do find middle-aged grandchildren, a category that does not often come to mind when you think of grandchildren. Conversely, people who have grandchildren are predominantly 50 years or over, a majority being older than 60. Of the 70-79 age group, 79 percent have grandchildren. A small percentage of those who are younger than 50 years old (3.1 percent) have grandchildren. Grandparents in the 30 to 50-year age range do exist, but they are few and far between. Grandparents aged 50-79 have an average of 4.2 grandchildren; the maximum number of grandchildren was 30.

Table 1.2. Respondents by age and whether or not they have parents, grandparents, children and grandchildren

	Age of respondent							
	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	All	Does not know
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
≥ one parent	99.3	98.9	93.3	70.4	26.1	3.4	76.2	0.1
≥ one grandparent	74.7	31.3	6.0	0.1	0.1	0.0	22.2	0.8
≥ one child	12.7	63.3	80.7	84.0	90.3	85.4	65.5	0.2
≥ one grandchild	0.0	0.2	3.0	28.6	70.3	78.5	20.6	0.1

Whereas the age at marriage and the age at motherhood are standard national statistics, the age at grandparenthood is not, which is why we have singled out this transition (see Table 1.3). Whereas the mean age at which mothers become grandmothers is 52, fathers become grandfathers at the age of 55, on average. Oppelaar and Dykstra (2004), who used data from the 1992 Dutch 'Living Arrangements and Social Networks of Older Adults' survey (NESTOR-LSN), report similar findings. Their data, based on grandparents who were between the ages of 55 and 89 at the time of data collection, show a mean age at grandparenthood of 53 for women and 55 for men.

Table 1.3. Percentage of parents who have made the transition to grandparenthood by specified ages

Age	45	50	55	60	65	70	75	79
Transition to grandparenthood (%)	4.9	17.5	40.4	66.3	81.9	89.2	89.8	91.0

Table 1.3. shows that a majority of parents have become grandparents by the time they are sixty. A small percentage (less than 5 percent) are grandparents by age 45. Nine percent of parents who have reached the age of 79 have not made the transition to grandparenthood. They are likely to remain grandchildless. Results of a Cox-regression analysis (see Appendix C) show that gender, religiosity and educational attainment each significantly affect the age at which parents become grandparents. As reported earlier, mothers become grandparents at an earlier age than fathers. The age at grandparenthood tends to be lower for parents with a religious affiliation, and they are also more likely to become grandparents than parents who consider themselves to be non-religious. Parents with lower levels of education tend to become grandparents relatively early in life compared to those with higher levels of education. The likelihood of becoming a grandparenthood is also greater among the lower educated than among the better educated.

Marital patterns

Kin networks are not only shaped by mortality and fertility patterns, but also by marital patterns. It is often suggested that the composition of families has become more complex as a result of the increase in divorce, second and third marriages, and unmarried cohabitation (Riley, 1983; Wachter, 1997). How complex are Dutch families? We will start with an analysis of partner status.

Partner status

Over the past decades the declining popularity of marriage has been a recurring topic in the media and in scientific literature (Cherlin, 2004; Kiernan, 2004; Latten, 2004). In the NKPS

survey questions were asked about the current partnership as well as all previous partnerships. A partnership was defined as having had a partner for at least three months. A partnership may be a married or an unmarried relationship, or a relationship with a person of the same or of the opposite sex, and need not be restricted to sharing a household.

Table 1.4. Respondents by age and partner status

	Age of respondent						
	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	All
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Partner in household[a]							
Married, living with spouse	13.9	58.5	71.2	75.1	73.5	55.3	56.7
Unmarried, living with partner	22.2	19.6	9.6	4.8	3.1	2.0	12.0
Partner not in household							
Single, never lived with partner	57.1	10.7	5.8	3.7	3.5	5.0	16.3
Single, after divorce/separation[b]	6.3	10.1	11.5	12.1	8.5	6.4	9.5
Single, after death spouse/partner[b]	0.1	0.3	1.0	3.6	11.0	30.2	4.8
Married, not living with spouse	0.4	0.7	1.0	0.7	0.3	0.9	0.7

[a] Excluded from the computation are three officially married respondents who were living with a different partner than their spouse.
[b] The reason for the break-up applies to the most recent partnership for those who have experienced more than one relationship dissolution.

Table 1.4 shows the distribution of respondents by age and by whether or not they were living with a partner at the time of the interview. Over two-thirds share a household with a partner. Marriage is the most frequently practised form of living with a partner (almost 57 percent of all respondents fall under this category), particularly among those between 40 and 70 years old. Twelve percent of respondents lived with a partner outside of marriage. This partnership arrangement was most popular in the younger age categories.

Not surprisingly, those who have never lived with a partner are concentrated in the youngest age group. Over 14 percent of Dutch adults are currently single, after having previously lived with a partner (either married or unmarried). Whereas singlehood after the death of one's partner or spouse is more prevalent in the older age groups, singlehood after divorce or separation is more evenly distributed across age groups.

Our results underscore that marital status is no longer a reliable indicator of the presence or absence of a co-resident partner. For example, of the officially married, 1.2 percent do not live with their spouse (0.6 percent consider themselves single, 0.5 percent report that their partners live elsewhere, and 0.1 percent are involved in a different partner relationship). Of the unmarried (i.e. officially divorced, widowed or never-married), 28.1 percent live with a partner.

Table 1.5 sheds light on the diversity in partnership experiences. We define diversity in terms of the number of partnerships and the type of partnership (marriage versus cohabitation). Both current and past co-resident partnerships are considered. Multiple partnerships are clearly not the norm in the Netherlands. The majority (69.1 percent) report one marriage or consensual union (and as we saw in Table 1.4 over 16 percent have never lived with a partner). Close to 15 percent report two or more marriages or consensual unions. Thirty to fifty-year-olds are most likely to report multiple partnerships. Table 1.5 shows that marriage is the norm in the older age groups. Current older adults grew up at a time when

unmarried cohabitation was virtually unthinkable. Levels of cohabitation are highest among the under-50s, attesting to the increasing popularity of informal living arrangements.

Table 1.5. Respondents by age and number and type of co-resident partnerships

	Age of respondent						
	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	All
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Number of partnerships							
One	38.2	69.5	73.1	80.4	82.8	85.1	69.1
≥ two	4.7	19.8	21.9	15.9	13.7	9.9	14.6
Type of partnership							
Ever-married	15.2	64.9	83.5	91.5	94.8	93.1	69.4
Ever-cohabited without marrying	28.5	33.9	20.8	11.1	5.9	4.2	20.3

So-called Living Apart Together, or LAT relationships (De Jong Gierveld, 2004), where partners do not co-reside, are another example of informal living arrangements. As Table 1.6 shows, close to seven percent of the 18 to 79-year-olds are involved in such a relationship. LAT relationships are most common in the youngest age category. In the younger age groups a LAT relationship appears to be a prelude to cohabitation or marriage, but in the older age groups it more often seems to be an alternative partnership arrangement. This is illustrated by people's future plans. Of the 18 to 29-year-olds with a LAT relationship, 94 percent plan to cohabit or get married. Of the 60 to 79-year-olds with a LAT relationship, 32 percent plan to cohabit or get married. Moreover, LAT relationships in young adulthood tend to be first partnerships, whereas in midlife and old age LAT relationships follow the dissolution of a marriage or consensual union. Among the under-40s with a LAT relationship, 21 percent have previously been married or been in a consensual union; among the 40 to 79-year-olds with a LAT relationship this figure is 83 percent.

Table 1.6. Respondents by age and whether or not they have a LAT relationship and previous partner history

	Age of respondent						
	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	All
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
LAT relationship	19.6	5.2	3.8	2.8	2.2	3.4	6.8
Never lived with partner	17.3	2.4	0.8	0.5	0.3	0.4	4.3
After divorce/separation[a]	2.2	2.8	2.9	2.1	1.1	1.2	2.2
After death spouse/partner[a]	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.3	0.7	1.8	0.3

[a] The reason for the break-up applies to the most recent relationship for those who have experienced more than one relationship dissolution.

Divorce

How often do relationships break up? Table 1.7 provides the answer to this question, drawing a distinction between official divorce (i.e. a broken marriage) and unofficial divorce (i.e. the break-up of a consensual union); 11.6 percent of Dutch 18 to 79-years-olds have ever experienced divorce (10.4 percent have had one marriage that ended in divorce, 1.2 percent have had two or more marriages that ended in divorce). The NKPS survey also has information on the break-up of consensual unions: 10.6 percent of respondents had experienced such a break-up (8.3 percent once, 2.3 percent more than once). We refer to the

break-up of consensual unions as 'unofficial divorces'. Taking official and unofficial divorce together, our findings show that 20.8 percent of the respondents had ever experienced the break-up of a relationship with a co-residing partner (16.5 percent once, 4.3 percent more than once).

A majority of respondents with divorce experience were between the ages of 40 and 60. Approximately 18 percent of people in this age group were ever-divorced. The break-up of a consensual union was found to be more common in the younger age groups. For example, of the 30 to 39-year-olds, 20 percent had ever split up with a partner they were living with outside of marriage. Both the youngest and the oldest age groups were the least likely to have experienced a partnership break-up. Many in the youngest age group are still in the process of starting a partner relationship, often not (yet) cohabiting or married. The low divorce rate in the oldest age group is a reflection of the greater barriers that existed to divorce in the past.

Table 1.7. Respondents by age and divorce experience

	Age of respondent						
	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	All
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Ever officially divorced	1.3	8.4	17.4	18.5	15.8	10.1	11.6
Ever unofficially divorced	9.2	20.0	13.8	6.7	2.6	1.2	10.6

Divorce and children

We examined whether respondents had dependent children at the time of divorce. Of first marriages ending in divorce 30.7 were childless, 61.7 percent had one or more children younger than 21 at the time of divorce, and 5.6 percent had children who were all aged 21 or over. (An inconsistency in the data was observed in 1.9 percent of the cases; the data indicated that children were born after the marriage had ended in divorce.) Apparently, the common notion of 'staying together until the children have left the home' is not widely practised: less than six percent of divorces involved children aged 21 and over.[2] Our findings on the parental phase at the time of divorce are very similar to those of the Divorce in the Netherlands (DIN) survey, which was conducted in 1998 (Kalmijn, De Graaf, Broese van Groenou, & Dykstra, 2001). In the DIN survey, 32 percent of divorcees were childless at the time their marriage broke up, 62 percent had children living at home (i.e. the youngest child was under the age of 18) and 6 percent were empty nesters (i.e. the youngest child was over 18). One should note, however, that the two surveys are not completely comparable, given sample differences (in addition to the difference in the years of data collection and the difference in the cut-off age for dependent children). Whereas the DIN survey was restricted to individuals who had divorced only once, the NKPS also includes individuals with multiple divorces. Furthermore, whereas DIN-respondents were between the ages of 30 and 75 at the time of the interview, the NKPS sample covers a wider age range.

Looking at divorces of first marriages only, we find that 69.3 percent of these marriages involved children at the time of divorce. If we also include remarriage in our analyses, we find that 78.3 percent of ever-divorced respondents had children in a marriage that ended in divorce. Consensual unions that break up are less likely to involve children than are marriages that end in divorce: 16.8 percent of ever unofficially divorced respondents had children in a consensual union that broke up.

[2] Unfortunately national statistics do not exist on the proportions of marriages ending in divorce after the youngest child has reached the age of 21. Statistics Netherlands only distinguishes between parental divorces involving minor children; childless marriages ending in divorce and marriages ending in divorce after the youngest child has reached the age of 21 are put in the same category.

Parental divorce

So far, we have only considered the respondents' own divorces. The NKPS also provides information about whether the respondents experienced the divorce of their parents' marriage. A very small number of respondents whose parents had separated but were not officially married are included in the parental divorce category in Table 1.8 (less than 7 percent of parental 'divorces' were disruptions of consensual unions). The 'other' category comprises respondents who had no information about their parents or whose parents had never shared a household.

Table 1.8. Respondents by age and parental divorce

	Age of respondent						
	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	All
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Divorce before age 21	16.4	12.2	6.3	4.4	5.0	2.9	8.8
Divorce age 21 and over	1.4	2.4	2.1	1.6	1.4	0.7	1.7
No divorce	81.3	84.5	90.3	92.6	93.2	95.5	88.4
Other	0.9	1.0	1.3	1.4	0.4	0.9	1.0

As Table 1.8 shows, a large majority of respondents have parents with intact marriages; 10.5 percent of respondents' parents had divorced. Parental divorce is most frequent in the youngest age group, where we find that over 16 percent experienced the break-up of their parents' marriage before their twenty-first birthday. After the age of 21 parental divorce becomes less common: under two percent of all respondents, slightly more when they belong to the 30-50 age groups, had parents who divorced after they had reached the age of 21. Focusing on divorces only, our findings show that 16 percent took place after the respondent had reached the age of 21. Again, we find that the common notion of 'staying together until the children have left the home' is not widely practised. The parental divorce rate in the youngest age group is virtually identical to estimates of Statistics Netherlands who report that one in six children experience the divorce of their parents before they reach the age of 21 (De Jong, 1989; Latten, 2000).

Divorce in the family

Research has repeatedly shown that children of divorced parents are more likely to see a marriage ending in divorce than children of parents whose marriages have remained intact (Amato, 1996; Diekmann & Engelhardt, 1999; Fischer, 2004). The NKPS data enable us to examine whether divorce runs in families. We first examined divorce among siblings. Five percent of our respondents had no siblings, and 21.4 percent had one or more siblings who have gone through a divorce.[3] Next, we considered the occurrence of divorce in the extended family, focusing on aunts and uncles, cousins, and grandparents[4]; 20.8% of respondents indicated they had an aunt, uncle, cousin or grandparent who had experienced divorce.

[3] This figure is probably an underestimation of sibling divorce because the NKPS survey does not provide marital history information on all siblings. There is information on current partner status for a maximum of two siblings. One of the response categories was 'single, after divorce'. Siblings who remarried after divorce cannot be identified on the basis of this. In addition, the survey had a general question on the occurrence of divorce in the respondent's family, where a sibling might have been identified as the person involved.

[4] We used the responses to a general question on the occurrence of divorce in the respondent's family: 'Has anyone in your family ever separated or divorced? If so, which family member was involved?'. Respondents

We were interested in finding out whether the likelihood of divorce is affected by divorce in the family. Results of a Cox-regression analysis (see Appendix D) of the duration of first marriages show that, controlling for gender, birth cohort, educational attainment, religiosity and childlessness in the first marriage - factors which have repeatedly been shown to be predictors of divorce (De Graaf & Kalmijn, 2001; White, 1990) - parental divorce and sibling divorce affect the likelihood of divorce. People with divorced parents and those with one or more siblings who have divorced are more likely to see their first marriage end in divorce than people whose parents did not divorce and those who do not have a divorced sibling. Only children are less likely to experience divorce than those who have one or more siblings. This result is contrary to what Diekman and Engelhardt (1999) report using data from the 1988 German Family Survey. Their analysis did not include a measure of sibling divorce, which might account for the inconsistency in findings. Interestingly, divorce in the extended family does not affect the likelihood of divorce. Divorce seems to run along nuclear rather than extended family lines, suggesting that socialisation experiences in the parental home (and perhaps genetic relatedness) shape the proneness to divorce.

The pattern of results for the background characteristics shows few surprising results, with the exception of sex: first marriages of women are more likely to end in divorce than those of men. It is unclear how this finding can be accounted for. Given that men tend to be less accurate reporters of demographic events (Festy & Prioux, 2002; Poulain, Riandley, & Firdion, 1992) it is conceivable that men are more inclined than women to underreport the occurrence of divorce. This issue clearly requires further examination. Differences by birth cohort show that the likelihood of divorce is lower for people who were born between 1923 and 1945 than for those who were born later in the twentieth century. The findings for educational attainment show that, compared with people with primary education only, those with higher vocational or university education are less likely to see their first marriage end in divorce. Differences by religiosity are in the expected direction: those who identify themselves as being religious are less likely to have divorced than those who do not consider themselves religious. Finally, childless first marriages (13.2% of all first marriages) are more likely to end in divorce than are marriages in which children have been born.

Half and step ties

Remarriage and the arrival of new children lead to complexity in kin networks: multiple sets of parents, grandparents, children and grandchildren. To gain insight into the degree of complexity of Dutch kin networks, we first identified the number of partners with whom respondents had had children. For each partner with whom they had ever lived, respondents were asked whether they had had children with that person. In addition, respondents were asked whether they had had children with a person with whom they had never lived. Here we consider biological children only: 34.3 percent of respondents had never had children; 63.4 percent had children, all with the same partner; and 2.4 percent had children with two or more partners (the maximum number of partners with whom respondents had children is five). These figures include the 0.7 percent who had children with a non co-resident partner. If we restrict the analysis to respondents aged 40 and over, we find that 15.4 percent were childless and that 3.2 percent of respondents had children with two or more partners.

Next we considered half and step ties. As shown in Table 1.9, 10.9 percent of respondents had one or more step parents, that is, one or both of their parents started a new partnership after divorce or widowhood.[5] Respondents are more likely to have step mothers than step fathers, a

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who identified an aunt, uncle, cousin or grandparent in response to this question were assigned a score of one on the divorce in the extended family variable.

[5] The percentage of respondents with step parents might be underestimated in the NKPS. If parents had divorced or if they had never lived together, respondents were asked whether their parents had ever started a new

finding that reflects men's greater likelihood of remarrying after divorce or widowhood (Liefbroer & Dykstra, 2000; South, 1991; Uunk, 1999); 4.4 percent have step fathers only, 4.0 percent have both a step mother and a step father, and 2.5 percent have a step mother only. The youngest respondents are most likely to have a step parent. Seven percent of respondents have a half sibling. Half siblings who are no longer alive are included in this figure. Though the percentages with half siblings do not differ much by age, the antecedents of the new parental relationship differ. Whereas the older respondents are more likely to have had parents who remarried after widowhood, the younger respondents are more likely to have had parents who remarried after divorce. More than two percent of respondents had a step sibling. Respondents were asked to count only those step siblings with whom they had ever lived or were currently living in the same household.[6] Again, we see that the youngest respondents were most likely to have a step sibling. Finally, we examined the existence of step children. In the survey, we asked only about step children who were members of the respondents' household at the time of the interview or had been members in the past. Approximately three percent of respondents reported having step children. Respondents between the ages of 40 and 70 were most likely to have step children; these are the groups with the highest proportions of divorcees.

Table 1.9. Respondents by age and half or step ties

	Age of respondent							
	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	All	Does not know
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
≥ one step parent	16.4	15.4	11.2	6.0	6.0	2.9	10.9	0.0
≥ one half sibling	8.2	7.2	5.9	7.8	6.3	6.1	7.1	0.0
≥ one step sibling	4.5	2.9	1.9	1.1	1.4	1.3	2.4	0.0
≥ one step child	0.7	2.0	4.7	4.6	4.7	2.8	3.1	0.0

Conclusion

There are many myths about the impact of demographic changes on the size, composition and structure of kin networks. As researchers, we have not always been able to redress misconceptions due to a lack of appropriate data. We have been able to sketch developments in childbearing, marriage, divorce and remarriage in broad strokes, but when it comes to telling the story of how these changes come together in people's lives and families we often end up with more questions than answers. With data from surveys like the NKPS, we can describe what contemporary families look like and what is going on in those families.

As in other industrialised countries, the Netherlands has witnessed a rise in life expectancy over the past decades. Whereas Dutch trends in mortality do not stand out when viewed internationally, this cannot be said for Dutch childbearing patterns. Until the

partnership. In the event of widowhood, this question was not asked. The survey does, however, provide information about the mother's or father's current partner if parents were no longer together. We lack information about new partnerships formed after widowhood that broke up before the time of the interview.

[6] We checked whether the focus on step siblings who lived in the same household as the respondent could have resulted in an underestimation of the proportion of respondents with step siblings, namely the exclusion of step siblings related to the respondent through the biological father's new partnership. If such a bias exists, we should find a lower proportion of respondents with step siblings among those with a step mother than among those with a step father. Analyses showed no evidence for such a bias. Among respondents with a step mother, 17 percent report step siblings. Among respondents with a step father, 11 percent report step siblings. Among respondents with both a step mother and a step father, 22 percent report step siblings.

beginning of the 1960s the Netherlands was one of the few countries in the western world with a relatively high fertility level, and the decline in the birth rate to below replacement levels did not set in until the early 1970s (Beets, 1993). Moreover, there are few countries in the world where the mean age of women at first birth is as high as it is in the Netherlands. What do these trends mean for the kin networks in which Dutch older adults are embedded, and what lessons can be gleaned from our results?

Firstly, and contrary to what is often suggested, the near future for today's older adults is not likely to be dramatic. Our results show that those who are now entering old age (the current 60-plus generation) have a relatively large number of children as potential providers of assistance. They are the baby boom parents. The birth cohorts succeeding them, roughly those born in 1946 and afterwards, are the older adults of the future who will have a more limited supply of children to help out should they require assistance. They will turn 75, the age at which older adults typically start having difficulties managing on their own, in the year 2021. For many years to come, the Netherlands will have older adults with relatively large numbers of adult children.

Secondly, and contrary to popular belief, vertically extended families with four or five generations alive at the same time are not common in the Netherlands. A majority of Dutch adults are members of three-generation families. In countries like Hungary (Knipscheer, Dykstra, Utasi, & Cxeh-Szombathy, 2000) and the United States (Soldo, 1996), where women have their children earlier in life, higher proportions of adults are members of four-generation families. Given the advanced mean age at which Dutch people become parents for the first time, the Netherlands has a decelerated generational turnover.

Thirdly, our findings give little credence to the image of the sandwich generation (Brody, 1981; Miller, 1981), the men and women caught between simultaneous responsibilities for their parents and children. Dutch adults typically occupy middle-generation positions between the ages of 30 and 60. This is not a period in the life course when both young children and elderly parents are likely to need care. For those in the younger part of the age range (i.e. those with child-care responsibilities), parents are not at risk of frailty. For those in the older part of the age range (i.e. those caring for their parents), children will generally have left the home. As several researchers have previously demonstrated (Agree, Bisset, & Rendall, 2003; Dykstra, 1997; Rosenthal, Martin-Matthews, & Matthews, 1996; Soldo, 1996) the image of a sandwich generation juggling care commitments towards parents and children is clearly a misconception of mid-life.

Whereas an examination of childbearing and mortality patterns tells us more about the existence of biological kin, an examination of divorce and remarriage patterns sheds light on the existence of half and step kin. Divorce rates in the Netherlands are very low compared with the United States (Teachman, Tedrow, & Crowder, 2000) and the United Kingdom (Allan, Hawker, & Crow, 2001). As stated, the most recent estimate for the Netherlands is that one in four marriages will end in divorce. Our findings show that the numbers of Dutch adults affected by a partnership break-up are not as dramatic as they are often made out to be. Approximately one out of nine Dutch adults have ever been divorced, and one out of five have seen either a marriage or a consensual union come to an end. One out of eight Dutch adults have experienced the divorce of their parents' marriage. People with divorce experience, whether it is their parents' or their own, are concentrated in the younger age groups. The Netherlands will have increasing numbers of adults entering middle and old age with a history of broken ties. Nevertheless, the large majority of Dutch adults have parents with intact marriages and are in their first marriage themselves.

Though increasing numbers of Dutch adults are leaving partnerships and entering new ones, our results show that childbearing is restricted almost entirely to a single partner over the course of a lifetime. Between two and three percent have children with two or more

partners. Concomitantly, the percentages with half family are not very high: seven percent have one or more half siblings. Adults who have acquired step ties because their parents have entered into new partnerships are concentrated in the younger age groups. Whereas 11 percent of all adults taken together had one or more step parents, this was 16 percent for the 18 to 29-year age group. The percentage with one or more step siblings was two for all adults taken together, but close to five percent for the 18 to 29-year-olds. Note that a restricted definition of step relationships was used in the NKPS: respondents were asked to report only those step siblings and step children with whom they had ever shared a household.

The picture emerging from our findings is that the complexity of Dutch kin networks is perhaps not as great as public debate often suggests, and less pronounced than in the United Kingdom and the United States, but nevertheless unmistakable. Furthermore, if we take the concentration of divorce and step family experiences in the younger age groups as an indicator of ongoing trends, we can conclude that Dutch families are moving in the direction of increasing complexity. The trend towards increasing complexity is also reflected in the findings on non-marital partnerships. One in five Dutch adults report having cohabited with a partner without being married. Again, the likelihood of ever having lived with a partner outside of marriage is greater in the younger than in the older age groups. Seven percent of Dutch respondents have a LAT relationship. These relationships introduce complexity in the sense that households and partnerships are independent of each other.

In this chapter we consciously restricted ourselves to descriptions of the number of different types of kin. We have provided findings only on whether they exist, not on the content or quality of these ties. Though the size and composition of kin networks are valid indicators of their support quality (e.g. Wenger, 1996), a focus on structural kin network characteristics provides only a partial view of family life, of course. To gain a better understanding of kinship resources and commitments we need to know what goes on in the various types of kin relationships. To what extent is the kin network activated? The answer to this question requires analyses within and across generations of mutual contact, patterns of exchange and back-up, as well as rules of kinship obligation. Analyses should also focus on the nature of kin ties (are they biological, half or step ties?), on whether the ties are formed through marriage or unmarried cohabitation, and on the impact of the generational structure in which they are embedded. These are the kinds of issues we would like to address in future work using data provided by the NKPS.

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Appendix A. Respondents by age and mean number of kin of different types

	Age of respondent					
	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79
Grandchildren	0	.01	.04	.71	2.9	4.4
Children	.2	1.3	2.0	2.0	2.4	2.8
Siblings	1.9	2.4	3.3	3.7	4.2	3.9
Cousins	18.8	22.4	25.5	24.6	23.4	17.2
Parents	1.9	1.7	1.2	0.6	0.2	0
Aunts/uncles	7.1	7.0	5.4	3.0	1.3	0.4
Grandparents	1.4	.4	.1	0	0	0
Total	31.3	35.2	37.5	34.6	34.4	28.7

Appendix B. Analysis of variance of mean family network size (multiple classification analysis)

			Deviation from the mean (M = 34.3)	
	F		Unadjusted	Adjusted for other factors
Gender	3.5			
Men			-.53	-.23
Women			.39	.17
Age	40.6	***		
18-29			-3.0	-1.6
30-39			.9	1.8
40-49			3.1	3.5
50-59			-.3	.-5
60-69			-.1	-1.4
70-79			-5.6	-7.7
Religion	216.2	***		
Non-religious			-3.9	-4.1
Religious			3.2	3.4
Missing value religion			-.4	-.7
Education	15.1	***		
Up to primary			1.2	2.6
Lower secondary			1.7	1.5
Upper secondary			-.3	-.6
Higher vocational			-.9	-1.0
University			-2.4	-2.2
$R^2 = .08$				
N = 8139				

** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Appendix C. Cox-regression analysis of the age at which parents become grandparents (relative risks)

	exp (B)	
Fathers	1.00	-
Mothers	1.32	***
Non-religious	1.00	-
Religious	1.16	**
Missing value religion	1.21	*
Up to primary education	1.00	-
Lower secondary education	.71	***
Upper secondary education	.58	***
Higher vocational education	.47	***
University education	.37	***
-2 log likelihood	25439	
df	7	
N	5454	

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

Appendix D. Cox-regression analysis of the duration of first marriages ending in divorce (relative risks)

	exp (B)	
Men	1.00	-
Women	1.21	**
Birth cohort 1923-1935	.44	***
Birth cohort 1936-1945	.72	***
Birth cohort 1946-1955	1.00	-
Birth cohort 1956-1965	1.06	
Birth cohort 1966-1975	1.07	
Birth cohort 1976-1985	.96	
Non-religious	1.00	-
Religious	.70	***
Missing value religion	.95	
Up to primary education	1.00	-
Lower secondary education	.84	
Upper secondary education	.86	
Higher vocational education	.74	**
University education	.65	**
Childless	4.35	**
Parents divorced	2.03	***
Sibling(s) divorced	1.12	*
Only child	.72	*
Divorce in extended family	1.10	
-2 log likelihood	18110	
df	17	
N	5673	

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

Chapter 2

Geographical distances between family members

Clara H. Mulder & Matthijs Kalmijn

Introduction

Geographical proximity (living nearby) can be expected to have an important influence on contacts and solidarity between family members. The popular picture is that these days family members live further away from each other than they did a few decades ago. If that were indeed the case, the conditions for the exchange of help and care among family members would be diminished.

Some forms of contact between family members are hardly influenced by geographical proximity because they can take place by telephone, post or e-mail. An example of contact with little sensitivity to distance is the exchange of emotional support (De Jong Gierveld & Fokkema, 1998). Other forms of contact are made easier by geographical proximity, but are still possible from a distance (incidental visits, an anniversary). For some other forms of contact, proximity does play a role. This applies in particular to the giving of instrumental support, especially where frequent and/or immediate help or care is concerned. A few studies have shown that with greater distance a strong decline does indeed occur in instrumental support between family members (De Jong Gierveld & Fokkema, 1998; Joseph & Hallman, 1998; Litwak & Kulis, 1987) and in contacts and joint activities by family members (Bengtson & Roberts, 1991; Grundy & Shelton, 2001; Lawton, Silverstein & Bengtson, 1994; Smith, 1998). The causal direction behind these correlations is unclear, however. Proximity can lead to more frequent contact and support exchange, but a greater need for support may also lead to a decline in distance. For example, people may decide to move closer to their parents when they are in need of support or they may decide against moving further away from their parents in such circumstances. Hence, there is a recursive causal relationship between distance on the one hand, and contact or support on the other hand.

Surprisingly enough, little is known about the actual distances between the residential locations of family members in the Netherlands. Some American and British studies have investigated how far away adult children live from their parents (Clark & Wolf, 1992; Lin & Rogerson, 1995; Rogerson, Burr & Lin, 1997; Rogerson, Weng & Lin, 1993; Silverstein, 1995; Warnes, 1984, 1986). For Britain, Warnes (1986) found that, depending on the social classes of the parents and the children, between 5 and 15 percent of the children of retired parents lived within one kilometre, between a quarter and just over half within five kilometres of each other, and between four and 16 percent over 200 kilometres away from each other. For the United States, Rogerson, Weng and Lin (1993) found that for about one quarter of adult children the parents lived closer than five miles (eight kilometres) from each other, and for about a quarter they lived further than 250 miles (400 kilometres) away. Considering the completely different scale and geography of the Netherlands in comparison with the United States or Great Britain – the largest possible distance within the Netherlands is not much more than 300 kilometres –, the findings of these studies are probably of limited relevance to the situation in the Netherlands. For the Netherlands, data on travelling time to family members are available in the NESTOR-LSN survey among older adults (Broese van Groenou et al., 1995). From these data Dykstra and Knipscheer (1995) derived that 86 percent of adults aged 55-89 had at least one child living within 30 minutes travelling time.

As far as we are aware, the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study (NKPS) is the first nationally representative survey containing data on the residential locations of a large number of family

members, using a detailed indicator of location. In this chapter, we explore the geographical distances between family members in the Netherlands based on the NKPS. A description is given of distances to parents, children and siblings separately, and to all family members (also including the parents-in-law). The chapter's research question is as follows: How far do people live away from their family members, how do the distances to family members relate to socio-economic status, educational level, age, household composition, housing tenure, degree of urbanisation and health, and how have distances between family members changed over time? This question is answered using both descriptive methods and OLS regression models.

Distances to family members: theory and previous research

It can be safely assumed that the vast majority of people start their lives living with their parents and, if present, their siblings. Therefore, the distances to parents and siblings of a person at one particular moment in time are the result of the residential relocations this person and his or her parents and siblings have undertaken during their life course. These relocations lead to changes in the distance to family members either coincidentally or deliberately. Explanations of the distance to family members should therefore be sought in factors hampering or enhancing residential relocations that lead to a change in distance either coincidentally or by means of a deliberate action to stay near, move closer to or move away from family members. It is assumed that – on average – coincidental changes lead to an increase in distance from family members.

Factors influencing the likelihood of residential relocations

There are powerful mechanisms through which the distance to family members is likely to be short and to remain so over the life course. The low likelihood that people will change residence has also been termed residential inertia (Huff & Clark, 1978). A major cause of this inertia is that moving is costly in both a financial and non-financial sense, and will only take place if a rather strong trigger exists (Mulder, 1996). This is the case in particular for exactly those moves that cause a major increase in distance to family members: migrations over a longer distance. For people to migrate, the relative advantage of a new location should at least exceed the cost of moving (Sjaastad, 1962). The extra cost of migration compared with residential mobility (relocation over a short distance) has to do with the fact that local ties, also denoted as location-specific capital (DaVanzo, 1981) may be endangered by migration. Location-specific capital is therefore a major factor binding people to a place. It may have to do with the dwelling itself, or with its location with respect to work, friends, cultural facilities, and the like. The proximity of family members may in itself be an important part of location-specific capital.

Older people are considerably less likely to change residence than younger people. The vast majority of residential relocations take place in the years just after leaving the parental home (see, for example, Dieleman & Mulder, 2002). One might therefore expect that the present distance between parents and children is mainly caused by the past residential mobility of the children. This was indeed found by Warnes (1986) for the United Kingdom. Growing older increases the likelihood of having moved in the past and it also increases the likelihood that one's children and siblings have moved. At the same time, some older people might use their greater freedom in choosing a residential location after retirement and move towards their children. So, on balance, it is not clear in advance what to expect regarding the distances to people's family members when they are older compared with when they are young.

Very pronounced gender differences in migration are not usually found, but particularly in young adulthood women are somewhat more likely to migrate than men (see, for example, Boyle, Halfacree & Robinson, 1998). It has also been found that women are more likely to move long distances for reasons of marriage (Mulder & Wagner, 1993). This might lead them to live somewhat further away from their families than men.

The presence of other household members also ties people to a place. People living alone are indeed more likely to move than couples or families with children (Mulder, 1993). Apart from being less geographically mobile in general, families with children might be particularly reluctant to migrate away from family members. Families with children might attach particular importance to the proximity of family members because they might value their support in caring for the children or the opportunity for their children to be in close contact with grandparents, aunts and uncles. Conversely, grandparents might attach particular importance to living near their children and grandchildren, more so than parents of couples without children. We therefore expect the distance to family members, particularly to parents, to be shorter for households with children than for other households.

Because of the greater dispersal of specialist than non-specialist jobs, the highly educated and those with a high socio-economic status are much more likely to accept a job far from their home and to migrate for that job (Börsch-Supan, 1990; Mulder, 1993; Simpson, 1992; Van Ham, 2001). Highly educated people are also more likely to have moved for educational reasons. We therefore expect the distance to family members to be greater for the highly educated than for others and to be positively associated with socio-economic status. People enrolled in education are also expected to live far from their families: in our study we only observed people in education who did not live in the parental home, and it is likely that many of them had moved out because the school or university was located too far from the parental home to commute. It is not immediately clear what to expect for dual-earners compared with one-earner households. All else being equal, dual-earner couples are less likely to migrate than one-earner couples (Smits, Mulder & Hooimeijer, 2003). But at the same time, dual-earner couples are found most among the more mobile categories of the population: the highly educated, those with a high socio-economic status, and the younger birth cohorts.

Home ownership is an important source of local ties. Homeowners are much less likely to move or migrate than renters (Helderman, Mulder & Van Ham, 2004; Mulder, 1993). It is therefore expected that homeowners, and those who have ever owned a home, live closer to their family members than renters.

In urbanised areas the availability of jobs and educational opportunities is greater than in rural areas. People who currently live in urban areas are therefore quite likely to have migrated there at some point in time – most probably when they were young, and most probably away from their parents. People who currently live in rural areas are more likely to have grown up there. So, we can expect people in urban areas to live further away from their parents than others. Similarly, whereas the children of people who currently live in urban areas are likely to have grown up in that area and to have had little necessity to move away, those currently living in rural areas are likely to have seen their children move away. We can therefore expect people in urban areas to live closer to their children.

Health problems are likely to lead to an increase in the importance attached to proximity of family members. People with health problems may therefore be reluctant to move away from family members and more likely to move towards them. They are therefore expected to live closer to family members than people without health problems.

Studies of the residential behaviour of international migrants in various countries and cities (for example, Bowes et al., 1997; Murdie, 2002) have shown that migrants tend to move near

to people from their country of origin upon first arrival and that the presence of family members plays an important part in determining a migrant's location.
Research has also shown that there are differences in family solidarity between ethnic categories; migrants from certain non-western countries have stronger norms of family solidarity than the native born in western countries (Rosenthal, 1986; for migrant groups in the Netherlands: Abraham, 1996; Yerden, 2000). Migrants may therefore show a greater reluctance to move away from family members and a greater propensity to move closer to them. We therefore expect the distance to family members who live in the Netherlands to be smaller among foreign-born than among native-born. Of course, we have to bear in mind that the international migration process itself often entails family disruption and an increase in the distance to family members. Hence, when family members live in the same country of destination, they tend to live closer to each other than the native population, but at the same time, we expect that among migrants, more family members tend to live abroad. The net result of these two tendencies is not clear a priori.

Distances between parents and children versus distances between siblings
The vast majority of migrations are undertaken before people have children. So, typically, there is a fixed place of residence of the parents during a child's adult life. The child moves away from this place of residence upon leaving the parental home, either to start a separate household nearby or to move somewhere else for school, for work or to live with a partner. Further migrations may follow. These are typically also undertaken by the child rather than by the parents. If we consider non-coresiding siblings, the picture is different. We then have people of the same generation, each being equally likely to have moved away from the parental home. We therefore expect distances between siblings to be greater than distances between parents and their children.

Because most migrations are undertaken by the younger generation, we may expect that characteristics of the children have a stronger influence on the distance between parents and children than characteristics of the parents. We therefore expect that the distance to parents can be better explained by individual and household characteristics than the distance to children. Because siblings belong to the same generation and are equally likely to migrate for their own reasons, we expect the smallest influence of individual and household characteristics on distances to siblings.

There is also another reason to expect that parents and children live closer to one another than siblings, and that the influence of individual and household characteristics on distances between siblings is smaller than that on distances between parents and children. Parents and children tend to feel they have more obligations towards each other than siblings (Rossi & Rossi, 1990). So, to the extent that people deliberately undertake action to stay near or move closer to family members, one would expect them to do so more with respect to their parents or children than with respect to their siblings. Regrettably, we have no way of distinguishing with certainty between coincidental differences in distances and deliberate actions. But the origin of our hypotheses does differ: whereas for health problems and for differences between people with children and those without children the hypotheses are based (partly) on expectations about deliberate actions, for the other individual and household characteristics they are mainly based on coincidental changes in distance.

Changes through time in distances between parents and children
Although many would probably guess that people live further away from their family members than they did a few decades ago, changes in distance to family members have not been investigated before. The reasons why one might expect an increasing distance to family members over the last few decades are related in part to the growth in the proportion of highly

educated. People with high levels of education are particularly likely to migrate, so their likelihood of living far away from family members is probably high as well. Changes in the structure of the economy have undoubtedly also played a role in changes in distance. The decrease in farming jobs, for example, led to a substantial flow of rural-urban migration up to the 1960s, which has probably led many family networks to become more dispersed. Finally, an increase in distance is suggested by changes in the perceived importance of the family. If it is true that people place less emphasis on their families for support, residential decisions will more often be made independently of family concerns.

It should be stressed that an increase in the distances between family members has not necessarily led to a decrease in opportunities for contact. Even if the distances have increased, faster travel speed might well have offset the extra time needed to cover greater distances. This greater speed was caused by increased car ownership and infrastructural improvements.

Investigating distances to family members using the NKPS

The data were taken from the main sample of the first wave of the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study, conducted in 2002-2003 among 8155 respondents representative of the Netherlands population aged 18-79 and not living in institutions. From these, we selected those respondents who lived independently of their parents (N = 7877). The data contain a wealth of information about relations between so-called Anchor respondents and their partners, parents, parents-in-law, children and siblings.

The residential locations of the Anchor and all these family members were measured in detail using the full six-digit postcode. A postcode is usually assigned to only one side or part of a street and thus covers up to a few dozen addresses. Distances to family members were derived from the co-ordinates of these postcodes rounded off to hundreds of metres. They were measured along a straight line. Distances were only calculated for non-coresiding family members. Distances to people living outside the Netherlands were not included. Because the Netherlands is a small country, this leads to a rather short maximum distance to family members compared with larger countries. The observed maximum distance to any family member in the analysis was 282 kilometres (quite close to the theoretical maximum of not much more than 300 kilometres).

The measurements of most independent variables (age, household situation, level of education completed, employment status) were straightforward. The socio-economic status of the job held by the Anchor respondent was measured using the International Socio-Economic Index (ISEI; Ganzeboom, De Graaf & Treiman, 1992). In the multivariate analyses, people who did not have a job were assigned the average ISEI. This is a standard procedure to obtain a reliable parameter estimate whilst not having to exclude respondents with no known ISEI from the analysis. The ISEI was divided by 10 to obtain more easily interpretable parameter estimates. The variable ‘ever homeowner’ indicates whether the respondent had ever become the owner of a home in which he or she lived. The degree of urbanisation was measured as the address density of the municipality inhabited by the respondent, provided by Statistics Netherlands. Respondents were categorised as having health problems whenever they reported that their general health was bad or very bad or whenever they reported they had prolonged illnesses, health disorders or handicaps that caused severe or slight limitations in their daily activities.

The available data provided us with only limited opportunities to study changes through time in the distances between family members. We did have some information about the proximity of grandparents when the NKPS respondents were fifteen years old: respondents were asked whether their grandparents lived in the same place of residence at that time. Using this information for respondents of various ages, we could reconstruct the

percentage living near their grandparents through time, and thereby also the percentage of people with 15-year-old children who lived near their parents.
Here descriptive statistics are given of the association between individual and household characteristics and various indicators of distances to family members: the number of family members outside the household; the average distance to all family members together (that is, parents, children, siblings and parents-in-law); the average distances to parents, children and siblings separately; the number of family members living at a distance of less than one kilometre; and the percentage having at least one family member living that close. For the descriptive statistics, we used the NKPS weights for individuals that correct for selective non-response and an address sample rather than a person sample.

Next, OLS regression models of average distances were used to investigate the influence of individual and household characteristics of the Anchor respondent on the average distance to all family members and the average distances to parents, children and siblings separately. The regressions were estimated using unweighted data. To ensure comparability with other chapters in this book, so-called adjusted means based on an analysis of variance are also given (see Appendix 2.1). A great advantage of using distance directly in regression models is the ease of interpretation of the findings – any parameter or adjusted means is expressed in kilometres. It can be argued, however, that distance in kilometres is not the best specification of the dependent variable. This is because many factors are likely to matter more to a one-kilometre difference in distance close by (say, a difference between one and two kilometres) than to such a difference far away (say, a difference between 100 and 101 kilometres). To acknowledge this difference between short and long distances, additional regression models were estimated using the natural logarithm of the distance as the dependent variable. Before the calculation of logarithms, distances between 0 and 1 kilometre were recoded into one kilometre. These additional models are presented in Appendix 2.2.

Findings on distances between family members

Descriptive findings
People were found to have an average of about five family members (parents, children, siblings or parents-in-law) living outside the household, in the Netherlands for whom the distance from their own homes was known. The percentage not having any of these family members is small (3%, not shown in tables). This percentage is substantial only among the foreign-born: 23%. The average distance to these family members is 33.8 kilometres (Table 2.1 on next page). As expected, the average distance between parents and children is smaller than the average distance between siblings. This difference is quite substantial: whereas the distance between parents and children was estimated to be just over 29 kilometres, the distance between siblings was 39 kilometres. People have an average of 0.6 family members who live at a distance of less than one kilometre; 32% have at least one family member living at such a short distance.

Table 2.1. Family network indicators by age group							
Age group	Average N family members	Average distance to all family members	Average distance to parents	Average distance to children	Average distance to siblings	Average N family members within 1 km	% At least 1 family member within 1 km
18-29	4.6	35.0	34.1	- -	38.2	0.6	26
30-39	4.7	28.3	25.1	- -	32.3	0.7	32
40-49	5.2	33.6	29.2	33.6	38.1	0.6	31
50-59	5.4	36.3	33.7	29.1	42.3	0.5	31
60-69	5.5	35.0	- -	26.6	42.2	0.6	37
70-79	4.7	39.8	- -	31.9	48.3	0.6	34
Total	5.0	33.8	29.5	29.3	39.0	0.6	32
F test, significance	25.3, 0.00	13.8, 0.00	7.0, 0.00	2.8, 0.01	16.4, 0.00	4.4, 0.00	
Number of respondents	7624						

Family members living abroad have not been included in Table 2.1. To give an impression of how many people have family members abroad, we note that among those respondents who had any living parent not sharing their household whose address was known, 7% had at least one parent abroad. Calculated in the same way, 9% hade at least one child abroad, 16% at least one sibling and 9% at least one parent-in-law abroad. These numbers are obviously higher for the foreign-born than for the native-born: for at least one parent abroad, 60% against 2%; for at least one child, 22% against 8%; for at least one sibling 70% versus 12%; and for at least one parent-in-law 47% versus 6% respectively.

We did not find a very pronounced age pattern in distances to family members (also in Table 2.1). The youngest age category (18-29), however, does seem to occupy a special position: distances to family members were considerably longer among this age group than among those aged 30-39. It should be borne in mind that the youngest category is selective with regard to having left the parental home. We paid particular attention to those who had left home at a young age, most likely for reasons of education or work. The distances indeed appear to be extra long for those aged under 25 (not shown). Another striking finding are the long distances for people aged over 70. These long distances might have been caused by a tendency towards a further dispersal of families as family members grow older. Alternatively, they might have been caused by selective survival of mobile people. For example, it is known that highly educated people live longer than others, and they also migrate more. The older age categories are somewhat more likely to have at least one family member living at a distance closer than one kilometre.

Considering the family network indicators for people in different household situations (Table 2.2), several findings stand out. The largest numbers of family members, and also the largest numbers living within one kilometre, were found for those living with a partner, probably because many of these have living parents-in-law. As expected, the smallest distances to family members (mainly parents and siblings) were found for those who have children. The longest distances were found for singles aged under 30.

Table 2.2. Family network indicators by household situation							
Household situation	Average N family members	Average distance to all family members	Average distance to parents	Average distance to children	Average distance to siblings	Average N family members within 1 km	% At least 1 family member within 1 km
Cohab/married no child	5.4	35.7	32.7	29.5	41.6	0.6	32
Cohab/married + child(ren)	5.3	30.0	25.6	31.4	35.0	0.8	36
Single parent	4.1	32.7	25.8	26.0	38.3	0.5	28
Single, age <30	3.7	44.9	43.1	- -	48.0	0.4	17
Single, age 30-60	4.0	35.7	32.0	22.0	39.7	0.4	23
Single, age 60-79, male	4.5	35.7	- -	29.0	42.4	0.5	27
Single, age 60-79, female	4.7	37.2	- -	28.9	42.5	0.6	34
Total	5.0	33.8	29.5	29.3	39.0	0.6	32
F test, significance	57.7, 0.00	12.6, 0.00	9.8, 0.00	1.5, 0.18	8.1, 0.00	15.2, 0.00	

Level of education strongly influenced the dispersal of families (Table 2.3). For people with up to primary education, we found an average distance of 24 kilometres to all family members, whereas this distance amounted to 55 for the university educated. Distances to parents differed even more: 16 kilometres for those with up to primary education and 55 for the university educated. For most distance indicators, the differences between the higher levels of education were more pronounced than the differences between the lower educational levels, at least when distance was regarded in absolute terms. The difference between up to primary and lower secondary level was less than 3 kilometres, the difference between lower secondary and upper secondary was about 7.5 kilometres, the difference between upper secondary and higher vocational level was 10 kilometres, and the difference between higher vocational and university level was no less than almost 20 kilometres. The university educated also had the smallest number of family members living within one kilometre and the smallest likelihood of having at least one family member living within one kilometre.

Table 2.3. Family network indicators by level of education							
Level of education	Average N family members	Average distance to all family members	Average distance to parents	Average distance to children	Average distance to siblings	Average N family members within 1 km	% At least 1 family member within 1 km
Up to primary	5.1	23.9	15.5	19.8	28.5	0.9	44
Lower secondary	5.4	25.1	18.1	22.6	30.0	0.9	42
Upper secondary	4.9	31.3	25.8	31.8	36.7	0.6	33
Higher vocational	5.0	41.2	35.8	38.8	48.5	0.4	23
University	4.5	55.1	55.3	49.1	55.7	0.2	13
Total	5.0	33.8	29.5	29.3	39.0	0.6	32
F test, significance	18.5, 0.00	135.6, 0.00	85.7, 0.00	40.5, 0.00	79.0, 0.00	67.8, 0.00	

The pattern for socio-economic status was found to be similar to that for level of education (Table 2.4): those with a high status lived further away from their families than those with a low status, and the differences were most pronounced for distances to parents. People without jobs were somewhere in the middle; this is a heterogeneous category of unemployed, housewives and retired people. For employment status, we mainly see a difference between those in education and others, in the expected direction: those in education lived considerably further away from their family members (Table 2.5). There was only a small difference between one-earner and dual-earner couples, with the dual-earner couples indeed living further away from their parents than single-earner couples (Table 2.6).

Table 2.4. Family network indicators by socio-economic status

Socio-economic status	Average N family members	Average distance to all family members	Average distance to parents	Average distance to children	Average distance to siblings	Average N family members within 1 km	% At least 1 family member within 1 km
no job	5.0	35.0	29.0	28.2	41.7	0.6	35
lowest <25%	5.1	25.0	19.9	24.2	29.6	0.9	40
25-<50%	5.2	29.7	23.6	31.3	34.6	0.7	34
50-<75%	5.0	35.6	33.0	34.6	40.7	0.5	26
upper 25%	5.0	44.0	44.4	35.9	47.2	0.4	19
Total	5.0	33.8	29.5	29.3	39.0	0.6	32
F test, significance	0.88, 0.47	49,1, 0.00	45.2, 0.00	5.3, 0.00	31.0, 0.00	30.8, 0.00	

Table 2.5. Family network indicators by employment status

Employment status	Average N family members	Average distance to all family members	Average distance to parents	Average distance to children	Average distance to siblings	Average N family members within 1 km	% At least 1 family member within 1 km
No work, No education	5.0	34.3	26.6	28.1	41.1	0.6	35
Employed	5.1	32.5	28.8	31.3	37.2	0.6	30
In education	4.4	45.7	46.5	- -	47.3	0.6	27
Total	5.0	33.8	29.5	29.3	39.0	0.6	32
F test, significance	11.4, 0.00	22.7, 0.00	25.1, 0.00	2.7, 0.07	12.7, 0.00	0.28, 0.75	

Table 2.6. Family network indicators by employment and partner status							
Employment and partner status	Average N family members	Average distance to all family members	Average distance to parents	Average distance to children	Average distance to siblings	Average N family members within 1 km	% At least 1 family member within 1 km
Employed, no partner	4.0	37.2	34.0	25.5	40.5	0.4	22
Not employed, no partner	4.3	36.8	34.5	27.3	43.2	0.5	29
One partner employed	5.4	32.1	28.1	28.9	37.2	0.7	36
Both partners employed	5.4	31.7	28.1	33.9	36.3	0.7	32
Both partners not employed	5.3	36.6	30.9	28.5	44.8	0.7	38
Total	5.0	33.8	29.5	29.3	39.0	0.6	32
F test, significance	78.1, 0.00	8.7, 0.00	3.8. 0.01	3.2, 0.01	9.9, 0.00	15.8, 0.00	

For home ownership, we see an interesting difference between distances to parents and distances to children (Table 2.7). For distances to parents, we found the expected shorter distance among those who had ever become a homeowner; this difference is not great (about 3 kilometres) but it differs significantly from zero. This is true even though homeowners were mainly found among those with a high socio-economic status and high level of education (see, for example, Mulder & Wagner, 1998). But for distances to children, we found a significant difference the other way around: those who had ever been homeowners lived significantly further away from their children than those who were not (by about 12 kilometres). This difference possibly has to do with the greater selectivity and later timing of home ownership among the older generation. It is also possible that older people who own a home are less likely to move closer to their children than older people who rent a home.

Table 2.7. Family network indicators by home ownership							
Ever homeowner?	Average N family members	Average distance to all family members	Average distance to parents	Average distance to children	Average distance to siblings	Average N family members within 1 km	% At least 1 family member within 1 km
Never homeowner	4.6	32.6	31.6	20.8	38.1	0.7	33
Ever homeowner	5.2	34.3	28.7	32.5	39.3	0.6	31
Total	5.0	33.8	29.5	29.3	39.0	0.6	32
F test, significance	107.3, 0.00	3.3, 0.07	4.2, 0.04	57.5, 0.00	1.2. 0.27	1.3, 0.25	

The greater the degree of urbanisation of the municipality in which a person lives, the greater the average distance to family members (Table 2.8). As expected, this is particularly true for the distance to parents. The association between degree of urbanisation and distances to both parents and siblings is not monotonous in municipalities with the lowest degree of urbanisation the distance is greater than in the category above that. The greater dispersal of homes in these areas possibly makes it less likely that family members find a place of residence near each other. Also as expected, the association between degree of urbanisation

and distance to children is in the opposite direction: those in urban areas live closer to their children than those in rural areas.

Table 2.8. Family network indicators by degree of urbanisation							
Degree of urbanisation	Average N family members	Average distance to all family members	Average distance to parents	Average distance to children	Average distance to siblings	Average N family members within 1 km	% At least 1 family member within 1 km
Not urbanised	5.5	34.3	24.7	35.9	39.9	0.8	39
Hardly urbanised	5.7	30.0	22.2	32.3	35.7	0.9	41
Moderately urbanised	5.0	32.3	25.6	31.8	37.5	0.7	36
Strongly urbanised	4.8	34.1	31.5	25.2	40.8	0.5	26
Very strongly urbanised	4.3	38.9	41.3	20.6	41.2	0.3	21
Total	5.0	33.8	29.5	29.3	39.0	0.6	32
F test, significance	61.6, 0.00	12.2, 0.00	27.8, 0.00	13.0, 0.00	4.3, 0.00	64.5, 0.00	

As expected, people with health problems live closer to their family members than those without (Table 2.9). For distances to parents and to children this difference is greater (4.5 kilometres for distances to parents, 4.2 kilometres for distances to children) than for distances to siblings (2.4 kilometres).

Table 2.9. Family network indicators by whether respondent has health problems							
Health problems?	Average N family members	Average distance to all family members	Average distance to parents	Average distance to children	Average distance to siblings	Average N family members within 1 km	% At least 1 family member within 1 km
No health problems	5.1	34.6	30.3	30.6	39.5	0.6	31
Health problems	5.0	30.9	25.8	26.4	37.1	0.7	35
Total	5.0	33.8	29.5	29.3	39.0	0.6	32
F test, significance	1.5, 0.22	14.0, 0.00	7.4, 0.01	8.0, 0.01	3.6, 0.06	1.2, 0.28	

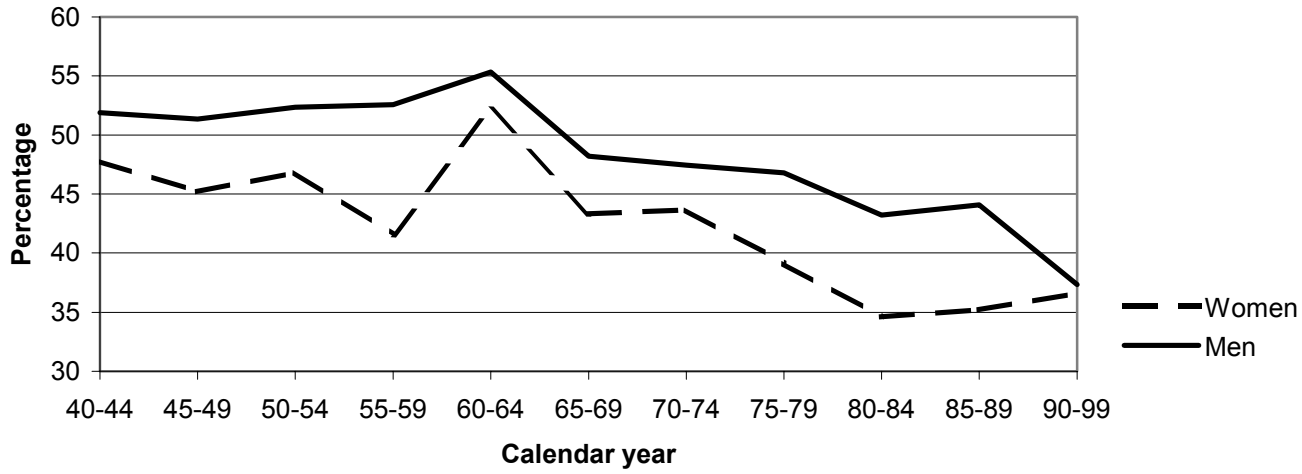
Finally, as expected, the foreign-born have fewer family members living in the Netherlands than the native-born, and a smaller likelihood of having at least one family member living within one kilometre (Table 2.10). The average distance to family members is shorter for the foreign-born than for the native-born. The only exception is the distance to children. This distance is estimated to be longer for the foreign-born, but the difference with the native-born is not significant. Note that only a small number (107) of foreign-born in the NKPS main sample had children living outside the household and in the Netherlands.

Table 2.10. Family network indicators by whether respondent is foreign-born							
Foreign-born?	Average N family members	Average distance to all family members	Average distance to parents	Average distance to children	Average distance to siblings	Average N family members within 1 km	% At least 1 family member within 1 km
Not foreign-born	5.2	33.8	29.8	29.1	38.9	0.6	33
Foreign-born	3.0	30.5	20.2	31.7	34.2	0.6	25
Total	5.0	33.8	29.5	29.3	39.0	0.6	32
F test, significance	172.5, 0.00	3.2, 0.04	3.2, 0.04	1.1, 0.32	5.2, 0.01	8.6, 0.00	

Descriptive findings: changes through time

In Figure 2.1 we look at whether parents and their adult children live in the same place of residence, broken down into 5-year periods, starting from 1940-1944 and ending in the 1990s (10-year period). The reports are by the children of these children (i.e., the grandchildren are the respondents) and pertain to the situation when the grandchild was 15 years of age. This implies that we only consider the relationship between adult children and parents foradult children who ever had a child and we are looking at these adult children in their child-rearing years.

Figure 2.1. Percentage of parents of men and women with a child aged 15 living in the same place of residence



The figure shows a clear downward trend in the percentage of men and women who live in the same place as their parents. The decline is somewhat irregular in the early period (1940-1965) but becomes much clearer after that. Consistent with the usual finding that women migrate slightly more than men, particularly around marriage, it is found that men's parents are more likely to live in the same place of residence as their children than women's parents. Overall, the percentage of parent-child ties living in the same municipality seems to have declined from around 50% to between 35 and 40%. This is not a dramatic decline, but a substantial decline nonetheless, and also in the expected direction.

Regression results

The regression results (Table 2.11 on next page) allow us to evaluate to what extent the associations between personal and household characteristics remain discernible and statistically significant after controlling for other characteristics. This is certainly the case for age and gender differences in distances to family members. The differences between household types were found to be less pronounced after controlling for other individual and household characteristics than before controlling for these characteristics. Living in a couple with children has a significant effect only on the average distance to all family members and the

Clearly, level of education is a very important determinant of the distance to family members. All else being equal, a university education adds over 35 kilometres to the average distance compared with a primary level of education. After controlling for level of education and other variables, the differentiation by socio-economic status (ISEI) was modest: the difference between the lowest (1.6) and highest (8.8) score of ISEI divided by 10 was estimated to be 7.2 times 0.7, or 5 kilometres. For distances to parents, this difference was estimated at 14 kilometres. As expected, enrolment in education leads to a significant increase in the distance to family members.

The effect of ever having been a homeowner was found to be in the same direction as in the descriptive results (negative for the distance to parents, but positive for the distance to children). However, it was not significant for distances to parents. Before controlling for degree of urbanisation, these effects were stronger and significant. This seems to indicate that the difference between owners and renters is partly due to the fact that owners tend to live in less urban areas than renters. As expected, the degree of urbanisation has opposite impacts for distances to parents (it increases the average distance) and distances to children (it decreases the distance).

Those with health problems were estimated to have slightly smaller distances to family members than those without, but this difference is significant only for the distance to all family members and the distance to parents, and not significant if the logarithm of the distance is taken as the dependent variable (see Appendix 2.2). The expected smaller distance to family members among the foreign-born is only found for distances to parents.

The percentage of variance explained by the models (R squared) is not very large. This is not a very surprising finding, given the fact that the proposed explanation of the distances is largely indirect. Distance is derived from residential locations. Residential locations in turn are the result of complex processes of location choice, migration and residential mobility. There does seem to be a difference in the percentage of variance in distances to siblings (0.08) and to parents or children (each 0.10), which was found to be in the expected direction: distances to siblings are less strongly associated to a person's individual and household characteristics than are distances between parents and children. In the models in which the logarithm of the distance is the dependent variable, the R squared is somewhat higher (between 0.10 and 0.14). In those models, it was indeed found that the distance to parents was better explained by the independent variables than was the distance to children.

average distance to siblings.

Table 2.11. OLS Regression of average distance to family members									
		To all family members		To parents		To children		To siblings	
		B		B		B		B	
(Constant)		15.1	***	6.6		17.7	***	18.7	***
Age group (18-29 = 0)									
30-39		-4.0	***	-5.4	***			-3.3	*
40-49		3.8	**	1.8				4.8	**
50-59		6.5	***	5.5	**	-2.4		9.3	***
60-69		5.1	***			-2.6		8.5	***
70-79		12.1	***			6.4	**	15.7	***
Female (Male = 0)		2.2	***	2.5	*	5.2	***	1.9	*
Household situation (Cohab/married no child = 0)									
Cohab/married + child(ren)		-2.6	**	-2.0		1.3		-2.5	*
Single parent		-0.2		-4.8		0.9		-0.5	
1 person		0.6		-1.8		-0.4		-0.5	
Level of education (Up to primary = 0)									
Lower secondary		4.5	***	3.1		1.7		5.6	***
Upper secondary		13.0	***	9.0	***	12.0	***	15.5	***
Higher vocational		22.2	***	17.6	***	19.8	***	26.5	***
University		35.2	***	32.7	***	31.0	***	33.5	***
Socio-economic status (ISEI)		0.7	*	2.0	***	0.3		0.6	
Employment status (Employed = 0)									
No work, no education		1.7		0.5		2.5		2.1	
In education		11.7	***	13.7	***			9.9	***
Two earners		-2.1	*	-2.7		3.5		-2.2	
Ever homeowner (Never owned a home = 0)		0.2		-1.8		4.9	***	-1.3	
Degree of urbanisation (Not urbanised = 0)									
Hardly urbanised		-4.1	***	-0.9		-4.4	**	-4.3	**
Moderately urbanised		-2.8	*	0.9		-4.8	**	-3.2	*
Strongly urbanised		-0.5		6.3	***	-9.5	***	0.2	
Very strongly urbanised		-0.3		10.3	***	-15.4	***	-2.8	
Health problems (No health problems = 0)		-2.6	***	-3.0	*	-1.9		-1.8	
Foreign-born		-0.4		-6.6	*	4.1		-0.1	
F test, significance		36.6, 0.00		23.5, 0.00		14.7, 0.00		23.3, 0.00	
R squared		0.10		0.10		0.10		0.08	
* p <0.10, ** p <0.05, *** p <0.01									

Conclusion

In this chapter we explored distances to family members living outside the household and the differentiation in these distances according to characteristics of individuals, their households and their residential locations. We expected that distances to family members would be longer for people who had a high likelihood of having migrated at some point in their lives, and shorter for those who were more likely to have a greater need to live close to family members.

The average distance to family members appeared to be rather short; just over 30 kilometres. Characteristics associated with a high likelihood of having migrated were found to have a considerable influence on distances to family members. This was especially true for level of education: the university educated in particular were found to live further from their family members than those with only primary education (by over 30 kilometres). But the influence of socio-economic status, enrolment in education and degree of urbanisation on distances to family members was also substantial.

The association between distances to family members and a greater need to live near family members was found to be much less strong, but was still significant: couples with children and those with health problems lived a few kilometres closer to family members than couples without children and those without problems. It should be stressed, however, that this does not necessarily mean that these people or their family members undertook deliberate action to reduce this distance or to make sure it did not grow longer. It is also possible that couples with children, possibly particularly those who had their children early in life and who did not spend many years as a childless couple, were less likely to have migrated than those without children. A similar reasoning could hold for health problems: those with health problems may be less likely to migrate. A relationship between distance and a supposed need for help was not found for age: those aged over 70, who supposedly have the greatest need for family members to live close by, were found to have the longest average distance to their family members of all age groups.

Only a limited part of the variation in average distances to family members was explained by the indicators of the likelihood of having migrated and the need for contact that were included in our models. More variation was explained in the distance to parents than in the distances to children and siblings.

The data allowed for a limited analysis of changes through time in the distances between parents and children. The popular picture was indeed confirmed that people are less likely to live close to family members than they used to a few decades ago. This difference can probably be attributed to migration flows from rural areas to cities that took place up to the 1960s and to the increased proportion of highly educated persons.

The Netherlands Kinship Panel Study provides a unique opportunity to study distances to family members. The information about residential locations of family members available in the NKPS is more detailed than in any survey we know of. In this chapter we focused only on average distances to family members. This is but one of the many possible ways of studying distances. Future research could focus on median or minimum distances rather than on average distances, or on geographical dispersion versus concentration of family networks. It is also important, of course, to widen the focus from distances as such to the role of distance in contacts between family members and in the exchange of support. This role is substantial, as shown in other chapters in this volume.

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Appendix 2.1. Adjusted means of average distance to family members									
		To all family members		To parents		To children		To siblings	
Age group									
18-29		31.4		30.6				34.9	
30-39		27.3		25.1				31.6	
40-49		35.1		32.4		30.4		39.7	
50-59		37.9		36.1		34.2		44.3	
60-69		36.5				34.1		43.4	
70-79		43.4				15.9		50.6	
Sex									
Male		33.1		28.5		29.8		38.4	
Female		35.2		31.0		33.3		40.3	
Household situation									
Cohab/married no child		35.7		31.6		34.2		40.6	
Cohab/married + child(ren)		35.1		29.6		30.3		38.1	
Single parent		32.5		26.8		33.5		40.1	
1 person		34.9		29.8		31.9		40.1	
Level of education									
Up to primary		20.3		17.6		19.9		23.6	
Lower secondary		24.8		20.7		19.8		29.2	
Upper secondary		33.3		26.6		30.0		39.2	
Higher vocational		42.5		35.2		41.6		50.1	
University		55.5		50.4		52.1		57.1	
Employment status									
No work, no education		34.8		29.5		31.4		40.4	
Employed		33.2		29.0		33.2		38.3	
In education		44.9		42.7		32.2		48.3	
Number of earners									
One earner		35.1		31.3		31.4		40.4	
Two earners		33.0		28.6		31.4		38.2	
Home ownership									
Never owned a home		34.2		31.2		30.0		40.5	
Ever homeowner		34.4		29.4		32.4		39.1	
Degree of urbanisation									
Not urbanised		35.9		26.0		33.8		41.5	
Hardly urbanised		31.8		25.1		29.9		37.3	
Moderately urbanised		33.2		26.8		31.4		38.3	
Strongly urbanised		35.4		32.2		33.6		41.7	
Very strongly urbanised		35.6		36.3		30.4		38.8	
Health problems									
No health problems		35.0		30.6		32.4		40.0	
Health problems		32.4		27.5		29.9		38.2	
Whether foreign-born									
Not foreign-born		34.4		30.2		31.9		39.6	
Foreign-born		34.0		23.6		26.2		39.5	

Appendix 2.2. OLS Regression of logarithm of average distance to family members									
		To all family members		To parents		To children		To siblings	
		B		B		B		B	
(Constant)		1.85	***	1.00	***	1.71	***	1.83	***
Age group (18-29 = 0)									
30-39		-0.08	***	-0.23	***			0.01	
40-49		0.31	***	0.09				0.42	***
50-59		0.48	***	0.26	***	-0.02		0.61	***
60-69		0.53	***			0.15		0.65	***
70-79		0.72	***			0.56	***	0.77	***
Female (Male = 0)		0.09	***	0.14	***	0.19	***	0.10	***
Household situation (Cohab/married no child = 0)									
Cohab/married + child(ren)		-0.13	***	-0.22	*	-0.02		-0.09	**
Single parent		-0.05	***	-0.03		-0.13		0.01	
1 person		0.01	***	0.15		0.06		0.03	
Level of education (Up to primary = 0)									
Lower secondary		0.18	***	0.47	***	0.07		0.22	***
Upper secondary		0.50	***	0.89	***	0.51	***	0.54	***
Higher vocational		0.88	***	1.46	***	0.81	***	0.92	***
University		1.27	***	0.09	***	1.25	***	1.17	***
Socio-economic status (ISEI)		0.05	***	0.47	***	0.03		0.04	**
Employment status (Employed, one earner = 0)									
No work, no education		-0.01	***	-0.04		0.00		0.02	
In education		0.34	***	0.48	***			0.29	***
Two earners		-0.02	***	-0.05		0.14		0.00	
Ever homeowner (Never owned a home = 0)		0.03	***	0.03		0.23	***	0.00	
Degree of urbanisation (Not urbanised = 0)									
Hardly urbanised		-0.15	***	-0.09		-0.08		-0.17	***
Moderately urbanised		-0.11	***	-0.02		-0.16	*	-0.13	**
Strongly urbanised		0.01	***	0.27	***	-0.35	***	0.01	
Very strongly urbanised		0.05	***	0.47	***	-0.54	***	-0.01	
Health problems (No health problems = 0)		-0.02	***	-0.07		-0.01		0.01	
Foreign-born		-0.20	***	-0.38	***	0.15		-0.14	
F test, significance		47.1, 0.00		34.3, 0.00		16.1, 0.00		31.1, 0.00	
R squared		0.13		0.14		0.11		0.10	
* p <0.10, ** p <0.05, *** p <0.01									

Chapter 3

Differentials in face-to-face contact between parents and their grown-up children

Matthijs Kalmijn & Pearl A. Dykstra

Introduction

Face-to-face contact between parents and their adult children has long been an important indicator of intergenerational relationships (Lye, 1996). There are several reasons for this. Firstly, face-to-face contact is an important condition for the development of what has been called 'family solidarity' (Silverstein & Bengtson, 71997), which is defined as the degree to which family members care for each other. It has generally been argued that support is more likely when contact is more frequent. This is true not only because frequent contact reduces the costs of giving support but also because frequent contact makes children more aware of their parents' needs. Face-to-face contact is also a good indirect measure of intergenerational support because it includes many forms of instrumental support that are too idiosyncratic to measure in standard surveys.

Second, intergenerational contact is a central concept in the older research literature on family change in the early stages of modernisation. Social and geographic mobility accompanying industrialisation and urbanisation were viewed as threats to the viability of the modern family, in which members of different generations were becoming estranged and isolated from one another. Empirical reality proved otherwise. Frequency of contact and geographic proximity came to replace coresidence as indicators of family cohesion. The 'new' family in the working class was characterised by day-to-day contact and residential proximity (living in the same neighbourhood). This family pattern was reminiscent of the earlier extended family and was therefore labelled the 'modified extended family' (Adams, 1968; Goldthorpe, Llewellyn, & Payne, 1980; Greenwell & Bengtson, 1997; Litwak, 1960a, 1960b; Young & Willmott, 1957). In this approach, structural characteristics of family relationships, rather than their content were the defining features.

Although contact is an important indicator of intergenerational relations, it also has its limitations. One limitation is that the frequency of contact cannot be equated with the quality of contact, although there clearly is a positive correlation between the two (Lawton, Silverstein, & Bengtson, 1994). Elementary exchange theories argue that higher levels of affection increase contact and that frequent contact in turn increases affection (Homans, 1961). The correlation between contact and affection (or other evaluative aspects of the relationship) is not very high, however. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, feelings of obligation can lead to high levels of contact even when the quality of the relationship is poor. If family norms are very strong, people can even be stuck in bad family relationships. Secondly, certain restrictions may lead to low levels of contact even when the quality of the relationship is high. Examples are children who study abroad and yet have very close ties with their parents.

Contact frequencies have been studied in many different countries, such as the United States (Lye, 1996), Germany (Szydlik, 2000) and Great Britain (Grundy & Shelton, 2001). In this chapter, we present new evidence of contact patterns using the data of the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study (NKPS). Contact patterns have previously been examined in the Netherlands. Dykstra and Knipscheer (1995) have analysed data from a 1992 survey of older persons to assess the frequency of interaction between older parents and their children. De Graaf (1997) has examined how often adult children were in touch with their fathers and

mothers using data from a national survey conducted in 1992. And Verweij and Kalmijn (2004) have analysed data from a national survey of married and cohabiting couples, which was conducted in 1995 to compare how often people see their parents and their parents-in-law. In this chapter, we present new data for the Netherlands. Compared with the earlier studies, our data are more recent, larger in scope, and include contact measures for each of the respondents' parents and for each of their children.

The first aim of our contribution is to present descriptive information on the level and patterns of contact in the Netherlands. How often do parents and children see each other? How common is it for parents to see at least one child frequently? How often have children lost contact entirely? And how do parents divide their time and attention between their children? The second aim is to assess how contact levels are differentiated. Whereas some people have daily contact with their parents, others only see their parents occasionally or not at all. We assess whether such differences are related to important social demarcations. We focus on three possible forms of differentiation: differences in contact (a) by socioeconomic status (i.e. education, employment and class), (b) with respect to cultural characteristics (i.e. religiosity and family-oriented socialisation), and (c) by demographic characteristics (i.e. age, stage in the life course and family size).

Theoretical background

Although the aim of this chapter is primarily to describe differentiation in contact patterns, it is worthwhile reviewing some of the basic theoretical arguments why people have frequent or infrequent contact with their parents or children. Differences in contact levels, together with differences in the degree of intergenerational support, have been explained in terms of two complementary theoretical perspectives (Bengtson & Roberts, 1991; Klein Ikkink, Van Tilburg, & Knipscheer, 1999; Rossi & Rossi, 1990).

One theoretical perspective argues that people weigh the costs and benefits of contact when deciding how often to see their children or parents. Important examples of costs are travel time and the foregone pleasure of alternative social contacts (i.e. not seeing one's friends). Important examples of benefits are the affection one feels for one's family and, of course, the support one may obtain from children or parents in times of need. This cost-benefit approach is consistent with an exchange perspective on intergenerational relationships, but the exchange perspective has mainly been applied to intergenerational support rather than to contact.

Another perspective on intergenerational relationships emphasises the norms and values that surround family ties. There are norms in society prescribing that one should care for one's children or parents, regardless of whether one enjoys doing this and regardless of how much it costs. These norms are generally rooted in religious ideologies. Adherence to traditional family norms is often enforced through sanctions, although more so by parents than by children. The norms may also become internalised so that they have an effect in the absence of sanctions. Feelings of guilt toward parents for not providing support or not maintaining contact are an example of a traditional family norm operating without sanctions.

In the remainder of this section, we present the various aspects of social differentiation that are considered in the analyses. We discuss what patterns we can expect to find in the data, using the more general theoretical arguments just presented.

Expected socioeconomic differentials

We shall look at two aspects of socioeconomic status: educational attainment and occupational class. Past research has often demonstrated a sharp class or status gradient in family patterns (Goldthorpe et al., 1980). The working class was characterised by day-to-day

contact between parents and children, who lived in the same neighbourhood. Similar results were found for the role of education – the lower educated are more likely to have daily face-to-face contact with their parents – but education and class have rarely been examined simultaneously. Two general arguments have been presented for these effects (Kalmijn, 2006). One argument focuses on the costs of contact and argues that the higher strata of society are often required to move away from their region of origin to find suitable schools and jobs. This suggests that the effects of class and educational attainment on contact are indirect, via geographic proximity. Another argument focuses on norms and values and argues that the higher strata are less strongly attached to traditional norms about the family. The normative line of reasoning suggests that there are also direct educational and class effects on contact, after controlling for geographic proximity.

A third socioeconomic characteristic we shall address is employment. Working hours can be relevant because they reduce the amount of leisure time people have, thereby increasing the costs of having contact. This argument has most frequently been applied to women. Women have always been more active in maintaining family ties so that women's employment would have the clearest negative effect on intergenerational ties. In the broader debate about the future of family solidarity, the rise of married women's employment has often been regarded as one of the more important 'new' restrictions. While the reasoning is sound enough, empirical evidence for this line of reasoning has so far been limited (Klein Ikkink et al., 1999; Starrels, Ingersoll-Dayton, Neal, & Yamada, 1995).

Expected cultural differentials

We shall address two indicators of cultural differentiation: religiosity and family-oriented socialisation. The main reason for expecting religious differences lies in prevailing norms and values about the family. Most Christian denominations in the Netherlands and elsewhere in the Western world promote the norm that one should love and respect (and care for) one's parents, regardless of the costs and benefits of doing so. The same holds for Islamic doctrines. As a result, one would expect people who identify themselves as being religious to be more likely to have frequent contact with their children and parents than those who do not consider themselves to be religious. There may also be differences among the Christian denominations. Within the Protestant church, there is a sharp cleavage between Orthodox denominations and the Dutch Reformed denomination(s), with the former being more traditional in their views on the family than the latter. Cross-national studies suggest furthermore that Catholic countries are more 'family minded' than Protestant and secular countries (Inglehart, 1997). Having said that, Dutch Catholics have generally been more liberal, so it is unclear what to expect (Felling, Peters, & Scheepers, 2000).

We shall also look at ethnic differences. More specifically, we shall compare Dutch people to people of Turkish and Moroccan descent and of Caribbean (Surinamese and Antillean) descent. For Turks and Moroccans, we expect more frequent contact between parents and children. These differences may, in part, be related to educational differences — on average, people of Turkish and Moroccan descent are less educated than the Dutch. Another factor that plays a role is that Islamic cultures tend to be more familialistic than Christian cultures (Reher, 1998). We should also note, however, that the migration process itself may counteract such tendencies. After all, many immigrants have a parent who lives abroad. For Caribbeans, we also expect more frequent contact with parents, but here an important gender difference may emerge. More specifically, Caribbeans are more likely to grow up in single-parent homes, especially in single-mother homes (Kalmijn & Kraaykamp, 2003), and this may lead to reduced contact between children and fathers at a later age. Similar patterns have been observed in the United States among black Americans (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994).

In addition to addressing differences in religiosity, we shall also look at what we call family-oriented socialisation, by which we mean the degree to which a person was confronted with a family-oriented lifestyle during childhood. Was the respondent living in the same neighbourhood as his or her grandparents, did he or she go on holiday with extended family members, and how often were there overnight stays of uncles and aunts, cousins and grandparents? We expect that people who were brought up amidst extended family will repeat such patterns when they grow up themselves. This would result in more frequent visiting of their parents later in life.

Expected demographic differentials

The life course has been a central element in the literature on intergenerational relationships (Hagestad, 2003). The life course is characterised by both discrete changes (experiencing life course transitions) and continuous changes (becoming older). Effects of the life course can be studied from the perspective of children or the perspective of parents. Some authors examine how intergenerational relationships are affected by the life course of their children (Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998; Rossi & Rossi, 1990). Here, the focus is on comparing parent-child relationships across the early life course stages of the children, i.e. living at home, living alone, entering into marriage, and becoming a parent. Other authors examine how intergenerational relationships are affected by the life course of the parents (Lye, 1996; Manning & Smock, 1999; Seltzer, 1991). Here, the focus is on later life course stages of the parents, such as divorce, remarriage, and widowhood.

When focusing on the parental life course, we expect that parents, especially fathers, will have less contact with their children if they are divorced from the mother of their children (Seltzer, 1991). The reasons for this are well-known. Fathers are less able to invest in their children after divorce, which may have negative effects later on in life. Fathers also miss the kinkeeping role of mothers when they divorce. And finally, children may experience a conflict of loyalties after divorce. They may choose between the father and the mother, and on average, this will lead to a reduction in contact for both parents. Fathers seem to be blamed more often for a divorce than mothers (Jennings & Howe, 2001), so this reduction tends to be asymmetric: Fathers will have less contact with their children after divorce than mothers (even though divorced mothers will also have less contact with their children than married mothers).

Widowhood is expected to have a different effect. Widowhood increases the needs of the surviving parent, which will lead to an increase in contact with the children (Barrett & Lynch, 1999; Dykstra, 1993). Whether this applies equally to men and women is less clear. Given that women are often the kinkeepers in the home, men develop few skills in maintaining contact with their children. If their wife dies, this may also result in reduced contact with children. In a sense, when men become widowers, they lose not only a wife, but also a kinkeeper.

Are there also continuous effects of the life course? Conflicting arguments have been given for the effects of the parents' age. Whilst parents need more support from their children as they grow older and experience more health problems and physical limitations (Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998), the physical limitations may, at the same time, reduce mobility and vitality, which in turn will reduce the frequency of contact. This suggests that intergenerational contacts become less frequent but at the same time more instrumental as parents grow older.

With respect to the life course of the children, the most important effect can be expected from family formation. When adult children become parents themselves, the parents will often become more important in their lives (Oppelaar & Dykstra, 2005; Silverstein & Marenco, 2001). One reason for this lies in the increased need for information and support by

the children as they become parents. Another reason is that grandparents often want to see their grandchildren, which will, as a by-product, increase contact with their children. There may also be developmental life course effects. Some authors argue that over the course of children's lives, a period of disengagement from parents in early adulthood is followed by a period of increasing closeness in mid-life (Rossi & Rossi, 1990). The disengagement is part of a process in which children become adults and establish their own lives.

Finally, we shall look at the role of family size. In the past, large families were common in the Netherlands. About half of all people born before World War II in the NKPS data had three or more children, a quarter had four or more children and ten percent had five or more children. Note that childlessness was also common in this cohort (12 percent never had a child). Family size plays an important role in the cost of contact. The more children a parent has, the less time there is for each child. Hence, we expect that there will be less contact at the dyad level in larger families (Dykstra & Knipscheer, 1995; Spitze & Logan, 1991; Uhlenberg & Cooney, 1990; Waite & Harrison, 1992). To some extent, these effects can be reduced because parents may also see their children at the same time. In other words, children are not full 'rivals'. The family size effect may also be more subtle. Visiting one's parents takes time and children may try to share these 'costs' with their siblings. In families with many siblings, each sibling may reduce his or her level of contact with the parents.

Family size is expected to have a different effect at the dyad level than at the family level. From the perspective of the parent, the likelihood of frequent contact with at least one child is greater in large families than in small families. If the chance of having frequent contact is p, the chance of having frequent contact with at least one child is $1 - (1-p)^s$, where s is the number of children. For example, if the chance of having frequent contact is 50 percent, the chance of seeing at least one child in a family of two is 75 percent (assuming the chances are independent). In a sense, a large family provides better protection against social isolation than a small family. The same logic implies negative effects as well. For example, the chance that contact is lost with at least one child, is also likely to be greater in larger families.

Empirical analyses of contact

In this chapter, we focus on the frequency of face-to-face contact between parents and children: 'how often have you seen [target person] in the last 12 months?' Seven answer categories, ranging from 'never' to 'daily' were used. For the descriptive analyses, these were regrouped into five categories that are often used in research (see Table 3.1). For the analysis of socioeconomic, cultural and demographic differentials, we recoded the answering categories to numerical scores indicating the approximate number of contacts per year. This leads to a skewed outcome variable, but as a transformation to more normal scores (a log-transformation) did not change the significance levels of the statistical tests. Hence, we decided to focus on the untransformed numerical scores. An advantage of these scores is that they have an intuitively attractive interpretation: the means refer to the average number of contacts per year in a specific social category. Though the focus of our analyses is face-to-face contact, we provide additional data on phone contact (including contact by email and letters).

Intergenerational contacts can be analysed from the perspective of parents or children. When analysing contact from the perspective of parents, the focus is on how the social characteristics of parents affect contact levels. When analysing from the perspective of children, the focus is on how the social characteristics of children affect contact. In this chapter, we use both perspectives. The role of parental characteristics is studied in Tables 3.3 and 3.4. For these analyses, we analysed all Anchors (i.e. primary respondents) who were parents of adult biological children aged 25 or older. The role of children's characteristics is

studied in Table 3.6. For these analyses, we analysed all Anchors who had at least one living non-coresiding biological parent. Anchors were 18 years or older but no older than 79.

In the analysis of parents, contact can be studied at the level of the dyad and at the level of the family. Parents generally have more than one child and our data include contact measures for all living children. This means that we can include all parent-child dyads in the analysis. In such an analysis, the units are not statistically independent, but is solved in this chapter by correcting the standard errors for clustering (using the program Stata). An important advantage of this approach compared with previous analyses is that no data are thrown away. Previous studies often made a random selection of one of the children per parent. A different approach is to switch the analysis to the level of the family, or more precisely, of the parent. This level of analysis provides insight into the aggregated outcome of contacts within a family. For example, how often do parents have frequent contact with at least one child? And how often is contact lost in a family? And what about the distribution of contact? Do parents have the same amount of contact with all their children or is it shared unequally among children? In this chapter, we use the dyadic approach in Tables 3.1, 3.3 and 3.6, and the family approach in Tables 3.2 and 3.5.

Contact frequency was only measured for children who were not living with their parents and for parents who were not living with their children. Obviously, coresidence is an intensive form of contact, but it is not common in the Netherlands. We focus on children who are 25 or older, and in that group, only 5 percent still live in the parental home. It is even less common for elderly parents to live with their children.

The number of parent Anchors in the analyses was 2,683 and they reported on 6,293 children who were living independently and who were older than 25. The number of child Anchors who were 25 or older and who had at least one non-coresident parent was 4,795 and they reported on 7,535 parents.

How much contact is there?

Table 3.1 provides information on the frequency of contact in the past 12 months.

Table 3.1. Contacts between parents and children: Percentages and means for dyads

Face-to-face	Father son	Father daughter	Mother son	Mother daughter	All dyads
Percentage					
Never	5	4	3	2	4
Once a year or more	16	14	16	12	14
About monthly	35	29	33	28	31
Weekly or more	39	46	41	49	44
Daily	5	7	7	8	7
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Mean annual number	54	68	61	76	65
Phone+ contact	Father son	Father daughter	Mother son	Mother daughter	All dyads

Never	7	7	4	3	5
Once a year or more	14	12	14	6	12
About monthly	23	16	21	12	18
Weekly or more	53	57	56	66	58
Daily	4	8	4	12	7
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Mean annual number	61	80	65	105	78
Notes:					
Parent anchors reporting (N = 6293 dyads; N = 2683 parents); weighted results.					
Contacts pertain to parents and non-coresiding children age 25 and older.					
Correlation phone and face-to-face contact *r* = .43.					

In about half the parent-child dyads, there is at least weekly contact, suggesting that contact is quite intensive in Dutch families. Contact by phone is even more frequent: about 65 percent have at least weekly phone contact. The percentage of dyads in which there was no face-to-face contact at all during the past 12 months is small (4%).

Contact is most frequent in mother-daughter dyads and least frequent in father-son dyads. Mixed dyads (i.e. father-daughter and mother-son dyads) are found between these two extremes, but they are closer to the father-son dyads than to the mother-daughter dyads. This shows that the mother-daughter tie stands out. This finding is even more striking when we look at phone contact.

How do our figures compare with earlier studies for the Netherlands? For technical reasons, our figures can best be compared with those of De Graaf (1997). De Graaf analysed a representative survey of all adult ages in the population and he separated face-to-face contact from phone contact. In his analysis, 47 percent of the respondents had at least weekly contact with their parents. Our percentage is very close to his. This is an important finding since it suggests that our sample is not biased toward strong families. The topic of our survey—family relationships—may have attracted respondents with good family ties and the nonresponse may disproportionally consist of people with weak or poor ties. Since the survey analyzed by De Graaf was a general survey, which did not explicitly focus on family matters, the similarity between the two estimates is reassuring.

How do our figures compare with other countries? In Great Britain, about 50 percent of the independently living children have weekly face-to-face contact with parents (Grundy & Shelton, 2001). In the United States, this is about 40 percent (Lye, Klepinger, Davis Hyle, & Nelson, 1995). Compared with Germany, face-to-face and phone contact need to be combined. This shows that in both the Netherlands and Germany about 75 percent of children have weekly contact with their parents (Szydlik, 2000). Hence, parent-child contacts in the Netherlands seem to be as frequent as they are in Great Britain and Germany and they are more frequent than in the United States.

In Table 3.2 the level of analysis shifts from the dyad to the family. Here, we present information on face-to-face contacts between Anchors and all their children taken together. The analyses were conducted separately for fathers and mothers.

Table 3.2. Contact indicators at the level of families: Percentages, means and correlations for parents			
	Fathers	Mothers	All
Percentage with at least one child with weekly contact (0-100)	68	73	70
Percentage with one child (or more) without any contact (0-100)	7	5	7
Annual number of face-to-face contacts across children (0-1320)	141	161	151
Correlation between pairs of children (logged contact)	0.42	0.34	0.38
Intra-family variation in contact (0-6.7)	1.09	1.02	1.06
Notes:			
Parent anchors reporting (N = 2683); weighted results.			
Contacts pertain to face-to-face interactions between parents and non-coresiding children age 25 and older.			

As Table 3.2 shows, 73 percent of mothers in the Netherlands have weekly (or more frequent) contact with at least one of their children. For fathers, the percentage is somewhat lower, at 68 percent. The results reveal a high level of contact with children. Keeping in touch and visiting one another seem to be the norm among Dutch parents and their children.

On the other side of the contact continuum, we see that 5 percent of mothers do not have face-to-face contact with (at least) one of their children. For fathers, this number is higher: 7 percent have lost contact with at least one of their children.

The table also presents the total number of annual contacts, a number that will become more relevant when we analyse the role of family size. Another aggregate measure is the correlation between pairs of children within a family of frequency of contact with the parent. A negative correlation would suggest that children serve as rivals or substitutes: contact with one child implies less contact with the other child. A positive correlation would suggest an equitable distribution: contact with one child is not necessarily at the expense of contact with the other child. A positive correlation might also suggest that children are seen at the same time. Of course, the correlation says nothing about the way in which get-togethers are organised. Do children make their behaviour contingent on their siblings' interactions with their parents? Do parents engage in efforts to give their children equal amounts of attention? As Table 3.2 shows, the correlations are moderately positive. Hence, the contact level of one child resembles that of his or her sibling. Another way of seeing this resemblance is by referring to an underlying family factor. In some families, there is frequent contact; in other families, there is only little contact. The correlation is far from perfect, however, which also shows that parents do not see all their children equally often.

The last aggregate measure is the intra-family variation in contact. Here we look at the child who has the most frequent contact with the parent and the child who has the least frequent contact. We calculate the difference between these two levels, and divide this by the mean number of contacts per child (calculated over all the children). Although the number itself is not meaningful, it is important for comparative purposes. The higher the number, the greater the differences between children in terms of the frequency of contact with their parents. In our analysis of the socioeconomic, cultural and demographic differentials in contact, we use this measure as an indicator of intra-family differences.

Differentials by parent and child characteristics

To analyse differentials, we use multivariate regression models in which all explanatory variables are included simultaneously. Hence, we analyse the role of one determinant while controlling for the influence of the other determinants in the model. Rather than presenting regression parameters, we present the results in terms of adjusted means (this is often called a multiple classification analysis, or MCA for short). The adjusted means are not the observed means for each category of a certain variable, but the means that one would observe if the respective categories all had the same score on the other variables (the average score on all variables). We also present statistical tests (usually F-tests) which tell us whether group differences are significant. These tests are corrected for the clustering of dyads within families.

The model for parent characteristics at the dyad level is presented in Table 3.3, the model for parent characteristics at the family level is presented in Table 3.5, and the model for child characteristics is presented in Table 3.6. Rather than discussing the tables in sequence, we shall organise our discussion around the various explanatory variables.

Socioeconomic differentials

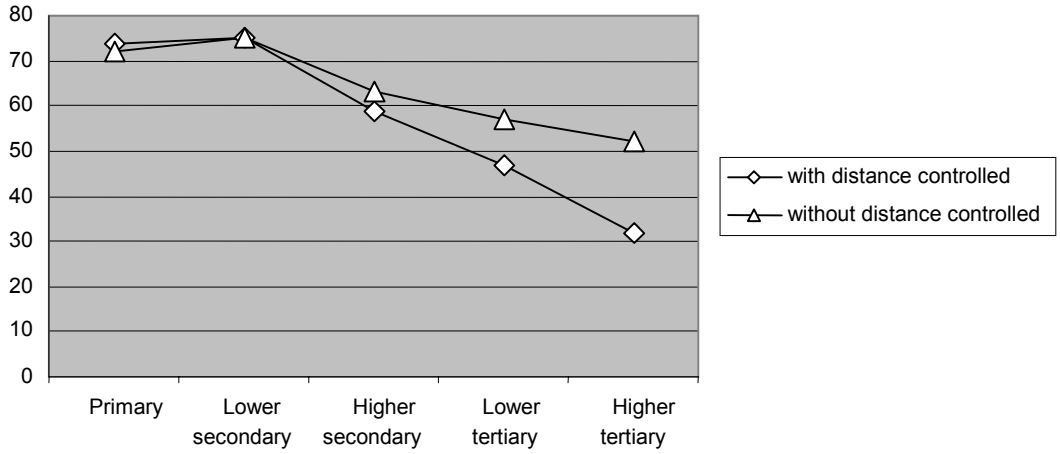
The first important finding is that education plays an important role. The higher the parent's level of education, the lower the number of contacts. The effects are quite substantial (Table 3.3, and Figure 3.1).

Table 3.3. Annual number of face-to-face contacts with children at the level of dyads by selected parent characteristics: MCA analysis

Parent characteristic	Fathers and mothers		+ Adjustment for distance		Mothers		Fathers	
	adjusted mean	F-test	adjusted mean	F-test	adjusted mean	F-test	adjusted mean	F-test
Education		25.8*		8.8*		15.3*		14.2*
Primary	74		72		75		73	
Lower secondary	75		75		78		71	
Higher secondary	59		63		53		65	
Lower tertiary	47		57		51		43	
Higher tertiary	32		52		24		33	
Social class		5.3*		3.6*		4.6*		0.6
Lower manual	73		73		77		66	
Higher manual	64		67		70		59	
Lower non-manual	57		61		60		55	
Higher non-manual	64		69		67		59	
Employment		0.1		0.1		0.0		0.4
Not working	64		68		68		58	

Working	65		68		68		62	
Family-oriented socialisation		1.7		2.2		0.4		1.8
Lower third	65		68		67		62	
Middle third	61		65		67		55	
Highest third	66		71		70		62	
Religiosity		6.9*		4.9*		4.2*		6.6*
No religion	57		62		65		46	
Catholic	71		72		75		65	
Dutch Reformed	67		70		69		64	
Orthodox	58		62		56		63	
Age category		15.5*		13.0*		15.8*		3.5*
45-55	81		85		86		74	
55-64	69		72		75		61	
65-74	59		63		60		57	
75-+	45		51		43		44	
Life course stage		41.1*		31.5*		16.1*		41.1*
In first marriage	71		74		72		68	
Single after divorce	45		48		58		21	
Single after widowhood	70		72		76		65	
Remarried after divorce	29		35		36		21	
Remarried after widowhood	39		48		39		41	
Number of children		8.3*		5.8*		3.5*		5.3*
One child	88		90		81		98	
Two children	71		73		74		65	
Three children	63		68		68		57	
Four children	57		63		61		52	
Five children	61		64		66		56	
Six children	47		54		54		38	
Seven or more children	40		46		45		35	
Notes:								
Parent anchors reporting (N = 6293 dyads; N = 2683 parents); unweighted results.								
Adjustments obtained from a multivariate model containing all variables listed and sex.								
Contacts pertain to face-to-face interactions between parents and non-coresiding children age 25 and older.								
Tests corrected for clustering.								
* $p < .05$								

Figure 3.1. Parent-child contacts by parental education



After controlling for distance (the second model in Table 3.3), the effects are much smaller, showing that the effect of educational level tends to be indirect. This can also be seen in Figure 3.1. The higher educated have considerably less contact with their children, but this may largely be explained by the fact that they live further away from their children. The effects are similar for fathers and mothers. Moreover, the effect also exists when we look at the child's level of education (Table 3.6). For a more extensive analysis of educational effects, see Kalmijn (Kalmijn, 2006).

Table 3.4. Contacts with parents according to children: Comparison of ethnic groups

Face-to-face with mother	Dutch-born of Dutch parents	Dutch-born of Dutch parents (less educated)	Persons of Turkish or Moroccan descent	Persons of Caribbean descent
Never	2	3	2	2
Once a year or more	12	9	9	15
About monthly	30	21	9	23
Weekly or more	51	58	49	41
Daily	5	10	31	20
Total	100	100	100	100
N	3708	945	177	246
Face-to-face with father	Dutch-born of Dutch parents	Dutch-born of Dutch parents (less educated)	Persons of Turkish or Moroccan descent	Persons of Caribbean descent

Never	3	5	2	14
Once a year or more	15	14	4	25
About monthly	32	22	10	17
Weekly or more	46	51	55	37
Daily	5	8	28	7
Total	100	100	100	100
N	2605	570	174	207
Notes:				
Child anchors reporting. NKPS data for Dutch, NKPS-SPVA data for minority groups.				
Contacts pertain to parents and non-coresiding children age 25 and older.				
Weighted results.				

Table 3.5. Contact indicators at the level of families by selected parent characteristics: MCA analysis

Parent characteristic	Weekly contact with at least one child		No contact with one child		Total number of contacts		Inequality in contact	
	adjusted proportion	Chi2-test	adjusted proportion	Chi2-test	adjusted mean	F-test	adjusted mean	F-test
Education		73.8*		4.1		28.9*		5.5*
Primary	0.81		0.05		183		1.03	
Lower secondary	0.79		0.03		177		1.15	
Higher secondary	0.69		0.04		137		1.11	
Lower tertiary	0.63		0.04		109		1.04	
Higher tertiary	0.41		0.02		72		0.95	
Social class		6.2*		3.8		4.9*		1.6
Lower manual	0.74		0.04		171		1.04	
Higher manual	0.78		0.04		151		1.15	
Lower non-manual	0.70		0.04		134		1.11	
Higher non-manual	0.73		0.03		150		1.04	
Employment		0.8		1.3		0.3		0.0
Not working	0.72		0.04		150		1.06	
Working	0.74		0.03		153		1.06	

Family-oriented socialisation		2.8		3.8		1.8		1.2
Lower third	0.73		0.04		154		1.11	
Middle third	0.71		0.03		144		1.05	
Highest third	0.74		0.03		155		1.04	
Religiosity		34.9*		6.2		6.9*		0.7
No religion	0.66		0.04		135		.08	
Catholic	0.79		0.03		168		1.09	
Dutch Reformed	0.74		0.03		158		1.01	
Orthodox	0.68		0.02		131		1.04	
Age category		8.6*		5.6		7.8*		22.9*
45-55	0.72		0.02		143		0.71	
55-64	0.74		0.04		162		1.13	
65-74	0.74		0.04		155		1.19	
75-+	0.64		0.05		113		1.22	
Life course stage		136.6*		153.9*		44.3*		3.7*
In first marriage	0.78		0.02		168		1.00	
Single after divorce	0.55		0.16		109		1.19	
Single after widowhood	0.78		0.05		170		1.13	
Remarried after divorce	0.44		0.19		71		1.10	
Remarried after widowhood	0.62		0.11		72		1.31	
Number of children		25.3*		52.1*		26.0*		80.2*
One child	0.60		0.02		88		nap	
Two children	0.74		0.02		131		0.67	
Three children	0.72		0.06		165		1.16	
Four children	0.76		0.07		188		1.62	
Five children	0.82		0.09		251		2.03	
Six children	0.72		0.13		232		2.42	
Seven or more children	0.81		0.16		258		2.89	
Notes:								
Parent anchors reporting (N = 683); unweighted results.								

Adjustments obtained from a multivariate model containing all variables listed and sex.
Contacts pertain to face-to-face interactions between parents and non-coresiding children age 25 and older.
Tests corrected for clustering.
* p < .05

Table 3.6. Annual number of face-to-face contacts with parents at the level of dyads by selected child characteristics: MCA analysis

Child characteristic	Sons and daughters		Daughters		Sons		
	adjusted mean	F-test	adjusted mean	F-test	adjusted mean	F-test	
Education		33.5*		18.5*		13.6*	
Primary	74		78		66		
Lower secondary	79		84		71		
Higher secondary	66		73		57		
Lower tertiary	51		57		45		
Higher tertiary	37		40		31		
Social class		7.5*		4.2*		3.3*	
Lower manual	70		71		68		
Higher manual	65		76		56		
Lower non-manual	68		74		52		
Higher non-manual	56		61		48		
Employment		2.9		2.7		0.0	
Not working	66		72		52		
Working	60		66		52		
Family-oriented socialisation		3.9*		5.7*		0.1	
Lower third	58		61		52		
Middle third	61		67		53		
Highest third	65		74		53		
Religiosity		13.3*		8.3*		6.9*	
No religion	55		62		45		
Catholic	74		80		64		
Dutch Reformed	72		77		66		
Orthodox	56		56		55		

Age category		9.5*		7.7*		3.5*	
25-34	68		77		55		
35-44	59		63		53		
45-54	52		58		45		
55-+	67		73		64		
Life course stage		0.8		1.1		1.3	
Single, never married	63		68		55		
In first marriage	62		69		50		
Single after divorce	64		66		60		
Remarried after divorce	57		61		50		
Widowed	60		62		65		
Children		9.6*		11.1*		2.2	
No children	56		58		53		
Children at home	67		74		55		
Empty nest	54		59		43		
Number of siblings		9.4*		5.3*		5.3*	
Only child	67		70		63		
One sibling	71		79		60		
Two siblings	63		67		56		
Three siblings	56		62		47		
Four siblings	55		60		46		
Five siblings	48		53		41		
Six+ siblings	46		55		33		
Notes:							
Child anchors reporting (N = 7535 dyads; N = 4795 children); unweighted results.							
Adjustments obtained from a multivariate model containing all variables listed and sex.							
Contacts pertain to face-to-face interactions between parents and non-coresiding children age 25 and older.							
Tests corrected for clustering. * $p < .05$							

When we look at families as a whole, the effects of education are rather similar (Table 3.5). We find that better educated parents are also less likely to have weekly contact with at least one child. Among less educated parents, about 80 percent have weekly contact with at least one child; among university educated parents, this is only 40 percent. Interestingly, we see greater variation in intra-family contact in less educated families. Even though the less educated see their children more frequently, the relative differences among children are greater.

After controlling for education, we see only a small effect of social class, especially when looking at the class of the parent (Table 3.3). In other words, socioeconomic differentials appear to be more a matter of education than a matter of class, in contrast to what most of the traditional stratification literature suggests. The class effects are somewhat larger when the focus is on the child (Table 3.6). The higher non-manual classes in particular appear

to have infrequent contact. But again, the educational effect is much stronger than the class effect.

It is sometimes argued that the time constraints posed by employment are an important reason why people – and women in particular – experience difficulties in maintaining family ties. Our findings are not in line with this view: the effect of employment was not found to be significant. Employed women have the same amount of contact with their parents as non-employed women (Table 3.6). More detailed analyses show that the number of working hours among working women does not have a negative effect on intergenerational contact either.

Cultural differentials

When we look at sociocultural determinants, we first see that religiosity plays a role. In line with expectations, we find that parents who identify themselves as being religious have more contact with their children than other parents. We also see denominational differences. Whereas Catholic parents see their children most often, Orthodox Protestant parents have the least contact. The Orthodox group appear to have the same level of contact as the secular group. This is contrary to what one would expect because the Orthodox are also the most traditional in their values. Differences by religiosity are somewhat reduced when distance is controlled for. A similar pattern emerges when we look at the children (Table 3.6). Whereas Catholic and Dutch Reformed children have the highest level of contact with their parents, non-religious and Orthodox children have the lowest level of contact. Note that these differences by religiosity have been adjusted for the possibly confounding influence of family size. Note also that religious differences are large.

With respect to ethnic differences, we made a comparison with respondents from the ethnic minority oversample, the so-called NKPS-SPVA data, because the number of Turkish, Moroccan and Caribbean respondents is too small in the main sample. We focused on two ethnic groups: people of Turkish or Moroccan descent and people of Caribbean descent. The underlying subgroups are combined for practical purposes. By 'foreign descent' we mean that either the respondent or one or both of the parents was/were born abroad. In Table 3.4. we compare these two groups with Dutch-born people of two Dutch-born parents in the main NKPS sample. For practical purposes, we focused on children Anchors (aged over 25).

The results in Table 3.4 show dramatic differences. About 80 percent of Turkish and Moroccan adult children were found to have at least weekly contact with their mothers. Almost one in third had daily contact. These numbers are higher than the corresponding figures for Dutch respondents. Similar results were found for fathers. When we compare Turkish and Moroccan respondents to less educated Dutch respondents, the differences are smaller, suggesting that educational differences partly explain why Turkish and Moroccan respondents had such frequent contact with their parents. Even in this more stringent comparison, however, it is clear that contact is more frequent among Turkish and Moroccan respondents, and this is probably related to the more familialistic orientation of Islamic culture.

Important to note, however, is that many immigrants had parents who live abroad. Of Turkish and Moroccan respondents aged 25 and over, 51 percent of the fathers and 54 percent of the mothers lived abroad. In these cases, there is still contact—77 percent see their fathers 'about once a year' and 81 percent see their mothers 'about once a year'—but it is obviously much less frequent than what is suggested in Table 3.4. This shows that the Turkish and Moroccan contact pattern is heterogeneous: Either there is very intensive contact (when the parent is living in the Netherlands) or there is very extensive contact (when the parent lives abroad). In that sense, the contact levels in Table 3.4 do not describe the overall experience of Turkish and Moroccan people in the Netherlands very well.

When we look at the Surinamese and Antilleans (the Caribbean group), we see that contact is also more frequent compared with the Dutch. Compared with the Turkish and Moroccan groups, the Caribbeans appear to have somewhat less contact. The main exception are Caribbean fathers. Compared with the Dutch, Caribbeans were found to have less frequent contact with their fathers and to have broken off contact with their fathers more frequently than the Dutch. This may probably be explained by the fact that many Caribbeans grow up in single-mother families.

A third cultural determinant is the degree to which the respondent grew up in a family-oriented environment. A series of retrospective questions was used for this measure: whether the Anchor ever stayed with maternal or with paternal family (two separate questions), whether paternal or maternal family members ever came and stayed with the Anchor (two separate questions), whether maternal or paternal grandparents lived in the same city or town (two separate questions), and whether the Anchor ever went on holiday with relatives (other than the immediate family). All questions refer to when the Anchor was 15 years old. The scale (range 0-7) is a count of the dichotomous items and is broken down into three categories (lower, middle and higher third).

The results show that daughters who grew up in a family-oriented environment tend to see their parents relatively frequently (Table 3.6). Interestingly, differences by family-oriented socialisation do not emerge for sons. Intensive interaction with extended family during childhood does not appear to affect sons' tendency to visit their parents. When we look at the parents (Table 3.3), we see no effect. In other words, the socialization effect does not travel across generations. If people are socialized by their parents into the importance of extended family, this does not affect the relationship they later will have with their own children, it only affects the relationship they have with their parents.

Demographic differentials

We see that both continuous (age) and discrete (stage) aspects of the life course have an effect on intergenerational contact. Contact was found to become less frequent as parents age, which suggests that the decline in mobility and vitality with age is probably more important than the increased need for support. The age decline is much steeper for mothers than for fathers. This does not imply that mothers end up with less frequent contact than fathers in late life. A closer inspection of the data in Table 3.3 shows that mothers start at higher levels when they are younger. Among children, the effect of age was found to be similar (Table 3.6). The older the child becomes, the lower the level of contact. The oldest children are an exception—they have frequent contact—but this is a small group. It is tempting to examine whether it is the age of the parent or the age of the child that matters most, but these ages are so highly correlated (r = .84) that the effects can hardly be separated.

Note the effect of age on intra-family variation in contact. As Table 3.5 shows, the differences in contact frequency among children in the same family increase as parents become older. As parents reach an age at which they start experiencing difficulty managing on their own, contact may become more functional—more related to support. And when contact is more functional, parents may perhaps lean more heavily on a single child to obtain the support they need. This increases inequality in contact within the family.

We also see major differences by parental life course stage, i.e. whether the parent is in a first marriage, single after divorce, single after widowhood, remarried after divorce or remarried after widowhood. Note that unmarried cohabitation is included in the marriage and remarriage categories. We use marriage terminology for clarity of presentation. Differences by life course stage are considerably stronger for fathers than for mothers. The experience of divorce has a strong negative effect on contact with children. First-married fathers have more than three times as much contact with their children as divorced fathers who live alone. When

parents remarry or 'recohabit' after divorce, the effect remains negative. Although the negative divorce effect has often been documented for fathers, we see that it also exists for mothers, albeit to a lesser extent. Divorced mothers have less contact with their children than first-married mothers.

Levels of contact with adult children do not differ between parents in a first marriage and parents who are 'single' because they have lost their spouse through death. In other words, widowhood appears to have neither a positive (which we had expected given an increased need for companionship and support) nor a negative effect on contact with adult children. The arrival of a new partner does, however, seem to lead to a change in contact levels. Widowed parents who live with a new partner see their children less often than those who live alone .

At the family level, we see large differences by life course stage (Table 3.5). Among parents who are divorced, about 16 percent have lost contact with at least one child. The proportions are higher among fathers than among mothers. Among fathers, 22 percent of those who are single after divorce and 25 percent of those who have remarried have lost contact with at least one child. Among mothers, these figures are 11 percent and 17 percent respectively. Intra-family variation in contact frequency is lowest among parents in a first marriage. Apparently, if parents are still together levels of contact with children are more similar than if the parental marriage has come to an end. Intra-family variation in parent-child contact frequency is relatively high among single divorced parents. When parents are divorced, differences in the level of contact with children increase. For fathers, these effects are even more striking (numbers not shown). This suggests that divorce has the effect of harming relationships with some children while not affecting the relationships with others. Perhaps the children are in some sense 'divided' over the two parents. Note that inequality is also high among widowed parents who live with a new partner, but this is a rather small group in our data.

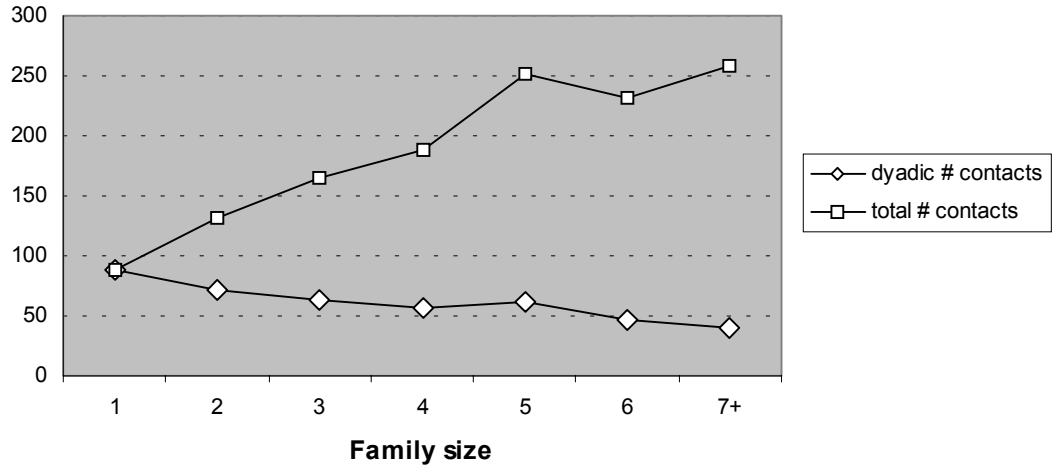
When we look at the life course of children, we see smaller differences in parent-child contact (Table 3.6) than when we look at the parents' life course. Contact levels do not differ between never-married adult children and those who are married. This finding suggests the transition from being single to being married has no effect on relationships with parents. Note that these findings are based on adult children aged 25 and up. If those aged 18-24 are included in the analyses, we do find differences in the frequency of contact with parents between those who are still single and those who are married (Kalmijn & Dykstra, 2004). Whereas the transition to marriage is associated with a reduction in contact for sons, for daughters there is a slight increase in contact after marriage.

Divorce is not associated with a drop in level of contact, as shown in an earlier study conducted in the Netherlands (Dykstra, 1998). Adult children who have divorced see their parents equally often as adult children in intact marriages. Grandparenthood appears to have the greatest consequences for contacts with the older generation. Daughters who have children living at home have higher levels of contact with their parents than do daughters who are childless or whose children have left the home. These differences by parental status are not observed for sons. More detailed analyses show that the differences in contact levels hold for both mother-daughter ties and father-daughter ties.

Finally, we see that family size has a very strong effect on contact levels. The more children a parent has, the less contact they have with each of their children (Table 3.3). When the perspective changes to the child, we see similar results. The larger the number of siblings (Table 3.6), the less often the child has contact with his/her parents. The effect is of the same magnitude as observed in the analysis of parents. These are obvious results showing that children are to some extent each other's rivals for their parents' time. Alternatively, children with a larger number of siblings might feel less obliged to keep in touch with their parents.

Effects of family size are also visible at the aggregate level. We illustrate these effects in Figure 3.2.

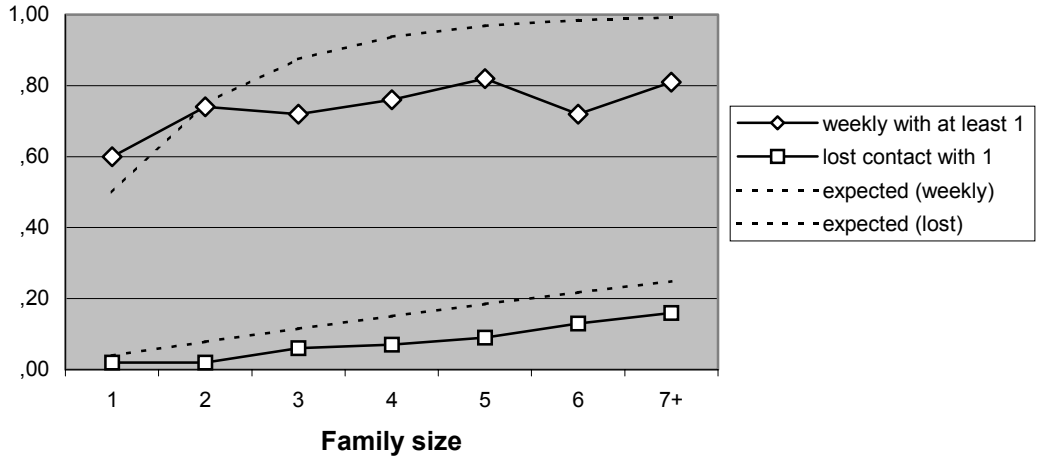
Figure 3.2. Parent-child contacts by family size



At the dyad level, the mean number of annual contacts decreases with an increase in family size. However, the total number of contacts is much higher in larger families. Hence, children may be rivals, but the total amount of time parents spend with their children is also greater in larger families. Of course, parents also see their children together, which saves time.

Differences by family size in terms of the likelihood of at least weekly contact do not follow a clear-cut pattern (see Table 3.5). There is a tendency for weekly contact to increase with family size, but the most important difference is between family size one and higher. Given that the effect of family size is driven by the logic of probability, we can compare the actual effect to what one would expect. At the dyad level, the chance of weekly contact is about 50 percent (see Table 3.1). This means that when there are two children, the probability of having weekly contact with at least one child is 75 percent. For larger families, these estimations are: 88 percent for a family size of three, 94 percent for a family of four, and 97 percent for a family of five. When we compare these estimates to actual numbers, as we do in Figure 3.3, we see two differences.

Figure 3.3. Weekly contact with at least one child and lost contact with at least one child by family size



First, the level of contact in families with one child is higher than estimated. Apparently, ties to a single child are quite strong. Second, the level of contact in families of size two and above are lower than estimated. This possibly points to the fact that children share responsibilities towards their parents.

Large families also entail risks, however. We see that the likelihood that a parent will lose contact with at least one child is much higher in big families than in small families. For example, in the most common family type – families with two children – about 2 percent of the parents have lost contact with one child (Table 3.5). In families of seven or more, 16 percent have lost contact with at least one child. This pattern is presented graphically in Figure 3.3. The findings suggest that in larger families, there is a greater likelihood of parents having a problematic relationship with an adult child. Although this finding is simply the result of probability (as shown by the expected curve in Figure 3.3), it is an important and hitherto neglected aspect of reality.

Finally, it is interesting to see how intra-family variation in contact frequency is associated with family size (Table 3.5). Note that the differences are controlled for the confounding effect of the average number of contacts because we have used a relative measure of intra-family variation (i.e. the difference in level of contact divided by the mean number of contacts). We see that variation increases with increasing family size. In other words, in large families it appears to be more difficult than in small families to maintain similar levels of contact with all children.

Conclusion

Parents and children see each other frequently in the Netherlands. This first main finding corresponds well with findings from other western European countries. Although contact levels are high, there is a strong degree of differentiation in contact. This differentiation exists when we look at characteristics of both parents *and* children.

One important source of differentiation is level of education. The better educated have contact with parents and children less frequently than the less educated. To a large extent, this is due to the fact that the better educated live further away from their family members. When class and education were analysed simultaneously, class differences turned out to be rather

small, and much smaller than educational differences. This sheds a somewhat different light on the older literature on the modified extended family of the working class. Contact patterns, which have been interpreted as being particular to certain occupational classes, might actually be particular to the attained level of education. Our findings show little evidence for differentiation in contact levels by employment status. Contrary to popular belief, we find no support for the idea that the time women spend on employment outside the home competes with the frequency of contact with their parents.

We also failed to find strong differences in family contact by religiosity. There are denominational differences, but there is no sharp contrast between the religious and the non-religious. Given the strong effects of religious background and church membership on virtually all aspects of demographic behaviour in the Netherlands, including marriage, cohabitation, fertility and divorce, our findings are surprising. In the Netherlands, as elsewhere, people who identify themselves as being religious tend to have more traditional family attitudes (Lesthaeghe & Meekers, 1986). Nevertheless, these traditional attitudes do not appear to translate into strong differences in intergenerational contact patterns.

In line with earlier studies, we find that the life course strongly patterns intergenerational contact. Both continuous and discrete life course effects were distinguished. Contact frequency declines as parents and children become older. More importantly, we find that a parental divorce strongly reduces contact, especially for fathers, but also for mothers. Children's divorce, however, does not have a negative effect on parent-child relations. For daughters, but not for sons, parental status is an important determinant of the frequency of contact with parents. Contact levels are highest when daughters have children living at home. Whereas widowhood is not associated with greater contact with children, it has no negative effect either. Our findings also show that the frequency of contact is relatively low in the event of parental remarriage, whether after widowhood or after divorce. We can only speculate about what takes place in these relationships. Does having a new partner mean there is less time, need, attention and energy for the children? Does having a step-parent mean that children are less willing to visit?

We not only examined contact at the dyadic level, but also looked at aggregate indicators of family contact. These analyses yielded additional and in some cases novel findings. First, we looked at the question of how often parents have contact with at least one child. We view this as a measure of protection against social isolation. Pronounced differences by level of educational attainment emerged. Better educated parents in particular were found to be unlikely to see at least one child on a weekly basis. The findings for this group stand out from those of other parents, suggesting that the 'problem' of intergenerational solidarity (Heath & Stacey, 2002) is probably a problem that is primarily experienced by the better educated. They are the ones who do not interact frequently with their children. Contact levels are much higher in the other educational attainment groups. Though one would expect the percentage of parents who see at least one child weekly to be much higher in large than in small families, this is not borne out by our findings. Whereas the likelihood of at least weekly contact in one-child families is higher than expected on the basis of chance alone, in families of size two and up the likelihood of at least weekly contact is lower than expected on the basis of chance alone. Single children appear to feel particularly responsible towards their parents. Children in larger sibships appear to delegate these responsibilities among themselves. Still, if we look at total levels of contact, we do find that they are higher in larger families than in smaller families.

A second indicator at the family level is the percentage of parents who lost (face-to-face) contact with at least one child. One striking finding here is that divorced parents who live alone, especially divorced fathers, often lost contact with a child: 22 percent of single divorced fathers lost contact with at least one child. Another striking finding lies in family

size. In larger families, it is more common for contact to be lost with at least one child. Hence, even though total levels of contact are higher in larger families, they also tend to face greater family problems.

Finally, we looked at the way in which parents divide their time and attention between their children. Do they see all their children to the same degree, or do they see some children more often than others? Although there certainly is variation in contact within families, we saw that there is a positive and moderately strong correlation between the contact levels of siblings. This suggests that there is an underlying family factor at work: whereas contact is intensive in some families, and this applies to all dyads in the family, there is little contact in other families. The degree of variation varies, however. First, we found that there is greater variation among less educated parents than among better educated parents. This could possibly be explained by the higher levels of family conflict in less educated families, which may reduce contact with some children without reducing contact with others. We also found that variation increases with age. One explanation is that when contacts become more functional – as is often the case when parents grow older – parents tend to rely on a single child. Finally, we saw that variation is greater when parents divorce, suggesting that a divorce negatively affects contacts for some children but not for others. Given these findings, a direction for future research is to more closely examine the source of differences in contacts within families.

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Chapter 4

More kin than kind: instrumental support in families

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Introduction

Since the post-war expansion of the welfare state, families are no longer regarded as the main provider of all types of instrumental support to their members. It is assumed that, in combination with a process of individualisation, the kind of instrumental support within families and its characteristics has changed. These days, family members do not support each other unconditionally, at any cost and by any means (Finch, 1989). According to Beck (2001), welfare state provisions, such as social security, childcare arrangements, and homes for the elderly result in 'institutionalised individualism'; traditional collectivist dependencies such as family dependency are being replaced by modern, institutional dependencies. This is not to say that no room is left for family support. The thesis that family solidarity is substituted by collective solidarity is contested by studies showing that collective solidarity and family solidarity are complementary (Arber & Attias-Donfut, 2000). Examples are mothers of young children who combine public childcare and childminding by family members, and student grants that are supplemented by money given by parents (Rainwater, Rein & Schwartz, 1986; Arber & Attias-Donfut, 2000; Timmermans 2003; Knijn, Jonsson & Klammer, 2005). This process, in which the family has been liberated from the primary and life-long responsibility for its members, has been termed 'de-familialisation' (Lister, 1994; Saraceno 1996). De-familialisation indicates that activities previously seen as family obligations are now outsourced to public provisions and services. It also implies that individuals are no longer primarily identified as family members, but as individuals who also happen to be, in addition to many other identities, members of a family. By consequence, family relationships are increasingly based on a voluntary contract and family obligations are less self-evident than they were in the past (Finch, 1989).

This changing character of support exchanges within the family is not only due to the expanding welfare state; other social and cultural changes have also transformed the kind and character of family obligations. For instance, the increase in female labour force participation has made it easier for many families to give financial support (e.g. to their adolescent children), but it has made it more difficult to give support that consumes a lot of time (e.g. care for frail parents). Adolescents, male and female, postpone adulthood – defined as being responsible for one's own income and household – and depend financially on their parents longer. Adult men retire from the labour market at a younger age than a few decades ago and by consequence have more time to support their family members, either by minding their grandchildren, do-it-yourself activities or by gardening. Lastly, family relations have become more dynamic and voluntary because of the diversification of family types (Liefbroer & Dykstra, 2000). This diversification confronts family members with the need to redefine family obligations, by answering questions like: 'who belongs to my family?' (Cheal, 2002) and 'under what conditions do I want to support a family member?'

This issue of the conditions of family support raises questions about the moral economy in families. In other words, what is the structure of giving and taking within families now that instrumental support is no longer self-evident? Theoretical studies on family obligations reveal several mechanisms that substitute coercive family obligations. Reciprocity refers to the norms and practices of giving and taking that do not immediately have to be balanced, although some retribution is expected in the long run (Gouldner, 1973; Komter, Burgers &

Engbersen, 2000). Reciprocity requires that people belong to a social entity that remains relatively stable over time; prolonged interaction offers possibilities to reciprocate. Trust is an important condition for reciprocity; hence social contact and a feeling of belonging are necessary (Axelrod, 1984; Ostner, 2004). Therefore, it can be expected that social groups, like families, that have intense social contacts have a high degree of reciprocity. A second mechanism underlying family obligation is based on prescribed altruism (Finch, 1989). Land and Rose (1985) observed that women's larger share in caring for elderly parents can be attributed to gendered norms and values. Internalisation of gendered norms as well as social expectations of women's responsibility for vulnerable family members result in an unequal division of family obligations, at least when it concerns care. The opposite may be true for financial support to family members; according to internalised gendered norms as well as social expectations men are seen as the main breadwinners. Whether this implies that men tend to support family members in financial need more than women do remains to be seen.

These considerations suggest that instrumental support exchange within the family is no longer self-evident. At the same time, relatively little is known about the extent of instrumental support exchange between family members and the conditions that facilitate or hamper this exchange. This chapter therefore seeks to contribute to the literature by answering a number of related research questions. The first question is to what extent instrumental support is exchanged between family members. The second question is to what extent giving and receiving instrumental support are related. Whilst one could argue that people give support to those who can reciprocate this support, which would imply a positive correlation between giving and receiving support, one could also argue that instrumental support is particularly likely to be given in situations in which the recipient of support lacks the ability to reciprocate. This latter argument would imply a zero or even negative correlation between giving and receiving support. The third and last question to be answered in this chapter concerns the conditions that favour or hamper support exchanges. In answering these questions, we will restrict ourselves to instrumental support within some of the most important relationships within families (Rossi & Rossi, 1990),namely relationships between parents and children and relationships between siblings. Before discussing the details of our analyses, however, we will first elaborate on the set of conditions that seem most important in determining the extent of instrumental support exchange.

Conditions for giving and receiving family support

Several conditions for giving and receiving instrumental support within families can be distinguished. A first condition refers to a person's position in the family structure in terms of gender, age and type of kin. Several studies have shown that while women feel more responsible for caring for (grand)children as well as for older members of the family, men take more responsibility for helping family members financially (Rossi & Rossi, 1990; Millar & Warman, 1996; Leira, Tobio & Trifiletti, 2005). Rossi and Rossi (1990) have found that feelings of obligations are much stronger for vertical family relationships than for horizontal family relationships. The strongest feelings of family obligation occur between parents and children. Feelings of obligation between siblings are weaker, and comparable to those between grandparents and grandchildren. Kohli (1999) shows that the transfer of financial means prioritises vertical family relations, between parents and children as well as between grandparents and grandchildren. Kohli also shows that financial means are more often transmitted downwards, from the older to the younger generations, than upwards.

The household composition of kin may constitute a second condition for instrumental support. In a study by Rossi and Rossi (1990), ex-spouses rank very low in feelings of family obligations. This study also shows that married parents are more likely to provide support to

their children than widowed or divorced parents, which is confirmed in a study by Dykstra (1998) and by Klein Ikkink, Van Tilburg and Knipscheer (1999). These studies, however, report different results on the status of parents with respect to receiving support. Whereas Dykstra (1998) reports that divorced parents receive less support than married parents, Klein Ikkink, Van Tilburg and Knipscheer (1999) report the reverse. The household composition of children also has an impact on support patterns. Klein Ikkink, Van Tilburg and Knipscheer (1999) report that daughters with young children give the most support to their parents, followed by sons without children, daughters without young children and sons with young children. Unmarried children, in their turn, in particular daughters, give more financial support to their parents than married children do. At the same time, Dykstra (1998) shows that parents' support to their children is not affected by a child's divorce. Finally, family size proves to be of importance for the exchange of family support. The more children parents have, the less they give to their children and the more they receive from them.

Proximity appears to be a third structural condition for the exchange of instrumental support. Klein Ikkink, Van Tilburg and Knipscheer (1999) conclude that the longer children have to travel to their parents, the less support they give. However, the study does not show whether the opposite is also true: do parents give less support to children who live far away than to children who live close by, and do siblings support each other more if they live at a short distance from one another and therefore have more frequent contact?

Fourthly, the resources available to both the providers and recipients of support influence actual support exchanges. We can thus assume that family members who have more time available, for instance because they are unemployed or retired, are better positioned to support their parents, children or siblings. The same may be true with regard to the availability of financial resources. Higher income groups will have more financial resources that can be used to support their kin. Does this imply that they also lend more financial support to their family members than low income groups do? This is questionable, given the overall reluctance of family members to accept financial assistance from family members (Brody, Johnsen & Fulcomer, 1984).

Finally, the actual or perceived need for support could constitute a prerequisite for support exchanges. Family members may not be expected to help each other if no help is needed. People can celebrate family bonding and togetherness at several occasions (see Chapter 5), but they do not have to confirm this by supporting each other. The most needy family members may therefore be expected to be the ones that receive most family support. Financial support, support with odd jobs and help with household chores and childcare may not be distributed equally among children and parents. Notions of fairness and an evaluation of needs and of having deserved support can even result in a quite uneven distribution of resources among kin (Finch, 1989).

Data

To answer the research questions, we used information from the interview with the central family member (the Anchor). Information on the main NKPS sample has been provided in the introduction of this book. Additional information can be found in Dykstra et al. (2005).

In the analysis of the exchange of instrumental support, we focused on four types of support: support with household chores, support with odd jobs, financial support and support with childcare. For each parent, and for up to two randomly chosen children and siblings, respondents answered the questions 'Did you get support from (this family member) with housekeeping during the last three months?', 'Did you get support from (this family member) with odd jobs during the last three months?' and 'Did you give support to (this family member) with respect to housekeeping (odd jobs respectively) during the last three months?'.

The answer categories are 'no', 'once or twice', and 'several times'. The same question was posed with regard to financial support, but with a timeframe of twelve instead of three months. In the analysis, answers were dichotomised into 'no' and 'yes'. With respect to childcare, the NKPS questionnaire included a question asking whether the respondent had received support with childminding. If a member of the family gave this support, the respondent could mention this specific member of the family.

For some respondents, information is available on support exchanges with more than one parent, child or sibling. To ensure independence between observations, in these instances a random parent, child or sibling was selected for analysis. In all, information is available on support exchanges with approximately 4,800 parents, 2,700 children and 7,000 siblings. To answer the first research question on the existence of support exchanges, a descriptive analysis of the percentage of respondents who gave support to parents, children and siblings and of the percentage of respondents who received support from these same family members is presented. Next, correlations between received and given support to family members were calculated to answer the second research question on the level of reciprocity within specific family relationships. Finally, logistic regression analyses, separately for parents, children and siblings, were performed to examine which factors influence whether or not support is exchanged. Indicators for each of the five sets of potential conditions for support are included in these analyses. Age of the respondent and the family member, gender of the respondent and the family member and the availability of siblings are used as indicators of the position of the respondent in the family structure. Household position of the respondent and of the family member are used as indicators of the household composition of the support giver and recipient. The distance between the family members (in kilometres) is used as an indicator of proximity. Whereas availability of financial resources is measured by household income, availability of time is measured by the number of days the respondent spends on paid labour. Finally, an assessment of physical impairment is included in the analyses. In analyses on support giving, this variable can be interpreted as a resource (those who are impaired have less opportunity to give support); in analyses on support receiving, this variable can be interpreted as a measure of perceived or actual need (those who are impaired are more in need of receiving support).

Results

Who gives what to which family members?

Table 4.1 Percentage of respondents who receive instrumental support from or give instrumental support to parents, children or siblings

	Any type of support[a]		Support with household chores		Support with odd jobs		Financial support		Support with childcare
	Received from	Given to	Received from	Given to	Received from	Given to	Received from	Given to	Received from
Parents	50.0	63.1	20.2	40.5	31.6	53.5	21.9	4.7	55.9
Children	45.4	65.1	22.0	32.1	37.3	49.3	2.5	25.0	-
Siblings	18.7	22.9	6.7	10.6	15.7	18.9	1.4	2.0	20.3

[a] Any type of support includes support with household chores, support with odd jobs and financial support

First, attention will be given to the likelihood of support exchanges between family members. Table 4.1 presents information on receiving and giving different types of instrumental support. The first two columns provide data on the exchange of all types of instrumental

support. A first conclusion is that parents and children exchange much more support than siblings do. While almost half of all respondents with one or more living parents (45%) received some kind of instrumental support from their parents and also about half of the respondents with adult children (50%) received some kind of instrumental support from this child, only one out of five respondents with siblings (19%) received any kind of instrumental support from their siblings. Parents and children also give each other more support than they give to their brothers and sisters. About two thirds of the children give instrumental support to their parents and the same percentage of parents give this kind of support to their children. In contrast, 22% percent of Anchors give instrumental support to their siblings. The results presented in Table 4.1 also show that perceptions about support exchange can differ quite strongly between parents and children. For instance, whereas 63.1 percent of the respondents with parents stated that they had given any type of support to their parents, only 45.4 percent of respondents with children reported that they had received any type of support from this child (cf. Komter & Vollebergh, 2002). This suggests that the giving of support is not always perceived as such by the recipient.

Table 4.1 also contains information about the exchange of specific types of support. It shows that one out of five parents receive help with housekeeping from their children and a similar percentage of children receive such help from their parents. Parents and children help each other even more with odd jobs; one third of the parents and 37% of children receive support with odd jobs from their children or parents respectively. Brothers and sisters receive much less support from each other with housekeeping (7%) and odd jobs (16%). Exchange of financial support is uncommon, and when it occurs, it is given from parents to children. A fifth of the children say that they have received financial support from their parents and a quarter of the parents say they have given financial support to their children. Given the relationship between parents and children, it will not come as a surprise that children receive more financial support from their parents than they give. Interestingly, family members help each other most with childminding. More than half the children (56%) say that their parents have helped them with caring for their children and many siblings (20%), too, help each other with childcare. This suggests that, despite individualisation processes, grandchildren, nieces and nephews still cement family relationships.

Table 4.2 Correlation between support received from and given to parents, children or siblings

	Any type of support[a]	Support with household chores	Support with odd jobs	Financial support
Parents	0.18	0.18	0.14	0.06
Children	0.19	0.17	0.15	0.01
Siblings	0.39	0.29	0.38	0.21

[a] Any type of support includes support with household chores, support with odd jobs and financial support

The second research question focuses on the extent to which support between parents and children and among siblings is reciprocated within a short timeframe. To answer this question, a set of correlations has been computed. For each type of support the correlation between what a family member states to have received from another member and what this family member states to have given to that other member is calculated. A higher correlation suggests greater short-term reciprocity within a relationship. These correlations are presented in Table 4.2. What is clear from this table is, firstly, that the level of short-term reciprocity is relatively low, with correlations ranging from 0.01 to 0.39. Secondly, reciprocity is twice as important in sibling relationships (r = 0.39) as it is in parent-child relationships (r = 0.18 or

0.19). Thirdly, reciprocity of specific types of support is weaker than reciprocity of total support and varies by family relationship and type of support. Whereas among siblings reciprocity is particularly strong for odd jobs, among parents and children reciprocity is stronger for household chores. Finally, no financial reciprocity is visible between parents and children, but siblings do seem to reciprocate each other's financial support.

Support given to and received from parents

The third research question focuses on the conditions that favour or hamper the exchange of instrumental support. These conditions have been studied separately for each type of family relationship. First, attention will be given to the conditions that influence the give and take of support to and from parents. The results of the logistic regression analyses that have been conducted are presented in Table 4.3**.**

Table 4.3 Results of logistic regression on support received from or given to a parent

	Support with household chores		Support with odd jobs		Financial support		Support with child care
	Received N=4805	Given N=4789	Received N=4805	Given N=4789	Received N=4880	Given N=4862	Received N=1757
Constant	-3.37**	-.71**	.98**	-.39	-.73*	-2.35**	-.44
Child aged 18-29	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Child aged 30-39	-.19	-.45**	-.44**	-.38**	-.72**	-.31	.18
Child aged 40-49	-.88**	-.53**	-1.08**	-.53**	-.86**	-.81*	-.45
Child aged 50-59	-1.26**	-.54**	-1.77**	-.53**	-1.12**	-.71	-1.32*
Child aged >60	-2.15**	-.96**	-2.35**	-.81**	-1.22**	-2.21*	-
Parents aged <49	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Parents aged 50-59	-.06	-.29	.42*	.40*	.00	-.73*	.58
Parents aged 60-69	.24	-.09	.43*	.60**	.12	-.66	.50
Parents aged 70-79	-.24	.27	-.02	1.10**	.34	-.75	.05
Parents aged >79	-.95**	.77**	-.67*	1.48**	.49	-1.12**	-.72
Son	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Daughter	.40**	.27**	.23**	-.56**	.02	.07	.16
Father	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mother	1.52**	.63**	-.49**	.50**	-.18*	-.18	.86**
Child has no siblings	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Child has one sibling	.08	-.31*	.23	-.13	.27	-.56	.07

Child has two siblings	-.09	-.31*	.06	-.26	.16	-.36	.05
Child has three siblings	-.36	-.38*	-.17	-.28	-.06	-.33	-.75*
Child has four or more siblings	-.80**	-.45**	-.49**	-.51**	-.44**	-.03	-.95**
Child single (no earlier cohabitation)	.41**	.48**	.27	.21	.25	.44	-
Child single (earlier cohabitation)	.36*	.07	.16	-.23	.14	.86**	-
Child with partner	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Child with partner and children	.24*	-.14	-.15	-.15	-.12	-.12	-
Child lone parent	.55*	-.20	.17	-.34*	-.23	-.24	.43
Parent lives alone	-.32**	.15*	-.93**	.14	.21*	1.07**	-.77**
Parents live together	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Parent lives with other partner	-.34*	-.63**	-.73**	-.41**	.13	.13	-.74**
Parents <5 km away	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Parents 5-20 km away	-.08	-.24**	-.18	.-.22**	-.05	-.52*	-.26
Parents 20-60 km away	-.45**	-.38**	-.36**	-.51**	.23*	-.46*	-.95**
Parents >60 km away	-.64**	-.36**	-.78**	-.87**	.39**	-.45*	-1.31**
Child's household income unknown	.11	.28	.06	.23	-.31	.26	.03
Child's household income < €950	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Child's household income €950-1350	-.11	-.05	-.13	-.14	-.13	-.01	-.54
Child's household income €1350-1950	-.04	.03	-.21	.22	-.25	.02	-.16
Child's household income €1950-2950	-.04	.00	.01	.23*	-.05	.27	-.00
Child's household income > €2950	.04	.02	.17	.26*	.11	.76**	.37

Child has no paid job	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Child has paid job for 2 days or less	.24	.11	.04	.10	.23	.09	.11
Child has paid job for 2-3 days	.32*	.06	.30*	.26*	.23	.47	.41*
Child has paid job for 3-4 days	-.04	-.12	.04	.05	.13	.52	.14
Child has paid job for more than 4 days	.03	-.24*	-.04	-.11	-.03	.34	-.13
Child has no physical limitations	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Child has illness, no permanent restriction	-.03	.07	.04	.29*	-.31	-.08	.10
Child has illness, some limitation	.16	.12	.11	.08	.08	-.16	-.12
Child has illness, severe limitation	.24	-.21	-.13	-.21	-.30	.49	-.44
Cox and Snell R^2	.16	.08	.24	.09	.05	.03	.23

First, attention is paid to the role played by the position of parents and children in the family structure. Young adults (age 18 to 29) by far exceed all the other age categories not only in receiving support from their parents but also in giving support to their parents. The older the parents are, the more support is given to them both with regard to household chores and odd jobs. More support is given to parents who are very old (above 79 years old), and in turn less support with housekeeping is received from old parents than from younger parents. Less financial support is also given to parents above age 79 than to younger parents. We also see that women are the main receivers, but also the main givers of support to their parents, with the exception of help with odd jobs. In line with traditional gender norms, men help their parents more with odd jobs than women do. Women, in contrast, help their parents more with housekeeping, and in return receive help from their parents with housekeeping, odd jobs and childcare. In addition, whereas more support with housekeeping and childcare is received from mothers than from fathers, more support with odd jobs is received from fathers. The number of siblings appears to be important for the exchange of support with parents. Respondents with four siblings or more were found to receive less support from and give less support to their parents. This suggests that both giving and receiving support is shared with the other siblings, resulting in a smaller portion of instrumental support to give or receive per sibling.

The composition of the household of the children and that of their parents is a second important determinant of the level of instrumental support exchanges. Respondents who lived with a partner received less support from parents than respondents who either lived on their own or had children. Single respondents who had never cohabited were most likely to give support to their parents. The household composition of the parents makes a difference as well. Children get more help with housekeeping and odd jobs from parents who live together than from parents who live alone or who have a partner who is not a parent of the respondent. In

their turn, children give less help with housekeeping and odd jobs to a parent who has a partner who is not a parent of the children.
Proximity proves to be a strong condition for supporting one's parents and for receiving help from them. The greater the geographical distance, the less exchange of all kinds of instrumental support there is between children and their parents. Interestingly, the availability of resources does not seem to strongly affect the exchange of support with parents. This is true for financial resources, where the only effect worth mentioning is that respondents in the highest income categories gave more financial support and help with odd jobs to their parents, as well as for temporal resources. The respondents' number of working hours did not have much influence on the exchange of instrumental support. Apparently, adult children who work two to three days a week receive more help from their parents than children with either fewer or more working hours. One explanation for this finding is that this mainly concerns employed women who prefer informal care by grandparents above formal care for their children. Finally, attention was paid to the role played by needs in determining the level of support. Surprisingly, hardly any effects were found. Only respondents who were ill, though not chronically, received a bit more help from their parents than respondents who were in good health.

Support given to and received from children
Next, attention is paid to the support that parents exchange with their children. Although the results of this analysis could be expected to mirror the results of the analysis on support exchanges with parents, this was found to be only partially true. Whereas the main focus in the previous section was on characteristics of the child, in the analysis of support exchanged with children, we focus on the role played by parental characteristics.

Table 4.4 Results of logistic regression on support received from or given to a child

	Support with household chores		Support with odd jobs		Financial support	
	Received N=2737	Given N=2737	Received N=2737	Given N=2737	Received N=2758	Given N=2758
Constant	-1.67**	-1.19**	.42	.52	-3.24**	-1.68**
Child aged 18-29	-	-	-	-	-	-
Child aged 30-39	-.63**	.15	-.29*	-.13	.25	-.59**
Child aged >40	-.92**	-.35	-.30	-.53**	-.43	-.63**
Parent aged <50	-	-	-	-	-	-
Parent aged 50-59	-.29	-.02	.28	-.17	-.26	.23
Parent aged 60-69	-.29	-.15	.24	-.23	.25	.58**
Parent aged >70	.19	-.51*	.38	-.80**	.55	.57*
Son	-	-	-	-	-	-
Daughter	.45**	.44**	-.75**	.37**	-.11	.14
Father	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mother	.21	.69**	.29**	-.44**	.47	.10
Parent has one child	-	-	-	-	-	-

Parent has two children	-.17	-.17	-.02	-.10	-1.04**	.01
Parent has three children	-.24	-.36*	-.15	-.29	-1.40**	-.44*
Parent has four or more children	-.33	-.72**	.01	-.43*	-.73	-.41*
Parent single	.25	-.14	.34**	-.54**	-.01	-.25
Parent with partner	-	-	-	-	-	-
Parent with partner and children	.28*	.18	.10	.04	-.12	-.03
Parent lone parent	.54*	.52*	.16	-.27	1.14*	-.03
Child lives alone	.61**	.29**	.25*	.31**	.12	.24*
Child lives together	-	-	-	-	-	-
Child <5 km away	-	-	-	-	-	-
Child 5-20 km away	-.41**	-.22	-.31**	-.14	-.02	.04
Child 20-60 km away	-.17	-.37**	-.82**	-.47**	.60	.43**
Child >60 km away	-.30*	-.46**	-.88**	-.64**	.63	.38**
Distance unknown	-.64**	-.68**	-1.33**	-.97**	.18	-.05
Parental household income unknown	-.07	.01	.20	-.02	-.63	.19
Parental household income < €950	-	-	-	-	-	-
Parental household income €950-1350	-.02	.11	.24	.30	.56	-.05
Parental household income €1350-1950	-.02	-.09	-.02	.16	.41	-.09
Parental household income €1950-2950	.13	.16	.22	.39**	-.93	.59**
Parental household income > €2950	.11	.27	.43**	.51**	.17	.87**
Parent has no paid job	-	-	-	-	-	-
Parent has paid job for 2 days or less	-.10	-.19	-.05	-.12	.17	-.51*
Parent has paid job for 2-3 days	.40	-.10	.13	-.04	-.71	.31
Parent has paid job for 3-4 days	-.20	-.13	.06	-.10	-.85	-.20
Parent has paid job for more than 4 days	.42**	-.09	.22	-.06	-.80	.21

Parent has no physical limitations	-	-	-	-	-	-
Parent has illness, no permanent restriction	-.03	.02	.01	-.19	.08	-.02
Parent has illness, some limitation	.27*	.02	.11	-.07	-.15	.05
Parent has illness, severe limitation	.48**	-.51**	.35**	-.60**	.38	-.05
Cox and Snell R^2	.09	.09	.08	.13	.02	.07

First, attention is paid once again to the influence of aspects of family structure on exchanges with children. The older children are, the less support parents get from them. Respondents received most support with housekeeping and odd jobs from children who were between 18 and 30 years old. In return, parents gave most help with odd jobs and most financial support to children in this same age group. The age of the respondents themselves has only limited influence on this pattern of giving and taking. Whereas parents aged 70 and over give least help with odd jobs and household tasks to their children, those who are older than 60 give more financial support to their children than younger parents do. Gender has a clear influence on the instrumental exchanges with children. Female respondents helped their children more with housekeeping and less with odd jobs than male respondents did. Respondents helped their daughters more than their sons with housekeeping and odd jobs. In return, respondents received more housekeeping help from their daughters, and more support with odd jobs from their sons. The number of children parents have also influences the level of support that is exchanged between them and their children. The more children respondents had, the less help they gave to each child with housekeeping and finances. The number of children has no effect on receiving support from these children, with one exception: it is more likely that parents receive financial support from a child if this child is an only child than if they have more children.

The household composition of parents as well as that of their children has some implications for the exchange of support. Respondents who were single and had no dependent children at home were found to receive more help and give less help with odd jobs than other respondents. At the same time, parents receive more support, with the exception of financial support, from children who live alone than from children who live with a partner. Proximity was again found to be an important predictor of mutual support between parents and children. The larger the distance between respondents and their children, the less instrumental support – with the exception of financial support – respondents received from their children and the less they gave their children as well. However, things are clearly different regarding financial support. Parents are more likely to give financial support to children who live far away than to children who live close by. Parents' temporal resources have only a marginal influence on the support they give to and receive from their children. Parents who work more than four days a week receive more help with housekeeping than those who have smaller jobs. The length of the working week of respondents is in no way related to giving support to their children. Financial resources were also found to influence the exchange of support with children. The higher the parents' income, the more support they give their children. This is true not only for financial support, but also for help with odd jobs. In turn, parents with the highest incomes receive more help with odd jobs from their children. Finally, the parents' health was found to be an important condition for supporting children or being supported by them. Parents with major health problems were found to receive most support with housekeeping and odd jobs

from their children and give much less support to their children than those who were in better health.

Support given to and received from siblings

The results presented in Table 4.1 show that supporting one's siblings is less common than the exchange of support between parents and children. Having said that, support exchange among siblings can still be quite substantial and the question which conditions facilitate or hamper the exchange of support among siblings remains relevant. The results of the logistic regression models used to answer this question are presented in Table 4.5. Once again, attention will be paid to the five sets of conditions outlined in the second section of this chapter.

Table 4.5 Results of logistic regression on support received from or given to a sibling

	Support with household chores		Support with odd jobs		Financial support		Support with childcare
	Received N=6993	Given N=6993	Received N=6993	Given N=6993	Received N=7216	Given N=7216	Received N=2234
Constant	-3.44**	-2.31**	-.06	-.11	-3.58**	-4.47**	-1.72**
Sibling aged 18-29	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sibling aged 30-39	-.14	-.05	-.32*	-.29*	-.59	-.08	-.32
Sibling aged 40-49	-.13	-.17	-.44**	-.57**	-1.25**	-.63	-.67**
Sibling aged 50-59	-.38	-.14	-.66**	-.71**	-1.87**	-.06	-1.00**
Sibling aged >60	-.22	-.10	-1.00**	-.87**	-2.17**	.28	-
Own age 18-29	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Own age 30-39	-.07	-.47**	-.28*	-.23	-.08	-.22	-.08
Own age 40-49	-.50*	-.48*	-.52**	-.32*	-.36	-.64	-.47
Own age 50-59	-.56	-.95**	-.49*	-.45*	-.68	-1.25*	-1.96
Own age >60	-1.06**	-1.32**	-.60*	-.78**	.47	-1.26	-
Brother	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sister	.87**	.53**	-.32**	.27**	.10	.40*	.89**
Male	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Female	.32**	.39**	.29**	-.42**	.38	.22	.21
One sibling	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Two siblings	-.16	-.14	-.22*	-.32**	-.10	-.44*	-.25
Three siblings	-.22	-.22	-.39**	-.45**	.11	-.44	-.57**
Four or more siblings	-.38**	-.44**	-.60**	-.59**	-.03	-.71**	-.46**
Sibling lives alone	.48**	.45**	.01	.37**	-.23	.18	.13
Sibling lives together	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

With parents	1.05**	.95**	1.18**	.69**	.22	.71*	-
Single (no earlier cohabitation)	.62**	.55**	.62**	.26*	.26	.16	-
Single (earlier cohabitation)	.32	.43**	.56**	.14	.65	.00	-
With partner	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
With partner and children	.11	-.03	.01	-.20*	-.29	-.31	-
Lone parent	.76**	.50**	.58**	.18	1.19**	.41	.54
Sibling <5 km away	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sibling 5-20 km away	-.48**	-.34**	-.68**	-.49**	.04	-.09	-.44**
Sibling 20-60 km away	-.67**	-.65**	-.82**	-.88**	.02	.19	-1.31**
Sibling >60 km away	-.93**	-.85**	-1.53**	-1.15**	-.18	.09	-1.93**
Distance unknown	-.86**	-.90**	-1.58**	-1.50**	.12	1.00**	-2.20**
Household income unknown	.23	.05	.10	.19	-.46	.05	-.16
Household income < €950	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Household income €950-1350	.21	.28	-.02	-.04	-.56	.04	.19
Household income €1350-1950	.05	-.07	-.04	.06	-1.03**	-.48	.17
Household income €1950-2950	-.03	.09	.20	.06	-1.06**	-.03	.03
Household income > €2950	.07	.12	.33*	.16	-.57	.41	-.04
No paid job	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Paid job for 2 days or less	-.11	.20	.10	.20	.66	.54	.56*
Paid job for 2-3 days	-.01	-.11	.22	.07	.24	.17	.48*
Paid job for 3-4 days	-.42*	-.02	-.10	-.07	.74	.69*	.98**
Paid job for more than 4 days	-.05	-.09	.15	-.10	.79*	.56	.20
No physical limitations	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Illness, no permanent restriction	.04	.20	.03	-.13	-.34	.65*	.08

Illness, some limitation	.02	.17	-.08	-.10	.11	.14	-.13
Illness., severe limitation	.01	-.35	.02	-.41**	.04	.40	-.28
Cox and Snell R^2	.05	.07	.12	.12	.02	.02	.15

The first set of conditions focuses on the positions of siblings in the family structure. The age of siblings was found to matter in this respect. The older respondents were, the less they gave to and received from their siblings. Gender is also important, with women receiving more help with housekeeping and odd jobs from their siblings and, in return, giving more help with housekeeping as well. In line with these findings, respondents were found to give more help with housekeeping and odd jobs to sisters. Respondents received more help with housekeeping and childcare from their sister(s), and received more help with odd jobs from their brother(s). What was observed in the exchange of support between parents and children also applies to the exchange of support among siblings; the more siblings one has, the less support is given or received. The only exception is that respondents who had more than three siblings received more childcare support than respondents who had three siblings.

The household position of siblings could constitute a second important condition for the exchange of support between them. Indeed, the exchange of instrumental support with siblings appeared to be least common among respondents living with a partner, irrespective of whether or not they had children. Apparently, the partner substitutes siblings in both giving and receiving instrumental support. Respondents who lived in non-standard families gave more support to and received more support from their siblings in terms of housekeeping and odd jobs. This pattern is mirrored in the household composition of siblings; those who lived alone exchanged more instrumental support with their siblings than those who lived with a partner.

Proximity was again found to be important. The nearer siblings live to one another, the more support they give to and receive from their siblings, with the exception of financial support. The resources siblings have hardly influence the mutual support that is exchanged between them. Respondents with average incomes (between € 1350 and 2950 a month) received more financial help from their siblings than the lower income groups. Hence, financial need does not appear to be a major factor in supporting one's siblings. This finding may imply that siblings are more likely to support each other financially if they expect something in return some day. The effect of temporal resources is limited as well. Respondents who either worked full-time, or not at all, were the least likely to receive support with childcare from their siblings. This may probably be explained by the fact that respondents who did not work did not need assistance with childcare, and that respondents who worked full-time either had a partner who looked after the children or relied on public childcare (see also Kremer, 2005). Finally, the exchange of instrumental support was found to be only weakly related to respondents' health or physical limitations. Respondents with severe physical limitations gave less support with odd jobs to their siblings. Surprisingly, respondents who were handicapped, without, however, being restricted by their handicap, were most likely to provide financial support to siblings.

Conclusion

This chapter studied the exchange of instrumental support between parents and children and among siblings. It was assumed that, despite processes of individualisation, reciprocity and prescribed altruism still serve as social norms that encourage family members to support each

other. In addition, we assumed that this exchange of support is more or less voluntary and conditional. We therefore examined which conditions favour or hamper the exchange of instrumental support between family members. Particular attention was given to five types of conditions that could be relevant: the position within the family, the household composition of providers and receivers of support, proximity between providers and receivers of support and the resources they have, and the need for help and the health of potential providers.
On the basis of our data, no conclusions can be drawn about whether the exchange of instrumental support between family members is becoming less common than it used to be. The data do show, however, that substantial amounts of instrumental support are still being exchanged between parents and children. Siblings, on the other hand, support each other less often. In addition, the exchange of support among siblings is based more on (short-term) reciprocity than is the exchange of support between parents and children. Reciprocity probably occurs when solidarity is no longer self-evident and partners in an exchange feel that the period between receiving support and giving something in return should be relatively short.

Although the exchange of instrumental support is not self-evident, this does not imply that no clear social differentials exist in the extent to which instrumental support is exchanged. Indeed, the results of the multivariate analyses illustrate that the extent of instrumental support depends on a host of factors, including one's position in the family structure, household position, proximity to family members, the availability of resources and one's needs. The most important factors in this respect seem to be proximity, position in the family structure and household position. Instrumental support, with the exception of financial support, strongly depends on proximity: the further away family members live, the less instrumental support is exchanged. If individualisation implies that families are dispersed and that family members live at a greater distance from each other for reasons of schooling, employment or partner relations, this indirectly decreases the exchange of support to and by family members. Furthermore, young people have the most intensive exchange relationships with their parents. This is interesting because it counterbalances the one-sided view of support between parents and young adult children. It is often stressed that delayed adulthood implies that young adults rely on support from their parents for an extended period of time. Our results show that young adults give more support than older adult children do. The results also confirm the importance of gender. Women give more support and get more in return, in particular in terms of housekeeping and childcare. The intergenerational bonding of women through the (grand)children, but also through nieces and nephews, appears to be quite strong. Men, on the other hand, maintain their family relationships by helping with odd jobs. The extent of instrumental exchange is also influenced by the household composition of family members. Respondents who had children themselves tended to give less help to their own parents than respondents without children, and parents who lived together provided most support to their children. Among siblings, it is particularly important whether or not siblings have a partner; brothers and sisters give more help to and get more help from siblings who do not live with a partner. Finally, an interesting finding is that the availability of money and time does not seem to be a very important condition for the exchange of instrumental support. This seems to suggest that these days giving and receiving instrumental support in families is more voluntary than it used to be.

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Chapter 5

The strength of family ties

Aafke E. Komter & Trudie C.M. Knijn

> Given rising divorce rates, it comes as no surprise that people are decreasingly happy with their marriages (..). Given too, that pleasure in family life is the most important contribution to happiness and life satisfaction, here lies a major explanation of America's current and rising sorrow. (Robert Lane, 2000: 108)

Introduction

Over the past two centuries drastic changes have occurred in the nature and strength of family ties. In days gone by, commitment to the survival and economic wellbeing of the family took priority over individual needs. The instrumental orientation towards the family has gradually been replaced by a more individualistic and affective orientation and a greater emphasis on individual needs and personal happiness (Hareven, 1995). This development has raised concern with respect to the vitality of family bonds and the strength of family ties. Comparative studies about cultural values have indeed shown that increasing individualization is accompanied by a lower level of identification with and loyalty to the family and that individualized value orientations towards marriage and the family are becoming more common (Inglehart, 1977; Van de Casteele and Billiet, 2004).

In addition to changes in values, several other demographic and structural developments have occurred that may have had an impact on family ties: increased longevity, a larger variation in family structure, women's greater participation in paid work and changes in the life course (Liefbroer and Dykstra, 2000). However, the nature of this impact is not immediately apparent. The phase of adolescence has become longer and societal responsibility is postponed, which may result in stronger family bonds during young adulthood (Van Wel, 1994). Older people supposedly have more time to spend with their families and possibly take on some caring tasks, but they may also become more dependent on their families if they get health problems. We do not know how these developments affect family ties. Finally, transformations in the welfare state may have influenced the nature of family ties (Bengtson and Achenbaum, 1993; Walker, 1996).

The impact of changing values, demographic developments and changes in the life course have not resulted in a decline in actual family solidarity, as several American and European studies have shown (Bengtson, 1993; Bengtson, 2001; Arber and Attias-Donfut, 2000; Komter and Vollebergh, 2002; Knijn and Komter, 2004; Komter, 2005). Family members still provide care for each other, but at the same time the strength of family ties may well have changed and people may experience their family relations in a different way. How do people feel about their families? To what extent do they care about their family members and do they, for instance, engage in shared activities? To some, family ties may be highly important; they may feel very committed to their family members and may enjoy undertaking all kinds of activities together. To others, however, family ties may mean much less; they do not feel such a strong attachment to their families, and for them mutual communication and

the sharing of activities is much less of a priority. Whereas some families seem to be highly cohesive, others are only loosely affiliated. The strength of family ties as expressed in family cohesion seems to be a more or less structural characteristic of families. Rossi and Rossi (1990), for instance, found that the strength of family ties was transmitted cross-generationally: happy, cooperative families tend to create families with similar characteristics themselves.

Two bodies of research seem to exist in family sociology, one directed at family solidarity and the other at family cohesion. Whereas the main focus of research on family solidarity is the intergenerational exchange of help and care (Johnson, 2000; Bengtson, 2001), studies on family cohesion predominantly emphasise the strength and closeness of family ties. While other chapters in this volume examine the level of contact between family members and the extent to which support is exchanged between family members (chapters 3 and 4, respectively), the focus of this chapter is on the strength of family bonds in the Netherlands. Among family researchers, Litwak (1960) was one of the first to study cohesion, using family visits and extended family identification as indicators. In addition, family cohesion has been associated with, for instance, loyalty to the family, shared activities with family members, family orientation, frequency of gift exchange, and correspondence with the extended family (Dyer, 1972). These studies show that both feelings and beliefs about family ties and concrete behaviours can be considered indicators of family cohesion. More recently, Olson et al. (1983; 1985; 1989) developed a theory on family cohesion, stressing only the emotional aspect. Olson et al. (1983) conceive of family cohesion as the 'emotional bonding that family members have toward one another' (p. 70) and distinguish between various levels of cohesion, ranging from disengaged (very low) to enmeshed (very high). According to Olson and his colleagues mid-range levels of cohesion are most viable for family functioning, whereas the extreme levels can be problematic for families. Barber and Buehler (1996), on the other hand, argue that family cohesion and enmeshment are different constructs, each having different effects. In their view of cohesion, the behavioural element returns; they see it as a combination of affection, support, helpfulness, and caring among family members.

Research on family cohesion has mainly focused on what a lack of it means for the psychological wellbeing of family members, on their perception of the quality of family relationships, and on the extent to which a lack of cohesion leads to problem behaviour (e.g. Farrell and Barnes, 1993; Farrell, Barnes, and Banerjee, 1995; Dreman and Ronen-Eliav, 1997; Wilson and Constantine 1999). In this chapter we will not so much focus on problem behaviour but take a different lead by combining three dimensions of family cohesion that emerge from the various studies reviewed here: attitudes reflecting the strength of family ties, the experienced quality of family relationships, and a behavioural component, in our case participation in shared family events and activities. Our purpose is to get an overall picture of the strength and variation in family bonds. We will also pay attention to a special category of family members whose family ties are very weak or even non-existent. These people, whom we will call 'black sheep', feel that they are not accepted, or even rejected by their families.

The questions that will guide our explorations is: How strong are family ties in the Netherlands? Is there a category of people whose family ties are very weak or non-existent? Are there significant socioeconomic and gender differences in the strength of family ties?

Attitudes reflecting the strength of family ties

On the basis of a number of items in the self-completion questionnaire (see the Introduction of this volume) we developed three scales designed to measure attitudes reflecting the strength of family bonds: 'family cohesion' (4 items; alpha=.80) to measure the strength of family ties; 'family support' to measure satisfaction with the support exchange in the family

(3 items; alpha=.71); and 'family atmosphere' to measure satisfaction with the general atmosphere in the family (5 items; alpha=.88). Answer categories ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Negatively worded items were reversed. The scales ranged from 1 (least positive) to 5 (most positive).

Examples of items of the 'family cohesion' scale are: 'The ties in my family are very strong'; 'Our family is loosely affiliated'; 'In our family we keep one another informed about important events'. The items of the 'family support' scale are: 'I give more to my family than I receive', 'I think my family should give me more support than I receive now', 'I receive enough support and advice from my family'. The items of the 'family atmosphere' scale are: 'In my family there is a lot of gossip', 'In my family there are often quarrels', 'When our family is together, everyone treads carefully', 'When we are together the atmosphere is tense', 'There is a lot of misery in my family'.

Table 5.1 presents an overview of the mean scores on the three scales, as well as those on family relationship quality, according to various background variables. A discussion of family relationship quality will be presented in the next section.

Table 5.1. Attitudes reflecting the strength of family ties and quality of primary family relationships by gender, age, education, household income, household situation, and religiosity (mean scores and standard deviations)

	family cohesion (N=6172) M (SD)	family support (N=7114) M (SD)	family atmosphere (N=7719) M (SD)	family relationship quality (N=8151) M (SD)
all	4.00 .57	3.62 .74	3.99 .74	3.17 .60
gender				
male	3.96 .57	3.59 .69	4.01 .72	3.14 .61
female	4.05 .57	3.66 .78	3.98 .76	3.19 .59
age group				
18-29	4.01 .55	3.85 .69	3.95 .77	3.29 .58
30-39	4.06 .57	3.69 .75	3.93 .74	3.17 .61
40-49	3.96 .54	3.56 .74	3.96 .74	3.06 .59
50-59	3.98 .60	3.53 .73	4.03 .72	3.10 .59
60-69	4.04 .58	3.46 .74	4.08 .68	3.19 .59
70+	4.03 .57	3.60 .71	4.17 .74	3.26 . 65
educational level				
up to primary	3.97 .64	3.38 .81	3.87 .86	3.02 .69
lower secondary	4.04 .58	3.60 .79	4.01 .77	3.14 .61

upper secondary	4.01 .56	3.66 .73	3.99 .75	3.19	.59
higher vocational	3.99 .56	3.65 .69	4.02 .68	3.19	.57
university	4.02 .53	3.77 .67	4.04 .68	3.26	.59
household income					
< €950	3.99 .61	3.61 .77	3.96 .80	3.16	.62
€950-1350	3.96 .63	3.55 .78	3.94 .80	3.08	.68
€1350-1950	3.97 .58	3.63 .74	3.97 .72	3.17	.61
€1950-2950	4.02 .55	3.64 .73	4.01 .68	3.18	.58
> €2950	4.04 .54	3.67 .69	4.05 .74	3.20	.54
household situation					
living with parents	3.94 .54	3.85 .68	4.00 .76	3.30	.56
single	3.83 .68	3.59 .77	3.94 .78	3.06	.72
coh./married no child(ren)	4.04 .56	3.61 .72	4.04 .71	3.24	.55
coh./married child(ren)	4.05 .53	3.63 .73	4.01 .71	3.16	.55
single parent	3.98 .57	3.53 .89	3.85 .88	3.03	.69
religious					
yes	4.08 .55	3.63 .74	4.04 .73	3.21	.58
no	3.90 .57	3.64 .73	3.95 .75	3.13	.61

This table shows, first of all, that in general our respondents were quite satisfied with the cohesion in their families, the extent to which support was exchanged, and the atmosphere in their families. Second, Table 5.1 shows that socioeconomic status generally has a positive effect on the strength of family bonds. Having attained a higher educational level tends to go hand in hand with greater family cohesion, more satisfaction with the exchange of support, as well as with a more positive experience of the atmosphere in the family. Level of income shows a similar pattern: those with higher incomes tend to have more positive attitudes on all three scales compared with those with lower incomes. People still living with their parents and cohabiting or married people were found to be more satisfied with the cohesion in their families than either people living alone or single parents. Those who still lived with their parents were more satisfied with the exchange of support than those in all the other household categories. Together with married or cohabiting respondents, those who lived with their parents also had more positive feelings about the atmosphere in their families than people

who lived alone or were single parents. People who considered themselves to be non-religious tended to have a less positive view of both family cohesion and the atmosphere in their families than did religious people. With a large-size sample, effects are often found to be statistically significant. One-way ANOVA tests showed that, with a few exceptions, the effects were indeed significant at a level of p <.001, but the effect sizes (not reported here) were generally low.

We singled out some interesting patterns for further investigation, which are visualised in Figures 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3.

Figure 5.1. Family cohesion by age and gender

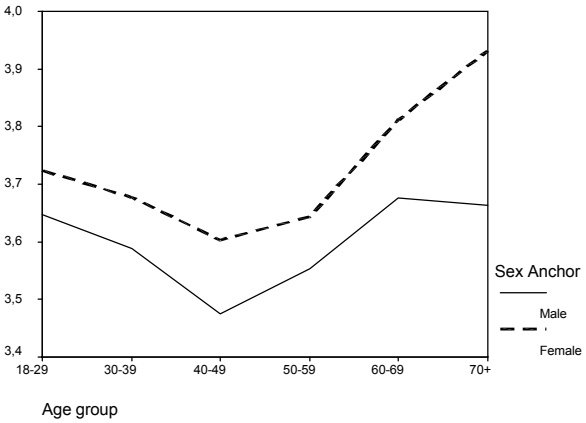


Figure 5.2. Satisfaction with support exchange by age and gender

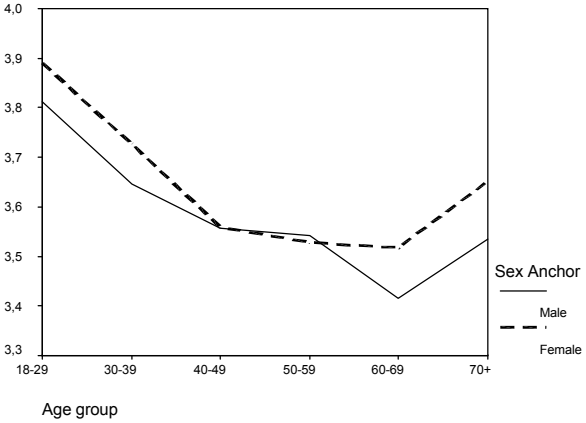
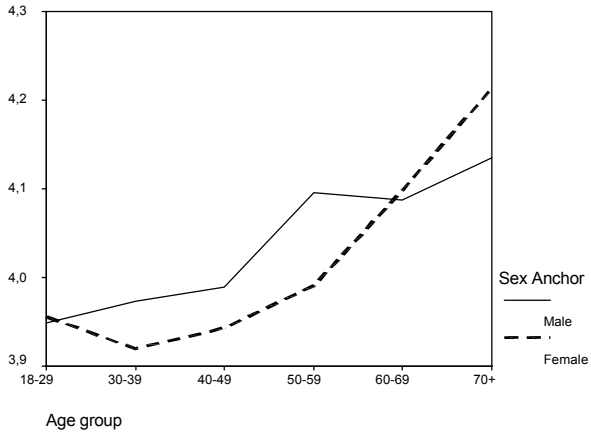


Figure 5.3. Satisfaction with family atmosphere by age and gender



Two-way ANOVA tests showed the following results with respect to Figure 5.1. There is a significant main effect of both gender and age. In general, men were found to have a more negative experience of family cohesion than women (p <.001). Apparently, men experience the ties in their families as being less close and feel less committed to their family members than do women. Both men and women seem to experience a 'midlife crisis' with respect to the closeness of their family ties. Middle-aged groups were significantly less satisfied with the cohesion in their families than both the younger and the older age groups (p <.05). Once men and women are over 50, the picture becomes rosier again. However, men older than 70 were again found to experience family cohesion as more problematic, as shown in Figure 5.1. An explanation for the gender difference in the experience of family cohesion might be that women traditionally fulfil the role of kinkeepers in the family (Rosenthal, 1985), which is likely to increase their general involvement in family issues and their commitment to family members.

A similar curvilinear pattern is visible in Figure 5.2, depicting satisfaction with the exchange of family support. The effects of both gender and age are significant (p <.001). Women were again found to be more satisfied with the exchange of support within their families than men. The age curve suggests the existence of a 'later-life crisis' in both women's and men's experiences of family ties. Those between 50 and 70 years old, in particular, tend to be less satisfied with the support exchange in their families than either the younger or the older groups. This might be explained by the fact that many people in this age group have adult children who have left the parental home and are in the process of creating their own families, causing them temporarily to exchange less support with their parents. With increasing age, the exchange of support may become more balanced again, possibly because elderly parents have become grandparents and are therefore more actively involved in the lives of their adult children. Table 5.2 shows that for people who are 70 or older, the negative feelings about support exchange seem to gradually fade away and to be replaced by a more positive attitude; this effect is slightly stronger for women than for men. Men in their late sixties are more dissatisfied than women, not only with the cohesion but also with the support exchange in their families. The picture arising from Figures 5.1 and 5.2 is consistent in terms of gender: apparently, family life is less satisfactory for men than for women, in particular in old age.

The results for family atmosphere are shown in Figure 5.3. No significant effect of gender was found, but the effect of age did reach significance (p <.001). Compared with Figures 5.1 and 5.2, Figure 5.3 shows a different age pattern. The younger generations experience the atmosphere in their families as more tense than the older age groups. Those in

the age group between 18 and 29 years differ significantly from all other age groups (p <.05). With increasing age, people come to experience the atmosphere in the family as less problematic and more relaxed. How can we explain the different age patterns found between the experience of family atmosphere and that of cohesion and support exchange? A possible explanation is that young people are often involved in a process of dissociating themselves from their parents, which may be accompanied by feelings of irritation or conflict. In the course of people's lives these temporary disturbances may smooth out and loose their negative impact on the experience of family ties.

Quality of family relationships

In the self-completion questionnaire respondents were asked the following question: 'Over all, how would you describe your relation with…?' Answer categories ranged from 1 (not so good) to 4 (very good). This question was asked for their current partner, their parents, two of their children and two of their siblings. We calculated the mean scores of relationship quality with these primary family members.

Looking at the far right column in Table 5.1, we again see that in general the Dutch have quite satisfactory family relationships. As with the attitudes reflecting the strength of family ties, socioeconomic status was found to positively affect the experienced quality of family relationships. The more highly educated perceive their family relationships as being more positive compared with those with less education; similarly, the more wealthy tend to have better relationships with their families than those who are less well off. As with most of the family attitudes, being religious is connected with a more positive experience of family relationships. All effects are statistically significant, but effect sizes are invariably small. Figures 5.4 and 5.5 show the effects of age and household situation on the quality of family relationships, by gender.

Figure 5.4. Quality of family relationships by age and gender

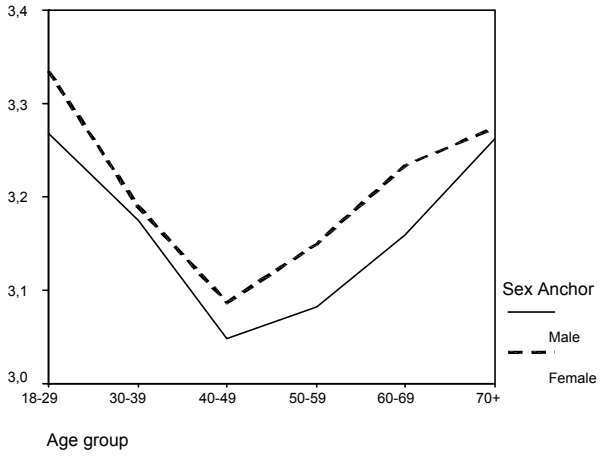
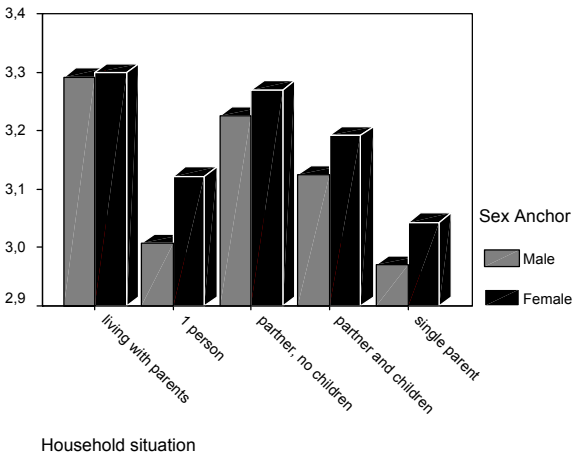


Figure 5.5. Quality of family relationships, by household situation and gender



Interestingly, Figure 5.4 shows a similar curvilinear age pattern as Figures 5.1 and 5.2. Two-way ANOVA revealed a significant main effect for both age and gender (p <.001). With respect to the experienced quality of family relationships there is again a 'midlife crisis' for both women and men, but women of all ages report having better relationships with their families than men. People between 40 and 50 years report a significantly lower level of relationship quality than either the younger or the older age groups (p <.05); the only age group they did not differ from is the group aged between 50 and 60. Younger people are significantly more satisfied with the quality of their family relationships than the other age groups (p <.05), but they do not differ significantly from the oldest age group. In view of their lower satisfaction with the atmosphere in their families (see Figure 5.2), this is a surprising result. We should, however, bear in mind that the quality of family relationships is an average measure based on the relationship with partner, parents, children and siblings. The items measuring satisfaction with family atmosphere may have been interpreted, in particular by young people, as referring to the parental home rather than to the extended family. As suggested, in their development towards autonomy and independence young people frequently attempt to disengage themselves from their parents. Whereas the relationship with their parents may temporarily suffer from this, the quality of their relationships with other family members is not necessarily affected. An explanation for the fact that younger people on average have better family relationships compared with the middle-aged could be that the former are in a phase of their lives where they have not yet established their own families. Once people start having families of their own, family ties become more extended and complex, including the risk of less positively experienced family relationships such as divorce or childrearing problems. As people grow older, these problems may be gradually overcome, resulting in an improvement in the quality of family relationships.

Figure 5.5 shows how the household situation in which people live affects the experienced quality of family relationships. Results from a two-way ANOVA test demonstrated both a significant gender difference (p <.002) and a significant effect of household situation (p <.001). Women in all household positions are more satisfied with their family relationships than men. The previously reported pattern with respect to family cohesion is confirmed here: people living alone and single parents are significantly less satisfied about the quality of their family relationships than people who still live with their parents, or who cohabit or are married (p <.05). An interesting finding is that people who cohabit or are married without children are significantly more satisfied with their family relationships than those who do have children (p <.05).

In view of the similarities found between the results on attitudes reflecting the strength of family ties and those concerning the quality of family relationships, we have computed correlations. Indeed, medium correlations exist between the quality of family relationships and the three attitude scales (.47 with cohesion, .37 with support and .39 with atmosphere; all correlations were significant at $p < .001$). Apparently, having good relationships with primary family members is connected to the strength of family ties as measured by these attitudes.

Family reunions, celebrations and holidays

Family reunions, celebrations, stays and joint holidays are occasions where family members can develop new family bonds and strengthen existing ones. Although such gatherings do not necessarily enhance feelings of togetherness, as the Danish movie *Festen* made painfully clear, our assumption in this chapter is that the frequency of family meetings is an indicator of the strength of family ties. Our respondents were asked how often they had attended family reunions and whether, in the past year, they had stayed with family, had had family staying with them, and had been on a joint holiday with family members. They were also asked whether they had celebrated St. Nicholas, Christmas, New Year's Eve in the past year, and whether members of their own household had been present. Table 5.2 gives an overview of such shared family events (only celebrations in the presence of members of one's own household are included in the table).

Table 5.2. Occurrence of family reunions and celebrations, having stayed with family/family stayed with you, joint family holiday during past 12 months (%)[a] by gender, age, education, income, household situation, dependent children at home and religiosity

	reunions (N=3543) %	St. Nicholas (N=4716) %	Christmas (N=7237) %	New Year's Eve (N=7295) %	stayed with family (N=2794) %	family stayed with you (N=3784) %	joint family holiday (N=2301) %
all	43.5	38.1	67.1	39.4	34.4	46.4	28.4
gender							
male	44.3	35.6	63.3	38.4	30.5	42.5	25.5
female	42.8	40.7	70.8	40.3	38.0	50.4	31.0
age group							
18-29	46.2	37.9	70.4	44.2	42.1	45.0	28.7
30-39	44.0	47.8	72.1	38.9	36.9	43.5	30.9
40-49	43.5	31.9	64.3	37.3	26.6	42.3	26.3
50-59	43.6	30.4	62.4	37.8	29.9	48.0	27.2
60-69	43.3	42.9	67.5	38.8	36.5	57.7	30.5
70+	35.6	38.7	62.2	38.5	34.1	48.0	24.3
education al level							
up to primary	30.7	30.5	56.8	40.0	25.8	39.4	22.0
lower secondary	38.2	37.7	66.0	42.3	27.0	42.4	24.1
upper secondary	43.9	39.8	68.8	41.2	32.3	46.1	28.7

higher vocational	49.5	40.4	69.0	36.0	40.3	50.6	32.7
university	54.6	35.4	69.7	32.0	55.2	55.8	33.4
household income							
< €950	39.5	36.1	64.1	40.6	37.2	47.7	25.1
€950-1350	39.5	34.7	60.3	39.5	34.1	39.8	24.0
€1350-1950	42.7	36.5	66.1	41.1	32.9	42.3	26.8
€1950-2950	44.2	43.0	69.5	39.3	30.1	45.6	30.9
> €2950	50.0	38.6	71.4	36.2	37.2	52.5	33.7
household situation							
living with parents	46.5	34.6	65.5	45.4	31.7	47.7	21.2
single	42.1	29.4	64.2	39.7	47.0	39.9	29.0
coh./ married no child(ren)	43.2	38.5	69.1	37.8	35.5	52.2	30.5
coh./ married child(ren)	44.8	43.8	67.7	39.0	27.1	44.6	28.1
single parent	33.6	32.5	60.6	40.8	35.6	42.6	23.5
religious							
yes	47.6	40.6	67.0	40.1	34.0	48.6	29.1
no	39.1	35.3	67.6	36.1	35.3	44.6	28.4

[a] Percentages are based on 'yes'-answers to the questions about the occurrence of family reunions, celebrations and holidays.

Christmas is the favourite family meeting. St. Nicholas is less popular than Christmas but was still celebrated by 38.1 percent of our respondents in the company of their families. New Year's Eve was celebrated by 39.4 percent of the respondents. Participation in family reunions appears to be rather common: 43.5 percent of all respondents were present at such family events. Joint family holidays were found to be somewhat less common; 28.4 percent of our respondents went on holiday with their families in the twelve preceding months.

We see that not all family members take part in family meetings to the same extent. Except for family reunions and New Year celebrations, women tend to participate significantly more often than men. This confirms our earlier finding that women are generally more involved in family matters, have closer family ties and better family relationships than men. The oldest age groups participate less often in reunions, Christmas, New Year's Eve and joint family holidays, but have their own family staying with them somewhat more often compared with the younger age groups, while staying less often with their families themselves. The same effect of socioeconomic position on attitudes reflecting the strength of family ties was also found for joint family activities. People with a low level of education tend to be less involved in most celebrations and family gatherings than the better educated; New Year's Eve is the exception: the lower educated are more inclined to celebrate this event with family members than more highly educated people. A similar pattern is found for

household income. The higher their income level, the more people tend to go to family reunions, celebrate St. Nicholas and Christmas together with their families, and go on joint holidays. Both the lowest and the highest income groups are relatively more likely to stay with their families and have family members staying with them.

Single persons do not attend family events and celebrations very often. They participate less in family celebrations such as St. Nicholas and Christmas, but stay with their families more often than people who live in other household situations. Single parents participate less often in family celebrations such as St. Nicholas and Christmas than do people who live in most other household types; they are also less inclined to attend family reunions or go on joint family holidays. Some festivities are typically celebrated in the circle of the primary family and in the presence of children. People who cohabit or are married and have children celebrate St. Nicholas and Christmas more often than others. Religious people attend family reunions more often, are more likely to celebrate St. Nicholas and New Year's Eve in the presence of other family members, and have family members stay with them more often. Almost all the differences discussed here are significant, but the strength of the effects is small.

Black sheep

One of the questions in the self-completion questionnaire measured the extent to which people feel accepted by their families. The answer categories were 1. not at all accepted; 2. not really accepted; 3. somewhat accepted; 4. entirely accepted. The answers to this question can shed light on the characteristics of a category of respondents who are particularly interesting from the viewpoint of the strength of family ties: those who have weak family ties, or no family ties at all.

We distinguished two categories: those who feel entirely accepted versus the rest. Of all our respondents 12.1 percent – one out of eight – did not feel entirely accepted or even not at all accepted by their families. We call these people the 'black sheep' and contrast them with the 'white sheep' – those who feel entirely accepted. A low socioeconomic position seems to increase the likelihood of becoming a black sheep. Of the two highest income groups, 10 percent are black sheep as against 15.9 percent of the two lowest income groups. Education has similar effects: 15.3 percent of the lowest educated groups are black sheep compared with 10.4 percent of the groups with the highest levels of education. Religious people are less often black sheep than non-religious people: 10.1 percent and 13.5 percent respectively. Middle-aged people are particularly vulnerable to becoming black sheep: 13.1 percent of those between 40 and 60 years old are black sheep as against 11.8 percent of either the younger or the older age groups.

Figures 5.6 and 5.7 present the effects of household situation and income on the extent to which people feel accepted by the families, by gender.

Figure 5.6. Acceptance by family by household income and gender

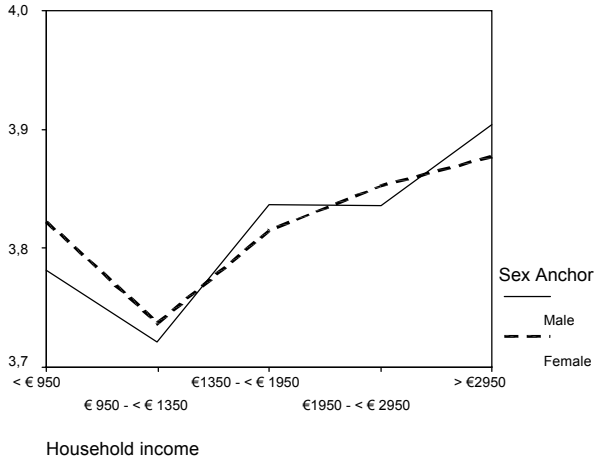
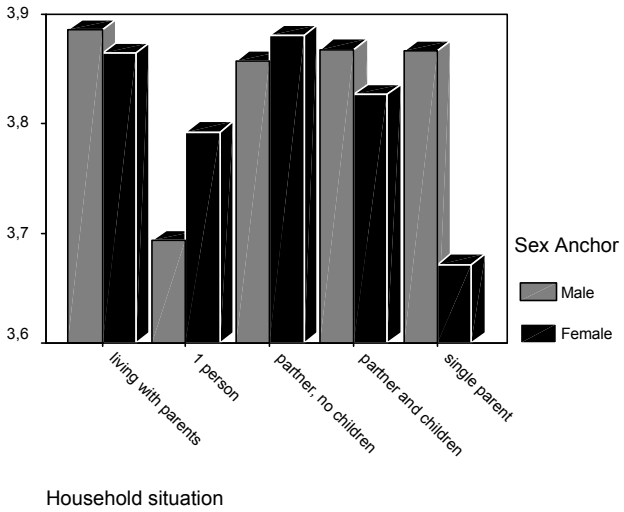


Figure 5.7. Acceptance by family by household situation and gender



Two-way ANOVA tests gave the following results. Those living alone and female single parents feel significantly less accepted compared with male single parents and people who cohabit or are married, irrespective of whether or not they have children (Figure 5.6). Both the effect of household situation and the interaction between gender and household situation were found to be significant (p <.001). The effect of household income (Figure 5.7) proved significant as well (p <.001) but no significant effect was found for gender. People in the higher income groups feel significantly more accepted by their families than those in the lower income groups. In particular, people who earn a monthly income between € 950 and € 1350 feel less accepted than both those with the lowest and those with higher incomes. They differ significantly from all the other income groups (p <.05). The typical black sheep therefore tends to be middle-aged, have a low educational level and low income, and either to live alone or to be a female single parent.

Given the fact that black sheep do not feel really accepted or not at all accepted by their families, one would expect that, compared with the white sheep, they have a more

negative experience of their family relationships and feel only weakly connected to their families. We computed t-tests to investigate these assumptions. The results of the group comparisons are shown in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3. Quality of family relationships and attitudes reflecting the strength of family ties; T-test for independent samples, comparing white and black sheep (mean scores and standard deviations)

	white sheep N=7152)	black sheep (N=988)	t-value
quality of family relationships	3.26 (SD=.54)	2.59 (SD=.66)	30.10***
family cohesion	4.07 (SD=.53)	3.51 (SD=.58)	25.79***
family support	3.72 (SD=.69)	2.96 (SD=.76)	27.35***
family atmosphere	4.11 (SD=.65)	3.23 (SD=.91)	26.84***

*** p <.001

All the differences between black and white sheep proved to be statistically significant (p < .001). Black sheep have a lower quality of family relationships than white sheep, they experience their family ties as being less close, are more dissatisfied with the support exchange in their families, and experience the general family atmosphere as much more tense compared with the white sheep.

Conclusion

The literature on family cohesion suggests the importance of attitudinal, emotional and behavioural dimensions of the closeness of family ties. In this chapter we have combined these dimensions by analysing family attitudes, the quality of family relationships, and engaging in shared activities. We have seen that in general our respondents were quite satisfied with the closeness of their family ties, the extent of support exchange and the atmosphere in their families. The same applies to their experience of the quality of relationships with primary family members. Also, a large number of our respondents participated in family reunions, celebrations, family stays or joint holidays. Taken together, these results seem to justify the conclusion that the strength of family ties in the Netherlands is still substantial.

We were particularly interested in the variation in the strength of family ties and in the extent to which this variation is affected by a range of background variables, such as socioeconomic status and gender. Consistent gender differences were indeed found on most of our measures of family ties. Women are not only more satisfied with the closeness, the support and the atmosphere in their families, they also feel that they have better family relationships compared with men. Moreover, women are more inclined to participate in joint family activities than men. We explained this difference by pointing to women's traditional role as kinkeepers in the family. Socioeconomic position proved to be another important factor in explaining the variation in the strength of family ties. Those with a lower level of education and a lower income are likely to be less satisfied with the cohesion in their families, the support exchange and atmosphere in the family, and the quality of their family relationships, and to participate less often in shared family activities. This seems to contradict the often heard assumption that the trend towards greater individualisation negatively affects the identification with and loyalty to the family, and that the more highly educated and wealthier people are more likely to be affected by the individualisation process (Inglehart, 1977).

Age proved to have a curvilinear relationship with various aspects of family ties. We found a 'midlife crisis' in the experience of family cohesion and relationship quality, and a

‘later-life crisis’ in the satisfaction with family support. We offered explanations for these age trends by relating the various stages in the life course to different types of family experiences. People living on their own and single parents often feel less connected to their families than either those who cohabit or are married, or those who are still living with their parents. Moreover, they value their family relationships less than people in the other household situations. Their participation is also less in some of the joint family activities. Religion seems to have a positive effect on the satisfaction with family cohesion, family atmosphere, relationship quality, and the sharing of family activities.

In addition to presenting a general description of family ties among the entire sample, we investigated a specific category of respondents in more detail: the ‘black sheep’, those who do not feel accepted, or not really accepted by their families. One out of eight turned out to be a black sheep. Black sheep are mostly middle-aged, tend to have little education and a low income, and either to live on their own or to be a female single parent. Apparently, single fathers can count on more sympathy and understanding from their families than do single mothers. Black sheep were found to have less close family relationships, and to be less satisfied with the cohesion, support and atmosphere in their families compared with the white sheep.

The analyses presented in this chapter were mainly descriptive in nature. In order to be able to draw some conclusions about the factors that could explain the variation in the strength of family ties, we performed several OLS-regressions. The results (not reported here) show that age, gender, partner status, religiosity and socioeconomic status significantly affect most of the indicators of the strength of family ties in the direction suggested by our descriptive analyses.

Although family ties among the Dutch are still solid and strong, we have to qualify this conclusion. For certain categories of people family ties are clearly more problematic than for others. Those who are middle-aged, have lower levels of education and income, live alone or are single parents seem particularly vulnerable to a weakening or loss of family bonds. Strong family bonds tend to accrue mainly to those who are already in a better social position because they are more highly educated, wealthier and are involved in a partner relationship.

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Chapter 6

Family obligations

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Introduction

Family solidarity is a multidimensional concept. Bengtson and Roberts (1991), for example, distinguish between six types of solidarity. Most aspects of solidarity pertain to how families are organised (family structure) and what goes on within families (family functioning). Expectations about how family members should behave towards one another constitute another important dimension of family life. Bengtson and Roberts term this aspect normative solidarity. Others also stress the importance of normative ideas about family behaviour. Rossi and Rossi (1990) suggest that a kinship system comprises both a network of concrete social relationships and a culturally defined normative structure. They define kin norms as "culturally defined rights and duties that specify the ways in which any pair of kin-related persons is expected to behave toward each other" (Rossi & Rossi, 1990, pp. 155-156). This chapter addresses this normative aspect of family solidarity by studying the opinions of the population of the Netherlands on family members' obligations towards one another.

A focus on family obligations is important because such obligations are indicative of the actual functioning of families. Firstly, feelings of obligation can have an impact on the provision of support (Klein Ikkink, Van Tilburg, & Knipscheer, 1999; Stein et al., 1998). The stronger a family member's feelings of obligation to provide a certain type of support to another family member, the more likely it is that he or she will actually provide such support in case of need. Secondly, feelings of obligation are an important yardstick for family members to evaluate actual support exchanges within families. Family members will evaluate the support they receive from family members in the light of what they feel that these other family members are obliged to give (Lee, Netzer, & Coward, 1994). Such an evaluation can have important consequences for family functioning. If family members do not live up to expectations, this could lead to a redefinition of this particular family relationship or to a redefinition of one's own feelings of family obligation, possibly leading to withdrawal of support. In that sense, expectations about family obligations and actual family exchanges are interdependent and often mutually reinforcing.

Although Rossi and Rossi suggest that obligations towards kin comprise a generic aspect of all kinship systems, the empirical record shows that great variation exists in the extent to which family members feel obliged towards one another, both within (Finch & Mason, 1991; Killian & Ganong, 2002; Lye, 1996) and across societies (Daatland & Herlofson, 2003). This chapter addresses some of the existing issues in the debate on family norms. Three main issues are discussed. First of all, attention is paid to the kind of obligations Dutch adults feel towards family in general and towards parents and children in particular. Earlier research has shown that the extent to which family members feel obliged to support each other differs between types of family relationships and depends on the context (Coleman, Ganong, & Cable, 1997; Finch & Mason, 1991; Killian & Ganong, 2002; Stein et al., 1998). Therefore, we study the strength of obligations towards family members in general and towards parents and children in particular, and the extent to which such obligations are conditional or unconditional.

Secondly, we address the variation in the strength of family obligations across ethnic groups. In the past decades, Dutch society has experienced an influx of migrants from cultures

with family systems that differ substantially from the individualised nuclear family system dominant in Western Europe (Kagitcibasi, 2005; Todd, 1985). Members of these newly established migrant communities bring with them the norms about family obligations that exist in their countries of origin. As a result, one could expect ─ and it has indeed been found in the empirical literature ─ that members of these migrant groups hold family values that are quite different from those dominant among the native population (Lee, Peek, & Coward, 1998; McLoyd, Cauce, Takeuch, & Wilson, 2000). However, members of new migrant communities are also constantly being exposed to the dominant norms in the country of destination (Foner, 1997; Phalet & Schönpflug, 2001b). This could result in migrants adopting some of the cultural values of Dutch society. The extent to which the feelings of obligation towards family among members of migrant groups in the Netherlands differ from those of the native Dutch population is not clear. We shall therefore examine this issue by comparing norms about family obligations among members of the four largest migrant groups in the Netherlands with those of native Dutch. Given the strong collectivist and authoritarian relationships that exist within some migrant groups ─ compared with the native Dutch ─ the kind of obligations people feel that children should have towards their parents is of particular interest.

Thirdly, most family norms are not universally endorsed. Depending on the issue, substantial proportions of the population do not feel any moral obligation to support their families (Finch & Mason, 1991; Lye, 1996). This raises the question which factors influence the extent to which individuals feel obliged to support their family members. We take up this theme by investigating the influence of life course stage, family structure, social status and value socialisation on feelings of obligation.

Theoretical background

Types of obligation

In their landmark study on the existence of kinship norms in the United States, Rossi and Rossi (1990) examine the strength of family norms and the extent to which these apply to different types of family relationships. In general, people are found to have relatively strong family norms. More than half of their respondents felt a strong to very strong obligation to provide money, comfort, gifts or visits to family members. Impressive as these figures may seem, they still imply that large proportions of the population do not or only faintly perceive an obligation to provide support. The most potent criticism of the idea that people generally have a strong sense of family obligation is presented by Finch and Mason (1991). Based on a British survey, they argue that in most cases no clear consensus exists on the existence of family norms. In many instances, respondents suggested that people are not obliged to take care of their kin, but that the latter should turn to others (the market, the state) for support. Two aspects seem to be of paramount importance in delineating the strength of family norms. These are (a) the type of family relationship, and (b) the appropriateness of the type of request made.

Some studies on family obligations focus on feelings of obligation towards family members in general, without specifying the type of family relationship concerned (Bengtson & Roberts, 1991; Marsh & Hsu, 1995). Others construct a scale combining questions on obligations towards different family members (Logan & Spitze, 1995). Although such a strategy provides a general idea about the strength of family norms, most studies focus on norms towards specific types of family. Rossi and Rossi (1990) show that the strength of obligation felt towards family members varies strongly with the type of relationship. Family norms are strongest towards both parents and children, siblings are clearly ranked third and the fourth rank is shared by grandchildren, grandparents, children-in-law and parents-in-law.

Feelings of obligation are much weaker towards stepchildren, stepparents, nieces and nephews, aunts and uncles and cousins (in that order). These findings stress the importance of specifying the type of family member when measuring feelings of obligation. Indeed, whereas most studies focus on obligations towards parents (filial obligations; Daatland & Herlofson, 2003; Killian & Ganong, 2002; Klein Ikkink et al., 1999; Lee et al., 1994; Stein et al., 1998; Zhan, 2004), others focus on both obligations of children towards parents and of parents towards children (Coleman et al., 1997; Lye, 1996; Ward, 2001). Studies that focus exclusively on obligations in other types of family relationships are extremely rare (Lee, Mancini, & Maxwell, 1990; Riggio, 2000). This chapter combines both approaches by studying both feelings of obligation towards family in general and feelings of filial and parental obligation.

Finch and Mason (1991) stress that people may hold positive attitudes towards providing support to family members in general, but may feel that they are not obliged to provide support in all circumstances. Indeed, in some situations it may be inappropriate to rely on family for support. Obligations are felt to be stronger if support does not lead to continuous dependence (Lye, 1996), if a request is thought to be legitimate (Finch & Mason, 1991), if support is reciprocal (Lye, 1996), and if the task to be performed is more limited (Finch & Mason, 1991). We shall pay particular attention to this last issue: are feelings of obligation weaker if the sacrifice that has to be made to support a family member is larger?

Ethnic differences in feelings of obligation

In the last five decades large numbers of migrants have settled in the Netherlands (De Valk, Esveldt, Henkens, & Liefbroer, 2001). Some of them came from other Western countries, presumably sharing many of the ideas the native Dutch may have about norms of obligation towards family. However, the majority of migrants came from countries that do not share the dominant cultural heritage of the Netherlands. Many migrants arrived from Muslim states around the Mediterranean (especially Turkey and Morocco) and from the Caribbean (especially Surinam and the Netherlands Antilles). Both theory and empirical results suggest that migrants from these parts of the world may have feelings of obligation towards family that differ quite substantially from those found among the native Dutch.

Two different theoretical orientations can be used to make inferences about the difference in feelings of obligation towards family between migrants and native Dutch (cf. De Valk, Liefbroer, Esveldt, & Henkens, 2004). First, in cross-cultural psychology a distinction is made between cultures that emphasise individualism and cultures that emphasise collectivism (Kagitçibasi, 2005; Triandis, 1996). Whereas Western culture is imbued with individualism, most other cultures, in Asia, Africa and Latin America, are more collectivistic in nature. In collectivistic cultures the individual is subordinated to collective entities like the family, the clan or the state. In individualistic cultures, priority is given to the goals and wishes of the individual (Phalet & Schönpflug, 2001a). Based on this theoretical orientation, feelings of obligation towards the family may be expected to be stronger among migrants with a Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese and Antillean background than among native Dutch. A somewhat different view on cultural differences in family obligations is provided by Todd's (1985) theory of structural family differences. According to Todd, values and norms about family relationships reflect the dominant structure of family relationships in a society. In his view, family systems around the globe differ along three dimensions: freedom versus autonomy, equality versus inequality, and endogamous versus exogamous marriage. By cross-classifying these dimensions, Todd ends up with eight different family systems. In the West, the nuclear family system is dominant, with a strong emphasis on individuality and independence in parent-child relationship. In Islamic countries, the community family system dominates. In such a system, family relationships are hierarchical, and the individual is

expected to subordinate individual strivings to the family interest. In Caribbean societies, a mix exists between characteristics of the nuclear family system and the community family system. Its matrifocal rather than patrifocal structure makes that authority relationships are somewhat less strong than in the community family system. Based on Todd's theoretical orientation, migrants with a Surinamese and Antillean background may be expected to hold a middle position. Their feelings of obligation towards family will probably be stronger than those of native Dutch, but weaker than those of migrants of Turkish and Moroccan descent.

The discussion about cultural diversity presented above is incomplete, however, because no attention is paid to the potential impact of the migration process. Two opposing effects of migration have been suggested in the literature (Foner, 1997; Phalet & Schönpflug, 2001b). On the one hand, migrants may become less reliant on the cultural orientations of their country of origin because they learn to value the different cultural heritage of their host country. They are constantly exposed (by children, in their work environment, by the media) to that culture and may start adopting these values. As a result, the differences in feelings of obligation between ethnic groups may become much smaller than expected on the basis of the cross-cultural theories discussed above. On the other hand, migrants are often in a subordinate position in their country of destination and may try to compensate for feelings of alienation and inferiority by strengthening their reliance on the cultural orientations of their country of origin. If so, ethnic differences in feelings of obligation towards family may even be stronger between migrants and native Dutch than between Dutch and people in the migrants' countries of origin.

Research on ethnic differences in feelings of obligation has been relatively scarce. In the United States, non-whites have been found to have stronger feelings of obligation towards their families than whites (Burr & Mutchler, 1999; Fuligni, Tseng, & Lam, 1999; Lee et al., 1998). Rossi and Rossi (1990), however, report only small differences. In their study, blacks and Asians are more likely to feel obliged towards distant kin than whites, but the differences in feelings of obligation towards primary kin are only small. Using NKPS data, Schans and De Valk (2005) studied feelings of filial obligation among older (50+) adults, and found that Moroccan and Turkish older adults have stronger feelings of obligation than Surinamese and Antillean older adults. Native Dutch elderly were found to have the weakest feelings of filial obligation.

Individual and family determinants of feelings of obligation

The extent to which people feel an obligation to support family members does not only vary between cultures, but also within cultures. In the literature, family norms have been suggested to depend on such diverse factors as gender, life course stage, family position, socio-economic position, and value orientation. Surprisingly, only very few factors show a consistent relationship with feelings of family obligation. Very often, results are mixed or contradictory. We shall briefly review the main arguments for studying these factors and accompanying empirical results.

Women are usually shown to be the main providers of support, and also the ones who function as kinkeepers. As a result, it is often assumed that women also have stronger feelings of family obligation than men. The empirical record, however, is quite mixed. Some studies find no gender differences in family obligations (Killian & Ganong, 2002; Lee et al., 1994; Logan & Spitze, 1995), or conclude that the size of the differences depends on the type of obligation (Finch & Mason, 1991). Other studies report that women have stronger feelings of obligation than men (Stein et al., 1998; Zhan, 2004). One study even found that women in Germany and England show weaker filial responsibility than men (Daatland & Herlofson, 2003).

Family obligations are often found to decline with age (Killian & Ganong, 2002; Lye, 1996; Rossi & Rossi, 1990; Stein et al., 1998; Ward, 2001), although even in this case the empirical record is far from consistent. Whereas a number of studies report no effect of age (Lee et al., 1994; Logan & Spitze, 1995), one study reports that respondents aged 75 and over had stronger feelings of filial obligation than younger respondents (Daatland & Herlofson, 2003). Lye (1996) suggests that a negative relationship between feelings of obligation and age could result from the fact that older adults want to keep their independence and do not want to become a burden to their children. Weak feelings of obligation strengthen this orientation towards independence. Marital status is another life course-related factor with very mixed findings. This partly results from the fact that not all possible marital status options are included in most analyses, but that specific comparisons are drawn (e.g. between the divorced and the non-divorced or between the married and non-married). The most consistent finding is that the divorced feel less obligation than the non-divorced (Coleman et al., 1997; Rossi & Rossi, 1990). Ward (2001) reports weaker feelings of parental and filial obligation among the married than among the non-married. In contrast, Lee, Netzer and Coward (1994) report stronger feelings of filial obligation among the married as opposed to the non-married. Finally, two other studies report no effect of marital status (Killian & Ganong, 2002; Logan & Spitze, 1995).

It has been suggested that feelings of obligation are related not only to a person's position in the life course, but also to their position within the family. Rossi and Rossi (1990) suggest that having a child is an event that has wide kinship repercussions and may enhance the salience of kin and therefore of feelings of obligation towards kin in general. However, again results are very mixed. Several studies (Daatland & Herlofson, 2003; Rossi & Rossi, 1990; Ward, 2001) show that people with children have stronger feelings of obligation towards near kin than people without children. However, two other studies show no effects (Killian & Ganong, 2002; Lee et al., 1994), and one study shows a negative rather than a positive effect (Logan & Spitze, 1995). The same mixed picture is found for having parents who are still alive. Whereas Ward (2001) finds that having any living parent is associated with weaker feelings of filial obligation, Killian and Ganong (2002) find that having one living parent leads to stronger feelings of filial obligation. Two other studies (Logan & Spitze, 1995; Rossi & Rossi, 1990) find no effect of having parents alive. Rossi and Rossi (1990) suggest that this reflects the fact that everyone has (had) parents and that little choice is involved. Finally, one study examines the impact of being an only child on feelings of obligation. Zhan (2004) reports a stronger sense of obligation among relatively young only children in China. Two opposing hypotheses may be formulated for the effect of having siblings. On the one hand, having siblings could lead to an enhanced sense of being part of a large kinship network and increase the feelings of solidarity (including normative solidarity) towards the family as a whole. On the other hand, having multiple siblings could lead to a sense that one's individual obligation towards kin (and towards parents in particular) is limited because of the presence of alternative providers of support.

Rossi and Rossi (1990) report higher levels of kin obligation with rising education. They explain this by pointing out that the highly educated have received greater parental investments in the past and may want to reciprocate, and that they are likely to have higher incomes and thus have greater opportunities to provide assistance. However, the body of research on the link between educational level and feelings of autonomy suggests that the more highly educated are more inclined to stress autonomy and this could translate into weaker feelings of obligation towards family (Kohn, 1969). Again, results are mixed. Three studies report a positive effect of educational attainment on feelings of obligation (Rossi & Rossi, 1990; Ward, 2001; Zhan, 2004), one reports a negative effect (Lee et al., 1994) and one reports no effect at all (Logan & Spitze, 1995). One of the reasons for these mixed results

could be that studies are not able to separate the potentially different effects of socio-economic status. Educational attainment can include an income effect. Higher income increases the financial opportunities to provide support and may be positively associated with feelings of family obligation. Educational attainment can also include an employment effect. The higher educated are more likely to be employed, leading to a reduced opportunity to provide care, and thus to a negative association. Although the empirical results on the impact of employment (Ward, 2001) and income (Killian & Ganong, 2002; Lee et al., 1994; Rossi & Rossi, 1990) were again found to be mixed, we tested for these possible multiple effects by including educational attainment, employment status and income in the analyses.

A final factor that is sometimes included in analyses of family obligations is religiosity. Religiosity can be viewed as a specific indicator of people's value systems. Killian and Ganong (2002) report that Protestants and Catholics have stronger feelings of family obligation than non-religious people, and Daatland and Herlofson (2003) found that the religious have stronger feelings of filial obligation than the non-religious. It is unclear, however, whether the effect of religiosity reflects people's religious socialisation or their current religious outlook. To examine this issue, we included both the religious orientation of the respondent's mother during the respondent's youth and the respondent's own religious orientation in the analysis.

Data

Data were taken from the main NKPS sample and from the migrant sample. In addition to the main sample, data were collected among members of the four largest non-Western migrant communities in the Netherlands, namely Turks, Moroccans, Surinamese and Dutch Antilleans. A total of 1402 respondents from these four migrant groups were interviewed. The response rate varied between 40% (Surinamese) and 52% (Moroccans). Additional information can be found in Dykstra et al. (2005).

A number of items on three types of obligations were posed in the self-administered questionnaire, which had to be filled in and returned by the Anchor after the interview. Questions were asked on obligations towards family in general and towards parents and children in particular. Each item could be answered on a balanced five-point scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. The content of the items is discussed in the results section.

To answer the first research question on the extent of feelings of family obligation, only data from the main sample were used. The focus was on a descriptive analysis of the content of family obligations. This was done by presenting frequency distributions of each of the items. For each of the three sets of family obligations (general, filial and parental), paired sample t-tests were performed to test whether some expectations were more strongly endorsed than others.

Ethnic diversity in family obligations was also studied descriptively by comparing frequency distributions on items on general family and filial obligations. In the migrant sample, no questions were posed on parental obligation. An analysis of variance was used to test whether ethnic groups differed in their level of obligation.

The third research question focused on individual and family-level determinants of feelings of obligation. OLS regression was used to answer this question. In order to reduce complexity, three scales to tap the different types of family obligation were constructed. The four items on family obligation presented in Table 6.1 were combined into a scale measuring feelings of family obligation, and the same has been done with the items on obligations towards parents in Table 6.2 and on obligations towards children in Table 6.3. In each case, scores on all four items were summed and rescaled to a scale running from 0 to 10, with 0

indicating complete disagreement with all four items and 10 indicating complete agreement. All three scales show excellent psychometric properties. Cronbach's α is .86 for the scale measuring obligation towards family in general, .76 for the scale measuring obligation of children towards parents and .78 for the scale measuring obligation of parents towards children.

Results

Family obligations among the general population

Table 6.1 Distribution of answers on 'obligation towards family' items (in % of all respondents)

	One should always be able to count on family	Family members must help each other, in good times and bad	If one is troubled, family should be there to provide support	Family members should be ready to support one another, even if they don't like each other
Strongly agree	26.9	20.8	16.3	11.3
Agree	51.0	56.0	51.3	32.4
Neither agree nor disagree	16.8	17.1	24.0	30.5
Disagree	4.8	5.7	7.8	23.1
Strongly disagree	0.4	0.5	0.6	2.7
Total	100	100	100	100

To examine feelings of obligation towards family among the general public, the answers to four questions on obligations towards family in general are presented in Table 6.1, ranked by the proportion of respondents who agreed with a specific obligation. Although all items refer to 'family' as a general category and do not specify the type of support, they differ somewhat in the conditions under which support should be provided. The first item ('One should always be able to count on family') is unconditional in its scope ('always'). About one quarter of the respondents strongly agreed with this statement and a further half agreed with it. Just five percent of the respondents indicated that they disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. The second item ('Family members must help each other, in good times and bad') is unconditional in its scope as well ('good times and bad'). Although the percentage of respondents who fully agreed with this statement is somewhat lower than for the first item, again more than three quarters of the respondents were in agreement with the statement. The third item ('If one is troubled, family should be there to provide support') is less unconditional. It asks whether family should support members who may be in clear need of it. Therefore, it comes as somewhat of a surprise that fewer respondents (strongly) agreed with this statement than with the earlier two. It is possible, however, that respondents regarded 'provide support' as a stronger and more concrete obligation than 'help' or being counted on. Still, about two thirds of all respondents (strongly) agreed with this statement, suggesting that most people feel an obligation to assist family members who are in need of assistance. The final item ('Family members should be ready to support one another, even if they don't like each other') asks whether support should be conditional on the quality of the relationship with a particular family member. To many respondents, the answer was a clear 'yes', as just under

half of all respondents (strongly) agreed with this statement and over a quarter (strongly) disagreed with it.

To answer the question about the obligations children feel towards their parents, using the general kind of statements discussed above does not suffice, as most people (even those who did not agree with the items that referred to family in general) will agree that they feel some obligation to provide support to their parents. Therefore, we used questions about types of support that differ in how costly they are to the child in terms of time, energy, money and infringement on privacy. The distribution of the answers to these questions is presented in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2 Distribution of answers on 'obligation towards parents' items (in % of all respondents)

	Children who live close to their parents should visit them at least once a week	Children should look after their sick parents	Children should take unpaid leave to look after their sick parents	In old age, parents should be able to live in with their children
Strongly agree	13.4	11.3	5.4	3.3
Agree	34.0	31.2	17.2	8.1
Neither agree nor disagree	23.7	37.3	30.9	25.1
Disagree	24.4	17.9	36.0	46.9
Strongly disagree	4.4	2.2	10.5	16.6
Total	100	100	100	100

Although the results in Table 6.1 show that most respondents had clear feelings of family obligation, the answer to the first question in Table 6.2 ('Children who live close to their parents should visit them at least once a week') shows that this does not automatically imply an obligation to visit parents. Fewer than half of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that children who live close to their parents should visit them at least once a week. More than a quarter rejected such an obligation. Clearly, many respondents did not feel obliged to have very frequent face-to-face contact with their parents. A different issue is how children should react if their parents are in clear need of support. To address this issue, we used questions about how children should react if they have sick parents. Two questions were posed about this issue. The first statement described feelings of obligation to look after their parents if they were sick, and the second asked whether children should be prepared to make adjustments to their work schedules if the condition of their parents so required ('Children should take unpaid leave to look after their sick parents'). In this latter case, children should be prepared to sacrifice time, money and their potential future labour market prospects to care for their parents. Table 6.2 shows that about 40 percent of the respondents felt an obligation for children to look after their sick parents. However, only half this percentage felt that this obligation should imply taking unpaid leave. In addition, substantial percentages of respondents denied that children have an obligation to care for their sick parents. An important explanation could be that respondents felt that care for the frail elderly is a responsibility of the state rather than the family. The answers to a question about this issue ('Is care for elderly in need of support mainly a responsibility of the state or of the family?' with a four-point answer scale) indicate that a large majority (81 percent) were of the opinion that care for the elderly is indeed mainly a task of the state, rather than of the family. The final item in Table 6.2 ('In old age, parents should be able to live in with their children') has the

greatest consequences for the children involved, in that they would have to spend not just a great deal of their time and energy on their parents, but would also lose much of their privacy. It is clear that most respondents were not prepared to do so. Just over ten percent stated that they agreed with this far-reaching obligation, and the large majority disagreed.

These results on obligations towards parents show that the majority of respondents did not feel an obligation to provide long-term support to their parents. Neither did a majority feel an obligation to visit them at least once a week if they lived close-by. As has become clear from chapters 3 and 4 in this volume, this does not imply that children do not have frequent contact with their parents, or that no support is given to them if they need it. Rather, it signifies that children tend not to feel an obligation to do so and that actual support exchanges will be based not only on feelings of obligation but on other considerations as well. An important corollary of the fact that children do not feel much of an obligation to care for their elderly parents is that they feel that the state has an important role in this respect. It is the state that carries the main responsibility for providing care to frail elderly and the responsibility of the children is seen as only supplementary to that provided by the state.

The four questions on feelings of obligation towards children differ in their level of specificity and in the costs incurred by parents. Whereas one question is general in nature, the other three ask for feelings of obligation to provide specific kinds of support. The four questions posed and the distribution of the answers provided by the respondents are presented in Table 6.3.

Table 6.3 Distribution of answers on 'obligation towards children' items (in % of all respondents)

	Parents should support their adult children if they need it	Parents should provide lodging to their adult children if they need it	Parents should help their adult children financially if they need it	Grandparents should be prepared to look after their grandchildren regularly
Strongly agree	15.3	11.6	7.3	4.2
Agree	51.3	40.3	27.1	17.5
Neither agree nor disagree	23.2	29.4	37.5	31.0
Disagree	9.0	15.9	24.1	36.6
Strongly disagree	1.2	2.8	4.0	10.7
Total	100	100	100	100

The first question ('Parents should support their adult children if they need it') is formulated rather generally. Two thirds of all respondents (strongly) agreed that parents have this general obligation towards their children. The second question pertains to parents providing lodging to their adult children if they need it. The proportion who felt that parents have the obligation to provide lodging to their adult children (more than half) is much higher than the proportion who felt that children have the obligation to have their parents living in with them (less than one fifth). This might indicate that obligations towards children are stronger than obligations towards parents, but it could also be related to a different view on the permanency of the arrangement and the difference in care burden. Having adult children living in after they have left is often a temporary arrangement following a negative life event (discontinuing tertiary education, separation or divorce). Usually, the child can be expected to move out within a reasonable period of time. This is often not the case for parents who live in. As this situation will usually end only after the parents have deceased, this arrangement could last for a long

and unspecified period of time. In addition, having frail parents living in could imply a heavy burden of care. The third question is about financial support ('Parents should help their adult children financially if they need it'). Most respondents felt that parents have no obligation of this sort: only one third felt that they do. The final question is about caring for one's grandchildren. Most people do not think parents have an obligation to provide that kind of support to their children on a regular basis. Just over 20 percent (strongly) agreed that grandparents should look after their grandchildren regularly, but almost half the respondents disagreed. Again, one could ask whether this is because respondents felt that this is a state responsibility rather than a family matter. The answer in this instance is a clear 'no'. Respondents were asked whether care for babies and infants and after-school care are mainly the responsibility of the state or the family and the large majority of all respondents (66 percent for care for babies and 73 percent for after-school care) answered that this was a family responsibility. These results, combined with the fact that this was not viewed as the grandparents' responsibility, show that this is not so much viewed as a responsibility of the family at large, but rather of the parents themselves.

The findings on obligations towards children show that most respondents felt that parents have an obligation to support their adult children if they need it. However, there is less consensus on the kind of support parents are expected to provide. The majority felt that parents should be willing to provide lodging to their adult children if they need it; only a minority felt that parents should provide financial support or assistance with childcare.

Ethnic differences in family obligations

As discussed above, non-Western migrants may hold opinions about family norms that differ quite strongly from those of the native Dutch population. One of the special features of the NKPS study is that data were collected on family-related behaviour and opinions among members of four major migrant populations (Turks, Moroccans, Surinamese and Dutch Antilleans), which can, at least in part, provide an answer to this question. Specifically, the answers to three items relating to family obligations in general and to three items relating to obligations of children towards parents of migrant respondents were compared with those of the native Dutch population. Respondents were assigned to the native Dutch category if they themselves and both their parents were born in the Netherlands. Respondents were assigned to one of the four migrant categories if they themselves or at least one of their parents were born in the country of origin of that migrant category.

Table 6.4 Distribution of answers on 'obligation towards family' items by ethnic category (in % of all respondents within an ethnic category)

	Native Dutch	Antilleans	Surinamese	Turks	Moroccans
One should always be able to count on family					
Strongly agree	25.7	17.3	28.4	46.4	47.0
Agree	51.6	52.0	38.0	38.7	41.3
Neither agree nor disagree	17.3	16.3	12.5	7.2	6.2
Disagree	5.1	13.9	17.2	4.9	5.2
Strongly disagree	0.3	0.3	3.9	2.9	0.2
Total	100	100	100	100	100
If one is troubled, family should be there to provide support					
Strongly agree	15.1	14.6	27.8	47.3	51.9

Agree	51.6	56.5	41.9	39.9	43.6
Neither agree nor disagree	24.6	12.9	13.5	6.2	3.8
Disagree	8.1	15.0	13.8	5.8	0.5
Strongly disagree	0.6	1.0	3.0	0.8	0.2
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Family members should be ready to support one another, even if they don't like each other					
Strongly agree	10.1	14.7	20.7	45.5	30.5
Agree	32.0	44.9	34.7	38.3	41.0
Neither agree nor disagree	31.1	16.1	16.3	9.1	16.4
Disagree	24.2	20.9	22.2	5.4	11.4
Strongly disagree	2.6	3.4	6.2	1.7	0.7
Total	100	100	100	100	100

How did respondents from these different categories feel about family obligations in general and how much did they differ from native respondents? To answer these questions, the distribution of responses to three items for each of the five ethnic groups separately is presented in Table 6.4. There are marked similarities and differences between categories of migrants. First, Moroccans and Turks were found to have much stronger feelings of family obligation than native Dutch. This is most clearly illustrated by the answers given to the item 'Family members should be ready to support one another, even if they don't like each other'. Whereas forty-two percent of the native Dutch (strongly) agreed with this statement, 84 percent of Turks and 72 percent of Moroccans did so. Differences are smaller, though still substantial, for the other two items. Secondly, differences between Turks and Moroccans were found to be small. Whereas Moroccan respondents showed statistically significantly stronger feelings of obligation on one item, Turks did so on another. Thirdly, Surinamese and Antillean respondents in general showed a somewhat stronger sense of obligation than native Dutch respondents, but weaker than Turks and Moroccans. The most remarkable finding for Surinamese respondents, however, is the fact that the variation in the answering pattern was relatively large. This is clearly illustrated for the item 'If one is troubled, family should be there to provide support'. More Surinamese respondents (28 percent) strongly agreed with this item than native Dutch respondents (15 percent), but at the same time more Surinamese respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the item than native Dutch respondents (17 percent versus 9 percent). This large variation could result from the fact that the Surinamese population itself is made up of different ethnic categories with quite different family values. There are Surinamese with a Hindu or Islamic religious background who cling to rather strict norms of family obligations, as well as Surinamese with a Creole background, who are more inclined to have far less strong feelings about family obligations. Antillean respondents also showed answer profiles that are somewhat more strongly polarised than those of the native Dutch. This is most clearly illustrated for the item 'If one is troubled, family should be there to provide support'. Both the proportion of respondents who agreed with this statement and the proportion who disagreed is larger among the Antilleans than among the native Dutch (71 versus 67 percent, and 16 versus 9 percent respectively).

Table 6.5 Distribution of answers on 'obligation towards parents' items by ethnic category (in % of all respondents within an ethnic category)

	Native Dutch	Antilleans	Surinamese	Turks	Moroccans
Children should look after their sick parents					
Strongly agree	10.3	18.0	25.2	44.0	53.8
Agree	29.9	49.5	39.6	43.1	39.3
Neither agree nor disagree	38.5	16.3	14.9	9.1	5.2
Disagree	19.0	14.6	16.6	3.6	1.4
Strongly disagree	2.4	1.7	3.7	0.2	0.2
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Children who live close to their parents should visit them at least once a week					
Strongly agree	12.3	20.7	35.2	48.9	53.8
Agree	33.3	50.8	38.4	40.4	38.2
Neither agree nor disagree	24.3	13.6	9.5	6.5	6.2
Disagree	25.4	11.5	13.7	3.4	1.7
Strongly disagree	4.6	3.4	3.2	0.8	0.2
Total	100	100	100	100	100
In old age, parents should be able to live in with their children					
Strongly agree	2.0	7.8	20.3	26.2	40.8
Agree	6.8	33.0	28.1	33.1	41.5
Neither agree nor disagree	24.5	24.1	17.6	21.4	9.7
Disagree	49.3	29.3	24.4	14.9	6.9
Strongly disagree	17.5	5.8	9.5	4.4	1.2
Total	100	100	100	100	100

With regard to the obligations of children towards their parents (Table 6.5), a first observation is that the difference between the native Dutch and the migrant respondents is even larger than for family solidarity in general. This is most clearly illustrated for the item 'In old age, parents should be able to live in with their children'. Among the native Dutch, this obligation was felt by about nine percent of all respondents, compared with 41 percent of Antillean, 49 percent of Surinamese, 59 percent of Turkish and 82 percent of Moroccan respondents. For the other two items, the differences are somewhat smaller, but still substantial. A second observation, in line with that on family obligations in general, is that obligations towards parents are particularly strong among Turks and Moroccans. More than 90 percent of Moroccan respondents felt that children are obliged to look after their sick parents and that children should visit parents at least once a week. For Turks, these percentages are somewhat lower but still very high. A third observation is that whereas Antillean respondents felt stronger obligations towards parents than the native Dutch, these two categories differed only marginally where family obligations in general were concerned. As a result, a clear gradient in obligations felt towards parents can be observed. Native Dutch expressed the weakest feelings of obligation towards parents, and Moroccans expressed the strongest feelings. Turks

are close to Moroccans in this respect. Antilleans are closer to the Dutch than to Moroccans, and the Surinamese occupy a middle position.

Individual and family determinants of family obligations

The earlier discussion of answers to the separate items showed a substantial variation in feelings of family obligation among the general population. The next question to be answered is to what extent life course factors, family status, socio-economic status, and cultural characteristics explain the variation in feelings of family obligation. Scale scores were calculated for each of the three types of obligations (general family obligations, filial obligations and parental obligations). Table 6.6 presents the mean scores on each of the three scales for each socio-structural dimension separately. In Table 6.7, results of an OLS regression analysis of the three obligation scales are presented. In other words, whereas Table 6.6 presents bivariate or 'uncontrolled' (uncorrected) scores, multivariate or 'controlled' (corrected) effects are presented in Table 6.7. In addition, corrected scores based on the OLS regression results are given in Appendix 6.I. In Table 6.7, a reference category is chosen for each dimension and the presented coefficients indicate how much the mean score in a specific category differs from that in the reference category. For instance, an effect of -.17 for women on the family obligation scale indicates that, on average and after controlling for other factors in the model, women score .17 lower on the family obligation scale than men. In addition, the effect is statistically significant at the $p<.01$-level, indicating that we can safely conclude that women have somewhat weaker feelings of obligation towards family than men do. Finally, it is important to note that, although all scales run from 0 to 10, comparing the absolute values between scales does not make sense as the scales are composed of quite different items. A higher score on the scale for obligation towards children than on the scale of obligation towards parents, for instance, does not imply that people feel that obligations of parents towards their children are stronger than those of children towards their parents.

Table 6.6 Scores on obligation scales by social category (N=7266)

	Family obligation (0-10)	Obligation towards parents (0-10)	Obligation towards children (0-10)
All	6.82	4.78	5.56
Male	6.90	4.96	5.76
Female	6.74	4.60	5.38
Age 18-29	7.28	5.37	5.93
Age 30-39	6.68	4.98	5.06
Age 40-49	6.48	4.76	5.04
Age 50-59	6.64	4.38	5.59
Age 60-69	7.02	4.34	6.30
Age 70-79	7.12	4.38	6.27
With parents	7.40	5.65	6.21
Single	6.91	4.95	5.57
With partner	6.80	4.45	5.73
With partner and children	6.65	4.77	5.23
Lone parent	6.90	4.96	5.68

No parents alive	6.92	4.45	6.09
One parent alive	6.62	4.75	5.29
Two parents alive	6.87	5.03	5.34
No children alive	6.92	5.19	5.45
One child alive	6.82	4.93	5.47
Two children alive	6.71	4.46	5.58
Three children alive	6.75	4.40	5.63
Four or more children alive	6.99	4.81	5.98
No siblings alive	6.93	4.91	6.06
One sibling alive	6.80	4.72	5.45
Two siblings alive	6.74	4.82	5.48
Three siblings alive	6.82	4.68	5.52
Four or more siblings alive	6.90	4.83	5.65
Up to primary education	7.40	5.21	6.29
Lower secondary education	7.14	4.91	5.85
Higher secondary education	6.82	4.90	5.50
Higher vocational education	6.44	4.41	5.26
University education	6.43	4.52	5.22
Household income unknown	6.83	4.62	5.46
Household income < €950	7.15	5.04	6.12
Household income €950-1350	7.07	5.06	5.78
Household income €1350-1950	6.83	4.86	5.45
Household income €1950-2950	6.70	4.66	5.36
Household income > €2950	6.46	4.48	5.18
No paid job	7.04	4.68	6.02
Paid job for 2 days or less	6.81	4.90	5.51
Paid job for 2-3 days	6.40	4.58	5.06
Paid job for 3-4 days	6.53	4.83	5.18
Paid job for more than 4 days	6.79	4.87	5.37
Mother Roman Catholic	6.78	4.77	5.50
Mother Protestant	6.76	4.63	5.47
Mother other religion (Islam, Hinduism, etc.)	7.86	6.61	6.76
Mother no religion	6.67	4.64	5.46
Roman Catholic	7.00	4.83	5.63
Protestant	7.01	4.70	5.63
Other religion (Islam, Hinduism, etc.)	7.50	6.26	6.50
No religion	6.53	4.63	5.36

Table 6.7 Results of an OLS regression of obligation scales (N=7266)

	Family obligation (0-10)	Obligation towards parents (0-10)	Obligation towards children (0-10)
Constant	7.59**	5.85**	7.15**
Male	-	-	-
Female	-.18**	-.53**	-.42**
Age 18-29	-	-	-
Age 30-39	-.47**	-.01	-.76**
Age 40-49	-.74**	-.25**	-1.02**
Age 50-59	-.73**	-.61**	-.87**
Age 60-69	-.50**	-.70**	-.62**
Age 70-79	-.53**	-.76**	-.75**
With parents	.20	.32**	.35**
Single	.12	.25**	-.02
With partner	-	-	-
With partner and children	.00	.38**	-.28**
Lone parent	.24	.56**	.04
No parents alive	-	-	-
One parent alive	-.12	.02	-.45**
Two parents alive	-.07	-.03	-.56**
No children alive	-	-	-
One child alive	.16	-.28**	.51**
Two children alive	.10	-.65**	.64**
Three children alive	.08	-.70**	.60**
Four or more children alive	.13	-.34**	.70**
No siblings alive	-	-	-
One sibling alive	-.01	-.26**	-.29**
Two siblings alive	-.09	-.17	-.30**
Three siblings alive	-.01	-.22*	-.31**
Four or more siblings alive	.02	-.03	-.29**
Up to primary education	.07	.18	.06
Lower secondary education	-	-	-
Higher secondary education	-.34**	-.25**	-.23**
Higher vocational education	-.57**	-.53**	-.32**
University education	-.58**	-.52**	-.30**
Household income unknown	.01	-.13	-.27**
Household income < €950	-	-	-
Household income €950-1350	-.09	-.07	-.21**
Household income €1350-1950	-.16*	-.15	-.36**
Household income €1950-2950	-.12	-.24**	-.30**

Household income > €2950	-.11	-.17*	-.29**
No paid job	-	-	-
Paid job for 2 days or less	-.18*	-.06	-.17*
Paid job for 2-3 days	-.30**	-.06	-.23*
Paid job for 3-4 days	-.16	.04	-.16
Paid job for more than 4 days	.02	-.15*	-.13*
Mother Roman Catholic	-.12	.04	-.06
Mother Protestant	-.15*	.00	-.13
Mother other religion (Islam, Hinduism, etc.)	.76**	1.08**	.75**
Mother no religion	-	-	-
Roman Catholic	.49**	.30**	.14*
Protestant	.53**	.25**	.19**
Other religion (Islam, Hinduism, etc.)	.34*	.83**	.55**
No religion	-	-	-
R^2	.08	.12	.13
* p < .05, ** p < .01			

There are clear gender differences in family obligations (Tables 6.6 and 6.7). Women have a weaker sense of obligation towards family members in general, but also towards parents and children than men. This is a remarkable finding because it contrasts with findings on the actual exchange of support within the family. In line with the general thrust of the literature and with the findings presented in chapter 4 of this volume men provide less support to family members, including parents and children, and receive less support as well.

Feelings of obligation towards family also differ between age categories. These feelings are stronger for young adults. Adults between 18 and 29 have a stronger sense of obligation towards family in general, but also towards children and parents than older adults. General feelings of obligation towards family are lowest for respondents between 40 and 59 years. This also holds for feelings of obligation of parents towards their children. At the same time, feelings of obligation towards parents are weakest among the oldest age category. This difference does not become insignificant after controlling for whether the parents are still alive (see Table 6.7). So apparently it is not, or not completely, caused by the fact that older people are less likely to have parents towards whom they may have obligations. Still, it is possible that people who actually fulfilled the role of being a child longer ago are less inclined to express a sense of obligation towards parents.

Whereas general feelings of family obligation are not found to differ according to living arrangement, this is not the case for more specific types of obligations. Respondents who lived with a partner, but without children, had the weakest feelings of obligation towards parents, and lone parents had the strongest feelings of obligation towards parents. Feelings of obligation towards children were found to be strongest among respondents who still lived in the parental home and weakest among respondents who lived with a partner and children.

The position respondents occupy within the family matters to feelings of obligation towards family. Feelings of obligation of children towards parents were found to differ according to the number of children respondents have (Table 6.6). Table 6.7 shows that respondents who had living children had weaker feelings of obligation towards parents than respondents who had no children. At the same time, respondents who had living children had

stronger feelings of obligation towards children. Respondents who had one or more parents alive had weaker feelings of obligation towards children than respondents who had no parents alive. In addition, the effects of number of siblings has been examined. Respondents who had living siblings had stronger feelings of obligation, both towards children and towards parents, than respondents without siblings.

Feelings of obligation towards family are quite strongly related to differences in educational attainment. This is true for all three types of family obligations. Whereas respondents who had completed a tertiary level of education had the weakest sense of obligation towards family, those with lower secondary education or less had the strongest feelings of obligation. Respondents with higher secondary education occupied a position between these two extremes. The household income of respondents and their number of working hours showed some but generally weaker relations to family obligations than level of education. Respondents with a monthly household income above €1950 felt weaker obligations towards parents than respondents with a monthly household income below €950. The latter not only held relatively strong opinions about obligations of children towards their parents but also about obligations of parents towards their children. Respondents with a part-time job of less than three days a week had weaker norms with regard to family obligations in general than respondents without a job. Respondents with a part-time job of two to three days a week also had a weaker sense of obligation towards children. One could speculate that cultural socialisation, monetary and time-budget constraints all play a role. The effects for level of education are in line with accounts that suggest that highly educated adults have been socialised to place less emphasis on conformity and social control and more emphasis on individual autonomy. The relatively strong feelings of solidarity displayed by respondents with low levels of income could be related to the fact that they had less access to the market in order to provide for their needs for support than respondents with high incomes. The weak feelings of solidarity of — mostly female — respondents with part-time jobs could result from the fact that they had even less time available to support family members than those with full-time jobs: most of them probably worked part-time because of household obligations.

Finally, religious affiliation shows the expected relationships with family obligations. As one might expect given the results presented in the section on ethnic differences, respondents who were members of ‘other’ religions — mainly Muslims and Hindus — had much stronger feelings of family obligation than other respondents. In addition, Catholic and Protestant respondents had stronger feelings of family obligation than respondents without a religious affiliation. It is also clear that the current religion of respondents was much more important than the religion of their mothers during their childhood. This suggests that religious socialisation might have lost its influence among those respondents who turned away from their religious background.

Conclusion

This chapter addressed feelings of obligation towards family members, differences in these feelings between migrants and native Dutch, and variation in feelings of obligation by respondents’ position in society and the family. It was found that a clear majority of the respondents felt obliged to support their family members if need be. Such feelings were not universal, however. Some five to ten percent of the respondents did not seem to feel such obligations and others had mixed feelings in this respect. More than half the respondents were found to make their feelings of obligation conditional on the quality of the relationship with the family member in need of support. If the quality of the relationship was not good, more than half the respondents did not feel obliged to provide support.

Much less consensus exists with regard to specific types of obligations. Obligations to support frail parents by providing care or lodging and obligations to support children by providing financial aid or childcare were felt by only a minority of respondents. This suggests that feelings of obligations are conditional on the type of family member involved and on the type of support to be provided. This conclusion is in line with what is reported in studies conducted in other countries. However, the results also show that obligations felt towards parents and children — which universally are found to be strongest among family obligations — are strongly conditional. Many children and parents felt that they did not have an obligation to provide support to their parents or children if this incurs high costs. This seems to reflect a conclusion drawn by Finch (1987), who suggested that family obligations are not just moral norms but also negotiated commitments. These commitments are arrived at through a process of covert negotiation in which family members weigh the appropriateness of the obligation, its costs and its benefits in order to reach a decision on whether or not support should be given.

A big difference in feelings of obligation towards family members was found between native Dutch respondents and Turkish and Moroccan respondents. This was found for feelings of obligation towards family in general, but became particularly apparent when focusing on obligations of children towards their parents. Whereas a large majority of Moroccans felt that children should visit their parents at least once a week, that children should look after sick parents and that parents should be able to live with their children in old age, only a minority of the native Dutch felt this kind of obligation. A considerable amount of variation in felt family obligations existed among different migrant groups. Surinamese and Antillean respondents felt weaker family obligations than Turkish and Moroccan respondents. These differences seem to reflect characteristics of the family systems in the countries of origin of these migrants. Among Turks and Moroccans, family relationships in general are strong and parental authority is high, and this is reflected in a strong general sense of family obligation and strong feelings of obligation towards parents in particular. Among Antilleans, family relationships in general seem to be weaker, but the relationship between mother and child is particularly strong. This seems to be reflected in the relatively weak feelings of general family obligation among Antillean respondents and the much stronger feelings of obligation towards parents. It would have been interesting in this respect to compare felt obligations towards fathers and mothers, as one might expect that the feelings of obligation of children towards their mothers would be much stronger than towards their fathers. Unfortunately, our data do not allow this kind of comparison. A final conclusion about ethnic differences is that the variation in felt obligations within specific migrant groups can be considerable. Whereas Turks and Moroccans were found to be very homogeneous in the sense that strong family obligations were felt by most respondents, this was not found to be the case for Surinamese respondents. This probably results from the fact that the ethnic composition of people with a Surinamese background is fairly heterogeneous.

Finally, attention was paid to factors that may explain variation in the level of family obligations. A host of factors that have been suggested and examined in the literature were taken into account. Some of the results met expectations and were in line with differences found in the international literature, others were rather surprising. For instance, women were found to have weaker feelings of family obligation than men. This is surprising given the fact that women provide more actual support than men do (see chapter 4 in this volume). One explanation could be that women deny the existence of obligations in order to move away from the role of the main support provider. Another explanation could be that the actual provision of support is driven by other factors than feelings of obligation.

Another interesting finding is that feelings of obligation vary with the position of an individual in the family structure. People who have children have a stronger sense of

obligation towards children and weaker feelings of obligation towards parents. People with living parents have weaker feelings of obligations towards children. This suggests that people balance obligations towards the previous and the next generation, but also that the obligations towards the next generation tend to take precedence over obligations towards the previous generation. Another important finding is that having siblings leads to weaker feelings of obligation towards parents and children. This seems to indicate a division of responsibilities among siblings.

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Appendix 6.I Corrected scores on obligation scales by social category, based on regression effects presented in Table 7 (N=7266)

	Family obligation (0-10)	Obligation towards parents (0-10)	Obligation towards children (0-10)
All	6.82	4.78	5.56
Male	6.91	5.05	5.77
Female	6.74	4.52	5.35
Age 18-29	7.35	5.09	6.24
Age 30-39	6.85	5.07	5.46
Age 40-49	6.56	4.83	5.21
Age 50-59	6.56	4.48	5.36
Age 60-69	6.81	4.40	5.63
Age 70-79	6.77	4.33	5.48
With parents	6.97	4.86	5.98
Single	6.90	4.81	5.62
With partner	6.79	4.55	5.64
With partner and children	6.78	4.93	5.36
Lone parent	7.02	5.11	5.68
No parents alive	6.88	4.79	5.92
One parent alive	6.77	4.81	5.48
Two parents alive	6.81	4.76	5.36
No children alive	6.75	5.15	5.15
One child alive	6.91	4.87	5.67
Two children alive	6.85	4.50	5.80
Three children alive	6.83	4.46	5.75
Four or more children alive	6.88	4.82	5.86
No siblings alive	6.85	4.94	5.85
One sibling alive	6.84	4.67	5.55
Two siblings alive	6.75	4.76	5.54
Three siblings alive	6.83	4.71	5.53
Four or more siblings alive	6.86	4.91	5.55
Up to primary education	7.21	5.23	5.84
Lower secondary education	7.13	5.04	5.75
Higher secondary education	6.78	4.77	5.50
Higher vocational education	6.54	4.51	5.41
University education	6.54	4.52	5.43
Household income unknown	6.91	4.78	5.52
Household income < €950	6.90	4.91	5.79
Household income €950-1350	6.82	4.85	5.58
Household income €1350-1950	6.75	4.76	5.43

Household income €1950-2950	6.78	4.67	5.48
Household income > €2950	6.79	4.75	5.50
No paid job	6.87	4.85	5.66
Paid job for 2 days or less	6.68	4.78	5.49
Paid job for 2-3 days	6.57	4.78	5.42
Paid job for 3-4 days	6.73	4.89	5.52
Paid job for more than 4 days	6.90	4.69	5.53
Mother Roman Catholic	6.76	4.75	5.54
Mother Protestant	6.73	4.71	5.45
Mother other religion (Islam, Hinduism, etc.)	7.63	5.78	6.32
Mother no religion	6.89	4.71	5.59
Roman Catholic	7.04	4.90	5.59
Protestant	7.08	4.86	5.64
Other religion (Islam, Hinduism, etc.)	6.90	5.45	6.02
No religion	6.55	4.60	5.45

Chapter 7

Family solidarity in the Netherlands: a varied picture

Aafke E. Komter, Trudie C.M. Knijn & Pearl A. Dykstra

Introduction

Family issues are the subject of frequent and ongoing debate, particularly in the political arena. Over the past few decades significant demographic, social and cultural changes have occurred in the Netherlands, and they are assumed to have affected family relationships and solidarity within families. Detailed social scientific knowledge about the extent and nature of this impact has been lacking so far. The aim of this volume is to fill this gap by providing insight into structural features of family ties, contact and exchanges among family members, and perceived obligations. Although a greater social scientific understanding of what is going on in Dutch families is worthwhile in its own right, such understanding is also essential for assessing the validity of the many common assumptions and popular pictures of families that abound in the public debate. One of these assumptions is that families are 'in decline': family ties are believed to be weaker than ever before, and solidarity between family members is said to be decreasing.

To assess this supposed decline, we addressed the following question in this volume: 'Which patterns of family solidarity can be distinguished, and how can variation in these patterns be explained?' In this chapter, we take stock: summarising the findings from the previous chapters with a specific focus on the social-structural and social-cultural differentiation of solidarity patterns in Dutch families. We distinguished several dimensions of family solidarity: structural characteristics (size and composition of family networks, distance to family members), frequency of contact, exchange of support, perceived quality and strength of family ties, and feelings of obligation. Contributors to the successive chapters examined whether patterns of family solidarity show the kind of social-structural and social-cultural grading that is characteristic of society at large. Here, we focus on differences in solidarity patterns by gender, age, educational attainment and socio-economic status, household situation, religiosity and ethnicity, bringing together the findings of the previous chapters.

Solidarity patterns of Dutch families

Composition and geographical location

The Second Demographic Transition (Lesthaeghe & Van de Kaa, 1986; Van de Kaa, 1987, 1994), gradually evolving from the mid-1960s, is believed to have had a revolutionary impact on contemporary family life. This transition implies that the age at marriage rose, childbearing was postponed, cohabitation became more common as an (often temporary) alternative to marriage, the dissolution of partnerships increased, and that childbirth outside wedlock became more popular. To what extent is this demographic transition reflected in the composition of Dutch families? Our data disprove a number of common assumptions in this respect, and confirm others.

Three-generation families are the norm in the Netherlands, not four generations as many believe. Approximately four percent of Dutch adults are solo individuals, meaning they have no ascending or descending kin. Dutch adults typically occupy middle generation positions between the ages of 30 and 60. This is not a period in the life course when both young children and elderly parents are likely to need care, so the image of a sandwich

generation having care commitments to both parents and children is clearly not a true picture of mid-life. The large majority of Dutch adults have parents with intact marriages and are in their first marriage themselves. Approximately one out of five have seen either a marriage or a consensual union come to an end. People with divorce, step family, or non-marital relationship experience are concentrated in the younger age groups. Our data confirm existing research on the transmission of divorce in families: parental divorce and sibling divorce are positively associated with the divorce of adult children. Despite the frequent occurrence of divorce and re-partnering among those who are divorced, childbearing is virtually restricted to a single partnership over the course of a lifetime: between two and three percent have children from two or more partners.

How are the members of Dutch families geographically located in relation to each other, and how likely are they to migrate? We find a strong association between the average distance to family members and determinants of long-distance moves, most notably the level of education: the higher the educational level, the greater the distance at which our respondents live from their family members. People with children live closer to their family members than those without children. The often-heard idea that people are less likely to live close to their families than they used to a few decades ago is indeed confirmed by our data.

Contact and help exchange

Contact between parents and their adult children was found to be quite frequent in Dutch families. In more than half of the parent-child dyads there was at least weekly contact, in particular telephone contact. In only a small percentage (4%) of the dyads there was no contact at all. If we look at the level of the family, we found that 73 percent of the mothers have weekly (or more) contact with at least one of their children; this applied to 68 percent of the fathers.

With respect to the support exchanged between parents and children we found that about 45 percent of all children received some kind of instrumental support from their parents, and about fifty percent of the parents received instrumental support from their children. Parents and children were found to give each other more support than they give to their brothers and sisters. Only one out of five respondents received instrumental support from their siblings. The closer family members live to each other, the more support they exchange. As noted earlier, contemporary Dutch families are dispersed, and family members live at a greater distance from each other than they did in the past. It is not unlikely that the greater geographic distance separating family members has resulted in a decrease in the exchange of support within family members. Of course, longitudinal data are required to properly test this assertion.

The strength of family ties and obligations

The participants in our survey were quite satisfied with the cohesion, the extent of support exchange and the atmosphere in their families. The same applies to their experience of the quality of relationships with primary family members. A large number of our respondents participated in family reunions, celebrations, family stays or joint holidays. Taken together, these results seem to justify the conclusion that family ties are quite strong in the Netherlands. However, family ties are clearly more problematic for certain categories of individuals than for others, as will be elaborated in a later section.

Finally, we investigated feelings of obligation towards the family in general, and feelings of obligation towards parents and children. A majority of the respondents said they would feel obliged to support their family members if they needed it. More than half the respondents made their feelings of obligation conditional on the quality of the relationship with the family member in need of support. In their view, family members should not feel

obliged to support one another if they do not like each other. Whereas three quarters of our respondents endorsed the general statement that family members must help each other in both good and bad times, the obligation to support frail parents by providing care or lodging, and the obligation to support children by providing financial aid or childcare were felt by only a minority of respondents. This suggests that feelings of obligation are conditional on the type of family member involved, the quality of the relationship, and on the type of support to be provided.

Structural and cultural differentiation of solidarity patterns

Gender

In the 1970s, Jessie Bernard suggested that there are two marriages, women's and men's, and that the two are rather different (Bernard, 1972). Does this also hold for family life as a whole? In the preceding chapters a substantial number of gender differences were reported. A first finding was that respondents more often indicated that they did not know of the existence of kin on the paternal side than on the maternal side, suggesting that family members have a stronger focus on, or even attach greater importance to their female than to their male lineage. Apparently, relationship disruptions are more likely to take place on the father's side of the family than on the mother's side. As for geographical distance between family members, it appears that women migrate somewhat more than men, particularly around the time of marriage. Consistent with this finding is that men's parents were found to be more likely to live in the same municipality than women's parents.

Women's greater mobility does not imply, however, that they have less contact with their parents: contact between daughters and their mothers, in particular phone contact, is the most frequent of all parent-child contacts. Daughters who grew up in a family-oriented environment (indicated by having stayed with family members, shared holidays, and so forth), tend to see their parents particularly frequently; this effect of family-oriented socialisation did not emerge with sons. Daughters who have children living at home have the highest level of contact with their parents, suggesting the importance of grandparenthood. Contrary to what is commonly assumed, employed women do not have less contact with their parents than women who are not employed; neither does the number of working hours have an effect. Apparently, daughters stay in touch with their parents, in particular their mothers, regardless of geographical distance or working hours. The life course patterns of parents have gendered effects. There is less contact with parents who have divorced, especially with fathers, but the level of contact with mothers also declines: 22 percent of fathers who are single after divorce, and 25 percent of those who have remarried were found to have lost contact with at least one child; among mothers, the corresponding figures were 11 and 17 percent.

Gender emerges as a firm predictor of the amount as well as the kind of support people receive from and give to family members. With the exception of giving support with odd jobs, women are the main recipients but also the main providers of support. The traditional gender stereotypes with respect to the types of help were confirmed: men help their parents as well as their children more with odd jobs, and women offer their parents and children more help with housekeeping. A similar pattern shows up when the help exchanged between male and female siblings is considered. Female relatives appear to be important back-ups for childcare. To what extent are the more frequent contacts between mothers and daughters and the strong exchange of support between female family members reflected in feelings of obligation towards family members? Contrary to what one might expect, women have a weaker sense of obligation than men towards the family in general, as well as towards parents and children. Apparently, women's actual provision of help is not very strongly or uniquely conditioned by feelings of obligation. Though women tend to be more involved in family support giving, this

greater involvement is not accompanied by stronger feelings of obligation compared with men. It is unclear how to account for this discrepancy. Could it be that women help each other without feeling it to be an obligation or do men profess support giving, implicitly assuming their partners, sisters, mothers and daughters will come through with help and assistance?

When we look at the strength of family ties, consistent gender differences again appear. Women are more satisfied with the cohesion, the support and the atmosphere in their families, and are more positive about the quality of their relationships with family members. In accordance with the gendered family patterns, women participate more in traditional family celebrations such as Christmas and St. Nicholas; they also take part more often in joint family activities such as family holidays and family stays. Despite their weaker feelings of obligation compared with men, women have more contact with their family members, exchange more support with them, experience their family ties as being stronger and of a better quality, and participate more frequently in family celebrations and shared family activities.

Age

Age differences must be interpreted with care: sometimes they represent cohort differences, and at other times they should be viewed as reflecting differences in life course stage or psychological development. Changes across successive cohorts in fertility, marriage and mortality patterns, and the impact of individualisation processes, underlie age differences in structural family characteristics. For example, whereas baby boomers have the largest family networks, age groups succeeding them have a smaller number of family members. Divorce is least common among the older age groups, reflecting the restrictive legislation and the more traditional attitudes towards divorce that existed in the past. Whereas unmarried cohabitation is most popular among the younger generations, from the age of forty the majority of the Dutch are married and live with a spouse.

Age differences in the geographic distances separating family members and in interaction patterns appear to be linked to differences in life course stage. People aged over 70 live at a relatively long distance from their families, as do people in the youngest age category (18-29). Retirement migration and early career moves are the most likely explanation for the observed age patterns. Interestingly, and despite the relatively large geographic distances separating them, young adult children have more contact with their parents than do middle-aged and older children. With increasing age, the frequency of child-parent contact decreases. Apparently, the decline in contact that comes when young adults start leading lives of their own is not followed by a contact revival later in life. Of course, in late life mobility and vitality problems start imposing restrictions on interactions. Looking at support exchange, we see that young adults have the most intensive exchange relationships with their parents. In the section on gender we observed a similar finding for women: they live at a greater distance from their families but still provide more support than men. Like women, young people tend to participate more often in family celebrations and shared family activities compared with older age groups. Yet another similarity between women and younger people in general is that both are relatively satisfied with the cohesion in their families, the support exchange and the quality of their family relationships.

Whereas contact frequency and support exchanges between parents and children decrease with increasing age, evaluations of family ties show a curvilinear relationship with age. Both the younger and the older age categories are more satisfied with the strength and quality of their family ties than the middle-aged groups. There seems to be a real ‘mid-life crisis’ in the extent to which people are satisfied with their family ties. The middle-aged group also feel less accepted by their families compared with the other age groups: they are more often seen as the ‘black sheep’ of the family. Apparently, the satisfaction derived from family ties dips in midlife. An explanation might be that younger people are in a phase of

their lives in which they have not yet established their own families. Family ties tend to become more extended and complex when people start having families of their own, which involves the risk of less positive family events and experiences. Among the oldest age groups, feelings about family cohesion and support are relatively positive again, but the age differences among men are greater than they are among women. Men in their late sixties are particularly dissatisfied with their family ties.

Feelings of obligation towards the family are stronger among people between 18 and 29 than among the other age groups. Again we see a dip in the commitment middle-aged people feel towards their family; in particular those between 40 and 59 report weak levels of obligation towards both their parents and their children.

Taken together, the findings show different patterns of age differences depending on the aspect of family ties considered. Whereas contact frequency and support exchanges show decreases with decreasing age, more subjective measures such as the satisfaction with family ties and perceived obligations show a U-shaped pattern. Clearly, a one-on-one association between what people do with family members and how they feel about these interactions does not exist.

Education and socioeconomic status

It is often assumed that the nature of family relationships has changed as a result of the increased level of education and the resulting higher level of material resources and greater opportunities to lead the life one chooses. Which solidarity patterns does educational attainment affect? Education significantly affects the timing and occurrence of a number of demographic behaviours, such as the age at which parents become grandparents, the likelihood of becoming a grandparent, and the likelihood of divorce. Parents with a lower level of education tend to become grandparents earlier in life than those with a higher education. The more highly educated are less likely to see their first marriage end in divorce than those with only primary education. The dispersion of family members over the country is strongly affected by educational level as well: whereas those with up to primary education live at an average distance of 24 kilometres from their family members, this amounts to 55 kilometres for those with university education. A similar pattern arises for socio-economic status: the higher the status, the further away people live from their families.

Geographic distance has implications for the amount of contact: the higher the educational level, the lower the number of contacts family members have with each other. About 80 percent of less educated parents were found to have weekly contact with their children, as against 40 percent of university educated parents. The effect of socio-economic status almost disappears when education is controlled for; apparently, educational level is a more important determinant of family contact than social class. The availability of material resources such as time and money, often resulting from a higher socio-economic status and education, does not substantially affect the exchange of instrumental support in families.

Combining the various findings yields an interesting, and seemingly contradictory picture of the way people with a higher level of education and income experience their family life and give shape to it. Participation in family celebrations and shared family activities are more common among those with a higher education and higher incomes; these people also experience their family as being more cohesive and are more satisfied about the quality of their family relationships than do those with less education. At the same time, however, the more highly educated have weaker feelings of obligation towards their families compared with those with a lower education, and have less contact with them. Apparently, living at a greater distance from their family members, having less contact, and weaker feelings of obligation towards them does not prevent people with a higher education from feeling connected to their families and from positively experiencing the quality of their family

relationships. It seems that certain factors that were traditionally believed to have a positive impact on family bonding and solidarity – living nearby, having regular contact, and endorsing norms of family obligation – are not necessary preconditions for closeness in families. Our data show that the experienced quality of family ties is relatively independent of these factors.

Divorce and household situation

Our results demonstrate that contact with adult children, and therefore the potential for family solidarity, is influenced by whether or not parents are divorced. Paternal divorce had a particularly strong negative effect on contact with children. First-married fathers saw their children more than three times as often as divorced fathers who live alone. About 16 percent of the parents who were divorced, were found to have lost contact with at least one child. With respect to the geographical mobility of people living in various household types, it appears that people who live alone are more likely to move than couples or families with children. Indeed, those with a partner and couples with children lived at smaller distances from their family members than singles or people without children.

Household situation is an important determinant of support exchanges within the family. For instance, people who live with a partner were found to receive less support from their parents and from their siblings than do those who are single or who have children. This finding suggests that having a partner is an important resource when help is needed. Conversely, parents who live with a partner are more likely to give their children help than parents who live alone. When a parent lives with a partner, the help they provide their adult child is more likely to be felt as a joint venture: they visit their children together and if help is needed, they are both involved, albeit probably in different ways.

Norms of obligation are not always congruent with the actual help that is provided. For instance, whereas never-partnered individuals were more likely to give support to their parents than people in any of the other household positions, their norms of obligation towards their parents were weaker compared with the other categories. Once again we see that norms of obligation do not always have predictive value for the actual provision of help. The help given by single people is largely independent of normative considerations, and appears to be more strongly affected by the fact that the obligations and responsibilities that go with partnership are lacking. We found that people living on their own and single parents are less satisfied about the quality of their family relationships than people who still live with their parents, or who live in a partner relationship. Interestingly, people with children are less satisfied with their family relationships than those who live with a partner without children. Apparently, living in a household with children brings potential strains to ties with other family members, for instance because there is less time to spend with other family members. Single people do not participate in family events and celebrations as often as people living in other household situations. Singles feel less accepted by their families than do those who have a partner. The same holds for single mothers compared with single fathers. The fact that single fathers meet with more sympathy from their families than do single mothers might reflect the double standards with respect to gender that still exist in our society: men who take on the obligations of childrearing and housekeeping that are traditionally ascribed to women are considered to be particularly responsible and laudable, whereas women who do so are simply ‘doing the normal thing’.

Religion and ethnicity

As in other Western European countries, in the Netherlands a process of secularisation set in during the 1960s which has affected many domains of social life, in particular family life.

Whereas 64.3 percent of the Dutch were members of a church in 1990, this percentage had dropped to 45.4 percent in 2005 (Social and Cultural Planning Office of the Netherlands, 2005a). Nevertheless, religion still occupies an important position both within society at large and in the personal lives of a minority of the Dutch population. In 2005 more than a quarter of all children born were baptised, 14 percent of all marriages included a blessing ceremony, and 40 percent of the deceased had funerals accompanied by a religious ceremony. The gap between the frequency of religious ceremonies accompanying births (14%) and those accompanying funerals (40%) might be interpreted as decreases across generations in the importance of religion.

In what ways is family life structured along religious lines (Dollahite, Marks & Goodman, 2004)? Not surprisingly, religious people have bigger families on average than people without a religious affiliation. As expected, divorce is less likely among people who identify themselves as religious than among those without a religious denomination. Religious people, in particular Catholics parents, tend to have more frequent contact with their children than do non-religious people. Religious affiliation is reflected in the norms of family obligation: respondents endorsing Muslim or Hindu religions were found to have much stronger norms of obligation towards their families than the other respondents, and Catholic and Protestant people feel more strongly obliged to their families than people who do not consider themselves religious. Finally, religious people participate in joint family events and some celebrations more often than the non-religious, and they generally have more positive attitudes about the cohesion and atmosphere in their families and the quality of their family relationships.

Ethnicity is another cultural factor that is generally assumed to have a substantial impact on family life (Kagitçibasi, 1996). In the Netherlands, the four largest ethnic minority groups are recent immigrant groups, arriving since the 1960s from Turkey and Morocco as guest workers or from the former Dutch colonies, Surinam and the Netherlands Antilles, bringing with them distinct family patterns and family values. Today, these groups together comprise around seven percent of the population of the Netherlands, and their numbers are still growing due to family reunification and family formation. In the larger cities around 40 percent of the primary school population have a non-Dutch background (Social and Cultural Planning Office of the Netherlands, 2005b), defined as being born or having at least one parent being born outside a ‘western’ country. Our data show that there are substantial ethnic differences in the amount of contact between parents and children. In general, adult children from ethnic minorities have more frequent contact with their parents than do the native Dutch; part of this difference can be explained by the fact that the average distance to family members is shorter for foreign-born than for native-born, but cultural differences such as family orientation and educational differences play a role as well. Turkish and Moroccan children have much more frequent contact with their parents compared with Dutch children. The Caribbean group – the Surinamese and the Antilleans – occupy an intermediate position between the Dutch and the Turkish and Moroccan groups when it comes to contact frequency. However, contact with fathers within the Caribbean group is infrequent. Caribbean children have less contact with their fathers than do Dutch children, probably due to the fact that many of them grow up in single-mother families.

Like religious affiliation, being a member of an ethnic minority group positively affects various dimensions of family life. Whereas religion clearly has a positive impact on the perceived quality and strength of family ties, members of ethnic minorities endorse norms of family obligation more strongly, and have more contact with their families compared with those belonging to the majority.

Conclusion

While several contemporary myths about the family are dispelled by our data, others receive support. For instance, the popular idea of a middle generation that has to cope with a double caring task – for their own parents and their dependent children – needs to be qualified: the so-called 'sandwich generation' is quite limited in size. Another popular notion, namely that people are less likely to live close to family members than they used to a few decades ago, is confirmed, however. As far as demographic characteristics are concerned, our data demonstrate that the complexity of Dutch kin networks is perhaps not as great as public debate sometimes suggests, but unmistakable nevertheless.

Although we have so far based our conclusions on cross-sectional findings, they do not indicate in any way that the family is in decline. At the beginning of the 21st century a substantial amount of support is still being exchanged between Dutch parents and children; the vitality of intergenerational solidarity in Dutch families seems to be unchallenged. One might argue that the often assumed lack of intergenerational solidarity is mainly a 'problem' among the better educated as they appear to have less contact with their parents and children than do those with a lower education. An interesting finding is that the availability of money and time in the form of working hours does not substantially affect the giving or receiving of help. Apparently, the actual provision of help is relatively independent of such material constraints. Once the longitudinal data of the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study become available, we will, of course, have a better basis for drawing conclusions about changes in family ties in the Netherlands over time.

Our findings strongly reinforce the notion of women's role as kinkeepers in the family. When Rosenthal (1985) coined this notion some twenty years ago, she would probably not have believed that the situation would still be essentially the same at the beginning of the 21st century. Not only do women's and men's marriages differ, as Jessie Bernard suggested, but their participation in and experience of family life as such are fundamentally different as well. Another noticeable finding is the 'crisis' in family ties faced by our middle-aged respondents: these respondents generally experienced their family ties as weaker and less satisfactory than the other age groups, and they felt less accepted by their families; conversely, they had weaker feelings of obligation towards their family members. Previous research on families has focused strongly on the early and late stages of life (cf. Shweder, 1998). One of the advantages of the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study is that it allows the examination of family ties over a wide range of ages. Our findings suggest that family ties in midlife warrant additional attention from researchers.

The assumption that the individualisation process diminishes loyalty towards and identification with family members, in particular among the more highly educated and wealthy, was not borne out by our data. Contrary to what one might expect, we found that strong family bonds in terms of a high-quality relationships and strong feelings of cohesion tend to accrue mainly to those who are already in a better social position because they are more highly educated, wealthier and are involved in a partner relationship. Merton (1968) called the process of disproportionate accumulation of benefits to those who already have much, the Matthew effect, after St. Matthew: '…unto every one that hath shall be given'. The same effect seems to apply to family ties.

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