Frequency and Intensity of Contact between Ageing Parents and their Adult Children in the Czech Republic: Exploration of Selected Predictors[1]

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Frequency and Intensity of Contact between Ageing Parents and their Adult Children in the Czech Republic: Exploration of Selected Predictors. The aim of this study was to analyse the frequency and intensity of contact between parents and their adult children in the Czech Republic. Using data from the *Life Roles* survey collected in 2014 we first focused on the effects of selected characteristics of parents and offspring. Next, we added residential distance, trying to see whether it can account for the effect of some of these predictors. The results show that the odds of frequent contact were higher among mothers and when the child in question was a daughter; and lower among divorced and higher educated parents. Mothers also spent more time per week on average with their child than fathers. In addition, contact was more intensive with daughters, but less intensive if the parent was working, and if the child was married. Contact frequency and intensity were also negatively affected by the age of the youngest grandchild. Distance had a strong negative effect on both dependent variables, but mostly accounted for the effect of age on frequency of contact, and some of the effect of child's marital status on contact intensity.
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Introduction

Despite assumptions that the importance of intergenerational bonds and solidarity would diminish over time, members of different generations continue to be involved in mutual contact and multifaceted support exchange. (Dykstra – Fokkema 2011; Bengtson 2001; Neuberger – Haberkern 2014; Kalmijn – de Vries 2009) Bengtson (2001) even suggested that intergenerational ties as a source of support will eventually become more important than ties within nuclear families. This is generally attributed to demographic developments, namely increased longevity. (Hank – Buber 2009; Luo et al. 2012; Bengtson 2001; Petrová Kafková 2014) This means that the life span shared between parents and their adult children has extended (Ferring et al. 2009; Hrozenská 2013), family networks with three generations have become something of the norm in the European context, and four-generational family networks are

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common. (Hoff 2007) Previously, it has been reported that contact between parents and their adult children is frequent in Europe, and often realized on a weekly basis. (Silverstein – Litwak 1993; Lawton et al. 1994; summary in Klaus 2012; Dykstra – Fokkema 2011) Yet, the frequency of contact has also been shown to differ across Europe, with the North-South divide as the most often used generalization. (E.g. summary in Dykstra – Fokkema 2011; Tomassini et al. 2004)

The aim of this study was to explore the frequency and intensity of contact between parents and their adult children in the Czech Republic, thereby adding to the pool of existing analyses mapping forms of intergenerational contact in European countries. On the basis of existing studies, we intended to explore the effect of selected characteristics of both parents and their adult children on intergenerational contact. Further, we wanted to analyse whether the effect of some of these predictors might be attributed to geographical distance between parental and offspring households, as distance has previously been identified as one of the main factors affecting parent-child contact (Fors – Lennartsson 2008; Kalmijn – de Vries 2009) and theorized to explain the effect of factors such as education. (Kalmijn – de Vries 2009; Hank 2007; Tomassini et al. 2004) To do this, we used the *Life Roles* survey conducted in 2014 among Czechs aged 50-70, who were asked to report on contact between themselves and one of their children. In the following section we will first briefly overview existing research into intergenerational contact. Then we will use logistic and linear regressions to analyse the effects of selected variables on the frequency and intensity of contact between ageing parents and their adult children in the Czech Republic.

Determinants of intergenerational contact

Previous research identified multiple factors that have been both assumed and shown to affect contact between parents and their adult children. Mothers were documented to have more frequent contact with children than fathers, which was attributed to the "kin-keeping" role of women. (Hank 2007; Kalmijn – Dykstra 2006) This led some authors to suggest that the labour-market involvement of women might have a negative impact on the frequency of intergenerational contact. (Kalmijn – Dykstra 2006; Kalmijn – de Vries 2009) Parental divorce was shown to have a negative effect on contact with children, especially among fathers (Kalmijn – de Vries 2009; Hank 2007; Tomassini et al. 2004), while married or partnered offspring were in less frequent contact with their parents than single children. (Kalmijn – de Vries 2009; Bucx et al. 2008) However, contact was more likely if offspring had children of their own (Bucx et al. 2008), possibly as a result of the provision of grandchild care by

parents. (Bucx et al. 2008; Kalmijn – Dykstra 2006; Lutherová – Maříková – Válková 2017; Filadelfiová – Bútorová 2013)

Family size was documented to have different effects for parents and children; the odds of frequent contact were higher for parents with more children, but lower for offspring with more siblings. (Tomassini et al. 2004; Kalmijn – Dykstra 2006; Hrozenská 2013) The effect of parental health is not quite clear; it was suggested that poor health might both foster and hinder contact as children might be more likely to visit their ill parents, but poorly or partially disabled parents might be less likely to visit their children. (Tomassini et al. 2004; Hank 2007) Similarly, older parents might be more in need of assistance and therefore in more frequent contact with their children (Tomassini et al. 2004), but contact might also diminish with age. (Kalmijn – Dykstra 2006) Contact was also found to be less frequent among more educated parents and more educated offspring, which was explained by lower adherence to family norms among the higher educated (Kalmijn – Dykstra 2006) or by higher mobility and therefore increased geographical distance between generations. (Kalmijn – de Vries 2009; Hank 2007; Tomassini et al. 2004)

In fact, geographic proximity/distance is often seen as one of the most important hindrances to intergenerational contact (Fors – Lennartsson 2008; Kalmijn – de Vries 2009) and, by extension, to intergenerational support, as proximity, contact, support provision, and sometimes parent-child relationship quality are understood to be tightly connected. (E.g., Kalmijn – de Vries 2009; Hank 2007; Bucx et al. 2008; Silverstein – Litwak 1993; Lawton et al. 1994; Klaus 2012; Tomassini et al. 2004; but cf. Van Gaalen – Dykstra 2006; Dykstra – Fokkema 2011) It has been said that "proximity facilitates contact" (Bucx et al. 2008: 146), especially face-to-face contact (Dykstra – Fokkema 2011), but at longer distances, deficiencies in face-to-face contact might be compensated by other forms, such as telephone contact. (Kalmijn – de Vries 2009; Hank 2007; Tomassini et al. 2004) Proximity might also foster in-kind help (i.e., practical assistance such as help with housework) while financial support might not be strongly dependent upon distance. (Dykstra – Fokkema 2011) However, the connection between distance and contact is not straightforward. Using SHARE data from 11 countries, Dykstra and Fokkema (2011) identified four family types which comprised different combinations of residential distance, frequency of contact, and intergenerational support. Therefore, it cannot be assumed that those living in close proximity are engaged in frequent contact, while those parents and children living farther apart do not see each other often.

Parents and children in the Czech context

The Czech Republic has been characterized by low geographical mobility, which means that adult children often live in close proximity to their parents. (Maříková 2004) This is similar to the situation described in other European countries, such as the Netherlands (Bucx et al. 2008), Sweden (Fors – Lennartsson 2008), or Slovakia. (European Foundation… 2006) Moreover, intergenerational solidarity is high in the Czech context. (Hasmanová Marhánková – Štípková 2014; Svobodová 2009; Kuchařová 2002; Vidovićová – Rabušic 2003; Petrová Kafková 2010) This is often seen as a legacy of the state socialist era (1948 – 1989), during which a housing shortage and a high employment rate among young women fostered the dependency of young families upon their family of origin[3]. (Možný et al. 2004) However, the pattern of intergenerational solidarity has recently been changing; mutual help has ceased to be a moral duty or obligation and tends to be negotiated individually and on an emotional basis. (Hasmanová Marhánková 2013; Petrová Kafková 2013) Using a sample of 45 to 59 year-old Czechs, Vidovićová and Rabušic (2003) found that intergenerational contact was quite frequent with 60% of respondents visiting their elderly parents at least once a week. Forty-three percent of respondents further reported that visiting their parents made them happy. No gender differences were documented. On the other hand, in their analysis, Možný et al. (2004) showed that middle-aged women had more frequent contact with their mothers than their fathers, both face-to-face and by telephone. Kuchařová (2002) observed that frequent contact between generations indicates good intergenerational relationships.

In this text, we aimed to analyse the effect of selected predictors on the frequency and intensity of contact between ageing parents and their adult children in the Czech Republic. We selected our predictors on the basis of existing findings, as discussed above. These were characteristics of both parents and their offspring, namely parental gender, education, age, marital status, heath, and number of children; and child's gender, age, economic activity, marital status, number of children, and age of the youngest child. First, we inspected whether the previously-observed effect of these variables may also be documented in the Czech context. Secondly, we tested whether the effect of some of these predictors might be attributed to geographic proximity by controlling for residential distance between generations.

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[3] The situation was the same in Slovakia (e.g, Filadelfiová 2004) where strong family ties and strong family solidarity are observed to have persisted. (Filadelfiová 2004; Hrozenská 2013)

Data, variables, and methods

For this analysis, we used data from the *Life Roles* survey conducted in the Czech Republic in 2014 on a sample of older adults. The survey collected data on older persons' social roles, activities, retirement, or involvement with their children and grandchildren; and was conducted among Czechs aged 50 to 70 using the computer assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) method, with interviews lasting an average of 43 minutes. The sample was created using quota sampling: In the first step, information from the 2011 census provided by the *Czech Statistical Office* was used to identify the socio-demographic structure of the Czech population aged 50 to 70 with respect to gender, age, education, NUTS 3 region, and size of place of residence. A sample of at least N = 700 observations was then designed to match this structure and cases were assigned to individual interviewers. In total, information was collected from N = 730 respondents and the final sample was representative of the population in question with respect to its selected characteristics[4]. (Focus 2014) Among other things, respondents were asked to state to which of their children they provided the most help[5]. They were then requested to report the frequency and intensity of contact with this selected child[6]. For the purposes of the analysis, we dichotomized frequency to distinguish between (1) very frequent contact and (0) less frequent contact. We defined very frequent contact as contact on a daily or a weekly basis, whereas all other forms (several times a month, several times a year, once a year of less often) were coded as less frequent contact. Intensity of contact is a continuous variable measured in hours per week spent with the child and is limited to those parents who reported spending time with their children daily, several times a week, or several times a month.

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[4] The response rate was not reported by the agency responsible for the data collection, as it was stated that it did not affect the structure of the sample.

[5] "Which one of your children do you help the most (spend the most time with, dedicate the most energy to)?", however, the exact nature of this help was not further specified. For the purposes of clarity, the first column of Table 1 summarizes the main characteristics of these "most helped" children (i.e., the initial selection, N = 617). We can see that the assistance was somewhat more frequently provided to daughters and that, on average, the selected child was in their early thirties. Seventy percent of these children were working and half of them were married. On average, the selected child had 1.2 children; but 34% of parents helped a childless child. We do not venture beyond this description as we lack comparable information about a child's siblings and are therefore unable to draw conclusions about parental preferences and strategies with respect to help provision.

[6] "How often do you meet this child's family?", "How many hours per week would you say you generally spend with this child's family?" Similarly to the above, the exact content/purpose of this contact was not specified in any way.

Table 1: **Description of the samples used in the analysis of frequency (N = 406) and intensity (N = 326) of contact with offspring; and description of the initial sample of respondents who reported on helping their children (N = 617).** *Life Roles survey*, **the Czech Republic 2014**

	Original sample of parents (N = 617)	Frequency of contact analysis sample (N = 406)	Intensity of contact analysis sample (N = 326)
Respondent			
Gender (% women)	56	58	60
Age (average)	59.7	61.5	61.4
Education			
Primary	17	19	20
Lower secondary, vocational	40	40	40
Upper secondary	31	30	29
Tertiary	12	11	10
Economic activity (% working)	56	44	44
Health (average)	5.1	5.2	5.1
Marital status (% married)			
Married	65	65	66
Divorced	18	16	16
Other	17	19	19
Total number of children (average)	1.9	2.0	2.0
Offspring			
Gender (% women)	55	62	64
Age (average)	33.7	36.5	36.5
Economic activity (% working)	70.3	74	75
Marital status (% married)	51	71	71
Number of children (average)	1.2	1.8	1.8
Age of the youngest child (average)	7.3	7.3	7.3
Age of the oldest child (average)	10.1	10.1	10.1
Distance			
Same house/flat	27	16	17
Within 30 km	59	70	76
30+ km	14	14	7
Frequency of contact			
Every day		15	17
Several times a week		42	47
Several times a month		34	37
Several times a year or less often		9	*n/a*
Intensity of contact (average hrs/week)			12.4
Intensity by distance (average)			
Same house/flat			25.2
Within 30 km			9.7
30+ km			9.3
Intensity by contact (average)			
Every day			27.1
Several times a week			11.5
Several times a month			6.9

As already mentioned, we used a set of elementary characteristics describing both the parent and their selected child as independent variables. For respondents (parents), these were gender, age, education, economic activity, marital status, health, and the total number of children. For offspring these were gender, age, economic activity, marital status[7], number of children, and the age of the youngest child. In both instances, gender was coded (1) for female and (0) for male, while age, number of children, and age of offspring's youngest child were left uncategorized (continuous). Health was measured on a 10-point scale where (1) means "no health issues" and (10) "serious health issues". Economic activity was used in dichotomous form capturing whether an individual (1) worked or (0) did not work. A respondent's marital status was simplified using the categories (1) married, (2) divorced, and (3) other; whereas marital status of the offspring was dichotomized to capture whether they were (1) married or were (0) not married. A respondent's education had four categories that reflect the Czech system of education: (1) primary, (2) lower secondary, vocational, (3) upper secondary, (4) tertiary. Lastly, we added distance from offspring, which has three categories indicating whether the selected child lived (1) in the same house/flat, (2) within 30 km of the parent, or (3) farther away.

For the purposes of the analysis, we dropped all observations with missing values for one or more of the variables used. We also dropped respondents whose selected child was under 18 years of age, thereby only keeping adult children. This yielded N = 406 observations for the analysis of frequency of contact and N = 326 observations for the analysis of its intensity (note that this actually resulted in the elimination of all respondents whose selected child had no children of their own, as these respondents did not report on frequency of contact with their selected child; in effect, we were left with a sample of grandparents). These two samples are described in Table 1. As we can see, about 60% of respondents were female and the average age was about 62. Most respondents attained some type of secondary education; 44% of them were economically active, 65% were married and 16% were divorced. Average health was 5.1 on the 10-point scale and respondents reported having two children on average. Moving to the selected child, about 60% were female and their average age was 37 years. Three quarters of children were economically active and about 70% were married. On average, the selected child had 1.8 children, with the youngest aged 7.3 and the oldest aged 10.1 years, on average. Most selected children lived within 30 km of their parents and the contact was

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[7] Existing research generally shows that parental contact tends to be less frequent with both married and partnered offspring. (E.g., Kalmijn – de Vries 2009; Bucx et al. 2008) In this analysis, we preferred marital status to partnership status/co-residence with a partner as we expected parents to be better informed about the "formal" status of their child than the "informal" incidence of partnership. However, as marriage ceases to be the dominant form of partnered life, future analyses might want to focus on partnerships and/or cohabitations regardless of the official marital status.

mostly realized on a weekly basis (several times a week). Reported intensity was 12.4 hours per week on average. Unsurprisingly, contact was the most intensive where parents co-resided with their children and where they were in a daily contact with their selected child.

The determinants of "very frequent contact" were analysed using logistic regression; the determinants of contact frequency were assessed using OLS regression. In both instances, we estimated four models. The first model (Model 1, Model 5) contains a set of elementary characteristics describing the respondents (gender, age, education, economic activity, marital status, health, and total number of children), the second model (Model 2, Model 6) adds elementary characteristics describing their selected offspring (gender, age, marital status, economic activity). The third model (Model 3, Model 7) adds offspring's number of children and the age of the youngest child; the fourth model (Model 4, Model 8) then contains geographic distance. For easier interpretation, logistic regression results are presented in the form of odds ratios (a value above one indicates higher odds; a value below one indicates lower odds). Model statistics and comparisons are summarized in Table 2 (frequency) and Table 3 (intensity). Results from selected models are presented in Table 4.

Table 2: **Goodness of fit statistics of estimated logistic regression models of frequency of intergenerational contact. *Life Roles* 2014**

	L2	df	p-value	BIC
Model 1: female + age + working + education + marital status + number of children + health	22.51	10	<0.05	599.7
Model 2: M1+ child female + child age + child working + child married	27.16	14	<0.05	619.1
Model 3: M2 + child's number of children + age of youngest child	31.57	16	<0.05	626.7
Model 4: M3 + distance	130.65	18	<0.00005	539.6
Contrasts				
M2-M1	4.65	4	0.325	19.4
M3-M2	4.41	2	0.111	7.6
M4-M3	99.08	2	<0.00005	-87.1

Table 3: **Goodness of fit statistics of estimated OLS regression models of intensity of intergenerational contact.** *Life Roles* **2014**

| | F | df | p-value | Wald test | |
				F	p-value
Model 5: female + age + working + education + marital status + number of children + health	2.40	10	<0.01		
Model 6: M5+child female + child age + child working + child married	3.19	14	<0.001	4.86	<0.001
Model 7: M6+child's number of children + age of youngest child	3.00	16	<0.001	1.58	0.207
Model 8: M7+distance	5.00	18	<0.00005	18.32	<0.00005

Table 4: **Estimated coefficients from selected logistic regression models of very frequent contact and OLS regression models of intensity of contact between parents and their selected children. Logistic regression results are presented in the form of odds ratios.** *Life Roles* **2014**

| | frequency (LR) | | intensity (OLS) | |
	M3	M4	M7	M8
Female	1.727*	1.998**	5.887**	5.664**
Age	0.939*	0.943	-0.057	-0.070
Working	0.632†	0.658	-4.575†	-4.625*
Education (primary is ref. category)				
Lower secondary	0.729	0.453*	-1.224	-2.756
Upper secondary	0.532†	0.432*	-5.187†	-5.924*
Tertiary	0.515	0.309*	-4.707	-5.492
Marital status (married is ref. category)				
Divorced	0.500*	0.338**	-0.581	-1.325
Other	1.019	0.657	4.365	3.051
Health	0.993	0.993	0.232	0.116
Number of children	0.927	0.868	0.527	1.160
Child: female	1.772*	1.981*	4.790*	4.581*
Child: age	1.042	1.062†	-0.065	0.025
Child: working	1.319	1.205	3.566	3.303
Child: married	1.189	1.401	-7.525***	-5.514**
Child: number of children	0.924	0.977	-1.366	-1.079
Child: age of youngest child	0.949*	0.943*	-0.367†	-0.390†
Distance (cores. is ref. category)				
Within 30 km		0.156***		-14.016***
30+ km		0.006***		-15.151***
Intercept	21.726†	76.671*	20.944	29.490*

***p<0.001; **p<0.01; *p<0.05; †p<0.1

Results

Very frequent contact between parents and children

Model 1 shows that out of parental characteristics, the odds of very frequent contact were statistically significantly higher among mothers than fathers, and declined with age. Those parents who attained upper secondary education had lower odds of frequent contact with selected offspring when compared to their least educated counterparts, while divorced parents had lower odds of very frequent contact than married parents. Number of children, economic activity, and health were found to have no effect. Adding child characteristics into Model 2 was not a statistically significant improvement to Model 1 (Table 2); and, indeed, among child characteristics, only gender had an effect; i.e., the odds of very frequent contact were about 1.6 higher when the selected child was a daughter as opposed to a son. Similarly, Model 3 was not an improvement on either of the previous two, though there was an effect of youngest grandchild's age: everything else being equal, with each additional year of age, the odds of very frequent contact declined by about 5% ([(1-0.949)*100]; p<0.05; Table 4). As might be expected, distance from the selected offspring had the greatest effect on the odds of very frequent contact, and its addition was a notable improvement to Model 3. People living within 30 kilometres of their selected child had, on average, about 84% lower odds of very frequent contact that those living in the same house/flat, while those living farther away had about 99% lower odds.

Model 4 further shows that after controlling for distance, mothers still had higher odds of very frequent contact than fathers, but neither age nor economic activity had statistically significant effects. In contrast, the effect of education was significant and the odds declined as education increased, with university educated parents – everything else being equal – having about 69% lower odds of very frequent contact when compared to their elementary educated counterparts. The effect of being divorced was actually more pronounced when controlling for distance; meanwhile, the effect of child's gender was almost unchanged. Child age had a borderline statistically significant positive effect (with each additional year of offspring age the odds of frequent contact increased by 6%, p<0.1), the effect of the youngest grandchild's age remained negative and almost unchanged – with each additional year of age the odds of frequent contact decreased by 6% (p<0.05).

Intensity of contact between parents and children

Moving to intensity, the same set of models was estimated using OLS regression (see Table 3 for model statistics and comparisons). Model 5, again containing only selected characteristics of the respondent, showed that women spend on average 6 hours more with their selected child than men, while

parents who were still working spend about 4 hours less (p<0.1) when compared to those who retired. Persons who attained upper secondary education spent on average 6.4 hours less with their selected child than their primary educated counterparts; however, no effect was observed for the other educational groups. Marital status and number of children had no effect and nor did health. On the basis of the Wald test, the addition of offspring characteristics may be considered an improvement to Model 1. Parents spent on average 4 (p<0.1) hours per week more with their daughters than with their sons but about 8 (p<0.001) hours per week less with their married children than with their unmarried children. Adding number and age of grandchildren into Model 7 did not improve upon Model 6, but the results are presented in Table 4 for the purposes of comparison with the last model; also, we again see a negative effect of the age of the youngest grandchild. Adding distance (Model 8) once again improved the previous models, distance having the strongest effect: compared to those co-residing with their child, those living within 30 km away spent on average 14 hours per week less with their offspring, and those living farther away, about 15 hours per week less, on average.

After controlling for distance, the effect of gender was still present and statistically significant, with mothers spending about 6 hours per week on average more with their selected child than fathers, and working parents spending about 5 hours per week less than retired parents. Those attaining upper secondary education spent less time with their child than those with elementary education. In comparison to Model 7, there was little change in the effect of offspring gender, but there was a change in the size of the effect of child's marital status – controlling for distance and everything else being equal, parents spent on average 5.5 hours less with their married children than with their unmarried (single, divorced, widowed) children. Age of the youngest grandchild maintained a marginally significant negative effect – with each additional year of age, time per week parents and children spent together declined by 0.4 hours (p<0.1).

Discussion and conclusions

Similarly to elsewhere in Europe (Silverstein – Litwak 1993; Lawton et al. 1994; Klaus 2012; Dykstra – Fokkema 2011), intergenerational contact in the Czech Republic was found to be frequent; more than 40% of respondents reported seeing their adult offspring several times a week and another third met their child at least several times a month. Contact was also relatively intensive at 12 hours per week on average spent with the selected child. Using logistic and OLS regressions, we found that the odds of very frequent contact were mostly affected by parental gender, age, and divorce, child's age, and the age of the youngest grandchild. Similarly, intensity was affected by parental and

offspring gender and child's marital status, as well as by parental economic activity and the age of the youngest grandchild (on p<0.1). In line with existing research, it was found that mothers were more likely to have very frequent contact with their children than fathers, and that they also spent more time per week on average with their selected child than male respondents. Contact was also more likely and more intensive if the child in question was a daughter. Often, the greater propensity of females to engage in intergenerational contact is attributed to the "kin-keeping" role of women (Hank 2007; Kalmijn – Dykstra 2006), perhaps, then, as mothers are more likely to initiate contact than fathers, daughters are more likely to welcome it than sons – although the data do not distinguish between parents visiting children and children visiting parents.

When compared to their married counterparts, divorced parents had lower odds of very frequent contact, but there was no difference in contact intensity, possibly indicating that once involved, married and divorced parents generally do not differ in the amount of time they spend with their offspring. On the other hand, whether or not child was married had no implication for very frequent contact, but the contact was actually less intensive with married as compared to unmarried children. We might speculate that intensive parental involvement – rather than frequent visits per se – might be unwelcomed by married children or their partners, or more difficult to maintain when a child also has to spend time with in-laws. (Bucx et al. 2008) We also saw that the age of the youngest grandchild had a negative effect on the odds of frequent contact and on contact intensity. Previously, contact was found to be more frequent between parents and their children who are also parents, possibly as a by-product of contact between grandparents and grandchildren. (Bucx et al. 2008) Moreover, grandparents tend to be involved with younger rather than older grandchildren, often as care providers. (Kalmijn – Dykstra 2006; Jappens – Van Bavel 2012; Cherlin – Furstenberg 1992) It therefore makes sense that contact with one's child would diminish as grandchildren grow older and as the need to be involved in childcare (namely babysitting) also diminishes. We found no effect of total number of children, size of the particular grandchild set (number of children of the selected child), and interestingly also health[8].

Residential distance had a strong negative effect on both dependent variables – both the odds of very frequent contact and contact intensity declined with increasing distance, and this decline was quite pronounced. This means that face-to-face contact between generations indeed suffered when

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[8] The non-existent effect of health is especially curious within the broader theoretical context (as discussed in the first part of the paper). To account for the possibility that the 10-point scale we used was too detailed (and, by extension, too vague) to measure one's subjective health status, we replicated the analysis using a categorized version of the same variable, which distinguished between those in good (1-3), medium (4-7), and bad (8-10) health. However, even when categorized, no effect of health was found (results not shown).

parents and children lived farther apart (or, more specifically, if they did not co-reside)[9]. As we saw, gender (of respondent and their child), marital status, and age of the youngest grandchild affected very frequent contact regardless of distance, but distance *did* account for the negative effect of parental age, possibly as older persons tend to be less able to travel longer distances and therefore cannot engage in frequent contact with offspring. In line with previous findings, the effect of education on very frequent contact was negative but appeared only when distance was controlled for. This is especially interesting, as literature tends to *explain* the effect of education by distance. Alternatively, some authors suggested that family norms may not be as strong at higher educational levels (Kalmijn – Dykstra 2006), or perhaps more educated parents simply have less need of, or a smaller preference for contact (or help) than the less educated, regardless of where they live. With respect to intensity, distance accounted for some of the effect of offspring being married (possibly as married children tend to live outside the parental home), but the effect of other variables remained almost unchanged. All in all, while distance had a pronounced negative effect on contact, it could not fully account for the documented effects of most of the parental and offspring characteristics.

At this point, several limitations of the analysis should be discussed. Firstly, the analysis was – at least to an extent, limited by missing complementary information about the selected child's siblings, leaving us unable to explore in detail parental strategies and preferences when it comes to potential contact with several adult offspring. The data do show that among parents of more than one child, 55% reported helping the youngest one (39% helped their eldest and 6% provided help to "other" child), yet the logic of the parental selection remains largely unclear; – and as such may be considered a subject for future investigation. Furthermore, the data gave us very little information about the type of parent-child contact in question. For example, it is not stated who initiated the contact and we therefore cannot draw solid conclusions about the effects of selected predictors (e.g., are parents involved more with daughters than sons because visits are easier to arrange or because daughters tend to visit more often than sons?). Moreover, we in fact do not know what this contact entailed. Was it primarily help-centred? Did parents and children spend quality-time together? Or did they only engage in short formal visits during weekends? It is true that respondents initially chose their children according to the amount of help provided (most likely practical rather than financial help), so it could be assumed that contact was at least partially help-based, but the full content remains unspecified. Lastly, it should be noted that when analysing the effect of distance, authors sometimes choose to exclude parents and children

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[9] However, no conclusions can be drawn regarding the quality of parent-child relationship.

occupying the same household, as co-residence does have special implications for contact. (Dykstra – Fokkema 2011; Tomassini et al. 2004) We elected not to do this as the sample size was too small to drop additional observations. Future analyses might want to address some of these shortcomings, as well as pursue international comparison using large harmonized datasets; concentrating not only on predictors but also on strategies of and driving forces behind intergenerational contact.

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