

Informal helping: Insights from a dyadic, family, and societal perspective

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Informal helping

Insights from a dyadic, family, and societal perspective

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Informal helping

Insights from a dyadic, family, and societal perspective

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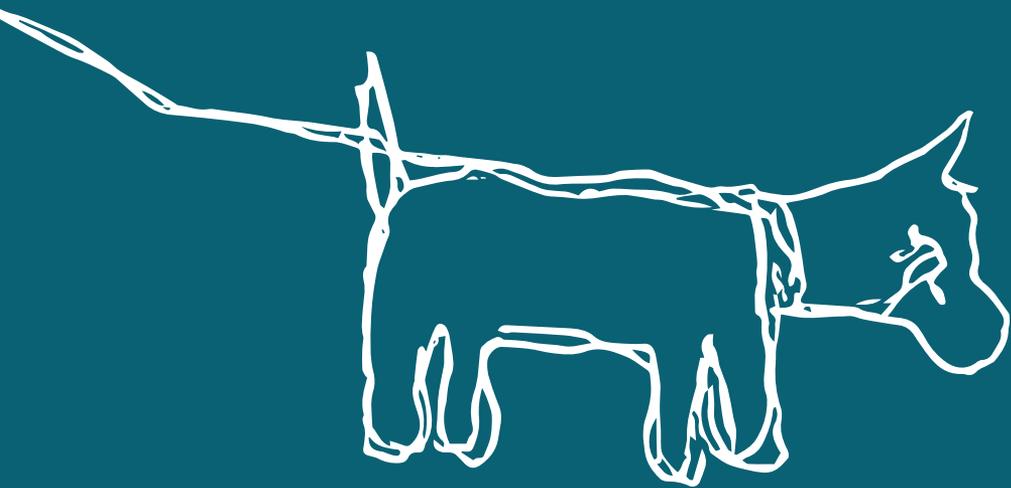
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CHAPTER 1

Synthesis



Drawing by Rachel Kollar



1.1 Introduction

Informal helping, that is providing practical support to family, friends and neighbors from time to time, is often seen as the social glue of societies (Einolf, Proueteau, Nezhina, & Ibrayeva, 2016). Providing support helps people connect with each other and build stronger relations. People generally feel good after doing something kind for another person (Andreoni, 1990; Crumpler & Grossman, 2008). Furthermore, informal helping may make people feel closer because it is a positive interaction that they share and because it signals that the helper is a person that can be relied on when support is necessary. Moreover, from a societal perspective, the extent to which people engage in informal helping signals how much people are willing to sacrifice time and effort to help out people in their network. Informal help provision can thus be considered an indicator of social cohesion and solidarity in society.

The importance of informal helping relations was for example highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, many older people and other vulnerable groups were afraid to do their own grocery shopping because of the risk of infection. By bringing groceries, family members, friend and neighbors likely managed to increase well-being among these groups (Silveira et al., 2022). Furthermore, informal helping relations and solidarity may become more and more important in Western societies. Governments in these countries are putting increasing emphasis on citizen participation in their policies. For example, people are expected to create support systems for those out of work or organize care and practical aid for vulnerable people within their own network before turning to the state. Thereby, these policies heavily rely on the existence of solidarity and informal helping relations. Thus, for these policies to work, it is important that sufficient informal helping relations exist.

Despite its importance, informal helping has received little attention in academic work. Studies that have examined informal helping have often done so in combination with other (formal support) activities (e.g., Cheng, Chan, Østbye, & Malhotra, 2022; Lee & Brudney, 2012; Wang, Mook, & Handy, 2017; Wilson & Musick, 1997). As a result, theoretical precision on explanations of informal helping specifically often lacks, making our understanding of informal helping limited. Furthermore, although policy makers have called for more informal helping in light of citizen participation policies, they have paid limited attention to informal helping when promoting community involvement. Instead, they mostly focus on formal organizations (Dean, 2022; Williams, 2003, 2008). To some extent this focus is understandable. From a policy point of view, it is difficult to influence unorganized social helping relations. Yet, this current policy perspective often sees

informal helping solely as a stepping stone for engagement in formal organizations. This is problematic as it disregards informal helping as a valuable activity in itself and an indicator of solidarity. This dissertation takes a similar stance to Williams (2003, 2008) and Dean (2022): it considers informal helping in itself a valuable activity that deserves attention from academics and policy makers. The dissertation contributes to the academic side by theorizing on informal helping and testing the impact of predictors on a dyad, family, and society level in Western countries.

1.2 Conceptualization

Informal helping refers to practical support that is provided to people who do not live in the same household and which are not coordinated by formal organizations (Einolf et al., 2016). As this definition is quite broad, informal helping includes a large range of activities. Examples are household tasks (cooking, cleaning, grocery shopping), maintenance tasks (car repairs, gardenwork), lending out things, childcare and providing transport (driving someone to an appointment) to others in one's network. Informal helping thus ranges from helping a friend move to doing grocery shopping for a neighbor every week, from lending a power drill to an (adult) child to spring cleaning an aunt's house, from watching nieces and nephews for an afternoon to planting new flowers in a friend's garden.

Six examples of informal helping are presented in Figure 1.1. Respondents in the Netherlands were asked how often they engaged in these tasks ("never", "occasionally", "regularly", "often"). Figure 1.1 denotes the share of people in the Netherlands who answered that they regularly engaged in these tasks. There is substantial variation in how often people engage in helping tasks. For examples, chores in and around the house are performed regularly by 37% of people for family, by 18% for friends and by 7% for neighbors. These percentages are lower, especially for family, with respect to looking after children. This helping task is regularly done by 28% for family, by 13% for friends and by 5% for neighbors. Driving someone to an appointment or other forms of transport is regularly performed by 41% for family members, by 27% for friends and by 9% of people for neighbors. This makes this form of informal helping the most common task that is regularly done for family, friends, and neighbors.

Figure 1.1 also shows the differences between receivers of informal help, namely, family, friends, and neighbors. This relates to key feature of informal helping; it is given to individuals in one's personal network (Dovidio, Piliavin, Schroeder, & Penner, 2006), mostly relatives, friends and neighbors (Amato, 1990). As figure

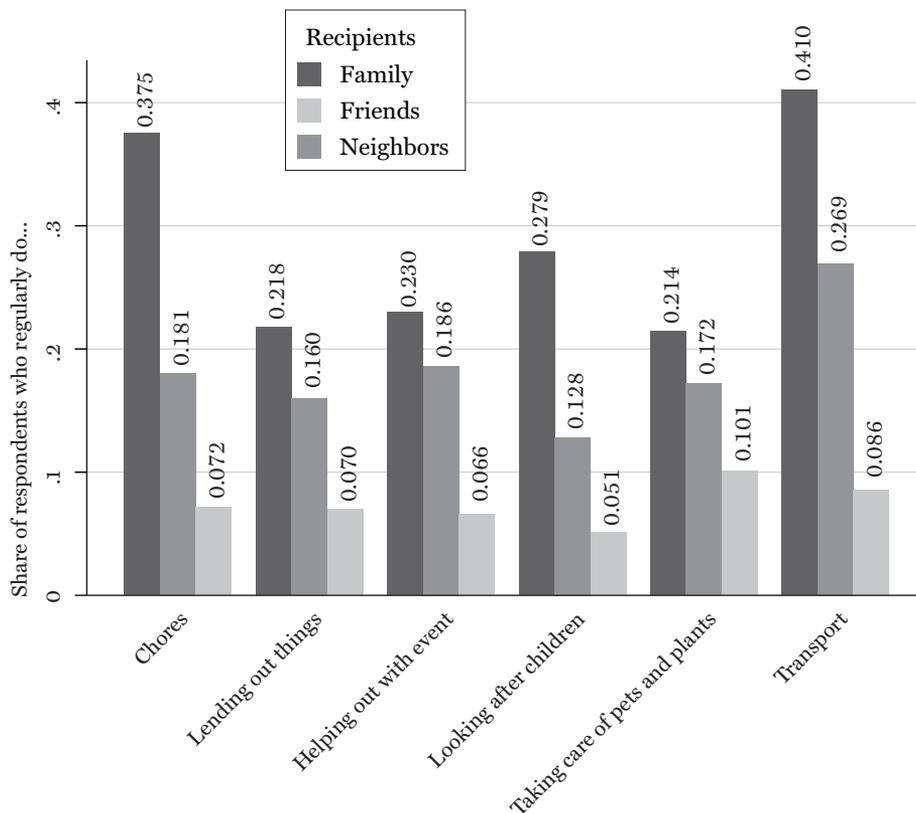


Figure 1.1 Share of respondents who regularly engage in informal helping behaviors, separated by recipients of help

Source: *Family Survey Dutch Population 2017-2018*

1.1 reports, family members receive support most often. This difference is especially clear for doing chores and looking after (grand)children. Friends receive less help (18% does chores, 13% provides childcare) than family members (37% does chores, 28% provides childcare) but more than neighbors, who receive the smallest amount of informal help (7% does chores, 5% provides childcare). The differences between these groups have not received much academic attention but they are likely the result of varying degrees of closeness and different helping norms. For example, many people see it as an obligation to help their family members (e.g., Lowenstein & Daatland, 2006; Silverstein, Gans, & Yang, 2006). This obligation is likely not felt as strongly towards friends and neighbors. My conceptualization thus focuses on person-to-person helping. Any help that ben-

efits a collective (e.g., the neighborhood) is excluded because it likely relies on different motivations and opportunities.

Informal helping is often compared to formal volunteering (Lee & Brudney, 2012; Wilson & Musick, 1997). It is then argued that they concern similar behaviors in terms of content. Yet, in case of formal volunteering, the helping activities are coordinated through organizations. This is not the case for informal helping. Instead, informal helping is organized directly between individuals through their social relations. Furthermore, like formal volunteering, informal helping is considered a form of social capital (Pichler & Wallace, 2007; Putnam, 2000) because it involves participation in the community. Informal helping is also considered a form of prosocial behavior (Amato, 1990; Finkelstein & Brannick, 2007; Helms & McKenzie, 2013; Wang, 2021), as it incurs costs for the helper and benefits the receiver (Hastings, Miller, & Troxel, 2015; Wittek & Bekkers, 2015). Because of comparison with formal volunteering, informal helping is sometimes referred to as informal volunteering (e.g., Einolf et al., 2016; Lee & Brudney, 2012; Wang, 2021; Wang et al., 2017). However, the general (academic) audience likely associates volunteering with organizations. Therefore, this dissertation refers to informal, voluntary helping behavior as informal helping.

Due to the lack of formal organization of informal helping, there are few barriers for engaging in it. Timewise, for example, informal helping is quite flexible. Organized helping behaviors often rely on people helping regularly or at fixed moments at fixed times. Informal help often can be provided in a more flexible manner. Often, there is no commitment to a certain amount of time, a certain moment or regular support. Instead, it can differ from day to day and from week to week. Therefore, informal helping is easily combined with other activities, such as work or childcare.

This flexibility is also a relevant feature in how informal helping differs from providing informal care. Informal care refers to support provided because of health impairments or old age (Kelle, 2020). This type of help is often necessary. Examples are grocery shopping because someone cannot physically leave the house, doing housework because it is too heavy for someone or helping someone get dressed. This necessity typically makes engaging informal care inflexible. Moreover, informal care often starts as a result of the recipient needing care (Broese van Groenou & De Boer, 2016). Hence, it is likely that informal care needs to be provided in a regular manner. On average, it may not be possible to provide it sporadically as this could directly impact the receiver's quality of life. Although informal help and informal care likely overlap to a certain extent, they generally differ in terms of flexibility.

Although informal helping incurs costs for the helper, it has also been argued to have benefits for the helper (Wang, 2021). Prior research has found that people who provide informal help later report higher self-rated health (Krause, 2009). Moreover, informal helping can assist people in dealing with adverse experiences. For example, providing informal help to others may help people deal with the loss of a spouse (Brown, Brown, House, & Smith, 2008; Li, 2007). Providing informal help during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic also helped people in North America deal with the lockdown measures (Sin, Klaiber, Wen, & DeLongis, 2021).

1.3 Prior research and theoretical perspectives

Research on informal helping relies on a large variety of theories. These can be put together in one general theoretical framework, which differentiates between resources, motivations, and opportunities. This framework was first proposed in a seminal study by Wilson and Musick (1997) and followed by various others (e.g., Cheng et al., 2022; Lee & Brudney, 2012).

First, resources refer to factors that allow people to engage in informal helping. These can include indicators of socioeconomic status, such as educational attainment and income. Prior research has found that factors such as financial resources, knowledge and skills have an ambiguous link to informal helping (Einolf et al., 2016; Lee & Brudney, 2012; Wang, 2021). This is likely the result of a lack of formal organization of informal helping. Therefore, people do not require skills and knowledge to find and navigate these organizations and the recruitment process does not rely on socioeconomic status indicators to determine whether someone can be helpful. Resources that have been consistently found to affect informal helping are time (Egerton & Mullan, 2008; Hook, 2004) and health (Erlinghagen, 2010; Hank & Stuck, 2008; Plagnol & Huppert, 2009; van Tienen, Scheepers, Reitsma, & Schilderman, 2011). Moreover, role overload theory suggests that people who are active in another domain, such as paid work, formal volunteering, or caregiving, are less likely to provide informal help. These activities cost time and energy that cannot be spend on informal help (Choi, Burr, Mutchler, & Caro, 2007; Hank & Stuck, 2008; Mutchler, Burr, & Caro, 2003). Empirical evidence is found in the fact that informal helping is less prevalent among female spousal caregivers, likely because they experience role overload (Choi et al., 2007).

Second, motivations refer to factors that make people more willing to provide informal help. These can stem from different sources. One strand of literature focuses on psychological states, showing that intrinsic motivation, internal focus

of control, helpful personality traits and empathic concern make people more likely to provide informal help (Einolf, 2008; Finkelstein, 2012; Finkelstein & Brannick, 2007). Furthermore, evidence suggests that the social motive from the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI) (Clary et al., 1998) also predicts informal helping (Finkelstein & Brannick, 2007). Other studies examine the impact of values. Van Tienen et al. (2011), for example, suggest that people with more religious attachment (through individual religiosity) provide more informal help. Values that match one's religious attachment are, among others, acquired through socialization, as shown by Perks and Haan (2010). Norms about helping have also been established as a motivation for providing informal help. For example, Manatschal and Freitag (2014) show that support for reciprocity affects who provides informal help. Furthermore, filial norms may explain differences in informal help supplied to relatives and to others (Lowenstein & Daatland, 2006). Finally, (changing) role identities may also affect informal helping. For example, studies have argued that when people retire and leave the work force, they substitute their paid work role for an informal helping role because they want to engage in meaningful activities (Erlinghagen, 2010; Hank & Stuck, 2008; Mutchler et al., 2003). Yet, empirical support for the impact of role substitution is limited.

Third, opportunities refer to circumstances that a person encounters in which informal help is easily provided. This factor is often related to social networks (Lee & Brudney, 2012; Wilson & Musick, 1997). It is, for example, argued that people with larger social networks know more people that may require help and thus may be more likely to find an opportunity to provide informal help (Lee & Brudney, 2012). Yet, opportunities may also rely on the closeness of social relations. After all, asking for help may be seen as difficult. Thus, people may only request help from someone they are close to. The type of people in a person's social network may also be relevant; some studies use demand based theories that argue that people differ in the demand for informal help in their networks (Gundelach, Freitag, & Stadelmann-Steffen, 2010; Lim & Laurence, 2015). For example, people in a deprived neighborhood may require more informal help than people in other neighborhoods. As a result, the demand for informal help in these neighborhoods may be higher and people living there may have more opportunities for informal helping. (Lim & Laurence, 2015). Finally, the distance to social relations may indicate informal helping opportunities. Because of its casual and flexible nature, informal helping is likely mostly exchanged between people who live near each other. Although this assumption is partly contrasted by the fact that neighbors receive less informal help, people may have more opportunities for helping, the nearer they live to their (close) social contacts.

Although informal helping has empirically been linked to various social network indicators (Amato, 1990; Lee & Brudney, 2012; Plagnol & Huppert, 2009; Wang et al., 2017; Williams, 2003), evidence regarding the underlying mechanisms of size, closeness and demand is limited. This may be partly due to the complicated causal relationship between social network indicators and informal helping. Although the opportunity approach considers a larger social network to be a predictor of informal helping, other causal relationships are also possible. For example, people may see informal helping as a way to interact with each other, meaning that informal helping is considered a part of social contact. In that case, social contact *includes* informal helping instead of predicting it. Another possibility is that informal help provision is used to maintain social relations. In that case, people who provide more informal help may have more close social relations or retain more people in their network because of their informal helping behavior. It is likely that all of these possibilities play a role in the relationship between social network indicators and informal helping. Since most studies were based on quantitative cross-sectional data, it has been difficult to disentangle their effects. As a result, any relationship between social network indicators and informal help should be interpreted cautiously in terms of causality.

1.4 Advancements of the dissertation

The general theoretical framework discussed in the previous section largely focuses on the individual, specifically on persons that may or may not engage in informal helping. Yet, as discussed in the conceptualization section, informal helping is relational behavior (Dovidio et al., 2006). Instead of prosocial behavior performed to benefit strangers or an abstract entity, it is based in existing social relations and depends on (local) norms about helping. This is, however, not reflected in the current theoretical and empirical work about informal helping.

To improve on earlier research, this dissertation incorporates the social environment further into theories on informal helping. It does so by connecting the general individual-level theoretical framework to three aspects of the social environment: the dyad, the family, and the society level. It thus answers the following research question: *to what extent does informal helping depend on characteristics of the dyad, the family, and society?*

1.4.1 The dyad level

Informal help is generally provided to specific persons (Amato, 1990). As a result, it is likely that characteristics of those who require help are important in whether

a person provides help and how much. Although it has been recognized that informal helping is relational by some (Dovidio et al., 2006), help receivers have hardly received attention in prior research on informal helping.

This dissertation takes a first step in this regard by connecting individual level theory to two aspects of the helping dyad. The helping dyad refers to the helper, the receiver, and their relationship. The dissertation therefore includes the receiver and their relationship to the helper in addition to the more often studied characteristics of the helper. Characteristics of receivers of help are studied in chapter 2. These are important to consider as they likely influence people's willingness to provide informal help. For example, people are more likely to help others who are in clear need for help (Batson, Lishner, & Stocks, 2015).

The relationship between the helper and help receiver is also important to understand informal helping. Prior research has suggested that people prefer support from family members over others (Conkova, Fokkema, & Dykstra, 2018; Wenger, 1990). This is in line with research on norms about providing support. In most Western countries, people have norms that it is important to help relatives (Lowenstein & Daatland, 2006; Rossi & Rossi, 1990; Silverstein et al., 2006), indicating that informal help is regularly exchanged in families. Although exchanging help is also sometimes considered part of friendships (Clark & Mills, 2012), this mostly pertains emotional support and mutual confiding, not necessarily practical informal help (Wenger, 1990). Neighbors do exchange informal help with each other but they are less often close (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Brashears, 2006) and exchanging help is often considered more transactional. That is, it is said to rely more strongly on short-term reciprocity norms and is more sensitive to norms of social exchange and social context (Phan, Blumer, & Demaiter, 2009; Thomése, Van Tilburg, & Knipscheer, 2003). This is also visible in figure 1.1 which reports that informal helping is much more common among family members than among neighbors. This dissertation thus considers the differences in informal helping between various recipient groups in chapter 4 and 6.

Additionally, social exchange theory (e.g., Blau, 1964) suggests that informal helping may depend on past help a receiver has given or future help they are expected to give. Following this argumentation, informal help is more likely to be provided if the helper and receiver exchanged informal help in the past. This is in line with reciprocity research (Burger, Sanchez, Imberi, & Grande, 2009; Falk & Fischbacher, 2006; Fehr & Gächter, 2000; Gouldner, 1960; Whatley, Webster, Smith, & Rhodes, 1999). This strand of research indicates that people are willing to engage in informal helping when others have helped them in the past or when they believe the other will support them in the future when needed. Although this reciprocity perspective has received some attention in prior research (Aeby &

Gauthier, 2022; Manatschal, 2015; Manatschal & Freitag, 2014), this was mostly on the importance of reciprocity norms in general. The exchange relationship between two specific people has hardly received attention. This dissertation takes a first step in investigating this in the second chapter.

1.4.2 The family

The family is the second aspect of the social environment that I incorporate into the individual-level theoretical framework in this dissertation. The (nuclear) family is an important aspect of people's lives. In general, people grow up in families and form their own family in adulthood. Furthermore, they are emotionally close. Consequently, family members exert a substantial amount of influence over a person's life (Arnett, 2015; Dovidio et al., 2006; Grusec & Hastings, 2015). This is also the case for helping and other prosocial behavior. Family members have been found to affect helping behavior by stimulating resources, motivations, and opportunities for helping (Bekkers, 2007; Hook, 2004; Nesbit, 2013; Rotolo & Wilson, 2006). The dissertation examines the family's impact on informal helping specifically and considers two aspects of the family: the helper's parents and the partner (Lück & Ruckdeschel, 2018).

Parents have been shown to strongly affect people's helping behavior (e.g., Bekkers, 2007; Perks & Konency, 2015; Wilhelm, Estell, & Perdue, 2014). Prior research suggests that they affect all individual-level factors for helping. Parents have been shown to transmit resources to their children (Bekkers, 2007; Mustillo, Wilson, & Lynch, 2004; Nesbit, 2013) and provide opportunities for helping (Nesbit, 2013). Yet, they most likely affect children's motivations for helping. Parents have a large role in children's prosocial socialization (Grusec & Davidov, 2015). Prosocial behavior develops throughout childhood. Through socialization, children learn what is appropriate (prosocial) behavior and internalize this behavior. During this period, parents are the main caretakers of children (Grusec & Davidov, 2015; Hastings et al., 2015). That is why the dissertation examines the impact of parents' socialization on informal helping in the third chapter.

Furthermore, partners likely play a role in people's informal helping. Although this aspect of the family has received less attention (for an exception see Hook, 2004), partners are generally one of the most important family members during adulthood (Nesbit, 2013). Like parents during childhood, partners live in the same household and are emotionally close to each other. The influence of partners can go through sharing resources and opportunities and motivating each other to help (Nesbit, 2013; Rotolo & Wilson, 2006). Furthermore, losing a partner through divorce may also affect a person's informal helping, as it impacts a person's

well-being (Booth & Amato, 1991; Johnson & Wu, 2002; Waite & Gallagher, 2000; Williams & Umberson, 2004) and social network (Eckhard, 2020; Terhell, Broese van Groenou, & van Tilburg, 2004; Wrzus, Hänel, Wagner, & Neyer, 2013). This dissertation examines the impact of the partner during a relationship (chapter 3 and 4) and the impact of partner loss due to divorce (chapter 5).

1.4.3 The society level

The third aspect that is connected to existing individual-level theories is an aspect of the society level. This level has received the most attention in prior research. For example, studies have examined the impact of macroeconomic changes (Lim & Laurence, 2015) or welfare state regimes (Gundelach et al., 2010; Jegermalm, Hermansen, & Fladmoe, 2019) on informal help provision. These studies often connect society characteristics to norms about informal helping and demand for help. For example, in economic downturns people may feel more strongly that helping those who cannot get by otherwise is important. Demand for help may rise during these downturns as well (Lim & Laurence, 2015).

Despite the prior attention to the societal level, studies have only compared people across contexts (countries or years). They have been unable to examine how people react in terms of informal helping when societal conditions change. This dissertation improves on earlier research on the society level by studying how people changed their informal helping behavior during the COVID-19 pandemic in chapter 6. I expect that changes in helping norms and demand for help resulted in changes in informal help provision during the first lockdown. Furthermore, these societal conditions are explicitly linked to individual-level factors predicting informal helping to improve understanding of how these levels interact with each other.

1.4.4 Methodological advancements

In addition to contributions to theorizing on informal helping, this dissertation makes advancements with respect to data and analyses. In general, it relies on survey data from three different countries (the Netherlands, Switzerland, and the United States). However, it uses various new data sources, which allow me to improve on prior research in terms of data and analyses as well.

First, the dissertation includes a time aspect in four of its five empirical studies. Most studies on informal helping are cross-sectional and do not examine effects over time. This may be problematic because selection and spuriousness likely play a role in informal helping research. For example, personality traits have

been found to relate to prosocial behavior (Carlo, Okun, Knight, & de Guzman, 2005). However, these traits likely also affect other factors, such as the size of one's social network or ability to combine paid work or childcare activities with informal helping. To isolate the impact of these factors on informal helping, it thus is necessary to account for the influence of personality traits. However, due to data constraints, cross-sectional data is often unable to do so. By including a time aspect, this dissertation can reduce the influence of selection and spuriousness. As a result, it provides new insights in how informal helping develops as a result of changes in resources, motivations, and opportunities. The time aspect is included by using retrospective data (chapter 3) and longitudinal data in which people are observed at multiple moments in time (chapter 4 to 6).

To analyze the time aspect optimally, this dissertation uses advanced data analysis techniques, such as fixed-effects and hybrid-panel regression models. These analysis techniques compare individuals with themselves at another moment in time. In this way, they limit the impact of differences between people and give more insight in how people change over time and as a result of which predictors. Furthermore, the fixed-effects modelling technique allows me to do a pre-post comparison of the first lockdown of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Netherlands.

Another advancement that this dissertation makes concerns the use of dyadic data in chapter 4. In this chapter, both partners are observed including reports on their own informal helping. This is a large improvement on studies that ask people to report on their partner's informal helping. As I argue in chapter 3, people likely are unable to accurately report on their partner's informal helping behavior. Using self-reports of both partners improves measurement validity and thus leads to more accurate insights in informal helping behavior and its antecedents.

Finally, new research problems on characteristics of the help receiver are tackled in this dissertation by using a factorial survey. As discussed in the prior sections on the advancements of this dissertation, prior research has sparsely addressed the issue of who receives informal help. A potential reason for this is that appropriate data sources were lacking. This made it difficult to study receivers' characteristics accurately. By collecting my own data and employing a factorial survey design, I was able to tackle this issue in chapter 2.

Using a factorial survey to study informal helping intentions also has other advantages. First and foremost, it allowed me to keep opportunities constant. Studies have argued that having a larger social network creates more opportunities for helping and is thus an important factor in predicting informal helping behavior (Lee & Brudney, 2012; Wang et al., 2017). Yet, differences in opportunities may also disturb the effects of motivations and resources on informal

helping because these likely correlate with differences in opportunities. Being able to keep opportunities constant in chapter 2 allows me to gain more insight into motivations of reciprocity. Second and relatedly, factorial surveys are highly controlled. Therefore, differences in responses can be ascribed to a limited group of factors. This helps me isolate the impact of direct and indirect reciprocity and help necessity from other factors that would disturb their effects in observational or survey data. Finally, factorial surveys avoid social desirability. In the study of informal helping intentions, it avoids the issue that people may say that they do not distinguish between people in their helping intentions, even though they (unconsciously) do.

1.5 Outline of dissertation and chapter summaries

The dissertation is structured along the three aspects of the social environment that it connects to individual-level theories. First, various characteristics of the dyad are examined in relation to informal helping intentions in chapter 2. Then, chapters 3 to 5 center the impact of family characteristics. Chapter 4 connects this focus on the family to the dyad, by exploring differences between recipients of help. Finally, chapter 6 focuses on the society level by studying the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on informal helping. Again, it connects to the dyad by exploring differences between recipients. The chapters study informal helping in three countries in the Global North, namely the Netherlands, Switzerland, and the United States. Table 1.1. presents an overview of the five empirical chapters.

1.5.1 Chapter 2: Why neighbors would help: a vignette experiment on reciprocity in informal helping

In chapter 2, I focus on the helping dyad. Specifically, I examine how characteristics of (potential) help receivers affect people's willingness to help a neighbor. The study's main focus is on reciprocity. That is, whether people are more willing to help a neighbor who will likely return their help. Reciprocity is often seen as a social phenomenon that ensures that people who are not altruistically motivated still exchange help. Yet, when reciprocity norms are strongly enforced, people who cannot provide help may be excluded from receiving help from their neighbors. Hence, the chapter examines the impact of reciprocity expectations on informal helping intentions and whether necessity of helping (based on the empathy-altruism hypothesis (Batson et al., 2015)) and prior helping behavior for others (based on indirect reciprocity (Nowak & Sigmund, 1999)) compensate this impact. Furthermore, it investigates whether people's informal helping intentions

Table 1.1 Overview of empirical chapters

	Aspect	Independent variable(s)	Dependent variable	Data sources	Country
Chapter 2	Dyad	Expected reciprocity Necessity of helping Past helping behavior	Informal helping intentions	Factorial survey among LISS panel (2022)	Netherlands
Chapter 3	Family	Socialization practices	Frequency of informal helping	Family Survey Dutch Population (2017-2018)	Netherlands
Chapter 4	Family	Informal helping by the partner	Informal helping (yes vs. no)	Swiss Household Panel (2013-2019)	Switzerland
Chapter 5	Family	Divorce	Time spent on informal helping	American's Changing Lives (1986-2002)	United States
Chapter 6	Society	COVID-19 first lockdown	Frequency of informal helping	Social and Cultural Developments in the Netherlands (2019-2020)	Netherlands

are less affected by reciprocity expectations when they know their neighbor has provided help to others in the past. To study these relationships, I conduct a factorial survey among the LISS panel members; people are presented with three hypothetical situations in which a neighbor need help. The description of the neighbor varies over the situations (and over respondents) based on likelihood of reciprocity, necessity of helping and prior helping behavior (for others). For each situation, respondents are asked how likely it was they would provide informal help. Multilevel regression analyses show that people have stronger intentions to help those who are likely to reciprocate informal help, but that a strong need for help and having helped others are more important for informal helping intentions. Hence, when neighbors are unable to reciprocate help but either have helped others in the past or are visibly in need of help, people still intent to help them. Furthermore, the effect of likelihood of reciprocity on informal helping intentions is stronger when neighbors never helped others. This indicates that when people are seen as unhelpful, self-serving motivations, such as expected

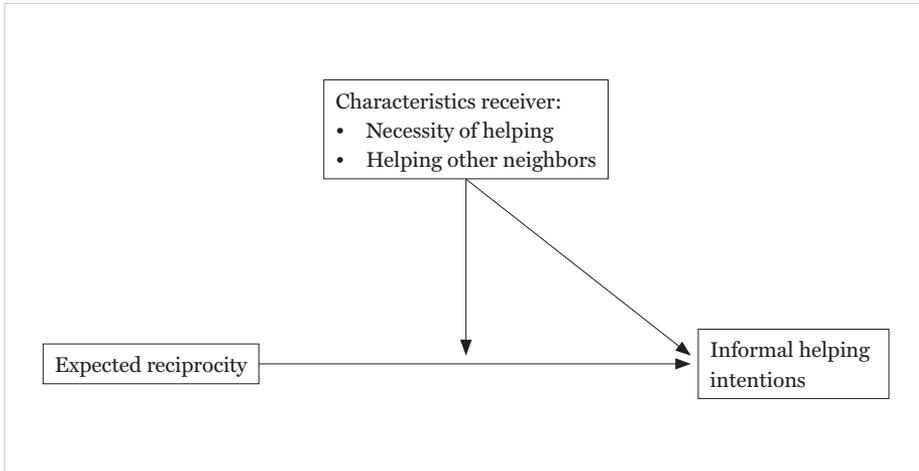


Figure 1.2 Visual representation of chapter 2: the impact of characteristics of the receiver on informal helping intentions (dyad)

reciprocity, are more important in determining informal helping intentions towards them. Overall, these results indicate that people are willing to help a neighbor in need when this neighbor is unable to reciprocate help, especially when this neighbor has helped other neighbors in the past.

1.5.2 Chapter 3: Socialization in informal helping. Examining modelling and encouragement by parents and partner

Chapter 3 focuses on the impact of the family, specifically on the parents and the partner. I examine how they affect motivation for informal helping through socialization. Prior research has shown that socialization plays an important role in prosocial behavior (Bekkers, 2007; Mustillo et al., 2004; Nesbit, 2013; Perks & Konency, 2015). By transmitting values about helping others from generation on generation and between partners, socialization efforts contribute to a sustainable engagement in prosocial behavior. Yet, evidence for informal helping specifically is limited. Moreover, it remains unclear which prosocial socialization practices are effective. To understand better which practices contribute to a sustainable engagement in informal helping, this chapter examines two socialization practices, namely modelling of prosocial behavior and encouragement of prosocial behavior, executed by two important sources of socialization, namely the parents and the partner. I propose that people provide more informal help to friends and neighbors when their parents and/or partner engage(d) in modelling or encouragement of prosocial behavior. This proposition is empirically tested with survey

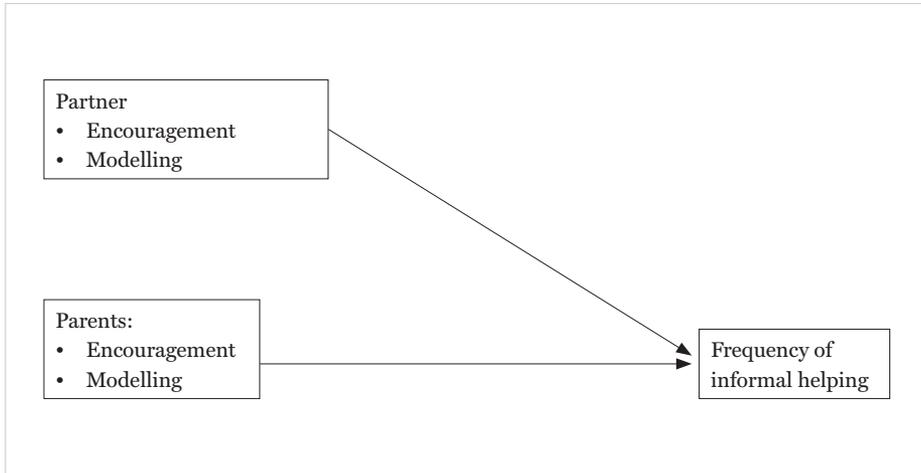


Figure 1.3 Visual representation of chapter 3: the impact of encouragement and modelling by parents and partner on frequency of informal helping (family)

data from the Family Survey Dutch Population 2017-2018. I control for a large variety of covariates of informal helping, such as personality traits, resources, and family characteristics, allowing me to isolate the impact of socialization as much as possible. Regression results show that modelling by both the partner and the parents promotes informal helping. Encouragement is an effective socialization practice if it is done by the partner, but not by the parents. The results suggest that parents thus contribute to one's informal helping behavior by showing their children that they engage in prosocial behavior. Partners, on the other hand, foster informal helping by showing its importance through both engaging in prosocial behavior and discussing the value of helping others with each other.

1.5.3 Chapter 4: Partners stimulate each other's informal helping behavior: evidence from a longitudinal dyadic study

In chapter 4, I further zoom in on partners. Chapter 3 and other research on partner effects in prosocial behavior suggest that partners influence each other's informal helping behavior (Brown & Zhang, 2013; Nesbit, 2013; Rotolo & Wilson, 2006). Yet, these studies have used cross-sectional data, meaning that selection could play a substantial role in the reported effects. In chapter 4, I improve on these studies by taking a longitudinal perspective. This allows me to control for unobserved heterogeneity and to do a more stringent test of partner effects in informal helping. I argue that a person's likelihood to provide informal help increases when their partner engages in it, because their partner stimulates their motivation

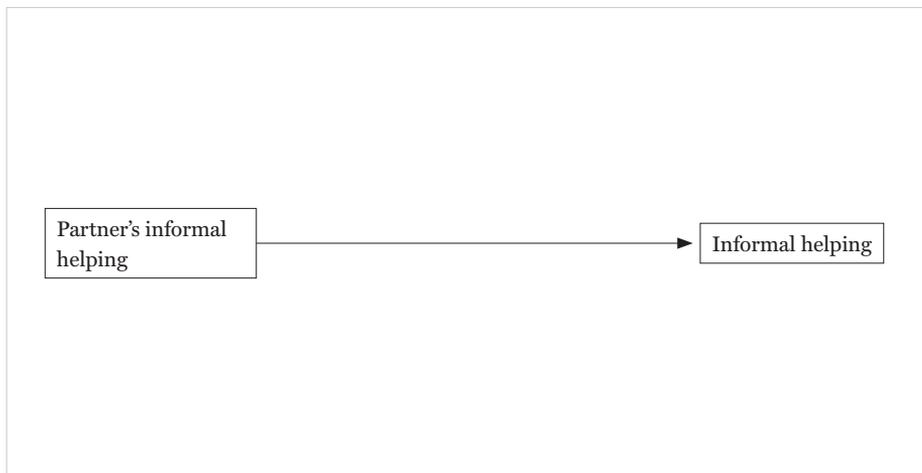


Figure 1.4 Visual representation of chapter 4: the impact of partner's informal helping behavior on informal help provision (family)

and opportunities for informal helping. Moreover, I examine this partner effect separately for help given to kin (family members) and non-kin (neighbors and friends). To do so, survey data from the Swiss Household Panel from 2013, 2016 and 2019 are used. Fixed-effects regression analyses are performed because they diminish the impact of unobserved heterogeneity between individuals. Reducing these differences between respondents, the models show that when one partner provides informal help, the likelihood that the other partner starts helping increases. This finding demonstrates that the partner effect on informal helping is not solely the result of selection, suggesting that partners influence each other as well. Furthermore, it supports the hypothesis that partners *positively* affect each other's informal helping. This finding applies to help provided to both kin and non-kin, yet the partner effect is larger in size with respect to informal help provided to kin than with respect to help provided to non-kin.

1.5.4 Chapter 5: The positive and negative consequences of divorce on informal helping from a longitudinal perspective

Chapter 5 employs a longitudinal design as well. Yet, instead of focusing on having a partner and their behavior, it examines the impact of relationship dissolution due to divorce. Divorce rates have risen since the 1970s and scholars have expressed concern that a breakdown of traditional unions would negatively influence community life, including informal helping. I propose that divorce may both increase and decrease informal helping. Informal helping may decrease after

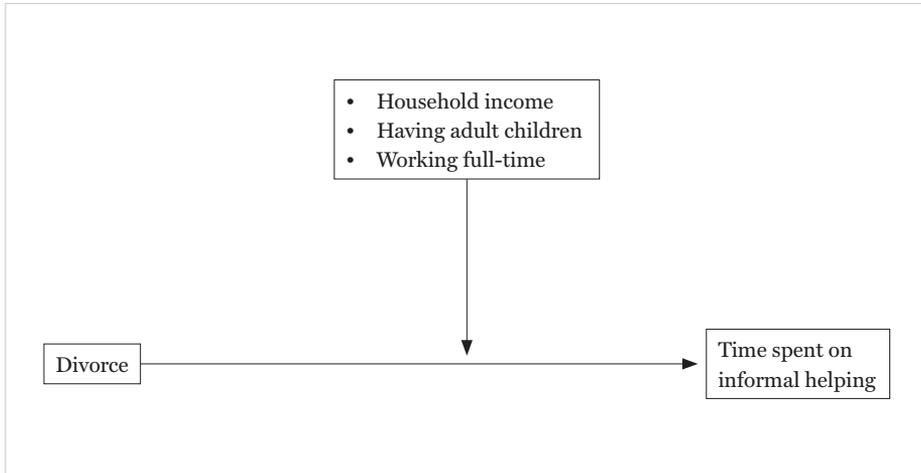


Figure 1.5 Visual representation of chapter 5: the impact of divorce on time spent on informal helping (family)

divorce because of reductions in social network size and well-being. Informal helping may increase after divorce because people feel a stronger need to invest in social relations, which spills over into helping. The negative consequences of divorce are expected to be less prominent in the high household income group. The positive consequences of divorce are expected to be less prominent among parents of adult children and full-time workers. Longitudinal survey data from the Americans' Changing Lives panel (1986-2002) are used to study these expectations. Fixed effects regression models show that informal helping does not change after divorce. Furthermore, the relationship between divorce and informal helping does not depend on household income or full-time work. It, however, does depend on having adult children. The tendency for people to increase informal helping after divorce is stronger for people without adult children than for those with adult children. Hence, this study suggests that rising divorce rates are unlikely to have led to a decline in informal helping.

1.5.5 Chapter 6: Informal helping in a lockdown. A study of changes in informal helping during the first COVID-19 lockdown in the Netherlands

In the sixth chapter, I examine informal helping during the first lockdown of the COVID-19 crisis in the Netherlands. During this period, government and civil society actors called for solidarity and to support each other. Yet, COVID-19 lockdown measures made this difficult because informal help is often provided

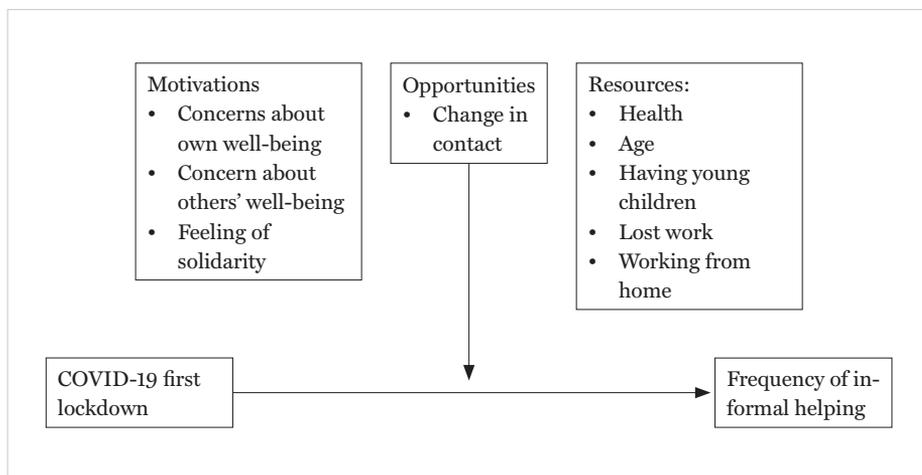


Figure 1.6 Visual representation of chapter 6: the impact of the first COVID-19 lockdown on frequency of informal helping (society)

face-to-face. Hence, I study how informal helping changed during the lockdown. Furthermore, to improve understanding of why people change their informal helping, I assess whether this change depended on resources, motivations and opportunities individuals had. It is expected that in general informal helping declined due to the reduction in opportunities for helping and fear of COVID-19, but that this decline was smaller among those who had more resources, motivations, and opportunities. Survey data from the SOCON COVID-19 Panel Study were used to test these expectations. The dataset consisted of people interviewed before the COVID-19 crisis and shortly after the first lockdown (July 2020). Both waves include questions on informal helping, allowing for a pre-post design. The change in informal helping is modelled with fixed effects regression models. In a second step, the change in informal helping is interacted with indicators of resources, motivations, and opportunities. Analyses are performed separately for help given to relatives, friends, and neighbors. Results show that help for all three recipient groups declined during the lockdown. The decline in informally helping relatives was smaller among those who lost work, were more concerned about family members, felt increased solidarity with other Dutch people and increased contact with relatives. Informal helping for neighbors slightly increased during the lockdown among those who increased contact with neighbors. The change in help given to friends was not related to indicators of resources, motivations, and opportunities.

1.6 Conclusions

The findings of this dissertation lead me to draw three main conclusions. Below, I will further explain these three conclusions and discuss some further reflections.

Helping inspires helping

The first main conclusion is that providing informal help to others inspires other people to do the same. This conclusion is based on two processes that this dissertation has found to play a substantial role in informal helping: socialization and reciprocity. Socialization refers to the process in which people learn what appropriate behavior is and internalize this. Chapter 3 shows the impact of socialization by family members on informal helping. It shows that when parents and one's partner engage in prosocial behavior, people engage more in informal helping. Direct encouragement by a partner has the same inspirational effect on people. The impact of one's partner's informal helping behavior is corroborated by the findings of chapter 4. This chapter shows that people are more likely to provide informal help when their partner starts helping. Moreover, this chapter indicates that it is not (just) the case that prosocial people are more likely to form a couple (selection). Instead, it implies that one's partner's informal helping behavior inspires more informal helping behavior.

Chapter 2 illustrates the impact of the second process that inspires more informal helping: reciprocity. It reports that people are more willing to help neighbors who are planning to stay in the neighborhood because they believe that these neighbors are more likely to return their informal help. This reveals the role that reciprocity plays in informal helping, namely providing informal help to a neighbor creates the expectation that this neighbor will return the favor at some point. Furthermore, this chapter reports that people who have helped other neighbors in the past and are always prepared to help are viewed more positively than other neighbors. More specifically, people are more willing to help them. This is a form of indirect reciprocity. This finding suggests yet another way in which helping inspires more informal helping; people are willing to reward helpful neighbors by providing informal help to them.

Motivations promote informal helping

The second main conclusion of this dissertation is that motivations play a substantial role in promoting informal helping. The processes described in the first main conclusion already allude to this conclusion. Both reciprocity (chapter 2) and socialization processes (chapter 3) increase motivation for informal helping, eventually resulting in people providing more informal help. However, the rel-

evance of motivations for informal helping is substantiated more broadly in the dissertation. For example, in chapter 2, I show that in people who are motivated by past helping behavior towards others have higher informal helping intentions. This chapter also reports that people can be motivated to provide informal help when they observe that someone is in high need of help.

Chapter 6 studies various motivations as well. Here, I found that motivations particularly affect providing informal help to relatives. Specifically, people who were concerned about their family members during the first stage of the COVID-19 pandemic and people who experienced a large increase in solidarity during this time kept their informal helping for family members stable during the first lockdown. This is in contrast to people who did not feel concern for family members or increased solidarity; they reduced their informal helping for relatives. Indirectly, chapter 5 addresses the issue of motivations as well. It reports that people without adult children tend to increase their informal helping after divorce in contrast to people with adult children (who tend towards decrease their informal helping). I argue that people without adult children react differently after divorce because they are motivated more strongly to invest in social relations than those with adult children. This social investment as a result of motivations then spills over into informal helping.

Neighbors do not automatically receive help

A third conclusion of this dissertation concerns neighbors. As figure 1.1 and chapter 6 illustrate, neighbors often receive less informal help than friends and family members. Additionally, friends receive less informal helping than family members who receive most informal help. This pattern is found in various sources on informal helping in the Netherlands. Following my theoretical framework, this finding implies that people have less motivations, resources, and opportunities for helping weak network ties (i.e., neighbors) than close ties (friends and family). An explanation for these differences may be found in theoretical notions on normative behaviors. Norms on helping family members are likely stronger than those on helping neighbors or friends (Lowenstein & Daatland, 2006). Another example is that people may have more family members that they are close to or in contact with than neighbors or friends (McPherson et al., 2006). Hence, people may be more likely to have information about informal helping opportunities for family members than for others. This may then result in more informal help being provided to family members than to neighbors and friends.

Despite the fact that neighbors receive less informal help, chapter 2 indicates that people are generally positive about helping neighbors. In this chapter, I asked people how likely it was that they would help the neighbor in the present-

ed scenario. The response to this question was on average positive, indicating that people are willing to help their neighbors. Yet, this chapter also reports that people's exact helping intentions depend on characteristics of the neighbor. For example, people have lower informal helping intentions when a neighbor requires help because they are busy than when they need help because they are injured. To summarize, although people are generally positive towards helping neighbors, they may feel less obligated to help them than other groups. Furthermore, people may (believe they) have less opportunities to help neighbors and differentiate between them based on characteristics such as the reason they require help, their prior helping behavior towards others and potential for future reciprocity.

1.6.1 Further reflections on measurements

The main conclusions of this dissertation should be seen in light of the differences in setup and data sources between chapters. One major difference between the chapters concerns the measurement of informal helping. In all chapters, informal helping is conceptualized and operationalized in accordance with the conceptualization presented in section 1.2. However, the exact measurement of informal helping differs slightly between chapters. Measurements can be divided in three categories: informal helping intentions (chapter 2), informal helping or not (chapter 4) and level of engagement in informal helping (chapter 3, 5 and 6). The last category can be divided further in time spent on informal helping (chapter 5) and frequency of informal helping (chapter 6).

The various ways of measuring informal helping may relate slightly differently to the resources, motivations, and opportunities that people have for informal helping. For example, informal helping intentions (chapter 2) are likely less strongly dependent on opportunities than actual helping behavior. Furthermore, the design of the factorial survey in this chapter left room for people to ignore their (lack of) resources for helping, such as available time and health impairments, because they were not explicitly instructed that resources should be considered. Another example is the dichotomous measurement of informal helping (i.e., providing help or not). Informal helping has a low threshold for participation (Williams, 2005). Consequently, virtually everyone may engage in informal helping at some point. As a result, a dichotomous measurement may not differentiate that well between (regular) helpers and casual or non-helpers, who lack the resources, motivations, or opportunities for more frequent informal helping.

Yet, considering the conclusions of various chapters, similar patterns do emerge. As stated above, motivations make an important contribution in predicting informal helping. Moreover, there are indications that opportunities play a substantial

role as well. This is suggested by the conclusions of chapter 5 and 6. Contrarily, resources have been found to only play a limited role in all measurements of informal helping. The results regarding resources are also more ambiguous than those regarding motivations and opportunities, but this finding is in line with prior literature on informal helping (Einolf et al., 2016; Wang, 2021). For example, higher educated intend more strongly to provide informal help to neighbors than lower educated (in chapter 2) but provide informal help less often (chapter 3). Moreover, people with good health intent to provide more informal help (chapter 2) but do not differ in frequency in which they provide informal help (chapter 3).

Another pattern that is observed across chapters and measurements are the differences between recipient groups. As discussed above, chapters 1 and 6 show that people generally provide more informal help to family members than to friends and neighbors. However, I do not observe this distinction in chapter 4. Here, I do not find differences between help provided to family members and friends and neighbors. It is possible that this is partly due to measurement; people may be equally likely to provide informal help to family and non-family once a year but may provide informal help more frequently to family members. It should be noted that this is only a partial explanation because additional descriptive statistics from chapter 1 and 6 indicate that the percentage of people who never provided informal help differed depending on whether family members, friends or neighbors received it.

1.6.2 Further reflections on country differences

Another explanation for differences in informal help provided to family members, friends and neighbors between chapters may lie in the differences between countries studied in this dissertation. As is visible in table 1.1, I examine informal helping in three countries: the Netherlands (chapter 2, 3 and 6), the United States (chapter 5) and Switzerland (chapter 4). Unfortunately, there is limited cross-national research to base any interpretations of cross-national differences on (for exceptions see Jegermalm et al. (2019), Kimmelmeier, Jambor, and Lerner (2006) and Plagnol and Huppert (2009)). Cross-national differences have received more academic attention in formal volunteering research (Anheier & Salamon, 1999; Baer et al., 2016; Musick & Wilson, 2008). Some of the structural and cultural explanations proposed in this strand of research may be useful for understanding cross-national differences in informal helping as well. Therefore, I use them to reflect further on the country differences in informal helping observed in this dissertation. Formal volunteering studies suggest that volunteering is more prevalent in liberal and social democratic welfare regimes (Anheier &

Salamon, 1999; Stadelmann-Steffen, 2011). Furthermore, countries with higher levels of economic development are reported to have higher levels of voluntary engagement (Baer et al., 2016; Curtis, Baer, & Grabb, 2001; Musick & Wilson, 2008). Cultural factors that may explain higher volunteer rates across countries include higher levels of postmaterialism, individualism, trust, and religiosity (Glanville, Paxton, & Wang, 2016; Inglehart, 2003; Luria, Cnaan, & Boehm, 2015; Ruiters & de Graaf, 2006). Additionally, formal volunteering has been found to be more prevalent in countries with a Protestant background (Curtis et al., 2001).

To some extent, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and the United States are similar in these aspects. All of them are Western, individualistic countries with high economic development and a historically protestant background. However, they do differ on other aspects. For example, approximately 40% of the Dutch population is not religiously affiliated. This percentage is much lower in the United States and Switzerland (Pew Research Center, 2014). Additionally, Switzerland and the United States are more liberal welfare regimes, whereas the Dutch welfare regime cannot be classified as such but tends more towards a social democratic or corporatist regime (Arts & Gelissen, 2002; Esping-Andersen, 1990; Sapir, 2006). Furthermore, people in the Netherlands and Switzerland are more trusting of each other and are less traditional than people in the United States (Inglehart, 2003; OECD, 2011).

The differences between chapter 1 and 6 (i.e., family members receiving more help than friends and neighbors) and chapter 4 (i.e., no differences by recipient group) may thus be the result of differences in the welfare state or level of religiosity between the Netherlands and Switzerland. Despite the contrasting result by Gundelach et al. (2010), the former may be particularly important. Jegermalm et al. (2019) indicate that informal helping is quite prevalent in the Nordic countries, which are all classified as social democratic regimes. They suggest that in these regimes the welfare state takes care of intensive care tasks, allowing people time and energy to take care of smaller, more casual tasks. In the Netherlands, people may devote this additional time and energy to helping family members due to family obligations (Lowenstein & Daatland, 2006; Rossi & Rossi, 1990; Silverstein et al., 2006). This could explain the differences between the Netherlands and Switzerland as well.

1.7 Implications

All in all, the dissertation finds that the social environment plays an important role in informal helping. The social environment increases opportunities for informal helping and stimulates motivations for helping. Moreover, who is the

potential recipient of informal help plays a substantial role in informal helping as well. These findings suggest that norms about helping in general, about the recipients and about the situation in which help should be provided play an important role in informal help provision. Therefore, these norms could form an important alternative to organizational mechanisms in promoting informal helping and cooperation. Hence, future research and policy can incorporate the role of norms further in their pursuit of informal helping.

1.7.1 Directions for future research

The main recommendation of this dissertation for future research is to follow it in its incorporation of the social environment in theories on informal helping and to study informal helping in relation to the social environment further empirically. As became clear from our main conclusions, the dyadic perspective is an important part in studying informal helping. This perspective should be incorporated further into future research. A relatively easy to execute example is assessing the differences between recipient groups. Further attention could be paid to norms about helping these various groups and opportunities for helping them. Preferably, future research also pays more attention to specific characteristics of (potential) help receivers. It could answer questions about the helping behavior of help receivers, but also consider studying homophily in informal helping (as Melamed et al. (2020) did).

A second recommendation concerns the role of social relations. Most studies in the informal helping realm agree that social relations are one of the most important covariates of informal helping (e.g., Lee & Brudney, 2012; Wang et al., 2017). Yet, the exact characteristics of social relations and how they lead to opportunities for helping remains unclear. The fifth chapter of this dissertation hints that social network size is not the only aspect of a social network that should be investigated. Instead, characteristics such as (emotional) closeness could also be of interest. Future research can dive further into the connection between social relations and opportunities for helping. For example, it can use longitudinal data to disentangle the causal order of social relations indicators and informal helping. Furthermore, future research may use various indicators of social relations, such as social network size, frequency of contact, average age, or educational level of close contacts, to examine which are the most important predictors of informal helping.

Third, this dissertation indicates the importance of norms regarding informal helping. Although norms can be linked to various hypotheses in this dissertation, they have not been tested empirically. Prior research has covered this to some extent

(Conkova et al., 2018; Manatschal, 2015; Manatschal & Freitag, 2014; Silverstein et al., 2006), but only in very specific areas. Future research should examine the role of norms more broadly. For example, it can test whether people who hold the norm that it is important to help neighbors also more provide informal help to neighbors than others. This informs the field further whether differences between recipient groups (e.g., neighbors and family members) are indeed the result of differences in norms or if other factors play a role in this difference.

Fourth, this dissertation did not devote much attention to differences between contexts in the mechanisms under study. In other words, it did not include differences between neighborhoods, regions, or countries. Yet, as I argue in the conclusions section, it is likely that at least country differences exist. Moreover, it is possible that norms to help may differ between regions or neighborhoods (for example based on degree of urbanization). In addition, certain mechanisms may be more relevant in certain country or regional context. An example could be that the opportunity structure for helping could be different in rural areas than in urban areas or that personal motivations play a smaller role in countries with higher levels of religiosity where the group norms about helping may be stronger. Hence, future research can expand further across different neighborhood, regional and country contexts and compare them. This would also allow for further testing of the central premise that this dissertation proposed, namely that the social environment (possibly including countries or regions) affects informal helping behavior.

Important in this recommendation is also the expansion of data sources that allow for cross-context comparison. One of the reasons, for example, why country comparisons in informal helping research are limited is a lack of appropriate data. General population cross-national data collection projects, such as the European Social Survey (ESS) and the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), did include questions on informal helping in 2006 and 2001 respectively. Yet, these items have not been repeated in the last 15 years (although ESS is planning to repeat a question on informal helping in its 2024 round). The Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE) does include more recent information about informal helping behavior in various countries. However, this dataset only surveys people older than 50 years. Hence, this dissertation calls for a more widespread inclusion of informal helping items in data collection projects that allow for cross-context comparisons.

1.7.2 Policy recommendations

Advising on policies on informal helping is difficult. As I acknowledged in the introduction, informal helping is unorganized by nature. As a result, it is more

difficult to influence informal helping than formally organized helping. After all, it is not possible to collaborate with all individuals who provide informal help (as opposed to organizations). Additionally, attempts to organize informal helping would change the nature of the behavior and would thus not affect informal helping itself. Yet, as I have also discussed earlier in the dissertation, informal helping is a valuable form of cooperation and contributes substantially to community life. Furthermore, informal helping may have well-being benefits for helpers (Krause, 2009). Informal helping is thus a behavior that government officials likely appreciate and would like to promote. Therefore, this dissertation does make some policy recommendations but restricts itself to factors that governments could feasibly implement.

The first recommendation is to promote motivations for helping. As I conclude from the empirical chapters, motivations play an important role in informal helping. Moreover, given that resources have an ambiguous relationship with informal helping and opportunities are difficult for governments to influence, motivations are the most feasible factor that governments can promote. This dissertation shows that motivations can take numerous forms, yet I would recommend government officials to focus on feelings of solidarity. The sixth chapter of this dissertation suggests that people who feel more solidarity with others provide more informal help. Hence, governments on both the national and local level can start campaigns that aim to foster feelings of solidarity, as these may eventually lead to increases in informal helping.

The second recommendation I do is to focus on increasing informal helping efforts among neighbors. Chapter 6 and figure 1.1 show that neighbors (in the Netherlands) do not exchange much help with each other, yet the second chapter indicates that people generally feel positively about helping neighbors. This seems like unused potential. Hence, governments can focus their promotion effects on neighbors specifically. For example, feelings of solidarity can be stimulated at the national level, but they can also be directed towards the neighborhood level. Thus, particularly local governments who emphasize social cohesion and solidarity within neighborhoods may promote informal helping.

CHAPTER 2

Why neighbors would help: a vignette experiment on reciprocity in informal helping



Drawing by Renae Loh



A slightly different version of this chapter is currently under review at an international journal. Tanja van der Lippe and Belle Derks are co-authors of this chapter.

The authors jointly developed the idea and the research design for this study. Ramaekers wrote the main part of the manuscript and conducted the analyses. Van der Lippe and Derks substantially contributed to the manuscript. The study on which this chapter is based was presented at the European Consortium for Sociological Research Conference on July 6, 2022, and the International Society for Third-Sector Research Conference on July 12, 2022.

Abstract

Reciprocity in informal helping is often seen as a way to ensure that people who are not altruistically motivated exchange help. Yet, it could be problematic for those who are unable to help, as they would be excluded from this exchange. We study to what extent people's reciprocity expectations affect informal helping intentions towards neighbors and whether necessity of helping (empathy-altruism) and helping behavior towards others (indirect reciprocity) compensate and moderate this relationship. Specifically, we expect that informal helping intentions are stronger when a neighbor is likely to reciprocate, is in high need of help or helped other neighbors. Expectations are tested with a factorial survey conducted among the LISS panel members ($N = 3302$). Multilevel regression analyses show that people have stronger intentions to help those who are likely to reciprocate but that a strong need for help and having helped others in the past are more important reasons to help. Furthermore, the gap in helping intentions between those are likely and unlikely to reciprocate help is larger when neighbors have never helped others.

2.1 Introduction

In our current day and age with the retreat of the welfare state and the decline of participation in formal volunteering organizations, it becomes more and more important to be able to rely on informal forms of helping. Informal helping refers to practical support that is provided to people that do not live in the same household and without coordination of formal organization (Einolf et al., 2016). Examples include watching a friend's children or helping a neighbor with gardenwork.

Providing informal help is often thought of as a prosocial or altruistic act (Dean, 2022; Helms & McKenzie, 2013). However, more self-serving considerations, such as reciprocity, likely play a role as well. Reciprocity refers to the phenomenon that people are more likely to help those who have helped them (e.g., Amato, 1990; Einolf et al., 2016; Manatschal & Freitag, 2014). Furthermore, reciprocity makes people expect more help of those they provided help to. Reciprocity may particularly play a role in helping among neighbors compared to friends and family, because they are less likely to help each other out of altruistic reasons (Curry, Roberts, & Dunbar, 2013; Phan et al., 2009). Hence, reciprocity norms may drive them to help, even when they would not have done so out of altruism.

Because reciprocity norms stimulate informal helping among those who are not altruistically motivated, it is generally seen as a positive influence on the provision of informal help (Manatschal & Freitag, 2014). For example, people may help a neighbor with their gardening because they assume that this neighbor will return their help by watching their kids for an afternoon. However, the importance of reciprocity may also have unintended, negative consequences. Particularly, a very strict norm of reciprocity in informal helping would entail that those who do not reciprocate will not receive help from neighbors. Although this may be an active choice for some, not helping may also stem from inability. This is problematic because the group that cannot help, for example due to health impairments (Erlinghagen, 2010; Hank & Stuck, 2008), is likely a group of people that would benefit most from receiving informal help.

To our knowledge, no prior research has examined to what extent people provide less help to those from whom they do not expect reciprocity. Previous studies have examined whether reciprocity norms motivate people to help (Manatschal, 2015; Manatschal & Freitag, 2014) and whether receiving help from others fosters informal helping (Aeby & Gauthier, 2022; Amato, 1990; Phan et al., 2009). Yet, prior research has scarcely considered help seeker characteristics. Hence, we are not aware of any study that has investigated whether people are less likely to help when they do not expect reciprocity in informal helping.

Moreover, these prior studies have not considered other help seeker characteristics that influence people's motivations to help them. This is problematic as it may confound any results found regarding reciprocity in informal helping. The best example of this is a help seeker's need for help. As argued above, people who do not help may do so because they are unable to (Erlinghagen, 2010; Hank & Stuck, 2008). Hence, when they ask others for help, they likely truly need it. According to the empathy-altruism hypothesis, this can motivate individuals to act altruistically (Batson et al., 2015), for example by providing informal help (Finkelstein & Brannick, 2007). Not controlling for the necessity of help may thus suppress the relationship between reciprocity and informal helping.

Prior research (Amato, 1990; Manatschal, 2015; Manatschal & Freitag, 2014) has also neglected the fact that informal help that a helper seeker provided to others may be relevant. Yet, indirect reciprocity research theorizes that people take into account how a person has treated others in past when considering providing informal help (Alexander, 1987; Kolm, 2008; Nowak & Sigmund, 2005). Specifically, it is argued that people want to reward others for their past helping behavior, even when they have not personally benefited from this help. Thus, this theory implies that people may be more willing to help a neighbor who helped a lot of other neighbors than a neighbor who never helped other neighbors. Because this aspect of indirect reciprocity concerns informal help that was provided in the past, being a helpful neighbor (i.e., having helped many neighbors in the past) may coincide with *currently* being unable to reciprocate help to the potential helper. This means that people may still be motivated to help people whom they do not expect to reciprocate their help, simply because they have helped others in the past. Hence, having helped others in the past may moderate the effect of (current) expected reciprocity.

Yet, not only moderations should be considered. It is also possible that people deem other help seeker characteristics more important than expected reciprocity. That is, people may see a neighbor's inability to reciprocate informal help as a reason against helping them, but consider other factors, such as highly needing help or having helped other neighbors (in the past), as more important reasons for helping this neighbor. If a neighbor thus is unable to reciprocate help but also in high need of help for example, people may eventually decide to help them, because the reason for helping is more important to them than the reason against helping. In this study, we therefore explore how important people find the aforementioned need for help and helping behavior for others in comparison to likelihood of reciprocity, or whether these factors can compensate for the inability to reciprocate help.

By examining likelihood of reciprocity, necessity of helping and helping behavior for others simultaneously in this study, we present a sounder estimation of the

impact of reciprocity in informal helping than earlier research. Furthermore, we gain new insights in the circumstances in which reciprocity norms are less relevant by examining the compensating and moderating effects of helping behavior for others and helping necessity. Hence, we propose the following research questions: *To what extent are people more willing to help neighbors who are likely to reciprocate their help in the future, are in high need of help than other neighbors or have helped others? To what extent does the impact of a neighbor's likelihood to reciprocate depend on their helping behavior towards others?*

We examine the impact of reciprocity, having helped others and perceived necessity of helping with a factorial survey. This entails that respondents are asked to consider a hypothetical situation – in our case about a neighbor asking for help – and are asked how they would respond (Auspurg & Hinz, 2015). Factorial surveys are a suitable method for studying reciprocity in helping. First, they have high reliability and relatively high internal and external validity (Auspurg & Hinz, 2015). Second, factorial surveys are known to reduce the impact of social desirability. Respondents are not asked directly how factors such as potential reciprocity or helpfulness would affect their behavior. Instead, this is assessed through presenting them hypothetical situations that vary on these factors. Finally, factorial surveys can confront people with situations they do not face in real life and evaluate how they would respond. This is particularly important in reciprocity research because regular surveys are unable to account for varying reciprocity opportunities. By only asking whether person A has helped the respondent and whether the respondent has helped person A (as done in Curry et al. (2013) and Stewart-Williams (2007)), a lack of opportunity cannot be taken into account, resulting in an underestimation of reciprocity. This is especially problematic because it can be assumed that opportunities for reciprocating are less prevalent among certain groups, such as young able-bodied persons. Despite these advantages, prior research scarcely used factorial surveys (for an exception see (Belmi & Pfeffer, 2015)). By employing a factorial survey, we aim to examine the impact of reciprocity in helping in a new and promising way.

In addition to this methodological contribution to the reciprocity literature, the present study makes various other contributions. First, it contributes to the informal helping literature by examining the impact of the help seeker. Prior research has largely neglected the idea that informal helping is an interplay between the potential helper and the help seeker and that help seekers thus may be relevant for the decision to help. Accordingly, characteristics of the help seekers have hardly been studied (for exceptions see Amato (1990), Manatschal and Freitag (2014), and Manatschal (2015)). Thus, our study improves on prior research by providing insight about the impact of help seeker characteristics.

Furthermore, the results of this study may inform governments and volunteering organizations in two ways. First, it may provide new insights in who is excluded from neighbors' help. These people either need to rely on help from friends and relatives or on help from formal organizations. Second, it may show how informal helping among neighbors may be facilitated. Because of their proximity, neighbors can be an important source of informal help. Yet, the informal help exchange among neighbors is currently relatively low in the Netherlands, compared to help exchanges among friends and relatives (Ramaekers, Verbakel, & Kraaykamp, 2023). Knowing what could facilitate this help exchange aids governments in stimulating this exchange among neighbors.

2.2 Theoretical framework

The concept of informal helping has been studied in various strands of literature, including philanthropy and volunteering research. In this strand of research, informal helping is often seen as a form of prosocial behavior (Helms & McKenzie, 2013) or as a form of volunteering time to help others (Einolf et al., 2016; Wilson & Musick, 1997). In the latter context, informal helping, or informal volunteering, is seen as the informal counterpart of volunteering for an organization, also known as formal volunteering (e.g., Lee & Brudney, 2012; Wilson & Musick, 1997). The key difference between the two is that informal helping is not coordinated by organizations (Einolf et al., 2016). Examples of informal helping are watching a friend's children, mowing a neighbor's lawn, or helping a relative with the maintenance of their car. Potential recipients of informal helping that are generally considered are relatives, friends and neighbors (Amato, 1990; Wilson & Musick, 1997). As discussed above, we will only focus on neighbors in this paper. Hence, in our paper, informal helping refers to helping activities for neighbors that are not coordinated by organizations.

It can be assumed that people are always willing to informally help neighbors to some extent, simply to maintain good social relations with their neighbors. However, prior research has suggested that norms about helping affect the extent to which people help informally (Einolf et al., 2016). A norm that is often proposed to influence informal helping is direct reciprocity (e.g., Gundelach et al., 2010; Manatschal & Freitag, 2014; Wilson & Musick, 1997). This norm entails that people are expected to react to others in a way that corresponds with how others treat them (Falk & Fischbacher, 2006; Gächter & Falk, 2002; Gouldner, 1960). Although scholars are not in agreement about what drives this phenomenon, reciprocity has been observed universally (Gouldner, 1960). Studies have shown that direct reciprocity is so deeply ingrained in humans that people are willing

to repay small favors, even when it is unlikely that the favor-doer will know that they did (Burger et al., 2009; Whatley et al., 1999). A study by Manatschal and Freitag (2014) shows that reciprocity is also an important motivation behind informal helping; those who believe that help should be repaid are more likely to provide it. Other studies show that people who receive help from neighbors are more likely to provide help to them as well (Amato, 1990; Phan et al., 2009).

Reciprocity may not only move people to return the help they received. It is also possible that it motivates them to initiate help. Especially when relations with others are expected to endure, the anticipation of reciprocity can motivate people to initiate helping (Axelrod, 1984; Simpson & Willer, 2015). This motivation is referred to as ‘the shadow of the future’ (Axelrod, 1984). As a result of this shadow of the future, the more people expect they will be able to reap benefits from helping their neighbors through reciprocity, the more motivated they are to help. Hence, we expect that *people are more willing to provide informal help to neighbors who are likely to reciprocate their help than neighbors who are unlikely to reciprocate (H1)*.

Another factor that may determine whether people are more willing to help a neighbor is the necessity of helping, especially when this need for help is clear to other neighbors. According to the empathy-altruism hypothesis (Batson, 1987; Batson et al., 1991), seeing other people in need triggers empathic concern. That entails that when individuals notice that someone is unable to do something themselves, they perceive a discrepancy between the other’s current well-being and the well-being that they believe the other should have. As a result of this discrepancy, individuals feel for the other person, also known as empathic concern (Batson et al., 2015). In turn, individuals who feel empathic towards others, feel the desire to solve the discrepancy between the other’s current and desired well-being. To fulfill this desire, their ultimate goal becomes to increase the other person’s welfare. This phenomenon is referred to as altruistic motivation (Batson et al., 2015), and can be expected to result in prosocial behavior.

Although neighbors are *less* likely to help each other out of altruistic motivation compared to friends and family, empathic concern for neighbors can still trigger altruistic motivation and prosocial behavior in specific moments. Prior research has not yet covered the direct relation between seeing that help is necessary and informal helping. Yet, studies have reported that experiencing empathic concern is related to providing informal help (Einolf, 2008; Finkelstein & Brannick, 2007). Hence, if Batson’s assumption that perceived necessity would trigger empathic concern is correct, we can expect that *people are more willing to provide informal help to neighbors whom they believe to be in high need of help than neighbors whom they believe to be in lower need of help (H2)*.

The third reason why people may informally help their neighbors is because of the help their neighbors have provided to others. According to indirect reciprocity research, helping others signals that people are helpful and do ‘good’ deeds (Alexander, 1987; Nowak & Sigmund, 1999; Seinen & Schram, 2006). Furthermore, it is assumed that other people want to reward those who are helpful or display ‘good’ behavior, either out of a belief in a just world (Lerner, 1980) or to promote cooperation (Kolm, 2008). Indirect reciprocity argues that this desire to reward helpers is separate from direct reciprocity considerations (Nowak & Sigmund, 2005). This would mean that people want to reward past helpers, even when they did not benefit directly from their help and are unlikely to benefit from help in the future.

Regarding informal helping, indirect reciprocity research thus suggests that people are motivated to help neighbors who have often provided informal help to other people in the neighborhood. This should even be the case when people are unlikely to receive help themselves from these helpful neighbors. Although research supporting this prediction specifically is lacking, a study on online platforms where people can exchange help suggests that people are more likely to provide help those who have been more helpful in the past (van Apeldoorn & Schram, 2016). It must be noted that the platform in this study tracked how often a person helped and that this ‘helping score’ was visible to others. Keeping track of how often a neighbor has helped others may be more difficult, but we believe that having helped other neighbors in the past, and thus perceived helpfulness, can also influence informal helping intentions. Thus, we expect that *people are more willing to provide informal help to neighbors who have often helped other neighbors and less willing to provide informal help to neighbors who have never helped other neighbors compared to neighbors whose past helping behavior is unknown (H₃)*.

2.2.1 Smaller role for reciprocity

Until now, we have presented the various forms of reciprocity as static; either someone is likely to reciprocate help or not and someone has either helped other neighbors or not. This seemingly creates a division between helpers and non-helpers. Obviously, the phenomenon of reciprocity is more complex than that. People who are unlikely to reciprocate help now may have helped other neighbors and people who are likely to reciprocate help now may have never provided help to other neighbors. Furthermore, the desire to help those who are likely to reciprocate help (direct reciprocity) and the desire to help those who helped other neighbors (indirect reciprocity) likely stem from different motivations. As

we have outlined above, using direct reciprocity as a motivation to help is likely motivated by self-interest (Manatschal, 2015). Contrarily, indirect reciprocity is argued to stem from a moral judgement, namely that good behavior should be rewarded (Alexander, 1987; Kolm, 2008).

These two types of motivations, the self-interested motivation and the “moral” motivation, may not both be necessary to help. That is when people have one reason to help a neighbor, i.e., it is the right thing to help a neighbor who has often helped others, other motivations may matter less. Here, we argue that especially the desire to reward people who helped others is strong, as it motivates people to help, even when they have no obligations and will not receive anything in return. As a result, we expect that the desire to reward helping behavior towards other neighbors is so influential that it substantially reduces the impact that likelihood of reciprocity has. In other words, we expect that helping behavior towards others moderates the impact of expected reciprocity; people rely less on expected reciprocity when deciding to help when they know their neighbor has often helped others. Accordingly, we expect people to rely more on expected reciprocity when they know that their neighbor has never helped others. Summarizing, we expect that *the impact of the likelihood of reciprocating on informal helping intentions is smaller when neighbors have helped other neighbors in the past and larger when they never helped other neighbors in the past (H₄)*.

2.2.2 Compensation

In addition to reciprocity having a smaller impact on informal helping for neighbors who often helped others (moderation), it is also possible that likelihood of reciprocity is not the decisive factor for informal help. This would entail that people rely more on other factors to decide to provide informal help than on expected reciprocity. For example, when a neighbor who cannot reciprocate help now but has often helped neighbors in the past, people may consider the low likelihood of reciprocation as a reason not to help but may simultaneously see their past helpfulness as a more important reason to provide help. Combining these considerations should then result in a final decision to help, as the motivation to help is stronger than the motivation not to help.

So far, there is hardly any research examining the possibility that necessity of helping and helping behavior towards others can *compensate* the impact of reciprocity. Hence, we refrain from deriving hypotheses about potential compensation. Instead, we will explore the relative effect sizes of these three factors in the results section. An overview of the hypotheses that we did derive is visually represented in figure 2.1.

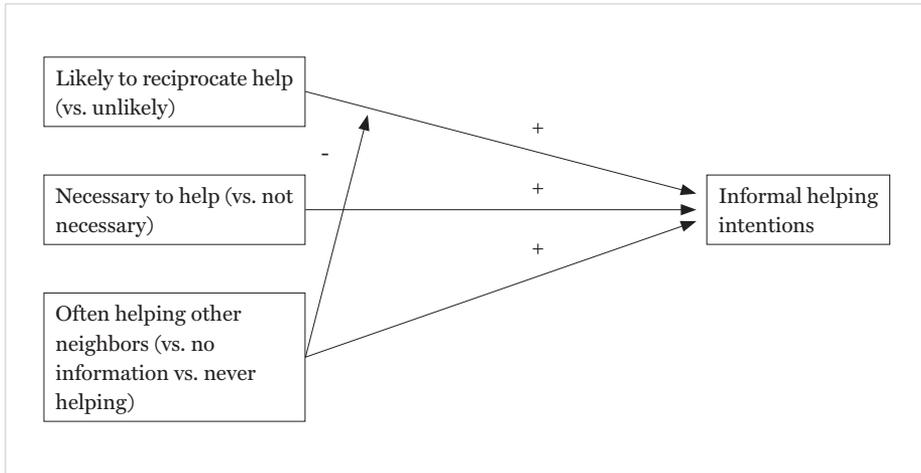


Figure 2.1 Conceptual model

2.3 Methodology and data

To our test our hypotheses, we designed a vignette experiment and conducted this among 1104 members of the Longitudinal Internet studies for the Social Sciences (LISS) panel in February 2022. The LISS panel consists of a representative sample of the Dutch population. Panel members are invited to complete online questionnaires every month. To implement our vignette experiment, 1400 people that were representative for the Dutch population were asked to participate, and of them, 1104 (78.9%) people did. Of these people, 3 (0.2%) were removed from the sample due to missing values on the control variables.

2.3.1 Factorial survey design

We gathered our data through a factorial survey design. This design entails that respondents are presented with short descriptions of hypothetical situations and are asked how they would respond to them. Major advantages of this design are relatively high internal and external validity. This means that on the one hand, the presented situations only differ on a few predetermined aspects, excluding the influence of potential confounding factors. On the other hand, the design refers to concrete situations that may also occur in real life, making inferences towards a real-life situation sounder. A final advantage of factorial surveys is the option to present respondents with situations that do not (yet) exist, thereby circumventing selection in being asked for help (Auspurg & Hinz, 2015).

Imagine the following situation.

You just moved to the street below. You have met your new neighbors, but you have not had the opportunity to get to know them better.



Your street features various tall trees whose leaves cause hinder in the fall. You decide to remove these leaves from your front yard. When you are done, the neighbors from number 37 ask you to help them removing the leaves from their front yard.

You know the following things about these neighbors:

According to the previous owner of your house, they are almost never there for others

One of the neighbors has a broken leg, making chores difficult to do

They will soon move to a new town

Figure 2.2 Example of a vignette (translated from Dutch)

Note: It is implied that the respondents have moved to the house within the white square.

In our study, we presented respondents with three hypothetical situations (vignettes). In those vignettes, the respondents were asked to imagine that they have just moved to a neighborhood and that one of their new neighbors asks for help with sweeping leaves from their front yard. Then a profile of this neighbor is presented, and respondents are asked how likely it is that they would help this neighbor. After answering the question, respondents were presented a new

vignette with a reminder in between to think of the second vignette as an entirely new situation. This was repeated three times in total. A (translated) example of a vignette is presented in figure 2.2.

The profiles varied across three dimensions: (1) (past) helping behavior for others, (2) necessity of help and (3) likelihood of reciprocity. The first dimension had three levels and the last two dimensions had two. Table 2.1 reports on the three dimensions and their corresponding levels. The vignettes were checked for illogical combinations¹. It was determined there were none. Following the number of levels, our vignette experiment has a 2x2x3 design. This results in 12 different vignettes, which were divided over four decks with three vignettes each (see appendix A for all possible combinations). Within each deck, the order of the vignettes was varied, resulting in six versions of each deck. Hence, there were 24 different conditions to which respondents were randomly assigned. Because every respondent reviewed three vignettes, our original data contain 3312 observations of 1104 respondents. One observation was removed due to an invalid answer on the dependent variable. Combined with the 3 removals due to missing values on the control variables mentioned earlier, our final sample consists of 3302 observations of 1101 respondents.

The dependent variable in the vignette design was the expressed intention to provide help. Respondents were asked how likely it is that they would provide help to each profiled neighbor, to which they could respond on a scale from 0 (*very unlikely*) to 10 (*very likely*). The independent variables were the three dimensions of the vignettes. Both the likelihood of reciprocity and perceived necessity of help are either low (0) or high (1). Furthermore, neighbors are either presented as being unhelpful (0), neutral (1) or helpful (2). We created dummy variables for helping behavior towards others, with being perceived as neutral as the reference category.

We controlled for the order in which the vignettes were presented, as this may have influenced people's stated intentions. Moreover, we included various

1 Illogical combinations are combinations of levels that are extremely unlikely occur in real life, therefore frustrating respondents (Auspurg, Hinz, & Liebig, 2009). An example of an illogical combination in income fairness perceptions is a combination of cleaner as occupation, working 12 hours per week and earning \$500,000 per year. Auspurg and Hinz (2015) recommend removing these combinations.

Table 2.1 Dimensions and categories used in the profiles

Facet 1: helping other neighbors	Facet 2: need for help	Facet 3: likelihood of reciprocity
a. Unhelpful (<i>The prior owner has told you that they almost never help others</i>)	a. High (<i>they have a broken leg which makes doing chores difficult</i>)	a. Low (<i>They will soon move to another city</i>)
b. Neutral (<i>The prior owner has not mentioned these neighbors</i>)	b. Low (<i>they have busy jobs which leaves them little time for chores</i>)	b. High (<i>They plan to live in the neighborhood for a long time</i>)
c. Helpful (<i>The prior owner has told you that they often help others</i>)		

background variables in our models². These give insight in how informal helping intentions relate to socioeconomic factors and can be compared to informal helping behavior. We control for gender (female/male), age, educational attainment (based on Statistics Netherlands categories), employment status (employed/non-employed), subjective health (good/poor), migrant status (native/migrant) and income (categories ranging from no income to more than €7500)³. An overview of descriptive statistics of the dependent, independent and control variables is presented in table 2.2.

2.3.2 Method of analysis

To analyze these data, we performed multilevel regression analyses. These are recommended for analyzing factorial survey data (Auspurg & Hinz, 2015) to account the nested structure of the data (Hox, 1995). The fact that vignettes are nested in

-
- 2 We were unable to include neighborhood characteristics as control variables. Although the LISS panel does include questions about neighborhood cohesion and social contact, only 45% of our respondents answered these questions. Including them would thus lead to a substantial decrease in our sample size. Instead, we ran models with these questions as robustness analyses only. These show that people with positive real-life neighborhood experiences have higher informal helping intentions yet controlling for these experiences does not lead to different conclusions regarding our hypotheses. Full models are included in online appendix 3.
 - 3 To avoid a substantial decrease in the number of observations due to missing values on the control variables, we included dummy variables for people who had missing scores on subjective health (5.6% missing), migrant status (2.0% missing), religiosity (6.0% missing) and income (5.6% missing). We do not report on these dummy variables in Table 2.3, but their effects are reported in appendix A.

Table 2.2 Dimensions and categories used in the profiles

	Range	Mean	SD
Informal helping intentions	0-10	6.995	2.426
Likelihood of reciprocity (ref. = low)	0/1	0.499	
High	0/1	0.501	
Helping behaviors towards others (ref. = neutral)	0/1	0.333	
Unhelpful	0/1	0.333	
Helpful	0/1	0.333	
Necessity of helping (ref. = low)	0/1	0.502	
High	0/1	0.498	
Order (ref. = first vignette)	0/1	0.333	
Second vignette	0/1	0.333	
Third vignette	0/1	0.333	
Gender (ref. = female)	0/1	0.531	
Male	0/1	0.469	
Age	16-95	54.711	18.448
Educational attainment (ref. = primary education)	0/1	0.064	
Intermediate secondary education	0/1	0.187	
Intermediate vocational education	0/1	0.244	
Higher secondary education	0/1	0.094	
Higher vocational education	0/1	0.273	
University education	0/1	0.138	
Employment status (ref. = non-employed)	0/1	0.532	
Employed	0/1	0.468	
Subjective health (ref. = poor health)	0/1	0.164	
Good health	0/1	0.780	
Subjective health missing	0/1	0.056	
Migrant status (ref. = native)	0/1	0.803	
Migrant	0/1	0.177	
Migration status missing	0/1	0.020	
Being religious (ref. = non-religious)	0/1	0.687	
Religious	0/1	0.253	
Being religious missing	0/1	0.060	
Net personal income (ref. = no income)	0/1	0.084	
EUR 500 or less	0/1	0.029	
EUR 501 to EUR 1000	0/1	0.106	
EUR 1001 to EUR 1500	0/1	0.156	
EUR 1501 to EUR 2000	0/1	0.169	
EUR 2001 to EUR 2500	0/1	0.162	

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INFORMAL HELPING

Table 2.2 continued

	Range	Mean	SD
EUR 2500 to EUR 3000	0/1	0.125	
EUR 3001 to EUR 3500	0/1	0.065	
EUR 3501 to EUR 4000	0/1	0.020	
EUR 4001 to EUR 4500	0/1	0.008	
EUR 4501 to EUR 5000	0/1	0.006	
EUR 5001 to EUR 7500	0/1	0.005	
More than 7500	0/1	0.053	
Missing	0/1	0.053	

Source: Informal helping intentions study (2022)

a person is particularly important in our data, because the intraclass correlation (ICC) is high (47.8%). This indicates that half of the variation in informal helping intentions is due to differences between persons (instead of vignettes).

We specified a multilevel model with the respondent at the higher level and the vignettes at the lower level. All effects included in our models are fixed, meaning that they do not vary over respondents. We chose these specifications because we do not expect that the factorial survey dimensions differ in their impact depending on respondent characteristics, as respondents were randomly assigned to conditions. Model 1 includes the three independent variables (likelihood of reciprocity, past helping behavior and perceived necessity of helping) and the control variables as predictors. Model 2 includes all variables from model 1 and interaction terms for reciprocity and the helping others dummy variables.

2.4 Results

2.4.1 Manipulating reciprocity

Before we discuss our main results, we report on the validity of the main manipulation, namely whether the help requester was likely or unlikely to reciprocate respondents' help. In this way, we establish the extent to which our results are a sound empirical test of our hypotheses and theoretical framework. To manipulate this, the neighbors in the vignettes were either described as moving soon to a new town (indicating unlikely reciprocity) or as planning to stay in the neighborhood for the foreseeable future (indicating likely reciprocity; see table 2.1 for an overview of the dimensions and categories). We assumed that respondents would expect the neighbor in the 'moving soon' condition to be less

likely to return their help than the neighbor in the ‘staying’ condition. To check whether respondents indeed interpreted the manipulation this way, we asked respondents to estimate the likelihood that the fictional neighbor would return their help (0 (*very unlikely*) to 10 (*very likely*)).

First, we examined to what extent respondents answered this question differently based on the descriptions they received (see online appendix 1 for tables). A multilevel analysis with the same predictor variables as our main analyses shows that respondents estimated that the neighbors were less likely to return their help when the neighbors were presented as unlikely to reciprocate help than when the neighbors were presented as likely to reciprocate help. Likelihood of reciprocity is also the strongest predictor of expected return of help, although it only amounts to an effect of 0.9 on an eleven-point scale.

Second, we examined to what extent respondents’ estimation of the fictional neighbor’s likelihood of returning their help explains any impact that reciprocity would have on informal helping intentions. We compared the results from model 1 to the results of a similar analyses that also includes respondents’ estimations of the return of help (see online appendix 1). This comparison indicates that the effect of reciprocity is explained by the estimated return of help. This suggests that people react differently to the high and low likelihood conditions because they evaluate the chances of receiving help from these neighbors differently. All in all, we conclude that our main manipulation largely captures what we intended it to do.

2.4.2 Main results

Table 2.3 reports the results of the multilevel analyses. Model 1 shows that people intent more strongly to help a (fictional) neighbor when this neighbor seems to be likely to reciprocate their help. More specifically, respondents score 0.335 higher on informal helping intentions when they are presented with neighbors who are likely to return their help compared to neighbors who are not. This effect is relatively small (3.0%), as informal helping intentions were measured on a 0-10 scale, but it is significant. This finding is in line with hypothesis 1.

Furthermore, model 1 shows that people are more willing to help neighbors when the necessity of helping is presented as high. This finding is in line with hypothesis 2. Additionally, people are more willing to help neighbors who are presented as helpful. That is, people have higher intentions to help neighbors who are presented as often helping others than neighbors for whom this information is not available. Simultaneously, people are less willing to help neighbors presented as unhelpful, compared to neighbors presented as neutral. This means

Table 2.3 Multilevel regression results explaining informal helping (N observations = 3302, N persons = 1101)

	Model 1		Model 2	
	B	SE	B	SE
Likelihood of reciprocity (ref. = low)	0.335 ***	0.052	0.175	0.108
Helping behavior towards others (ref. = neutral)				
Unhelpful	-0.908 ***	0.060	-1.095 ***	0.095
Helpful	0.641 ***	0.060	0.559 ***	0.108
Necessity of helping (ref. = low)	1.145 ***	0.052	1.143 ***	0.052
Likelihood of reciprocity x				
Unhelpful			0.375 *	0.148
Helpful			0.166	0.179
Order (ref. = first vignette)				
Second vignette	-0.104	0.060	-0.105	0.060
Third vignette	-0.118 *	0.060	-0.116	0.060
Male (ref. = female)	-0.077	0.125	-0.078	0.125
Age	-0.049	0.042	-0.049	0.042
Educational attainment (ref.= primary education)				
Intermediate secondary education	0.622 *	0.271	0.614 *	0.271
Intermediate vocational education	0.686 *	0.267	0.681 *	0.267
Higher secondary education	0.994 ***	0.297	0.989 ***	0.297
Higher vocational education	0.930 ***	0.269	0.919 ***	0.269
University education	1.037 ***	0.291	1.019 ***	0.291
Employed (ref. = non-employed)	-0.099	0.152	-0.097	0.152
Good health (ref. = poor health)	0.480 **	0.162	0.478 **	0.162
Migration background (ref. = native)	-0.187	0.155	-0.186	0.155
Being religious (ref. = non-religious)	-0.114	0.136	-0.112	0.136
Net personal income (ref. = no income)				
EUR 500 or less	0.245	0.394	0.252	0.394
EUR 501 to EUR 1000	0.282	0.291	0.281	0.291
EUR 1001 to EUR 1500	0.379	0.277	0.375	0.277
EUR 1501 to EUR 2000	0.517	0.284	0.520	0.284
EUR 2001 to EUR 2500	0.549	0.293	0.550	0.293
EUR 2500 to EUR 3000	0.451	0.313	0.462	0.313
EUR 3001 to EUR 3500	0.657	0.351	0.661	0.351
EUR 3501 to EUR 4000	1.431 **	0.497	1.421 **	0.497

Table 2.3 continued

	Model 1		Model 2	
	B	SE	B	SE
EUR 4001 to EUR 4500	-0.299	0.613	-0.314	0.612
EUR 4501 to EUR 5000	1.240	0.698	1.255	0.698
EUR 5001 to EUR 7500	1.529 *	0.775	1.552 *	0.775
More than 7500	0.678	0.896	0.727	0.896
<i>Variance</i>				
Vignette (N=3302)	1.998		2.014	
Respondent (N=1101)	2.973		2.965	

*** $p < 0.001$ ** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$; Note: full models included in appendix A (table A.3)
 Source: *Informal helping intentions study (2022)*

that people have lower intentions to help neighbors who are presented as never helping others than neighbors for whom this information is not available. These findings are in line with hypothesis 3. We will not extensively discuss the results regarding the control variables due to space constraints, but we do want to note the effects of order. We found that respondents intended to help less in the third vignette than in the first⁴.

Model 2 reports on the results of the multilevel analysis including the interaction terms between reciprocity and past helping behavior towards others. A visual representation of this model can be found in figure 2.3. This figure shows the difference in informal helping intentions concerning a neighbor who was presented as likely to reciprocate help (light bar) and a neighbor who was presented as unlikely to reciprocate help (dark bar) for various levels of past helping behavior. For vignettes in which the neighbor was also presented neutral (i.e., no information about their helping behavior for other neighbors), this difference is 0.175, as reported in model 2 of table 2.3. To calculate the difference between low and high likelihood of reciprocity when comparing vignettes in which the neighbor was presented as unhelpful (i.e., never helped others), we add this coefficient (0.175) to the interaction effect (0.375), which results in a 0.550 difference in total.

4 We further explored this by excluding the vignettes presented third from the analyses and performing the analyses separately for all places (first, second, third) in which a vignette was presented. These analyses confirm our conclusions regarding the main effects. The interaction effect is insignificant but in the same direction. It is possible that this due to a lack of power. Tables can be found in online appendix 4.

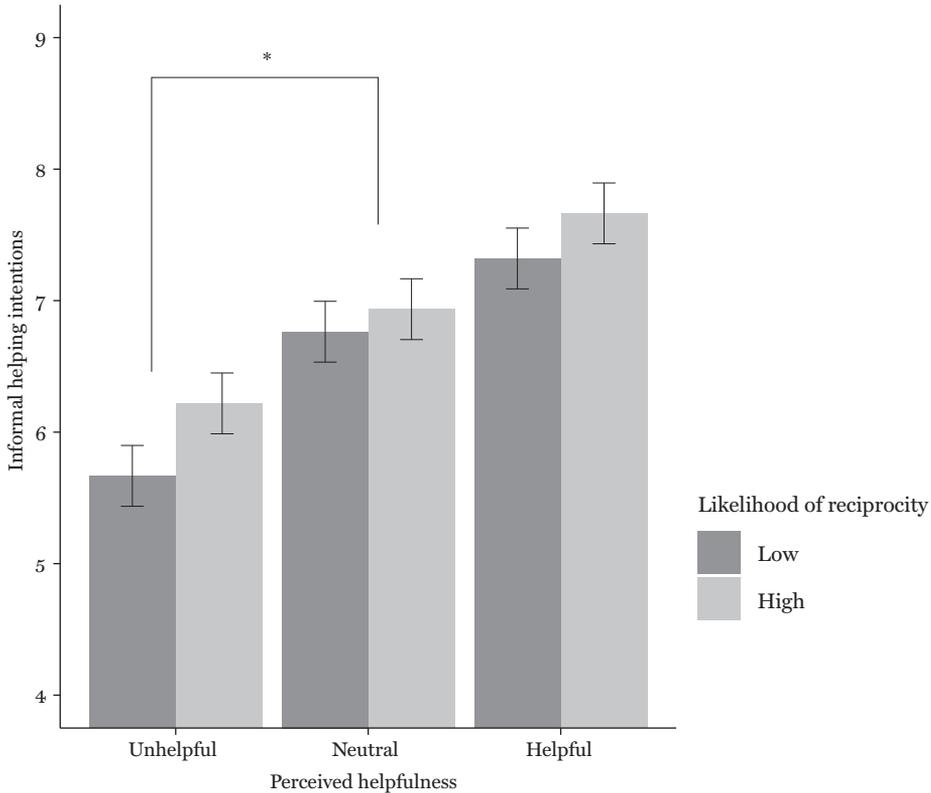


Figure 2.3 Informal helping intentions by helping behavior towards others and likelihood of reciprocity, based on multilevel regression models (N observations = 3302, N persons = 1104) *Significant differences in the gap between low and high likelihood of reciprocity are denoted with *.* Source: *Informal helping intentions study (2022)*

This difference is significantly larger than among neutrally presented neighbors, which is in line with hypothesis 4. However, the opposite does not apply. The difference between low and high likelihood of reciprocity did not significantly differ between vignettes in which the neighbor was presented as helpful (i.e., often helped others) and neutral vignettes. This means that the impact of likelihood of reciprocity was not smaller when a neighbor was presented as helpful, which opposes hypothesis 4.

Although we did not hypothesize about this, it is not unthinkable that our interaction hypothesis only applied to people who were not in need of help, as necessity of help may have triumphed all other motivations for help. Hence, we explored a three-way interaction between our three manipulations in additional multilevel regression analyses. The results of these analyses, which can be found

in online appendix 2, report no significant three-way interaction. Surprisingly, we do find an interaction between past helping behavior (towards others) and necessity of helping; when neighbors are presented as in high need of help, being presented as unhelpful is more relevant than when neighbors are presented as in low need of help. Additionally, often helping other neighbors is also more relevant for individuals' informal helping intentions when people are perceived to be in high need of help instead of in low need of help. The results of the three-way interaction model and additional analyses that only include the two-way interaction (also included in online appendix 2) indicate that an interaction between likelihood of reciprocity and necessity of helping is not significant.

2.4.3 Compensation

In addition to interactions between likelihood of reciprocity and perceived necessity and helping behavior towards others, the effect of likelihood of reciprocity may be *compensated* by the effects of perceived necessity and helpfulness. That is, the effect sizes of perceived necessity and helpfulness may be larger than that of likelihood of reciprocity, resulting in a net increase when adding them up. The results from model 1 indicate indeed a compensation. Being unable to reciprocate help results in a drop of 0.335 in neighbors' informal helping intentions. However, if one has helped others, model 1 predicts an increase of 0.641 in informal helping intentions in informal helping intentions, resulting in a net increase of 0.306 in informal helping intentions. The same applies to perceived necessity. If helping a person is presented as necessary, model 1 predicts a 1.146 increase in informal helping intentions. This also compensates for the 0.335 drop in informal helping that one faces if one is unable to return help. It eventually results in a 0.811 net increase (on an eleven-point scale) in helping intentions when helping is necessary, but a person is unlikely to reciprocate.

2.5 Discussion

The goal of this paper was to examine the impact of reciprocity on informal helping intentions, and whether this impact can be dampened by helping behavior towards other neighbors and perceived necessity of helping. Based on theories on direct and indirect reciprocity and the empathy-altruism hypothesis, we expected that people would be more willing to help neighbors who are 1) likely to reciprocate, 2) perceived as in high need of help or 3) have often helped others. Furthermore, we expected that reciprocity norms would be less relevant for those who often helped

other neighbors. We tested these hypotheses with a factorial survey conducted among the LISS panel in February 2022, using multilevel regression analyses.

We find that people have stronger intentions to help neighbors who are likely to reciprocate their help, and that this is because they expect more help from their neighbor in the ‘likely to reciprocate’ condition. These findings entail that people want to help their neighbors more when they believe that neighbors will return their help at some point, which is in line with direct reciprocity research (Falk & Fischbacher, 2006; Fehr & Gächter, 2000; Gouldner, 1960) and supports its theoretical underpinnings (Fehr & Gächter, 2000; Gouldner, 1960). It must be noted that likelihood of reciprocity seemingly has a rather small impact on people’s intentions to help. However, neighbors only help each other 2.5 times per month in the Netherlands, compared to family members who help each other almost ten times a month (Ramaekers et al., 2023). Hence, reciprocity may be the deciding factor in people’s ultimate decision to provide help. Future research needs to corroborate this claim by examining helping behavior.

For receivers of informal help, these results mean that they may not receive informal help when they are unable to reciprocate this help. Thus, if people who are unable to return informal help require additional support, for example because of health impairments, they may have to turn to family members and friends. After all, reciprocity norms are generally less strong among these groups (Curry et al., 2013; Phan et al., 2009).

Although the results of this study are in line with earlier studies about reciprocity in informal helping (Amato, 1990; Manatschal, 2015; Manatschal & Freitag, 2014; Phan et al., 2009), they also produced three new insights. First, Manatschal (2015) assumes in her study that immigrants help others to establish a reciprocal relationship with others. Our study empirically supports this assumption because whether another person will reciprocate indeed plays a role in whether someone intends to help that person. Second, our study is the first to show the importance of help seeker characteristics, such as past helping behavior or likelihood of reciprocity, in someone’s decision to help. Prior studies have examined topics that relate to help seekers characteristics (Manatschal, 2015; Manatschal & Freitag, 2014) or have examined differences between the type of recipients (Ramaekers, Verbakel, & Kraaykamp, 2022; Ramaekers et al., 2023). Yet, no study has examined whether specific characteristics foster receiving help. Because our study stresses their importance, future research may devote more attention to these characteristics.

Third, our study shows that factorial surveys are a suitable method for examining the impact of reciprocity in helping. Our results and manipulation check show that reciprocity expectations can be accurately measured through factorial surveys and that these can detect reciprocity in informal helping. Being able to

study reciprocity through factorial surveys in a positive development because this method has high reliability, relatively high internal and external validity and can account for situations that have not (yet) occurred. Hence, our study has shown how reciprocity in helping would work, even for people who have never encountered such a situation.

Our findings also provide new insights on indirect reciprocity (Alexander, 1987; Nowak & Sigmund, 2005) and empathy-altruism research (Batson et al., 2015). The finding that people have stronger intentions to help those who have often helped others or are in high need of help supports both these theories. Particularly, regarding the empathy-altruism hypothesis, it confirms that perceiving need does not only translate to altruistic motivation, but also to concrete informal helping intentions, which is considered altruistic by some (Helms & McKenzie, 2013). Additionally, the interaction between likelihood of reciprocity and helping behavior towards others indicates support for a negative judgement bias (Rankin & Eggimann, 2009). This bias entails that people's decisions rely more strongly on information about negative or uncooperative behavior than on positive or cooperative behavior. Together, these findings support the notion that people do not only help because they may reap benefits from it in the future. Instead, they are also compelled to provide informal help because they want to reward cooperative behavior or feel for others. These are even more important motivations than expected reciprocity according to our study. For receivers, this implies that an inability to reciprocate does not necessarily exclude them from receiving informal help. Instead, this exclusion depends on whether they have often helped other neighbors and their reason for asking for help.

Yet, our study is not without limitations. First, this study examines informal helping *intentions*, not actual behavior. Although people may have thought about real-life considerations such as physical health or time constraints, we cannot be certain that the impact we found for intentions also translates to actual behavior. Yet, focusing on intentions may also have been beneficial in some regard. It is generally understood that social networks and having opportunities for helping play a major part in informal helping (Lee & Brudney, 2012; Wang et al., 2017). Examining intentions shows the potential in helpers when they are asked for help.

Second, note that this study only focuses on neighbors. Studies imply that reciprocity norms may be more important for them than for people that are closer to a person, such as friends and relatives (Curry et al., 2013; Phan et al., 2009). For example, an entire subsection of reciprocity in help literature suggests that reciprocity hardly matters for relatives because they are helped out of kin altruism instead of reciprocal altruism (Stewart-Williams, 2007; Stürmer & Snyder, 2010). Still, we did not study neighbors without reason. Neighbors are a largely

unused group of potential helpers (Ramaekers et al., 2023). Understanding what motivates their helping can inform policy that promotes helping about neighbors. Future research should thus aim to validate the findings of the current study by comparing intentions and behavior and by comparing various recipients of help, such as relatives, neighbors, friends, and acquaintances.

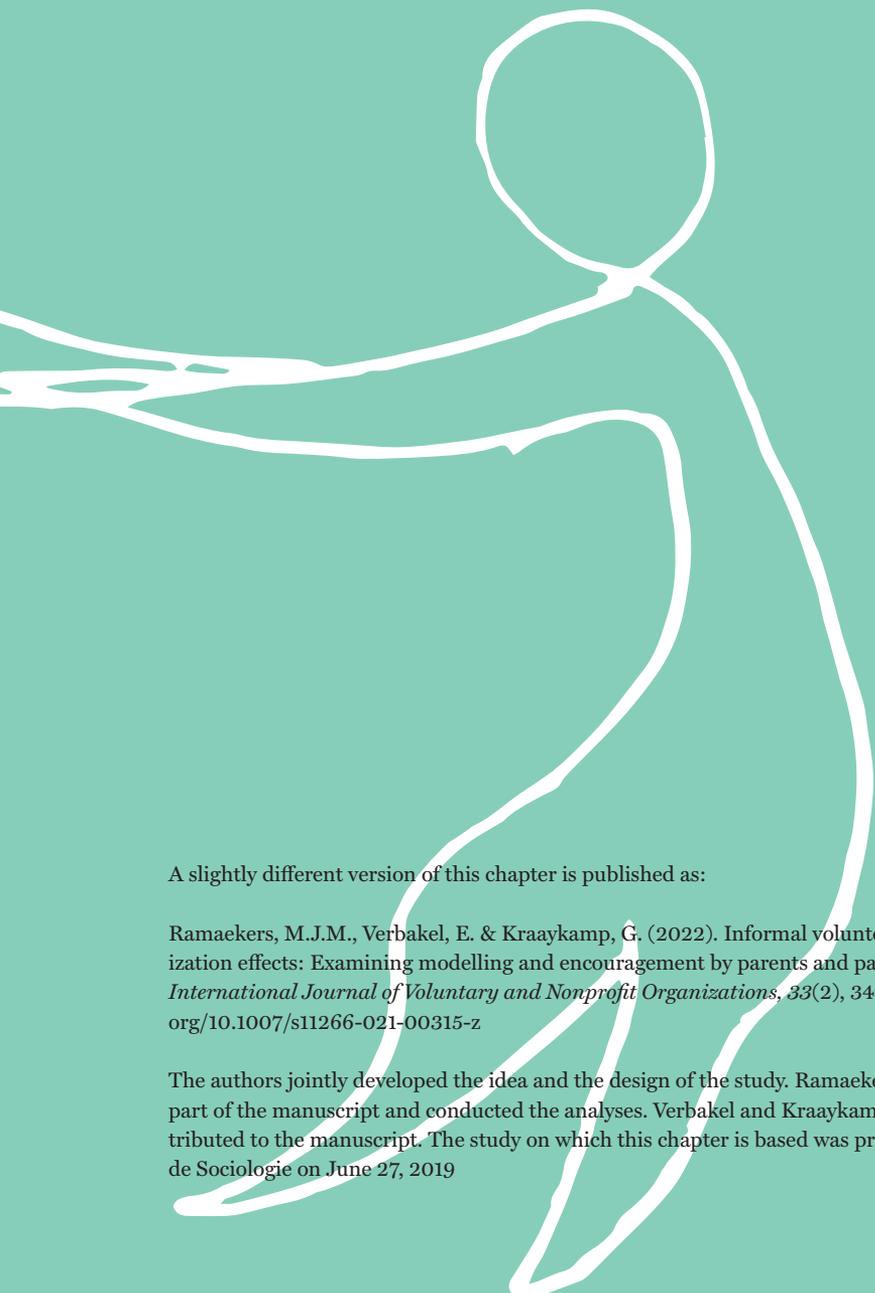
Finally, the current study focuses on a single interaction. Yet, prior research has shown that reciprocity norms are reinforced by repeated interactions, which are likely to be common among neighbors (Gächter & Falk, 2002). Furthermore, reciprocity is to some extent situational; what is considered a fair exchange and who can provide that depends on characteristics of the asker, helper, their relationship and the wider context they are a part of (Hansen, 2004; Nelson, 2000). Future research can thus investigate the impact of reciprocity over a longer period of time in which multiple interactions occur and with consideration of the social context in which exchange takes place. As argued by (Hansen, 2004), particularly qualitative approaches may be suitable to understand reciprocity from this more holistic perspective.

To conclude, our study shows that reciprocity affects informal helping intentions among neighbors and that people who cannot give help are less likely to receive help from neighbors. Municipalities and neighborhood organizations can thus work together and invest in public servants in neighborhoods. Ideally, these servants are tasked with identifying who cannot participate in the informal help exchange and organizing additional support when these people need it, either through formal organizations (municipalities or neighborhood organizations) or through other groups (friends and family). Additionally, our study shows that high need or previously helpful individuals are more likely to receive help from neighbors. In real life, information about past helping behavior for neighbors or need for help may not be available to all neighbors. Therefore, neighborhood organizations and municipalities can emphasize these features when it comes to vulnerable residents. For example, they can signal people's need for help through neighborhood bulletins, posters, or emails. Finally, our study shows that providing informal help to various neighbors increases the likelihood of receiving help, even from neighbors who have never benefited from past help. This stresses the importance of investing in one's neighborhood and building relationships with other neighbors. This is yet another reason for municipalities to invest in promoting cohesive neighborhoods.

Informal helping fostered by socialization practices? Examining modelling and encouragement by parents and partner



Drawing by Ayşegül Güneylı



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The authors jointly developed the idea and the design of the study. Ramaekers wrote the main part of the manuscript and conducted the analyses. Verbakel and Kraaykamp substantially contributed to the manuscript. The study on which this chapter is based was presented at the Dag van de Sociologie on June 27, 2019

Abstract

Informal helping is seen as an important indicator of social relations and community life. We therefore investigate the impact of various socialization practices on informal helping, being small helping behaviors outside of organizations for people outside the household. From theoretical notions on socialization, we hypothesize that experiencing extensive prosocial socialization practices promotes informal helping. We examine socialization processes of both modelling and encouragement and consider two socializing agents: parents and partners. We test our expectations employing the sixth wave of the Family Survey Dutch Population (N=2,464) that included unique measures on socialization as well as informal helping and holds important control variables. Our results indicated that parental modelling, partner modelling and partner encouragement were all positively related to informal helping, but that parental encouragement was not significantly related to informal helping. Our paper, thus, underscores that socialization practices are relevant in nurturing social relations and community life.

3.1 Introduction

This study examines the role of socialization in explaining informal helping. Informal helping is defined as helping behaviors for people outside the household, such as friends, neighbors, and acquaintances, that do not involve any organizations or institutions (Einolf et al., 2016; Li & Ferraro, 2005; Wilson & Musick, 1997). Examples of such types of helping are looking after children, doing garden work, lending materials, or driving someone to an appointment. Informal helping is a form of prosocial behavior, since it involves costs for the self and results in benefits for another person's well-being (Hastings et al., 2015; Helms & McKenzie, 2013; Wittek & Bekkers, 2015). Moreover, abundant informal helping by a society's members is seen as the social glue of a society and a key aspect of community life (Einolf et al., 2016; Lim & Laurence, 2015).

A profound study on the impact of socialization on informal helping may contribute to the lively debate on the supposed decline of community life. Some scholars have expressed serious concerns, arguing that communities have become less tightly knit in terms of social relations and support, which in turn reduces community life (e.g., Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; Dotson, 2017; Putnam, 2000). Contrarily, scholars also argued that such concerns are theoretically unfounded and empirically unverified. Social networks would be changing and shifting in focus, but this not necessarily entails a reduction in social support and corrosion of community life (Hampton & Wellman, 2018; Paxton, 1999). Our study on the impact of socialization practices on informal helping highlights another relevant aspect in this discussion, namely the motivational side. Socialization refers to a process of learning what appropriate behavior is and internalizing this (Dovidio et al., 2006; Kuczynski & Hildebrandt, 1997). It is thus assumed that socialization in informal helping foremost nurtures a person's motivation to provide informal help. If socialization practices play a meaningful role in the manifestation of informal helping, it is likely that society's community life would remain relatively stable since changes in (the effects of) socialization practices only come about slowly.

Prior research on informal helping has revealed several explanatory factors: (a) psychological traits of sociability and emotional stability (Finkelstein, 2012; Finkelstein & Brannick, 2007), and (b) sociological features such as being religious, higher educated, older and female (Lee & Brudney, 2012; Plagnol & Huppert, 2009; van Tienen et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2017). However, the impact of socialization practices on informal helping has been neglected, despite theories highlighting the relevance of socialization in prosocial behavior, such as informal helping (e.g., Dovidio et al., 2006; Hastings et al., 2015). Moreover, socialization

practices have been found to play a prominent role in various other prosocial behaviors (Bekkers, 2005; Lee, Piliavin, & Call, 1999; Nesbit, 2013; Quaranta & Dotti Sani, 2016; Wilhelm, Brown, Rooney, & Steinberg, 2008), including formal volunteering which is closely related to informal helping. Although formal volunteering is organized by formal institutions and informal helping is not, they share similarity in content and motivation and are both considered forms of prosocial behavior (Reed & Selbee, 2000; Wang et al., 2017). Hence, it is likely that socialization practices play a role in informal helping but this has not been tested yet.

Underscoring this study's focus on the impact of socialization on informal helping, we will use an extensive approach towards socialization. First, we will distinguish between two forms of socialization, modelling and encouragement (Dovidio et al., 2006; Laible, Thompson, & Froimson, 2015). Modelling has been examined in studies towards formal volunteering relatively often (Bekkers, 2005; Nesbit, 2013; Perks & Konency, 2015; Quaranta & Dotti Sani, 2016), and refers to the idea that people learn by observing behavior from relevant others. If these relevant others are more prosocial in their behaviors, this is believed to induce prosocial behavior in the observer. Yet, most prior studies do not take into account that socialization by direct encouragement may also be relevant (Dovidio et al., 2006). People who engage in prosocial behaviors likely discuss their activities and thereby encourage others to do alike. To provide a stricter test of modelling and encouragement as socialization practices we distinguish the two and examine them simultaneously.

Second, we consider two highly relevant socializing agents that are important in various stages of a person's life course: parents and partners. Parents are likely the most important socializing agents during a person's youth (Grusec & Hastings, 2015), and partners are most relevant in adulthood (Nesbit, 2013). Both parents and partners as socializing agents share a strong (emotional) bond with a person and have a high frequency of (daily) contact, both contributing to the presumed impact of socialization by modelling and encouragement.

We focus on socializing agents originating from the family. Therefore, we chose to exclude family members as targets of informal helping. Reciprocity processes may predict both informal helping among relatives and socialization practices, which makes them difficult to separate in the family context. We will thus answer the following research question: *To what extent do modelling and encouragement by parents and the partner promote informal helping?*

To answer this question, we use data from the sixth wave of the Family Survey Dutch Population 2017-2018 (FSDP). This dataset uniquely includes measures of informal helping and additionally provides extensive information on socializing activities of respondents' parents, and – if applicable – a partner. To provide a

strong test of our expectations we also include a wide set of control variables in our models. Information on personality traits (Big Five), religiosity, family configuration and a person's resources is available. In sum, we contribute to the literature by assessing the impact of socialization processes on an important aspect of society's community life, namely informal helping.

3.2 Theoretical framework

3.2.1 What is socialization?

Most often socialization is described as a two-layered process in which people learn to behave appropriately in certain groups or situations (Grusec, 2002, p.143). First, people learn what is considered appropriate or desirable behavior in a society, certain group, or situation. This learning process may take various expressions. People may be directly encouraged to engage in certain behavior (encouragement) but may also learn by being confronted with rewards or punishments following their displayed behaviors (reinforcement). Another type of learning concerns observational learning (Bandura, 1977); people observe behaviors and the (possible) reactions and repercussions of others and learn through this information whether behavior is appropriate (Dovidio et al., 2006; Laible et al., 2015). After people have learned appropriate behaviors, they may display these behaviors to gain approval and confirmation of others, but will not do so if no one is present to give their approval (Kuczynski & Hildebrandt, 1997). In other words, they do not yet value these behaviors to a high extent themselves.

The second layer of socialization concerns the internalization of behavior. Experiencing encouragement and reinforcement and observing others' behavior gradually results in an internal motivation to perform similar appropriate behavior (Kuczynski & Hildebrandt, 1997). In this process, people learn to value a behavior themselves, and incorporate this in their inner value system. As a result, it also becomes more likely that they will engage in this type of behavior (Ajzen, Fishbein, Lohmann, & Albarracín, 2018). After internalization of behaviors, external control is no longer considered necessary, meaning that people will engage in socialized appropriate behavior even if no one is present to give (dis)approval (Kuczynski & Hildebrandt, 1997).

3.2.2 Who is involved in socialization?

Socialization involves at least two persons or entities: the target (the person, who is socialized) and the agent (the entity that socializes) of socialization. By defini-

tion, a target can be of any age and can be in any stage of life when experiencing socialization practices. Understandably, most prior studies have focused on children as targets of socialization, as (young) children are in the initial process of learning to become functional individuals in society (Grusec & Hastings, 2015).

Various socializing agents may contribute to children's socialization, but nuclear family members, and particularly parents, are regarded as the primary agents of socialization. Generally, parents are the first adults that children have a strong bond with, they are formally assigned the role of primary caretakers, and they mostly are in close proximity to their children, which gives them a prominent position to socialize them (Grusec & Davidov, 2015). Other significant socializing agents that may play a role during a person's youth include schools, teachers, peers and the media (Grusec & Hastings, 2015). Customarily, these are regarded as secondary socializing agents. Youth experiences of primary and secondary socialization are expected to have a relevant impact that lasts into adulthood (Grusec & Hastings, 2015; for examples see McFarland & Thomas, 2006; Perks & Konency, 2015).

Actors that play a relevant socializing role in adulthood are regarded as tertiary agents. Although most adults do no longer need to learn how to function in society, their ideas about what is appropriate behavior in a certain situation can still be adjusted (Arnett, 2015; Dovidio et al., 2006; Luong, Rainers, & Fingerman, 2015). Instead of being socialized by parents and original nuclear family members, most adults encounter socialization practices in a romantic relationship with a partner (Arnett, 2015; Maccoby, 2015). As is the case with parents and children, most partners have a close emotional bond, they are often formally connected, and they live in close proximity, which gives them the opportunity to communicate and encourage ideas about desirable behavior. For example, prior studies have shown that romantic partners influence each other's health behaviors (e.g., Perry, Ciciurkaite, Brady, & Garcia, 2016; Smith & Christakis, 2008), financial behaviors (e.g., Curran, Parrott, Ahn, Serido, & Shim, 2018), and prosocial and antisocial behaviors (e.g., Knight, 2011; Nesbit, 2013; Rotolo & Wilson, 2006). Therefore, we consider romantic partners as important tertiary agents. It is, however, important to note that tertiary socializing agents are fundamentally different from primary agents of socialization, because they are to some extent self-selected.

3.2.3 Socialization in prosocial behavior

Although socialization processes play a role in the transmission of various types of behaviors, we here focus on the development of prosocial behaviors (Dovidio et al., 2006; Hastings et al., 2015). Prior research has not only theorized that socialization practices play a significant role in the manifestation of prosocial behavior

(Dovidio et al., 2006; Hastings et al., 2015), empirical studies have also shown the impact of socialization for several forms of prosocial behavior, such as formal volunteering (e.g., Nesbit, 2013; Perks & Konency, 2015), charitable giving (e.g., Bekkers, 2005; Wilhelm et al., 2008) and blood donation (e.g., Lee et al., 1999).

Various ways in which individuals learn prosocial behavior may be distinguished, including reinforcement, observational learning (modelling), and talking about and encouraging helping others (Dovidio et al., 2006). In this study, our focus is on modelling and encouraging as socialization processes, as we suspect that people will be susceptible to such forces and influences in both their youth and adulthood. Direct reinforcement may be perceived as a threat to a person's autonomy, especially by adults, which may make this type of socialization less effective in adult life. Below, we outline how parents and partners may be involved in modelling and encouragement and how these socialization processes relate to informal helping behavior.

Modelling. Observational learning, or modelling, is a socialization process that is grounded in social learning theory (Bandura, 1977). It stresses that people learn a behavior by observing others performing it and observing the according consequences. This means that socializing agents will teach prosocial behaviors by engaging in prosocial activities themselves, especially when it is possible for targets of socialization to observe them. We argue that formal volunteering is a well-demarcated behavior that is easily recognizable for others. This likely makes it suitable behavior for parental modelling. For example, adolescents whose parents formally volunteer are more likely to volunteer formally themselves (Quaranta & Dotti Sani, 2016; Wilhelm et al., 2014). This parental impact has been found to last into adulthood, as adults whose parents volunteered formally in their school-age years seem more likely to volunteer formally as an adult (Bekkers, 2005, 2007; Perks & Konency, 2015). In addition to direct modelling, formal volunteering can inspire other forms of prosocial behavior, such as charitable giving (Bekkers, 2005; Hook, 2004). Hence, we expect that the prosocial norm that is learned by observing parental formal volunteering enhances all kinds of prosocial behavior, including informal helping. We therefore hypothesize that: *If parents volunteered formally during individuals' youth, those individuals will engage more in informal helping in adulthood (H1).*

While socialization processes have been studied mostly for children, modelling has also been proposed as an effective strategy among adults. As stated before, romantic partners may be seen as important tertiary socializing agents, meaning that they could be effective role models in adulthood. Previous research on volunteering among spouses has found that people are more likely to volunteer formally and provide informal support when their spouse volunteers formally

(Hook, 2004; Nesbit, 2013). According to Nesbit (2013), these findings suggest that partnered people engage more in prosocial behavior when their partner sets the example. Hence, we expect that: *Individuals whose partner is a formal volunteer will engage more in informal helping than individuals whose partner is not a formal volunteer (H2).*

Encouragement. Instead of indirectly observing prosocial behavior and copying appropriate behaviors, people are also socialized through direct encouragement. This may include both direct instruction, i.e., being instructed to act pro-socially, and also preaching, i.e., being explained that helping is valuable and therefore something the target is expected to do (Dovidio et al., 2006). Since parents are primary socializing agents in a person's youth (Grusec & Hastings, 2015), we assume that they are also effective in encouraging children to express prosocial behaviors. Indeed, prior research has found that adolescents whose parents encouraged and discussed charitable giving with them, donate more money to charity (Wilhelm et al., 2014; Wilhelm, Zhang, Estell, & Perdue, 2017), and volunteer more (Wilhelm et al., 2014). We assume these socialization influences hold into adulthood and work similarly for informal helping. We therefore expect that *the more parents encouraged prosocial behavior, the more individuals will engage in informal helping in adulthood (H3).*

Among adults, it is less likely that direct encouragement is an effective socialization strategy. Because adults do not necessarily perceive socializing agents as more powerful, they may not respond as strongly to direct instruction (Dovidio et al., 2006), and since most adults already have established ideas on appropriate and desirable behaviors, also preaching seems less effective. We, however, do consider encouragement by a romantic partner in the form of conversations as an effective socialization strategy for adults. In a conversation among partners, there is room for discussion about what behaviors are important and what would speak against it. Thus, encouragement takes a less commanding form in adulthood, but still could be a relevant socialization practice. Hence, we expect that: *the more the partner encourages prosocial behavior, the more individuals will engage in informal helping (H4).*

A summary of the hypotheses is presented in figure 3.1.

3.3 Data and measurements

3.3.1 Data

To test our hypotheses, we employed data from the sixth wave (2017-2018) of the Family Survey Dutch Population (FSDP) (Meuleman, Kraaykamp, & Tolsma,

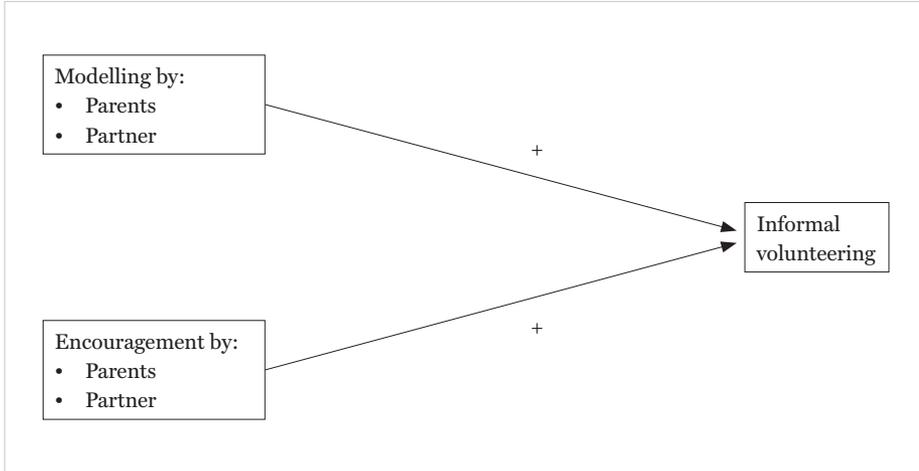


Figure 3.1 Conceptual model

2019). The FSDP registers respondents' opinions and behaviors as well as their family upbringing and current family situation in the Netherlands. It was conducted among a sample of individuals between 18 and 70 years old ($N = 2,610$) drawn from the Longitudinal Internet Studies for the Social Sciences (LISS) panel, which is representative for the Dutch population. An important quality of the FSDP is that through retrospective questioning, information is gathered on the family situation in a person's youth. Moreover, from LISS, information is available on respondents' religious affiliation, personality, and aspects of social integration. For an extensive description of matching FSDP and LISS information, see appendix B.

We excluded individuals from our sample with missing information on informal helping (1.8%), and all independent variables, with the exception of parental volunteering (7.0%), partner education (2.2%) and parental education (9.7%). For these variables, respondents had to report information about their partner or parents, which some respondents did not know or could not remember. To avoid an unnecessary loss of respondents, we constructed a separate category for respondents who did not know if their parents volunteered or not during their youth. Respondents who did not know their parents' or partner's level of education were assigned a lowest score (4), and we included a dummy (missing information) in our models to control for selectivity in this respect.

We performed our analyses on two separate samples. We tested our hypotheses regarding parental socialization on all respondents ($N = 2,464$). Obviously, hypotheses on the role of partner socialization were analyzed only among part-

nered individuals (N=1,475). In these models, it is possible to include partner characteristics.

3.3.2 Measurements

Informal helping was measured with the following question: 'please indicate how often you have done the following things for a) friends and acquaintances and b) neighbors without receiving money in return in the past 12 months'.⁵ A list was presented to the respondent with types of behavior indicating emotional support (giving advice; listening to someone's problems), and indicating practical help (doing small chores in or around the house; lending tools, appliances or clothes; helping with an activity or event; looking after (grand)children; taking care of pets or plants when someone is away; providing transport). Since informal helping refers to voluntary work (Einolf et al., 2016), we decided to only include the items referring to practical help in our analyses.⁶ Response options for each of the six items were: Never (0); Once in a while (1); Regularly; (2); Often (3). To create one composite measure of informal helping, we first weighed the items according to the proportion of respondents that had responded 'never' to that particular item to take into account that some behaviors (e.g. looking after (grand) children of friends or neighbors) were more exclusive and may take more effort and prosocial motivation than others (e.g. doing small chores in or around the house).⁷ For example, 42% of the respondents indicated that they had never done small chores in or around the house in the last 12 months for friends. Therefore, we multiplied respondents' original scores by 0.42. A respondent who originally scored 3 on the item scored $0.42 * 3 = 1.26$ after this multiplication. As a result, doing small chores was less relevant to the composite measure than other behaviors, such as looking after (grand)children of neighbors (which was never done by 86.1% of respondents). To create a scale, we averaged the weighed scores. The minimum score was 0, meaning a respondent had not engaged in any informal helping. The maximum observed score was 2.06.

5 We also performed our analyses for informally helping family members. These analyses showed similar results for family members and non-family members with respect to parental modelling and partner encouragement. Yet, effect sizes were smaller in the analyses predicting informal helping for family members. Furthermore, partner modelling only predicted informal helping for non-family members and not informal helping for family members.

6 Including emotional support items in the informal helping scale did not change the conclusions.

7 Not weighing the items did not change the conclusions.

Parental modelling referred to whether or not parents (formally) volunteered during a respondent's youth. Respondents were asked about parental volunteering when they were approximately 15 years old. Although we would have preferred to use parental informal helping as a measure of parental modelling, this information was not available. Moreover, it is likely that questions about parental informal helping would suffer more from a memory bias than questions about formal volunteering since it is unorganized and therefore less memorable. Hence, we use parental formal volunteering as an indicator of parents' modelling prosocial behavior. A similar strategy was applied for partner modelling, which referred to whether or not a partner was currently active in formal volunteering. For parental and partner encouragement, we used two items, namely 'I learned from my parents/partner to take others into consideration' and 'my parents/partner emphasizes how important it is to help others', with response categories ranging from 'totally disagree' (0) to 'totally agree' (4). If respondents answered 'not applicable' (2.2%), they were assigned the lowest score (0). A dummy variable controlling for selectivity in this respect (missing information) was included in the analyses.⁸ For both parents and partners, the scores on both items were averaged to create a scale. Higher scores refer to stronger parental and partner encouragement.

We considered several control variables in our models. First, we controlled for gender and for age in years. Second, we take relevant psychological traits and religious motivations into account by inclusion of *agreeableness*, *extraversion* and *being religious*. Agreeableness and extraversion are two of the 'Big Five' personality traits (Goldberg, 1992) and prior research indicates that these traits are relevant for people's prosocial behavior (Carlo et al., 2005). Within LISS, these traits were measured by the IPIP's Big Five scale which has 50 items in total, 10 for each personality trait (based on Goldberg (1992)). Factor analysis indicated that agreeableness and extraversion were separate dimensions, and a reliability analysis showed high alpha's (.846/.880) for agreeableness and extraversion. A third group of control variables referred to an individual's resources. For *employment status*, individuals were divided in three categories: non-employed (no job or works less than 12 hours a week), part-time employed (works 12 to 36 hours a week) and full-time employed (works 36 or more hours a week). *Education* was measured in years of education based on the highest degree a respondent obtained. The so-called name generator assessed respondents' *core discussion network size*; the number of people a respondent named to discuss personal matters with. *Health* referred to a person's subjective health. The original five

8 Excluding individuals who answered 'not applicable' did not change the conclusions.

categories were reduced to two categories, namely 'poor' ('bad' and 'mediocre') and 'good' ('good', 'very good', and 'great'). *Household income* was measured as the sum of the net monthly income of all household members. To facilitate interpretation of the coefficients, income scores were divided by 100. People who did not answer the question (8.1%) were assigned the average household income and we included a dummy variable (missing information) to control selectivity therein. Finally, we controlled for several family characteristics. *Parental education* was measured in years similar to respondents' own education. In the sample with partnered respondents, we additionally controlled for partner's education, partner's employment status, relationship duration, and number of children. *Partner's education* and *partner's employment status* were measured similar to respondent's own education and employment status. *Relationship duration* was measured in years and number of children refers to number of children that lived in the same household as the respondent.

Table 3.1 shows the descriptive statistics for our full and partnered sample.

3.3.3 Analytical strategy

We started our analyses performing bivariate descriptive analyses of the socialization variables and informal helping in table 3.2. Hereafter, we performed multiple regression analyses. Model 1 to 4 were based on the full sample and presented in table 3.3. Model 1 included both parental modelling and parental encouragement and gender and age. In the models 2 until 4, controls for motivational factors, resources and family characteristics respectively were added. In table 3.4, we presented model 5 to 8 on the partnered sample. These models were built up similarly but obviously included partners' rather than parents' modelling and encouragement measures. Finally, we discuss some of the robustness checks we performed.

3.4 Results

3.4.1 Descriptive analyses

Our descriptive analyses, as reported in table 3.2, show that individuals who experienced prosocial socialization indeed were more active in informal helping. More specifically, respondents whose parents volunteered ($\beta=.092$), whose partner volunteered ($\beta=.109$), or whose partner encouraged them to help others ($\beta=.148$) engaged more in informal helping. We also found a small positive relationship between parental encouragement and informal helping ($\beta=.037$). Yet, this effect was significant only at $p<.1$.

Table 3.1 Descriptive statistics for the full (N=2,464) and partnered sample (N=1,475)

	Range	All individuals		Partnered individuals	
		Mean/ prop.	SD	Mean/ prop.	SD
Informal helping	0-2.04	0.307	0.287	0.313	0.285
<i>Independent variables</i>					
Parental formal volunteering (ref. = no)	0/1	0.347		0.354	
Do not know about parental volunteering	0/1	0.065		0.056	
Partner formal volunteering (ref. = no)	0/1			0.348	
Parental encouragement	0-4	3.033	0.837	3.003	0.845
Partner encouragement	0-4			2.106	1.003
Partner encouragement not applicable	0/1			0.028	
<i>Control variables</i>					
Gender (ref. = female)	0/1	0.460		0.475	
Age (in years)	18-71	51.143	14.953	52.753	13.348
Agreeableness	1-5	3.913	0.578	3.921	0.556
Extraversion	1-5	3.215	0.679	3.236	0.663
Being religious (ref. = nonreligious)	0/1	0.325		0.344	
Employment status (ref. = full time)	0/1	0.290		0.299	
Part time	0/1	0.292		0.306	
Non-employed	0/1	0.418		0.395	
Education (in years)	6-16	12.380	2.684	12.519	2.634
Core discussion network size	0-5	3.020	1.830	2.919	1.817
Health (ref. = bad health)	0/1	0.819		0.841	
Household income (/100)	0-140	29.121		34.663	15.818
Household income missing	0/1	0.075		0.077	
Having a partner (ref. = no partner)	0/1	0.599			
Parental education	4-16	10.256	3.715	10.109	3.551
Parental education missing	0/1	0.085		0.071	
Relationship duration (in years)	0-56			26.567	15.503
Number of children	0-6			0.688	1.019
Partner's education	4-16			12.214	2.806
Partner's education missing	0/1			0.014	
Partner's employment status (ref. = full time)	0/1			0.341	
Part time	0/1			0.296	
Non-employed	0/1			0.363	

Source: FSDP 2017-2018

Table 3.2 Standardized coefficients of parental and partner socialization in single linear regression analyses on informal helping

	Full sample (N=2,464)		Partnered sample (N=1,475)	
	β	β	β	β
Parental modelling	0.092 ***			
Parental encouragement		0.037 +		
Partner modelling			0.109 ***	
Partner encouragement				0.148 ***

*** $p < 0.001$ ** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$ + $p < 0.1$

Source: FSDP 2017-2018

3.4.2 Multivariate analyses

Model 1 in table 3.3 shows that, controlled for gender and age, parental modelling was still positively related to providing informal help ($\beta = .098$). So, when parents were active in formal volunteering in a respondent's youth, this person was inclined to perform more informal help tasks currently. Table 3.3 also indicated that having experienced parental encouragement in one's youth was not significantly related to present-day informal helping ($\beta = .020$). Apparently, this encouragement effect was cancelled out by the active modelling of parents. Controlling for possible confounding aspects in models 2 until 4 did not change our main conclusions. This means that the difference in informal helping between respondents with volunteering parents and non-volunteering parents in one's youth could not be attributed to internal motivations, resources, or family characteristics. Thus, our results lead us to support hypothesis 1 and refute hypothesis 3. While estimates in model 4 suggest that the effect of parental modelling seems relatively small ($\beta = .098$), it showed larger than the effects of agreeableness ($\beta = .043$), and being religious ($\beta = .058$), which have often been linked to various prosocial behaviors (e.g., Bekkers, 2007; Carlo et al., 2005; van Tienen et al., 2011). This indicated that the impact of parental modelling was substantial.

Table 3.3 also shows that the more extravert and the older a person was, the more often they provided informal help. The opposite seemed true for education; the higher a person was educated, the less engaged they are in informal helping. We further found that religious and non-employed people provided more informal help as compared to non-religious and full-time employed people.

Table 3.4 reports the estimates of partner modelling and encouragement. Model 5 shows that both partner modelling ($\beta = 0.101$) and partner encouragement ($\beta = 0.139$) were positively related to informal helping. Inclusion of internal moti-

Table 3.3 Standardized coefficients of the effects of parental modelling and parental encouragement on informal helping (N=2,464)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
	β	β	β	β
Parental modelling	0.098 ***	0.088 ***	0.102 ***	0.101 ***
Parental encouragement	0.020	-0.009	-0.007	-0.005
<i>Other internal motivations</i>				
Agreeableness		0.043	0.045	0.046
Extraversion		0.131 ***	0.140 ***	0.138 ***
Being religious		0.064 **	0.058 **	0.058 **
<i>Resources</i>				
Employment status (ref. = full time)				
Part time			0.017	0.015
Non-employed			0.075 **	0.074 **
Education			-0.051 *	-0.053 *
Core discussion network size			-0.008	-0.003
Health			-0.006	-0.004
Household income			-0.009	-0.024
<i>Family characteristics</i>				
Having a partner				0.035
Parental education				0.028
<i>Control variables</i>				
Gender (ref. = female)	-0.013	0.004	0.019	0.019
Age	0.065 **	0.057 **	0.019	0.022
R ²	0.013	0.039	0.047	0.049

*** $p < 0.001$ ** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$

Source: FSDP 2017-2018

vations, resources, or family characteristics (including parental socialization) did not change these results. Our findings support hypothesis 2 and 4 that state that respondents whose partner is a volunteer provide more informal help, and that people whose partner encourages them to help others engage more in informal helping. Again, these effects seem substantially larger than that of agreeableness ($\beta = .033$), and religious involvement ($\beta = .027$). Looking at unstandardized effects gives an idea of how substantial the socialization effects are. For example, the unstandardized effect of partner modelling indicated that individuals whose partner volunteered differed .05 on the scale of informal helping (0-2.04) from

Table 3.4 Standardized coefficients of the effects of partner modelling and partner encouragement on informal helping (N=1,475)

	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
	β	β	β	β
Partner modelling	0.101 ***	0.092 ***	0.101 ***	0.084 **
Partner encouragement	0.139 ***	0.134 ***	0.134 ***	0.138 ***
<i>Other internal motivations</i>				
Agreeableness		0.031	0.039	0.033
Extraversion		0.110 ***	0.119 ***	0.117 ***
Being religious		0.049	0.042	0.027
<i>Resources</i>				
Employment status (ref. = full time)				
Part time			-0.022	-0.033
Non-employed			0.036	0.041
Education			-0.038	-0.066 *
Core discussion network size			-0.017	-0.014
Health			0.002	0.004
Household income			-0.056	-0.082 **
<i>Family characteristics</i>				
Partner's education				0.045
Partner's employment status (ref. = full time)				
Part time				-0.036
Non-employed				-0.041
Relationship duration				-0.024
Number of children				0.039
Parental education				0.015
Parental encouragement				0.010
Parental modelling				0.092 **
<i>Control variables</i>				
Gender (ref. = female)	0.007	0.018	0.027	0.035
Age	0.030	0.024	-0.017	0.045
R ²	0.036	0.054	0.063	0.076

*** p<0.001 **p<0.01 *p<0.05

Source: FSDP 2017-2018

individuals whose partner did not volunteer. The unstandardized effect of partner encouragement was 0.039. This means that individuals who received the maximum amount of partner encouragement (score 4) scored $0.039 \times 4 = 0.156$

higher on informal helping than individuals who did not receive any partner encouragement (score 0).

Table 3.4 also shows that, among partnered individuals, those who were more extravert provided informal help more often. People with higher levels of educational attainment and higher income helped less informally. Our earlier finding is also corroborated in table 3.4: people whose parents volunteered in their youth currently engage more in informal helping.

3.4.3 Robustness checks

We performed three types of robustness checks, which we report on in table B1 and table B2 in Appendix B. First, we checked whether differentiating between helping friends and helping neighbors yielded different results (Appendices B1.a, B1.b, B2.a and B2.b). It could be that these two groups instigate different helping norms and that helping friends and neighbors may thus be influenced differently by socialization processes. Although the estimates of the four socialization measures for helping friends were slightly smaller as compared to helping neighbors, the main results were similar, and thus our conclusions are virtually identical.

Second, we performed analyses for all six informal helping behaviors separately (Appendices B1.d to B1.i and B2.d to B2.i). Our analyses suggested that there was some variation in effect sizes (ranging from $\beta=.047$ until $\beta=.123$), but also that the results for parental modelling and partner encouragement were rather robust. These models, however, show that estimates of partner modelling were less robust. Individuals whose partner volunteered only engaged more in chores in or around the house, lending tools, equipment or clothes and helping with activities or events.

Third, we estimated the effects of prosocial socialization solely on items dealing with emotional support⁹ (Appendices B1.c and B2.c), a type of helping behavior that is sometimes included in informal helping (van Tienen et al., 2011). Again, parental modelling and partner encouragement showed similar effects as found for our practical measures of informal helping. It is shown that neither partner modelling, nor parental encouragement was related to providing emotional support. This suggests that providing emotional support is also affected by socialization practices, but to a lesser extent.

9 Emotional support was measured by averaging the two previously excluded items in the informal helping battery, namely 'giving advice' and 'listening to someone's issues.'

3.5 Discussion

In this study, we examined the role of socialization practices on informal helping. We expected that modelling and encouragement by both parents and partner would promote informal help provision. We tested our expectations with unique data from the sixth wave of the FSDP (2017-2018), and extensively controlled for confounding factors to ensure that the reported effects of socialization practices may not be assigned to confounding factors.

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In line with research on volunteering in formal organizations (e.g., Bekkers, 2005; Nesbit, 2013; Perks & Konency, 2015; Quaranta & Dotti Sani, 2016), our study found that socialization was indeed consistently related to informal helping, even after controlling for confounding factors and examining various aspects of informal helping. More specifically, we found that people whose parents or partner volunteered provided more informal help. These findings are strongly in support for the theoretical idea that modelling prosocial behavior is a relevant socialization practice (Dovidio et al., 2006; Nesbit, 2013; Perks & Konency, 2015; Quaranta & Dotti Sani, 2016). Moreover, as we tested modelling by examining formal volunteering, our findings suggest that observing a parent or partner being active in formal volunteering spills over to prosocial behaviors in other domains. These findings are in line with previous studies that also found a spill-over between formal volunteering and charitable giving (Bekkers, 2005; Wilhelm et al., 2014), and also between formal volunteering and informal support (Hook, 2004).

With respect to encouragement as a socialization practice, this study found that the more people were encouraged by their partner to help others, the more they were active in informal helping. Parental encouragement, however, did not relate to informal helping. This finding contrasts prior research that shows that talking with parents about donating to charity promotes charitable giving (Wilhelm et al., 2014; Wilhelm et al., 2017). It may be that the effect of partner encouragement actually reflects partner's stimulation to start providing informal help together as a social activity, for instance when caring for (grand) children is concerned. This may be less likely to occur as a result of parental encouragement. Another explanation for why we did not find an effect of parental encouragement may be that the items measuring parental encouragement were rather general. These items referred to learning to 'take others into consideration' and 'helping others.' Likely, almost all parents encouraged these types of behaviors in their children (83% 'taking into consideration' and 73% 'helping others'), and it might be too difficult for respondents to assess the intensity of parental stimulation. This may be less relevant for partner encouragement, as parents are charged with the responsibility to teach what is right and partners are not. When future

research would continue to study modelling and encouragement simultaneously, it is preferable to include measures that more strictly differentiate in situations or behaviors in which parental encouragement may play a role.

Obviously, our study also holds limitations. First, while our analyses of the partnered sample may indicate that partners influenced each other's prosocial behavior, it is also possible that partners have met each other performing prosocial behaviors or selected each other because of their prosocial behavior. Our measurement of partner encouragement takes this into account to some extent by asking respondents about their experience of encouragement instead of their partner's values. However, to draw stronger conclusions on the direction of partner effects, it is advisable for future research to study longitudinal data.

A second limitation concerns the dyadic aspect of informal helping. This study has focused on the motivation of the helper and has made an effort to isolate effects of socialization practices. The decision to provide informal help, however, may not only depend on personal characteristics of the helper, but also on characteristics of the one that is helped, and the relationship with the helper. Moreover, although informal helping indicates that people are willing to help and may point at social cohesion in a neighborhood or friendship network, informal help provision may also depend on social cohesion and norms to help others within a certain context. When such norms do not exist, individuals may be less inclined to volunteer informally, regardless of their socialization. Hence, the amount of informal helping that one does may also depend on contextual characteristics. Future research could examine how these alter, dyad and context characteristics affect informal helping and how they relate to socialization practices.

Finally, although our study distinguished between two types of socialization processes, modelling and encouragement, it was unable to test the underlying mechanisms, most prominently, intentions. We presumed that socialization practices result in prosocial motivations and intentions, which promote informal helping. Yet, we were unable to put that notion to the test. Future research could examine the underlying mechanisms further, for example by including motivations and intentions in their empirical models.

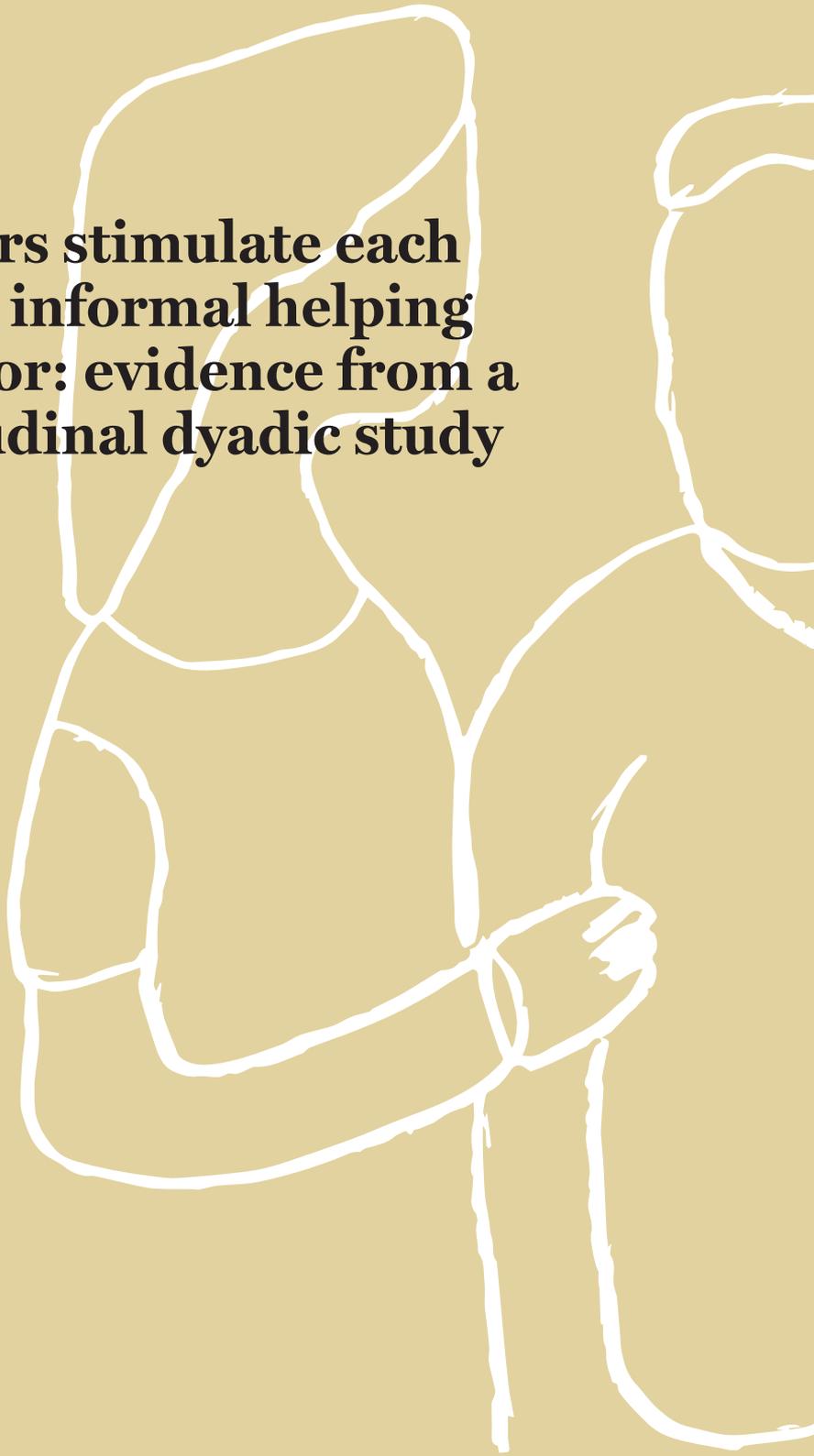
Despite its limitations, we are of the opinion that this study makes some meaningful contributions to the literature. First, it tested whether socialization practices are relevant for informal helping. Second, our study included socialization practices of parents as primary socializing agents, and partners as tertiary socializing agents, and differentiated between modelling and encouragement processes of socialization, which allowed us to show more accurately that modelling was a more powerful socialization process than encouragement. Finally, our study examined both youth and adult prosocial socialization practices, showing

that motivations for prosocial behavior are not set after a person's youth, but are affected by significant others in adult life as well.

These findings suggest an optimistic outlook on community life in terms of informal helping. Our conclusion that informal helping is (partly) shaped by socialization by volunteering parents suggests that community life decline may be a process of slow development. Simultaneously, our conclusions suggest that also in adult life, people still learn informal helping from others. On the one hand, this implies that people may be socialized during their adult life in the direction of not engaging in informal helping. Yet, on the other hand, it offers opportunities to turn the tide of community life decline, as people are shown to still learn new behaviors, even after they have reached adulthood.

CHAPTER 4

Partners stimulate each other's informal helping behavior: evidence from a longitudinal dyadic study





Marieke Voorpostel is the co-author of this chapter.

The authors jointly developed the idea and the design of the study. Ramaeckers wrote the main part of the manuscript and conducted the analyses. Voorpostel substantially contributed to the manuscript.

Abstract

Although prior research has suggested that partners' influence each other's informal helping behavior, empirical studies have been disturbed by possible selection effects. The present study takes a longitudinal approach to examine whether the partner's helping behavior changes informal helping over time, thereby diminishing the impact of selection. Partners are expected to stimulate each other's informal helping because they provide each other with opportunities and motivation for informal helping. We examine the impact of partner's helping on informal helping in general, helping kin and helping non-kin. Using three waves of dyadic data from the Swiss Household Panel (2013, 2016, 2019), our fixed-effects regression models showed support for our general hypothesis: partners positively influence each other's helping behavior over time. That means that when a partner starts (or stops) helping the likelihood that the other person provides informal help increases (decreases). This is the case for informal help provided to both kin (family) and non-kin (friends and neighbors), although the partner effect is larger for helping family members.

4.1 Introduction

Providing informal help, that is helping people that do not live in the same household without coordination of formal organizations (Einolf et al., 2016), is often thought of as the social glue of societies. Examples of informal help are grandparents watching their grandchildren, neighbors helping each other with gardenwork and friends doing groceries when someone is sick. Informal helping is prevalent in all layers of society, as it has a low threshold and does not require extensive knowledge or skills (Williams, 2005).

Informal helping is a form of community involvement (Jones, 2000) and thus subject of the longstanding discussion on a presumed decline of community life (Bellah et al., 1985; Putnam, 2000). It is often argued that societies are becoming increasingly individualized, which may result in lower solidarity between people. This is expected to be expressed in a reduction people's interest and opportunities for informal helping. Simultaneously, prior research has shown that community engagement is contagious; people who are active in community life stimulate others to engage in their communities as well (e.g., Bekkers, 2007; Nesbit, 2013; Perks & Konency, 2015). These opposite mechanisms suggest that informal helping may continue to be the social glue of societies if people who provide informal help manage to inspire enough others to do the same. It is therefore important to understand how and to what extent people's informal helping behavior affects others' helping behavior.

This study focuses on (romantic) partners as a source of informal help promotion. We do so because romantic partners are likely among the most important persons in adults' life. They are one of the closest relationships people have as an adult (Nesbit, 2013). Therefore, their partner's values and attitudes are likely important to people. Moreover, (romantic) partners often share a household, meaning they may substantially affect whom people have social interactions with (Kalmijn, 2003) and how much time people have to provide informal help (Hook, 2004).

Prior research has indeed shown that partners' informal helping behavior is related (Hook, 2004). Specifically, the more one partner engages in informal helping, the more the other does it as well. This strand of research argues that this positive relationship is the result of partner influence; partners provide each other with resources, motivations and opportunities for helping, which makes them resemble one another (Nesbit, 2013; Ramaekers et al., 2022; Rotolo & Wilson, 2006). Despite this focus on influence, most prior studies have used cross-sectional data. Thus, it is possible that selection also explains part of the positive relation between partners' informal helping. After all, prior research has identified various predictors of informal helping that also are associated with

homogamy in partner choice (e.g., health, religious motivations, employment status) (Einolf et al., 2016; Kalmijn, 1998; Wang, 2021). In other words, those who provide more informal help may also be more likely to enter a romantic relationship with people who provide informal help.

The current study advances on prior research by using longitudinal data to study the relationship between partners' informal helping behavior. We use three waves of the Swiss Household Panel (SHP) that include information about informal helping. We analyze these data through fixed-effects regression models (Allison, 2009), which allow us to compare people to themselves at different moments in time. These models filter out (unobserved) differences between people, including characteristics on which people may select their partner. Thus, using longitudinal data and fixed effects models reduces the impact of selection, providing a more stringent test of partner influence, as theories suggested in prior research.

To summarize, the study answers the following research question: *to what extent do partners influence each other's informal helping behavior?*

4.2 Theoretical framework

Informal helping refers to practical support that is not organized by formal organizations (Einolf et al., 2016). It is provided to people who do not live in the same household as the helper, such as (extended) family, friends and neighbors (Amato, 1990; Wilson & Musick, 1997). Examples are driving a friend to an appointment, watching a neighbor's children, or doing gardenwork for a relative.

Prior research has rarely paid attention to the influence of partner's helping behavior on informal helping. Exceptions are studies by Hook (2004) and Ramaekers et al. (2022). These studies both find a positive relationship between partners' (informal) helping behavior. This indicates that a helping person is more likely to have a helping partner. This finding is in line with studies on partner effects in other types of helping behaviors, such as formal volunteering (Brown & Zhang, 2013; Nesbit, 2013; Rotolo & Wilson, 2006). Moreover, these studies generally rely on similar theoretical approaches on why partners' helping behaviors are related as studies on informal helping. Hence, when we discuss these approaches below, we will sometimes refer to formal volunteering studies and note differences when deemed relevant.

First, partners may *stimulate* each other's informal helping behavior. As a result of this stimulation, partners are expected to display the similar behavior with respect to informal helping. They either both engage in informal helping (or to the same extent), or they both do not. Hence, although theorizing sometimes focuses on partners stimulating their partner to engage (more) in helping (Nes-

bit, 2013), this approach also indicates that partners may stimulate each other to stop providing informal help.

Stimulation may occur through various mechanisms. Some studies argue that *socialization* plays a role, where partners transmit their attitudes towards helping and their values regarding prosocial behavior to each other (Nesbit, 2013; Rotolo & Wilson, 2006). This transmission occurs, for example when someone (visibly) engages in prosocial behavior (modelling) or when they encourage helping others (Ramaekers et al., 2022). The other partner then learns that their partner finds helping others important and may eventually internalize the importance as well (Dovidio et al., 2006; Grusec & Hastings, 2015; Kuczynski & Hildebrandt, 1997). People are assumed to act on their attitudes towards helping and their prosocial values (Ajzen et al., 2018). Thus, if they internalized the importance of helping, it is likely that they would engage in informal helping as well. This would lead to partners resemble each other in terms of informal helping. Ramaekers et al. (2022) indeed found support that socialization practices, such as encouragement and modelling, promote informal helping behavior.

Partners may also enhance each other's helping behavior by providing each other with helping *opportunities*. With respect to informal helping specifically, partners often have overlapping social networks (Kalmijn, 2003). Social networks are key in the organization of informal helping; people with more contact with others are argued to receive more information about people who require or expect informal help (Lee & Brudney, 2012; Wang et al., 2017). Hence, by gaining access to each other's network, partners provide each other with more informal helping opportunities. Moreover, it is likely that partners who provide informal help give their partner more access to helping opportunities than non-helping partners. People in the networks of a helping partner likely see this person as someone they can approach or rely on for help. It is likely that they extend this assumption and expectation to their partner. Furthermore, helping partners may have more people who require informal help in their network than those who do not provide informal help. Additionally, informal helping may be a way for partners to spend time together, as suggested by Rotolo and Wilson (2006) for formal volunteering.

Literature on formal volunteering suggests an additional mechanism, namely promoting *resources and skills* necessary for helping (Nesbit, 2013). Examples of such skills and resources are income, knowledge and organizational skills (Ges-thuizen & Scheepers, 2012; Musick & Wilson, 2008). Yet, these resources have been found to be ambiguously related to informal helping (Einolf et al., 2016; Wang, 2021). Hence, despite partners providing each other with more income, knowledge, or organizational skills, these may not translate into a higher likelihood to provide informal help. Although this mechanism may play a role in the

influence that partners exert over each other in terms of informal helping, we assume that this role is small.

Second, it is also possible that *substitution* occurs between partners; if one partner provides help to someone, the other may simply need to help less. Studies that propose this perspective generally see helping through a lens of household production in which partners divide tasks including informal helping (Brown & Zhang, 2013; Hook, 2004; Rotolo & Wilson, 2006). Partners may consider informal help provision a task that someone in the household has to perform. For example, they may consider it their duty to support their neighbor by offering help with gardenwork and watching their pet when this neighbor is out of town. Yet, this support does not need to be provided by both partners, which allows them to divide the responsibility among themselves in a similar fashion to dividing housework and paid work tasks. Empirically, the substitution approach has received only limited support; Brown and Zhang (2013) only find this for formal volunteering activities that relate to children. For formal volunteering activities that relate less to the own household (i.e., volunteering to support people in poor health), they also find support for stimulation.

Third, partner *selection* processes may explain the association between partners' informal helping behavior: individuals who engage in prosocial behavior are more likely to select a partner with the same preferences and characteristics. To the extent that such individual preferences and characteristics affect individual informal helping behavior, partners will automatically be similar in their helping behavior. As most studies on prosocial behavior assessed the relationship with helping behavior of the partner based on cross-sectional data, selection and influence could often not be clearly separated.

Although substitution and selection likely play a role in the relationship between partners' informal helping behavior, we argue that partners are most likely to stimulate each other's informal helping behavior. Given that we focus on providing informal help or not, we deem it unlikely that if people wanted to provide informal help, they would place all helping tasks with one partner. Instead, they may draw each other into informal helping. Moreover, there is overwhelming empirical evidence for a positive relationship between partners' informal helping behavior (Hook, 2004; Nesbit, 2013; Ramaekers et al., 2022; Rotolo & Wilson, 2006), supporting the stimulation argument over the substitution argument as well. Additionally, we expect that this positive relationship between partners' informal helping is not solely the result of selection. Prior research has shown that irrespective of selection effects, partners' behavior in various domains spills over into each other (Gruneau, 2020; Kristensen, Pfeffer, Dahl, Holm, & Feldhues, 2022). Furthermore, studies on prosocial behavior specifically indicate that parents

affect their children's prosocial behavior (Bekkers, 2007; Perks & Konency, 2015). Given that selection effects are very unlikely in parent-child relationships, these results imply that social influence occurs in prosocial behavior as well.

Thus, our main hypothesis is that *it is more likely that a person becomes involved in informal helping when their partner engages in informal helping*.

Although our main hypothesis refers to informal helping in general, we also investigate the partner effect for helping kin (family members) and non-kin (friends and neighbors) separately. We distinguish between these two recipient groups because people approach helping kin and non-kin differently (Conkova, 2019; Curry et al., 2013). Accordingly, prior research has considered kin as a distinct recipient group (Einolf et al., 2016; Lim & Laurence, 2015). Furthermore, partners may stimulate motivations and opportunities for helping kin differently than motivations and opportunities for helping non-kin, for example because partners' kin networks overlap to a larger extent than their non-kin networks (Haggerty, Du, Kennedy, Bradbury, & Karney, 2022; Stein, Bush, Ross, & Ward, 1992). Therefore, we examine the partner effect for helping kin and non-kin separately, in addition to informal helping in general.

4.3 Data and measurements

To test and explore the impact of partners on informal helping, we use the three waves of the Swiss Household Panel (SHP) that include information about informal helping. The SHP is a longitudinal study that follows a random sample of private households residing in Switzerland over time since 1999. Refreshment samples were added in 2004, 2013 and 2020. The waves we use were collected in 2013 (wave 15), 2016 (wave 18) and 2019 (wave 21).

In our sample, we include co-resident couples of which both partners completed the individual questionnaire in at least two of the three waves (2074 couples). Additionally, we remove individuals who have a missing score on the dependent variables, on informal helping by the partner, or on any of the control variables (91 respondents). This leaves us with a sample of 9605 observations of 4046 respondents from 2039 couples¹⁰.

10 For most couples both partners were included as main respondent and as partner. For the analyses it was not a requirement to have complete information for both partners. When a respondent had missing scores on one of the control variables, they were excluded as a main respondent, but were still included as a partner. As a result, some couples are incomplete in the data.

We use three measures of informal helping in this study. First, respondents were asked about their general informal helping behavior. This was described as volunteering activities other than formal volunteering and for people who do not live in the same household. Watching someone else's children, helping a neighbor, and offering transportation were given as examples. Respondents could answer with yes (1) and no (0). Second, respondents were asked to specify to whom they gave this help, and they could name multiple groups to answer this question (family, friends, neighbors, other people). We divided those groups into kin (family members) and non-kin (friends and neighbors)¹¹. Both variables distinguish between 'I helped this group' (1) and 'I did not help this group' (0). We exclude observations with missing scores on these variables.

We connected the data from the main respondent to their partner's answers on the questionnaire. Hence, to measure partner's informal helping, we use the same measure as described with respect to the dependent variables but use the answers from the respondents' partner.

We control in our analyses for various factors that have been related to informal helping behavior in prior research. First, we control for the number of minor children in the household and the age of the youngest child (under 6 years old, between 6 and 12 years old, between 12 and 18 years old and no (minor) children in the household). Parents of children under six generally have less time and energy to engage in informal helping behavior (Wilson, 2000). Reversely, children between 6 and 12 years old involve their parents in help by connecting them to other parents and the local community (Lee & Brudney, 2012; Wilson, 2000). Second, despite the somewhat ambiguous relationship with informal helping (Einolf et al., 2016; Wang, 2021), we control for various indicators of socioeconomic resources that are sometimes found to be related to informal helping, namely, employment (not in employment, part time and full time (self-)employed) (e.g., Gundelach et al., 2010; Hook, 2004; Manatschal & Freitag, 2014) and household income (imputed version, equivalized (Hagenaars, de Vos, & Zaidi, 1994)) (e.g., Lee & Brudney, 2012; Perks & Haan, 2010). Finally, we control for type of housing (living in a house vs. an apartment), as a proxy for social integration in the neighborhood (e.g., Perks & Haan, 2010; Wang et al., 2017), and for linguistic

11 We decided not to include 'other people' into the non-kin group, because we cannot be certain that people excluded kin from this category. Moreover, including 'other people' in the non-kin group did not alter our results (online appendix 5).

area (German, French, Italian and multilingual)¹². The latter is relevant in the Swiss context, as prior research indicates that helping and volunteering are more prevalent in German-speaking parts of the country (Gundelach et al., 2010; Lamprecht, Fischer, & Stamm, 2020). We also include time dummy variables for the second and third wave. We do not control for time-invariant factors as these will be filtered out by the fixed effects models.

An overview of all variables is presented in table 4.1. Surprisingly, this table indicates that the proportion of people who provide informal help to kin is similar to the proportion that helps non-kin, which contrasts earlier research (Kahn, McGill, & Bianchi, 2011; Ramaekers et al., 2023).

4.3.1 Analytical strategy

To analyze these data, we performed fixed-effects logistic regression models. As described in Allison (2009), these models control for differences between respondents and thus only attempt to explain variance within a single person. This approach thus excludes the impact of time-invariant unobserved heterogeneity in the sample and diminishes the possible role of selection effects. This method is suitable for this study as our main hypothesis focuses on changes over time and thus on within-person differences.

To account for the nested structure of our dataset, we clustered the standard errors on the couple level¹³. This is necessary because we included both partners in our dataset as main respondents, meaning that the data violate the assumption of independent observations. Respondents in a couple are more similar to each other than other respondents, as they are part of the same higher-level unit (the household). Not accounting for this through clustering standard errors would result in an inflation of the standard errors in our analyses.

The interpretation of the estimates from a fixed-effects logistic regression model is not particularly intuitive. To gain a better understanding of these estimates, we estimate average logit elasticities with `aextlogit` in STATA (Kemp & Santons Silva, 2016; Kitawaza, 2012). Average logit elasticities can be interpreted as the percentage change in the likelihood that the dependent variable is 1 when

12 We based linguistic area on the canton people lived in, given the literature that shows that other helping behaviors (such as formal volunteering) are more prevalent in certain cantons. A robustness check (online appendix 6) shows using language of the interview as an indicator for linguistic background does not change the results.

13 Note that splitting the analyses by gender to account for the interdependency does not change the results.

Table 4.1 Descriptive statistics for wave 15 (N=2551), wave 18 (N=3783) and wave 21 (N=3721)

		Wave 15		Wave 18		Wave 21		
		Range	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
92]	Informal helping (in general) (ref. = no)	0/1	0.323		0.291		0.299	
	Informal helping for kin (ref. = no)	0/1	0.193		0.168		0.198	
	Informal helping for non-kin (ref. = no)	0/1	0.188		0.158		0.150	
	Partner helps informally (in general) (ref. = no)	0/1	0.325		0.296		0.300	
	Partner helps kin informally (ref. = no)	0/1	0.192		0.171		0.197	
	Partner helps non-kin informally (ref. = no)	0/1	0.190		0.160		0.151	
	Number of children	0 - 5	0.646	0.983	0.633	0.972	0.630	0.993
	Age youngest child (ref. = no (minor) children)	0/1	0.645		0.656		0.666	
	Younger than 6 years old		0.144		0.146		0.138	
	Between 6 and 12 years old		0.098		0.109		0.101	
	Between 12 and 18 years old		0.113		0.089		0.095	
	Relationship duration (in years)	0 - 71	25.990	14.641	27.522	15.069	29.798	14.907
	Employment status (ref. = fulltime)	0/1	0.357		0.325		0.301	
	Parttime		0.294		0.301		0.293	
	Non-employed		0.349		0.374		0.406	
	Income (CHF; divided by 10,000)	0.6 - 57.8	7.513	3.849	7.554	4.138	7.725	4.298
	Linguistic area (ref. = German)	0/1	0.535		0.541		0.544	
	French		0.201		0.191		0.169	
	Italian		0.038		0.042		0.042	
	Multilingual		0.226		0.226		0.227	
	Type of residence (ref. = house)	0/1	0.493		0.492		0.500	
Apartment		0.465		0.464		0.459		
Other housing		0.042		0.043		0.041		

Table 4.1 continued

	Range	Wave 15		Wave 18		Wave 21	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Educational attainment (in years)	8 - 21	14.215	3.071	14.238	3.094	14.272	3.096
Age	20 - 92	52.656	13.798	54.606	14.103	56.973	13.975
Gender (ref. = male)	0/1	0.494		0.493		0.493	

Source: SHP 2013, 2016, 2019

an independent variable increases by 1. In this paper, the average logit effect of partner’s informal helping can thus be interpreted as the percentage change in the likelihood that someone provides informal help when their partner starts informal helping. Note that the effects of the fixed-effects analyses and thus that average logit elasticities are symmetric. This means that they also reflect the percentage decrease (in case of a positive effect) in the likelihood that someone provides informal help when their partner stops informal helping.

4.4 Results

4.4.1 Descriptive results

Table 4.2 reports on the changes in informal helping over the three waves of the Swiss Household Panel. Results from this table show that the majority of respondents are stable in their informal helping behavior over the waves. The percentage of respondents with no change is slightly lower for informal helping in general (71-74%) than for helping kin or non-kin specifically (80-82%). Furthermore, the majority of people who are stable in their informal helping behavior do not provide any informal help. Approximately 55% of respondents (77% of people who do not change their informal helping over the waves) consistently do not provide informal help (in general). In comparison, only 16% to 18% of respondents consistently provide informal help (23% of stable respondents). The group that consistently does not provide informal help is even larger with respect to providing informal help to kin and non-kin. The stable non-helpers amount to 71% to 75% of the sample compared to 6% to 11% of the sample that is consistently involved in informal helping.

Of the people who change their informal helping behavior over time, the majority stops helping. Of the total sample, 16% stops providing informal help in general between 2013 and 2016 and 13% does so between 2016 and 2019. These

Table 4.2 Changes in informal helping in general over the three waves

		2013-2016		2016-2019	
		(N=2346)		(N=2873)	
		N	%	N	%
General	Stops	390	16%	397	13%
	Stable – not helping	1308	55%	1732	57%
	Stable – helping	382	16%	525	17%
	Starts	289	12%	397	13%
Kin	Stops	281	12%	245	8%
	Stable – not helping	1694	72%	2196	72%
	Stable – helping	195	8%	297	10%
	Starts	199	8%	313	10%
Non-kin	Stops	285	12%	297	10%
	Stable – not helping	1737	73%	2295	75%
	Stable – helping	153	6%	203	7%
	Starts	194	8%	256	8%

Source: SHP 2013, 2016, 2019

percentages are similar for specifically helping kin or non-kin (10-12%). It is the case for all recipient groups that the group of respondents that stops helping is larger than the group that starts helping (8-12%).

Figure 4.1 reports the proportion of people that engage in informal helping by the helping behavior of their partner. It is clear from this figure that people with a helping partner are more likely to provide informal help themselves. 24% of people who do not have a helping partner engages in informal helping compared to 44% of people who do have a helping partner. The difference between those with and without a helping partner is smaller with respect to helping non-kin (12 percent points) and larger for helping kin (28 percent points). Though these findings suggest a consistent partner effect, they do not indicate whether this is the result of partner influence, selection or third factors. To isolate partner influence further, we need to account for heterogeneity between respondents by performing fixed-effects regression analysis.

4.4.2 Fixed-effects logistic regression models

Table 4.3 reports on the results of the fixed-effects logistic regression models predicting informal helping and the corresponding average logit elasticities. The effect of having a partner who provides informal help significantly positive.

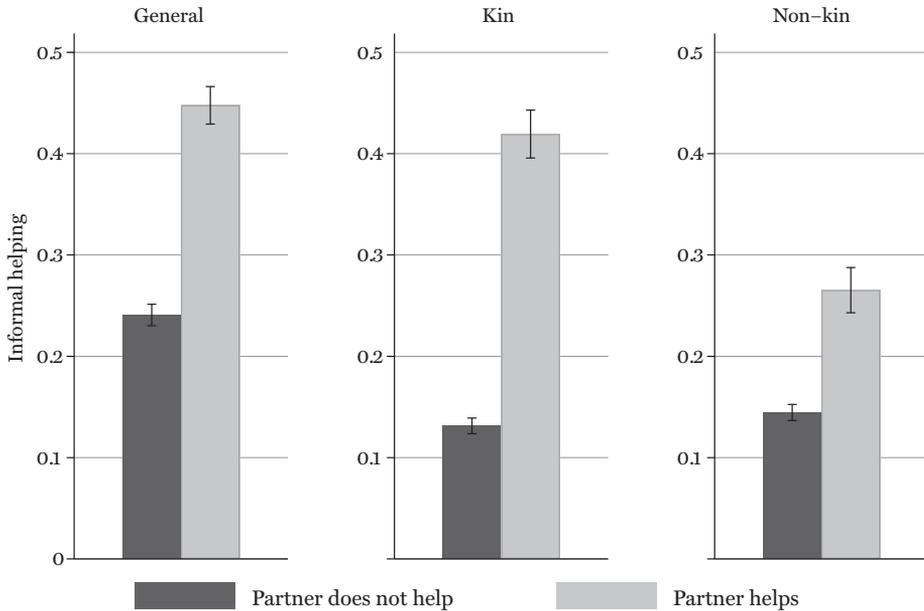


Figure 4.1 Informal helping in general, for kin and for non-kin, by helping behavior partner
Note: Chi Square tests show that all differences between people whose partner does and does not help are statistically significant
Source: SHP 2013, 2016, 2017

This means that when someone starts helping, the likelihood that their partner provides informal help increases as well. The average logit elasticity of having a partner who provides informal help is 0.468. This means that the likelihood that someone provides informal help increases by 46.8% when their partner starts informal helping. To illustrate this further, we will use a fictional example. Suppose that a person whose partner does not help has a likelihood of 30% to provide informal help. When the partner starts providing informal help, the likelihood that that person provides informal help increases by $0.468 \times 30 = 14$ percent points to a likelihood of 44 percent. Given that only 30.2% of people provide informal help, this is a substantial increase. Because the average logit elasticity is symmetric, having a partner that stops helps predicts a 46.8% decrease in the likelihood to provide informal helping. Hence, assuming that someone with a helping partner has a 30% likelihood to provide informal help, the likelihood to provide informal help drops by 14 percent points (46.8%) to 16% when their partner stops helping.

As a robustness check, we employed Allison's method (2019) to investigate whether our results were driven by an increase or decrease in informal helping

Table 4.3 Fixed-effects logistic regression results and average logit elasticities predicting within-person change in informal helping in general (N respondents = 4046, N observations = 9605)

	Fixed-effects logit regression coefficients		Average logit elasticities	
	B	SE	B	SE
Partner helps informally (ref. = no)	0.671 ***	0.097	0.468 ***	0.068
Number of children	0.424 **	0.143	0.296 **	0.100
Youngest child in household (ref. = no (minor) children)				
Under 6 years old	-1.196 ***	0.336	-0.834 ***	0.234
Between 6 and 12 years old	-0.968 **	0.337	-0.488 *	0.189
Between 12 and 18 years old	-0.700 *	0.270	-0.675 **	0.235
Relationship duration	0.067	0.065	0.047	0.045
Employment status (ref. = fulltime)				
Non-employment	0.581 **	0.168	0.406 **	0.117
Parttime employment	0.401 *	0.163	0.279 *	0.114
Income (CHF/10,000)	-0.040	0.022	-0.028	0.016
Residence type (ref. = house)				
Apartment	0.213	0.263	0.149	0.183
Other housing	-0.928	0.843	-0.648	0.588
Linguistic area (ref. = German)				
French	0.366	0.293	0.255	0.205
Italian	12.602	647.179	-	-
Multilingual	-0.708	0.678	-0.494	0.473
Wave (ref. = wave 15)				
Wave 18	-0.525 *	0.209	-0.366 *	0.146
Wave 21	-0.735	0.393	-0.513	0.274

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$

Source: SHP 2013, 2016, 2019

by the partner. The results of these analyses can be found in appendix C (table C.1). These analyses show that people's likelihood to provide informal help is both affected by a partner stopping informal helping and by a partner starting helping. However, the impact of a partner that starts helping is much larger. This suggests that the results of Table 4.3 are mostly driven by a helping partner promoting informal helping, rather than by a non-helping partner discouraging informal helping.

Of the control variables, changes in the number and age of children that a person has and changes in their employment status affect informal helping as well. When someone has another child, their likelihood of engaging in informal helping increases as well. However, when the household situation changes from no minor children to a child under six years old, people's likelihood to provide informal help decreases. The same applies to having a child between six and twelve years old and to having a child between twelve and eighteen years old, albeit a smaller decrease. Regarding employment status, the fixed-effects regression analyses report that when a person becomes non-employed or starts working part-time (as opposed to full-time), that their likelihood to engage in informal help increases. Finally, the likelihood to provide informal help decreased from 2013 (wave 1) to 2016 (wave 2) but return to approximately its 2013 level in 2019 (wave 3).

Splitting our analyses in providing help to kin and to non-kin in table 4.4 leads to similar results regarding our main hypothesis: when someone starts helping, the likelihood that their partner engages in informal helping as well increases. Again, we estimated average logit elasticities. These reveal that the size of the partner effect is larger when informal help to kin is concerned in comparison to informal help to non-kin. The average logit elasticity of the partner effect regarding helping kin is 0.719, whereas the average logit elasticity of the partner effect regarding helping non-kin is 0.503. To illustrate this further, suppose that our models predicted that an average person whose partner did not help kin or non-kin had a 30% likelihood of providing informal help to either group. If their partner started providing informal help to kin, the likelihood to provide informal help to kin would then increase by $0.719 * 30 = 21.6$ percent points to 51.6%. If their partner started providing informal help to non-kin, the likelihood to provide informal help to non-kin would then increase by $0.503 * 30 = 15.1$ percent points to 45.1%. This suggests that the partner has a larger impact with respect to informally helping kin than to informally helping non-kin.

Furthermore, we examined whether these results were driven by increases or decreases in informal helping by the partner. These analyses (appendix C) indicate that informal helping for kin is driven by an increase in the partner's helping but not by a decrease. Informally helping non-kin is marginally significantly driven by a partner who starts helping ($p < 0.10$) but not by a partner who stops providing informal help. These findings again suggest support for our main hypothesis. Furthermore, the average logit elasticities indicate that the impact of partner's informal helping for kin is larger than the impact of their informal helping for non-kin.

Table 4.4 Fixed-effects logistic regression results and average logit elasticities predicting within-person change in informal helping for kin and for non-kin (N respondents = 4046, N observations = 9605)

	Informal helping for kin	
	Fixed-effects regression coefficients	
	B	SE
Partner helps informally (ref. = no)	0.882 ***	0.122
Number of children	0.229	0.194
Youngest child in household (ref. = no (minor) children)		
Under 6 years old	-1.486 **	0.443
Between 6 and 12 years old	-0.980 *	0.439
Between 12 and 18 years old	-0.319	0.370
Relationship duration	0.108	0.074
Employment status (ref. = fulltime)		
Non-employment	0.550 **	0.207
Parttime employment	0.248	0.208
Income (CHF/10,000)	-0.034	0.026
Residence type (ref. = house)		
Apartment	0.060	0.304
Other housing	-1.931	1.362
Linguistic area (ref. = German)		
French	0.247	0.357
Italian	-	-
Multilingual	-0.758	0.736
Wave (ref. = wave 15)		
Wave 18	-0.696 **	0.238
Wave 21	-0.800	0.445

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$

Source: SHP 2013, 2016, 2019

4.5 Discussion

This paper studied partner effects on informal helping from a longitudinal perspective. We expected that partners would positively influence each other's informal helping because they stimulate each other's motivation and opportunities for helping. To study partner effects, we analyzed three waves of data from the Swiss Household Panel (2013, 2016, 2019) and estimated fixed-effects regression models.

Average logit elasticities		Informal helping for non-kin Fixed-effects regression coefficients		Average logit elasticities	
B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
0.719 ***	0.100	0.601 ***	0.133	0.503 ***	0.111
0.187	0.158	0.442 **	0.160	0.370 **	0.134
-1.211 **	0.361	-0.668	0.381	-0.559	0.319
-0.260	0.302	-0.549	0.380	-0.620 *	0.262
-0.799 *	0.358	-0.741 *	0.313	-0.459	0.318
0.088	0.060	-0.074	0.071	-0.062	0.059
0.448 **	0.169	0.537 **	0.200	0.450 **	0.168
0.202	0.169	0.221	0.190	0.185	0.159
-0.028	0.021	0.011	0.026	0.009	0.021
0.049	0.248	-0.146	0.307	-0.122	0.257
-1.574	1.110	-0.459	0.958	-0.384	0.802
0.201	0.291	0.780 *	0.384	0.653 *	0.321
-	-	-	-	-	-
-0.618	0.600	-0.004	0.684	-0.003	0.572
-0.567 **	0.194	-0.200	0.231	-0.167	0.193
-0.652	0.363	-0.109	0.430	-0.092	0.360

Our study clearly shows a positive effect of the partner's helping behavior on a person's own informal helping. Specifically, our findings indicate that people are more likely to start engaging in informal helping when their partner helps as well. These results are in line with earlier, cross-sectional studies on the topic (Hook, 2004; Ramaekers et al., 2022). A large improvement of the current study over prior research, however, was that it was able to examine the partner effect over time, reducing the impact of selection in the partner effect. The fact that we

still found support for the expectation that helping by one partner increases the likelihood that the other partner provides informal help suggests that the partner effect in informal helping is not solely the result of selection. Instead, partners likely stimulate each other's informal helping. These findings thus provide more solid empirical evidence for the stimulation approach and its mechanisms.

The reported positive relationship between partners' informal helping behavior indicates that substitution plays a smaller, possibly limited, role in this relationship: either substitution does not occur between partners in informal helping or it affects informal helping behavior but stimulation is more important. Brown and Zhang (2013) suggest that substitution only occurs when couples see helping as shared task that the household as a whole needs to do. Hence, our results may suggest that couples do not see informal helping tasks as shared. However, it is also possible that couples consider at least part of their informal helping tasks as shared household tasks but do not place all tasks with one person. Instead, they both take up some informal helping tasks and substitute for each other's helping in terms of hours. Because our study only considers whether people provide any informal help (or not), we cannot exclude this possibility. To gain more insight into the role of the substitution mechanism, future research can examine partner effects in time spent on or frequency of informal helping.

We examined the partner effect for informal help provided to kin and to non-kin separately. This exploration provided new insights in who benefits when partners stimulate informal helping. We found that the partner influence is present regardless of recipient group. We also found indications that the partner effect may be larger for informally helping kin (family members) than for informally helping non-kin (friends and neighbors). Theory suggests that these differences may occur due to a larger overlap of kin networks (Haggerty et al., 2022; Stein et al., 1992) and because couples informally help kin more often together than non-kin (Gerstel, 2000). Future research can examine these differences further.

An important avenue for future research to do so may be to focus on underlying mechanisms. Although theories suggest that people whose partner provides informal help are more motivated to help and have more access to helping opportunities, there is little empirical evidence to support this argumentation. Testing the explanatory power of the proposed mechanisms can be first step in understanding both the partner effect itself and the differences by recipient group better. Thus, future research can improve our general understanding of the partner effect by testing the theoretical mechanisms proposed in this study.

The current study has improved on earlier research by using longitudinal data. Fixed-effects regression models largely exclude the impact of unobserved differences between people (Allison, 2009). Hence, the reported effects are the

result of changes over time. However, fixed-effects regression models cannot account for (different) events that occur during our period of observation. This may be problematic given that we observe people every three years. As a result, having a helping partner may coincide with other life events that we do not directly observe. Particularly, people in couples likely experience similar increases in opportunities (a family member that requires more support), motivation (realization how important solidarity behaviors are) or resources (changes in work or family situation). These shared life experiences may result in similar changes in informal helping behavior between partners. Concurrent changes in informal helping of partners may thus not be the result of direct partner influence but of shared life experiences. Although we tried to account for similar changes as much as possible by controlling for family and employment states (e.g., having children, having paid work), we cannot fully remove their impact, which could have affected our results. Mostly importantly, we were unable to account for demand side characteristics. That is, we do not know whether neighbors, friends or family members started to require more informal helping during the period of observation. Future research can thus advance the study of partner effects in informal helping further by disentangling direct partner influence and partner influence through similar life experiences.

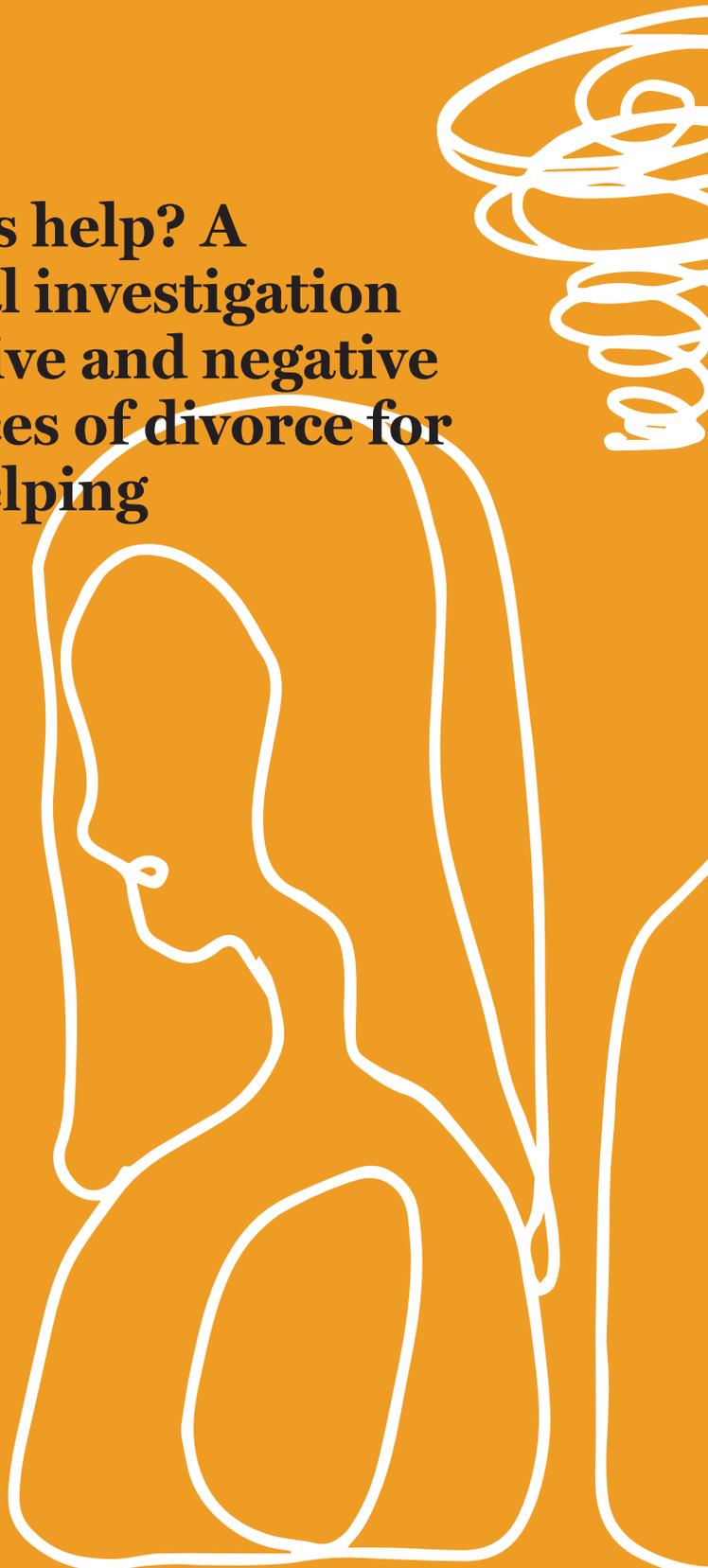
Another limitation of our research pertains selection in panel attrition. Abraham, Helms, and Presser (2009) suggest that people who are likely to engage in helping or voluntary behavior are also more likely to participate in surveys. As a result, people who do not help may have been more likely to drop out of the Swiss Household Panel and thus out of our sample. This selection effect may be one of the reasons why we find smaller downward effects of partners' helping; changes in social involvement are associated with attrition in the Swiss Household Panel (Voorpostel & Lipps, 2011). Furthermore, it should be noted that we only observe couples that stayed together for at least three years. Couples that ended their relationship before they could participate twice were removed from the sample due to the design of the study. Some studies suggest that the longer couples are together, the more they start resembling each other (Melamed, 1994; Monden, 2007) (although evidence is mixed, see (Ask, Idstad, Engdahl, & Tambs, 2012; Di Castelnuovo, Quacquarello, Donati, de Gaetano, & Iacoviello, 2009; Monden, 2007; Tambs & Moum, 1992)). Hence, the partner effect in informal helping may not occur immediately but only after a couple of years or only for couples that stay together for three years or longer. Future research can determine in more detail how and when partners start affecting each other's informal helping by observing couples over shorter time intervals, for example of one year.

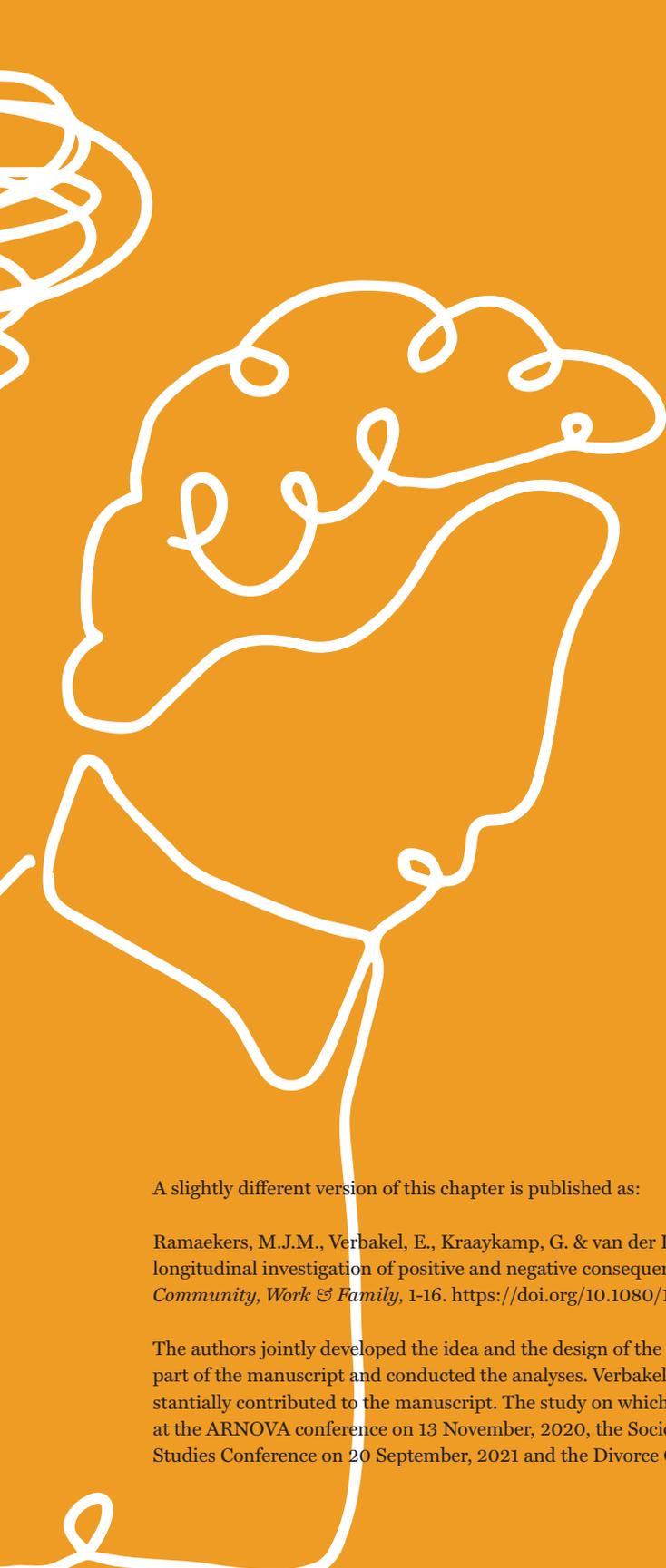
To summarize, this study shows that whether a person provides help is also relevant for their partner's informal helping behavior. This result is not solely due to selection when entering a romantic relationship but is also observed to work over time. Furthermore, our study suggests that the impact of the partner could be larger in providing informal help to family members than to friends and neighbors. Hence, when one partner convinces the other to engage in informal helping, this mostly benefits family members. With respect to community life and its presumed decline, our study presents a rather optimistic view; partners draw each other into informal helping, more so than they motivate each other to stop. This positive partner influence may diminish the declining trend in community life and thus promote a more sustainable supply of informal help.

CHAPTER 5

**More or less help? A
longitudinal investigation
of the positive and negative
consequences of divorce for
informal helping**

Drawing by Anne Maaïke Mulders





A slightly different version of this chapter is published as:

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The authors jointly developed the idea and the design of the study. Ramaekers wrote the main part of the manuscript and conducted the analyses. Verbakel, Kraaykamp and van der Lippe substantially contributed to the manuscript. The study on which this chapter is based was presented at the ARNOVA conference on 13 November, 2020, the Society for Longitudinal and Life Course Studies Conference on 20 September, 2021 and the Divorce Conference on 15 October, 2021.

Abstract

As divorce rates have risen, scholars have expressed concern that a breakdown of traditional family bonds might negatively influence life. This study examines the impact of divorce on one form of community involvement, namely informal helping, and whether this impact depends on household income, having adult children and being full-time employed. We hypothesized that informal helping can both increase and decrease after divorce and that the impact of divorce is smaller for people with higher household income, adult children, or a full-time job. Utilizing longitudinal data from the first four waves (1986-2002) of the Americans' Changing Lives panel study ($N=6,185$), this study employed fixed-effects regression models. These demonstrated that people did not change their informal helping after divorce. The impact of divorce did not depend on household income or full-time employment, but people with adult children increased their informal helping after divorce less than average.

5.1 Introduction

For more than a century, scholars have expressed concern about a presumed decline of community life (e.g., Bellah et al., 1985; Putnam, 2000). Community life here is defined as prosocial behavior among groups of individuals connected through a shared interest, identity, or space. A trend often linked to the decline of communities is the rising number of divorces, as people who are divorced have been said to be less involved in community life than married people (Hofmeister & Edgell, 2015; Lee & Brudney, 2012; Putnam, 2000; Rossi, 2001; Rotolo & Wilson, 2004).

A relevant part of community involvement is informal helping; that is, helping people outside one's own home without the involvement of external organizations or institutions (Einolf et al., 2016). Examples of informal help are providing transport, doing housework, and caring for others' children or grandchildren. Informal help is often provided to neighbors, friends or relatives living in a different household (Gundelach et al., 2010; Li & Ferraro, 2005; Wilson & Musick, 1997). Moreover, informal help is mainly an outgrowth of existing social relations between community members and has a low threshold for participation. This results in a widespread prevalence of informal help, regardless of affluence or other resources (Williams, 2005). A major argument for why divorced people might engage less in such help than married people is that divorcees have a smaller social network than married people (Lee & Brudney, 2012; Musick & Wilson, 2008; Putnam, 2000). Because informal helping relies on one's direct social network, it may be more impacted by divorce than other forms of community involvement, such as formal volunteering and charitable giving. Furthermore, people generally reciprocate informal help and expect others to do so as well (Amato, 1990; Manatschal & Freitag, 2014). Not providing informal help may thus result in receiving less support, which may be especially harmful for divorced people who require support to cope with this transition. This makes informal helping a particularly interesting form of community involvement to study to understand the impact of divorce.

Despite the overall expectation that divorce reduces informal helping, studies have reported mixed findings on the topic (Lee & Brudney, 2012; Mutchler et al., 2003; Perks & Haan, 2010; Plagnol & Huppert, 2009). Some have indicated that non-married people provided less informal help than married people (Cramm & Nieboer, 2015; Helms & McKenzie, 2013; Li & Ferraro, 2005; Lim & Laurence, 2015), while others reported the opposite (Plagnol & Huppert, 2009), or found no differences in informal helping by marital status (Erlinghagen, 2010; Lee & Brudney, 2012; van Tienen et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2017). However, these studies

only examined differences in informal helping by marital status; they did not explicitly examine the impact of divorce on informal helping. Moreover, most of these prior studies lack a clear focus on the theoretical link between marital status and informal helping (for an exception, see Lee & Brudney, 2012). This makes it difficult to put the mixed findings into perspective.

To better understand the relationship between divorce and informal helping, this study proposes two competing hypotheses. The first is based on the aforementioned premise that divorce reduces the size of the social network and on marriage premium literature. This latter strand of literature presupposes a decline in well-being after divorce (Booth & Amato, 1991; Dupre & Meadows, 2007; Johnson & Wu, 2002; Williams & Umberson, 2004), and subsequently a decline in informal helping. The second and competing hypothesis proposes an increase in informal helping after divorce. Based on social integration literature, it is expected that although social network size may decline, an increase in close social relations occurs after divorce, which subsequently results in a rise in informal helping.

Moreover, since these mechanisms could cancel each other out, the present study examines three groups for whom either positive or negative consequences might be more prominent: people with a high household income, in full-time employment and having adult children. Mapping the impact of these moderators can shed light on the theoretical mechanisms underlying the association between divorce and informal helping. Furthermore, understanding why people from certain social groups increase or reduce their informal helping after divorce may help us to understand in what types of communities rising divorce rates are more or less problematic for community life. Hence, this study aims to answer the following research question: *To what extent is divorce related to changes in informal helping, and to what extent is this relationship moderated by household income, being full-time employed, and having adult children?*

To answer this question, we used longitudinal information from the Americans' Changing Lives study (House, 2018), collected from 1986 to 2002 and thus covering 15 years of adults' life course. The panel design of the study provided an advantage over prior research, which only compared married individuals to non-married individuals (Lee & Brudney, 2012; Mutchler et al., 2003; Plagnol & Huppert, 2009; van Tienen et al., 2011) and results likely were affected by selection bias. For example, sociable people may be more likely to remain married but also provide more informal help. As a result, previously reported associations of not being married may not be indicative of positive or negative consequences of divorce, but instead point to a third factor that explains both divorce and informal

helping. By using panel data and estimating fixed effects models, we controlled for such stable, unobserved (third) factors.

5.2 Theoretical framework

5.2.1 Negative consequences of divorce

Various studies suggested that never married and previously married people are less involved in community life than married persons (Lee & Brudney, 2012; Putnam, 2000; Rossi, 2001; Rotolo & Wilson, 2004). This implies that divorce reduces community involvement, including informal helping. Two reasons have been suggested for this decline. First, divorce reduces the size of a person's social network (Eckhard, 2020; Terhell et al., 2004; Wrzus et al., 2013). Divorcees often lose contact with their former spouse's family and friends (de Bel, 2020; Terhell et al., 2004). Moreover, divorce often induces moving to another house, possibly in a different neighborhood or city (Mikolai & Kulu, 2018). This diminishes one's proximate social network, at least in the short term. Since larger social networks are expected to increase the likelihood of knowing someone who needs help, they bring more opportunities for helping (Lee & Brudney, 2012). Altogether, since divorce generally reduces the size of a person's social network, it is likely that informal helping is reduced as well.

A second reason why community involvement, such as informal helping, may decline after divorce relates to a person's physical and mental well-being (Musick & Wilson, 2008). Divorce is stressful and may have severe negative impacts on a person's well-being (Booth & Amato, 1991; Dupre & Meadows, 2007; Johnson & Wu, 2002; Williams & Umberson, 2004). A major explanation is the loss of economic resources (Gadalla, 2009; Tach & Eads, 2015). Divorcees may have difficulty affording healthcare or maintaining their standard of living with more financial and emotional stress as a result (Waite & Gallagher, 2000). Additionally, spouses often exert social control over unhealthy behaviors, such as smoking or drinking alcohol (Ross, Mirowsky, & Goldsteen, 1990; Umberson, 1992). Divorce removes this source of social control, leaving more room for individuals to engage in unhealthy behaviors (Das, 2013). Finally, spouses rely on each other for emotional and social support and companionship (Ross et al., 1990). The lack of this source of emotional and social support after divorce may also lead to a decline of individuals' well-being (Williams & Dunne-Bryant, 2006).

In contrast, good physical and mental well-being have been linked to providing more informal help (e.g., Erlinghagen, 2010; Hank & Stuck, 2008; Li & Ferraro, 2005; Plagnol & Huppert, 2009). Although theory on this mechanism is sparse, it seems likely that poor well-being acts a barrier preventing individuals from

engaging in informal helping. First, individuals with poor physical well-being may be unable to engage in physically straining helping activities, such as gardening or housework. Second, poor well-being may tap into an individual's energy, leaving them with little capacity to notice that others need help. Third, individuals with low well-being likely will not be asked to help, because others do not want to burden them even more. Prior research indeed found that people with worse self-rated health (Erlinghagen, 2010; Plagnol & Huppert, 2009), health impairments (Hank & Stuck, 2008; Li & Ferraro, 2005) and mental health problems (Choi et al., 2007) provided less informal help.

Combining these two arguments, we expect *individuals to reduce their informal helping after divorce (H1)*.

5.2.2 Household income as a moderator

The above-theorized reduction in well-being after divorce, and subsequent reduction in informal helping, may be less marked for people with a high household income. Although most people, including those with a high income, will likely experience some decline in income after a divorce (Gadalla, 2009; Tach & Eads, 2015), this reduction may have a less significant impact on the well-being of people with higher incomes. This is because people with higher incomes may still be able to afford decent health care and maintain a good standard of living after divorce. Moreover, their financial position after divorce might not be bad enough to cause too much stress. As a result, divorce is likely to be less detrimental to the well-being of people with a higher household income compared to those with a lower household income. Since decreased well-being has been linked to reduced informal helping (e.g., Erlinghagen, 2010; Hank & Stuck, 2008; Li & Ferraro, 2005; Plagnol & Huppert, 2009), we argue that the explanation of a differential impact of divorce for those with higher and lower incomes can be extended to informal helping. In other words, we expect that *the higher a person's household income, the less they reduce their informal helping after divorce (H2)*.

5.2.3 Positive consequences of divorce

Divorce also may have positive consequences for informal helping, according to research on social contacts conducted among both married and non-married individuals (e.g., Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2008, 2016). While the size of one's social network may decline after divorce, this strand of literature argues that at the same time the need for close social relations increases (Kalmijn, 2012; Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2008, 2016). In this regard, two arguments come to the fore. First, marriage

is often considered a “greedy” institution (Kim & Dew, 2016; Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2016). That is, being married takes up time and energy that a person cannot devote to other social relations (Coser, 1974). When a person divorces, additional time and energy may become available that can be invested in alternative social relations. Second, married individuals have been found to rely mostly on their spouse for social contact and support (McPherson et al., 2006). After a divorce, the need for social contact and belonging likely has to be fulfilled through social relations with others (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Therefore, people are expected to invest more in alternative social relations after a divorce.

Increased investment in alternative social relations also brings more opportunities for informal helping, as most people provide informal help only to those they know personally (Amato, 1990). More importantly, without the involvement of formal organizations, a person can only help when they are aware of others in need. People with more close social relations more easily pick up signals that others need help and may be more readily asked to provide help. Hence, those with more close social relations are likely to engage more in informal helping (Lee & Brudney, 2012; Wang et al., 2017).

As a result, we expect that *individuals increase their informal helping after divorce (H3)*.

5.2.4 Adult children as moderator

The increased need for social relations after a divorce may be greater for those who during marriage were highly dependent on their spouse for social contact and support. According to Baumeister and Leary (1995), social need fulfillment has diminishing returns; for each new social relation, the additional positive impact is smaller. Conversely, losing a social relationship is more damaging for people with only a few close social contacts, compared to people with a lot of social relations. Hence, divorce is expected to be less damaging for people who during their marriage already have invested in close social relations next to their spouse. Consequently, people with various close social relations feel less need to invest in new social relations after divorce. So, their opportunities for informal helping would increase less, compared to those who had fewer close social relations during their marriage (Lee & Brudney, 2012; Wang et al., 2017). Altogether, this implies that a smaller increase in informal helping after divorce is expected for those who were less dependent on their spouse for social contact during marriage.

One group of individuals that may be less dependent on their (previous) spouse are parents of adult children who live in a different household. Parents often rely on adult children for social contact and conversations (McPherson et al., 2006).

While prior research has shown that the quality of the parent-child bond sometimes deteriorated after a parental divorce, these studies also demonstrated that the majority of parents kept frequent contact with at least one of their children, both before and after divorce (Daatland, 2007; Shapiro, 2003). This suggests that when parents of adult children divorce, their need for social contact will not be as large as it is for people without adult children. After a divorce, people with adult children may therefore invest less in social relations and thus increase their informal helping less.

As a result, we expect that *parents of adult children who do not live in the same household increase their informal helping less after divorce, compared to divorcees without adult children (H₄)*.

5.2.5 Full-time work as moderator

Another group, next to parents of adult children, which may be less dependent on spousal contact is people who work full time. Employed individuals generally report that approximately half of their daily contacts are with colleagues (McDonald & Mair, 2010). Full-time employed individuals interact with colleagues during the workweek, which makes it relatively easy for them to engage in close social relations with them. This is more difficult for individuals who work part-time, and impossible for those who are not employed. In other words, full-time employed individuals may be less dependent on their spouse for social contact because they can uphold close social relations with colleagues. Individuals who work full-time would therefore feel less need to invest more in social relations after divorce, compared to those who do not have a job or who work part time.

As a result, we expect that *individuals who work full time increase their informal helping less after divorce than individuals who work part time or not at all (H₅)*.

5.3 Data and measurements

To test our hypotheses, we used the first four waves of the Americans' Changing Lives (ACL) survey study (House, 2018).¹⁴ These data were collected in 1986, 1989, 1994 and 2002, and covered approximately 15 years of adult Americans'

14 The ACL data were collected as a large-scale survey. This data collection method reflects a non-interventional study, and it was not necessary to gain approval by a research ethics committee.

life courses. Although a fifth wave was available, we were not able to use it in this study because of a change in measurement of our dependent variable after wave 4. Unlike earlier waves, the fifth wave did not give the example of childcare (for others) for informal helping. As a result, it is possible that people did not count childcare hours as informal helping hours in the fifth wave while they did so in earlier waves.

The ACL sampling procedure focused on a representative sample of the adult American population over 25 years of age (excluding residents of Alaska and Hawaii), but oversampled people older than 60 and Black people.¹⁵ Respondents were selected through a multi-stage design. First, a selection of counties was made, followed by a selection of areas within these counties. Afterwards, housing units were selected from which individual respondents were randomly picked and approached for a face-to-face interview. In 1986, 3,617 individuals (68%) participated. In 1989, all respondents were approached again for face-to-face interviews, and 2,867 respondents (83%) participated. In the third and fourth waves, face-to-face interviews were replaced by telephone interviews, with in-person interviews conducted only if the respondent could not be reached by phone. Moreover, in the third and fourth waves (in 1994 and 2002), respondents could indicate that they were unable to participate in the interview, for example, due to health impairments or disabilities. In that case, proxy respondents (mostly the partner or adult children) could answer the questions for them, although they were only asked about certain aspects of the original respondent's life. These aspects did not include informal helping, so we excluded these respondents (259 observations) from our sample.

Each wave had 15% to 25% panel attrition. Reasons for attrition included death, refusal or having an undocumented address or phone number. A total of 1,593 individuals participated in all four waves. Because our models allowed for unbalanced panels, we included all respondents that participated in at least two waves. Since we were interested in the transition from marriage to divorce, we removed all observations in which individuals were single and never married (9.1%) or widowed (19.2%). We also removed all observations (2.6%) that indicated remarriage (i.e., being married after divorce or widowhood). Finally, we excluded all observations with one or more missing values (4.6%). Our final dataset contained 6,185 observations of 1,955 individuals.

15 Oversampling was performed by an oversampling of medium to high Black residential areas (based on the U.S. Census of 1980). Housing units and respondents were then sampled from such residential areas. As a result of this oversampling, Southern states are somewhat overrepresented in the data.

5.3.1 Measurements

Informal helping was measured by asking respondents about help they had provided over the previous 12 months to friends, neighbors and relatives who did not live with them. The survey specified that it concerned help given without receiving payment in return. Specifically, respondents were asked whether they “provided transportation, shopped or ran errands”, “helped others with their housework or upkeep of their house, car or other things”, “did childcare without pay” and “did any other things to help neighbors, friends or relatives who did not live with them”. Respondents who answered “yes” to any of these items were then asked how many hours they spent doing these activities in total during the last 12 months. Response options were “less than 20 hours” (1), “20 to 39 hours” (2), “40 to 79 hours” (3), “80 to 159 hours” (4) and “160 hours or more” (5). Respondents who indicated that they had not given any help were assigned to the category “did not give any help” (0). For 246 observations of 227 individuals (6.3%), the score on informal helping hours was invalid.

We measured marital status by differentiating between respondents who were married and those who were divorced or separated.¹⁶ As we were interested in changes in informal helping after divorce, the reference category was being married. There were two observations in which information on marital status was missing.

With respect to the moderating variables, we measured having adult children by asking respondents if they had any children living outside their own household and how old these children were.¹⁷ If children were older than age 18, the respondent was categorized as having adult children. Working full time was measured by asking respondents whether they had a paid job, and if so, how many hours they worked in their main job. Working more than 32 hours a week was considered to be working full time. For 125 observations of 116 respondents (3.2%), we had no valid score on full-time employment. Household income was originally measured in ten categories ranging from “less than \$5,000 per year” to “more than \$80,000 per year”. This included all household income contributions before

16 Cohabitators were not included in the ‘married’ category but were considered single (never married, divorced, or widowed). Union dissolution after marriage might be a different experience than union dissolution after cohabitation, especially in the period under study. Robustness analyses in which cohabitation was equaled to marriage show similar results but with the exception that divorce has a significant and positive effect on informal helping. Robustness analyses in which cohabitators were removed however showed similar results.

17 As a robustness analysis, we included the number of adult children instead of having adult children (yes/no). This did not change our conclusions.

taxes from employment, wealth, child support, social benefits, and food stamps. The ACL dataset provided an imputed version of household income. We used this version to ensure that all respondents had a valid score on income. To correct for inflation between 1986 and 2002, respondents were assigned the midpoint of their category. These values were divided by the consumer price index (base year 2010) and multiplied by 100.¹⁸ Finally, the corrected household income was divided by 1,000 to facilitate interpretation.

Table 5.1 reports the descriptive statistics for the variables used in this study. This table also includes background information on the panel, such as average age and distribution of gender, educational attainment, and ethnicity. Table 5.2 reports the prevalence of changes and transitions in the main variables between the four waves.

5.3.2 Method of analysis

To test our hypotheses, we first compared average scores on informal helping for people who experienced a divorce and those who stayed married. Potential differences between these scores were tested using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). Table 5.3 reports the results of this analysis for each wave separately.

Table 5.3 gives us a glimpse of the relationship between divorce and informal helping. However, these results may refer to between effects and within effects. In other words, they can reflect both differences between people who did and did not experience divorce and changes in informal helping after a divorce. To estimate the impact of changes in marital status (i.e., the divorce), which is the focus of our study, we estimated fixed effects models in R, using the `plm` package. These models are specifically suited to assess the impact of changes in marital status on informal helping, as they control for unobserved heterogeneity (Allison, 2009). Fixed effects models control for all time-invariant differences between persons and only report on effects of time-varying independent variables. Effects can thus be interpreted as changes in informal helping when an independent variable increases by 1. Accordingly, the effect of divorce is interpreted as the change in a person's informal helping after divorce. Table 5.4 reports the results of the fixed effects analyses.

18 For example, respondents who earned \$15,000 to \$19,000 in 1989 were first assigned an income of \$17,000. The price index for 1989 was 56.851. Hence, the income was corrected for inflation with the following formula: $17,000/56.851*100 = 29,903$.

Table 5.1 Descriptive statistics per wave

		Wave 1 (N=1,919)	
		Range	Mean
			SD
Informal helping hours		0-5	2.13
Marital status			1.60
Married		0/1	0.80
Divorced or separated		0/1	0.20
<i>Moderating variables</i>			
Having an adult child (vs. not having an adult child)		0/1	0.57
Working full time (vs. not working full time)		0/1	0.48
Income		3.03-179.05	56.50
			42.72
<i>Background variables</i>			
Male (vs. female)		0/1	0.41
Age ^b		25-89	50.23
			15.42
Educational attainment			
No degree		0/1	0.26
High school degree		0/1	0.58
College degree		0/1	0.16
Ethnicity			
White		0/1	0.65
Black		0/1	0.25
Hispanic		0/1	0.04
Native American		0/1	0.05
Other		0/1	0.01

Note:

^a More individuals were included in the second wave than in the first wave. While striking, this was the result of removing all observations in which individuals had never been married. This marital status occurred most often in the first wave, causing those observations to be removed. These same respondents entered the sample if they had married before the next wave.

^b Although only age at Wave 1 is included in the hybrid panel models in Appendix D, here we present age at the time of the specific wave.

Source: ACL, 1986-2002.

Despite our focus on the impact of divorce on informal helping, we also estimated the between effects; that is, differences in informal helping between persons who did and who did not experience a divorce, by performing hybrid panel models. These models also report the effects of time-invariant background variables, such as gender, age, educational background, and ethnicity, on informal helping. Appendix D (table D.1) presents the complete results of the hybrid models. The

	Wave 2 (N=1,939)^a		Wave 3 (N=1,439)		Wave 4 (N=888)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
	2.24	1.59	2.02	1.48	2.04	1.50
	0.77		0.77		0.78	
	0.23		0.23		0.22	
	0.60		0.65		0.72	
	0.47		0.46		0.49	
	56.35	42.10	59.80	41.92	68.31	41.42
	0.41		0.43		0.45	
	52.99	15.51	56.33	14.47	59.97	12.93
	0.25		0.21		0.15	
	0.58		0.61		0.63	
	0.16		0.18		0.22	
	0.65		0.68		0.73	
	0.25		0.23		0.19	
	0.04		0.04		0.03	
	0.05		0.05		0.04	
	0.01		0.01		0.02	

Table 5.2 Prevalence of changes in informal helping and transitions to divorce by wave

	Wave 1-2 (N=1,939)	Wave 2-3 (N=1,439)	Wave 3-4 (N=888)	Total (N=6,185)
Informal helping				
Increase in helping	36.0% (699)	27.7% (398)	31.8% (282)	32.3% (1,379)
Decrease in helping	31.9% (619)	43.1% (620)	38.4% (341)	37.0% (1,580)
Marital status				
Divorce	2.6% (65)	3.0% (56)	4.4% (50)	4.0% (171)

Source: ACL 1986-2002.

appendix also discusses how hybrid panel models work and how reported effects should be interpreted.

5.4 Results

Table 5.3 presents the differences in informal helping between individuals who experienced a divorce and those who remained married, per wave and in total. People who got divorced between the first and second wave reported an almost identical amount of informal helping hours as those who remained married. This was different for individuals who got divorced between the second and third wave, as they spent more hours on informal helping than people who remained married. Although this suggests an increase in informal helping after divorce, this difference proved not significant. In contrast, people who got divorced between Waves 3 and 4 reported slightly fewer hours of informal helping than those who remained married. Again, these differences were insignificant. Hence, we conclude from table 5.3 that people who got divorced did not significantly differ in their informal helping from those who remained married.

Table 5.3 Informal helping (hours on scale from 0 to 5) after staying in marriage or transition to divorce per wave

	Wave 2 (N=1,939)	Wave 3 (N=1,439)	Wave 4 (N= 888)	Total (N=6,185)
Staying in marriage	2.24	2.01	2.09	2.13
Experienced divorce	2.22	2.43	1.84	2.18

Source: ACL 1986-2002.

Table 5.4 reports the results of the fixed effects models. In line with the results from table 5.3, Model 1 in table 5.4 indicates that informal helping did not change when individuals got divorced. In other words, there was no significant difference in informal helping between when respondents were married and when they were divorced. Hence, hypothesis 1, which predicted a decrease, and hypothesis 3, which predicted an increase, both were rejected.

Next, we account for the situation that positive and negative consequences of marital transitions on informal helping may have canceled each other out, resulting in a non-significant effect of divorce in model 1. To test whether positive or negative effects were present for specific groups, we tested interactions between divorce and the three moderators: household income, having adult children and being employed full time. These are presented, respectively, in Models 2, 3 and

4. As shown in model 2 (table 5.4), the effect of divorce on informal helping did not differ between income groups. This refutes hypothesis 2, which suggests that the negative consequences of divorce for informal helping are smaller for people with higher incomes.

Model 3 concerns the interaction between divorce and having adult children outside the respondent's household. Whereas people without adult children who experienced a divorce tended to increase their informal helping (by 0.26 on a scale from 0 to 5; not significant), people with adult children tended to reduce their informal helping (by 0.08; not significant). Although no estimate effect was significantly different from zero, the difference between the two groups in the effect of divorce ($b = -0.333$) was significant. Therefore, we conclude that divorce tends to increase informal helping those without adult children than for those with adult children. This is in line with hypothesis 4.

Finally, model 4 in table 5.4 presents the results of the moderation-interaction between divorce and full-time employment. In short, the impact of divorce on informal helping did not differ depending on whether respondents were in full-time employment. This contradicts hypothesis 5, as divorce was expected to increase informal helping less among people who were in full-time employment, compared to those who worked less or were unemployed.

5.4.1 Robustness checks

We performed several robustness checks to ensure that our measurement and modelling decisions did not substantially influence the results. Details and models of these robustness checks are available upon request.

In our first set of robustness analyses, we performed the analyses separately with “divorced” and “separated” respondents. Although our theoretical framework likely applies similarly to both groups, they may nonetheless have differed. The results of these analyses showed they did not, with one exception: the impact of separation on informal helping did not differ between those who had adult children and those who did not.

Second, we performed the analyses separately for the oversampled groups (Black people and people over age 60) to check the impact of this oversampling on our results. These analyses showed very little difference between the Black sample and the non-Black sample. The only exception was the interaction between divorce and having adult children, which was insignificant in the Black sample. However, this might have been due to a power problem, as only 25% of the sample was Black. If it were not a power problem, this difference could indicate an underestimation of the results presented in table 5.4. With respect to the

Table 5.4 Fixed effects models predicting informal helping (N observations =6,185, N individuals = 1,955)

		Model 1	
		B	SE
Marital status (ref. = married)			
	Divorce	0.123	0.122
Household income x divorce			
Adult children (ref. = no) x divorce			
Full time employment x divorce			
Wave (ref. = wave 1)			
	Wave 2	0.107 **	0.041
	Wave 3	-0.262 ***	0.046
	Wave 4	-0.325 ***	0.056

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

Source: ACL 1986-2002.

oversampling of people older than age 60, we also found little difference. Again, this means only that our conclusions were not affected by the oversampling of people older than age 60.

Third, we replaced dummy variables for wave with an interval variable indicating the time between waves. This was because the time between waves varied from 3 to 8 years, which may have affected our results. Including the time between waves in our model enabled us to assess the size of this potential impact. Our results, however, were not substantially different when the time between waves was included.

5.5 Discussion

This study examined the impact of divorce on informal helping using longitudinal data from four waves of the Americans' Changing Lives (ACL) panel study. Prior research reported both positive and negative consequences of divorce for infor-

Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
0.230	0.157	0.258	0.140	-0.008	0.151
0.001	0.001				
-0.002	0.002				
		0.426 ***	0.075		
		-0.333 *	0.140		
				-0.168 *	0.069
				0.206	0.131
0.107 **	0.041	0.097 *	0.041	0.104 *	0.041
-0.260 ***	0.046	-0.306 ***	0.047	-0.273 ***	0.047
-0.324 ***	0.056	-0.419 ***	0.059	-0.343 ***	0.057

mal helping (Cramm & Nieboer, 2015; Helms & McKenzie, 2013; Li & Ferraro, 2005; Lim & Laurence, 2015; Plagnol & Huppert, 2009). We sought clarification by testing opposing hypotheses. Moreover, we examined whether one type of consequence was more prominent among people with particular characteristics in regard to household income, full-time employment and having adult children.

Our results indicate that divorce, on average, was unrelated to the amount of informal help a person provided. This suggests that concerns about rising divorce rates undermining community involvement, such as informal helping, may be largely unfounded (Hughes & Stone, 2006; Putnam, 2000). Even when we examined groups that were expected to be especially prone to the negative consequences of divorce, such as individuals with lower household incomes, we found no support for the expectation that divorce results in less informal helping. Instead, we established that people were rather stable in their informal helping (even) after experiencing a divorce. Note that this is possibly due to the fact that people with fewer economic resources might be more likely to have others in their

social network with few economic resources. In such networks, the demand for informal help may be larger, creating more opportunities for help. Divorcees with lower incomes may thus capitalize more on their free time and desire for social contact than higher-income divorcees.

Our findings also indicate that people who were expected to be less dependent on their spouse for social contact and support (i.e., people with adult children) were less affected by divorce, as they did not invest more in close social relations after divorce. It must be noted that we expected a similar finding with regard to employment, namely, that those who worked full time and thus had more contact with colleagues would be less affected by divorce. Here, however, we found no difference in divorce's impact. This finding may be due to a lack of close social relations between colleagues, meaning that despite contact with colleagues, full-time employed individuals may be as dependent on their partner for contact and support as other individuals. They would therefore have a similar need to invest in close social relations after divorce. An alternative mechanism might explain this relationship between full-time work and informal helping as well. Because part-time or non-working people, in contrast to full-time working people, have had the time and energy to build close social relations during their marriage, especially the full-time workers may experience an increasing investment in close social relations after divorce. The loss of a partner relation freed up time and energy to spend on social contacts.

Our theoretical arguments were mostly based on social network size and the closeness of social interactions, though we did not have specific information about the size and closeness of respondents' social networks. Based on previous findings, the size of the network was expected to decrease after divorce (Eckhard, 2020; Terhell et al., 2004; Wrzus et al., 2013), resulting in a decline in informal helping. In contrast, the closeness of (remaining or new) social relations was expected to increase after divorce (Kalmijn, 2012; Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2008, 2016), resulting in increased informal helping. One group of people who were expected to have less need of increased close social relations after divorce, that is, people with adult children, were indeed found to be less affected by divorce. This suggests that closeness may matter more than the size of the social network. We encourage other researchers to follow up on this proposition in future research, by measuring network size and the closeness of social interactions.

This study contributes to discussions about divorce and community life by showing the impact of divorce on informal helping. While informal helping is an important aspect of community life, and one that is perhaps more susceptible to the impact of divorce, it is not representative of all aspects of community life. Consequently, the results reported here cannot be generalized to all forms

of community life. This is exemplified by prior studies, such as Lancee and Radl (2014) and Nesbit (2012), which found that divorce reduced people's formal volunteering. Thus, in order to paint a full picture of the impact of divorce on community life, findings on various aspects of community life, such as formal volunteering, charitable giving, and informal care, should be considered.

Although the present study improves on prior research by employing a longitudinal design, the study design has some limitations. First, our data was collected at four points in time that were rather far apart. For example, eight years passed between the collection of the third and fourth wave of the ACL data. As a result, this study may not capture all short-term effects of divorce on informal helping. Furthermore, the large gap between data points makes it difficult to disentangle the exact conditions under which divorce took place. For example, a person's income may have been significantly reduced after divorce but restored to pre-divorce levels by the time of data collection (although de Vaus, Gray, Qiu, and Stanton (2017) found that divorced men and women in the US both remained at an economic disadvantage compared to their continuously married peers). Hence, a reduction in income may not always have been captured by the data. It would be advisable to replicate this study with yearly data on divorce and informal helping. Still, it must be noted that this study's analyses likely underestimated the impact of divorce, as some people who got divorced will have already adjusted to their new situation by the time of data collection.

Second, the fourth round of ACL data was collected in 2002, making our most recent data point twenty years ago. Although divorce rates seem to have stabilized or even declined since then (NCHS, n.d.), other trends such as growing individualism and secularization have likely continued. Moreover, the last two decades have seen the rise of social media usage, making it easier to maintain social contacts between those who live farther apart – though it is probably still difficult to provide informal help to people who do not live nearby. Hence, close social relationships may bring increasingly less informal helping nowadays. We advise future research to replicate our study with more recent data. We also call on the Americans' Changing Lives study to revise its measurement of informal helping in future waves, so that it is comparable to earlier waves.

This study suggests that the rising divorce rates in the 1980s and 1990s did not bring a decline in informal helping. People did not provide less informal help after divorce than before. Hence, concerns that the breakdown of traditional families because of rising divorce rates would result in the breakdown of community life seem unfounded.

CHAPTER 6

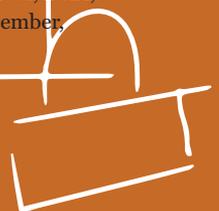
**Informal helping in a
lockdown. A study of changes
in informal helping during the
first COVID-19 lockdown in
the Netherlands**



A slightly different version of this chapter is published as:

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The authors jointly developed the idea and the design of the study. Ramaekers wrote the main part of the manuscript, was in charge of the data collection and conducted the analyses. Verbakel and Kraaykamp substantially contributed to the manuscript. The study on which this chapter is based was presented at the European Sociological Association Conference on 1 September, 2021, the ARNOVA conference on 20 November, 2021 and the ERNOP conference on 2 December, 2021.



Abstract

Like many European countries, the Netherlands locked down in March 2020 to combat the spread of COVID-19. Although government officials called for solidarity, the lockdown measures made it more difficult to help fellow citizens. In this study we examine whether informal helping declined during the first lockdown in the Netherlands and to what extent changes depended on people's resources (time/health), motivation (solidarity/covid concerns) and opportunities (social contact). In general, we expected an overall decline of informal helping, and this decline was expected to be smaller for people with more resources, motivation, and opportunities. We used data from the SOCON COVID-19 Panel survey that were collected through internet and telephone interviews before (February 2019/2020) and shortly after the first lockdown in the Netherlands (July 2020) (N=522). Information on informal helping was collected in both waves, whereas information on people's resources, motivation and opportunities during the lockdown was collected only in the second wave. Indeed, results showed that people overall helped less during the lockdown than before. The decline in helping relatives was smaller among those who lost work, were worried about relatives, experienced an increase in solidarity with others or had more contact with relatives during the lockdown. People who contacted more with neighbors during the lockdown period provided more informal help to them during the lockdown than before.

6.1 Introduction

Like many European countries, the Netherlands faced a widespread outbreak of COVID-19 in March 2020. To prevent a fast spread of the virus, the Dutch government closed schools, restaurants, bars, and gyms on March 15 and urged citizens to work from home. The COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown thus severely limited people's ability to meet the demands of daily life; some suddenly found grocery shopping dangerous, others had to balance taking care and homeschooling children and working from home. People struggled to keep in touch with friends, relatives and colleagues and had to deal with insecurity surrounding one's safety and income during these early stages of the pandemic (Engbersen et al., 2020; Kuyper & Putters, 2020). Hence, media, politicians and various civil society actors called for solidarity and encouraged people to help those in need (Elzendoorn, 2020; Rijksoverheid, 2020; Van de Wiel, 2020). Such a call for solidarity is not uncommon in times of crisis. However, it remains unclear whether individuals actually respond to these calls. Although some studies report spikes in solidarity behaviors, such as (informal) helping, during rapid economic declines, terrorist attacks or natural disasters (Chambré, 2020; Penner, Brannick, Webb, & Connell, 2005; Rotolo, Wilson, & Dietz, 2015), others suggest that solidarity behaviors decline during such crises (Cameron, 2021; Lim & Laurence, 2015).

In addition to these mixed findings, there is another reason why calls for solidarity may not have worked during the first lockdown of the COVID-19 crisis. After all, the call to help each other largely opposed actual lockdown measures at that time. People were implored to limit their social interactions as much as possible. Informal helping, that is helping people that do not live in the same household without the coordination of formal organizations (Einolf et al., 2016), generally relies on face-to-face social interactions (Koolen-Maas & de Wit, 2022). Thus, regular forms of informal help, such as helping with housework, providing transport, and watching children were seriously discouraged.

Studies that investigated the impact of the first lockdown of the COVID-19 crisis present an ambiguous picture regarding changes in informal help. Some suggest an increase (Bertogg & Koos, 2021b; Engbersen et al., 2020), whereas others indicate that informal helping decreased (Katz & Feit, 2021), or that people simply expected less help from each other (Borkowska & Laurence, 2020). Hence, the current study aims to clarify some of this ambiguity by not only describing how informal helping changed during the lockdown in the Netherlands, but also by theorizing which groups are expected to report a larger or smaller change.

To theorize on the differences between groups, we rely on a general theoretical framework that explains informal helping. This framework distinguishes between resources, motivations, and opportunities to help, sometimes also referred to as human, cultural and social capital (Brady, Verba, & Scholzman, 1995; Lee & Brudney, 2012; Lim & Laurence, 2015; Verba, Scholzman, & Brady, 1995; Wilson & Musick, 1997). We expect that those with fewer resources during (time) or at the start of the lockdown (health), fewer motivations (concerns about COVID-19 and solidarity) or opportunities (social contact) were more likely to reduce their informal helping, whereas people with more resources, motivations or opportunities were more likely to increase their help.

By examining exactly which people changed their informal helping during the lockdown and how, we provide new insights into the conditions under which informal helping changes. This improves on earlier research that largely disregarded the impact of major societal changes (for an exception, see Lim and Laurence (2015)). Our focus on changes in informal helping allows us to test to what extent the aforementioned general theoretical framework is suitable to predict changes in informal helping and to differentiate reactions to crises, such as a lockdown. Moreover, because homophily plays a role in social networks and cooperative behavior (McPherson et al., 2006; Melamed et al., 2020), we assume that people generally help others that are similar to them in terms of age, socio-economic status, or ethnicity. As a result, determining which people reduced their informal helping (more strongly) may inform governments which groups and communities have lacked help during the COVID-19 lockdown. This supports local governments and volunteering organizations to assess where formal help may be required during future lockdowns or crises.

Hence, this study answers the following research questions: *How did informal helping change during the first lockdown in the Netherlands? To what extent did this change depend on individuals' resources, motivation, and opportunities for helping?*

To answer these questions, we used a unique panel dataset that combines survey data collected before the corona crisis in the Netherlands (either in February 2019 (54%) or in 2020 (46%)), and survey data collected shortly after the first lockdown (July 2020), creating a pre-post comparison study. The data thus include questions about informal helping before (wave 1) and during the lockdown (wave 2). To analyze these data, we performed fixed-effects regression models in which we interacted time with measures of people's resources, motivation, and opportunities.

6.1.1 Dutch context

We here shortly discuss the COVID-19 situation in the Netherlands until the end of the data collection (end of July 2020) to place our expectations in perspective. As discussed in the introduction, the Netherlands went into lockdown on March 15th, 2020. This was done after the introduction and rapid spread of the virus since the end of February. Lockdown measures entailed that most public places (including but not limited to schools, restaurants, and gyms) were closed and that occupations that required contact between people (e.g., hairdressers, dentists, and physical therapists) were not allowed to be practiced. Childcare facilities were only available for workers in essential jobs. People were told to stay at home as much as possible, keep 1.5 meters distance between members of different households and were not allowed to convene in public. Working from home was strongly encouraged, but not mandatory. Masking was not advised at all.

These measures were slowly relaxed from May 11th onwards. First, primary schools partially reopened, and contact occupations were allowed again. From June 1st, most public spaces reopened with restrictions on the number of visitors and the distance between them. The same applied to groups assembling in public. On this date, widespread testing became available as well. From July 1st, events, such as fairs and sports games, were allowed again, with similar restrictions on the number of visitors and the distance between them.

During the lockdown in the Netherlands, people had to adjust their daily lives, for which they sometimes required help. For example, not all non-essential workers were allowed to work from home. In combination with the shutdown of childcare facilities this likely resulted in an increased demand for help with childcare. People indeed reported that they received more help during the lockdown than before (Engbersen et al., 2020).

6.2 Theory and hypotheses

Resources, motivations, and opportunities are the three main antecedents of helping according to the general theoretical framework that is regularly used to explain helping behavior such as formal volunteering and informal helping (Brady et al., 1995; Lee & Brudney, 2012; Verba et al., 1995; Wilson & Musick, 1997). According to this framework, resources refer to the knowledge, financial means and physical and mental capabilities that foster helping. Particularly available time and health have been found to be consistent predictors of people's informal helping (Egerton & Mullan, 2008; Plagnol & Huppert, 2009; Wilson & Musick, 1997). Motivations refer to feelings and values that motivate a person to

provide help. Examples of important motivations for informal helping is valuing helpfulness and religiosity (Finkelstein & Brannick, 2007; van Tienen et al., 2011). Opportunities refer to the number of situations a person faces in which help can be provided. In prior research, it has been assumed that the more people a person is associated with, the more likely it is that they face an opportunity to help (Lee & Brudney, 2012; Wang et al., 2017; Wilson & Musick, 1997).

With respect to the first lockdown in the Netherlands, we could expect both an increase and a decrease in informal helping based on this framework. As studies have documented, crises, such as a lockdown, can motivate people to take up helping. For example, people who provided help during terrorist attacks, natural disasters and economic crises in the US seem to be motivated by a sense of shared fate and solidarity (Chambré, 2020). Crises also often result in an increased demand for help, which offers people more helping opportunities (Lim & Laurence, 2015). These arguments are in line with the findings by Bertogg and Koos (2022) about the COVID-19 crisis in Germany.

Yet, a decline can be expected as well. First, crises may leave individuals with fewer financial resources and less mental space for helping (Lim & Laurence, 2015). Second, in this specific COVID-19 crisis, motivation to help may have declined, despite people's feelings of solidarity. After all, people were concerned about contracting the virus and they likely avoided situations that required interactions with others in person, including informal helping. Additionally, people may have had fewer opportunities for helping if they wanted to adhere to social distancing measures or because help requesters felt uncomfortable receiving help. Because of the pressing nature of the COVID-19 crisis, we believe these covid-specific arguments to be decisive. Hence, we expect that *in general informal helping declined during the first lockdown of the corona crisis in the Netherlands (H1)*.

Prior studies suggest that not everyone experiences the same change in helping behavior during a crisis (e.g., Cameron, 2021; Lim & Laurence, 2015; Rotolo et al., 2015). We assume that this applies to the first COVID-19 lockdown as well. We will use the framework of resources, motivations, and opportunities to derive expectations on which people decreased their informal help more (or less) strongly. The resources we discuss below refer to stable characteristics that did not change before and during the lockdown (e.g., having young children or age) as well as to characteristics specifically related to lockdown experiences (e.g., working from home). The motivations and opportunities we discuss all refer to lockdown experiences (e.g., worries over contracting COVID-19 or changing contact with neighbors). Yet, we should note that in the end all our hypotheses refer to differences between people who differ in resources, motivations, or opportunities in their individual change in informal helping.

6.2.1 Resources

We consider five factors that refer to a person's resources to provide informal help, namely health, age, being a parent of young children, losing work and working from home. First, both people with poor health and people over 65 faced more severe consequences of contracting COVID-19 (Zheng et al., 2020). Because they would benefit most from avoiding in-person contact, it is expected that people with poor health and people over the age of 65 adhered more strongly to the lockdown measures than others. Hence, their availability for informal helping declined relatively strongly. We expect that *people with poor health (H₂) and people over the age of 65 (H₃) reduced their informal helping more strongly during the first lockdown than others.*

Second, the first COVID-19 lockdown may have especially affected the available time of parents of young children. During the lockdown, day care centers closed, and schools were forced to educate pupils online. As a result of these measures, parents of (pre-) primary school children, substantially increased time spent on childcare (Lee & Tipoe, 2021; Sevilla & Smith, 2020; Van Kesteren, Bussink, & Van der Werff, 2021), and on home schooling (Adams-Prassl, Boneva, Golin, & Rauh, 2020; Huls et al., 2022). Assuming that requirements of paid work and housework remained rather similar, less time remained available for informal helping during the first lockdown (Huls et al., 2022; Yerkes et al., 2020). As a result, it can be expected that *people with young children reduced their informal helping more strongly during the first lockdown than others (H₄).*

The opposite may have happened to people who lost their job or could not work during the first lockdown. Various theories cover the relationship between becoming unemployed and helping others (e.g., Musick & Wilson, 2008; Piatak, 2016). These theories predict both a positive and negative relationship, which is also reflected in prior empirical research (for an overview see Musick and Wilson (2008)). The mechanisms that are suggested to underlie a negative relationship between unemployment and informal helping include a reduction of social integration, a lack of self-esteem due to stigmas on unemployment (Piatak, 2016) and a lack of financial and mental resources (Lim & Laurence, 2015). Mechanisms, such as an increase in available time (Piatak, 2016) and a coping mechanism for dealing with unemployment (Musick & Wilson, 2008), are expected to result in a positive relationship.

Here, we focus specifically on individuals who could not work during the first lockdown. Because everyone had to stay at home during this time, the stigma on unemployment may have been smaller. Additionally, not all individuals who could not work lost their job or their income, likely reducing the impact of lack

of financial resources and reduction in social integration. On the other hand, these individuals did have more time available and since the option for spending this time were limited, informal helping was likely an attractive alternative to work activities. Hence, it is expected that *people who lost work during the lockdown reduced their informal helping less strongly during the first lockdown than others (H5)*.

People who worked from home may also have experienced more available time during the first lockdown. Working from home saves commuting time that could be spent on informal helping. Moreover, working from home allows for more flexibility; one can alternate paid work tasks with other tasks, such as housework, childcare, or informal help. Therefore, we expect that *people who worked from home reduced their informal helping less strongly during the first lockdown than others (H6)*.

6.2.2 Motivations

We consider three factors that may have affected a person's motivation to provide informal help, namely concerns about contracting COVID-19, concerns about others contracting COVID-19 and changes in their feelings of solidarity. First, individuals who were concerned about contracting COVID-19 may have developed a less positive or even negative attitude towards helping others. Informal helping likely required them to be in close contact with others, potentially exposing themselves to the risk to get infected. As a result, they may have felt more hesitant to provide informal help than people who were less concerned. Thus, it can be expected that *the more concerned people were about contracting COVID-19, the more strongly they reduced their informal helping during the first lockdown (H7)*.

The opposite may apply to people who were concerned about others contracting COVID-19. These individuals did not necessarily worry about their own well-being, but about that of others. On the one hand, it could be expected that these people were more hesitant to provide help to those they worried about, as it would increase the risk of exposing them to the virus. On the other hand, people who were concerned about others contracting COVID-19 could also have been more motivated to help these people; they more often wanted to support people they considered at risk by providing informal help (Verbakel, Raiber, & De Boer, 2021). Moreover, informal helping can replace services by third parties, thereby limiting social interactions of the help recipient and reducing their risk of exposure to COVID-19. Following this line of reasoning, we expect that *the more concerned people were about others contracting COVID-19, the less strongly they reduced their informal helping during the first lockdown (H8)*.

People whose feelings of solidarity increased during the lockdown may also have been more motivated to provide informal help. Prior research has shown that people generally experience higher levels of solidarity during crises (Lau et al., 2008; Putnam, 2002), yet for an opposite finding about the COVID-19 crisis, see Borkowska and Laurence (2020)). However, some people may have experienced larger increases in feelings of solidarity than others. It is likely that people who felt more connected with others also developed a more positive attitude towards helping and thus provided more help. Hence, it can be expected that *the more people's feelings of solidarity increased, the less strongly they reduced their informal helping during the first lockdown (H9).*

6.2.3 Opportunities

Finally, we consider a person's opportunities to provide informal help, namely the changes in the number of social contacts during the first lockdown. Although government measures urged people to avoid social contact as much as possible, not everyone did this to the same extent (Bertogg & Koos, 2021a; Latsuzbaia, Herold, Bertemes, & Mossong, 2020; Safi et al., 2020). Moreover, some people replaced in-person social contact with safe online social contact (Safi et al., 2020). As a result, people widely varied in how they changed their social behaviors; some people dramatically reduced their total social contacts, whereas others increased their total social contacts (Bertogg & Koos, 2021a), likely through online communication (Safi et al., 2020).

From the general theoretical framework on volunteering, it follows that people with more social contacts are more often asked for help (Wang et al., 2017). Applied to the lockdown period, we argue that, despite a general hesitancy to ask for help, people with more social contacts during the lockdown than before were more likely to be asked for help than those with similar or fewer social contacts during the first lockdown. This is in line with findings that people with more social capital received more support from their social network during the COVID-19 crisis (Höltmann, Hutter, & Specht, 2023). Hence, it can be expected that *people who increased their social contact reduced their informal helping less than people who did not change (H10a) and that people who decreased their social contact during the first lockdown reduced their informal helping more than people who did not change (H10b).*

Table 6.1 shows an overview of all our expectations. Although our hypotheses refer to informal helping in general, we will test them for informally helping relatives, friends, and neighbors separately. Theories on social distance and social proximity suggest that people approach helping kin and non-kin differently

Table 6.1 Overview of expectations regarding the influence of resources, motivations, and opportunities

	Indicator	Resource	Motivation	Opportunities	Decline in informal helping
H2.	Poor health	X			Stronger
H3.	Over 65 years old	X			Stronger
H4.	Having young children	X			Stronger
H5.	Becoming unemployed	X			Weaker
H6.	Working from home	X			Weaker
H7.	Concerns about COVID for self		X		Stronger
H8.	Concerns about COVID for others		X		Weaker
H9.	Increase feelings of solidarity		X		Weaker
H10a.	Increase social contact			X	Weaker
H10b.	Decrease social contact			X	Stronger

(Cialdini, Brown, Lewis, Luce, & Neuberg, 1997; Conkova, 2019; Curry et al., 2013). Following prior research (e.g., Einolf et al., 2016; Lim & Laurence, 2015; Ramaekers et al., 2022), we thus consider relatives as a distinct recipient group. Additionally, we distinguish between friends and neighbors within the non-kin category, because barriers for helping neighbors were likely lower during the lockdown than they were for helping friends, as neighbors were spatially closer to people's homes.

6.3 Data and measurements

To test our expectations, we used data from the Social and Cultural Developments in the Netherlands (SOCON) COVID-19 Panel Survey (Ramaekers, Savelkoul, van Groenestijn, Scheepers, & Verbakel, 2021).¹⁹ The SOCON data consist of two waves; one collected before the first lockdown in the Netherlands and one shortly after the first lockdown, creating a pre-post comparison study. The first SOCON wave was collected in two parts with two independent samples but with virtually

19 Social and Cultural Developments in the Netherlands (SOCON) is a collection of representative cross-sectional datasets collected from 1979 to 2020 among the Dutch population. For more information, see <https://easy.dans.knaw.nl/ui/datasets/id/easy-dataset:210154>.

identical questionnaires. One part was collected in February 2019 (51.4%) and the other part in February 2020 (48.6%), either through an internet survey or phone interview. In total, 2,762 respondents participated in the first wave. Of the first wave respondents, 1,320 indicated they would be willing to participate in a follow-up study by e-mail and registered contact information.²⁰ In July 2020, these respondents were approached by e-mail for a COVID-19 themed follow-up SOCON study. 663 respondents (50.2%) participated in this second wave (53% female; age=20-72).²¹ People with lower educational attainment were overrepresented among those who dropped out (Ramaekers et al., 2021), exacerbating the underrepresentation of lower educated people from the first wave (Savelkoul et al., 2020; Savelkoul et al., 2019). Since we were interested in the changes between waves, we only used respondents that participated in both SOCON waves.

We performed multiple imputation in STATA, using chained equations (mice), to substitute missing values (N=64; 9.7%) regarding contact with friends and neighbors, COVID-19 related concerns about friends and neighbors, and feelings of solidarity.²² Respondents with remaining missing values and those with missing values on other (predictor) variables were excluded (N=73; 11%). Our final sample consisted of (at least) 522 respondents, depending on the number of missing values on the dependent variable. Respondents with an invalid score on a certain dependent variable were removed for that particular analysis but were included in the other analyses.

20 Approximately 250 respondents showed interest in participation by providing their phone number. Yet, because of financial reasons, it was not possible to contact these respondents for a follow-up in July 2020.

21 In our sample, 53.9% of the respondents first participated in 2019 and 46.1% of the respondents first participated in 2020.

22 The variables used in the imputation procedure were: having poor health, being over 65, having young children, losing work during the lockdown, working from home, being concerned about COVID-19 for one's own well-being, being concerned about COVID-19 for relatives' well-being, change in contact with family members, gender, educational attainment in years, year participated in wave 1, subjective well-being, satisfaction with covid measures, having a partner, having children in the household, wanting to vote if elections were today, being religious, political interest, social trust, age, number of covid cases in municipality, number of covid hospitalizations in municipality, number of covid deaths in municipality, being a migrant and income. The method of imputation was predictive mean score matching. To achieve reliable results, we performed 5 imputations, for which we constrained the number of iterations to 10. For the analyses, we pooled all 5 imputations. We also performed our analyses without imputations (see Appendix E). We found identical effects regarding resources and opportunities. We did not find significant effects of motivations (concerns for relatives and feelings of solidarity).

6.3.1 Dependent variables

To assess changes in informal helping, we measured informal helping in both wave 1 and wave 2. Respondents were asked how often they provided help to relatives, friends, and neighbors respectively. Several examples of informal help were given, such as chores, childcare, grocery shopping, lending things and giving advice. In the first wave, respondents were asked about the entire previous year. In the second wave, respondents were asked about their helping during the lockdown period (15th of March until 1st of June). Response options were identical and were recoded to the number of times a respondent helped per month; ‘every day’ (30), ‘multiple times a week’ (16), ‘once a week’ (4), ‘multiples times a month’ (3), ‘once a month’ (1), ‘less often’ (0.5), ‘never’ (0). Respondents could also answer they did not know; 24 (3.6%), 41 (6.2%), and 34 (5.1%) respondents had a missing score on informal helping of relatives, friends, and neighbors respectively in the first wave, and 57 (8.6%), 76 (11.5%) and 66 (10.0%) had a missing score on informal helping of relatives, friends, and neighbors respectively in the second wave.

6.3.2 Independent variables

All independent variables were time constant and measured in the second wave. Poor health was measured by asking respondents how they would describe their health (1=excellent to 5=poor). The answers were recoded into a dichotomous variable measuring whether respondents described their health as poor (not very good or poor) (1) or not (good to excellent) (0). To measure *being over 65 years old*, we constructed a dichotomous variable of respondents up to 64 years old (0) and being 65 years or older (1). We determined whether respondents were *parents of young children* with two questions. First, respondents were asked whether they had children living in their home. People who did not have children living with them were coded to be no parents of young children (0). Those who had children living with them were asked in which stage of education their children were. Respondents could give multiple answers. Respondents who had children that were too young to go to school or in primary education were considered as parents of young children (1). Respondents who reported only to have older children were coded to be no parents of young children (0).

Having lost work was measured by asking respondents about their work situation before and during the lockdown. Their work situation before the lockdown could be either employment, self-employment or not working. If they were not working, they could not lose work and were thus not considered as having lost work (0). Also, (self-) employed respondents who did not experience any change

or could do their work from home were considered as not having lost work during the lockdown (0). (Self-) employed respondents who could not do any work or lost their (self-)employment were considered as having lost work (1). *Working from home* was measured with a question asking how often respondents worked from home (1=always, 4=never). Response options were reversed; a higher score thus represented working from home more often. Our hypothesis regarding working from home relies on the argument that those working from home had more available time and flexibility. We assume that non-employed respondents share these experiences, which is why we assigned them the highest score on the working from home variable.

Concerns about COVID-19 for own well-being were measured by asking respondents how concerned they were that they would contract the virus and how concerned they were that they would become seriously ill when infected (1=not worried at all to 5 = very much worried). The two items were combined by calculating the average score. To measure concerns about COVID-19 for others' well-being, respondents were asked the same questions for concerns about relatives, friends, and neighbors. We combined scores for each recipient group by calculating the average score. This resulted in three measures: concerns for relatives, concerns for friends and concerns for neighbors. *Increased feelings of solidarity* towards other people in the Netherlands were measured by asking respondents to what extent their feelings about being connected to other people in the Netherlands had changed during the first lockdown (1=a lot more [connected] to 5 = a lot less [connected]). Scores were reversed, meaning that a higher score represented a larger increase in feelings of solidarity.

Respondents were also asked how they *changed the intensity of social contact* with relatives, friends, and neighbors during the first lockdown (1=*a lot more*, 5=*a lot less*). Social contact included both online and offline contact. For each group, scores were divided in three categories: 'decrease in contact' (0), 'no change in contact' (1) and 'increase in contact' (2). Respondents who answered 'not applicable' were regarded as 'no change in contact'.

We controlled for gender (0=female, 1=male), education in years (6=no education completed to 18=PhD), born outside of the Netherlands (0=no, 1=yes),

Table 6.2 Descriptive statistics (Total N = 661)

	Valid N	Range	Mean/prop.	SD
<i>Dependent variables</i>				
Wave 1				
Informal helping relatives	637	0-30	9.48	9.87
Informal helping friends	620	0-30	4.39	6.19
Informal helping neighbors	627	0-30	2.48	4.46
Wave 2				
Informal helping relatives	604	0-30	7.86	9.55
Informal helping friends	585	0-30	2.89	5.17
Informal helping neighbors	595	0-30	1.96	4.35
<i>Independent variables</i>				
Having poor health (ref. = no)	647	0/1	0.12	
Being over 65 years old (ref. = no)	661	0/1	0.22	
Having young children (ref. = no)	631	0/1	0.17	
Lost work (ref. = no)	618	0/1	0.12	
Working from home	618	0-3	1.92	1.24
Concerns about COVID-19 for self	658	0-4	1.56	0.94
Concerns about COVID-19 for relatives	651	0-4	2.11	1.02
Concerns about COVID-19 for friends	634	0-4	1.66	0.93
Concerns about COVID-19 for neighbors	624	0-4	1.52	0.90
Increased feelings of solidarity	583	0-4	2.06	0.67
Social contact with relatives (ref. = no change)	621	0/1	0.28	
Increase	621	0/1	0.33	
Decrease	621	0/1	0.39	
Social contact with friends (ref. = no change)	615	0/1	0.27	
Increase	615	0/1	0.21	
Decrease	615	0/1	0.52	
Social contact with neighbors (ref. = no change)	615	0/1	0.40	
Increase	615	0/1	0.13	
Decrease	615	0/1	0.47	
Gender (ref. = female)	658	0/1	0.47	
Education in years	653	6-18	13.39	2.37
Year participated in wave 1 (ref. = 2019)	661	0/1	46.14	
Migrant status (ref. = native)	661	0/1	0.07	

Source: SOCON COVID-19 Panel Study

year participated in SOCON-wave 1 (0=2019, 1=2020)²³ and baseline informal helping (i.e., score in wave 1). The latter is done to account for bottom and ceiling effects. Table 6.2 presents the descriptive statistics of the dependent and independent variables.

6.3.3 Analytical strategy

For descriptive purposes, we first present average scores for informal helping for the three recipient groups. Next, we calculated within-person change in informal helping during the first lockdown in the Netherlands by comparing scores on informal helping in the first wave to scores on informal helping in the second wave within individuals. We report the percentage of people that reduced, increased, or did not change their informal helping during the lockdown. To present a more representative picture of the Netherlands during this period, we weighted the data to the national distribution for education and age for this description (Statistics Netherlands, 2021); we divided the percentage based on the national statistic by the percentage in our data. Hence, underrepresented groups in our data were given more weight than the overrepresented groups. We did not include gender in our re-weighting because the sample was representative for the Dutch population in that regard (Ramaekers et al., 2021).

To test our hypotheses, we transformed the data from a wide format to a long format. This means that we included two observations for each respondent, one for each wave of data. We included a dummy variable that indicated whether the observation was done in the first or second wave. Because independent variables were measured once, they did not differ between the two observations of a respondent. The dependent variable was measured twice, which is why these scores did differ over a respondent's observations.

We performed fixed-effects panel regression models (Allison, 2009) to control for all unobserved heterogeneity between persons, thus analyzing within-person change only. The analyses were performed in STATA. The frequency of helping

23 In addition to controlling for the year that a respondent participated in the first wave, we also checked to what extent the effects were different for the 2019 and 2020 cohort. These analyses (Appendix online E) showed that in the 2020 cohort, the effects of concerns about relatives and feelings of solidarity were not present. Given that these referred to lockdown-specific experiences, this likely indicates a difference in selection into the second wave between the 2019 and the 2020 cohort. Reversely, in the 2019 cohort, the effects of contact with relatives and losing work were not present. Yet, because there was more time between waves, it is possible that these differences can be attributed to other events that occurred between the two measurements.

served as the dependent variable.²⁴ We first estimated models that only include time (0=wave 1, 1=wave 2) showing the average change in helping (shown in Appendix E, table E.1). Because the goal of the paper is to test to what extent this change in informal helping was different between groups, we interacted this time variable with individuals' resources, motivations, and opportunities. The same was done for the control variables. Note that no 'main effects' of the independent and control variables are reported, as they are time invariant. We ran separate regression models for help given to relatives, to friends, and to neighbors.

6.4 Results

6.4.1 Descriptive results

Informal helping before (i.e., wave 1) and during the lockdown (i.e., wave 2) were positively correlated: 0.33 for helping relatives, 0.25 for helping friends, and 0.40 for helping neighbors. This implies stability in helping behavior, but at the same time suggests that many respondents have changed the amount of informal helping. This is also visible in figure 6.1, which reports on average levels of informal helping in wave 1 and wave 2. It shows that, for each recipient group, levels of informal helping depend on the level of help provided before the lockdown. Yet, initial levels of informal helping were clearly higher than the levels during the lockdown, suggesting a decline in the amount of informal helping. Yet, for some people change will have been in the direction of less helping, while for others it may have been in the direction of more helping.

Figure 6.2 shows that the majority of respondents reduced their informal helping during the lockdown. Approximately 54% of all respondents reduced their informal help given to relatives during the lockdown, whereas 25.1% remained stable and 20.9% increased their informal helping to relatives. This pattern is observed for informally helping friends as well: 58.8% provided help less frequent-

24 We treated our dependent variable as an interval variable. To ensure that this decision did not affect our results, we performed fixed effects ordered logit regression (Appendix online F). The results of these analyses were very similar in terms of opportunities to the fixed effects linear regression results. Losing work, concern about relatives and feelings of solidarity had similar effects on informally helping relatives but were not significant. This is likely because ordered logit models require more degrees of freedom, reducing the power to find significant estimates. Given our small sample size, we thus prefer the linear model over the ordered logit models. Additionally, we log transformed our dependent variable and performed our analyses again (Appendix online G). This did not lead to substantially different conclusions.

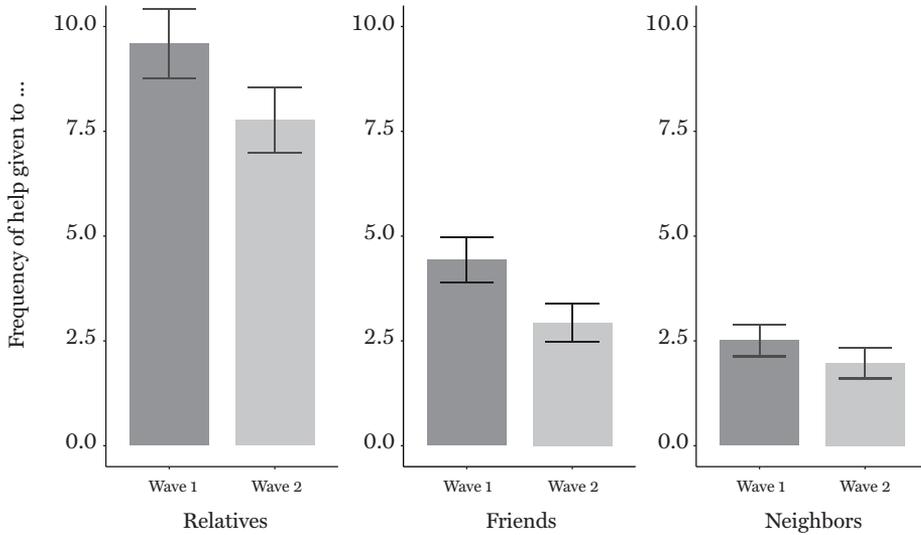


Figure 6.1 Frequency of help given to relatives, friends, and neighbors before (wave 1) and during the lockdown (wave 2) per month

Note: 95% confidence intervals; weighed data

Source: SOCON COVID-19 Panel Study

ly during the lockdown than before, whereas 24.1% remained stable and 17.1% increased their informal helping. A smaller share reduced their informal helping for neighbors, yet the group that reduced their help is still the largest (46.9%). This is interesting as Figure 6.1 shows that informally helping neighbors is less prevalent than helping relatives and friends. Furthermore, 32.7% maintained their informal help given to neighbors, whereas 20.3% increased it.

6.4.2 Multivariate results

Table E.1 (appendix E) reports the results of the fixed effects analyses that only include time. In accordance with our descriptive results, these analyses show a negative effect of time, indicating that informal helping for all three groups declined during the lockdown. This is in line with the first hypothesis that predicted a general decline in informal helping. Table 6.3 reports the results of the fixed effects analyses including all interactions (with time). With respect to resources for helping, we only found a statistically significant interaction between having lost work during the lockdown and the change in informally helping relatives (Model 1: $b=2.397$, $p=0.040$). This effect is in line with our expectation that people who lost work during the lockdown reduced their informal helping less

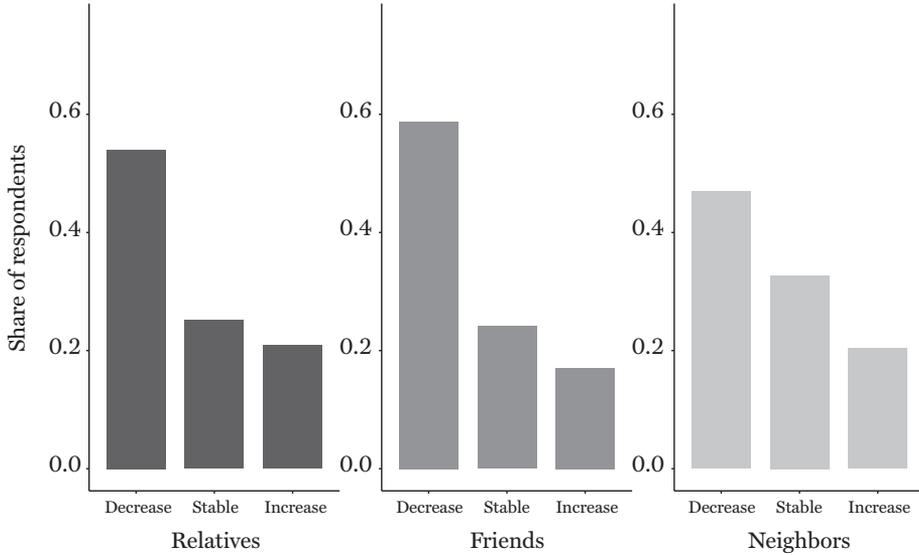


Figure 6.2 Within-person changes in informal helping relatives (N=550), friends (N=522) and neighbors (N=536) between wave 1 (February 2019 or February 2020) and wave 2 (July 2020)

Note: Graphs are based on weighed data

Source: SOCON COVID-19 Panel Study

strongly (hypothesis 5). Figure 6.3 visualizes the significant differences between groups from table 6.3 as marginal effects. Panel A shows that people who did not lose work during the lockdown reduced their informal help to relatives from approximately 10 times per month to 7.5 times per month. People who lost work did not decrease their informal helping for relatives but slightly increased it instead. We did not find evidence for an impact of the other types of resources on the change in helping relatives, nor for an impact of any of the resources on changes in helping friends or neighbors.

Results regarding the motivations for providing informal help show that strong concerns about relatives' well-being significantly affected the change in informal help to relatives. The coefficient of the interaction term ($b=1.007$, $p=0.048$) was in line with what we expected in hypothesis 8, namely that stronger concerns about others would lower the tendency of people to reduce their helping behavior during the lockdown. The same applies to increased feelings of solidarity ($b=1.160$, $p=0.047$); people who felt more connected to other Dutch people during the lockdown than before decreased their informal helping for relatives less during the lockdown, in line with hypothesis 9. Both effects are visualized in figure 6.3 (panel B and C). These panels show that people who felt least concerned about relatives and experienced the largest decrease in

Table 6.3 B-coefficients and standard errors of fixed effects regression analysis

	Informal helping relatives		Informal helping friends		Informal helping neighbors	
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Time (ref. = wave 1)	-0.030	2.694	4.670 **	1.629	1.248	2.230
Time (ref. = wave 1) x ...						
<i>Resources</i>						
Having poor health (ref. = no)	-0.966	1.263	-0.832	0.744	-0.632	0.558
Being over 65 years old (ref. = no)	0.168	0.867	0.604	0.590	0.594	0.456
Having young children (ref. = no)	-0.150	1.043	-0.035	0.616	0.263	0.468
Lost work (ref. = no)	2.397 *	1.167	0.764	0.689	0.217	0.521
Working from home	0.039	0.341	-0.098	0.201	0.108	0.154
<i>Motivations</i>						
Concerns about COVID-19 for self	-0.774	0.561	-0.557	0.369	-0.306	0.239
Concerns about COVID-19 for relatives	1.007 *	0.508				
Concerns about COVID-19 for friends			0.505	0.358		
Concerns about COVID-19 for neighbors					0.324	0.245
Increased feelings of solidarity	1.160 *	0.583	0.500	0.333	-0.028	0.260
<i>Opportunities</i>						
Social contact with relatives (ref. = no change)						
Decrease	-1.692	0.945				
Increase	2.281 *	0.984				
Social contact with friends (ref. = no change)						
Decrease			-0.862	0.527		

Table 6.3 continued

	Informal helping relatives		Informal helping friends		Informal helping neighbors	
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Increase			0.913	0.668		
Social contact with neighbors (ref. = no change)						
Decrease					-0.229	0.367
Increase					2.370 ***	0.554
<i>Control variables^a</i>						
Informal helping before lockdown	-0.706 ***	0.039	-0.812 ***	0.036	-0.664 ***	0.038
Gender (ref. = female)	0.217	0.768	-0.114	0.453	-0.050	0.346
Education in years	0.048	0.171	-0.216 *	0.102	-0.157 *	0.078
Year participated in wave 1 (ref. = 2019)	1.089	0.754	-0.688	0.446	-0.067	0.340
Migrant status (ref. = native)	0.281	1.452	0.506	0.825	0.153	0.631
N observations	1,100		1044		1072	
N persons	550		522		536	

^aall control variables are included as interactions with time.

*** $p < 0.001$ ** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$

Source: SOCON COVID-19 Panel Study

solidarity reduced their informal helping for relatives from approximately 10 times per month to less than 6 times per month. People who experienced the most concern about relatives were stable in their helping behavior, whereas those who experienced the largest increase in solidarity even slightly increased their informal helping.

Finally, table 6.3 reports a significant impact of the opportunity structure on changes in informal helping. People who increased the amount of contact they had with relatives reduced the informal help they gave to relatives less during the lockdown than those whose contacts with relatives did not change (model 1: $b = 2.281$, $p = 0.021$). A similar pattern is visible for informally helping neighbors

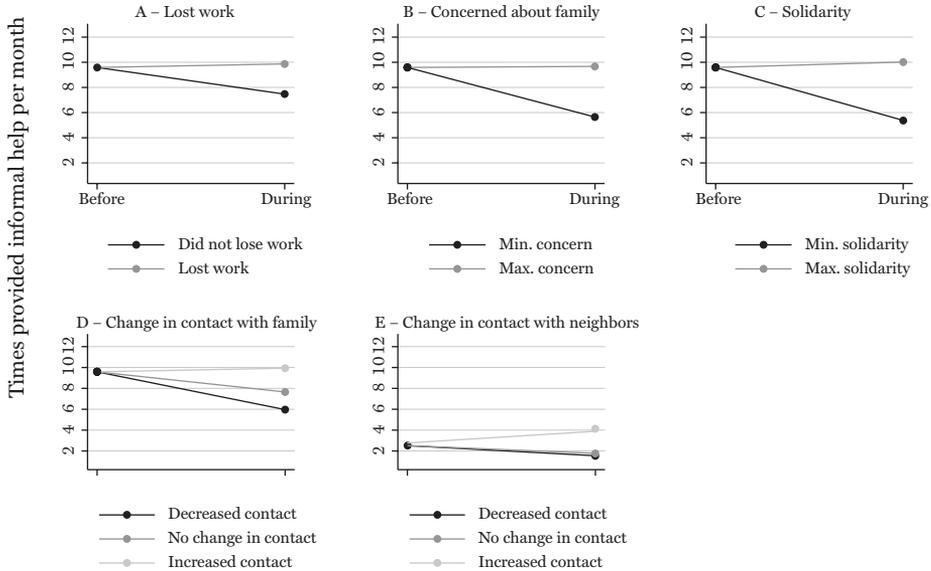


Figure 6.3 Marginal effects of determinants with significant effects in fixed effects regression analyses

Note 1: Panel A to D report the impact on informally helping relatives, panel E report the impact on informally helping neighbors.

Note 2: Confidence intervals not reported due to bias in degrees of freedom used in case of multiple imputation.

Source: SOCON COVID-19 Panel Study

(model 3: $b=2.370$, $p=0.000$). As figure 6.3 shows, both people who did not change contact with relatives or neighbors and those who reduced contact provided less help during the lockdown. Those who increased contact with relatives and neighbors remained relatively stable (relatives) or increased their informal helping for this group as well (neighbors; from 2.5 times to 4 times per month). In sum, the reduction in help provided to relatives and neighbors during the lockdown was smaller for people who increased their contact frequency with them. This is in line with hypothesis 10a.

6.4.3 Robustness checks

We performed various additional analyses to check the robustness of our results. First, we checked whether we were possibly overcontrolling by including all three factors (resources, motivations, and opportunities) simultaneously. Analyzing the factors separately produced very similar results (appendix E, table E.2 to E.4). The only difference was that there was no significant result

of concerns about relatives without controlling for resources and opportunities, and that concerns about one's own well-being exacerbated the decline in informally helping friends.

Second, we considered to what extent our results on the change in helping between waves 1 and 2 were in line with respondents' perceptions of the change in their helping (appendix E, table E.5).²⁵ For these analyses we used respondent information collected in wave 2 on perceived changes in informal helping behavior during the first lockdown. The analyses did not show an effect of having lost work during the lockdown on the change in informally helping relatives, but the other factors we found to be significant in our fixed effects analyses were confirmed. Additionally, the analyses revealed several significant associations that were not present in the fixed effects analyses. Regarding resources, we found for example that people older than 65 were more likely to believe they decreased their informal help (to all groups) than others. People who decreased contact with relatives, friends and neighbors did the same. They had a higher likelihood to believe that a decrease in informal helping occurred during the lockdown. We found the opposite for people who increased contact with relatives, neighbors and now friends as well. They were more likely to think that they increased informal helping. Thus, the perceptions people have about changes in their informal helping behavior more strongly followed patterns in resources, motivations and, especially, opportunities than their reported behavioral changes in informal helping.

6.5 Discussion

During the first lockdown of the corona crisis in the Netherlands, government officials and civil society actors called for solidarity and urged people to help each other deal with its consequences. At the same time, lockdown measures discouraged social interactions, which made providing help more difficult. Hence, this study examined how informal helping changed during the lockdown and to what extent this depended on the resources, motivations and opportunities

25 The perceived change in informal helping was measured by asking respondents whether they had changed the amount of informal help they provided to relatives, friends, and neighbors during the first lockdown (15 March to 1 June), citing the same examples as was done for the questions on the frequency of informal helping. Response options were 'a lot more help' (1), 'a bit more help' (2), 'about the same amount of help' (3), 'a bit less help' (4) and 'a lot less help' (5). These options were recoded into three categories, namely 'decrease in help', 'no change in help' and 'increase in help'. Missing scores amounted to 47 (7.1%; relatives), 73 (11.0%; friends) and 61 (9.2%; neighbors). To analyze these data, we ran multinomial logistic regression analyses with 'no change in help' as the reference category.

people had for helping during the lockdown. We first expected a general decline in informal helping. Using data from the SOCON COVID-19 Panel Study, we indeed found that the majority of the Dutch reduced their informal help given to relatives (54%), friends (58.8%) and neighbors (46.9%) during the lockdown. We thus conclude that governmental calls for solidarity, in this particular crisis, did not result in a widespread increase in informal helping.

The general tendency to reduce informal helping was however (partly) counterbalanced by several compensating factors. We hypothesized and found evidence for compensating effects of resources, motivations, and opportunities. The decline in informal helping of relatives was smaller among those who lost work during the lockdown compared to those who remained (self-)employed, probably because they had more (flexible) time available; among those who had stronger concerns about their relatives' well-being and experienced an increase in feelings of solidarity with other Dutch people, because they presumably felt more strongly motivated to help; and among those who increased contact with their relatives, because they likely had more opportunities to help. The compensating effect of opportunities also emerged with respect to informal help to neighbors: the decline in help was lower if social interactions with neighbors increased.

This study's results underscore the usefulness of a theoretical framework that considers resources, motivations, and opportunities as determinants of informal helping in two ways. First, our results corroborate existing research on informal helping. We extended the evidence that not in all crises informal helping rises (Cameron, 2021; Lim & Laurence, 2015). In line with research on informal care (Verbakel et al., 2021), we found that especially concerns about relatives' well-being result in a smaller decline in informal help given to them. Finally, our results on social contacts mirrored prior studies reporting that opportunities are important for informal helping (Lee & Brudney, 2012; Wang et al., 2017). Second, our study suggests that changes in resources, motivations and opportunities to some extent explain changes in informal helping. Our study therefore shows that the general theoretical framework of resources, motivations and opportunities is not only applicable to understand between-person differences in informal helping, but also within-person change in informal helping.

It is important to note that not all indicators that we tested appeared to significantly affect change in informal helping. This was especially the case with respect to various resources. This may seem unsurprising because prior research has not reported a strong relationship between resources and informal helping (Einolf et al., 2016; Wang, 2021). Yet, we focused specifically on resources, such as health, available time, and flexibility to spend it, that have been linked to informal helping (e.g., Egerton & Mullan, 2008; Wilson & Musick, 1997). Although

prior research suggest that they are predictors of differences between people in their informal helping, our study indicates that they have less explanatory power regarding changes in informal helping. An exception is the finding that people who became non-working during the lockdown reduced their informal helping less. Given the lack of support for other indicators of available time, such as having young children or working from home, it is likely that people who could not work used informal helping as a coping strategy (Musick & Wilson, 2008). That is, they provided help to relatives to deal with the fact that they lost work and thereby created new self-fulfillment.

Another consideration is that our theoretical framework seemed particularly helpful to understand change in helping relatives, but less so with respect to helping friends and neighbors. We know from prior research that people are more willing to give help to relatives (Curry et al., 2013; Kahn et al., 2011) and that motivations, such as expecting help in return (Curry et al., 2013; Stewart-Williams, 2007), play a smaller role in the decision to help them. This suggest that help to family members is given regardless of one's exact resources, (personal) motivations or opportunities. Our findings contrast these studies, as changes in informally helping relatives seemed more strongly driven by resources, motivations, and opportunities than changes in informally helping friends and neighbors. We cannot determine exactly why this is the case. Yet, it is possible that the lower importance ascribed to informally helping friends and neighbors has led to more uniform effects. When it became too difficult to maintain all types of helping behavior, people may have prioritized to maintain help provided to relatives over help provided to non-kin, with only those with the most resources, motivations and opportunities succeeding in maintaining help provision to relatives. Future research should delve deeper into the differences between helpers of relatives, friends, and neighbors.

Certainly, our study is not without drawbacks. A first limitation concerns the interpretation of the associations for intensity of social contacts. These estimates should be interpreted cautiously because causality is rather unclear for this aspect. It is possible that those who increased their social contacts during the lockdown indeed gave more informal help as a result of this increase (as theorized). However, it is also possible that the reported informal help was a part of this increased social contact, or that social contact increased as a result of the demand for informal help. Hence, with the current data, we only conclude that changes in informal helping and changes in social contact were interrelated, but do not draw conclusions on the direction of the influence. Future research can investigate this relationship longitudinally to better disentangle the causality structure.

A second limitation concerns the sample size. Due to attrition in the SOCON panel the sample was relatively small and less representative, especially regarding age and education. Fortunately, we do not believe that this has biased the effects of resources, motivations, and opportunities for helping, because we do not expect these effects to differ largely by age or education. However, in our study, effects could not be estimated with great statistical power. Hence, it is important that future research on the changes in informal helping is based on larger samples, so differences over time and between groups can be better distinguished.

Future research preferably also extends the scope of this research topic to the demand for informal help in one's core social network. The current study only considers factors that may have affected people's resources, motivations, and opportunities to provide informal help. So, it did not consider that some network members may have needed more help during the lockdown, as shown by Bertogg and Koos (2022). We consider the need for help in one's network as an often-overlooked aspect in the informal helping literature, and our data unfortunately could not shed light on this issue. Hence, we invite future research to follow the study by Bertogg and Koos (2022) and pay more attention to the demand side of informal helping, particularly whether demand side changes affect the level of help provided.

Our results show a decrease in informal help during the first lockdown in the Netherlands. However, the lockdown also had some silver linings. First, informal helping declined less among those who lost work during the lockdown, suggesting that they may have used their extra time for the greater good. Second, the lockdown created opportunities for (re)connecting with neighbors increasing cohesion in local communities. Our study suggests that this (re)connection is not limited to social contact but spills over to giving informal help. That is likely why informal helping decreased less among neighbors than among family and friends. These results underscore that increased availability in combination with increased contact with others fosters informal helping, even in a pandemic.

APPENDICES



Drawing by Ayşegül Güneçli



Appendix A – Chapter 2

Table A.1 Decks in the factorial survey (notwithstanding the order of the vignettes)

	First vignette	Second vignette	Third vignette
Deck 1	1a – 2a – 3a	1a – 2b – 3c	1b – 2b – 3b
Deck 2	1a – 2b – 3a	1a – 2a – 3b	1b – 2a – 3c
Deck 3	1a – 2b – 3b	1b – 2a – 3a	1b – 2b – 3c
Deck 4	1a – 2a – 3c	1b – 2b – 3a	1b – 2a – 3b

152]

Table A.2 Decks in the factorial survey, including order

Deck	Code	First vignette	Second vignette	Third vignette
Deck 1	Deck 1A	1a – 2a – 3a	1a – 2b – 3c	1b – 2b – 3b
	Deck 1B	1a – 2a – 3a	1b – 2b – 3b	1a – 2b – 3c
	Deck 1C	1a – 2b – 3c	1a – 2a – 3a	1b – 2b – 3b
	Deck 1D	1a – 2b – 3c	1b – 2b – 3b	1a – 2a – 3a
	Deck 1E	1b – 2b – 3b	1a – 2a – 3a	1a – 2b – 3c
	Deck 1F	1b – 2b – 3b	1a – 2b – 3c	1a – 2a – 3a
Deck 2	Deck 2A	1a – 2b – 3a	1a – 2a – 3b	1b – 2a – 3c
	Deck 2B	1a – 2b – 3a	1b – 2a – 3c	1a – 2a – 3b
	Deck 2C	1a – 2a – 3b	1a – 2b – 3a	1b – 2a – 3c
	Deck 2D	1a – 2a – 3b	1b – 2a – 3c	1a – 2b – 3a
	Deck 2E	1b – 2a – 3c	1a – 2b – 3a	1a – 2a – 3b
	Deck 2F	1b – 2a – 3c	1a – 2a – 3b	1a – 2b – 3a
Deck 3	Deck 3A	1a – 2b – 3b	1b – 2a – 3a	1b – 2b – 3c
	Deck 3B	1a – 2b – 3b	1b – 2b – 3c	1b – 2a – 3a
	Deck 3C	1b – 2a – 3a	1a – 2b – 3b	1b – 2b – 3c
	Deck 3D	1b – 2a – 3a	1b – 2b – 3c	1a – 2b – 3b
	Deck 3E	1b – 2b – 3c	1a – 2b – 3b	1b – 2a – 3a
	Deck 3F	1b – 2b – 3c	1b – 2a – 3a	1a – 2b – 3b
Deck 4	Deck 4A	1a – 2a – 3c	1b – 2b – 3a	1b – 2a – 3b
	Deck 4B	1a – 2a – 3c	1b – 2a – 3b	1b – 2b – 3a
	Deck 4C	1b – 2b – 3a	1a – 2a – 3c	1b – 2a – 3b
	Deck 4D	1b – 2b – 3a	1b – 2a – 3b	1a – 2a – 3c
	Deck 4E	1b – 2a – 3b	1a – 2a – 3c	1b – 2b – 3a
	Deck 4F	1b – 2a – 3b	1b – 2b – 3a	1a – 2a – 3c

Table A.3 Multilevel regression results explaining informal helping, including missing value dummies (N observations = 3302, N persons = 1101)

	Model 1		Model 2	
	B	SE	B	SE
Likelihood of reciprocity (ref. = low)	0.335 ***	0.052	0.175	0.108
Past helping behavior (ref. = neutral)				
Unhelpful	-0.908 ***	0.060	-1.095 ***	0.095
Helpful	0.641 ***	0.060	0.559 ***	0.108
Necessity of helping (ref. = low)	1.145 ***	0.052	1.143 ***	0.052
Likelihood of reciprocity x				
Unhelpful			0.375 *	0.148
Helpful			0.166	0.179
Order (ref. = first vignette)				
Second vignette	-0.104	0.060	-0.105	0.060
Third vignette	-0.118 *	0.060	-0.116	0.060
Male (ref. = female)	-0.077	0.125	-0.078	0.125
Age	-0.049	0.042	-0.049	0.042
Educational attainment (ref. = primary education)				
Intermediate secondary education	0.622 *	0.271	0.614 *	0.271
Higher secondary education	0.994 ***	0.297	0.989 ***	0.297
Intermediate vocational education	0.686 *	0.267	0.681 *	0.267
Higher vocational education	0.930 ***	0.269	0.919 ***	0.269
University education	1.037 ***	0.291	1.019 ***	0.291
Employed (ref. = non-employed)	-0.099	0.152	-0.097	0.152
Subjective health (ref. = poor health)				
Good health	0.480 **	0.162	0.478 **	0.162
Subjective health missing	0.315	0.298	0.309	0.298
Migration background (ref. = native)				
Migrant	-0.187	0.155	-0.186	0.155
Migration background missing	-0.090	0.428	-0.095	0.428
Being religious (ref. = non-religious)				
Religious	-0.114	0.136	-0.112	0.136
Being religious missing	-0.252	0.257	-0.249	0.258
Net personal income (ref. = no income)				
EUR 500 or less	0.245	0.394	0.252	0.394
EUR 501 to EUR 1000	0.282	0.291	0.281	0.291

Table A.3 continued

		Model 1		Model 2	
		B	SE	B	SE
	EUR 1001 to EUR 1500	0.379	0.277	0.375	0.277
	EUR 1501 to EUR 2000	0.517	0.284	0.520	0.284
	4,756 mm	0.549	0.293	0.550	0.293
	EUR 2500 to EUR 3000	0.451	0.313	0.462	0.313
154]	EUR 3001 to EUR 3500	0.657	0.351	0.661	0.351
	EUR 3501 to EUR 4000	1.431 **	0.497	1.421 **	0.497
	EUR 4001 to EUR 4500	-0.299	0.613	-0.314	0.612
	EUR 4501 to EUR 5000	1.240	0.698	1.255	0.698
	EUR 5001 to EUR 7500	1.529 *	0.775	1.552 *	0.775
	More than 7500	0.678	0.896	0.727	0.896
	Missing	-0.162	0.344	-0.153	0.344
<i>Variance</i>					
	Vignette (N=3302)	2.020		2.014	
	Respondent (N=1101)	2.963		2.965	

*** $p < 0.001$ ** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$

Source: *Informal helping intentions study (2022)*

Appendix B – Chapter 3

Explanation of matching of the FSDP and other LISS panel data

The main dataset in this study is the sixth wave of the Family Survey Dutch Population (FSDP). These data were collected among members of the LISS panel, which is a panel of Dutch respondents between 18 and 70 years old who are invited to fill in questionnaires every month. One of the questionnaires they filled in was the FSDP. In addition to irregular questionnaires such as the FSDP, LISS sends monthly questionnaires from the LISS Core study to the panel. The LISS Core study covers various topics, such as health and family. Each topic is surveyed once a year. For more information on the LISS panel, see <https://www.lissdata.nl/about-panel>.

Since the FSDP respondents were also invited to fill in the LISS Core Study, we can retrieve additional information about them from this study and link it to the FSDP. We retrieved additional information from four LISS Core Study questionnaires: Religion and Ethnicity, Social Integration and Leisure, Family and Household, and Personality. To do so, we first determined that the tenth wave of the Core Study was collected closest to the FSDP. Second, we matched four (groups of) variables to the FSDP, namely whether the respondent was religious (Religion and Ethnicity), the amount of core discussants mentioned (Social Integration and Leisure), the starting year of the respondent's relationship (Family and Household) and the BIG-V IPIP scale (Personality).

Because respondents of the LISS panel are not required to fill out every questionnaire they receive, we could not retrieve information on these variables for all respondents of the FSDP from the tenth wave of the Core Study. Therefore, we checked whether respondents with missing data on these variables participated in the ninth wave. If they did, we matched information from that wave to the FSDP. If not, we checked for the eighth wave. We repeated this process until none of the respondents with missing data had participated in an earlier wave. For the starting year of the relationship, we repeated the process for all ten waves because respondents did not have to answer the question if they had the same partner as the previous year. For religiousness, the amount of core discussants and the BIG-V IPIP scale, we repeated the process for the last five, four and three waves respectively. In the end, we lost 47 (1.8%), 3 (0.1%), 58 (3.8%) and 6 (0.2%) respondents because they did not respond to the Religion and Ethnicity, Social Integration and Leisure, Family and Household and Personality questionnaires respectively.

Although this procedure allows us to retrieve additional information on most respondents in the FSDP, it forces us to make an additional assumption, namely

that scores on the variables from the LISS Core Study remain stable over time. While this assumption may be less theoretically sound for some variables (e.g., core discussion network size) than for others (personality traits), excluding individuals who did not participate in the tenth wave of the Core Study did not result in different conclusions. Hence, we present our results with these individuals included.

Table B.1 Standardised coefficients of the effects of parental modelling and parental encouragement on informal helping for friends and for neighbours, emotional support, and various informal helping behaviours

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
	β	β	β	β
B1.A	Informal volunteering for friends (N=2,443)			
Parental modelling	0.077 ***	0.068 **	0.083 ***	0.081 ***
Parental encouragement	0.037	0.003	0.003	0.004
B1.B	Informal volunteering for neighbours (N=2,395)			
Parental modelling	0.100 ***	0.091 ***	0.103 ***	0.102 ***
Parental encouragement	0.002	-0.017	-0.011	-0.009
B1.C	Emotional support for friends and neighbours (N=2,457)			
Parental modelling	0.078 ***	0.068 **	0.066 **	0.065 **
Parental encouragement	0.058 **	0.008	0.009	0.007
B1.D	Helping with chores in or around the house (N=2,407)			
Parental modelling	0.090 ***	0.084 ***	0.094 ***	0.093 ***
Parental encouragement	0.029	0.006	0.007	0.007
B1.E	Lending tools, equipment, or clothes (N=2,399)			
Parental modelling	0.109 ***	0.104 ***	0.101 ***	0.093 ***
Parental encouragement	-0.011	-0.037	-0.038	-0.038
B1.F	Helping with activities or events (N=2,381)			
Parental modelling	0.141 ***	0.128 ***	0.122 ***	0.123 ***
Parental encouragement	0.013	-0.020	-0.021	-0.020
B1.G	Looking after (grand)children (N=2,241)			
Parental modelling	0.027	0.019	0.048 *	0.053 *
Parental encouragement	-0.005	-0.017	-0.012	-0.006
B1.H	Taking care of pets and plants when someone is on holiday (N=2,371)			
Parental modelling	0.074 ***	0.070 **	0.072 ***	0.064 **
Parental encouragement	0.041 *	0.018	0.022	0.022
B1.I	Driving someone to an appointment or providing other transport (N=2,393)			
Parental modelling	0.044 *	0.034	0.048 *	0.047 *
Parental encouragement	0.034	0.005	0.007	0.005

*** $p < 0.001$ ** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$

Note: models are controlled for the same variables as in Table 3.3. Full models are available at the authors.

Source: FSDP 2017-2018

Table B.2 Standardised coefficients of the effects of partner modelling and partner encouragement on informal helping for friends and for neighbours, emotional support, and various informal helping behaviours

	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
	β	β	β	β
B2.A	Informal volunteering for friends (N=1,465)			
Partner modelling	0.066 *	0.059 *	0.070 **	0.059 *
Partner encouragement	0.129 ***	0.125 ***	0.123 ***	0.126 ***
B2.B	Informal volunteering for neighbours (N=1,445)			
Partner modelling	0.101 ***	0.093 ***	0.101 ***	0.080 **
Partner encouragement	0.119 ***	0.114 ***	0.114 ***	0.119 ***
B2.C	Emotional support for friends and neighbours (N=1,470)			
Partner modelling	0.049	0.034	0.033	0.017
Partner encouragement	0.101 ***	0.097 ***	0.099 ***	0.105 ***
B2.D	Helping with chores in or around the house (N=1,448)			
Partner modelling	0.071 **	0.062 *	0.068 **	0.058 *
Partner encouragement	0.132 ***	0.127 ***	0.124 ***	0.130 ***
B2.E	Lending tools, equipment, or clothes (N=1,451)			
Partner modelling	0.120 ***	0.118 ***	0.118 ***	0.097 ***
Partner encouragement	0.077 **	0.074 **	0.075 **	0.081 **
B2.F	Helping with activities or events (N=1,429)			
Partner modelling	0.183 ***	0.172 ***	0.162 ***	0.146 ***
Partner encouragement	0.100 ***	0.093 **	0.088 **	0.095 ***
B2.G	Looking after (grand)children (N=1,347)			
Partner modelling	0.031	0.024	0.042	0.036
Partner encouragement	0.092 **	0.088 **	0.086 **	0.091 **
B2.H	Taking care of pets and plants when someone is on holiday (N=1,430)			
Partner modelling	0.062 *	0.058 *	0.062 *	0.040
Partner encouragement	0.095 **	0.094 **	0.097 ***	0.095 **
B2.I	Driving someone to an appointment or providing other transport (N=1,442)			
Partner modelling	0.062 *	0.053 *	0.063 *	0.050
Partner encouragement	0.129 ***	0.122 ***	0.124 ***	0.125 ***

*** $p < 0.001$ ** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$

Note: models are controlled for the same variables as in Table 3.4. Full models are available at the authors.

Source: FSDP 2017-2018

Appendix C – Chapter 4

Table C.1 Fixed effects regression models predicting informal helping, separating starting and stopping informal help (N respondents = 4046, N observations = 9605)

		Informal helping in general	
		B	SE
Partner helps informally (ref. = no)	Increase	0.515 ***	0.137
	Decrease	-0.266 *	0.131
Youngest child in household (ref. = no (minor) children)			
	Under 6 years old	-1.245 ***	0.335
	Between 6 and 12 years old	-0.975 **	0.336
	Between 12 and 18 years old	-0.729 **	0.269
Employment status (ref. = fulltime)			
	Non-employment	-0.195	0.135
	Parttime employment	-0.591 ***	0.167
Income (CHF/10,000)		-0.041	0.022
Residence type (ref. = house)			
	Apartment	0.222	0.261
	Other housing	-0.817	0.841
Linguistic area (ref. = German)			
	French	0.333	0.291
	Italian	13.098	845.073
	Multilingual	-0.620	0.667
Wave (ref. = wave 15)			
	Wave 18	0.415 **	0.143
	Wave 21	0.063	0.065

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$

Source: SHP 2013, 2016, 2019

	Informal helping for kin		Informal helping for non-kin	
	B	SE		
Partner helps informally (ref. = no)				
Increase	0.968 ***	0.169	0.325	0.190
Decrease	-0.175	0.168	0.169	0.176
Youngest child in household (ref. = no (minor) children)				
Under 6 years old	-1.503 **	0.442	-0.734	0.381
Between 6 and 12 years old	-0.919 *	0.437	-0.574	0.379
Between 12 and 18 years old	-0.297	0.368	-0.764 *	0.312
Employment status (ref. = fulltime)				
Non-employment	-0.323 *	0.161	-0.305	0.164
Parttime employment	-0.556 **	0.205	-0.533 **	0.199
Income (CHF/10,000)	-0.036	0.026	0.010	0.026
Residence type (ref. = house)				
Apartment	0.045	0.304	-0.120	0.306
Other housing	-1.812	1.356	-0.344	0.918
Linguistic area (ref. = German)				
French	0.242	0.355	0.742	0.382
Italian	-	-	-	-
Multilingual	-0.692	0.709	0.169	0.689
Wave (ref. = wave 15)				
Wave 18	0.175	0.192	0.461 **	0.160
Wave 21	0.107	0.076	-0.075	0.071

Appendix D – Chapter 5

Hybrid panel models are a combination of fixed effects and random effects panel models. Like fixed effects models, hybrid models control for unobserved heterogeneity, meaning that within-person changes can be estimated. At the same time, like random effects models, hybrid models can estimate the effects of time-invariant variables, such as gender or ethnicity, as well as the between-person effects of time-varying variables, allowing us to compare people. Moreover, hybrid panel models can estimate between effects and within effects separately (Allison, 2009).

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Measurements of Time-Invariant Control Variables

In the hybrid panel models, we controlled for various time-invariant variables: gender, age, educational attainment, and ethnicity. These were measured in Wave 1 and assumed not to change after this wave. For educational attainment, we differentiated between “no high school degree”, “high school degree” and “college degree”. For ethnicity, we differentiated between “White”, “Black”, “Hispanic”, “Native American” and “Other”. Thirty-six respondents (1.0%) had a missing value on one of these control variables.

Estimation and Interpretation

To estimate the hybrid models, random effects models were estimated in R, using the `plm` package. Time-invariant variables were included without modifications, and their effects can be interpreted as the average difference in informal helping between people with varying scores on these variables. To estimate the effects of time-varying variables, we first calculated the average score that a person had over all the waves they participated in on a certain variable. Then, a deviation score was calculated for each observation by subtracting the average score from the original score. Both the mean score and the deviation score were included in the model. This approach was taken for both interval variables and dummy variables. To calculate the interaction effects, an interaction term was calculated by multiplying scores on the two interacting variables, after which a mean score and deviation score were calculated for this interaction term and included in the models (Schunck, 2013).

The effects of the mean scores can be interpreted as the differences in informal helping between people with varying average scores on these variables. The effects of the deviation scores can be interpreted as the results of a fixed effects model, namely, as the effect that one person changing their score on a variable between waves had on informal helping. The within effects of the hybrid panel model should therefore correspond exactly with the effects of a fixed effects model.

Interpretation of “Between” Effects

The main article discussed the within effects of the hybrid models, as these were the same as the results of the fixed effects models. Hence, we briefly discuss only the between effects here (including the effects of the time-invariant variables). Table D.1 presents the full results of the hybrid panel models.

As shown in table D.1, the between effect of divorce was not significant. This means that individuals who were married in a certain wave did not differ in their informal helping from individuals who were divorced in that wave. Moreover, Model 1 in table D.1 reports that non-White individuals engaged less in informal helping than White individuals, with the exception of Native Americans. Furthermore, people with a high school diploma or a college degree provided more informal help than people without a high school diploma. Additionally, the older someone was the less informal help they provided. Men and women did not differ in their informal helping.

Models 2 to 4 in table D.1 report that informal helping did not differ between individuals with varying household incomes and between people who were and were not in full-time employment in a certain wave. However, there was a difference in informal helping between those with adult children and those without adult children. Model 3 shows that (married) individuals with adult children who did not live in their household provided more informal help than those without.

Table D.1 Hybrid panel models predicting informal helping: Within and between effects (N observations = 6,185; N=1,955)

		Model 1	
		<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>
<i>Within</i>			
Marital status (ref. = married)			
	Divorce	0.123	0.123
Household income			
	x divorce		
Adult children (ref. = no)			
	x divorce		
Full time employment			
	x divorce		
<i>Between</i>			
Marital status (ref. = married)			
	Divorce	-0.031	0.067
Household income			
	x divorce		
Adult children (ref. = no)			
	x divorce		
Full time employment			
	x divorce		
<i>Control variables</i>			
Gender (ref. = female)			
		-0.079	0.052
Ethnicity (ref. = White)			
	Black	-0.273 ***	0.064
	Hispanic	-0.452 ***	0.131
	Native American	0.034	0.118
	Other	-0.743 **	0.240
Education(ref. = no high school diploma)			
	High school diploma	0.497 ***	0.065

Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>
0.230	0.158	0.258	0.140	-0.008	0.151
0.001	0.001				
-0.002	0.002				
		0.426 ***	0.075		
		-0.333 *	0.140		
				-0.168 *	0.069
				0.206	0.132
-0.064	0.111	0.134	0.113	-0.170	0.099
0.002	0.001				
0.002	0.002				
		0.449 ***	0.095		
		-0.285	0.150		
				-0.006	0.091
				0.289	0.153
-0.095	0.052	-0.052	0.052	-0.079	0.055
-0.255 ***	0.064	-0.273 ***	0.063	-0.273 ***	0.064
-0.430 **	0.131	-0.436 ***	0.131	-0.451 ***	0.131
0.066	0.118	0.010	0.117	0.039	0.118
-0.751 **	0.240	-0.656 **	0.240	-0.741 **	0.240
0.449 ***	0.068	0.498 ***	0.065	0.478 ***	0.066

Table D.1 continued

		Model 1	
		<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>
	College degree	0.513 ***	0.086
	Age	-0.012 ***	0.002
	<i>Within</i>		
	Wave (ref. = Wave 1)		
	Wave 2	0.107 **	0.041
	Wave 3	-0.262 ***	0.047
	Wave 4	-0.325 ***	0.056
	<i>Between</i>		
	Wave (ref. = Wave 1)		
	Wave 2	-0.559	0.835
	Wave 3	0.236	0.449
	Wave 4	-0.313	0.474

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

Source: ACL 1986-2002.

Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>
0.416 ***	0.096	0.551 ***	0.087	0.495 ***	0.088
-0.011 ***	0.002	-0.020 ***	0.003	-0.011 ***	0.002
0.107 **	0.041	0.097 *	0.041	0.104 *	0.041
-0.260 ***	0.047	-0.306 ***	0.047	-0.273 ***	0.047
-0.324 ***	0.056	-0.419 ***	0.059	-0.343 ***	0.057
-0.629	0.835	-0.279	0.833	-0.554	0.834
0.183	0.449	0.312	0.447	0.247	0.449
-0.406	0.475	-0.273	0.472	-0.289	0.474

Appendix E – Chapter 6

Table E.1 Full fixed effects regression models explaining informal helping

	Informal helping relatives			
	Model 1a		Model 1b	
	B	SE	B	SE
Time (ref. = wave 1)	-1.822 ***	0.475	-0.030	2.694
Time (ref. = wave 1) x ...				
<i>Resources</i>				
Having poor health (ref. = no)			-0.966	1.263
Being over 65 years old (ref. = no)			0.168	0.867
Having young children (ref. = no)			-0.150	1.043
Lost work (ref. = no)			2.397 *	1.167
Working from home			0.039	0.341
<i>Motivations</i>				
Concerns about COVID-19 for self			-0.774	0.561
Concerns about COVID-19 for relatives			1.007 *	0.508
Concerns about COVID-19 for friends				
Concerns about COVID-19 for neighbors				
Increased feelings of solidarity			1.160 *	0.583
<i>Opportunities</i>				
Social contact with relatives (ref. = no change)				
Decrease			-1.692	0.945
Increase			2.281 *	0.984
Social contact with friends (ref. = no change)				
Decrease				
Increase				
Social contact with neighbors (ref. = no change)				
Decrease				
Increase				
<i>Control variables</i>				
Informal helping before lockdown			-0.706 ***	0.039
Gender (ref. = female)			0.217	0.768
Education in years			0.048	0.171
Year participated in wave 1 (ref. = 2019)			1.089	0.754
Migrant status (ref. = native)			0.281	1.452
N observations	1,100		1,100	
N persons	550		550	

*** $p < 0.001$ ** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$

Source: SOCON COVID-19 Panel Study

Informal helping friends				Informal helping neighbors			
Model 2a		Model 2b		Model 3a		Model 3b	
B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
-1.504 ***	0.310	4.670 **	1.629	-0.545 *	0.209	1.248	2.230
		-0.832	0.744			-0.632	0.558
		0.604	0.590			0.594	0.456
		-0.035	0.616			0.263	0.468
		0.764	0.689			0.217	0.521
		-0.098	0.201			0.108	0.154
		-0.557	0.369			-0.306	0.239
		0.505	0.358				
						0.324	0.245
		0.500	0.333			-0.028	0.260
		-0.862	0.527				
		0.913	0.668				
						-0.229	0.367
						2.370 ***	0.554
		-0.812 ***	0.036			-0.664 ***	0.038
		-0.114	0.453			-0.050	0.346
		-0.216 *	0.102			-0.157 *	0.078
		-0.688	0.446			-0.067	0.340
		0.506	0.825			0.153	0.631
1044		1044		1072		1072	
522		522		536		536	

Table E.2 Regression models explaining informally helping relatives during the lockdown, per factor

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Time (ref. = wave 1)	2.345	2.450	-0.657	2.617	2.535	2.358
Time (ref. = wave 1) x ...						
<i>Resources</i>						
Having poor health (ref. = no)	-1.495	1.260				
Being over 65 years old (ref. = no)	0.323	1.007				
Having young children (ref. = no)	-0.315	1.050				
Lost work (ref. = no)	2.408 *	1.183				
Working from home	0.001	0.341				
<i>Motivations</i>						
Concerns about COVID-19 for self			-0.619	0.545		
Concerns about COVID-19 for relatives			0.874	0.504		
Increased feelings of solidarity			1.435 *	0.588		
<i>Opportunities</i>						
Social contact with relatives (ref. = no change)						
Decrease					-1.495	0.928
Increase					2.800 **	0.972
<i>Control variables</i>						
Informal helping before lockdown	-0.687 ***	0.039	-0.693 ***	0.039	-0.702 ***	0.038
Gender (ref. = female)	-0.383	0.769	-0.377	0.767	-0.088	0.758
Education in years	0.138	0.171	0.107	0.163	0.127	0.159
Year participated in wave 1 (ref. = 2019)	1.210	0.763	0.905	0.759	0.837	0.747
Migrant status (ref. = native)	0.133	1.477	0.716	1.471	0.951	1.451
N observations	1,100		1,100		1,100	
N persons	550		550		550	

*** $p < 0.001$ ** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$

Source: SOCON COVID-19 Panel Study

Table E.3 Regression models explaining informally helping friends during the lockdown, per factor

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Time (ref. = wave 1)	1.414	3.740	4.545 **	1.529	5.321 ***	1.361
Time (ref. = wave 1) x ...						
<i>Resources</i>						
Having poor health (ref. = no)	-1.158	0.730				
Being over 65 years old (ref. = no)	0.801	0.589				
Having young children (ref. = no)	-0.211	0.615				
Lost work (ref. = no)	0.779	0.693				
Working from home	-0.172	0.200				
<i>Motivations</i>						
Concerns about COVID-19 for self			-0.712 *	0.351		
Concerns about COVID-19 for friends			0.656	0.349		
Increased feelings of solidarity			0.609	0.328		
<i>Opportunities</i>						
Social contact with friends (ref. = no change)						
Decrease					-0.752	0.515
Increase					0.992	0.643
<i>Control variables</i>						
Informal helping before lockdown	-0.796 ***	0.035	-0.799 ***	0.035	-0.807 ***	0.034
Gender (ref. = female)	-0.294	0.446	-0.140	0.438	-0.079	0.438
Education in years	-0.197	0.100	-0.252 **	0.094	-0.209 *	0.092
Year participated in wave 1 (ref. = 2019)	-0.676	0.445	-0.715	0.435	-0.604	0.433
Migrant status (ref. = native)	0.734	0.828	0.571	0.821	0.636	0.814
N observations	1044		1044		1044	
N persons	522		522		522	

*** $p < 0.001$ ** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$
 Source: SOCON COVID-19 Panel Study

Table E.4 Regression models explaining informal helping neighbors during the lockdown, per factor

	Model 1b		Model 2b		Model 3b	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Time (ref. = wave 1)	2.849 *	1.109	1.552	1.247	2.438 *	1.082
Time (ref. = wave 1) x ...						
<i>Resources</i>						
Having poor health (ref. = no)	-0.676	0.555				
Being over 65 years old (ref. = no)	0.708	0.458				
Having young children (ref. = no)	0.461	0.473				
Lost work (ref. = no)	0.243	0.527				
Working from home	0.084	0.155				
<i>Motivations</i>						
Concerns about COVID-19 for self			-0.179	0.239		
Concerns about COVID-19 for neighbors			0.344	0.252		
Increased feelings of solidarity			0.227	0.264		
<i>Opportunities</i>						
Social contact with neighbors (ref. = no change)						
Decrease					-0.192	0.370
Increase					2.680 ***	0.553
<i>Control variables</i>						
Informal helping before lockdown	-0.636 ***	0.038	-0.627 ***	0.040	-0.650 ***	0.039
Gender (ref. = female)	-0.169	0.347	0.030	0.355	0.115	0.347
Education in years	-0.156 *	0.078	-0.085	0.076	-0.114	0.074
Year participated in wave 1 (ref. = 2019)	0.004	0.344	-0.120	0.352	-0.142	0.344
Migrant status (ref. = native)	0.205	0.639	0.060	0.656	0.144	0.643
N observations	1072		1072		1072	
N persons	536		536		536	

*** $p < 0.001$ ** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$

Source: SOCON COVID-19 Panel Study

Table E.5 Multinomial logistic regression models explaining the subjectively perceived change in informal helping during the lockdown

Informal helping relatives				
Model 1				
	Decrease (vs. no change)		Increase (vs. no change)	
	B	SE	B	SE
Constant	-0.995	0.852	-1.804 *	0.736
<i>Resources</i>				
Having poor health (ref. =no)	0.698 *	0.349	0.142	0.360
Being over 65 years old (ref. no)	0.645 *	0.306	-0.438	0.286
Having young children (ref. = no)	-0.641	0.397	-0.050	0.270
Lost work (ref. = no)	-0.283	0.422	-0.043	0.309
Working from home	0.019	0.111	0.157	0.091
<i>Motivation</i>				
Concerns about COVID-19 for self	0.407 *	0.185	-0.334 *	0.152
Concerns about COVID-19 for relatives	-0.123	0.171	0.420 **	0.137
Concerns about COVID-19 for friends				
Concerns about COVID-19 for neighbors				
Increased feelings of solidarity	-0.478 **	0.183	0.043	0.168
<i>Opportunities</i>				
Social contact with relatives (ref. = no change)				
Decrease	0.960 **	0.303	0.153	0.268
Increase	0.644	0.348	1.652 ***	0.264
Social contact with friends (ref. = no change)				
Decrease				
Increase				
Social contact with neighbors (ref. = no change)				
Decrease				
Increase				
<i>Control variables</i>				
Gender (ref. = female)	-0.734 **	0.255	-0.117	0.208
Education in years	-0.004	0.054	0.004	0.046
Year participated in wave 1 (ref. = 2019)	0.336	0.244	0.221	0.204
Migrant status (ref. = native)	-0.212	0.515	0.217	0.378
N	583		583	561

*** $p < 0.001$ ** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$

Source: SOCON COVID-19 Panel Study

Informal helping friends				Informal helping neighbors			
Model 2		Model 3		Model 2		Model 3	
Decrease (vs. no change)		Increase (vs. no change)		Decrease (vs. no change)		Increase (vs. no change)	
B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
-1.730 *	0.800	-2.665 **	0.966	-0.589	0.754	-2.368 *	1.054
0.504	0.320	-1.402	0.763	0.249	0.334	-0.050	0.499
0.836 **	0.278	-0.397	0.386	0.682 *	0.284	0.248	0.401
-0.072	0.320	0.379	0.330	-0.704 *	0.338	-0.268	0.388
0.132	0.359	0.522	0.361	0.171	0.336	0.832 *	0.392
-0.075	0.099	0.085	0.117	-0.150	0.095	-0.082	0.131
0.313	0.174	-0.232	0.219	0.226	0.152	-0.024	0.208
-0.002	0.175	0.358	0.213				
				-0.040	0.159	0.280	0.211
-0.492 **	0.164	-0.046	0.206	-0.489 **	0.172	-0.109	0.228
1.382 ***	0.295	0.171	0.332				
0.663	0.376	1.187 **	0.354				
				1.383 ***	0.240	0.585	0.359
				0.271	0.505	2.806 ***	0.390
-0.284	0.224	-0.020	0.265	0.015	0.218	-0.198	0.297
0.014	0.049	0.029	0.059	-0.030	0.048	-0.002	0.067
0.271	0.219	0.181	0.260	0.302	0.216	-0.223	0.293
0.013	0.431	0.314	0.439	0.349	0.410	0.093	0.553
	561		568		568		

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VERKLARING DATAMANAGEMENT PHD THESIS

Radboud Social Cultural Research, Radboud Universiteit

Sectie A. Primaire data / gegevens

Voor mijn thesis heb ik zelf **primaire** data / gegevens verzameld?

Ja → Vul sectie A verder in.

Nee → Ga naar sectie B.

Ik verklaar dat

- | | | |
|-----|--|----|
| A1. | De data / gegevens zijn verkregen met toestemming van informanten. | Ja |
| A2. | Privacy gevoelige data / gegevens zijn versleuteld en opgeslagen op een beveiligde computer of server. | Ja |
| A3. | De data / gegevens tot minimaal tien jaar na afloop van het onderzoek worden bewaard in het kader van wetenschappelijke integriteit. | Ja |
| A4. | Geanonimiseerde data / gegevens zijn gedeponereerd in een dataregistratiesysteem (Research Data Repository, DANS-KNAW). | Ja |
| A5. | Toegang tot geanonimiseerde data / gegevens is geregeld in het kader van datamanagement (FAIR-principes). | Ja |

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Sectie B. Secundaire data / gegevens

Voor mijn thesis heb ik **door andere onderzoekers verzamelde** informatiebronnen gebruikt?

Ja → Vul sectie B verder in.

Nee → Ga naar sectie C.

Ik verklaar dat

- | | | |
|-----|---|----|
| B1. | De data / gegevens op legitieme wijze zijn verkregen. | Ja |
| B2. | Niet publiek toegankelijke data / gegevens gedurende het onderzoek zijn opgeslagen op een beveiligde computer of server. | Ja |
| B3. | De data / gegevens niet zijn gedeeld met derden en is gehandeld in overeenstemming met de afspraken gemaakt met de informatieverstrekker. | Ja |

Sectie C. Algemeen

Ik verklaar dat

- | | | |
|-----|---|----|
| C1. | Een korte methodologische verantwoording, en/of de syntax en methode van databewerking is gedeponereerd in een zogenaamd 'publication package'. | Ja |
| C2. | Gegevens in publicaties niet zijn te herleiden tot een individueel persoon (m.u.v. expliciete toestemming). | Ja |
| C3. | De data op integere wijze zijn geanalyseerd en niet doelbewust zijn gemanipuleerd richting bepaalde uitkomsten. | Ja |

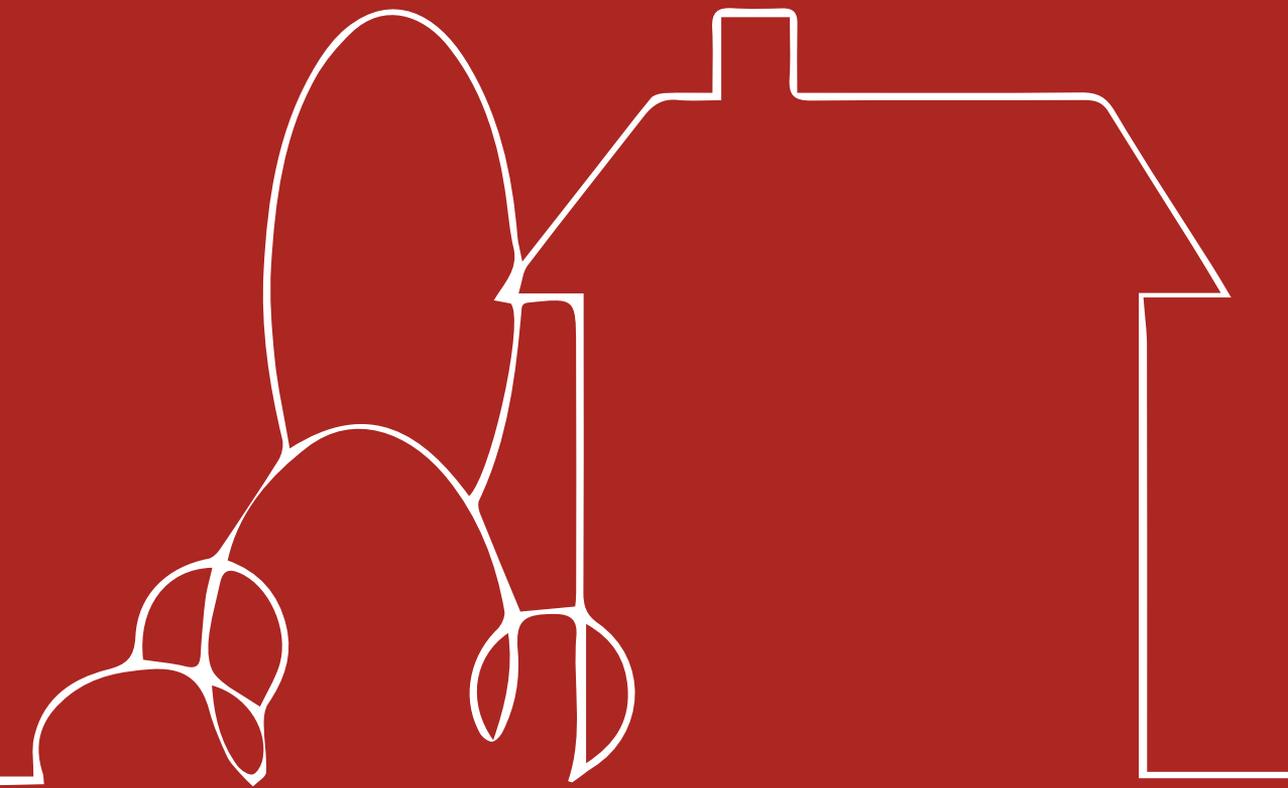
Indien op een of meerdere stellingen niet bevestigd kan worden geantwoord dient in een bijlage te worden uitgelegd waarom aan deze voorwaarde niet kan worden voldoen. Dit vanuit het 'comply or explain' principe.

NEDERLANDSE SAMENVATTING

(summary in Dutch)



Drawing by Sara Wiertsema



NEDERLANDSE SAMENVATTING (SUMMARY IN DUTCH)

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INFORMAL HELPING

Een vriend helpen verhuizen, de auto van de buurman mee wassen of op de kinderen van je zus passen. Veel mensen hebben een vriend(in), familielid of buurtgenoot wel eens geholpen met dit soort praktische zaken. Vaak is hulp met praktische zaken niet absoluut noodzakelijk maar wel fijn voor de ontvanger. Daarnaast kan het plotseling erg belangrijk zijn om een netwerk te hebben van mensen die dit soort hulp geven, bijvoorbeeld als iemand ziek wordt of door ouderdom minder kan. Ook in crises kan dit soort hulp ineens van groot belang zijn. In de COVID-19 crisis werd dit bijvoorbeeld duidelijk. Het was plotseling belangrijk dat mensen iemand hadden die boodschappen doen of de hond konden uitlaten als ze dat zelf niet konden of niet meer durfden. Hetzelfde gold voor mensen met essentiële beroepen met kinderen die opeens om kinderopvang te verlegen zaten. Het is dan ook niet vreemd dat deze vormen van hulp ook wel worden gezien als de sociale lijm van een samenleving.

In wetenschappelijk onderzoek wordt iemand helpen op deze manier ‘informele hulp geven’ genoemd. Het gaat daarbij om hulp die de ene persoon direct aan een ander geeft. Een voorbeeld is iemand die een vriendin zonder auto naar een afspraak rijdt. Daarnaast gaat het om hulp die zonder inmenging van (vrijwilligerswerk)organisaties wordt uitgewisseld. Het gaat dan bijvoorbeeld om iemand die een buurman helpt de tuin winterklaar te maken zonder dan een buurthuis of andere buurtorganisatie hierin bemiddelt. Ten slotte draait informele hulp vaak om kleine(re) praktische klusjes. Vormen van mantelzorg waarbij er intensief, langdurig en/of regelmatig voor iemand gezorgd moet worden horen er dus niet bij. Kortom, ik definieer informele hulp geven als het helpen van vrienden, familie en burens met praktische zaken zonder inmenging van organisaties.

Eerder onderzoek naar het geven van informele hulp heeft zich met name gericht op welke mensen informele hulp geven. Deze vraag wordt vanuit het individu ingestoken: welke hulpbronnen of motivaties heeft een individu die het geven van informele hulp stimuleren. Deze aanpak impliceert dat een individu in isolatie de beslissing maakt om informele hulp te geven, zonder rekening te houden met wie de hulp ontvang, wie zich nog meer in zijn of haar sociale netwerk bevinden en hoe de maatschappij er voor staat. Dit perspectief is echter te beperkt. Omdat informele hulp geen formele regels of procedures kent, is het juist bij deze vorm van hulp geven relevant wie er geholpen wordt, wat anderen doen en daarvan vinden en met wie men contact. In mijn proefschrift onderzoek ik daarom de

invloed van de sociale omgeving op het geven van informele hulp nader. Daarbij bestudeer ik drie aspecten van de sociale omgeving: de dyade, dat wil zeggen de relatie tussen de gever en de ontvanger, de familie en de gehele samenleving.

Ik begin mijn empirisch onderzoek naar de invloed van de sociale omgeving bij de relatie tussen gever en ontvanger (dyade). Deze bestudeer ik in *Hoofdstuk 2*. Met behulp van een surveyexperiment met vignetten onder het LISS panel onderzoek ik of kenmerken van de (mogelijke) hulpontvanger de beslissing tot het geven van informele hulp aan burens beïnvloeden. Ik onderzoek daarbij of mensen sterker bereid zijn een van hun burens te helpen wanneer het waarschijnlijk is dat deze hen ook een keer helpt (wederkerigheid). Daarnaast focus ik op hoeveel de ontvanger andere burens heeft geholpen en de reden waarom de ontvanger hulp nodig heeft. Het blijkt dat al deze drie factoren van invloed zijn op de beslissing om hulp te geven. Mensen blijken eerder bereid te zijn om informele hulp te geven aan burens die a) waarschijnlijk in de gelegenheid om hen een keer te helpen, b) vaak voor andere burens klaar staan of c) iets echt niet zelf kunnen. Daarnaast komt uit dit hoofdstuk naar voren dat wanneer mensen niet uit kunnen gaan van de goede reputatie van hun buurtgenoot als een behulpzame buur, de overweging of zij zelf voordeel kunnen behalen door nu hulp te bieden belangrijker is. Al met al benadrukt dit hoofdstuk hoe belangrijk het is om te bestuderen wie men informele hulp kan bieden en dat onderzoek dat de ontvangende kant niet mee neemt beperkt is.

In *Hoofdstuk 3* staat het tweede aspect van de sociale omgeving centraal, namelijk de familie. In dit hoofdstuk wordt onderzocht of het geven van informele hulp wordt beïnvloed door het gedrag van ouders en de partner. Specifiek wordt er gekeken naar twee vormen van socialisatie die ouders en de partner kunnen toepassen, namelijk het voordoen van hulpgedrag (door vrijwilligerswerk te doen) en het aanmoedigen van hulpgedrag. Ik gebruik gegevens van grootschalig vragenlijstonderzoek en analyseer deze gegevens voor een groep mensen met partner en een groep mensen zonder partner. Uit deze analyses blijkt dat wanneer iemands ouders in diens jeugd hulpgedrag hebben voorgedaan, die persoon op latere leeftijd gemiddeld vaker informele hulp geeft dan mensen wiens ouders geen hulpgedrag voor hebben gedaan. Het aanmoedigen van hulp door de ouders heeft geen effect op het geven van informele hulp in deze studie. Daarnaast komt naar voren dat mensen gemiddeld vaker informele hulp bieden wanneer hun partner zelf ook hulp geeft, door middel van vrijwilligerswerk, of wanneer deze het helpen van anderen aanmoedigt.

De resultaten wat betreft de partner kunnen echter op twee manieren tot stand komen. Van de ene kant kan de ene partner de ander beïnvloeden. Van de andere kant kunnen twee partners een relatie beginnen omdat ze dezelfde dingen be-

langrijk vinden, bijvoorbeeld dat iemand altijd klaar staat voor anderen. Om uit te sluiten dat de resultaten uit het derde hoofdstuk alleen tot stand komen doordat twee behulpzame mensen een relatie beginnen, ga ik in *Hoofdstuk 4* verder in op de partner. Met behulp van longitudinaal vragenlijstonderzoek laat ik zien dat het waarschijnlijk is dat partners elkaar beïnvloeden in hun informele hulpgedrag. Anders gezegd, wanneer de ene partner informele hulp geeft, is de kans groter dat de andere dat ook zal beginnen te doen. Daarnaast gaat het hoofdstuk weer in op de dyade; ik bestudeer namelijk de invloed van de partner apart voor hulp die gegeven wordt aan familieleden en hulp die gegeven wordt aan anderen. Resultaten van deze verkenning suggereren dat partners meer invloed over elkaar uitoefenen op het gebied van informele hulp aan familieleden dan op het gebied van informele hulp aan anderen.

In *Hoofdstuk 5* staat opnieuw de partner, en dus de familie, centraal. Deze keer wordt er echter niet gekeken naar het gedrag van de partner maar naar wat er gebeurt wanneer iemand diens partner verliest door middel van een scheiding. Daarbij onderzoek ik ook of de invloed van een scheiding op het geven van informele hulp anders is wanneer men een baan heeft, wanneer men volwassen kinderen heeft of wanneer men een hoog inkomen heeft. Longitudinaal vragenlijstonderzoek wijst uit dat het doormaken van een scheiding geen invloed heeft op hoeveel informele hulp men biedt. In tegenstelling tot gangbare aannames zowel in het publieke als wetenschappelijke debat zorgt een scheiding er dus niet voor dat de informele hulp die men biedt afneemt. Het is zelfs zo dat mensen die geen volwassen kinderen hebben mogelijk iets meer informele hulp gaan geven. Het effect hiervan is echter beperkt.

Hoofdstuk 6 richt zich op het laatste aspect van de sociale omgeving dat ik onderzoek, namelijk de samenleving als geheel. In dit hoofdstuk wordt de invloed van de eerste lockdown in Nederland van de coronapandemie op het geven van informele hulp onderzocht. Door gegevens van voor en net na de eerste lockdown met elkaar te vergelijken laat ik zien dat de meeste mensen tijdens de lockdown minder vaak informele hulp gaven. Er was echter ook een aantal groepen die nauwelijks minder of juist net iets meer hulp gaven tijdens deze periode. Zo nam informele hulp aan familieleden onder mensen die niet konden werken, erg bezorgd waren om hun familie, zich meer verbonden voelden met andere Nederlanders en die meer contact onderhielden met hun familie maar beperkt af. Daarnaast gaven mensen die meer contact onderhielden met hun burens tijdens de eerste lockdown meer informele hulp aan hun burens dan anderen. Wat betreft informele hulp die aan vrienden gegeven werd, waren er geen verschillen tussen groepen. Het zesde hoofdstuk laat daarmee niet alleen zien hoe veranderingen op samenlevingsniveau van invloed kunnen zijn op het geven van informele hulp

maar benadrukt ook nog eens het belang van kenmerken van de relatie tussen gever en ontvanger.

Samengenomen kunnen er drie conclusies getrokken worden uit deze empirische hoofdstukken. De eerste conclusie is dat helpen doet helpen. Wanneer iemand een ander informele hulp geeft, kan dit anderen motiveren om hetzelfde te doen. Dit komt omdat diens kinderen of partner het zien en daardoor gesocialiseerd worden om hetzelfde te doen of omdat de ontvanger vindt dat hij of zij iets terug moet doen en daardoor hulp geeft aan de originele gever. De tweede conclusie is dat, breder dan alleen 'helpen doet helpen', motivaties in het algemeen een belangrijke manier zijn hoe de sociale omgeving van invloed is op het geven van informele hulp. Het lijkt erop dat het niet zozeer zo is dat de sociale omgeving hulpbronnen aanlevert die mensen er toe in staat stellen om hulp te bieden. In plaats daarvan stimuleert de sociale omgeving voor motivaties om te helpen. De derde en laatste conclusie van het proefschrift betreft het belang van de dyade en het onderscheid tussen verschillende ontvangers. Uit het onderzoek blijkt namelijk dat burens relatief weinig hulp geven aan elkaar. Buren zijn echter vanwege de korte afstand bij uitstek goede kandidaten voor het geven van informele hulp. Mensen staan over het algemeen wel positief tegenover het helpen van burens (zoals blijkt uit Hoofdstuk 2) maar lijken zich tegelijkertijd ook minder verplicht te voelen om hun burens te helpen. Daarbij komt naar voren dat conclusies over met name familieleden (en tot op zekere hoogte vrienden) niet zomaar toegepast kunnen worden op burens. Dit benadrukt wederom het belang van het bestuderen van informele hulp geven vanuit een sociaal perspectief.

DANKWOORD
(acknowledgements)



Drawing by Nik Linders



DANKWOORD

(acknowledgements)

Nijmegen, oktober 2023

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INFORMAL HELPING

Als ik een ding heb geleerd van mijn promotietraject en vooral van de combinatie met een pandemie is het dat je je proefschrift niet alleen schrijft. Zonder de input, sparsessies, afleiding, advies en kritiek van anderen was dit proefschrift nooit tot stand gekomen. Ik denk niet dat ik iedereen die me ooit een goed idee heeft gegeven, me heeft geïnspireerd of me heeft opgevrolijkt tijdens een wetenschappelijke worsteling bij naam kan bedanken. Maar ik doe graag een poging.

Ten eerste wil ik graag mijn team van promotoren bedanken. Natuurlijk bedank ik jullie voor alle feedback en al het advies, niet alleen op paperniveau maar ook carrière- en levensniveau. Voor alle keren dat jullie me een hart onder de riem hebben gestoken, voor alle keren dat jullie me het laatste zetje hebben gegeven om een paper dan toch eindelijk af te maken. Maar het meest wil ik jullie bedanken voor het feit dat jullie mijn promotietraject altijd hebben begeleid vanuit mij. Ik heb me altijd gesteund gevoeld als ik iets moeilijk vond en altijd het idee gehad dat er werd gekeken naar welke oplossing voor mij zou werken, ook al zouden jullie er niets mee kunnen. Ik heb in de afgelopen vijf jaar geleerd hoe belangrijk dat is.

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dingen te delen. Jij wist me altijd op te beuren als ik het allemaal niet meer zo zag zitten en dat waardeer ik enorm. En natuurlijk ook bedankt voor alle lichtelijk gestoorde ideeën zoals de kattenplaatjes, plankchallenges en het massaal inslaan van truffelpepernoten.

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I had the privilege of spending two and a half months in Lausanne at FORS (and UNIL). I want to thank Marieke Voorpostel and the rest of the Swiss Household Panel team for hosting me. Ik wil Marieke ook bedanken voor de fijne samenwerking, het intoom houden van mijn neiging om alles moeilijker te maken dan het hoeft te zijn, maar vooral het hartelijke welkom in Lausanne en Zwitserland. In

addition, I want to thank the PhDs from LIVES-LINES (and all the other people from the Multicultural Almuercito group) for inviting me to lunch and speaking English with me (because my French really isn't great). A special shout out to Saandra, with whom I could share all my experiences of being new in Lausanne, and Marija, for her kindness and being my Dutch connection.

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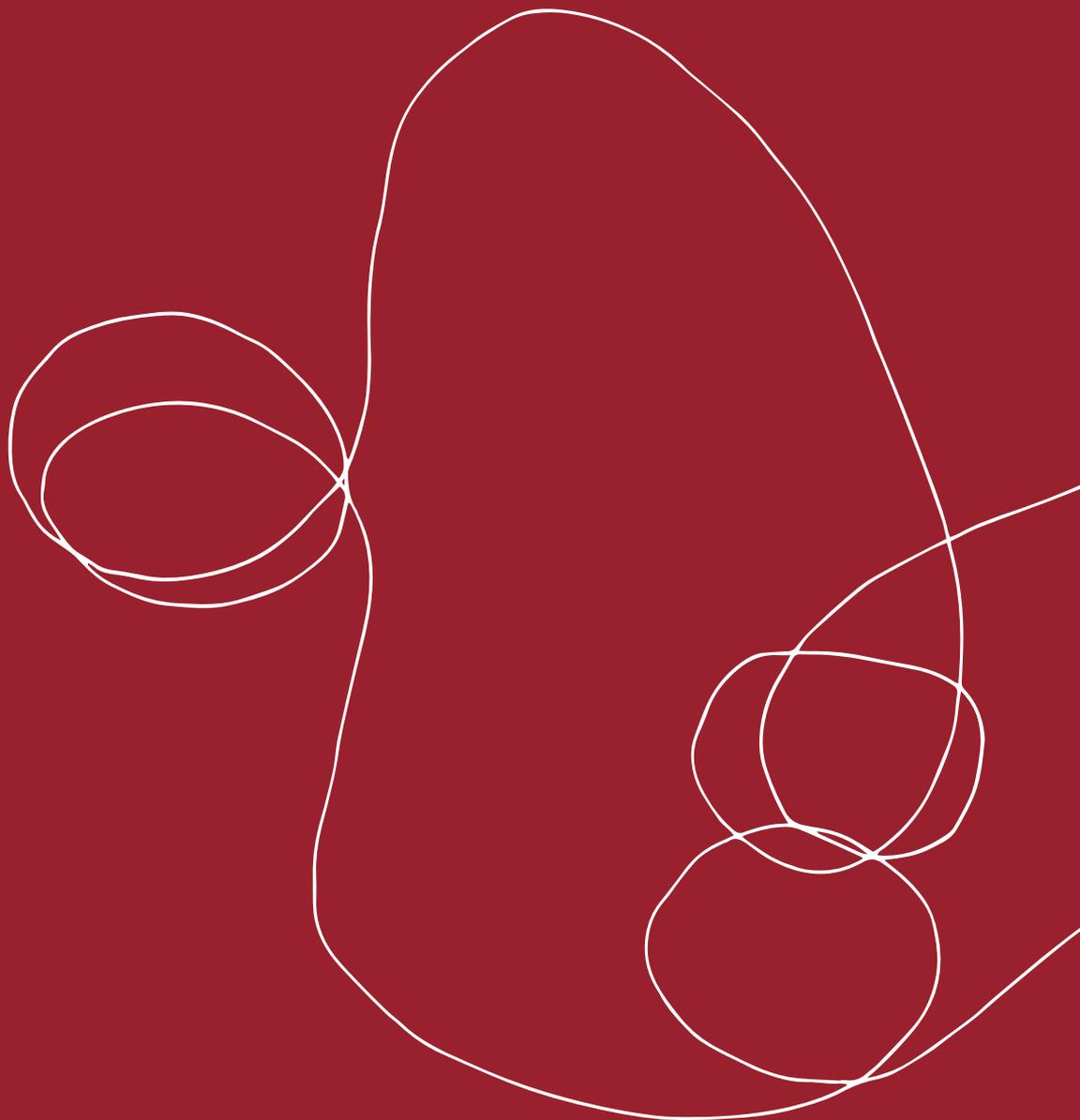
Natuurlijk moet ik ook Eline bedanken. Wie had gedacht toen we naast elkaar gingen zitten bij Nederlands in de eerste klas dat we een vergelijkbaar carrièrepad zouden volgen. Of dat nu invloed of selectie is, weet ik niet, maar ik vind het een fijn idee dat iemand die ik al zo lang ken ook zo goed begrijpt waar ik mee bezig ben. Bedankt voor de fijne gesprekken en je steun, voor, tijdens en na het promotietraject.

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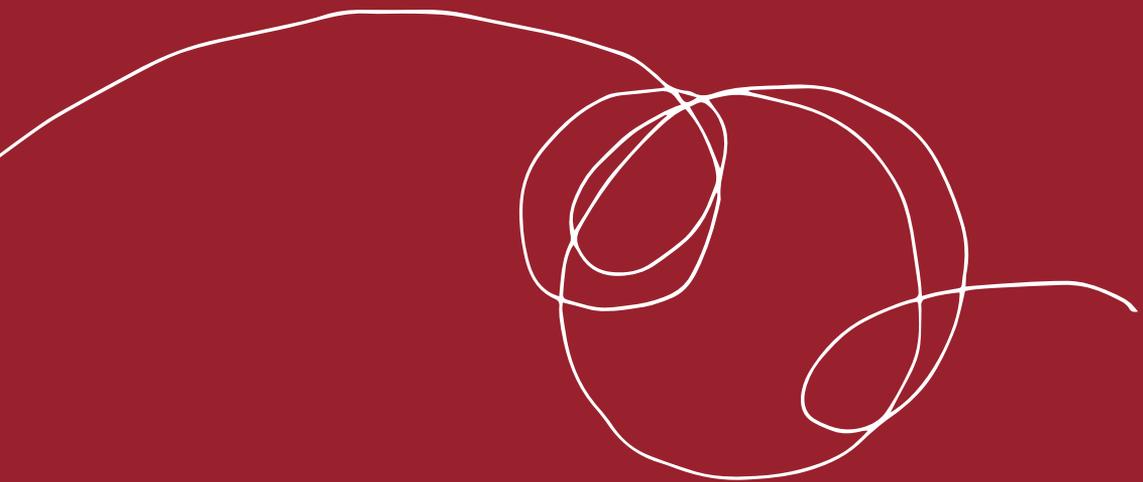
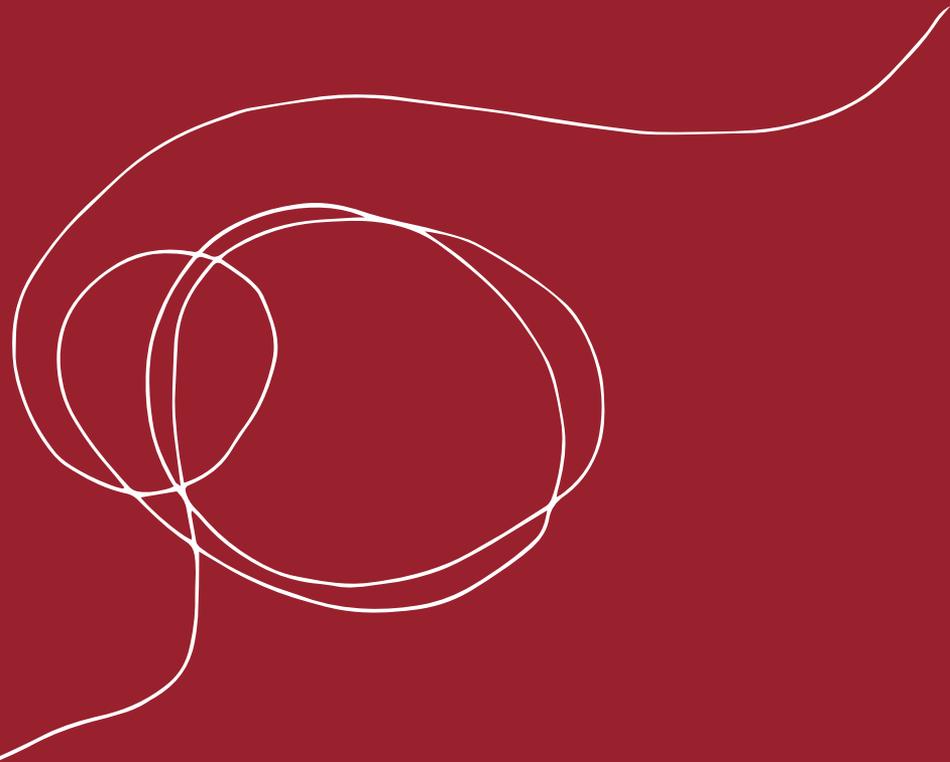
Papa, ik ben nu 28 jaar oud en ik hoop nog steeds een herinnering te zijn dat er meer is in het leven dan werk en wetenschap ;) Bedankt voor het advies over promoveren en wetenschap. Ik hoop dat jij en mama trots op me zijn.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Drawing by Marlou Ramaekers



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Marlou Ramaekers was born on September 14th 1995 in Asten. She obtained her Bachelor's Degree in Sociology (2016) and Research Master's Degree (2018) at Radboud University Nijmegen. In 2018, she started as a PhD candidate at the Interuniversity Center for Social Sciences Theory and Methodology (ICS) and the Department of Sociology at Radboud University. Here, she wrote the present dissertation under the supervision of Ellen Verbakel, Gerbert Kraaykamp and Tanja van der Lippe. Her research was part of the SCOOP research program, which consists of researchers from various Dutch universities and social science disciplines (Social Psychology, Sociology, Philosophy and History) who tackle the issue of sustaining cooperation in society together. As part of the transdisciplinary focus of the SCOOP program, Marlou worked with Belle Derks, professor in Social Psychology, in addition to her supervising team. From August to October 2022, she was a visiting scholar at the Swiss Centre for Expertise in the Social Sciences (FORS) and the University of Lausanne, hosted by Marieke Voorpostel. Marlou taught an introductory course on sociological perspectives and academic skills and was involved in the development of the course curriculum. In addition, she supervised several research projects and master theses. In 2020, she coordinated the second wave data collection of the SOCON COVID-19 Panel Study and was the main contributor for its documentation. In collaboration with Tanja van der Lippe and Belle Derks, she designed the factorial survey used in Chapter 2. As of May 2023, Marlou works as a data manager and postdoctoral researcher on the Giving in the Netherlands project at the Centre for Philanthropic Studies and the Department of Sociology at VU Amsterdam.

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