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# Introduction

The event of moving out involves major life changes, as it alters the living situation and family relation of both, the young adult breaking away from the parental home and their parents. For the young adult, this event is associated with newly gained independence and responsibility. For the parents, the departing of their adult child goes hand in hand with regained freedom, but also marks the end of a period characterized by increased leverage on the child’s life choices.

In light of the young adults’ strive for independence, it becomes evident that staying with the parents might above all be a decision of necessity. Research on the effects of the 2007 to 2009 Great Recession has revealed a delay in young adults’ household formation and a higher share of boomerang kids, i.e. children who returned to their parents’ homes. As this recent example shows, intergenerational cohabitation in its function as security net is especially valuable in times of economic crises (South and Lei, 2015). Yet, while economic insecurities are a neat ad-hoc explanation, they are only part of the story. From an economical perspective, the fundamental concept of supply and demand can be applied: the parents’ willingness to oﬀer accommodation to an adult child cannot be taken for granted. But how can these factors be integrated into a theoretical framework?

There are several arguments for looking into this topic. First, home-leaving is closely associated with the timing of family formation. Research on European household compositions found intergenerational cohabitation to be not only a major factor regarding the timing of child-bearing but also fertility rates (Dalla Zuanna, 2001).

Additionally, household compositions are closely related to a country’s welfare state and its policy mechanisms. Kaplan (2012) remarks that “many public programs are designed to insure against the same types of idiosyncratic labor market shocks that living arrangements respond to” (p.496). Cohabitation of young adults and their parents therefore can be seen as an information source indicating which economic insecurities are not suﬃciently met by existing welfare policies.

Long before the Great Recession, Aquilino (1990) suggested the importance of economic factors. Ever since, researchers placed a strong emphasis on young adults’ economic needs. In congruence with this and other inﬂuential early work, the lion’s share of studies (with a few exceptions, e.g. Ward et al., 1992) examined the phenomenon of intergenerational cohabitation as a whole across all phases of life. A wide variety of living situations was studied simultaneously, and no distinction was made between young adults who just came of age living with their middle-aged parents and pensioners sharing a household with their old and frail parents. To be able to make precise claims on processes underlying intergenerational cohabitation, it is crucial to gather information on the phenomenon occurring in the more independent stages of life: in between adolescence and aging.

Furthermore, the topic’s perceived intuitiveness limited the scientiﬁc need for theoretical principles. However, as straight forward as the topic may seem, the moderate explanatory power of numerous papers bears witness to its covert complexity (Kaplan, 2012). Szydlik is one the few researchers who contributed to the development of a theoretical basis, considering intergenerational cohabitation a form of functional family solidarity (Isengard & Szydlik, 2012).

As a ﬁnal point, the inﬂuence of macro-factors makes it quite obvious that intergenerational cohabitation is a phenomenon most appropriately studied from a cross-national perspective. Hence, it is surprising that there are only a handful of studies comparing cross-generational living across diﬀerent countries (see e.g. Choi, 2003; Haurin et al., 1993).

The present article aims at addressing this research gap. In detail, the paper analyzes under which conditions young adults in their twenties and thirties co-reside with their parents. As a theoretical basis, Szydlik’s model of intergenerational solidarity is adapted to the proposed age range and extended to include the parents’ social motivation. Accounting for the impact of national factors on intergenerational cohabitation, residents of several European countries are considered, using data from the Survey of Health, Aging and Retirement in Europe (SHARE, <http://www.share-project.org/>).

# Theoretical Framework

## *Life Course Approach*

The life course approach provides a conceptual framework regarding the timing, sequencing and occurrence of transitions from early childhood to old age (e.g. Neugarten and Hagestad, 1976). Therefore, it allows for the integration of intergenerational cohabitation into the life course. The concept of role trajectories and transitions are pivotal to the understanding of life course dynamics (Elder, 1985). While role trajectories refer to the period during which an individual embodies a certain role, e.g. a parent to a child, role transitions mark the beginning or end of such periods of time, for example the birth of a child.

In the following, three key facets of the approach will be discussed.

### *Common Pathways*

The young adult’s decision to live independently is often closely related to other life events, such as moving in with a partner or starting higher education (Billari and de Valk, 2007). Bengston and Silverstein (1997) revealed common pathways of solidarity between parents and their children. Over time, as young adults take on emerging family and work roles, concerns shift further and further away from their parents toward family formation and career. Later on, parental frailty and care dependency force children in supportive intergenerational roles. This prevalent succession of role transitions from adolescence to old age is commonly referred to as a family life cycle (Stapleton, 1980). Throughout diﬀerent Western cultures, there exist children’s rhymes about the succession of life events, referred to as sequencing norms (Liefbroer and Billari, 2010). One popular example is the English playground song “Frank and Nikki sitting in a tree, K-I-S-S-I-N-G. First comes love, then comes marriage, then comes the baby in the baby carriage.”

### *The Influence of Available Resources*

Instead of mere role succession, the interconnection of social roles over time creates common “routes” leading through diﬀerent life phases. Sewell (1992) argues that social structures are sets of rules constituted by resources enabling and restraining social action while at the same time relying on reproduction through said social action. Transferring this logic to the life course framework, Macmillan and Copher (2005) conclude that “only role configurations and pathway schema that are buttressed by resources will be validated and reproduced and will have cultural resonance and prominence within a given society” (p.860). Due to this mechanism, relatively universal pathway schemata emerge. It should be noted, though, that this insight does not generally translate into life course homogeneity (see e.g. George, 1993), as cultural templates influence the use of available resources.

### *Norms*

According to Neugarten and Hagestad (1976), young adults presume that specific role transitions take place during particular life phases, thereby creating a “mental map” (p.35) of the life cycle. Thus, norms regarding the appropriate timing of role transitions make it possible for an individual to evaluate their advancements by comparing themselves to peers of similar age. Accordingly, upper age limits, sometimes referred to as age deadlines (Settersten and Hagestad, 1996), are of great importance when it comes to the transition out of the parental home (Billari and de Valk, 2007).

Previous research has shown that not only roughly 80% of young adults perceive such an upper age deadline, but that there seems to be a strong consensus about the timing as well (Settersten, 1998). However, the latter is only true for individuals from similar cultural backgrounds (see e.g. Billari and de Valk, 2007; Goldscheider and DaVanzo, 1989). Yet, while the socially appropriate age to leave the parental home varies across young adults with diﬀerent cultural identities, pathways show similarities.

## *Szydlik’s Theoretical Model of Intergenerational Solidarity*

Based on considerations of the aforementioned approach, Szydlik (2008) developed the theoretical model of intergenerational solidarity. Intergenerational solidarity can be defined as a sense of connectedness one shares with family members of other generations; it becomes apparent through the provision of time, care and ﬁnancial resources (Szydlik, 2000).

The three-level-model applies to various types of family solidarity, including support, contact frequency as well as cohabitation. The latter is deemed an important aspect of solidarity, as oﬀering accommodation to a relative in need displays a sense of togetherness and social cohesion.

Szydlik and Isengard’s 2012 paper, in which they applied the model to intergenerational cohabitation for the first time, provides a comprehensive overview of relevant impact factors applying to various kinds of cohabitation. For the purpose of these analyses, the model will be narrowed down to parameters relevant for young adults and their middle-aged parents.

### *Micro-level: Opportunities and Needs*

While opportunities reﬂect resources available for potential support within the family, needs in turn refer to the individual family member’s demand for solidarity. According to Dunn and Philipps (1998), co-residence mainly takes place at the parental home. Therefore, parents are assumed to be the main suppliers of accommodation. As the Feathered Nest Hypothesis (Avery et al., 1992) states, nontransferable parental resources, such as home ownership and available living space, add to the perceived attractiveness of the parental home, thereby increasing the likelihood of young adults living there.

Considering the life phase which is the focus of this study, the younger generation is either in educational training, seeking work, started working or is taking care of their young family.

Not surprisingly, empirical studies indicate that cohabitation rates are particularly high during a young adult’s education phase (see e.g. Mitchell, 2004). As young adults with a low educational level on average have a rather short educational period, they start working at a younger age and leave home earlier than their better-educated peers (Sandberg-Thoma et al., 2015).

As economic independence is the key driver of young adults’ residential autonomy (Furstenberg et al., 2008), young adults, who are unemployed or in precarious employment, often opt for staying with their parents (Assave et al., 2002).

Although cohabitation obviously has numerous merits, young adults are assumed to highly value residential independence. According to Whittington and Peters (1996), this preference can be understood as a “negative” need in contrast to previously mentioned “positive” needs concerning shared residency. Examining the desire for residential independence, Dunn and Phillips (1998) hypothesized that a higher income elicits a higher demand for privacy by raising the young adult’s aspirational level. The same logic applies to a young adult’s level of education.

The level of educational attainment is also relevant when considering the parents. As Mitchell et al. (2000) note, “more highly educated parents may expect and desire adult children’s independence, [and] have strong orientations for their own self-development in mid-life” (p.202). In contrast, the impact of parental ﬁnancial standing is far more ambiguous. While some studies ﬁnd that high income and wealth contribute to young adults’ early residential independence (see e.g. South and Lei, 2015), others ﬁnd the opposite is true (see e.g. Goldscheider and DaVanzo, 1989; Le Blanc and Wolﬀ, 2006) and yet others that there is no signiﬁcant inﬂuence at all (Isengard and Szydlik, 2012). Nevertheless, scholars agree that parental earnings are only of subordinate interest compared to their children’s ﬁnancial situation.

### *Meso-level: Family Structure*

Family structure refers to interpersonal relationships which affect the residential arrangements.

A young adult, who has already started family formation, is assumed to have an increased need for privacy and thus a strong desire for residential independence (Silverstein and Bengston, 1997). To a moderate extent, this also applies to young adults in a relationship.

Contrarily, when dealing with loneliness and social exclusion, parents are likely to seek closer contact to their adult children (Carstensen et al., 1999). Moreover, the death of a partner can lead to an increased need for emotional support and social interactions. It is therefore reasonable to assume that widowed parents are more likely to live with their children (Lee and Dwyer, 1996). However, once widowed or separated parents engage in new partnerships, their need for privacy increases again. In addition, the absolute number of household members plays an important role for the likelihood of intergenerational cohabitation. If siblings or other family members of young adults live with his or her parents, they occupy potential housing space (Szydlik and Isengard, 2012).

### *Macro-level: Cultural-contextual factors*

Cultural-contextual factors include, inter alia, cultural conditions, welfare state arrangements, and numerous conditions of the economy and the labor market. Kaplan (2012) even suggests that cross-national diﬀerences concerning intergenerational living can be largely traced back to national unemployment rates. According to him, the unemployment rate determines young adults’ and parental financial resources alike, making shared living more or less attractive for both parties. Futhermore, the welfare state’s position towards family support also has a major inﬂuence on cohabitation needs. Szydlik and Isengard (2012) explain that “a retrenchment of the welfare state is placing increasing demands on relatives. Elderly parents and adult children thus find themselves having to take responsibility more frequently for one another” (p. 469).

## *The Development of a Revised Model*

Szydlik’s (2008) model allows for the integration of a great variety of inﬂuence factors and is ﬂexible enough that it can be successfully applied to various forms of family solidarity. Yet, it can be argued for two modiﬁcations, viz. the reduction of dimensions and an amendment regarding the inﬂuence of other forms of family solidarity.

First, it can be reduced to the two core dimensions of need and opportunity. Both family structure and cultural-contextual structures exert their eﬀect either via the need or the opportunity channel and can thus be considered subordinate factors. Regarding family structure, a single parent’s desire for companionship can be understood as a positive need for cohabitation. And on the macro-level, welfare state policies replacing family services aﬀect residency decisions by decreasing the young adults’ need for shared living.

Second, Szydlik’s model to a large extent neglects the inﬂuence of other forms of solidarity on intergenerational cohabitation – which can be categorized as a special form of solidarity: functional family solidarity (Bengston and Roberts, 1991). The (social) motivation for such behavior lies in normative family solidarity, which entails societal expectations regarding the provision of solidarity when needed (see e.g. Goerres and Tepe, 2010).

Functional and normative family solidarity are theoretically and empirically closely linked (see e.g. Silverstein et al., 2006). Parents who hold close ties to their adult children and support them in every-day life are assumed to have a stronger perception of normative solidarity towards their children. Complementarily, early scholars, such as Bourdieu (1983) and Coleman (1988), were of the opinion that by fostering social relationships, feelings of reciprocity and even obligation are generated. Following these theorizations, it becomes apparent that the different types of solidarity are interconnected and that focusing on one type does not convey the whole picture.

## *Explanatory Model and Hypotheses*

The proposed model consists of three dimensions: need, opportunity and social motivation. In addition, characteristics are attributed to the individual, household, and state level. **Table X** on **page X** gives an overview of the relevant factors and their eﬀects on the three dimensions.

As young adults are assumed to be the main demanders, features of solidarity on part of the parents are of vital importance. The motivation to support a family member can be provoked by their immediate need. Regarding the opportunity dimension, parents are the inﬂuential party. Since this paper focuses on the impact of family solidarity on intergenerational cohabitation, this dimension is limited to the most important factors.

Based on the review of Szydlik’s work, the existence of several mechanisms will be assumed.

Starting with young adults, those who are still in education or seeking work are assumed to be very likely to need support. On the contrary, young adults who are employed, have started a family or are highly educated probably attribute a higher value to their privacy and thus prefer residential independence. Complementarily, parents are thought to be less likely to oﬀer co-residence to a ﬁnancially stable child. The young adults’ separation process continues over the years, making co-residence less and less likely.

Moving on to the parents’ sociodemographic characteristics, a high educational level is thought to correspond with a stronger need for residential separation. Naturally, parents are more likely to be dependent on their children with increasing age. As the parents in this sample are fairly young, poor health is assumed to play a minor role regarding their need for cohabitation. Lastly, migrational background is thought to be linked to a higher likelihood of intergenerational co-residence, due to potential economic constraints as well as strengthened family cohesion (Szydlik and Isengard, 2012).

Concerning parental resources, nontransferable resources are presumed to increase the attractiveness of living in the parental home for young adults. In contrast, transferable resources, mainly income and assets, facilitate monetary support, consequently decreasing the need for other types of support.

Cohabitation of young adults and their parents usually takes place at the parents’ home. Hence, characteristics of this household are considered. First, parents who have no partner are believed to especially value their children’s company. Other cohabitating family members obviously restrict living space but can also be regarded as indication of the parents’ readiness to take in relatives. **Einführung Hypothesen?** However, this does not apply to under-aged children: their presence limits living space, while not being an indicator for parental familialistic values as cohabitation at this point is natural. Thus, the presence of under-aged siblings in the parental home should reduce the likelihood of cohabitation between young adults and their parents (Hypothesis 1a).

Moving on to co-residing adult siblings, South and Lei (2015) state:

“The presence of adult siblings [...] likely signals a higher level of familialism and parents’ willingness to co-reside with an adult child, as well as increased competition for parental resources” (p.867).

Therefore, a second hypothesis can be deduced: Young adults whose parents already cohabitate with another young adult, are more likely to live in the parental home than their peers whose adult siblings live independently (Hypothesis 1b).

Following a similar logic as with other cohabitating family members, parents who regularly spend their time supporting their offspring are presumed to hold strong familialistic values and practice intergenerational solidarity. Consequently, the next hypothesis proposes that parental support towards other adult siblings increases the likelihood of shared residency between young adult and parents (Hypothesis 2).

To account for structural determinants, several macro-economic factors will be included into the model.

Generous welfare state policies are commonly linked to a decline in family solidarity and ﬁnancially stable parents are more likely to support their children monetarily rather than oﬀering cohabitation. Thus, high family expenditures and a good overall economic situation are expected to be negatively associated with the likelihood of intergenerational cohabitation (Hypothesis 3).

According to Kaplan’s extensive analyses (2012), the unemployment rate and the GDP are well suited to reflect the general economic situation.

# Research Design and Methods

*Data Set*

The analyses conducted in this paper are based on the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE), a comprehensive longitudinal survey of the European population in the second half of life. The data set covers topics such as socio-economic status, health, living arrangements, family situation, social networks and support. In SHARE, information is consistently provided by the parents, thus overcoming sample selection, which is a common problem of due to retracing and re-interviewing adult children who moved out (Billari and de Valk, 2007).

The ﬁrst survey wave took place in 2004. To date, ﬁve further survey waves (2007, 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015) have been conducted. With each wave, the number of participating countries kept growing. As of the sixth wave, the survey includes respondents from Denmark, Sweden, Belgium, Netherlands, France, Luxembourg, Austria, Switzerland, Germany, Spain, Italy, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Poland, Estonia, Slovenia and Israel. The survey’s target population is comprised of all non-institutionalized persons aged 50 and older, who have their primary residence in one of the countries listed above (Börsch-Supan et al., 2013).

Additionally, cohabitating spouses and current partners of all ages were interviewed. All respondents, who took part in a previous wave and did not migrate to another country, were re-interviewed. General exclusion criteria include incarceration, hospitalization, stays abroad during the survey period, no command of the respective country’s language(s) and an unknown place of residence. The respondents were surveyed using computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI). Information concerning the entire household, such as living conditions, is only provided by one selected household member on behalf of the couple. Consequently, household, family and ﬁnancial respondents are chosen to answer speciﬁc sections of the questionnaire.

## *Sampling*

Although the data structure of SHARE allows for panel analysis, for the purposes of this paper, cross-sectional analyses were employed. The reason for this is that between sequential waves only very small numbers of transitions are documented, viz. young adults moving out or returning to the parental home. This is not due to generally few young adults relocating in and out of parental homes, but because short term stays in between waves are not captured. **eventuell löschen, je nach Unterscheidung zwischen Boomerang und Nesthockern**

In this paper, information from the sixth wave of the survey collected in 2015 is used. Initially the sample consisted of 43.464 households. The sample includes respondents from all countries surveyed except Israel which was excluded because of its unique cultural and societal features.

To begin with, only parental households with living children are selected (n= 38.302). Households with more than eight children (n=74) were removed from the data set as they were extremely uncommon. Again, for the reason of their very low prevalence, same-sex parents were excluded from the data set (n= 94). Moreover, parents who spent at least 100 nights of the year prior to the interview in care facilities, such as hospitals, institutions for medical rehabilitation or nursing homes, were not considered (n=82). As the survey only includes respondents who were not institutionalized at the time of their interview, this selection is also necessary to prevent possible selection bias.

Following this, the data set was reorganized resulting in each respondent’s child counting as one observation. Then, the sample consisted of 89.848 children, ranging in age from newborns to seniors. According to Erikson’s stages of psychosocial development, early adulthood ranges from 20 to 39 years (Crain, 2010). Hence, only young adults in this age range were considered for the following analyses (n=40.957).

Separated parents had no opportunity to indicate that their adult child was instead living with the other parent. Consequently, young adults co-residing with un-surveyed parents cannot be distinguished from peers living on their own, which poses a high potential for bias. Only young adults whose natural parents stayed together were retained (n=12.660). Young adults who lack information with regard to their place of residency were omitted (n=37).

Lastly, based on information provided by the parents, permanently sick or disabled young adults were excluded from the data set, since their life courses are likely to deviate from those of their healthy peers (n=134). The ﬁnal data set contains 12,509 young adults.

## *Operationalization*

*Dependent Variable*

Intergenerational cohabitation.

Whether a young adult co-resides with his parent(s) is inferred from the following question: “Where does [child name] live?” With their answer, parents can indicate that a child is living in the same household, same building, or the distance to their home in km.

According to previous research, the two forms of intergenerational cohabitation – living in the same household vs. the same building – are hard to distinguish conceptually (Isengard and Szydlik, 2012) and the same factors apply, exerting similar effects (see e.g. Courtin and Avendano, 2016). Therefore, no distinction is made, resulting in a dichotomous variable of intergenerational cohabitation.

### *Independent Variables*

#### Young adults.

Concerning young adults’ ability to provide for themselves, four types of employment are distinguished: full–time, part–time, self–employment and still part of the educational system. Apart from that, unemployed young adults and homemakers are also identiﬁed.

To determine their level of education, re-encoding of national achievements to the ISCED–standardization from 1997 is employed and simpliﬁed, resulting in ﬁve categories ranging from pre-primary and primary education to tertiary education.

Four categories are generated to characterize the young adults’ stage of family formation. Preceding family formation, young adults who are not married or have children are identiﬁed. A second category comprises those unmarried young adults who are parents. The last two categories consist of married young adults, dividing them by parenthood. As a ﬁnal point, the young adults’ age is considered.