

Master thesis at the Institute of Sociology, Department of Political and Social Sciences

There is no place like the parents’ home

-

A comparative multi-level analysis of cohabitation of young adults and their parents across Europe

Julia Charlotte Büschges

Student number: 4842727

Mail: [j.bueschges@fu-berlin.de](mailto:bueschges@fu-berlin.de)

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Gerhards

Second Supervisor: Dr. Ignacz

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Abstract

Over the past decade, an increasing number of “boomerang kids” returned to their parents’ home after periods of independent living (Kaplan, 2012). In addition, the share of so called “stay-at-homes”, adult children who have never left home, is on the rise (Ogg and Renaut, 2006). Using data provided by the Munich Centre for the Economics of Ageing, the present article aims at investigating the reasons for young adults to stay with their parents during a life phase that is commonly characterized by independence. Exploring which factors might compel young adults to co-reside with their parents promises to shed light on relevant need patterns which are not met by social policies. The lion’s share of studies regarding intergenerational cohabitation either focuses on the age of home-leaving of young adults, cohabitation resulting from care dependencies of frail parens or examines the phenomenon as a whole across all phases of life. However, it is crucial to gather information on the phenomenon occurring in the more independent stages of life – this means somewhere in between the natural life phases of adolescence and aging. Moreover, most of the research done in this field does not include international comparison and thus cannot account for cultural, economic and welfare state specific variations. Szydlik’s model of intergenerational solidarity can be used to explain a variety of behavioural patterns associated with family solidarity while taking into account opportunity and need structures of parents as well as their children, family structures and cultural-contextual structures (Szydlik, 2008). Following a revision of Szydlik’s theory, the model was extended to include the effect of other forms of family soldarity. The results confirm that young adults’ needs mainly determine intergenerational cohabitation. Yet, the newly added feelings of intergenerational solidarity seem to play an important role as well.

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1 Introduction

“However painful the process of leaving home, for parents and for children, the really frightening thing for both would be the prospect of the child never leaving home”

Robert Neely Bellah

In this quote, American sociologist Bellah points out two important insights on the spatial separation of adolescents and their parents. First, the event of moving out involves ma jor 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. What is more, for the young adult, the beginning of this new life phase is not only associated with newly gained independence and responsibility, but consequently also with a great number of profound life choices: if and what to study, what to work, where to live and with whom to start a family, for instance. For the parents, the de- parting 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. Thus, the event of a young adult leaving the parental home entails certain ambival- ence for both parties and may even be a somewhat painful process, as Bellah puts it. The young adult’s emancipation of the parental home is cross-culturally deemed not only a naturally occuring life event, but also one parents are expected to guide their children towards. The consideration of ﬁlial independence as the ﬁnal goal of parental education contributes to understanding Bellah’s negative assessment of an adult child which has not left the parents’ home.

But why go so far as to call this prospect “frightening”? In the light of the young adults’s strive for independence, it becomes evident that staying with the parents might above all be a decision of necessity. To live autonomously, a young adult has to be able to sustain a household, which in turn requires ﬁnancial stability. There- fore, not leaving the parental home is very likely to be indicative of considerable economic insecurities on the adult child’s part. From this point of view, intergen- erational cohabitation seems to be a compromise solution rather than an active life choice.

Yet, while being a neat ad-hoc explanation, this is only a fraction of the whole story. Thinking of obstacles for intergenerational cohabitation, various features, such as the geographical distance between parents and child and available living space, play a role. Other family members in the parental home are also likely to inﬂuence the young adult’s recidency decision. Additionally, the parents’ willingness to oﬀer accommodation to an adult child cannot be taken for granted. Lastly, not only the younger generation can be in need of family support. With increasing age, the parents’ likelihood of being in need of personal care or support in everyday tasks.

As is often the case, the picture becomes much more complex with further insight. This raises the question: Why do young adults stay with their parents during a life phase that is commonly characterized by independence? And how can the relevant factors be integrated into a theoretical framework? These are the main research questions addressed in this paper.

Depending on the adopted perspective, e.g. development or socialization, the deﬁni- tion of young adulthood comprises quite diﬀerent age ranges (Levinson, 1986). How- ever, following Erikson’s stages of human development (Crain, 2010), most scholars consider individuals in their twenties and thirties as young adults. This deﬁnition includes three groups: individuals in their early to late twenties who have just begun taking on the responsibilities of adulthood, as well as young adults around the age of 30 who are thought to be in a process of restructuring their lives and individuals in their thirties who already began settling down. People aged 40 and older are generally perceived as being in the life phase of middle adulthood instead.

There are three main arguments for looking into this topic. First, researching the timing of life phases in general contributes to the understanding of demographic changes. Most prominently, the second demographic transition beginning in the

1960s was expressed by new patterns in household compositions, such as a rise in solitary living before family formation and a rise in unmarried cohabitation (McLa- nahan, 2004). It is thus not surprising that historically, research into the process of leaving home has its origins in life course sociology, which aims at integrating the

events of leaving and returning to the parents’ home into a broader picture. Secondly, as already mentioned, delays in leaving the parental home can to some degree be attributed to economic insecurities of the young adult, most noticeably unemployment. As a protwective measure, national welfare policies with varying coverage were established. Household compositions are closely related to basic fea- tures of a country’s welfare state and its policy mechanisms. Economist Kaplan remarks that “many public programs are designed to insure against the same types of idiosyncratic labour market shocks that living arrangements respond to” (Kaplan,

2012, p.496). Keeping with the example of unemployment, social security beneﬁts have the purpose to allow for a high level of employment by preventing unemploy- ment or at least shortening its duration. 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.

As a last point, home-leaving is closely associated with the timing of family forma- tion. Over the last decades, an increasing number of “boomerang kids” returned to their parents’ home after periods of independent living (Kaplan, 2012). In addition, the share of so called “stay-at-homes”, adult children who have never left home, is on the rise (Ogg and Renaut, 2006). It can be assumed that these developments will in turn be followed by a delay in family formation. What is more, research into household compositions in Northern and Southern Europe found intergenerational cohabitation to be not only a ma jor factor regarding the timing of child-bearing but also fertility rates (Dalla Zuanna, 2001). As this example illustrates, intergenera- tional cohabitation can have far-reaching implications. Understanding the mechan- isms underlying cross-generational living therefore promises valuable insights.

To reveal those mechanisms, over the past decades, researchers from the ﬁelds of sociology, social psychology as well as economics, among others, examined why and under which circumstances adult children and their parents cohabitate. Early on, research in the ﬁeld of gerontology gave rise to a focus on parents’ health status and care dependencies in old age (for a history on research regarding intergenera- tional cohabitation see Lee and Dwyer, 1996). Since Aquilino’s often cited paper in

1990, which conﬁrmed the importance of the economic situation of adult children (Aquilino, 1990), researchers placed a strong emphasis on the role of their economic needs. In congruence with this and other inﬂuential early work, subsequent scholars with only few exceptions (see e.g. Ward et al., 1992) examined the phenomenon as a whole across all phases of life. They include a wide variety of living situ- ations from young adults who just came full of age and their middle-aged parents sharing a household to pensioners living with their very frail parents of very old age. Such research designs often cannot acknowledge shifting dependencies which innately occur over the life course. In order to be able to make precise claims on pro- cesses underlying intergenerational cohabitation, it is crucial to gather information on the phenomenon occurring in the more independent stages of life. This means somewhere in between the natural life phases of adolescence and aging which are generally associated with cross-generational living. Therefore, a speciﬁcation with regard to the sample of adult children and their parents seems worthwhile. Even when limiting the age range, because of the two generations involved, high demands are place on the dataset. It needs to include a variety of general information on the adult child and their parents as well as the accommodation in question and special features relating to the speciﬁc research question, e.g. the parents’ health status. Furthermore, this ﬁeld of research would beneﬁt from more specialised theoretical models. There are two reasons why this is diﬃcult: the broad conceptualization of intergenerational cohabitation and the apparent intuitiveness of the phenomenon. Due to the wide age range of adult children and their parents included in most ana- lyses, a great number of determinants are considered, making it diﬃcult to integrate them into a synoptic theoretical model. When taking into account individuals of such diverse life phases, the life course approach is the only recognized concept bringing them all together. However, the approach is often criticised for lacking explanatory power and being mostly descriptive (Mayer, 2009).

As another aspect, the topic’s perceived intuitiveness limited the scientiﬁc need for theoretical principles. In fact, many important factors, such as determinants refer- ring to the child’s economic situation, come to mind quite easy. However, as straight forward as the topic may seem, the moderate explanatory power of numerous papers

bears witness to its covert complexity (Kaplan, 2012). Life course scholar Szydlik is one the few researchers who contributed to the development of a theoretical basis, considering intergenerational cohabitation a form of functional family solidarity (Is- engard and Szydlik, 2012).

As a ﬁnal point, the inﬂuence of macro-factors makes it quite obvious that in- tergenerational cohabitation is a phenomenon most appropriately studied from a cross-national perspective. Hence, it is surprising that there is are only a handfull studies comparing cross-generational living across diﬀerent countries (see e.g. Choi,

2003; Haurin et al., 1993). Instead, the lion’s share of studies focuses on a single country.

The presented article aims at adressing this research gap while specifying the stud- ied population. In detail, the paper analyses under which conditions young adults in their twenties and thirties co-reside with their parents. As a theoretical basis, Szydlik’s theoretical model of intergenerational solidarity is adapted to the sample and extended to include the parent’s social motivation. In order to account for the impact of national factors on intergenerational cohabitation, a comparison of residents of several European countries is attempted using data from the Survey of Health, Aging and Retirement in Europe (SHARE).

The structure of the paper is as follows: To start with, the life course approach as well as Szydlik’s model are presented. The latter is then critically appraised with the aim of developing an outline of a theoretical model adapted to the study’s fo- cus. Next, the revised model is presented and hypotheses building on the newly integrated features are formulated. In the following chapter, the used dataset is presented, the process of sample selection is reported, the operationalization of the variables described and, lastly, the statistical methods used to assess the explanat- ory power of the model are explained. Thereupon, the results of descriptive as well as inferential statistics used to test the hypotheses are presented and the explanat- ory power of the revised model is discussed. A discussion, which reiterates the most important results relating to the abovementioned research question, and suggestions for future research, round oﬀ the paper.

2 Theoretical framework

In this chapter, the overall research question why young adults and their parent cohabitate will be approached from a theoretical point of view. By this, the theoret- ical basis for the following empirical analyses is established. The chapter consists of four subchapters. To begin with, by using the life course approach, three important aspects are addressed. The approach aims at providing a conceptual framework regarding the timing, sequencing and occurrence of transitions ranging from early childhood to old age (e.g. Neugarten and Hagestad, 1976). In doing so, it allows for the integration of the phenomenon of intergenerational cohabitation into the life course. On this basis, the question whether intergenerational cohabitation is to be generally considered a "more or less involuntary living situation” (Isengard and Szydlik, 2012, p.450) can be examined. Scholars widely disagree on this topic which is reﬂected in the assumptions on which their models are based. A ma jority pre- supposes that young adults co-reside solely out of necessity with their parents, see e.g. (Le Blanc and Wolﬀ, 2006; Kaplan, 2012; Isengard and Szydlik, 2012). On the parents’ side, opinions strongly diverge. Some scholars expect that “parents prefer to live with their children and are willing to offer them an income transfer ("bribe") if children decide to live with them” (Manacorda and Moretti, 2006, p. 804), or encourage cohabitation in order to exert control over their child and feel needed (Burn and Szoeke, 2016). Yet, others assume that parents want to see their child move on with their own lives and even fear a loss of independence when getting older (de Jong Gierveld and Dykstra, 2002). These considerations are of vital importance in order to shed light on the complex mechanisms leading to a shift of preferences regarding cohabitation over the life course.

Finally, the life course approach is useful when discussing to what extent the cross- cultural commonality of pathways can be assumed. Most studies account for cultural diﬀerences regarding the aversion or preference for cohabitation (see e.g. Manacorda and Moretti, 2006), the underlying assumption being that the same dynamics ap- ply. However, a substantiation of this claim appears necessary. For all these reasons, before diving into the numerous factors promoting and supressing intergenerational

cohabitation, it seems worthwhile to explore the diversity of general preferences re- garding cohabitation across diﬀerent life phases and cultures.

The second subchapter presents relevant factors contributing to or inhibiting in- tergenerational cohabitation. This is done using the approach developed by so- ciologist and life course scholar Szydlik (Szydlik, 2008). His theoretical model of intergenerational solidarity integrates numerous features, both derived from the life course perspective as well as other approaches, and provides a general framework. Furthermore, determinants are not only diﬀerentiated by parent and child as well as need and opportunity, but also along the micro-, meso- and macro-level. As a result, it is possible to get a grasp of the interplay of causal connections across diﬀerent levels.

However, as I will argue later on, the model does not provide a complete picture since it largely excludes the reciprocal eﬀects of intergenerational solidarity. Oﬀering accommodation to a relative in need displays a sense of togetherness and social cohe- sion. Thus, intergenerational cohabitation can be considered a form of family solid- arity (Isengard and Szydlik, 2012). Exploring the implications of cross-generational living as an act of solidarity enables a ﬁne grained analysis of the circumstances under which individuals provide support to one another. From this point of view, an extension of Szydlik’s model seems necessary. In the third subchapter, I aim at formulating the ﬁrst outline of such a revised model which both takes into account the determinants indicated by Szydlik as well as the solidary nature of intergenera- tional cohabitation.

The last subchapter presents the explanatory model which was derived from the previous revision of Szydlik’s model and will be tested in the empirical analyses. This section also includes a set of hypotheses emphasizing the added features and the interplay of indicators presented.

2.1 Life course approach

In the following subchapter, an outline of the life course approach is presented. In the 1980s, the approach was developed to distinguish characteristics of life courses varying within and between cultural as well as historical backgrounds (Mayer, 2009,

p. 415). Most prominently, Kohli, among other scholars, revealed how modern life courses are geared towards employment as a consequence of economic developments (Kohli, 1985). For the purpose of this paper, three key facets of the approach will be discussed: fairly universal pathways which life courses follow, their occurrence as the consequence of available resources and, lastly, societal norms which lead to the culture-speciﬁc variation of life courses.

(a) Common pathways

According to sociologists Giele and Elder, who contributed signiﬁcantly to the development of the approach, the term life course refers to a “sequence of so- cially defined events and roles that the individual enacts over time” (Giele and Elder, 1998, p.22). Both, the concept of role tra jectories and transitions are pivotal to the understanding of life course dynamics (Elder, 1985). While role tra jectories refer to the period during which an individual embodies a certain role, e.g. a spouse in a marriage or parent to a child, role transitions mark the beginning or end of such periods of time, for example the birth of a child or a divorce.

Leaving the parental home is referred to as one of the ma jor transitions de- ﬁning adulthood, alongside leaving educational systems, starting a career and gaining ﬁnancial independence (Furstenberg et al., 2004). In general, a young adult’s spatial separation from the parental home is an essential part of the natural desire for autonomy which emerges during adolescence. Developmental psychologist Ma jorano states:

“Adolescents are involved in the redefinition of their relationships with parents and peers, moving away from their dependence on the family” (Ma jorano et al., 2015, p.346).

Moreover, the 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, p. 185). In their life course analysis, Bengston and Silverstein revealed a relatively common pathway of aﬀective solidarity between parents and their children (Silverstein and Bengtson, 1997). Early

on, young adults are strongly dependent on their parents as providers of emo- tional support and ﬁnancial resources. According to the authors, after reaching adulthood, however, emotional closeness declines. 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 (Silverstein and Bengtson, 1997). Empirically, this translates to mainly unemployed, single adult children living with their middle-aged parents (Lee and Dwyer, 1996). In turn, parental frailty and care dependency due to very old age force children in supportive intergenerational roles (Silverstein and Bengtson, 1997, p.435). Consequently, later in life, children are once again more likely to co-reside with their inﬁrm parents of high age (Lee and Dwyer, 1996, p.57). From the parents’ point of view, besides support from their adult children the contact itself is of great value as well.

“One unique risk factor relating to older adults’ well-being is loneli- ness— one of the most painful of all human experiences, and a per- vasive one among the elderly“ (Chen and Feeley, 2014, p.2).

With increasing age, social networks shrink and the frequency of social inter- actions decreases (Huxhold et al., 2013). These changes are mainly attributed to natural life course developments, such as the incremental loss of social func- tion (Weiss, 2005). Socioemotional selectivity theory assumes that, because of increasing awareness of the limitedness of their remaining life time, older adults give more and more attention to what they perceive as meaningful social interactions (Carstensen et al., 1999). By implication, family ties are generally thought to gain further importance in later adult life.

This prevalent succession of role transitions from adolescence to old age is commonly referred to as a family life cycle (Stapleton, 1980). For example, parenthood is very likely to be preceded by marriage. Throughout diﬀerent western cultures, children’s rhymes about the succession of life events, referred to by Billari as sequencing norms (Liefbroer and Billari, 2010), exist. One pop- ular 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.” By aggregating such highly frequented pathways and universal structures can be revealed.

(b) The influence of available resources

The life course approach assumes that not mere role succession structures life courses. Rather, the interconnection of social roles over time creates common “routes” leading through diﬀerent life phases. Macmillan and Copher (Mac- millan and Copher, 2005) link this understanding of life course structure to Sewell’s general theory of social structure (Sewell, 1992). In his theory, Sewell builds on Gidden’s idea of duality of structure ((Giddens, 1986)) as well as Bourdieu’ theory of habitus (Bourdieu, 1983). Sewell argues that social struc- tures are sets of rules constituted by resources enabling and restraining social action while at the same time relying on reproduction through social action. As a result, only those arrangements sustained by suﬃcient resources will be further reproduced and continue to be of social signiﬁcance. To better illus- trate: an aesthetic norm exceeding the ﬁnancial capabilities of the ma jority of society is very unlikely to prevail. Hence, Sewell perceives social structure as a dynamic concept which is continuously shaped by social processes (Sewell,

1992, p.27). Macmillan and Copher transfer this logic to the life course struc- ture. The authors argue that both, pathways and their socially prescribed templates, develop in congruence to resources available to individuals during their various transitions (p.860). On the one hand, because of strong similarit- ies regarding the amount of various forms of capital at a certain points in life, relatively universal pathway schemata emerge. For example, young adults’ economic capital is often limited, which then restrains their opportunities. In turn,

“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” (Macmillan and Copher, 2005, p.860).

However, this insight does not translate into life course homogeneity (see e.g. George, 1993), as resources of individuals in a certain life phases also have the potential to diﬀer substantially. Thus, the concept of heterogeneity of life courses is an integral part of the life course approach, highlighting the importance of understanding the interplay of cultural templates and access to resources.

(c) Norms

As Neugarten and Hagestad illustrate

“Individuals develop a mental map of the life cycle, they anticipate that certain events occur at certain times [. . . and] internalize [. . . ] norms that tell them if their behaviour in various areas of life is age-appropriate” (Neugarten and Hagestad, 1976, p.35).

These norms regarding the appropriate timing of role transitions make it pos- sible for an individual to evaluate their advancements by comparing themselves to peers of similar age. For example, a man in his late forties might feel that he is running late leaving his parent’s home while peers have already started families. 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). From a historical point of view, due to a longer educational period, young adults leave their parents’ home at a later point in time than previously, thus prolonging their ﬁnal transition to ﬁnancial independence and gradually raising the upper age limit of spatial autonomy (Mitchell et al., 2000, p.198).

In his survey research, sociologist Settersten showed 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). A study of young adults in Canada revealed that especially the strength of individual versus familial cultural values has a decisive impact on the timing of nest clear-

ing (Mitchell, 2004). To be more speciﬁc, young adults with a British cultural identity left the parental home relatively early to autonomous life, while those with an Indo background continued to live at home, later on transitioning commonly to marriage and cohabitation with their partner, thereby shorten- ing or bypassing the ﬁrst phase of independent living.

While being criticised for its mainly descriptive nature and the lack of a syn- optic theoretical foundation (Mayer, 2009, p.423), the life course perspective as a set of individual heuristics has proven rather useful at this point. As has been presented in detail, young adults can be assumed to generally value their privacy, while the parents’ motives are more diverse. However, this does not mean that all young adults who live with their parents do so because of their economic needs or their parents’ health and social needs. Nevertheless, this ﬁnding seems to be robust across diﬀerent cultural backgrounds as they appear to go hand in hand with a similar succession of ma jor life events, e.g. marriage before family formation. Yet, cultural membership is associated with variation in respect to age deadlines and role tra jectories. Put concisely: while the so- cially appropriate age to leave the parental home varies across young adults with diﬀerent cultural identities, pathways show strong similarities and, as a result, allow cross-cultural comparison.

2.2 Szydlik’s theoretical model of intergenerational solidarity

In 2008, sociologist and life course researcher Szydlik proposed his theoretical model of intergenerational solidarity (Szydlik, 2008). As its name suggests, the model ap- plies to various types of family solidarity, including support, contact frequency as well as cohabitation. It integrates and organizes a wide range of features, derived from the life course perspective as well as other approaches. According to the model, at the micro-level, solidarity between adult children and their parents is inﬂuenced by their respective needs and opportunities. These, in turn, are aﬀected by the fam- ily structure at the meso-level. Lastly, cultural-contextual factors at the macro-level

have an impact on all, family structure as well as potential needs and opportunit- ies. It should be noted, that both, meso- and macro-level determinants exert their inﬂuence not directly, but by aﬀecting the respective underlying levels. Szydlik’s graphical representation of these associations can be found in the appendix, subsec- tion A.1, on page 70.

Together with colleague Isengard, Szydlik applied the model ﬁrst to intergenera- tional cohabitation in in 2001 (Isengard and Szydlik, 2012). Their paper provides a comprehensive overview of relevant impact factors applying to various kinds of cohabitation, from young adults who just graduated and have not yet left the par- ental home, to adults in the second half of life living with their frail parents of very old age. For the purpose of this analysis, using the implications provided by the preceded life course analysis, the model will be narrowed down to parameters rel- evant for young adults and their middle-aged parents. In the following, relating to the three aforementioned levels, empirical evidence is presented. An overview of the characteristics can be found on page 14.

14

2 Theoretical framework

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Needs | Opportunities | Family structure | Cultural-contextual  factors |
| Children | Current employment status  • In education  (Mitchell, 2004)  • In transition  (South & Lei, 2015)  • Unemployment  (Billari et al., 2002)  • Precarious employment  (Billari et al., 2002)  Level of education (Sandberg-Thoma, Snyder & Yang, 2015)  Perceived job insecurity  (Becker et al., 2003)  Financial situation  (Payne & Copp, 2013, | Suﬃcient living space at parents’ place  (Szydlik & Isengard, 2012)  Parents’ home ownership (Szydlik & Isengard, 2012, Gierveld, Dykstra  & Schenk, 2012)  Equipment of parental accommodation (Gierveld, Dykstra  & Schenk, 2012) | Relationship status  (Silverstein & Bengston, 1997)  Parenthood  (Silverstein & Bengston, 1997) | Overall economic situation  (Kaplan, 2012)  Aﬀordability of independent living  (Le Blanc & Wolff, 2006, South & Lei, 2015  Haurin, Hendershott  & Dongwook, 1993)  Social & family support  policies  (Szydlik, Brandt  & Haberkern, 2009, Szydlik & Isengard, 2012)  Culture-speciﬁc age deadlines  (Goldscheider &  DaVanzo, 1989,  Szydlik & Isengard, 2012) |
| Parents | Financial situation  (South & Lei, 2015,  LeBlanc & Wolff, 2006, Mitchell, 2004)  Health and care needs  (Choi, 2003,  Szydlik & Isengard, 2012)  Level of education  (Mitchell,  Whister & Gee, 2000) | Relationship status  (Carstensen, Isaacowitz  & Chalres, 1999  Lee & Dwyer, 1996)  Migrational background  (Baykara-Krumme, 2008)  Coresidence with competing family members  (South & Lei, 2015, Szydlik & Isengard, 2012) |

Table 1: Overview of explanatory factors based on Szydlik’s theoretical model of intergenerational cohabitation

(a) Micro-level: Opportunities and Needs

Starting at the micro-level, for coresidence to be practical in the ﬁrst place, several opportunities can be regarded essential requirements. For instance, without suﬃcient living space, family members are unlikely to move in and co-reside for a longer period of time.

As the metaphorically named feathered nest hypothesis states, nontransferable

parental resources which contribute to higher residential qualities, such as home ownership, available living space and the equipment of their accommod- ation (de Jong Gierveld et al., 1991), contribute to the perceived attractiveness of the parental home, thereby increasing the likelihood of young adults to live there (Avery et al., 1992). Empirical evidence suggests, too, that parents are much more likely to take in their children than vice versa. According to Dunn and Philipps, in more than 80% of co-residence arrangements parents are the providers of accommodation (Dunn and Phillips, 1998, p.8). Also, this is due to the fact that young adults frequently relocate on account of their educa- tion or job. Moreover, intergenerational cohabitation is often used by young adults as a safety net (Mitchell et al., 2000, p.217). This is why, in the fol- lowing elaborations, parents are assumed to be the main providers of residence.

While opportunities reﬂect resources available for potential support within the family, needs in turn refer to the individual family member’s demand for solid- arity. Considering the life phase which is the focus of this study, the younger generation is either in educational training, seeking work, started working or taking care of their young family. Henceforth, the eﬀects of a young adult’s education, transition to employment, (un-)employment and income as well as job insecurity on the decision to cohabitate with the parents are discussed.

To begin with, a young adult’s level of education is related to his or her prob- ability of cross-generational living in two ways. First, a young adult currently in education is probably either not working at all or working only part-time. Subsequently, it might prove diﬃcult or even impossible to accumulate the monetary resources needed to set up and maintain an independent household.

Not surprisingly, empirical studies indicate that cohabitation rates are partic- ularly high during a young adult’s education (see e.g. Mitchell, 2004). After having completed education, young adults commonly transition to employ- ment and strive for residential independence. As young adults with a low educational level on average have a rather short educational period, they start working at a young age and leave home early (Sandberg-Thoma et al., 2015). In contrast, highly educated young adults have longer periods of education, thus leaving their parents’ home at a later point in life. However, less educated young adults are more likely to return to the parental home than their higher educated peers (ibid). This might be due to the fact that the latter achieve higher earnings and are therefore not as vulnerable to unpredicted events, such as job loss.

Having said that, the probability of returning to the parental home when trans- itioning between life phases is especially high (South and Lei, 2015, p. 866). According to South and Lei, this is due to the fact that most transitions are associated with periods of uncertainty and ﬁnancial insecurity. For example, in Great Britain, young adults who started working after college returned back to their parents’ home more often than their permanently employed peers or peers who continued education (Stone et al., 2014).

Compared to young adults living independently, those cohabitating with their parents are generally more likely to be unemployed and have lower aver- age earnings (Payne and Copp, 2013). As mentioned previously, setting up and maintaining independent living requires a certain amount of ﬁnancial re- sources. Hence, economic independence is the key driver of young adult’s residential autonomy (Furstenberg et al.). Consequently, young adults, who are unemployed or in precarious employment, often opt for staying with their parents (Aassve et al., 2002). Similarly, low income and a poor ﬁnancial situ- ation are commonly associated with a return to the family home (Mitchell,

2004; South and Lei, 2015; Choi, 2003). Furthermore, young adults who eval- uate their employment prospects as being poor to a high proportion decide to give up residential independence (Kaplan, 2012). According to Fogli (Fogli,

2000), the fact that leaving the parental home is ﬁrst of all considered a ﬁ- nal decision incites insecure young adults to delay residential independence as well. As gerontologist Choi summarizes “it appears that some adult children who continued to live in their parents’ households might never have gained

economic or other necessary momentum to leave their nests in the first place”

(Choi, 2003, p.385).

However, young adults, who themselves do not have the resources to aﬀord independent living, might receive monetary support from their parents. As can be expected, such aids strongly decrease the likelihood of moving back in with the parents in case of unemployment and can be considered an alternative option to cohabitation (Mitchell et al., 2004).

Although cohabitation obviously has numerous merits, young adults are not always keen on cohabitating with their parents. As discussed in the previous chapter, young adults are assumed to highly value residential independence. Consequently, their need for privacy might translate into disinterest or even aversion towards intergenerational coresidence. According to Whittington and Peters, this preference can be understood as a “negative” need in contrast to previously mentioned “positive” needs concerning shared residency (Whitting- ton and Peters, 1996). In a nutshell, a poor ﬁnancial situation leaves a young adult in strong need for cohabitation while a good ﬁnancial standing has the opposite eﬀect. The authors remark that young adults’ needs for privacy are of prime importance with regard to a possible co-residency decision. Examining the desire for residential independence, Dunn and Phillips hypothesized that a higher income elicits a higher demand for privacy by raising the young adult’s aspirational level (Dunn and Phillips, 1998, p.39). The same logic applies for a young adult’s level of education.

While young adults are at the very beginning of their career path, their parents are in the ﬁnal stages of their career or have recently entered retirement. In the following section, their health and care needs, the inﬂuence of their level

of education, ﬁnancial standing and migrational background will be discussed. As elaborated in the chapter on the life course approach, parents of young adults are in a stage of life during health and care needs gain more and more importance for everyday life. Due to this study’s focus on young adults and their parents, intensive care needs resulting from very old age are excluded. Nevertheless, the health status of parents and their emerging needs regarding everyday support and care are of relevance (Ward et al., 1992; Isengard and Szydlik, 2012; Choi, 2003). Besides those needs, similar to young adults, pri- vacy is also a relevant issue when considering the parents. In particular, “more highly educated parents may expect and desire adult children’s independence,

have strong orientations for their own self-development in mid-life, and pos-

sess the resources to assist independent living” (Mitchell et al., 2000, p.202). In conformity with this presumption, various studies have shown that high par- ental educational achievements are linked to lower rates of cross-generational cohabitation (Aquilino, 1990; White, 1994; South and Lei, 2015; Mitchell et al.,

2000).

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). One possible explanation for these contradict- ory results is that parental resources are not per se relevant, but the young adult’s access to these resources (Mitchell, 2004, p.116). Interestingly, when low income is found to be linked to higher rates of intergenerational cohabit- ation, it is not attributed to potential ﬁnancial needs on the parents’ side but rather the parents’ inability to allow for residential independence of their chil- dren (see e.g. South and Lei, 2015). Nevertheless, scholars agree that parental earnings are only of subordinate interest compared to their children’s ﬁnan- cial situation. According to calculations by Wolﬀ and LeBlanc, the impact of the latter is approximately nine times stronger (Le Blanc and Wolﬀ, 2006,

p.61). As a ﬁnal factor, a person’s migrational background is thought to be attributed with strong family cohesion stemming religious and cultural beliefs as well as further economic needs, resulting in the migrants’ higher prevalence of shared residency (Baykara-Krumme, 2008).

Having addressed relevant parental as well ﬁlial needs, the question whether both are of equal importance in the decision for joint residency comes to mind. The prevailing scientiﬁc opinion is that throughout all life phases the circum- stances and potential needs of the younger generation determine whether in- tergenerational cohabitation occurs (Ward et al., 1992, p.220). The rationale is that parental care extends beyond adolescence and parents are less aversive towards living together than their adult children. As both Aquilino as well as Ward and colleagues discovered in the 1990s, even when analyzing aging parents older than 65, children’s needs were still signiﬁcantly more important than the parents’ (Aquilino, 1990; Ward et al., 1992).

(b) Meso-level: Family structure

Apart from all these factors at the micro-level, features of the family structure also indirectly aﬀect the probability of intergenerational cohabitation. The factors presented consist of the number of the young adult’s children, the cur- rent relationship status of both, young adults and their parents, as well as the parents’ household composition.

Looking back to the life course approach, a young adult who has already star- ted family formation is assumed to have an increased need for privacy and thus a strong desire for residential independence (Silverstein and Bengtson, 1997). To a moderate extent this also applies to young adults who have entered a relationship (ibid). As sons on average are older when entering marriage, it is not surprising that they stay longer with their parents than daughters (Bil- lari et al., 2001). Contrarily to their adult children, parents often experience the opposite desire: companionship. When dealing with loneliness and so- cial exclusion, parents are likely to seek closer contact to their adult children

(Carstensen et al., 1999). Previous research has shown that, among others, taking on the role as caregiver for a child boosts parents’ wellbeing (de Jong Gierveld et al., 2012). According to Mitchell, mothers report being in an elevated, positive state of mind (Mitchell, 1998) and enjoying the company (Mitchell et al., 2004) when taking care of their co-resident adult children. Apart from the common loneliness in later life aforementioned, the death of a partner can lead to an increased need for emotional support and social interac- tions. It is therefore reasonable to assume that widowed parents are more likely to live with their children (Lee and Dwyer, 1996). As argued in the chapter on the life course approach, with role transitions to adulthood and the pursuit of family formation, young adults’ need for residential independence steadily increases, being in a (marital) relationship or being a parent greatly reduces the probability of living in the parental home. Moreover, when competing family members, such as siblings or grandparents, live with the parents, they are likely to occupy potential housing space, thereby decreasing the likelihood of cohabitation (Isengard and Szydlik, 2012, p. 467).

(c) Macro-level: Cultural-contextual factors

Lastly, intergenerational cohabitation is also indirectly inﬂuenced by cultural- contextual factors. These“societal conditions within which intergenerational relations develop” (Isengard and Szydlik, 2012, p.453) include inter alia nu- merous conditions of the economy, labor market, welfare state arrangements and cultural conditions. In the following section, the eﬀect of the overall economic situation, aﬀordability of independent living, the public position to- wards family support and culture-speciﬁc age deadlines are discussed. Research on the eﬀects of the 2007 to 2009 Great recession has shown that intergenerational cohabitation in its function as a security net is especially valuable in times of economic crises (South and Lei, 2015). During this period, young adults’ household formation was delayed and a higher share returned to their parents’ homes. Scholars attribute these changes to the increased diﬃ- culty of ﬁnding a job, allowing young adults to provide for themselves (Payne and Copp, 2013). Not surprisingly, regarding the overall economic situation,

characteristics of the labour market are of great importance. Economist Ka- plan even goes so far as to say that cross-national diﬀerences concerning in- tergenerational living can be largely traced back to national unemployment rates (Kaplan, 2012, p.54). He argues that this is because the unemployment rate to a large degree determines young adults’ ﬁnancial resources and parental incomes alike, making shared living more or less attractive for both parties. Whether a young adult is ﬁnancially capable to establish a new household is determined by the cost of living independently as well as their ability to cover those expenses. It is generally assumed that, as a consequence of greater perceived beneﬁts of shared living, high living expenses delay residential inde- pendence and lead to a larger share of young adults returning to the parental home at some time (South and Lei, 2015, p.869). Since accommodation costs account for the ma jority of overall household expenses, they are the key factor determining the feasibility of independent living (Le Blanc and Wolﬀ, 2006, p.57). According to Haurin, to estimate those expenses, one requires know- ledge about the speciﬁc housing costs in the young adults’ residential area (Haurin et al., 1993, p.284). As those vary geographically, with more centrally located and metropolitan areas being especially expensive, regionally diverse rates of intergenerational cohabitation emerge (Ermisch, 1999; Haurin et al.,

1993). In their analysis, Buck and Scott (Buck and Scott, 1993) were able to demonstrate that in the United States, average regional housing costs are directly linked to the frequency of household formation among young adults as well as the probability of a failed launch.

Aside from the overall economic situation and the aﬀordability of independent living, the welfare state’s position towards family support also has a ma jor in- ﬂuence on cohabitation needs. According to Brandt (Brandt et al., 2009, p.2), policies displacing family services, referred to as “crowding out”, can be dis- tinguished from measures stimulating family support (“crowding in”). Szydlik and Isengard 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” (Isen- gard and Szydlik, 2012, p. 469).

In turn, welfare state expansion is denoted a moral risk which undermines family solidarity (Brandt et al., 2009, p.3). A prominent historical example for this phenomenon is the introduction of public pensions and the subsequent decline of elderly care provided by family members.

In addition to those welfare state characteristics and economic factors, culture- speciﬁc norms, as can be deduced from the previously elaborated life course approach also apply. These include, for instance, the perceived appropriate age for a young adult to gain residential independence (Goldscheider and DaVanzo,

1989; Isengard and Szydlik, 2012).

2.3 Development of a revised model

This subchapter aims at developing a ﬁrst outline of a revised theoretical model explaining why young adults and their middle-aged parents choose to cohabitate. For this endeavour, Szydlik’s model presented in the previous chapter is critically appraised and partially modiﬁed. To begin with, Szydlik’s model allows for the in- tegration of a great variety of inﬂuence factors and, as the author has demonstrated (Szydlik, 2008), is so ﬂexible that it can be successfully applied to various forms of family solidarity. Moreover, the diﬀerentiation of causal mechanisms along the micro-, meso- and macro-level facilitates the conception of their heterogeneity and analysis of cross-level interplay. Yet, I will argue for two modiﬁcations, viz. the reduction of dimensions and an amendment regarding the inﬂuence of other forms of family solidarity.

First, the stepwise development of the model convinced me that it can be boiled down 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 oppor- tunity channel and can thus be considered subordinate factors. For instance, welfare state policies, which lead to crowding out, aﬀect residency decisions by decreasing

the young adults’ as well as their parent’s need for shared living. Just the same, other siblings living in the parents’ home decrease the likelihood of intergenerational cohabitation by limiting space and thus restricting the opportunity for siblings to move in. Many other factors which Szydlik also attributed to family structure are reassigned to the need dimension in this revised model. These include, for example, the parents’ relationship status and a young adult’s number of children. With re- gard to the former, a single parent’s desire for companionship is an example of a positive need for cohabitation. On the contrary, a young adult who has already started his/her own family is assumed to have a heightened need for privacy which translates into aversion towards coresidence. To summarize, the revised theoretical model of intergenerational cohabitation at this point consists of two dimensions: need and opportunity.

In the subsequent section, social motivation as a third dimension is introduced to the revised model. The need for this dimension will be emphasized and the added factors depicted. Szydlik’s model to a large extent neglects the inﬂuence of other forms of solidarity on intergenerational living. To retrace why this is an issue, one ﬁrst has to understand the concept of intergenerational solidarity in general and then consider the implications of cross-generational living as a form of family solidarity. If either parents or adult children take in a relative in need, this implies a feel- ing of solidarity towards the other. This behaviour is in its motivations similar to young adults and parents living separately who, for example, give support with daily chores, assume responsibility for care or provide ﬁnancial assistance (Brandt et al.,

2009). According to Szydlik, intergenerational solidarity can be understood as a sense of connectedness one shares with family members of other generations; it be- comes apparent through the provision of time, care and ﬁnancial resources (Szydlik,

2000, p.37). In their well-known article, family sociologists Bengston and Roberts argued for the diﬀerentiation of distinct dimensions of the concept (Bengtson and Roberts, 1991). One widely recognized aspect is the support and exchange of re- sources, referred to as functional solidarity (Silverstein and Bengtson, 1997; Goerres and Tepe, 2010). For reasons yet unknown, women are more involved in activities

of functional solidarity than men (Dwyer and Coward, 1992). Szydlik and Isengard identify cross-generational living as a manifestation of functional solidarity (Isen- gard and Szydlik, 2012, p.450). There are two reasons why this insight contributes to a critical revision of Szydlik’s model: the interconnectedness of diﬀerent forms of solidarity and, again, the life course perspective.

Concerning the ﬁrst, there is one more relevant dimension of family solidarity to mention: normative solidarity, referring to societal expectations regarding the pro- vision of solidarity when needed (see e.g. Goerres and Tepe, 2010). These two dimensions, functional and normative family solidarity, are theoretically as well as empirically closely linked (Silverstein et al., 2006). This seems logical, as, for ex- ample, the intrinsic value to always take care of one’s child is very likely to inﬂuence the decision to oﬀer one’s home to an adult child in need. Contrarily, parents who hold close ties to their adult children and support them in every-day life are as- sumed to have a stronger perception of normative solidarity towards their children. However, as sociologists Silverstein, Gans and Yang point out, behavioural values arising from normative solidarity are only ”predisposing rather than deterministic features of families, and as such, are necessary but not sufficient as explanations of behaviour" (Silverstein et al., 2006, p.1071). On the macro scale, there is an association between normative solidarity and the concept of cultural familialism. Also referred to as the family mode of social organization (Thornton et al., 1994), strong normative solidarity is observed in cultural backgrounds where familialistic values have a high standing (Klein, 2001). As Szydlik’s model accounts for culture- speciﬁc values, normative solidarity on the macro-level is included in his model at this point. However, familialistic values only vary to a medium degree based on cultural membership, but are strongly inﬂuenced by numerous other factors, such as gender, income and age (Parrott and Bengtson, 1999). Consequently, I argue for the inclusion of solidarity on the individual level.

My second argument for the importance of family solidarity stems from the life course approach. Early scholars, such as Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1983) and Coleman

(Coleman, 1988), were already of the opinion that by fostering social relationships feelings of reciprocity and even obligation are generated. Put into concrete terms, this means that functional solidarity at an early point in time has the power to gener- ate normative solidarity later on. From the life course perspective, it is evident that potential intergenerational paybacks are of crucial importance to the provision and demand for functional solidarity. After all, estimates suggest that approximately

50% of middle-aged women will later on care for their frail parents (Sorenson and Zarit, 1996). Moreover, prolonged lifespans, later transitions into adulthood and an increasing need for care and support in very old age extend life phases characterized by support and care needs. In foresight, middle-aged parents who expect to become dependent on their adult children later on might feel an elevated sense of obligation and also be more likely to provide refuge for their children when needed. This train of thought is conceptually very similar to Antonucci’s support bank model (Anto- nucci, 1990). This metaphor also illustrates the accumulation and consumption of familial capital over the life course. Its central notion is that, by investing aﬀection, ﬁnancial resources and time, parents deposit capital in a virtual bank. When being in need later on, parents then can access this dormant resources which itself have become manifest as a sense of ﬁlial responsibility in their children (Silverstein et al.,

2002). Thus, solidary actions in the past, as well as expected future needs should also be included in the model.

To recapitulate: the proposed model consists of the three dimensions need, oppor- tunity and social motivation. In brief, the ﬁrst dimension includes economic, social and health needs. In line with economist Whittington (see page X), not only the positive need for companionship but also the negative need for privacy are con- sidered. Next, for cross-generational living to be possible, certain opportunities have to be provided. In contrast to the preceding dimension, it refers not to the possible demand for intergenerational cohabitation but the feasibility of the decision to co-reside. The last dimension, social motivation, includes family solidarity into the model.

2.4 Explanatory model and hypotheses

In this subchapter, based on the previous theoretical elaborations, the employed explanatory model is formulated and hypotheses regarding the added features of the model are presented. As aforementioned, the proposed model consists of three dimensions: need, opportunity and social motivation. Table 2 on page 27 gives an overview of the relevant micro- and macro-level factors and their eﬀects on the three dimensions.

For both, young adults and their parents, various needs are of signiﬁcance. Moving on to the second dimension, opportunity, parents are the inﬂuential party. Since this paper’s focus mainly lies on the impact of needs and solidarity on the prevalence of intergenerational solidarity, the opportunity dimension is limited to the most im- portant factors. Consequently, aspects of the young adults’ perceived attractiveness of the parental home are not explored. As a ﬁnal point, young adults are assumed to be the main demanders in this scenario. Hence, features of solidarity on the part of the parents are of vital importance. Naturally, the motivation to support a family member can be provoked by their immediate need.

Starting with young adults, those who are still in education or seeking work are assumed to be very likely to need support due to their ﬁnancial situation. On the contrary, young adults who are employed, have started a family or are highly edu- cated, probably attribute a higher value to their privacy and thus prefer residential independence. Additionally, parents are thought to be less likely to oﬀer co-residence to a ﬁnancially stable child. Naturally, the young adults’ separation process contin- ues over the years, making it less and less likely for older children to co-reside with their parents. Lastly, daugthers are thought to be more likely than sons to return to the parental home when they need support.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Micro-level factors | Need | Oppor-  tunity | Social  motivation |
| Young adults |  |  |  |
| Occupational status |  |  |  |
| In education | + |  | + |
| Employed | - |  | - |
| Unemployed | + |  | + |
| Level of education (high) | - |  | - |
| Stage of family formation |  |  |  |
| In a (marital) relationship | - |  | - |
| Being a Parent | - |  |  |
| Age (older) | - |  |  |
| Gender (female) |  |  | + |
| Parents |  |  |  |
| Household composition |  |  |  |
| Partner | - |  |  |
| Underage children |  | - |  |
| Young adults |  | - | + |
| Grandparents |  | - | + |
| Resources |  |  |  |
| Non-transferable (wealthy) |  | + |  |
| Transferable (wealthy) | - |  |  |
| Future need for ﬁnancial support | + |  | + |
| Support for other family members |  |  |  |
| Young adults |  |  | + |
| Grandparents |  |  | + |
| Level of education (high) | - |  |  |
| Health status (poor) | + |  |  |
| Age (older) | + |  | + |
| Migrational background | + |  | + |
| Macro-level factors |  |  |  |
| Family expenditures (high) | - | - | - |
| Overall economic situation (good) | - |  |  |
| Old age security (high) | - |  | - |
| Living expenses (cheap) | - | - |  |

Table 2: Classiﬁcation of inﬂuence factors according to the revised model

As the parental home can be considered the spatial basis for intergenerational cohab- itation, characteristics of this household should be considered. First, parents who have no partner are believed to especially value their children’s company and thus are more often found to cohabitate with them. Other cohabitating family members can obviously restrict living space but they can also be regarded as indication of the parents’ readiness to take in relatives. Starting with underaged children, their presence is assumed to limit available living space, while not being an indicator for parental familialistic values as cohabitation at this point is natural. Thus, young adults whose parents live together with younger children are presumed to be less likely to cohabitate with their parents than peers whose parents do not co-reside with younger children (Hypothesis 1a). In turn, cohabitation with grandparents indicates family cohesion as well as normative values of intergenerational solidar- ity. Therefore, young adults whose parents co-reside with grandparents should be at least as likely to cohabitate with their parents as their peers with independent grandparents (Hypothesis 1b).

Moving on to adult children, South and Lei state:

“The presence of adult siblings [. . . ] likely signals a higher level of famili- alism and parents’ willingness to co-reside with an adult child, as well as increased competition for parental resources” (South and Lei, 2015, p.867).

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

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, con- sequently decreasing the need for further support. Yet, apart from resources that parents possess at the moment, their future situation play an essential role as well. More speciﬁcally, if parents are at risk of being ubale to provide for themselves in old age, they are believed to invest above average in ﬁlial companionship. Thus,

their children are hypothesized to more often live with them compared to their peers whose parents do not need their children’s support (Hypothesis 2).

Following a similar logic as with other cohabitating family members, parents who provide regular support are anticipated to have a strong sense of family cohesion and normative intergenerational solidarity. Hence, it is hypothesized that young adults whose parents support grandparents are more likely to cohabitate than their peers whose parents do not support the older generation (Hypothesis 3a). More so, this causal connection can be presumed to be even stronger for parents who support other adult children as such behaviour is not only indicative of general familialistic values but feelings of parental responsibility for their adult children. Consequently, the next hypothesis proposes that young adults whose parents provide support to their other adult children are more likely to cohabitate than those whose parents do not support their adult oﬀspring (Hypothesis 3b).

Moving on to the parents’ sociodemograﬁc characteristics, a high educational level is thought to correspond with a stronger need for residential separation. Naturally, parents become more likely to be dependent on their children with increasing age. According to socioemotional selectivity theory, parents also consider familial bonds more and more important with increasing age. Hence, it is assumed that their so- cial motivation strengthens over time as well. Sine the parents in this sample are fairly young, poor health is assumed to play a minor but signiﬁcant role regarding their need for intergenerational cohabitation. With regard to potential needs as well as strong social motivation, a migrational background is thought to be linked to a higher prevalence of intergenerational living.

To account for structural determinants, several macro-economic factors will be in- cluded into the model. To begin with, some features are assumed to relieve young adults’ need for family solidarity in general and for intergenerational cohabitation speciﬁcally. To be more precise, high family expenditures and a good overall eco- nomic situation are expected to be negatively associated with the likelihood of in-

tergenerational cohabitation (Hypothesis 4). Contributing to this eﬀect, generous welfare state policies are commonly linked to a decline in family solidarity and ﬁn- ancially sound parents are more likely to support their children monetarily rather than oﬀering cohabitation. As an indicator of the general economic situation, the unemployment rate was chosen, as

"Macroeconomic characteristics having an impact on the leaving home pattern at a country level relate mainly to the unemployment rate. The overall level of unemployment impacts the incomes as well as the accu- mulation of wealth of the parents, whereas the unemployment rate among the young workers affects the resources of the children negatively." (Ka- plan, 2012, p.54).

Thinking back to the parents’ future ﬁnancial situation, it was assumed that parents who might need support at some point, are especially likely to oﬀer accommoda- tion to their adult children. On a larger scale, the coverage of pension beneﬁts is closely associated to pension entitlement supplementing earning-related pensions. Analogous to the aforementioned hypothesis, it can be therefore argued that high expenditures for old age security decreases the parental need for support and in turn their motivation to accomodate their adult children (Hypothesis 5).

Equally, the aﬀordability of independent living, indicated by regional rent and house price indices as well as mortgage rates, lowers the costs of independent living, thereby relieving a ma jor ﬁnancial burden and making shared living less attractive. Although these factors are likely to play a role, the attractiveness of shared living is not analysed in detail in this paper.

3 Resarch design and methods

This chapter presents the research design employed in the paper at hand in four steps. Starting with a description of the data set, the survey’s target population, in- terview technique, content-based orientation and structure are depicted. Following, this study’s sampling procedure is explained and its implications for representative- ness are discussed. Third, the operationalization of the dependant variable as well as independent variables is outlined. In a ﬁnal step, the statistical methods used to empirically assess the explanatory power of the previously designed model are elucidated.

3.1 Data set

The analysis conducted in this paper is 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 (Borsch-Supan et al., 2013). Ac- cording to Szydlik and Isengard, who also used this data set in their analysis of intergenerational cohabitation, it is uniquely suited for exploring this topic due to the great number of participating countries, the wide use of standardized procedures as well as its broad range of issues surveyed (Isengard and Szydlik, 2012, p.457). The data set covers topics such as socio-economic status, health, living arrangements, family situation, social networks and support. Moreover, the respondents provided detailed information on their parents and children.

As Billari points out, when researching intergenerational cohabitation one often faces the problem of sample selection. This is because most longitudinal surveys only retrace and re-interview adult children who lived in the parental home in an earlier wave (Billari and de Valk, 2007, p.191). In SHARE however, information is consistently provided by the parents, thus, overcoming the problem of sample selec- tion at this point.

The ﬁrst survey wave took place in 2004. To date, ﬁve further survey waves (2007,

2009, 2011, 2013, 2015) have been conducted. Up to wave three, the pro ject was

mainly funded by the European Commission. Ever since the fourth wave, SHARE is organized as an international institution (SHARE-ERIC). Data is coordinated by the Munich Centre for the Economics of Ageing (MEA) at the Max Planck In- stitute for Social Law and Social Policy. Funding is now provided collectively by the European Commission, the US National Institute on Aging and all cooperating states. With each wave, the number of participating countries kept growing. As of the ﬁfth wave, the survey includes respondents from Denmark, Sweden, Belgium, Netherlands, France, Luxembourg, Austria, Switzerland, Germany, Spain, Italy, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Slovenia and Israel. With SHARE being a multinational survey, sampling resources and thus sampling methods vary between diﬀerent coun- tries. However, the ma jority of countries have access to national population registers. According to Börsch-Supan, the scientiﬁc coordinator of SHARE:

“Sample frames are chosen in accordance with the best available frame resources in the country to achieve full probability sampling” (Borsch- Supan et al., 2013, p.993).

Response rates are consistently fairly high, varying between around 70% and 90% (Munich Centre for the Economics of Aging, 2017). According to an extensive meta-analysis of 175 studies, average survey response rates lie at approximately 60

% (Baruch, 1999, p.433). 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 (Borsch-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 emigrate to another country, were re-interviewed. However, separated partners under the age of 50, new partners and partners who were never interviewed are not followed up on if they no longer live with the primary respondent. General exclusion criteria include in- carceration, hospitalization, stays abroad during the survey period, no command of the respective country’s language(s) and an unknown place of residence. Sample attrition, the biased dropout of individuals from a previously random sample over

time, is counteracted by three measures. Besides a strong eﬀort to contact and re- interview respondents, the available sample is regularly extended. Moreover, weights accounting for remaining selection bias are provided.

The respondents were surveyed using computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI). This survey method is characterized by face-to-face interviews with the results be- ing recorded on a computer. Information concerning the entire household, such

as living conditions, is only provided by one selected household member on be- half of the couple. Consequently, household, family and ﬁnancial respondents are chosen to answer speciﬁc sections of the questionnaire. Because of the multina- tional nature of the survey, the questionnaire had to be translated into a wide variety of languages. Concerning this matter, a strategy called ex-ante harmoniza- tion was applied (Borsch-Supan et al., 2013, p.997). In accordance with this survey strategy, one generic (English) questionnaire was compiled and then translated into all languages required. In addition, ex-post harmonization was used to account for country-speciﬁc diﬀerences and allow international comparison, e.g. the Interna- tional Standard Classiﬁcation of Education (ISCED).

3.2 Sampling

The subsequent section retraces the selection of waves for analysis as well as its exclusion criteria and presents the resulting sample. Although the data structure of SHARE allows for panel analysis, for the purposes of this paper, cross-sectional analyses were employed. There are two reasons for this. First, 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 relocate in and out of parental homes, but because short term stays in between waves are not captured. Secondly, regarding intergenerational cohabit- ation self-selection based on stable characteristics into living conditions is of great signiﬁcance. Consequently, ﬁxed eﬀect models are not well suited.

In this paper, information from the ﬁfth wave of the survey collected in 2013 is used. Initially the sample consisted of 43.464 households in Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, Spain, the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Estonia. As a result, the sample includes respondents from all countries surveyed except Israel which was excluded because of its unique cultural and societal features. Next, only households of parents with living children are selected (n= 38.302). On average, each household indicates to have 2.37 children (SD=1.20). Households with more than eight children (n=74) were debarred 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 disregarded (n=82). This is because, not mainly living at home any longer, these parents are not likely to provide accommodation for their children, but rather adapt their current living situation on a short term basis to their health and care needs. As the survey only considered respondents who were not institutionalized at the time of their interview, this selection is also necessary to prevent possible selection bias.

After this ﬁrst sample selection, the data set was reorganized resulting in each respondent’s child counting as one observation. Following this change of data struc- ture, the sample consisted of 89.848 children, ranging in age from new-borns to seniors with a mean age of 39.42 years (SD=11.61). As this study deals with young adults and their parents, a speciﬁc age range had to be demarcated. According to classic psychoanalyst Erikson’s stages of psychosocial development who diﬀerenti- ates eight stages from infancy to late adulthood, 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).

To investigate intergenerational cohabitation, the respondents were asked whether their child lived with them or, if they had moved out, how far away they lived.

Thus, unfortunately, separated parents had no opportunity to indicate that their adult child was instead living with the other parent. This information gap poses a high potential for bias, as young adults co-residing with parents who were not surveyed cannot be distinguished from their peers who live on their own. On these grounds, only young adults whose natural parents stayed together were retained (n=12.660). Unfortunately, the variable indicating whether a child is a natural child of the respondents’ current relationship, a previous relationship, a foster or an adoptive child, has a very high share of missing values (63.90%). Missing values analysis revealed that missingness on this variable is highly correlated with other missing information, such as the young adult’s level of education, number of children and place of residence. One could hypothesize that those children, with whom par- ents have fewer contact, are especially likely to fall into this group of young adults, who have a high share of missing information. Yet, information on the frequency of contact is complete in 99% of all cases and show that their parents indicate contact frequencies similar to those of young adults with complete information. Never- theless, by excluding those observations, the concern of biasing the sample arises. However, with the outcome variable missing most of the time, there seems no point in including these cases into the analyses.

Returning to case selection, remaining young adults who lack information with re- gard to their place of residence were omitted (n=37). Lastly, young adults whom their parents indicated as being permanently sick or disabled were excluded from the data set, since their life courses are likely to deviate from those of their healthy peers (n=134). Consequently, the ﬁnal data set contains 12,509 young adults with a mean age of 30.28 years (SD=5.51) of whom 24.61% cohabitate with their parents. The parents are on average 59.40 years old, 77.32% state to live together with a partner. Just over half of the parents’ households consist of two residents, 15% are single– person households and the remainder of households consist of three to eight people in total.

3.3 Operationalization

Following, the measures used in the empirical analyses are discussed. Detailed in- formation on all indicators presented in this section can be found in the appendix, section B on page 71 and subsequent pages.

(a) Dependent variable

Intergenerational cohabitation. Whether a young adult co-resides with his parent(s) is inferred from the following question included in the ﬁfth wave: Where does [child name] live?

(a) In the same household, (b) In the same building,

(c) Less than 1 kilometre away,

(d) Between 1 and 5 kilometres away, (e) Between 5 and 25 kilometres away,

(f ) Between 25 and 100 kilometres away, (g) Between 100 and 500 kilometres away, (h) More than 500 kilometres away and

(i) More than 500 kilometres away in another country.

This question indicates two forms of intergenerational cohabitation: living in the same household and living in the same building. The latter includes for example young adults living in a self-contained ﬂat within their parents’ house. As Szydlik and Isengard discovered in their recent analysis, both forms of cross-generational living are hard to distinguish conceptually (Isengard and Szydlik, 2012). Empirically, the same contributing factors apply and exert similar eﬀects (see e.g. Courtin and Avendano, 2016). Thus, for the purposes of this paper, both will be considered, resulting in a dichotomous variable of intergenerational cohabitation.

(b) Independent variables

To begin with, the operationalization of causal inﬂuence factors with regard to young adults and, secondly of their parents are presented. Unfortunately, the survey does not include information on motives for co-residence, its duration as well as perceived beneﬁts or drawbacks.

Young adults. For each household, one family respondent was chosen to provide information on children. It should be mentioned that the quality of this information is worthy of discussion as it is only provided indirectly through the young adults’ parents and might not be up–to–date or incorrect due to so- cial desirability.

First, concerning young adults’ ability to provide for themselves, their occupa-

tional status is of great importance. In this paper, three types of employment are distinguished: full–time, part– time and self– employment. 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: pre-primary and primary education, lower secondary versus upper secondary education, post-primary non-tertiary education and tertiary education. To characterise the young adults’ stage of family formation, inform- ation about their marital status as well as number of children are combined. Preceding family formation, young adults who are not married or have children are identiﬁed. A second group comprises those unmarried young adults who are parents. The last two categories consist of married young adults, dividing them into parents versus childless persons. As a ﬁnal point, the young adults’ age as well as their gender are considered.

Parents. Regarding the young adults’ parents, information is either provided by each respondent individually, or by a household representative as well. Analogous to the young adults, their parents’ level of education is assessed using the same modiﬁed ISCED–classiﬁcation (see above) and summarised in