

## **MOTIVATION TO PROVIDE HELP TO OLDER PARENTS IN NORWAY, SPAIN, AND ISRAEL**

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### **ABSTRACT**

We explore from a cross-national perspective three motivations in adult children to provide help to older parents: affectual solidarity, parental need for care, and filial norms. The sample is 1,055 adult children from Norway, Spain, and Israel, countries selected because they represent different family cultures and welfare regimes. Affectual solidarity and parental need for care was found to influence amount of help in all three countries, whereas filial norms was found to have no effect. Country context had a differential impact. In Israel, affectual solidarity was more strongly associated with amount of help. In Israel and Norway, parents' need for care was related to amount of help; in Spain help provided was high, regardless of parents' need for care. We demonstrate the universality of motivations to provide help to older parents and the influence of cultural context on these motivations, taking into account within-country differences.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Interest in the relations between adult children and their parents has risen sharply over the past 3 decades. Researchers have found that parents and adult children maintain regular relations of exchange and support across societies (Kalmijn &

Saraceno, 2008). Less attention has been paid to the cross-cultural context of the motivation to provide help. In the present study we explore the factors that contribute to adult caregivers' ability and willingness to provide help to older parents—in particular, the influence of affectual solidarity between generations, parents' need for care, and filial norms on how much adult children help their older parents. We take a cross-national perspective, comparing Norway, Spain, and Israel.

Specifically, this study replicates and extends the research by Eggebeen and Davey (1998), who examined adult children's motivation to help their parents, using data characterizing American family life. Following their study, the present research focuses on three major motives: altruistic (i.e., filial norms), parent-child relations (i.e., intergenerational affectual solidarity), and parents' need for help. The contribution of our study is twofold: first, we take the provider's perspective, that of the adult child. Second, we highlight the national context. Eggebeen and Davey found parental need for care to be the strongest motivation to provide help. However, this finding is embedded in the context of an individualistic country with a liberal welfare regime (Esping-Andersen, 1999). Our study is based on data from two European countries and Israel, each of which represents a different welfare regime and family culture. This comparative data set enables us to better understand the interaction between the country context and adult children's motivation to help their parents.

Rapid changes in recent decades have influenced the role of families in helping elderly parents (Gierveld & Dykstra, 2008). Changes in family norms, structures, and patterns of behavior, along with a growing number of single-parent families, low birthrates (in specific cohorts), high divorce rates, and high rates of women's participation in the labor force, affect the lives of older people and their families (Ganong & Coleman, 1999). The time constraints on working women—the traditional caregivers—have created a shortage of available caregivers. Furthermore, an increase in the proportion of the population aged 65 years and older, an increase in the absolute number of older people, and improved life expectancy at birth all raise questions about appropriate ways to meet the needs of older people. The “aging of the aged” means that a growing number of older people, who become ever more frail, will need additional help and support. Societies' inability or unwillingness to continue to meet the needs of older people likewise alters the balance of family and society in bearing responsibility for elders (Sundström et al., 2008). These changes call for a reassessment of the role of adult children's motivations to provide help. Does adult children's affectual solidarity with their parents play a role? Do adult children still form the backbone of their parents' informal support system when they need care? Do their obligations to help their older parents predict their willingness to provide help?

In the following section we discuss the cross-national perspective; thereafter we address the three motivations to provide help, and then we discuss

within-country differences. The final section of the introduction is devoted to the specific hypotheses investigated.

### **Cross-National Perspective**

The interplay between culture-specific mechanisms and intergenerational relationships is better understood from a cross-national perspective (Yi & Farrell, 2006). In this article it is based on data from the OASIS study (Old Age and Autonomy: The Role of Service Systems and Intergenerational Solidarity),<sup>1</sup> which reveals similarities and differences between countries in family culture and welfare regime. Individuals and families operate in the context of larger social institutions that shape how adult children function as support systems for their parents. Indeed, families and state institutions intersect to jointly render help and support services to older people (Minkler & Estes, 1998). Care of the aged is a family-and-state mix, the exact proportions varying according to country.

Recently a large-scale European cross-national project studied intergenerational support (Survey of Health, Aging, and Retirement [SHARE]). Using this data set and focusing on patterns of intergenerational financial and time transfer, Attias-Donfut, Ogg, and Wolff (2005) found that in the 10 European countries studied, intergenerational family support is strong. Some of the inter-country variations that appeared follow the north-south gradient, but others operate in different directions (e.g., level of unemployment and poverty). In another study using the same data set, adult children proved more responsive to their elderly parents' needs in countries with more family-oriented attitudes (Kalmijn & Saraceno, 2008). Rather than comparing overall levels of support, Kalmijn and Saraceno (2008) compared the effects of need on support across countries. They found children to be more important in familialistic countries because they respond more strongly to the parents' needs than in other countries.

Using a different data set, the present study focuses on three countries of the OASIS study—Norway, Spain, and Israel—selected to represent different contexts and opportunity structures for family life and elder care. Norway stands out in that the welfare state is the major help source; in Spain family care predominates; and the Israeli model is characterized by a fairly even split between the family and the welfare state (Daatland & Lowenstein, 2005). We chose countries that are more prototypical examples of the family-state division of responsibility; therefore, the other two European countries from this project (England and Germany) were excluded.

The challenges Norway, Spain, and Israel face are similar, but the solutions tend to be different. These countries represent complex welfare-state arrangements in which family support and how it interacts with existing service systems

<sup>1</sup>OASIS was funded under the 5th program of the European Union, Contract No. QLK6-TC 1999-02182.

is currently under discussion. The focus is mainly on the future development of social care and support for people in need as a result of demographic trends, privatization, and individualization (Motel-Klingebiel, Tesch-Römer, & von Kondratowitz, 2005; Zunzunegui, Béland, & Otero, 2001).

Norway, Spain, and Israel are located along a north–south axis according to which southern European countries represent stronger kinship ties and a more family-oriented culture than northern European countries (Reher, 1998). Based on a large study that compared 64 countries, Hofstede scaled the countries on a collectivism–individualism continuum. Norway scored high on the individualism scale (69), whereas Spain and Israel received medium scores (51 and 54 respectively; Hofstede, 2001).

The three countries represent different welfare-state regimes: social democratic Norway and conservative (southern) Spain (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Ferrera, 1996), whereas Israel's welfare-state regime is best described as a mix of family and state obligations (von Kondratowitz, 2003). Spain is a family-inclined welfare state that tends to favor family responsibility and leaves the state a residual role. This country imposes legal obligations on adult children with respect to their older parents and provides relatively low levels of social-care services in areas that are by tradition a family responsibility, such as elder care. By contrast, Norway has individualist social policies, no legal obligations between adult family generations, and higher levels of social-care services. The mixed Israeli welfare-state regime combines legal family obligations, as in Spain, with high service levels, as in Norway (Daatland & Lowenstein, 2005). Findings regarding the use of services by older people in the three countries reflect the higher levels of social services provided in Norway and Israel than in Spain (Lowenstein, Katz, & Gur-Yaish, 2008). For example, in Norway and Israel about one-third of respondents aged 75 or older use home care provided by the state, whereas only 8% of Spaniards use these services. Similar findings reflect the use of services in the community: about 20% of Norwegians and Israelis use transport services, whereas only 4% of Spaniards use them.

### **Affectual Solidarity**

The quality of intergenerational relationships was considered in the present study as one of the motivators of helping older parents. According to social-exchange theory (Homans, 1961), the flow of support is a reciprocal process, at certain times or over the life course. Adult children who enjoy good relations with their older parents will provide more help because they have received help and comfort from their parents in the past. Eggebeen and Davey (1998) suggested that the amount of help provided is also contingent on the particular quality of the parent-child relationship. Empirical evidence supported this theoretical assumption and showed that adult children's attachment to their older mothers was related to more prospective help (Cicirelli, 1983) and to the amount of help

actually provided (Cicirelli, 1993; Schwarz & Trommsdorff, 2005). Stronger attachment was related to a less subjective burden. Carpenter (2001) obtained similar findings regarding emotional support.

### **Parents' Need for Care**

Studying the older parents' perspective on help from children, Eggebeen and Davey (1998) found in their longitudinal study that parents received help from their adult children in times of need and that the number of crises or transitions in parents' lives was a strong predictor of amount of help rendered by their children. The proportion of parents who received help from their children increased steadily with the experience of each additional transition. This occurred regardless of their general value orientation about children's obligations to help parents, or their expectations of help from their own children specifically. Similarly, Ikkink, Tilburg, and Knipscheer (1999) found that the amount of help received by parents depends on circumstances in the parents' lives, for example, parents with poor activities-of-daily-living levels or parents in great need of help.

### **Filial Norms**

Norms of filial obligations refer to adult children's expectations and attitudes regarding provision of help for their parents. They are taken as general behavioral guidelines indicating the right thing to do, and as such they are motivators for behavior. Ajzen's (1988) model of "planned behavior" assumed that personal attitudes and subjective norms influence behavioral intentions, but not the reverse. Even though substantial malleability in filial norms exists over the life course, children (and parents) share the view that children are obliged to provide help when needed (Gans & Silverstein, 2006). However, evidence on the relation of filial norms to actual help appears ambiguous: some suggested that filial obligations play a role in the amount of help afforded (e.g., Ikkink et al., 1999; Silverstein, Gans, & Yang, 2006), whereas others found little evidence of this relationship (e.g., Eggebeen & Davey, 1998). This inconsistency in the literature might reflect different family cultures: Lowenstein and Daatland (2006) found that the effect of filial norms on help provision by adult children appeared to be more prescriptive in southern countries (i.e., Spain and Israel) than in northern countries (i.e., Norway, England, and Germany), where intergenerational exchanges were more open to negotiation.

### **Within-Country Differences**

Adult children's support for their parents is also determined by the diverse opportunities in each country. Children do not always have opportunity to give support even when the motivation is there. Differences within the three countries in structured relations (e.g., gender) and family configuration (e.g., marital status)

might explain variations among them in motivations to provide care. Gender, education level, financial adequacy, and marital status are among the relevant personal resources that might affect support provided. In the current study we acknowledge the significance of these potential differences in personal resources within the countries. This acknowledgment may facilitate a better understanding of what underlies the findings of differences among countries.

### **The Present Study**

The present study advances previous research by examining cross-national variations in what motivates adult children to help their parents. We investigated the influence of affectual solidarity, parents' need of care, and filial norms on the amount of help, taking into account the cultural context in which these motivations are embedded and within-country differences. We suggest that the unique family culture of each country and the different welfare regimes will interact with the three motivations to provide help. Specifically, we hypothesized the following:

- H1: Affectual solidarity will affect the amount of help adult children provide to their older parents in all three countries. However, this effect will be stronger in the more family-oriented countries (Israel and Spain) than in the more individualistic country (Norway).
- H2: Parental need for care will affect the amount of help adult children provide to their older parents in all three countries. However, this effect will be stronger in Norway and Israel, where the state provides more services for older people, than in Spain, where state support is limited.
- H3: Filial norms will affect the amount of help adult children provide to their older parents in all three countries. However, this effect will be stronger in countries where the family tradition is strong (Israel and Spain) than in the more individualistic country (Norway).

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design and Sample**

This study used data from a comparative cross-sectional international research project (OASIS) that was collected through face-to-face structured interviews from a random urban representative sample. The present analyses focus on adult children who have at least one living parent aged 65 or older, from Norway, Spain, and Israel, for a total of 1,055 participants. The sample was not limited to adult children whose parents were impaired or in need of assistance. This may broaden the understanding of the motivation to provide help and may shed light on the normal everyday relations between adult children and their older parents.

A complete account of the OASIS model, design, and methodology is available in Lowenstein and Ogg (2003). Table 1 presents the comparative distribution of the main background variables by country.

The age distribution of the sampled population is almost identical in the different countries, with an average age of about 42 years. In all countries a larger proportion of women participated; the percentages were somewhat higher in Israel than in the other two countries. About 70% of the respondents were married. Spaniards were the least educated, with 17% indicating a primary education or less; in Norway 78% indicated having higher education. Perceived financial adequacy showed substantial differences: the highest was in Norway, the lowest in Spain. In terms of living arrangements, the Spaniards showed the highest rate of co-residence with older parents, followed by Israel. In Norway there was a negligible amount of co-residence.

## Measures

### *Help Domains*

To fully capture the experience of providing help to elderly parents, we included four potential domains of help: instrumental help (i.e., shopping and transportation, household chores, home repair, and gardening), personal care (e.g., nursing or help with bathing and dressing), financial assistance (e.g., giving money), and

Table 1. Background Characteristics of Adult Children  
in the Three Countries

	Norway <i>N</i> = 348	Spain <i>N</i> = 328	Israel <i>N</i> = 379
Age in years ( <i>SD</i> )	43.7 (9.3)	42.4 (9.7)	42.8 (10.0)
Gender (% female)	56.0	52.4	64.9
Marital status (% married)	67.5	70.1	73.6
Education			
Primary (%)	2.7	17.4	5.8
Secondary (%)	19.8	39.6	29.4
higher (%)	77.5	43.0	64.7
Financial adequacy (% comfortable)	53.9	39.7	43.5
Co-residence with parents (%)	.9	14.0	9.2

emotional support (e.g., providing comfort when the parent feels sad; House & Kahn, 1985). Participants were asked whether they had provided regular help to their older parents in each of the domains in the previous 12 months. Answers were “yes” (1) or “no” (0). A dichotomous variable was created to indicate whether participants had provided at least one form of help in one of the four domains (1) or had not (0).

#### *Affectual Solidarity*

The quality of the parent-child relationship was measured by means of the affectual aspect of the Intergenerational Family Solidarity Measures for Survey Assessment. Solidarity items were selected from the University of Southern California’s Longitudinal Study of Generations (Mangen, Bengtson, & Landry, 1988). *Affection* describes feelings of emotional intimacy between children and their parents, based on three questions: “How close do you feel to your parent?” “How well do you and your parent get along?” and “How good is communication between you and your parent?” The questions were coded from 1 (*not at all*) to 6 (*extremely*). A mean score was computed. The alpha score for the scale was 0.67.

#### *Parent’s Need for Care*

Participants were asked whether their parents regularly needed help with household chores such as cleaning or washing clothes, and with personal care such as nursing, bathing, or dressing. Parent’s need for care was coded as 1 (*needs regular care with household chores or personal care*) or 0 (*needs no regular care*).

#### **Filial Norms**

Expectations and obligations of intergenerational help were measured by a four-statement scale adapted from Lee, Peek, and Coward (1998). It probed the adult children’s general beliefs regarding intergenerational help (i.e., adult children should be willing to sacrifice some of the things they want for their own children in order to help their older parents; adult children should live close to their parents so that they can help them if necessary; older people should be able to depend on their adult children to help them; parents are entitled to some returns for the sacrifices they have made for their children). Respondents rated their agreement with these statements on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 5 (*totally agree*). A mean score was computed. The alpha score for the scale was 0.72.



## RESULTS

First we present descriptive statistics that shed light on the different help domains and the three motivations in the three countries. Then we present the main analyses of the impact of the three motivations to provide help, and the interactions between them and the country context, on amount of help provided to parents, taking within-country differences into account.

Comparative statistics by country are presented in Figure 1, including help provided to the parents in the four domains of help. Chi-square analyses were performed separately for each help domain, and all were found significant at the .05 level or higher (see Figure 1).

In all three countries, emotional support, as reported by the adult children, was the most common type of help provided to parents; with Spanish and Israeli participants reporting medium levels of emotional support and Norwegian participants reporting lower percentages of this kind of help. About one-fifth of the participants from all three countries reported providing instrumental help to their parents (Norwegians reported somewhat lower levels). Last, in all three

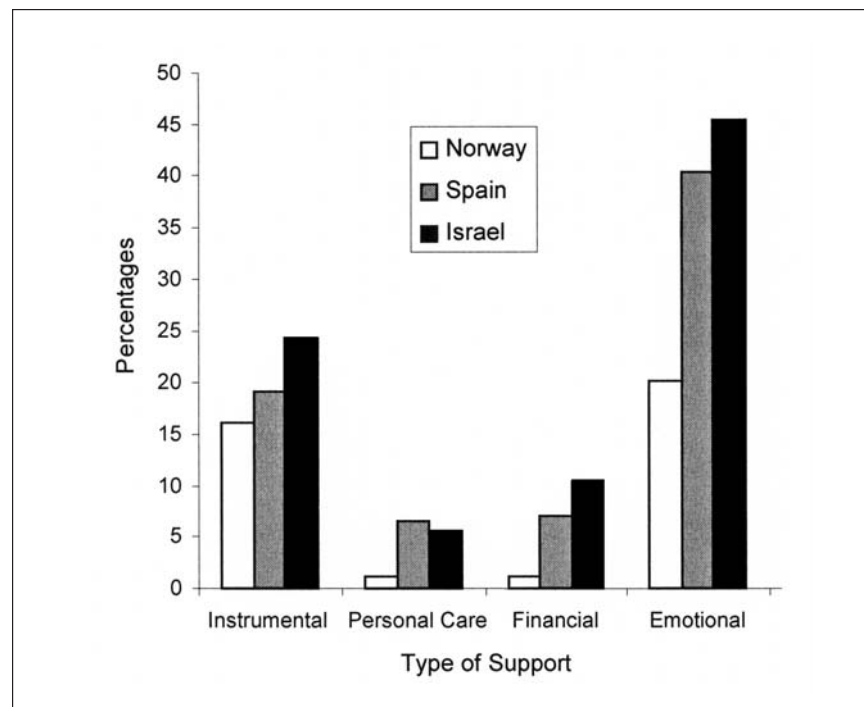


Figure 1. Amount of help provided to participants' parents by type of support and country (in percentages).

countries participants reported low rates of personal care and financial assistance. Spaniards and Israelis reported the highest rates of personal care and financial assistance, Norwegians the lowest.

Comparative statistics by country, including the three kinds of motivation, are presented in Table 2. ANOVAs were conducted for differences between the countries in affectual solidarity and filial norms, and chi-square analysis was performed for differences in parental need for care (see Table 2).

The data indicate that affectual solidarity as reported by adult children was high in all three countries. However, ANOVA analysis revealed statistically significant differences between the three countries,  $F(2, 1048) = 18.39, p < .0001$ . A Scheffé post hoc test showed that Israel formed one group, Norway and Spain another group.

Filial norms as reported by participants were in the middle range of the scale in all three countries, although they were relatively lower in Norway and had higher means in Spain and Israel,  $F(2, 1048) = 11.29, p < .0001$ . A Scheffé post hoc test revealed that Israel and Spain formed one group, Norway another. As for parents' need for care, most respondents in all three countries reported that their older parents needed care: about 70% in Israel and about 64% in Norway and Spain. Israeli parents needed significantly more help than parents in Spain and Norway ( $\chi^2(3) = 5.94, p = .05$ ).

To study the impact of the three motivations to provide help (i.e., affectual solidarity, parents' need for care, and filial norms) on the amount of help provided to older parents in a cross-cultural context, accounting for within-country differences (i.e., sociodemographic attributes), we conducted a log-linear regression with two blocks. The first contained the within-country variables of age, gender, marital status, education, financial adequacy, and co-residence with parents. The second contained the three motivations, the country variables, and the interactions between them. We computed the coefficients for each interaction term (see Table 3).

Three of the six sociodemographic variables were significant: age, gender, and co-residence with parents. Older, female caregivers who lived with their parents were more likely to provide help. As for the motivations to provide help, respondents who reported high affectual solidarity with their parents and respondents with parents who needed care were more likely to provide help to their older parents.

The significant interaction between affectual solidarity and Israel suggests that higher emotional solidarity with parents was a stronger motivation to provide help in Israel than in Spain and Norway (see Figure 2). In addition, the interaction between Spain and parents' need for care suggests that in Spain the amount of help adult children provided was high, regardless of parental need for care. In Norway and Israel, support from adult children (as reported by them) depended on parents' need for care (see Figure 3). Filial norms did not contribute significantly to the amount of help provided to older parents.

Table 2. Means and Percentages of the Three Types of Motivations by Country

	Norway N = 348			Spain N = 328			Israel N = 379			$\chi^2$	F	p
	M	SD	%	M	SD	%	M	SD	%			
Affectual solidarity	4.31 <sub>a</sub>	.96		4.48 <sub>a</sub>	.89		4.74	1.04		18.39		.0001
Filial norms	3.07	.79		3.35 <sub>a</sub>	.81		3.29 <sub>a</sub>	.80		11.29		.0001
Parents' need for care			64.1			62.7			70.7	5.94		.05

**Note:** Means in the same row that do not share subscripts differ at  $p < .05$  in the Scheffé post hoc test.

Table 3. Summary of Logistic Regression Analyses for Correlates of Help Provided to the Participants' Parents ( $N = 1,003$ )

Predictor	Block 1 <i>B</i>	Block 2 <i>B</i>
Age	.022**	.025**
Gender (1 = <i>woman</i> )	.380**	.378**
Marital status (1 = <i>married</i> )	-.013	-.104
Education	.022	.197
Financial adequacy	-.090	-.067
Living arrangement (1 = <i>co-residence</i> )	1.694***	1.544***
AS		.268*
PNC (1 = <i>yes</i> )		1.336***
Filial norms		.043
Spain		.503
Israel		-1.232
AS $\times$ Spain		.082
AS $\times$ Israel		.411**
PNC $\times$ Spain		-1.255**
PNC $\times$ Israel		-.670
Filial $\times$ Spain		.173
Filial $\times$ Israel		.076
Constant	-1.804	-4.886

**Note:** Norway is the reference category. AS = affectual solidarity; PNC = parents' need for care.

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

## DISCUSSION

The goal of this study was to investigate the cross-national variations in motivations of adult children to provide help to their older parents in terms of affectual solidarity, parents' need for care, and filial norms. Norway, Spain, and Israel were studied because they represent similarities and differences in family culture and welfare regime.

The results suggest that affectual solidarity and parental need for care influenced the amount of help provided to older parents in all three countries, whereas filial norms had no effect on the amount of help in any of them. Our results also

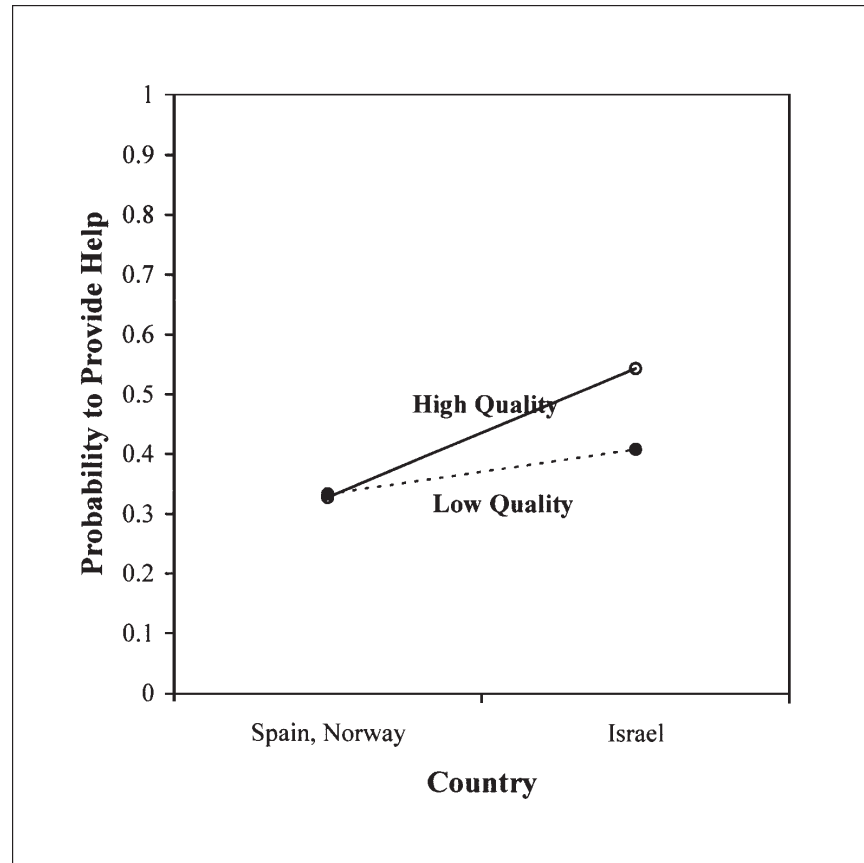


Figure 2. Amount of help provided to participants' parents by quality of relationship and country ( $N = 1,003$ ).

indicate that the country context influences affectual solidarity and parental need for care in different ways. First, although affectual solidarity was a significant predictor of amount of help in all three countries, in Israel it was a stronger predictor than in the other two countries. Israeli participants with high levels of affectual solidarity provided more help to their older parents. This motivation had a lesser effect on respondents from Norway and Spain. These findings partially support the first hypothesis. Second, in Israel and Norway parents' need for care was related to the amount of help provided, whereas in Spain help provided to older parents was high, regardless of their need for care. These findings support the second hypothesis. The third hypothesis, that filial norms will affect the amount of help adult children provide to their parents, was not

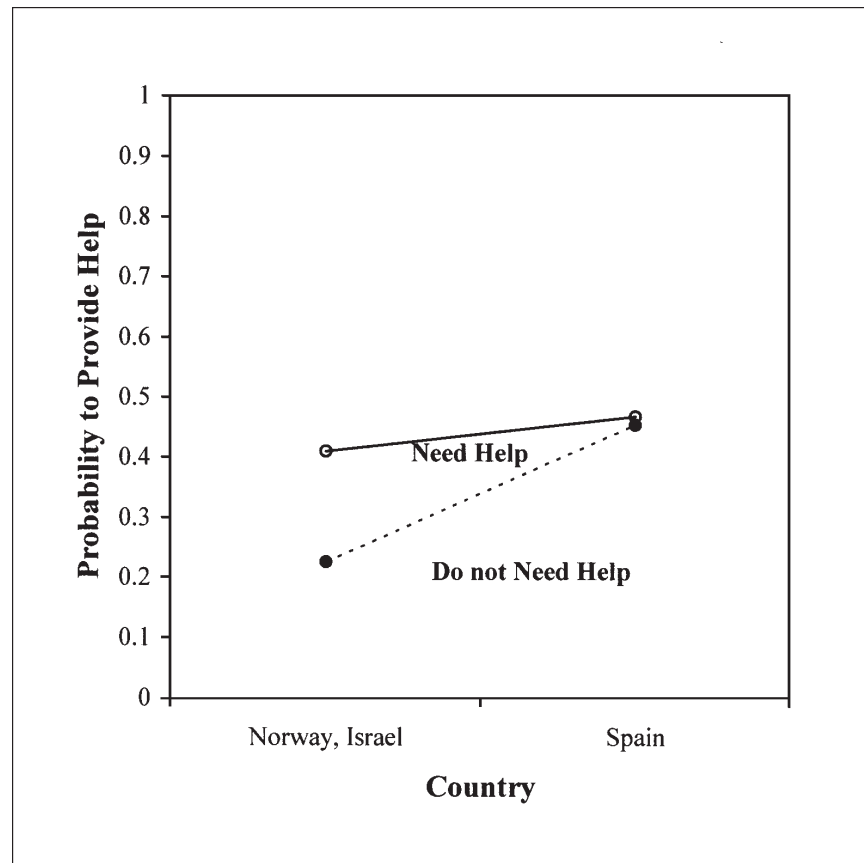


Figure 3. Amount of help provided to participants' parents by parents' needs for care and country ( $N = 1,003$ ).

supported. Before discussing the main results of this study, we refer to the findings that emerged from the descriptive analyses (see Figure 1), and the within-country differences.

### Help Domains

The findings reveal substantial variability in the kind and amount of help adult children provide to their parents: more respondents reported that they provide emotional support, and to a lesser extent instrumental help, whereas a small proportion of the respondents provided personal and financial support. The results indicate that the family still accomplishes a wide range of tasks related

to help and maintenance of its older members, although its salience varies according to the help domain and the country.

In general, the Israeli parents needed more support than parents in the other two countries in terms of personal care and instrumental help (see Table 2). This might be due to the high proportion (25%) of immigrants in Israel aged 65 or older, who report low levels of physical and psychological health (Brodsky, Shnoor, & Be'er, 2008). Accordingly, in Israel family help was the highest (except for personal care). The high proportion of family help might also suggest that although services for older people are widespread there, the family culture is very dominant (Katz & Lavee, 2005). In Norway family help was the lowest, which probably reflects the more central role of the state there. In Spain family help was high. This probably reflects both the less developed services provided by the state, and family interdependence, which is highly valued in Spain (Zunzunegui et al., 2001).

### **Within-Country Differences**

Personal resources within countries indicated that age, gender, and living arrangements contribute to understanding the national variations in helping behaviors of adult children toward their older parents. Older females who co-reside with their parents provide more help. These findings are consistent with previous research in Europe and in the United States showing that informal caregiving is systematically linked to both age and gender (Dahlberg, Demack, & Bamba, 2007; Swartz, 2009). Also, practical help such as transport and shopping, household chores, and personal care are more often provided where co-residence occurs.

### **Motivations to Provide Help to Older Parents**

In the following sections we discuss findings regarding the three motivations to provide help in the cross-cultural context. First we refer to affectual solidarity (Hypothesis 1), followed by parents' need for care (Hypothesis 2), and, last, filial norms (Hypothesis 3).

#### *Affectual Solidarity*

Affectual solidarity predicts the amount of help in all three countries (see Table 3). This finding is congruent with attachment-theory research that found relationships between adult children's attachment and the amount of help provided to parents (Carpenter, 2001; Cicirelli, 1983, 1993, 2003). The importance of affectual solidarity is also reflected in the finding that emotional support was the highest dimension of help given to older parents in the three countries (see Figure 1). In all of them, duty is seen as a less optimal motive and affection as a more optimal motive, implying the voluntary profession of support. Personal

affection becomes more important for family cohesion and intergenerational family ties. Normative obligations continue to play a role but may become increasingly transformed into affection and choice, giving family relationships a more personal and less structured aspect (Katz, Lowenstein, Phillips, & Daatland, 2005).

In terms of policy issues, it is very difficult to strengthen long-term emotional ties between adult children and their old parents; however, as Lyonette and Yardley (2003) suggested, interventions can be formulated to support those who have poorer relationships with their older parents: "It may be possible to ameliorate some negative aspects of the caring experience and thereby break the cycle of resentment in the carer role, relationship difficulties and stress" (p. 503).

The interaction between affectual solidarity and Israel may be due to the major significance ascribed to the elderly in this country's religious tradition; to the presence of particular sources of stress such as recurrent wars, terror acts, and immigration-related stressors that further strengthen intergenerational family relations; and to the close involvement of older parents in their offspring's lives (Katz & Lavee, 2005). For example, Brodsky, Shnoor, and Be'er (2008) found that 78% of people aged 65 and over in Israel meet with their family members, and 91% talk with them, every week. Marriage in Israel is almost universal: Less than 3% of the population has never been married by age 50. Total fertility for the average Israeli woman is 2.89, and the divorce rate is 32%, which is significantly lower than in most industrial countries (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2009). Contrary to expectations, affectual solidarity with parents did not affect the amount of help in Spain. Because of the family's major role in caring for older people in this country, affectual solidarity does not have a significant effect. Children are expected to provide help, regardless of the quality of their relationships with their older parents.

#### *Parents' Need for Care*

Similar to findings of previous studies (Eggebeen & Davey, 1998; Ikkink et al., 1999; Kalmijn & Saraceno, 2008), in our study parental need for care proved a strong predictor of the amount of help provided by adult children to their parents. Their circumstances predict behavior more than affectual solidarity and filial obligations do. In times of need, children tend to be there for their parents, regardless of their cognitions or emotions (Eggebeen & Davey, 1998; Silverstein, Gans, & Yang, 2006).

Findings that in Spain adult children provide help to their parents regardless of need reflect the family's central role there in caring for older people. Services there are still not regarded as trustworthy or desirable, either to replace or to supplement the family (Bazo & Ancizu, 2003). In Israel and Norway, where services for older people are more developed, adult children become more involved when parents need care. A more generous welfare-state provision,



as in Norway, does not discourage adult children's help. Formal services do not substitute for the family but instead complement it (Lowenstein & Daatland, 2006).

### *Filial Norms*

Filial norms did not predict the amount of help given. This is congruent with findings of some of the studies discussed earlier (e.g., Eggebeen & Davey, 1998). As Goldscheider and Lawton (1998) suggested, the concept of filial responsibility as the normative aspect of filial support may say little about the expectations adult children have with respect to their own older parents. Such personal expectations might be the mediating link between norms and helping behaviors (Gans & Silverstein, 2006).

Furthermore, expectations of filial norms might differ from behavior in real time. Appealing to the theory of cognitive dissonance, Finley, Roberts, and Banahan (1988) suggested that generalized filial norms may be adjusted in an attempt to reconcile the gap between the ideal and what is possible or actual.

In the current study, the adult children's three motivations to provide help (affectual solidarity, parents' need for care, and filial norms) were tested simultaneously. Unlike filial norms, which are a general guideline for behavior (Cicirelli, 1990), the other two motivations better represent the elderly parent's actual circumstances and the quality of the relationship among family members.

Other mediators not tested in the present study, such as race and ethnicity, family structure and size, and help provided in the past, may also play a role in the relation of filial norms to amount of help (Davey, Janke, & Savla, 2005). Future research might probe these suggested influences and shed more light on the inconsistent findings regarding the relationship between filial norms and amount of help provided to older parents.

### **Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

The current study was subject to the usual limitations inherent in cross-sectional designs. In addition, the sample was selected from urban areas. The decision to restrict samples in this way arose from the premise that potential differences between countries depend in part on stages of urbanization. Therefore, the findings and their interpretations must be viewed with some caution. A cross-sectional design shows family relations in a static situation. The replication and extension of the analysis through a longitudinal design would strengthen the directionality suggested in this article, and would provide a more dynamic picture of possible changes in the amount of help provided to older parents. Furthermore, the present analysis reports only one side of the parent-child relationship—that of the adult children. To fully understand the association between family relations and amount of help, researchers should examine the older parents' point of view at the same time (Fingerman & Birditt, 2003; Fingerman & Hay, 2002).

Understanding dyadic relations within the total context of family networks and roles may further help test the association of family relations with amount of help. Finally, presenting the dichotomy of individualistic versus collectivistic cross-cultural differences hampers the richness and diversity of national practices and institutes (McSweeney, 2002). Future research should investigate more thoroughly subcultures and more sophisticated models of cultural differences.

### Summary

The goal of this study was to replicate and extend the study of Eggebeen and Davey (1998) in three countries (Norway, Spain, and Israel) that represent different family cultures and welfare regimes. Like these authors, we found that parental need for care was a strong predictor of adult children's help and that their responsiveness was not related to filial obligations. Unlike Eggebeen and Davey, we also found that affectual solidarity was a significant contributor to amount of help. Within-country differences showed that older women who co-reside with their parents tended to provide more help. Finally, the results of this study suggest that the country context shapes the motivation to provide help. Thus, affectual solidarity is a stronger predictor of help in the more family-oriented country (i.e., Israel), and parental need for care is a stronger predictor for help in the countries where services for older people are developed (i.e., Norway and Israel). Taken together, our results suggest that motivations of adult children to provide help to their older parents are universal, but at the same time there is interplay between the motivations and the country context.

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