

# Familiecomplexiteit op oudere leeftijd en de gevolgen voor ouders en hun (stief)kinderen



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'Familiecomplexiteit: Over nieuwe  
gezinsstructuren en veranderde relaties'  
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# Families ... definitives stief



## Soorten familieleden

Bloedverwantschap ('ascribed') ... onzekerheid

Niet via bloedverwantschap ('achieved') ... permeabele familiegrenzen

- Aangetrouwd
- Via aangetrouwd
  - Stiefkinderen: uit eerdere relatie van één van partners (Sweeney, 2010); einde eerdere relatie door (echt-)scheiding of verweduwing
- Adoptiefkinderen
- 'Fictive' or 'voluntary' kin (Braithwaite et al., 2010; Voorpostel, 2013): substitutie voor afwezige familie



## Soorten stiefgezinnen

- Simpele stiefgezinnen
  - Eén partner brengt kind uit eerdere relatie in
  - Elke ouder heeft één rol (stief of bio); kind dubbele rol
- Complexe stiefgezinnen
  - Beide partners brengen kind uit eerdere relatie in
  - Iedereen dubbele rol (minder ambiguïteit); ouders geven voorrang aan bio-rol (meer ambiguïteit) (Stewart, 2005; Van der Pas & Van Tilburg, 2010)
- Samen een biologisch kind
  - “Concrete baby”; ‘cementing steprelationships’ (Ganong & Coleman, 1994)
  - Verkleint ambiguïteit stiefgezin (Cherlin, 1978)



(Waarom) zijn stiefrelaties ‘minder’  
(contactrijk, zeker, zorgend, ...)  
dan biologische relaties?



## “What Therapists Need to Know”

- Insider/outsider positions are intense and they are fixed
- Children struggle with losses, loyalty binds, and change
- Issues of parenting, stepparenting, and discipline often divide the couple
- Stepcouples must build a new family culture while navigating previously established family cultures
- Ex-spouses (other parents outside the household) are part of the family

(Papernow, 2018)



## Perspectives on stepchild's caregiving

- Intergenerational relationship
- Family affair
  - Contagion between children
  - Couple's or parent's characteristics
- Normative context



## Perspectieven: kans zorgverlening door stief

- Resource exchange perspective: Ouders investeren (zorg, tijd, geld) in kinderen; reciproque steun op latere leeftijd
  - Volwassen stiefrelaties zwakker en minder stabiel dan volwassen bio-relaties (Fingerman, Pillemer, Silverstein, & Sutor, 2012; Silverstein & Giarrusso, 2010)
  - Ten nadele van laat gestarte stieffamilies; wordt ook dan nog in stiefkind geïnvesteerd?
- “Incomplete institution” vanwege ambiguïteit in rollen en bijbehorende verwachtingen (Cherlin, 1978)
  - Verbetert? Maatschappelijke verwachtingen over scheiding/stief verschillen (landen), veranderen (cohorten) (Albertini & Garriga, 2011; Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1994)





# Consequenties van stieffamilies



## Stief vs. bio

- Stepfamily relations weaker than biological ones in aging families, leading to a 'step-gap' in contact, support and care (Aquilino, 2005; Cherlin, 1978; Ganong & Coleman, 2006; Pezzin, Pollak & Steinberg Schone, 2008; Shapiro, 2003; Van der Pas & Van Tilburg, 2010; Ward, Spitze, & Deane, 2009); Stepchild less likely to live near or with stepparents in later life (Seltzer et al., 2012)
- Presence of stepsiblings encourage adult bio child to help biological parent (compensation) (Pezzin, Pollak, & Schone, 2008) ↔  
Fewer time transfers; increase in number of family members due to stepkin is insufficient to compensate for the lower likelihood of transfers in stepfamilies (Wiemers, Seltzer, Schoeni, Hotz, & Bianchi, 2018)
- Ambiguous norms; normative obligations towards stepparents are more conditional (e.g. co-residential history; divorce vs. widowhood) (van Houdt, Kalmijn, & Ivanova, 2018)



## US stepfamily configuration; couple's characteristics

	Married, bio N = 3486; 59%	Married, step N = 2346; 35%	Cohabiting, step N = 418; 6%
Complex (vs. simple)		46	57
Joint child		38	10
Both previously married	3	62	80
Woman older	8	20	25
Different race/ethnicity	4	9	13
Man's education: college+	38	28	19
Both good health	68	62	51
Relationship very close	67	57	43



## Stepparent's poor health: less care or selection?

- Stepmother
  - developing disability 13 months sooner than bio-mother
  - entered nursing homes ~6 years earlier than bio-mother
- Stepfather
  - 18 months decreased longevity than bio-father

( $p < .10$ ) (Pezzin, Pollak, & Schone, 2013)



# Understanding cross-national differences in late-life stepfamilies in Europe and the United States



## Data sources

- Health and Retirement Study (HRS; USA; N = 7,038)
- Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE; 27 European countries; 20 in analysis; N = 38,071)
- Samples of households; one family respondent
- Selection: living with spouse or partner, having (biological or step) children, 55-90 years
- Sampling from different years of data collection, selecting unique respondents
- Data
  - Prevalence
  - Highest contact frequency across children (for stepfamily: bio and step)  
Countries with N stepfamilies < 25 excluded



## Sample size

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HRS		2006	2008	2010	2012	Total
		N=659	N=760	N=777	N=4,842	N=7,038

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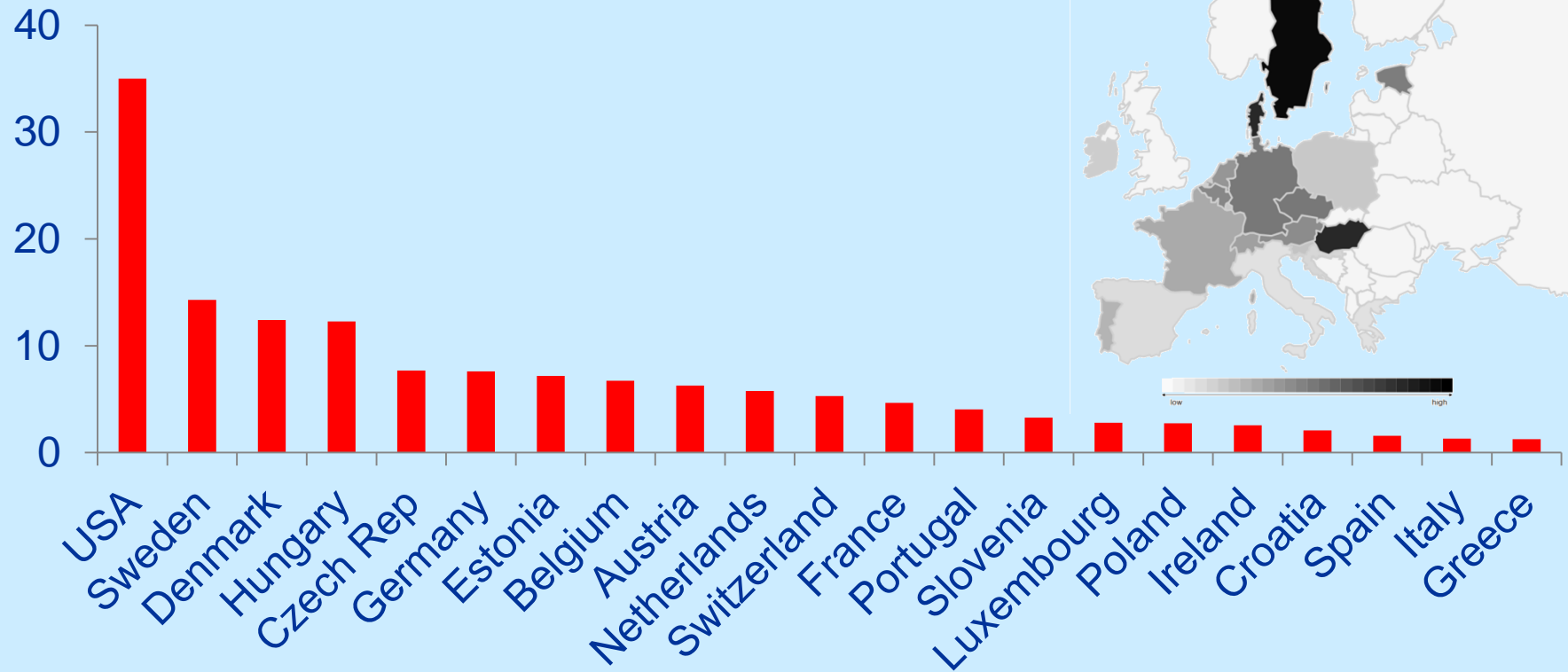
SHARE	2004	2006/2007	2011	2013	2015	Total
	N=2,025	N=3,525	N=4,629	N=6,354	N=21,538	N=38,071

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Note: unique respondents



# Prevalence of stepfamily (%)







## Country characteristics

- Economic circumstances
  - GDP (\$/1000 per capita; Worldbank)
  - GINI (income equality; Eurostat, OECD)
- Values (religion)
  - % Catholic, % Protestant (PewForum)
  - Is religion important in your daily life? (% yes; Gallup)
- Divorce
  - Crude divorce rate (OECD)
- Individualism
  - ‘Preference for a loosely-knit social framework in which individuals are expected to take care of only themselves and their immediate families’; vs. collectivism (0-100; Hofstede)



## USA and EU (SHARE-20) compared

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	USA	EU-20 (M)
% Stepfamily	35	6
GDP	56	37
GINI	.43	.29
% Catholic	24	55
% Protestant	52	15
% Religion important	69	45
Divorce rate	3.2	2.0
Individualism	91	60

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## Regression of stepfamily prevalence (EU; SHARE-20)

	Correlation	Beta	Beta
GDP	.08	-.33	
GINI	-.50	-.28	
% Catholic	-.58	-.03	
% Protestant	.79	.52	.56
% Religion important	-.72	-.12	-.40
Divorce rate	.66	.22	
Individualism	.49	.19	
R <sup>2</sup>		.87	.73
tolerance		> .34	.66



## Stepfamily prevalence predicted from regression

### Protestant

Low  
(0-5%)

Medium  
(20-37%)

High  
(64-82%)

Religion important  
High  
(70-75%)

2%: Croatia; Greece;  
Italy; Poland; Portugal

● USA ( $\hat{y}=20\%$ ) 35%  
(52% protestant,  
69% religion is  
important)

Medium  
(39-55%)

4%: Austria; Ireland;  
Luxembourg; Slovenia;  
Spain

7%: Germany;  
Hungary;  
Switzerland

Low  
(16-33%)

6%: Belgium; Czech  
Republic; France

8%: Estonia;  
Netherlands

13%: Denmark;  
Sweden



# Ratio frequency contact stepfamily / biological family





## Summary and discussion

- Prevalence USA twofold higher than in EU-20
- Income and income equality
  - Remarriage an economic necessity (Holmgren, 1985)
  - Divorce more likely if remarriage financially attractive (Cherchye et al., 2016)
- Religion (Protestant; religion less important)
  - Contrary to Catholic traditional family values (Inglehart & Baker, 2000)
  - Correlates with divorce rate
  - Indirect effect of family-friendly policies (Castles, 1998)
- Prevalence stepfamily is high in individualistic countries: people are used to relying on themselves or immediate family (in contrast to an unquestioning loyalty within greater family or a particular in-group)



## Summary and discussion (2)

- Stepfamilies are less a threat for family care than suggested
  - Prevalence stepfamily is high in countries where they are more accepted
  - Stepgap is relatively small
- However, this pertains to 'intact' stepfamilies
  - What care is given by stepchild when partnership ends?



Thanks! Questions?  
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