



# **Intergenerational family relations: Linked lives and lives in context**

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## Multigenerational focus

- vertical ties (children, parents, grandparents, great-grandparents)
- several generations together (demographic reality) [go to](#)
- both young *and* old (all phases of life, exchanges up and down, similarities) [go to](#)

# 6 generations of same family living in Ontario

Baby boy is introduced to 4 generations of grandmothers

CBC News Posted: Jul 14, 2013 6:34 PM ET | Last Updated: Jul 14, 2013 10:14 PM ET



6 generations of same family living in Ontario 2:28

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## Comparative focus

- cross-national differences in intergenerational ties
- historical changes in intergenerational ties



## Connecting two theoretical strands of life course research

- linked lives [go to](#)
- lives in context [go to](#)

Key concept: *generational interdependence*

Running theme: inequality (life chances) [go to](#)

"There was not just one story, but many stories, depending on your age, gender and circumstances," said Elder, author of "Children of the Great Depression," which is providing a baseline for scholars to examine today's narratives.

Then, as now, those in the middle class were more insulated from the worst ravages of the new financial realities, while those on the lowest rungs of the ladder — without savings, education and social networks — were the hardest hit.

That would certainly describe Sanchez, 23, of Des Plaines. She was pursuing an associate's degree in business when national headlines turned personal. In March 2008, the cafeteria that employed her dad shut down. Five months later, her mom, too, was pink-slipped from her manufac-

turing job.

At first, her parents trimmed the obvious expenses: Internet, cable, dining out. But when no more fat remained in the family budget, they turned to their daughter.

"It was hard. ... I really liked school," said Sanchez, who has three younger siblings. "But if I didn't bring in some money, we'd lose our house."

Sanchez went to work, first making metal parts for \$9 an hour, 45 hours a week, then moving to the office of a plastic bag company. "I told my parents, 'You supported me for 18 years, so now it's my turn.'"

After a four-year hiatus, Sanchez finally plans to return to Harper next month, thanks to a scholarship, and she aims to be the first in her family to graduate from college. But the recent struggles

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# individualisation ...



**“Dear Andy: How have you been?  
Your mother and I are fine. We miss you.  
Please sign off your computer and come  
downstairs for something to eat. Love, Dad.”**

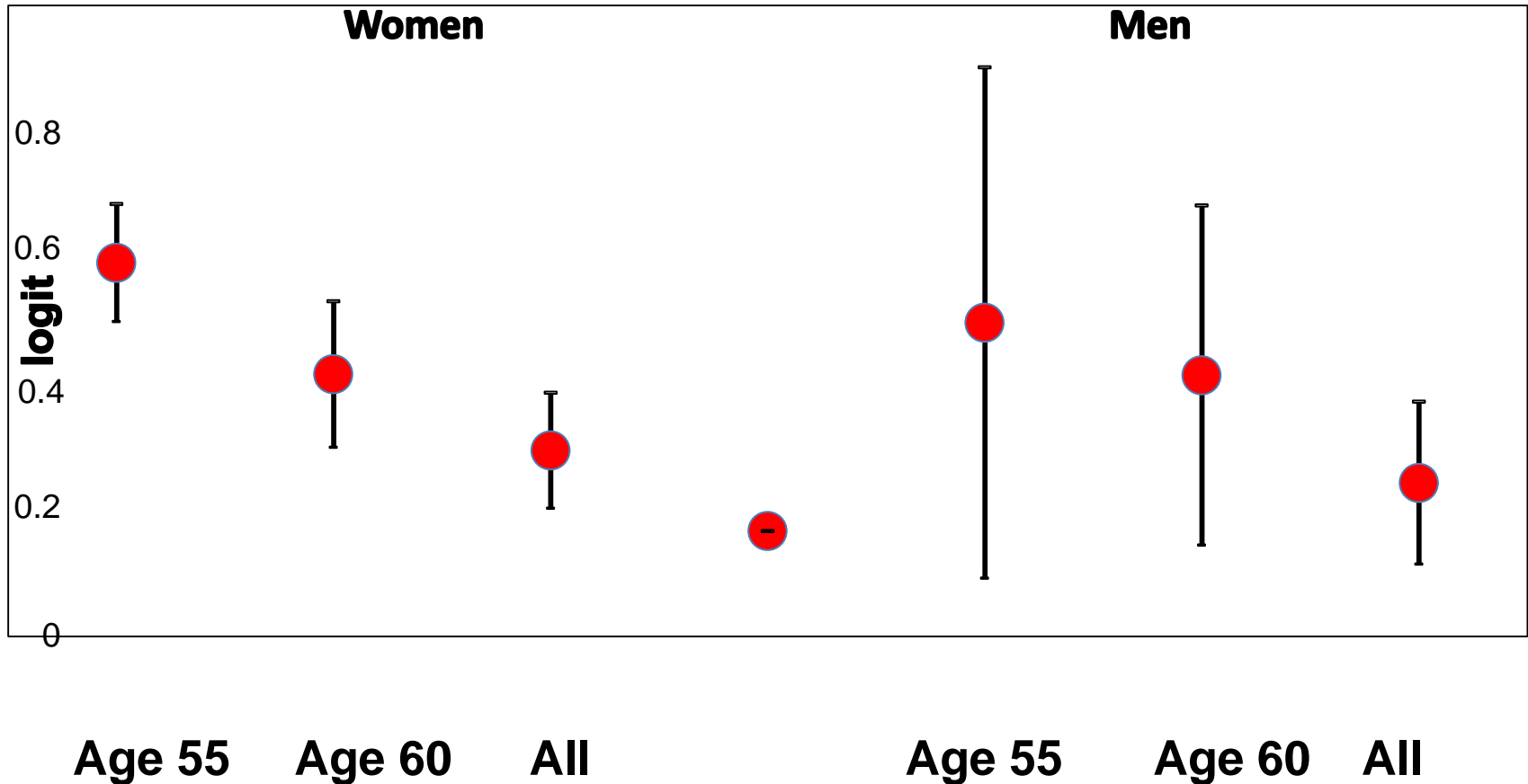
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## **New insights into inequality from taking a multigenerational view of family ties across life phases: examples from research\***

**\*References at the end of presentation**

## Predicted probability of grandparenthood for early exit labour force



Source: Van Bavel & De Winter (2013), based on ESS



## **Social mobility?**

**For both men and women: a strong and statistically significant net\* association between grandparents'\*\* and grandchildren's class positions**

**\*controlling for parents' social class, educational attainment, wealth, and income**

**\*\*maternal grandparents**

**Grandparents' effect in social mobility most striking in cases of upward countertermobility (not! regression towards the mean)**

**Chan & Boliver (2013), based on 1946, 1958 and 1970 British birth cohorts**

## **Another child?**

**Greater likelihood another child 8 to 10 years later  
if grandparents regularly provided childcare  
at the time of the first measure**

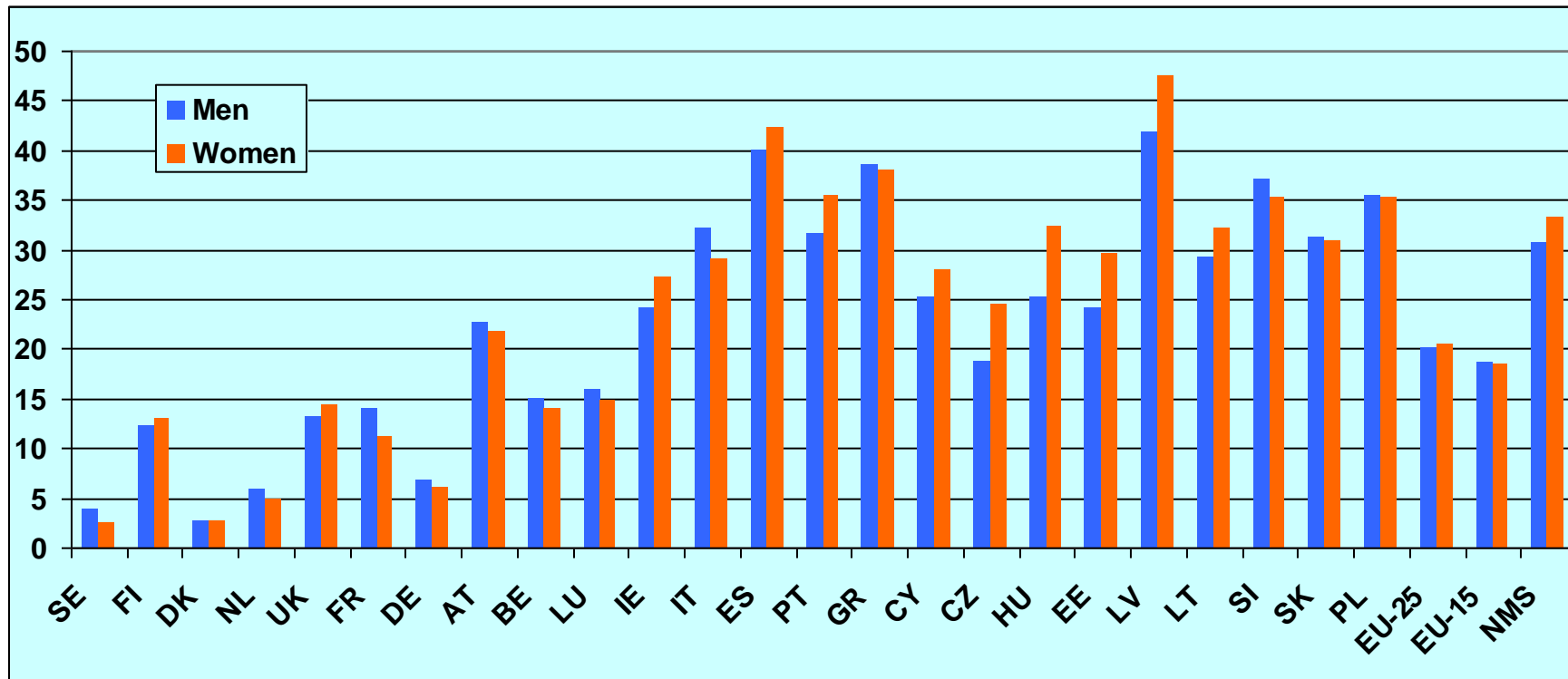
**(= support for cooperative breeding hypothesis)**

**Kaptijn et al. (2010), based on NESTOR-LSN and LASA,  
1992 - 2002**

# Recognising macro-level structuring of generational interdependence (and by extension: inequality), examples from research

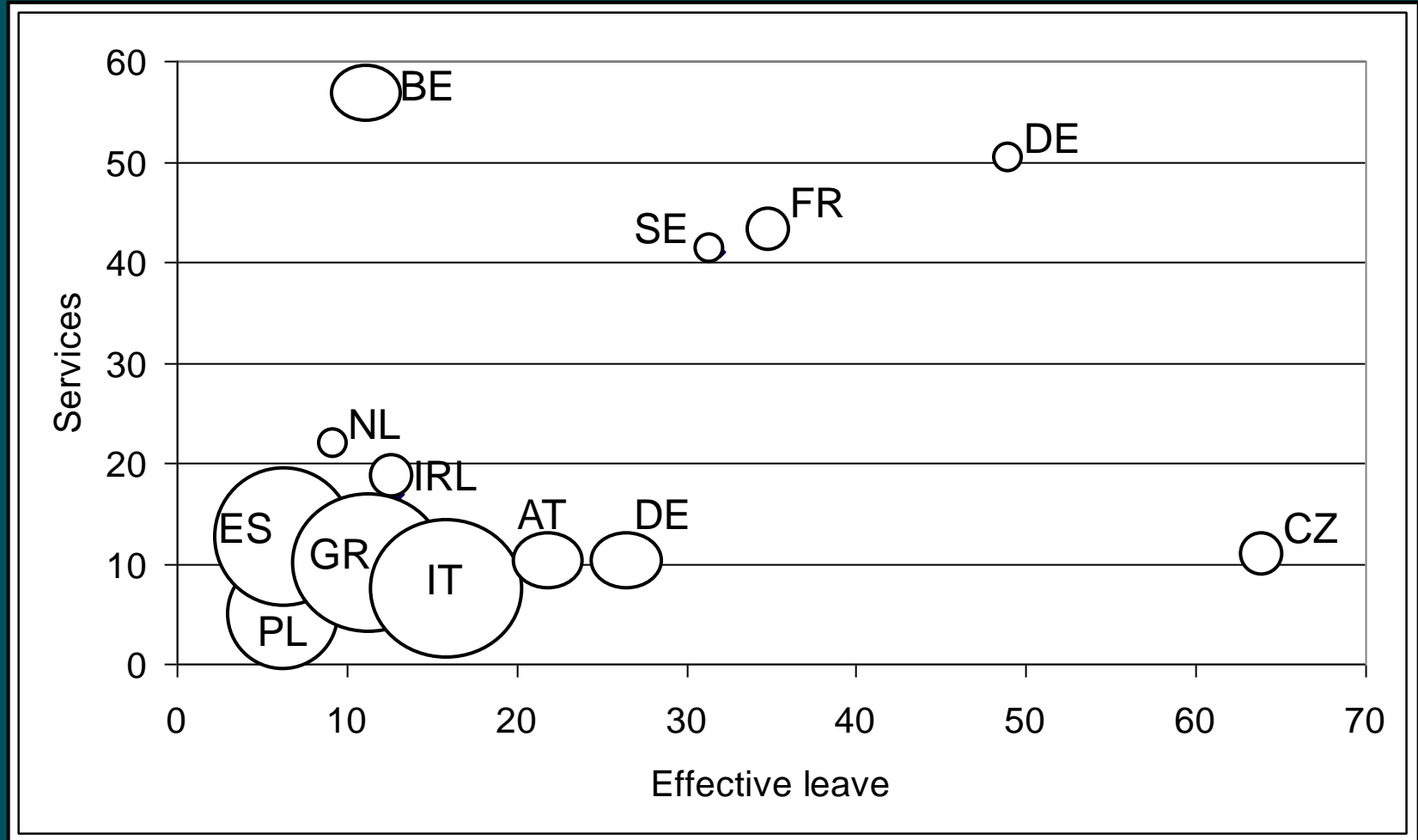


## % 65-plus in co-resident households



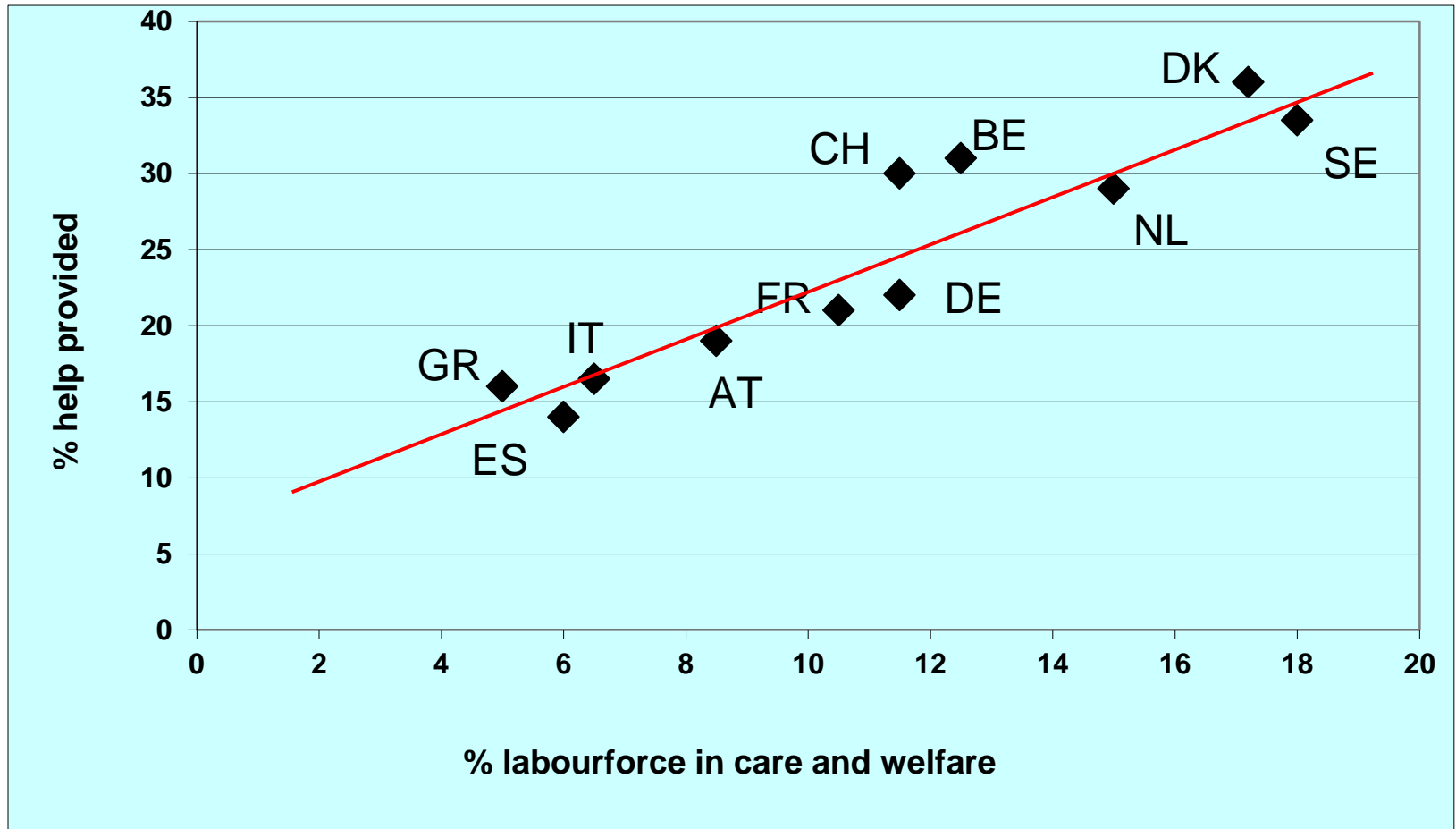
Source: Iacovou & Skew (2010), based on EU-SILC

# Predicted probability of caring for a grandchild of a working daughter by level of effective leave and services



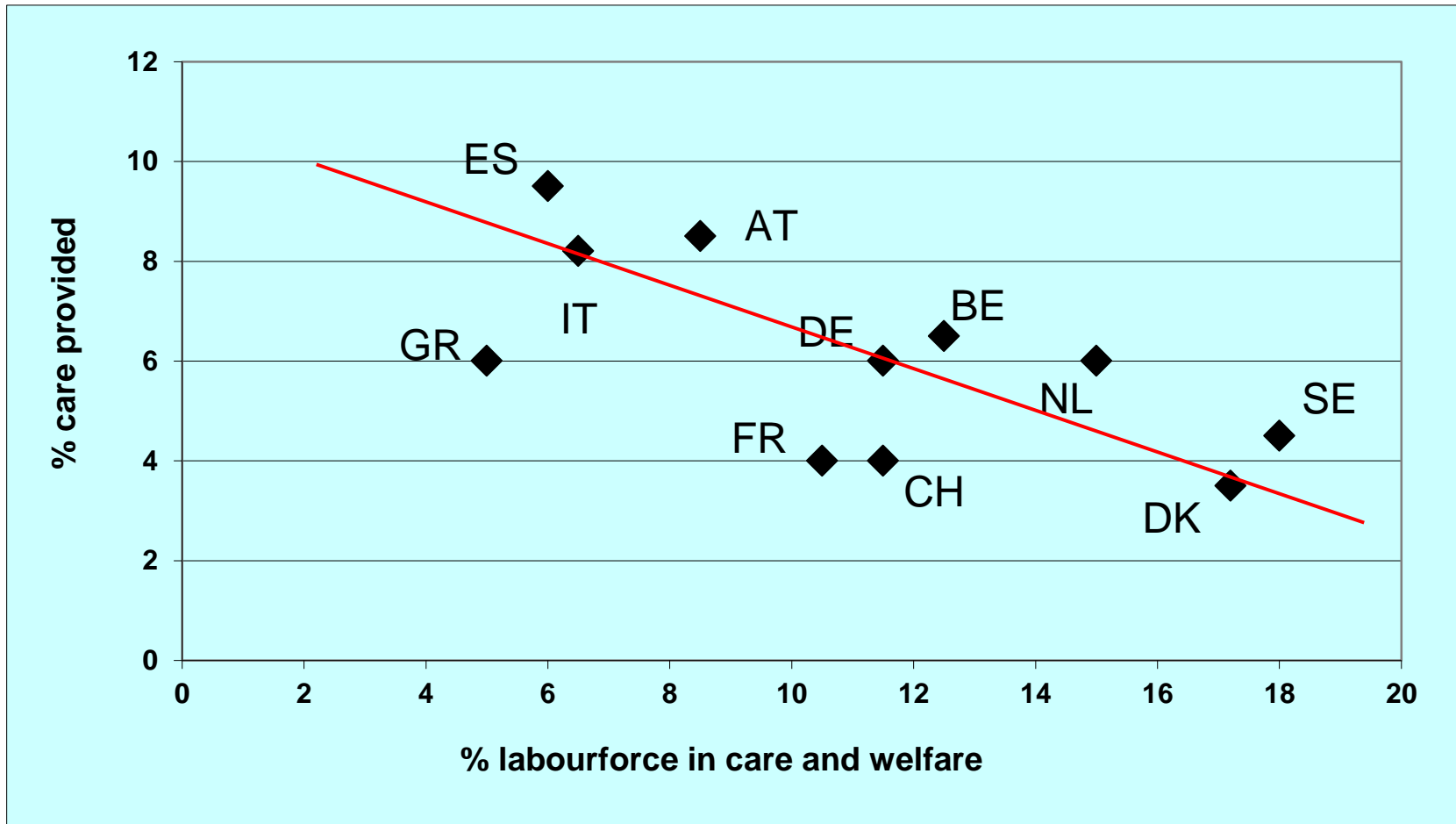
Source: Bordone et al. 2012, based on SHARE, MULTILINKS)

## % 50+ providing help to elderly parents



Source: Brandt et al. (2009), based on SHARE

## % 50+ providing care to elderly parents



Source: Brandt et al. (2009), based on SHARE

**Recognizing historical change in generational  
interdependence (and by extension: inequality),  
an example from divorce research**





## Why might impact of divorce have changed over time?

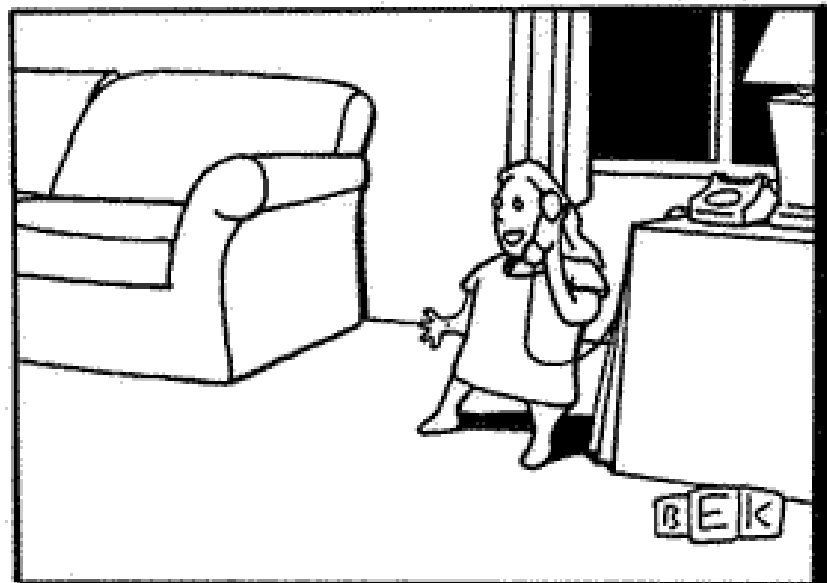
General agreement: over time declining impact of divorce

- Weaker stigma
- Less selectivity (lower barriers to divorce)
- Better preparation
- More interference by practitioners, policy makers

→ Divorce culture (Wagner & Weiß, 2006)



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*"So, are you still with the same parents?"*

"So, are you still with the same parents?"

© The New Yorker



“I want to get married and start a family with you—although  
God knows who I’ll want to finish it with.”

## What does the literature show?

Author(s)	Topic	Method	Result
Amato (1991)	Children of divorce	Comparison of US studies carried out in the 1970s and in the 1980s	Smaller effect sizes in more recent studies
Amato (2001)	Children of divorce	Comparison of US studies carried out in the 1980s and in the 1990s	No change in effect sizes
Sigle-Rushton et al (2005)	Children of divorce	Comparison of 1958 UK birth cohort and 1970 UK birth cohort up to age 30	No change in impact of divorce
Glaser et al (2008)	Intergenerational support transfers	Comparison of 61-69 year old parents in 1988 (SRRP) and 2001 (BHPS)	No change in impact of divorce
Wolfinger (1991)	Intergenerational transmission of divorce risk	Repeated national surveys (US-GSS)	Decline in rate of divorce transmission

## Offsetting effects?

- Reversal of divorce risks by level of educational attainment (for UK: Chan & Halpin, 2008; for NL: De Graaf & Kalmijn, 2006, Dykstra & Komter, 2006; for Sweden: Hoem, 1997, see also Dronkers & Härkönen, 2008)
  - Highly educated: most serious problems in marriage prior to divorce
  - Highly educated: better able to protect their children
- selectivity hypothesis
- protection hypothesis



## **Empirical support?**

**Study carried out in collaboration with Niels Schenk (EUR)**

- **Youth sample from the BHPS (ages 11-15)**
- **15 waves (1994-2009)**
- **25% of sample excluded (step-parent, single parent)**
- **N = 3882 adolescents in 2830 two-parent households**
- **Multi-level models (time nested in children; children nested in households)**
- **Parents divorced?**
- **Outcome measure: self-esteem (five items,  $\alpha \sim .75$  each wave)**



## Characteristics of the marriages of parents with high and those with low levels of education (N = 2813)

	High level education (ISCED > 4)	Low level education (ISCED ≤ 4)
Proportion divorced	4%	6%
Quality marital relationship ( <u>no divorce</u> ) (1 - 7)		
As rated by mothers	6.0	6.2
As rated by fathers	6.3	6.3
Quality marital relationship ( <u>divorce</u> ) (1 - 7)		
As rated by mothers	2.9	3.8
As rated by fathers	5.2	4.7



**Impact of parental divorce on adolescent self-esteem (0 – 5), mother's level of education and quality of the parental marriage (N observations = 8058)**

	Unstandardized regression coefficients		
Age child in years (mean centered)	-.001	-.001	-.005
Daughter	-.168***	-.146***	-.147***
Parents divorced	-.120***	-.151***	-.153***
Mother high education (ISCED > 4)		.030**	.033†
Mother high education * parents divorced		.085	.103†
Relationship quality parents at baseline			.025**
Constant	.176	.177	.024



## Reflections

- Evidence suggesting that highly educated mothers protect their adolescents from harm of divorce
- No evidence suggesting additional harm linked with very poor quality marriages of the highly educated
- Caution is advised: small numbers, only one outcome
- Future: repeat analyses with wider range of outcomes
- Perhaps: follow adolescents as they become main sample members

## Wrapping up

- **Avoid a “chopped up” notion of what families are about (consider both young and old)**
- **Gain new insights into inequality by examining macro-level structuring of family practices and historical shifts (generational interdependence)**
- **Combining key assumptions of “linked lives” and “lives in context” improves scientific knowledge on families**

## References

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