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The Legacy of Leaving Home: Long-Term Effects of Coresidence on Parent – Child Relationships

This study investigated how early, ''on-time,'' and late home leavers differed in their relations to parents in later life. A life course perspective suggested different pathways by which the time spent in the parental home may set the stage for intergenerational solidarity in aging families. Using fixed-effects models with data from the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (N = 14,739 parent – child dyads), the author assessed the effects of previous coresidence on intergenerational proximity, contact frequency, and support exchange more than 5 years after children had left home. The results indicated that, compared with siblings who moved out ''on time,'' late home leavers lived closer to their aging parents, maintained more frequent contact, and were more likely to be providers as well as receivers of intergenerational support. Overall, this evidence paints a positive picture of extended coresidence, revealing its potential to promote intergenerational solidarity across the life course.

The literature provides a fairly comprehensive understanding of parent – child coresidence as well as of the timing and pathways out of the parental home. Far less is known,

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however, about the long-term consequences of this transition. Most notably, there is an absence of research on the consequences of coresidence for parent – child relations in later life, although previous experiences are likely to set the stage for subsequent solidarity between the generations. For example, off-schedule departures that violate cultural norms around the ''right'' time to leave home may adversely affect the quality of parent – child relations. But the time young adults spend in the parental home may also strengthen intergenerational solidarity in later life. For instance, extended coresidence may promote later awareness of each other's needs or constitute an obligation for adult children to reciprocate in the long term.

In view of these connections, it appears worthwhile to include information on transitions out of the parental home into the analysis of intergenerational relations in aging families. In this study, I examined how early, ''on-time,'' and late leavers differed with respect to intergenerational proximity, contact frequency, and support exchange in later life. A life course perspective was particularly well suited to guide this research: One of its basic tenets is that previous transitions are linked to outcomes in later life. Therefore, this perspective provided a lens through which to view how the experience of intergenerational coresidence and leaving home was carried over into late parent – child relationships. A life course perspective also emphasizes the importance of the sociohistorical and family context in shaping the meanings attached to life transitions. In keeping with this principle, my research design included within-culture, within-cohort, and within-family

controls. I used pooled data from two waves (2004–2005 and 2006–2007) of the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE; see http://share-dev.mpisoc.mpg.de/), comprising respondents from 14 European countries and Israel.

BACKGROUND

A large body of literature suggests that an adverse family climate promotes early home leaving (e.g., Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1999). In this sense, any influence of the time spent in the parental home on later parent – child relations may be attributable to pure selection effects; that is, problematic parent – child relations are carried over into later life, producing a spurious correlation between early departures and lower levels of intergenerational solidarity in aging families. Whereas early leavers are undoubtedly selected on the quality of relations with the parents, it appears unlikely that the reverse is true for late home leaving. Ward and Spitze (2007), for example, analyzed U.S. panel data and found that harmonious ties to parents did not predict coresidence at a later wave.

I argue that the duration of coresidence has an idiosyncratic influence on parent – child relations and is therefore more than a proxy for previous family climate, at least where late home leaving is concerned. With regard to ''late'' departures, it is important to note that age norms attached to life transitions are socially created within a specific cultural and historical setting (Hagestad & Neugarten, 1985). Thus, expectations concerning the appropriate time to leave home may vary considerably across countries and cohorts. In this article, the term *late leaver* refers to individuals who left their parental home at an advanced age *relative* to the sociohistorical context in which the transition occurred. Because I did not consider instances of home returning, the age at which one leaves home refers to the final move-out.

Concerning the long-term effects of late home leaving on parent – child relations, life course considerations suggest two contrasting views, both of which follow the basic notion that previous experiences have lasting consequences for family life. The first is in line with popular accounts that portray late leavers as ''greedy and lazy children'' (Mitchell, 2006, p. 86). This negative picture is consistent with classical life course theory, which predicts adverse outcomes if children are off schedule in their passage to adulthood: Late leavers violate cultural expectations, signaling failure in their transition to an adult role and even dysfunction of their family as a whole (Parsons, 1949). Extended coresidence may thus be experienced as increasingly burdensome, interfering with parents' and children's preferences and disrupting other relationships and activities (see Ward & Spitze, 1992). Empirical research on intergenerational coresidence suggests that such adverse effects on relations to parents transpire only if children remain too dependent and are unable to achieve an adult status (White, 1994; White & Rogers, 1997). Thus, it appears that negative implications of extended coresidence may pertain only to the latest leavers. In other words, young adults who move regularly toward independence are unlikely to be among the latest leavers. Very late departures, however, are likely to signal difficulties in completing the passage to adulthood, which in turn may entail detrimental effects on the quality of relations to parents. Research on family relationships over time has demonstrated that changes brought about by developmental transitions possibly extend into later life (e.g., Elder, Caspi, & Downey, 1986). Considering the constructs examined in this study, such negative long-term effects may be reflected in lower levels of intergenerational contact and support provided to parents. Another possible implication is that children's lack of autonomy is carried over into later life, increasing the chance that they continue to rely on parental assistance.

A second, more positive view of extended coresidence emphasizes its potential to strengthen intergenerational bonds and promote solidarity in later life. One idea that has been advanced in the literature is that the investment of parental resources throughout previous family life represents a deposit in a ''support bank'' (Antonucci & Jackson, 1990); that is, parental investments in the course of extended coresidence build a sense of obligation in adult children. According to the principle of long-term reciprocity, late leavers may later assist their aging parents in order to balance intergenerational support accounts in a longitudinal fashion across the life course (Silverstein, Conroy, Wang, Giarrusso, & Bengtson, 2002). As Mitchell (2006) noted,

> Young adult coresiders may want to provide more help to parents in later life . . . than non-coresiders

in an attempt to ''repay'' parents for providing them with a home base and burdening them with extra household responsibilities in their time of need. (p. 88)

This motive should pertain particularly to the latest leavers who benefited most extensively from a ''feathered nest'' and accumulated the largest support debt. If extended coresidence represents a debt to be repaid, I would expect that the latest leavers provide more support to their parents in later life than early or on-time leavers.

A related idea is to assume a bidirectional exposure effect; that is, extended coresidence not only obligates late leavers to reciprocate but also entails mutual socialization processes that promote feelings of responsibility in both generations. As a result, parents and children may monitor each other more closely and respond more readily to situations of need in later life (Mitchell, 2006). If extended coresidence promotes mutual feelings of responsibility, I would expect to observe higher levels of intergenerational contact in later life, accompanied by an increase of support in both directions.

Finally, I propose geographical distance as an additional pathway that is likely to mediate the relationship between age at leaving home and later relations to parents. As a component of the structural dimension in the typology of intergenerational solidarity (Bengtson & Roberts, 1991), parent – child proximity reflects opportunities for contact and support exchange. A recent study suggested that timing and distance of move-outs are interrelated dimensions in the process of home leaving: Younger leavers moved across greater distances, whereas those who left later relocated closer to their parental home (Leopold, Geissler, & Pink, in press). With respect to the above discussion, this evidence may point to late leavers' continued dependency, but beyond the family sphere it is also consistent with developmental models of migration that posit that a long duration of residence increases the emotional attachment to a region and facilitates access to its resources, such as the job and marriage market. In any case, if late leavers live closer to their parents in later life, proximity may mediate other dimensions of intergenerational relations, such as frequency of contact and exchange of support.

In the empirical analyses, I controlled for a number of aspects that have been found to be associated with the key independent variable, age at leaving home, and one or more of the outcomes: intergenerational contact, support exchange, and proximity. A prominent factor is the gender of the child: Daughters not only leave home earlier than sons (Billari, Philipov, & Baizán, 2001), but they also maintain more frequent contact (Hank, 2007) and exchange more functional support (Rossi & Rossi, 1990) with their older parents. Further important covariates are family-related factors, such as the birth order of adult children (Sulloway, 1996) and the presence of grandchildren (Hank & Buber, 2009) as well as measures of marital status (Leopold & Schneider, 2011), education, and labor market activity (Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2004) as indicators for a child's need, opportunities, and time constraints.

METHOD

Data and Sample

I used data from SHARE (Börsch-Supan et al., 2005), a large-scale panel study representative of the population age 50 and over in 14 European countries (Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, The Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland) and Israel. There are three main reasons why the SHARE data were particularly well suited to address my research questions. First, these data offer comprehensive information on up to four children per family, including parents' retrospective reports on their offspring's age at leaving home. Second, the nested data structure (i.e., children within families) allowed me to control for shared family characteristics (see *Models* section). Third, the SHARE sample was large enough to apply a number of important restrictions. For the purpose of the present study, the latter points represented significant benefits in dealing with early and late leavers' potential self-selection on the quality of family relations.

My original sample consisted of 27,355 family respondents (henceforth *families*), including all individuals who entered SHARE in Wave 1 (2004 – 2005) or Wave 2 (2006 – 2007) and reported on living children at the time of the interview. I selected the analytic sample as follows. First, I constrained my sample to families who had between two and four children ($N = 19,967$). The minimum number of

two children per family was necessary to estimate fixed-effects models. Because this analytical strategy focuses on explaining differences between siblings, at least two children were required to examine within-family variation. The upper bound was defined by the SHARE survey instrument because detailed information about children's characteristics was not collected above the parity of four. Second, estimates of within-family variation in the age at leaving home could be obtained only if this information was available for every child in a family. Therefore, I excluded all families ($N = 6,935$) that reported on children who never left their parental home.

Third, I removed another 3,161 families in which the last move-out of a child occurred less than 5 years before the interview date. This sample restriction served two purposes. First, it addressed one of the main ideas behind this research, namely, to study how previous experiences are linked to outcomes in later life. In this respect, introducing a 5-year interval allowed me to capture longer term effects of previous coresidence on later parent – child relations. Second, this interval reduced unwarranted heterogeneity between siblings by excluding very recent transitions out of the parental home. Because the latter are typically followed by periods in which children establish own families and careers, they were not consistent with this study's focus on outcomes in aging families.

In a fourth step, I restricted the remaining sample to families without outliers or implausible values on the key predictor variable, children's age at leaving home. I removed all families in which at least one child stayed less than 15 years ($N = 1,133$) or more than 49 years ($N = 26$) in the reporting parents' households. The benefits of these exclusions were not only that extreme cases of extended coresidence were eliminated but also that they remedied, at least to some extent, the potential bias introduced by early departures that were most likely associated with family disruption. I further addressed the latter problem by a fifth sample restriction, removing all families ($N = 679$) that included at least one nonbiological (i.e., step-, foster, or adopted) child. In these families, the SHARE data did not allow one to determine clearly how long each child had coresided with the parents and how long each child had been exposed to a stepfamily. Step 6 of the sample selection removed families ($N = 1,151$) in which at least one child resided outside a geographical distance of 500 km to the responding parent. This restriction was aimed at ensuring that each child had the opportunity to be a provider or receiver of instrumental support. It also allowed me to generate a linear measure of geographical distance (see Table 1).

Another sample restriction was necessary to adequately deal with the historical and cross-national variation of the key predictor variable, children's age at leaving home. I excluded families in which at least one child was born before 1950 ($N = 714$) because case numbers in the SHARE data were not sufficient to reasonably compute cohort- and country-specific quintiles of coresidence duration (see *Measures* section for details). Finally, I removed 50 families with missing data on any of the control variables used in the analysis. After all restrictions, the analytic sample consisted of 6,118 families, comprising 14,739 parent – child dyads. Compared with the original sample, the analytic sample had a very similar proportion of family respondents who were male (44% vs. 45% in the original sample), single (both 31%), and reported on health problems (both 45%). The average number of children was slightly lower in the analytic sample (2.4 vs. 2.5). Because I removed families with coresident children as well as those in which the last child left home less than 5 years ago, the mean age of family respondents (67.6 vs. 64.9) and of children (40.1 vs. 36.0) was considerably higher in the analytic sample. I tested the robustness of the multivariate findings using a less restricted sample ($N = 11,296$ families), excluding only families that had missing data on any of the variables used in the analysis. All effects of age at leaving home that I report in the multivariate analysis were robust.

Measures

The data in Table 1 present a descriptive overview of all variables used in the analysis as well as background information on the responding parents. I estimated two linear and three binary outcomes. The linear outcomes, geographical distance and contact frequency, were generated by coding schemes that maximized the information available in the data: I replaced original data on geographical distances by their interval means and original responses of contact frequency by a measure of days per year (see Table 1).

Table 1. *Variables and Descriptive Statistics (*N $= 6,118$ *Respondents;* N $= 14,739$ *Parent $-$ Child Dyads)*

Variables	*M*	*SD*	Range	Description	
Characteristics of respondents					
Age	67.59	7.87	48 $-$ 96		
Male	.44		0 $-$ 1		
No. children	2.41	.63	2 $-$ 4	Sample restricted to the range of 2 $-$ 4 children	
Single living	.31		0 $-$ 1	1 $=$ *parent was living as a single at the interview*	
Health problems	.45		0 $-$ 1	1 $=$ *parent reported limitations in usual activities because of health problems*	
Characteristics of children					
Age at leaving home	22.53	4.11	15 $-$ 47	Calculated from parents' retrospective reports on the year in which a child left home	
Age	40.10	7.09	20 $-$ 57		
Male	.49		0 $-$ 1		
Married	.67		0 $-$ 1	1 $=$ *child was married and living together with the spouse;* 0 $=$ *child was single, living separated from the spouse, divorced, or widowed*	
Young child	.26		0 $-$ 1	1 $=$ *child had own child <7 years*	
Older child	.50		0 $-$ 1	1 $=$ *child had own child ≥7 years*	
Employed full time	.67		0 $-$ 1	1 $=$ *child worked full time*	
High education	.34		0 $-$ 1	1 $=$ *child had at least some postsecondary education (ISCED >4)*	
Last born	.42		0 $-$ 1	1 $=$ *youngest child in a family*	
Characteristics of parent $-$ child relations					
Distance (km)[a]	58.35	99.88	0 $-$ 300	Geographical distance to the responding parent's household	Recoded
				In the same building	$= 0$
				Less than 1 km away	$= 0.5$
				1 $-$ 5 km away	$= 3$
				5 $-$ 25 km away	$= 15$
				25 $-$ 100 km away	$= 62.5$
				100 $-$ 500 km away	$= 300$
Contact (no. days)	180.53	131.49	0 $-$ 365	Contact with the responding parent or his or her husband/wife/partner, either personally, by phone, or mail	Recoded
				Never	$= 0$
				Less than once a month	$= 6$
				About once a month	$= 12$
				About every 2 weeks	$= 26$
				About once a week	$= 52$
				Several times a week	$= 182.5$
				Daily	$= 365$
Support: Child to parent (time)	.10		0 $-$ 1	Practical household help or paperwork assistance given to the responding parent or his or her husband/wife/partner within the past year (1 $=$ *yes*)	
Support: Parent to child (time)	.33		0 $-$ 1	Looking after grandchildren and/or providing practical household help or paperwork assistance to a child within the past year (1 $=$ *yes*)	
Support: Parent to child (cash)	.15		0 $-$ 1	Cash transfer of at least € 250 (~325 USD) given to a child within the past year (1 $=$ *yes*)	

Note: Data are from SHARE Waves 1 and 2, Release 2.5.0, unweighted. Respondents represent families with two to four non-coresident biological children who left home at least 5 years ago and lived less than 500 km from parents. ISCED $=$ International Standard Classification of Education.

[a] 1 km $\approx$ 0.621 miles.

The remaining three outcomes pertained to support exchange. The first measured whether a non-coresident adult child had provided time transfers, such as paperwork assistance (e.g., filling out forms, settling financial or legal matters) and/or household help (e.g., home repairs, gardening, transportation, shopping, household chores) to the responding parent or his or her spouse within the past year. Note that this indicator was restricted to transfers of practical help. I did not consider personal care because other research based on SHARE data has shown that intergenerational caregiving corresponded to different determinants and should be analyzed separately (Brandt, Haberkern, & Szydlik, 2009). In my sample, however, the low prevalence of caregiving to parents (provided in less than 1% of all dyads) did not permit separate analyses. The measure of downward (i.e., parent-to-child) time transfers counted not only the types of practical help mentioned above but also providing care for grandchildren. Finally, I used an indicator variable for whether the parent had given a cash transfer of €250 (~325 USD) or more to an adult child in the past year. I included no outcome measure for upward financial assistance because children barely provided such support in my sample (less than 2% of children).

My key predictor variable, children's age at leaving home, was based on the following retrospective survey question: "In which year did [child's name] move from the parental household?" Parents were asked to count the last move-out, allowing for prior instances of home returning. This measure ranged from age 15 to 47 across the entire sample, averaging at 22.5 years. Of course, many characteristics of families and parent-child dyads varied considerably between the countries included in the sample. The data in Table 2 illustrate cross-country variation in all variables that were later introduced in the multivariate models.

For the present study, the most important aspect of cross-country variation was the diversity in the transition to adulthood. The countries represented in the sample were very heterogeneous with respect to a complex set of institutional and cultural factors, including characteristics of employment, family, and housing policy as well as cultural prescriptions regarding the appropriate time to leave home (Billari, 2004). As a result, there is also considerable variation in the social context

associated with the transition out of the parental home. In southern Europe, for example, comparatively few children leave home before completing their education and entering their first union, whereas this is quite common in Nordic countries (Billari et al., 2001). This diversity is also reflected in the timing of transitions: Whereas departures past the age of 25 are extremely rare in northern Europe (quite similar to North America), they are considered perfectly normal in Italy, Spain, and Greece. Accordingly, the analytic sample revealed marked differences in children's mean age at leaving home, ranging from 19.9 in Denmark to 26.1 in Italy. These numbers were in line with results from a recent study that used an unconstrained sample of SHARE respondents (Angelini, Laferrère, & Pasini, 2011).

From a life course perspective, it was critical to assess which age of leaving home was "off schedule" and may thus have interfered with prevailing age norms, possibly straining parent-child relations or, alternatively, reflecting a support arrangement of an unusually long duration that may have obligated children to repay in later life. Obviously, this assessment had to be carried out relative to the specific sociohistorical context in which a transition took place. Apart from the considerable cross-country differences, it was important to allow for changes across cohorts. As Settersten (1998) noted, the "historical time in which one reaches adulthood, and the conditions associated with that time, are likely to play a significant role in . . . determining life-course experiences" (p. 1384). On the basis of these considerations, I proceeded as follows to capture the sociohistorical context of home-leaving transitions. First, I constructed three birth cohorts of children (1950–1959, 1960–1969, and 1970–1979). Second, I defined five categories representing (a) earliest, (b) early, (c) average, (d) late, and (e) latest leavers. Because my sample represented a population selected on the basis of specific analytical reasons, whereas cultural prescriptions of what constitutes a typical or an atypical transition should instead be reflected in a country's general population, I took advantage of SHARE's large and representative samples of each country to specify these categories. On the basis of the entire SHARE sample of parent-child dyads ($N = 54,571$), I defined the process of leaving home starting at age 15 and censored (a) at the coresiding child's age

Table 2. *Characteristics of Children and Parent – Child Relations in 15 Countries (N = 14,739)*

Variables	AT	DE	SE	NL	SP	IT	FR	DK	GR	CH	BE	IL	CZ	PL	IE	Total
Child characteristics																
Age at leaving home	22.24	22.51	20.25	21.96	25.24	26.08	22.41	19.92	23.87	22.11	23.52	22.11	23.22	24.06	22.71	22.53
Age	39.53	39.78	38.62	38.41	41.28	41.97	39.97	38.80	41.97	39.99	41.01	40.66	41.24	42.60	39.26	40.10
Male	.46	.50	.52	.50	.51	.50	.50	.49	.45	.47	.49	.50	.49	.44	.46	.49
Married	.61	.63	.45	.66	.87	.88	.62	.53	.81	.59	.69	.82	.75	.89	.66	.67
Has young child	.20	.18	.31	.33	.32	.26	.31	.31	.20	.21	.25	.39	.19	.17	.26	.26
Has older child	.50	.48	.42	.34	.56	.59	.46	.41	.63	.40	.56	.48	.68	.75	.38	.50
Employed full time	.70	.66	.68	.61	.69	.57	.74	.73	.59	.55	.65	.69	.77	.67	.64	.67
High education[a]	.37	.37	.33	.38	.24	.12	.39	.49	.26	.14	.48	.51	.16	.20	.63	.34
Last born	.43	.43	.43	.42	.43	.42	.42	.43	.45	.42	.40	.39	.46	.42	.35	.42
Parent – child relations																
Distance (km)[b]	66.66	73.52	81.44	58.91	39.62	27.47	65.27	81.11	46.03	62.94	30.61	62.35	42.36	39.52	90.45	58.35
Contact (days per year)	145.63	149.38	169.09	167.45	249.37	256.72	159.79	157.85	281.75	132.61	173.19	236.69	159.48	178.20	209.91	180.53
Parent received time transfer	.08	.13	.08	.06	.05	.06	.06	.10	.15	.07	.08	.08	.23	.09	.05	.10
Parent gave time transfer	.26	.27	.39	.37	.32	.30	.35	.43	.27	.30	.40	.26	.27	.22	.34	.33
Parent gave cash transfer	.18	.14	.22	.14	.04	.11	.13	.19	.10	.11	.14	.23	.11	.12	.06	.15
No. dyads	703	1,339	1,456	1,768	445	749	1,079	1,382	903	709	1,498	775	1,090	624	219	14,739

Note: Data are from SHARE Waves 1 and 2, Release 2.5.0, unweighted. Dyads represent parents and two to four non-coresident biological children who left home at least 5 years ago and lived less than 500 km from parents (*N* = 14,739). See Table 1 for details on the variables. AT = Austria; DE = Germany; SE = Sweden; NL = The Netherlands; SP = Spain; IT = Italy; FR = France; DK = Denmark; GR = Greece; CH = Switzerland; BE = Belgium; IL = Israel; CZ = Czech Republic; PL = Poland; IE = Ireland.
[a]International Standard Classification of Education Level 4 or higher. [b]1 km ≈ 0.621 miles.

at the interview or (b) at the age of 49 and estimated survivor functions of leaving home separately for each of the three cohorts within each country. From these functions, I computed quintiles of survival times that were matched to my sample with the corresponding country- and cohort-specific values assigned to each child. These quintiles represented my key predictors of later parent – child relations, indicating for each child whether he or she had left home very early (within the first quintile of cohort- and country-specific survival times), early (second quintile), on average (third quintile), late (fourth quintile), or very late (fifth quintile).

In Table 3 I present the quintiles for a number of selected countries, covering different geographical regions. These countries illustrate not only cross-country variation in the timing of leaving home but also different patterns of change across cohorts, including continuity (e.g., Denmark), moderate increase (France, Israel, Czech Republic), and more complex patterns, such as in Spain, where an increase in the first and second quintiles was accompanied by a marked decrease in the upper quintile.

Models

In the multivariate analysis, I adopted a fixed-effects approach, using linear and conditional logit models to obtain within-family estimates of the effect of age at leaving home on parent – child relations in later life. As noted in the BACKGROUND section, a predominantly adverse or supportive family environment in previous life has an impact on the timing of leaving home and is also likely to be reflected in the quality of later parent – child relations. One analytical approach would be to simply treat the age at leaving home as a correlate, broadly indicating how previous family climate was carried over into later life. My theoretical considerations, however, suggested a number of pathways by which the duration of coresidence itself may affect later parent – child relations. To estimate such effects, it was important to address the problem of selectivity. Concerning previous family conflict, I had already excluded individuals who had been exposed to parents' marital disruption and/or stepfamilies during childhood and adolescence. Even after these restrictions, however, it remained likely that families still differed considerably with regard to adverse or intimate and supportive relations

Table 3. *Quintiles of Age at Leaving Home in Selected Countries (*N = 54,571 Parent – Child Dyads)

Country and Cohort	Quintiles of Survival Time			
	20%	40%	60%	80%
Denmark				
Birth cohorts 1950 – 59	18	19	20	22
1960 – 69	18	19	20	22
1970 – 79	18	19	20	22
France				
Birth cohorts 1950 – 59	19	21	22	25
1960 – 69	19	21	23	26
1970 – 79	20	22	24	26
Greece				
Birth cohorts 1950 – 59	19	22	25	30
1960 – 69	20	23	27	33
1970 – 79	23	27	30	36
Spain				
Birth cohorts 1950 – 59	22	25	29	39
1960 – 69	23	26	29	35
1970 – 79	24	27	29	33
Israel				
Birth cohorts 1950 – 59	20	22	24	28
1960 – 69	20	22	24	29
1970 – 79	21	23	26	30
Czech Republic				
Birth cohorts 1950 – 59	20	22	25	29
1960 – 69	20	22	24	29
1970 – 79	21	23	25	30

Note: Data are from SHARE Waves 1 and 2, Release 2.5.0, unweighted.

Survivor functions were calculated separately for each birth cohort within each country using an unrestricted sample. Process time started at age 15 and was censored at the interview or at age 49.

during children's passages to adulthood. In this respect, the main idea pertaining to the use of fixed-effects models was that family climate in previous life represented a factor that all family members shared. In fixed-effects models, all characteristics (both observed and unobserved) that are constant within a family drop out of the estimation equation and therefore do not affect the estimates. As a result, adverse family relations as well as a shared family culture of mutual support are rendered inconsequential. A further benefit of fixed-effects models is that they do not treat parent – child relations as isolated dyads but allow considering the experiences of other children. As Suitor and Pillemer (2000) argued, a ''child's normative transitions,

relative to those of other children in the family, will also affect the quality of parent – adult child relations'' (p. 108). Family fixed-effects models correspond well to this idea, focusing on differences between siblings. Because this analytical strategy explains variation within families, fixed-effects models require at least two children per respondent (for a detailed account, see Henretta, Hill, Li, Soldo, & Wolf, 1997).

RESULTS

Descriptive Results

In Table 4 I present descriptive statistics regarding the outcomes and controls separately for each quintile of age at leaving home. Geographical distance to parents decreased markedly across the quintiles, from an average of 74 km for the earliest leavers to 42 km among the latest leavers. A similar pattern was observed for the frequency of contact with parents. Those who left earliest had an average of 172 days per year of parental contact—approximately 21 fewer days than the latest leavers. Compared with geographical distance, however, these differences were less pronounced, and no clear gradient was observed

across the second, third, and fourth quintiles. Late leavers and latest leavers provided more practical help to parents, but they were also more frequently on the receiving end of parental time transfers. In contrast, the highest proportion of financial transfer receipt was found among the earliest leavers. The distribution of the controls across the five quintiles indicates that sons were clearly overrepresented among the late and latest leavers, whereas daughters represented the majority of earliest and early departures from the parental home.

Multivariate Results

I used eight multivariate models, presented in Table 5, to estimate the five outcome variables. The three additional models (2b, 3b, and 4b) pertained to the fact that parent – child proximity may be endogenous to intergenerational contact as well as to the exchange of time transfers; that is, parents and adult children may move closer to each other in order to facilitate personal contact and/or the provision of location-specific support, such as household help or personal care (Silverstein & Angelelli, 1998). Therefore, I estimated each of the three corresponding outcomes

Table 4. *Means of Variables by Quintiles of Leaving Home (*N = 14,739)

| | Country- and Cohort-Specific Quintiles of Age at Leaving Home | | | | | |
| | 1st | 2nd | 3rd | 4th | 5th | |
Variables	(Earliest)	(Early)	(Average)	(Late)	(Latest)	Total
Outcomes (parent – child relations)						
Distance (km)[a]	74.05	57.78	52.11	49.25	42.40	58.35
Contact (days per year)	171.95	182.27	179.72	186.76	193.06	180.53
Parent received time transfer	.09	.09	.09	.12	.12	.10
Parent gave time transfer	.31	.32	.33	.36	.35	.33
Parent gave cash transfer	.16	.15	.14	.14	.13	.15
Controls (child characteristics)						
Age	39.15	39.60	40.57	40.91	41.72	40.10
Male	.36	.44	.54	.61	.68	.49
Married	.63	.71	.70	.70	.59	.67
Has young child	.24	.26	.25	.31	.30	.26
Has older child	.52	.52	.52	.45	.39	.50
Employed full time	.61	.66	.69	.71	.75	.67
High education[b]	.33	.33	.35	.38	.35	.34
Last born	.41	.44	.43	.43	.39	.42

Note: Data are from SHARE Waves 1 and 2, Release 2.5.0, unweighted. Dyads represent parents and two to four non-coresident biological children who left home at least 5 years ago and lived less than 500 km from parents (N = 14,739). See Table 1 for details on the variables.

[a] 1 km ≈ 0.621 miles. [b] International Standard Classification of Education Level 4 or higher.

(contact, upward time transfers, and downward time transfers) twice: once excluding (Models 2a, 3a, and 4a) and once including (Models 2b, 3b, and 4b) geographical distance as a control. Note that the case numbers varied considerably between the models, because in linear fixed-effects models (Models 1 and 2) all families enter the estimation, whereas a fixed-effects conditional likelihood approach (Models 3, 4, and 5) drops all families in which there is no variation in the dependent variable from the equation (Chamberlain, 1980). For example, in 5,083 families (83.1%), no child gave practical help to parents, and in 251 families (4.1%), all children were providers. The corresponding models (3a and 3b) were estimated for the remaining 784 families (12.8%) in which there was within-family variation in children's provision of practical help.

Model 1 corroborates the descriptive findings on the gradient of geographical distance across the quintiles of leaving home. Earliest leavers (first quintile) lived farther from their aging parents than their siblings who left at average ages (third quintile). Conversely, those who were among the latest leavers (fifth quintile) resided closest to their parents in later life even when controlling for a variety of child characteristics. A largely similar pattern emerged with regard to the frequency of intergenerational contact (Model 2a). These effects did not change markedly after introducing geographical distance, controlling for structural opportunities of maintaining personal contact (Model 2b).

Model 3a shows that the latest leavers were more likely to provide practical help to their parents in later life than their siblings who left home at an average age. Although this effect was somewhat reduced after geographical distance was introduced into the equation (Model 3b), it remained statistically significant. Model 4a indicates that the late leavers as well as the latest leavers also received more parental support than their siblings. In analyses not shown here, I found that these differences concerned the provision of grandchild care rather than practical help given to an adult child. Again, the general pattern across the quintiles remained intact after controlling for structural opportunities to offer location-specific support (Model 4b). Finally, Model 5, concerning the receipt of financial transfers from parents, did not point to any differences between siblings with respect to their age at leaving home.

Overall, the results of the controls were largely consistent with those reported in previous studies. Full-time employment competed with intergenerational contact and reduced the need for financial support from parents, well-educated children were geographically more mobile and less likely to be supported financially than siblings who had lower levels of education, the presence of own children was strongly associated with receiving time transfers from parents (i.e., looking after grandchildren), and sons maintained lower levels of contact and received less practical as well as financial support from their parents than did daughters (Hank, 2007; Hank & Buber, 2009; Lennartsson, 2010).

DISCUSSION

This study was designed to investigate how previous coresidence affected parent – child relations in later life. Classical life course theory postulates that extended coresidence entails long-term detrimental effects on intergenerational relations resulting from children's prolonged dependency and violation of age norms on leaving home. Other life course considerations offer a more positive view, proposing that extended coresidence may obligate late home leavers to repay or promote feelings of responsibility in both generations, strengthening intergenerational solidarity in later life.

I tested these hypotheses using family fixed-effects models to estimate the effects of age at leaving home on intergenerational proximity, contact, and support exchange in aging families. The empirical findings suggest that time spent in the parental home during young adulthood increased later levels of solidarity, controlling for shared family factors and a variety of child characteristics. The latest leavers were those who lived closest to their aging parents, maintained the most frequent contact, and offered more practical help than their siblings who left home "on time." The latter finding was consistent with the model of long-term reciprocity, suggesting that previous benefits received within a "feathered nest" constituted support debts that adult children repaid in later life (Silverstein et al., 2002). It is important to note that this effect could not be attributed to structural opportunities, although age at leaving home revealed a strong positive effect on later parent – child proximity. Late leavers were also more likely to be on the receiving end of

Table 5. *Fixed-Effects Regression Models (*N = *14,739)*

	Distance (km)[a]	Contact (Days per Year)		Parent Received Time Transfer		Parent Gave Time Transfer		Parent Gave Cash Transfer
		Parent – Child Relations in Later Life						
Predictors	Model 1	Model 2a	Model 2b	Model 3a	Model 3b	Model 4a	Model 4b	Model 5
Age at leaving home (reference: 3rd quintile)								
1st quintile	12.67***	−18.65***	−14.59***	−0.11	−0.10	−0.18	−0.10	−0.22
	(2.78)	(3.35)	(3.23)	(0.15)	(0.16)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.18)
2nd quintile	4.39	−6.60*	−5.20	0.12	0.07	−0.08	−0.06	0.05
	(2.78)	(3.35)	(3.23)	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.18)
4th quintile	−2.61	5.54	4.70	0.32*	0.30	0.40***	0.41***	−0.09
	(2.92)	(3.51)	(3.39)	(0.15)	(0.16)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.18)
5th quintile	−15.85***	25.40***	20.32***	0.55**	0.48*	0.49**	0.43*	−0.22
	(3.97)	(4.78)	(4.61)	(0.21)	(0.22)	(0.16)	(0.17)	(0.25)
Controls (child characteristics)								
Male	2.96	−39.60***	−38.65***	−0.03	−0.05	−0.58***	−0.57***	−0.31**
	(1.90)	(2.28)	(2.20)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.11)
Age	1.19**	−2.58***	−2.20***	0.01	0.01	−0.13***	−0.12***	0.00
	(0.42)	(0.50)	(0.48)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)
Married	−3.61	−4.46	−5.61*	0.20	0.19	0.03	0.02	−0.89***
	(2.39)	(2.87)	(2.77)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.13)
Employed full time	4.04	−16.76***	−15.47***	−0.01	−0.01	0.04	0.07	−0.30*
	(2.15)	(2.58)	(2.49)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.13)
High education[a]	19.03***	−9.83***	−3.74	−0.07	0.06	−0.18	−0.04	−0.40**
	(2.48)	(2.98)	(2.88)	(0.14)	(0.14)	(0.10)	(0.11)	(0.15)
Has young child	−11.90***	18.48***	14.67***	−0.17	−0.21	4.12***	4.21***	0.37*
	(2.88)	(3.47)	(3.34)	(0.16)	(0.17)	(0.17)	(0.18)	(0.16)
Has older child	−17.25***	9.45**	3.93	0.04	−0.01	3.40***	3.38***	0.48**
	(2.93)	(3.53)	(3.41)	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.18)
Last born	1.21	−0.36	0.03	0.03	0.00	−0.07	−0.09	0.22
	(2.36)	(2.83)	(2.73)	(0.12)	(0.13)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.15)
Distance (km)			−0.32***		−0.01***		−0.01***	−0.00
			(0.01)		(0.00)		(0.00)	(0.00)
Constant	10.76	315.16***	318.60***					
	(17.54)	(21.10)	(20.34)					
R^2 (within)	.02	.07	.13					
χ^2				18.96	120.89	1,867.71	2,013.88	94.10
df				12	13	12	13	13
No. dyads	14,739	14,739	14,739	1,977	1,977	6,011	6,011	1,630
No. families	6,118	6,118	6,118	784	784	2,394	2,394	640

Note: Numbers in parentheses are standard errors. Data are from SHARE Waves 1 and 2, Release 2.5.0. Linear regression coefficients (Models 1, 2a, and 2b) and logit coefficients (Models 3a, 3b, 4a, 4b, and 5) are shown. Dyads represent parents and two to four non-coresident biological children who left home at least 5 years ago and lived less than 500 km from parents (*N* = 14,739). See Table 1 for details on the variables.

[a]International Standard Classification of Education Level 4 or higher.

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

intergenerational support. These patterns may support the claim that extended coresidence promoted mutual feelings of responsibility, which translated into higher levels of support exchange in later life, but the effect of downward intergenerational assistance may have also been a matter of multigenerational bonds (Bengtson, 2001). Because this effect pertained only to

grandchild care, an obvious interpretation is that extended coresidence increased the chances that grandchildren were born into multigenerational households, quite possibly intensifying their relations to grandparents in later life.

Overall, these findings supported a positive view of extended coresidence, revealing its potential to strengthen intergenerational solidarity in aging families. It is important to note, however, that the outcome measures available in the SHARE data were restricted to the standard typology of solidarity (Bengtson & Roberts, 1991), covering its associational (frequency of contact), functional (exchange of support), and structural (geographical distance) dimension. As a result, I could test only for the presence or absence of these types of solidarity. Considering the contrasting views regarding the effects of extended coresidence, it would have been conceptually desirable to use a more inclusive set of outcome measures, allowing the study of solidarity, conflict, and their coexistence in the form of intergenerational ambivalence (Lüscher & Pillemer, 1998). An interesting note in this regard is that previous research has linked ambivalence to both high levels of contact (van Gaalen & Dykstra, 2006) and support exchange (Leopold & Raab, 2011).

A second limitation concerns the key predictor variable: Age at leaving home represented a rather crude indicator for parent–child relationships in previous life that did not offer any direct information of how coresidence was actually experienced by parents and children. Extant research, however, has stressed that coresidence is mutually satisfying if it represents a voluntary arrangement, whereas the reverse may be true if it is forced on families, for example, by an economic crisis. In light of that, my results do not necessarily imply good prospects for aging societies that have experienced a recent rise in coresidence, such as the United States (Fleck, 2009). I was also unable to consider the diverse pathways out of the parental home (e.g., leaving home to take a job, to move in with a partner, to escape from family conflict, etc.) that may also affect parent–child relations in the long term. In addition, the data did not allow me to determine with absolute certainty that parents' retrospective reports on their children's age at leaving home were equal to the actual duration of coresidence. This problem concerns, for example, the issue of returning home (Mitchell, 2006). With regard to my data,

however, I note that returning home is a comparatively uncommon phenomenon in Europe (Corijn & Klijzing, 2001).

Third, my claim that I controlled for family-level factors rested on the assumption that these characteristics did not vary among siblings. Although this appeared adequate with regard to a general family climate, it ignored the obvious within-family variation in levels of affection. The literature on parental favoritism, for example, has shown that favoring a child is a ubiquitous phenomenon both in earlier and later family life (Suitor, Sechrist, Plikuhn, Pardo, & Pillemer, 2008). Although the SHARE data enabled me to control for some correlates of parental favoritism, such as being a daughter, being the last-born child in a family, and residing close to parents, I lacked direct information on the quality of parent–child relationships. This may therefore represent an omitted variable if late leavers were selected on positive relationships. This contention, however, was not supported in a recent study (Ward & Spitze, 2007). Furthermore, research from developmental psychology suggests that, in fact, on-time leavers were those who were most securely attached to parents and benefited from supportive relations that helped navigate their passage to adulthood (Seiffge-Krenke, 2006).

Fourth, an examination of gender differences in greater detail was beyond the scope of the present study. The experience of coresidence, however, is likely to vary with the gender of children and parents as well as the gender constellation of siblings. In this respect, Ward and Spitze (1992) noted that coresidence may be more consequential for daughters and mothers because women tend to invest more in family relationships, thus receiving more benefits but also experiencing greater costs. Family norms pertaining to extended coresidence may also be gender specific. Parents may, for example, attach greater importance to sons' transitions to adulthood, possibly increasing intergenerational tension if a son fails to achieve his developmental tasks on time.

There are good reasons to assume that the time spent with parents during the passage to adulthood affects intergenerational relations and that this impact may resurface even decades later. On the basis of this idea, I proposed a number of pathways by which the age at leaving home may set the stage for later patterns of proximity, contact, and support exchange.

This study is the first to examine such long-term effects of coresidence, investigating from a life course perspective how experiences related to previous family transitions were carried over into later life. I consider it worthwhile to look more closely at these linkages in future research. An obvious improvement on the present study would be to include more direct information about the social situation surrounding the home-leaving transition. For example, which of the various pathways out of the parental home did children choose? How was extended coresidence perceived by parents and children and did it represent a voluntary arrangement? Also, more generally, how were age norms on leaving home played out in the family context? Addressing these questions would contribute to understanding the long-term effects of coresidence on parent-child relationships.

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