"Does it take a village to raise a child? Buffering effect of family support during parenthood in Switzerland"

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Abstract
Does it take a village to raise a child? Buffering effect of family support during parenthood in Switzerland

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Does it take a village to raise a child? Buffering effect of family support during parenthood.

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June 2, 2015, Lausanne
“It takes a village...”
only few studies demonstrated a sustained positive effect of parenthood on life satisfaction (Baetschmann et al., 2012; Kohler et al., 2005; Pollmann-Schult, 2014; Aassve et al., 2012)

the effect of parenthood on subjective well-being differs across individuals (Galatzer-Levy et al. 2011, Myrskylä and Margolis, 2012)
Families provide extensive help to parents of young children, mainly by offering childcare and housework, advice and information, as well as material support (Chan, 2009; Chan and Ermisch, 2011; Hank and Buber, 2009)

and family support is activated in response to critical, difficult events (Eggebeen and Davey, 1998)
Buffering mechanism

During difficult events social support may act as a buffer, alleviating the negative consequences of the event (on subjective well-being, health, et.c.) (Cohen, 1985; Thoits, 1982)
Our question

Does the support from relatives acts as a buffer (improves the experience of parenthood) in contemporary Switzerland?
Hypotheses

H1 Availability of support from relatives increases in response to parenthood.
... after the birth?
... during the care intense stages?
... later?

H2 Persons with higher support from relatives experience more positive changes of life satisfaction in response to parenthood.
Switzerland – do networks compensate the weak state support?

under-investigated channel through which social capital and networks make people’s lives better
Data

- waves 2-12 (years 2000-2011)
- sample: parents, prospective parents, and childless persons, limits on own (18-70) and child’s age (> 30)

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<tbody>
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</table>
Method

- fixed-effect models: focus on change
- long-term perspective
- the main challenge: distinguish between the historical time, aging of the parent, and aging of the children
Measures

- How frequent are your contacts with these relatives? *(relatives living outside of respondent’s household, with whom the respondent is on good terms and enjoys a close relationship)*

- If necessary, in your opinion, to what extent can these relatives or your children who do not live in your household provide you with practical help (this means concrete help or useful advice)? 0 – “not at all”, 10 – “a great deal”

- To what extent can these relatives or these children be available in case of need and show understanding, by talking with you for example? 0 – “not at all”, 10 – “a great deal”

Likely parents, but we do not know if parents are alive, stay in contact, etc.

- In general, how satisfied are you with your life? 0 – “not at all satisfied”, 10 – “completely satisfied”
Does the support increase?
Does the frequency of contact increase?

1st child:

2nd child:

3rd child:

reference: 4+ years before the birth
Does the practical support increase?

1st child:

2nd child:

3rd child:

reference: 4+ years before the birth
Does the emotional support increase?

1st child:

2nd child:

3rd child:

reference: 4+ years before the birth
Summing up

H1 Availability of support from relatives increases in response to parenthood.

- contact frequency increases among women after the first birth
- BUT contact frequency is lower for mothers of two or more (age 6-7) or three or more (age 8-20) children than of those with one child or childless
- parents of two or more children receive systematically less support from non-resident relatives than childless or those with only one child
Are parents with higher support happier?

- Frequent contact: $\geq 4$
- High practical support: $\geq 7$
- High emotional support: $\geq 7.9$
Are parents with higher frequency of contact happier?

women

men

reference: 4+ years before the birth
Are parents with higher practical support happier?

women

men

reference: 4+ years before the birth
Are parents with higher emotional support happier?

women

men

reference: 4+ years before the birth
H2 Persons with higher support from relatives experience more positive changes of life satisfaction in response to parenthood.

- 1st child for women:
  - women with lower support or less frequent contact experience more consistent increase of life satisfaction
    - are contact and support just indicators of unobserved problems? (→)

- a consistent buffering effect among fathers having their third child – strongest for emotional support
Are contact and support just indicators of unobserved problems?
Are contact and support just indicators of unobserved problems?

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<td>Pseudo R²</td>
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logistic regression (OR), sample: parents with 1 child
Conclusions (1)

H1 Availability of support from relatives increases in response to parenthood.

- only contact frequency at first birth among women
- decline of contact and support in families with 2 or more children
Conclusions (2)

H2 Persons with higher support from relatives experience more positive changes of life satisfaction in response to parenthood.

- some buffering effect only among fathers of 3 or more children
- opposite mothers having their first child
- but frequent contact and high support is a sign of privilege rather than of problems
- → selection?
  - child means more for those who have less?
  - stronger “taste for children” necessary to trigger parenthood among those who have low support?
Thank you!

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