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# **Non-kin ties as a source of support in Europe: Understanding the role of cultural and institutional contexts**

Nina Conkova<sup>1</sup>, Tineke Fokkema<sup>1,2</sup>, Pearl A. Dykstra<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Erasmus University Rotterdam

<sup>2</sup>Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI-KNAW), University of Groningen

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## **Abstract**

This study scrutinises the role of cultural and institutional contexts in shaping Europeans' choices for a source of support. We draw attention to an often overlooked source of support: non-kin. Taking an interdisciplinary theoretical approach, we formulate a number of hypotheses on the impact of individualistic values, familialistic norms, generalised trust, and social protection expenditure. We test these contextual hypotheses by means of multilevel multinomial models employing European Quality of Life Survey data from 28 countries. Our findings reveal that more generous social protection expenditure seems to create a sense of solidarity that bolsters people to rely on non-kin. This impact is however weaker than that of cultural context. Regarding individualistic values and norms of family obligations, we find that the latter are of a greater importance in predicting behavioural intentions. Finally, our findings evince that in countries with lower rather than with higher levels of generalised trust people are more likely to turn to non-kin. We argue that this effect is driven by the inclusion of a vast number of Central and Eastern European countries, which share a distinct post-communist context.

**Key words:** non-kin, support sources, context, Europe, cross-country comparison

## **Introduction**

When one is in need, several options are at hand. A person can opt for help from kin, be it the nuclear or extended family; one can turn to non-kin, i.e. the wide circle of friends, neighbours and acquaintances; or an individual can choose to receive help from a professional. In the European research on support, each source of assistance has been examined to a greatly varying degree. Kin ties – in particular close relatives – have received by far the most attention, followed by professionals, whereas non-kin ties have been sorely understudied. The few studies on the supporting role of friends and neighbours show that non-kin ties provide primarily emotional and practical help (Heady & Schweitzer, 2010; Wenger, 2001), as well as that their importance as a source of care and assistance tend to increase when a person has never had (Albertini & Mencarini, 2014; Wenger et al., 2007) or has exhausted the family resources (Kalwij, Pasini, & Wu, 2014; Lapierre & Keating, 2013). Moreover, the extent to which non-relatives play a part in one's social (support) network varies across countries; compared with Southern and Eastern European nations, where family-based social networks are predominant, in Nordic and Western European societies there is a higher frequency of friends-based social networks (Höllinger & Haller, 1990; Stoeckel & Litwin, 2013).

Country differences in the extent to which people rely on different sources of support are often assumed to be the result of varying degrees of welfare provision and cultural norms, but empirically speaking surprisingly little cross-national research has been undertaken to test this contextual hypothesis. As yet, only a few studies have adopted a multilevel approach to investigate the role of context and they have exclusively focused on family support. Kalmijn and Saraceno (2008) tested the impact of cultural context in Europe, showing that in more familialistic countries adult children are more likely to provide care and support to their parents in need. Brandt and colleagues (2009; 2011), on the other hand, examined the effect of welfare provision and evinced that in more generous states relatives are less likely to provide demanding care, though they are more likely to provide practical support and money.

In the present study, we draw attention to an often overlooked source of support – non-kin – and set out to examine European country differences in the extent to which friends, neighbours and others who do not belong to one's family serve as a source of assistance. We conduct multilevel

multinomial analysis to test a number of hypotheses on the role of cultural and institutional contexts in shaping Europeans' choices for receiving help from non-kin as compared with receiving help either from kin or from professionals. When formulating the hypotheses we discuss the impact of cultural and institutional contexts separately, primarily for the sake of simplicity. Yet, we recognise that culture and welfare provision interrelate and consider them simultaneously in the empirical analysis. The analysis rests on four types of support, namely help with household chores when one is ill, advice, financial help, and help when looking for a job.

### **Conceptualising cultural context**

For all that is written in sociology about the power of cultural context in explaining country differences, the discussion has remained largely qualitative and the concept of culture fuzzy. Culture has rarely been conceptualised, yet is habitually used as a black box for residual, unexplained by empirical analyses differences between countries (Nonnenmacher & Friedrichs, 2013). Unlike previous research, we first conceptualise cultural context as levels of individualism/collectivism, familialism and generalised trust, and then move on to explain and test the mechanisms through which culture might impact Europeans' choices for a source of support.

In family studies, there exists a long-lasting tradition of dividing Europe into cultural regions, i.e. more individualistic Northern and Western European countries and more familialistic Southern and Eastern European nations (Reher, 1998; Viazzo, 2010). In so doing, commentators have often equated the concepts of individualism/collectivism and familialism, though they have also debated the existence of a causal relationship, where increased levels of individualism have supposedly led to decreased levels of familialism (Esping-Andersen & Billari, 2015). Empirical research suggests that lower levels of familialism are manifested in less intensive support exchange between family members (micro-level), the rise of the nuclear family and new forms of family formation (meso-level), and weakened norms of family obligations (macro-level) (Silverstein & Giarrusso, 2011).

Whilst we concede that individualism and familialism are interrelated, we also argue that they are different approaches to culture. Focusing on the macro-level, we choose to examine the relationship between both individualistic *values* and familialistic norms, and one's choice for a source of support. Two main arguments underpin this decision. First, individualism and its

opposite – collectivism – represent a broader concept of culture than familialism does and, as such, allows for testing hypotheses comparing not only non-kin and kin but also non-kin and professionals as alternative sources of support. Building upon “The Big Three” of cross-cultural studies – Hofstede, Schwartz and Inglehart – we depict individualism as a cultural dimension or, in other words, as part of a broader system of basic, deep-rooted values which serve as a guiding principle in life. Society-wide held basic values have, on the one hand, the power to explain the diversity of practices across countries and, on the other, they underlie within-country, specific values, norms and attitudes in specific domains of social life, such as the family (Ester, Mohler, & Vinken, 2006). Familialism, when defined as norms of family obligations, can thus be seen as influenced by levels of individualism and as a more specific approach to culture with explanatory power limited to kin practices.

Note that the constructs of values and norms differ. Basic values reflect what people consider to be important to themselves, whereas norms reflect shared expectations about what members of a society should or should not do (Minkov & Hofstede, 2011; Schwartz, 2012). Values are, moreover, seen as relatively stable and even durable (Ester, Mohler & Vinken, 2006; Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010), whilst shared expectations are a complex product, and conceivably also the root, of recent levels of welfare provision, and country-specific policies and legal regulations (Cooney & Dykstra, 2011; Millar & Warman, 1996). By examining both individualistic values and norms of family obligations, we are thus able to separate the effect of what people truly believe is right to do from the effect of what people feel they are expected to do given the current structural environment in which they are embedded.

In addition to levels of individualism and familialism, we extend the conceptualisation of cultural context to include generalised trust, which according to Uslaner (2002) is a cultural value that people learn early in life. Generalised trust is defined as “the belief that people will not deliberately or knowingly do us harm, if they can avoid it, and will look after our interests, if this is possible” (Delhey & Newton, 2005: 311). As yet, generalised trust has not been considered as a possible explanation for why in some countries people rely less on family members than in other countries, but we argue that it may have an impact on choosing to receive help from non-kin rather than kin through its ability to ease social interaction and cooperation.

### **Links between the cultural context and non-kin support**

In this section we formulate five hypotheses referring to the role of cultural context in shaping Europeans' choices for receiving help from non-relatives. Four of the hypotheses deal with the impact of respectively individualism/collectivism (two alternative hypotheses), familialism and generalised trust on the likelihood that a person will turn to non-kin rather than kin. An additional hypothesis pertains to the impact of individualism on the likelihood that a person will turn to non-kin rather than a professional. Since familialism and generalised trust do not provide a theoretical rationale when it comes to the contrast between non-kin and professionals, we do not derive such hypotheses.

Generalised trust is thought to serve as a foundation for a sense of solidarity, togetherness and cooperation, and to function as social glue that creates a sense of community to fellow citizens (Delhey & Newton, 2005; Uslaner, 2008). This implies that people in societies with high levels of generalised trust can be expected to more readily engage in social relationships with others, i.e. those outside the close circle of family members. Furthermore, since high levels of generalised trust reflect lower levels of risk of being deceived, people in countries high on trust may feel more confident in shifting demands for social support to the community at large. We therefore expect that *in countries with higher levels of generalised trust people will select non-kin over kin more frequently than in countries with lower levels of generalised trust* (Hypothesis 1).

Similarly, compared with more individualistic societies, in more collectivistic countries people may select non-kin over kin and professionals more frequently as a result of an existing assortment of socially valued qualities such as cooperation, social responsibility and group togetherness (Peterson, 2009). People who live according to collectivistic principles view the welfare of their larger community as central to the concept of the self (Gaines et al., 1997) and strive to maintain a sense of solidarity and harmony through fulfilment of their duty to the group. This sense of solidarity and harmony is, furthermore, sustained through heightened sensitivity to the needs of community's members, empathy and reciprocity (Sorensen & Oyserman, 2009). Since fulfilment of one's duty to the group implies giving whereas reciprocity by definition infers that one gives with the intention to receive, people in more collectivistic countries can be expected to more

readily provide but also demand from the circle of communal relationships, a circle that expands beyond the family<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, unlike more individualistic societies where people may seek to achieve the desired autonomy and independence through purchasing professional help, in more collectivistic societies, people may rather turn to non-kin asking them to fulfil their duty to the group. We therefore hypothesise that *in more collectivistic countries people will select non-kin over respectively kin<sup>2</sup> and professionals more frequently than in more individualistic countries* (Hypothesis 2 and 3).

Whilst higher levels of collectivism may reinforce choosing the receipt of help from non-kin through cooperation, higher levels of individualism may have an impact through intensifying the number of social relationships. Compared with more collectivistic countries, where social relationships and group belonging are largely prearranged and relatively fixed over one's life time, in more individualistic countries social relationships are shown to be voluntary, carefully fostered and as result also greater in number and diversity (Hofstede et al., 2010; Oyserman, Coon, & Kimmelmeier, 2002). In other words, people in more individualistic societies are less restricted in expanding their social connections beyond the family – the first group in which an individual is integrated (Hofstede et al., 2010). Since a greater number of social contacts implies a greater access to various types of support, people in more individualistic countries may be able to leave behind and substitute (partly) the safety net which family ties provide with that of non-kin ties. Following this rationale, we formulate an alternative hypothesis, which states that *in more individualistic countries people will select non-kin over kin more frequently than in more collectivistic countries* (Hypothesis 4).

Finally, we argue that *in more familialistic countries – that is countries where people exhibit and subscribe to norms of strong family obligations – people will select non-kin over kin less frequently than in less familialistic countries* (Hypothesis 5). Here, it is important to note that the predictive strength of the concept of familialism lies in explaining whether a person is likely or not to select kin ties as a primary source of support. It does not therefore provide clear clues as to whether people who are less likely to turn to kin will at the same time be more likely to turn to non-kin. We feel, nevertheless, safe in assuming that when strong feelings of family obligations prevail, people will be less likely to opt for any other source of support than kin.

### **Links between the institutional context and non-kin support**

Compared with the cultural context, the institutional environment in Europe has been better examined in empirical research on support. Yet, most of the knowledge about the link between the institutional context and support provision comes from family sociology, where scholars have focused on understanding the interdependencies between the state and the family (Brandt et al., 2009; Brandt & Deindl, 2013). In doing so, they have neglected non-relatives as an alternative source of support. In the present study, we address this gap and bring new insights by probing into the relationship between social protection expenditure and the likelihood that a person will turn to non-kin rather than to kin or professionals when in need. Building upon the assumption that the availability of generous public spending will crowd out informal support – be it from kin or non-kin – we expect that *in countries with more generous welfare provision people will select non-kin over professionals less frequently than in countries with less generous welfare provision* (Hypothesis 6). Moreover, following notions of crowding in, namely that more generous welfare provision enables family members to provide more practical and financial help (Brandt et al., 2009; Deindl & Brandt, 2011), we expect that in states which offer ample assistance, needs will be more easily met by family members and the support which non-kin ties could provide may become redundant. We therefore hypothesise that *in countries with more generous welfare provision people will select non-kin over kin less frequently than in countries with less generous welfare provision* (Hypothesis 7).

### **Methodological Approach**

To test the hypotheses, we use data from the most recent (2011-2012) round of the European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS). The EQLS is conducted every four years by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions. Our sample consists of 28 countries in Europe, namely the European Union countries except for Greece and Cyprus, and two candidate countries – Serbia and Iceland. The sample size per country varies between 1000 (Bulgaria and Slovakia) and 3055 (Germany) observations. The age of the respondents ranges from 18 to 95 years.



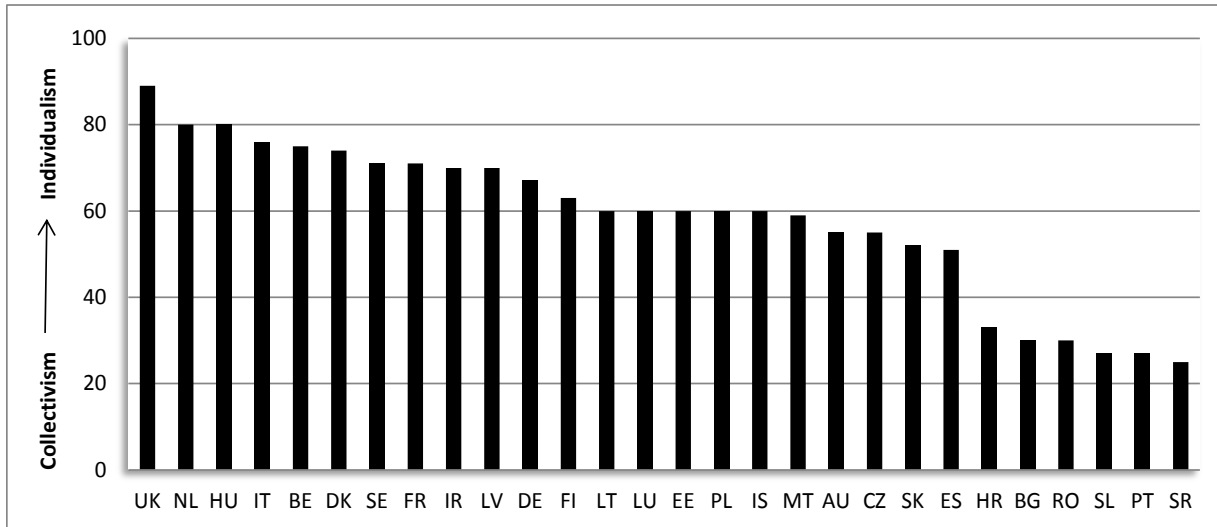
### *Dependent variables*

Our analysis rests on four dependent variables reflecting four types of support. They are based on the questions “From whom would you get support in each of the following situations: (1) if you needed help around the household when ill; (2) if you needed advice about a serious personal or family matter; (3) if you needed to urgently raise [1/12 of annual national at-risk-of-poverty threshold] to face an emergency; and (4) if you needed help when looking for a job. For each situation, choose the most important source of support”. The respondents were able to choose between the following answers: “a member of your family/relative” (kin); “a friend, neighbour or someone else who do not belong to your family or relatives” (non-kin); “a service provider, institution or organisation” (professionals); and “nobody”. Since we are interested in comparing individual choices for receiving help from non-kin rather than kin or professionals, we removed from our sample those who answered nobody. For help with household chores, advice, financial help and help when looking for a job, we removed respectively 1.9%, 2.9%, 8.8% and 18.9% of the observations. Since the principle of Independence of Irrelevant Alternatives (Hedeker, 2007) holds true in our multinomial models, omitting nobody as an alternative outcome did not affect the odds among the remaining outcomes.

### *Independent variables at the country-level*

Data on country levels of individualism/collectivism were obtained through Hofstede’s webpage (Hofstede, 2014)<sup>3</sup>. The Hofstede’s index ranges from 0 to 100, where higher scores signify higher levels of individualism. Figure 1 displays the index of individualism per country. According to these data, higher levels of individualism are found in the West and North of Europe (and surprisingly Hungary). At the other extreme are the post-communist countries and Portugal.

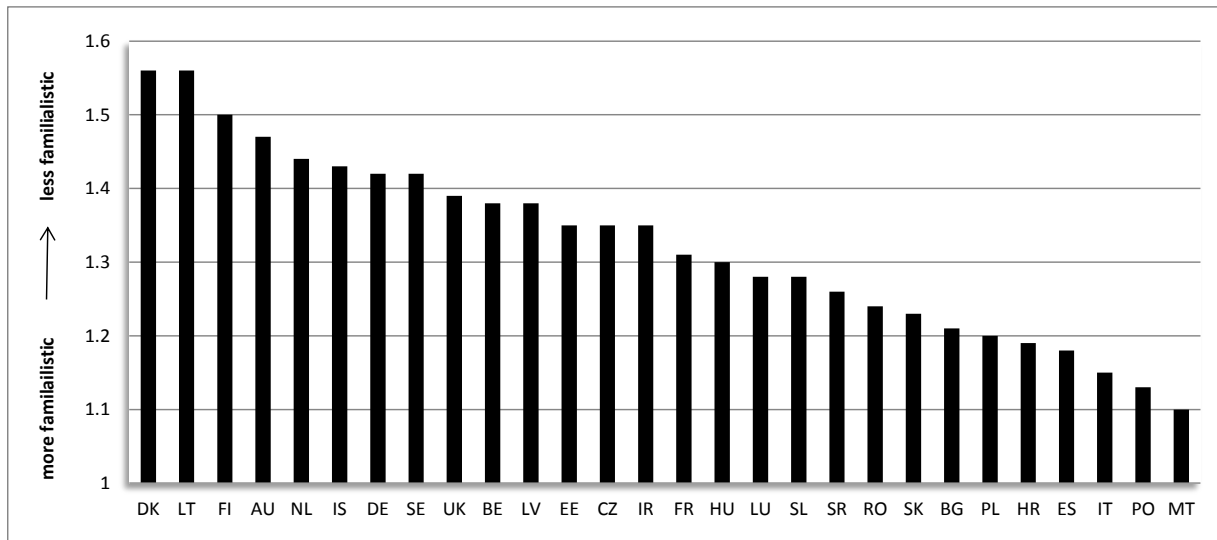
Figure 1: Per country index of individualism



Source: The Hofstede Centre (Hofstede, 2014)

To our knowledge there are no ready-to-use macro-level measures of norms of family obligations and generalised trust. Therefore, we generated both measures by taking the arithmetic mean of individual-level scores. Data on norms of family obligations were obtained from the fourth (2008) wave of the European Value Survey and are based on the questions “Which of these statements best describes your views about (a) parents’ responsibilities to their children and (b) responsibilities of adult children towards their parents when their parents are in need of long-term care?”. The statements were respectively “parents’/children’s duty is to do their best for their children/parents even at the expense of their own well-being” and “parents/children have a life of their own and should not be asked to sacrifice their own well-being for the sake of their children/parents”. Lower numbers of the measure represent more familialistic and higher numbers less familialistic countries. Figure 2 depicts the degree of familialism per country. Our data suggest that the Nordic and Western European countries (and surprisingly Lithuania) are less familialistic, whereas more familialistic countries are found in the South and East of Europe.

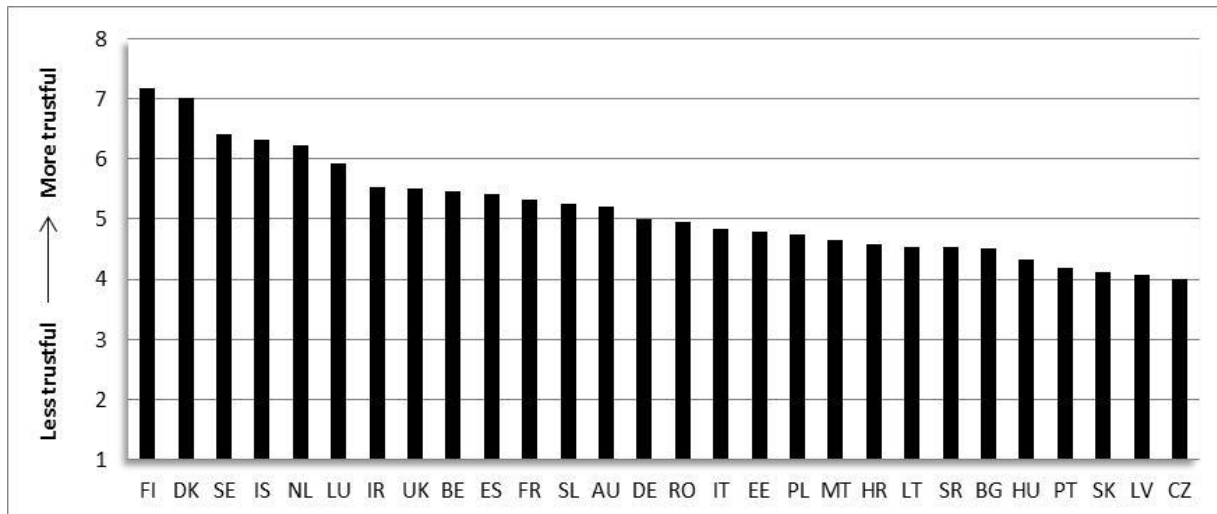
Figure 2: Per country norms of family obligations



Source: European Value Survey (2008)

For generating the measure of generalised trust we used data from the third round of EQLS<sup>4</sup>. The trust question in the EQLS is a standard question used throughout cross-national surveys, which despite its shortcomings is proven to be a reliable, valid and cross-nationally comparable instrument (Nannestad, 2008). The question reads as follows: “Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can’t be too careful in dealing with people?”. Answers are measured on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means that you can’t be too careful and 10 means that most people can be trusted. The average country scores (Figure 3) resemble a well-documented pattern of low levels of generalised trust in the post-communist countries (Bjørnskov, 2006) and high levels in the Nordic countries (Delhey & Newton, 2005).

Figure 3: Per country average levels of generalised trust

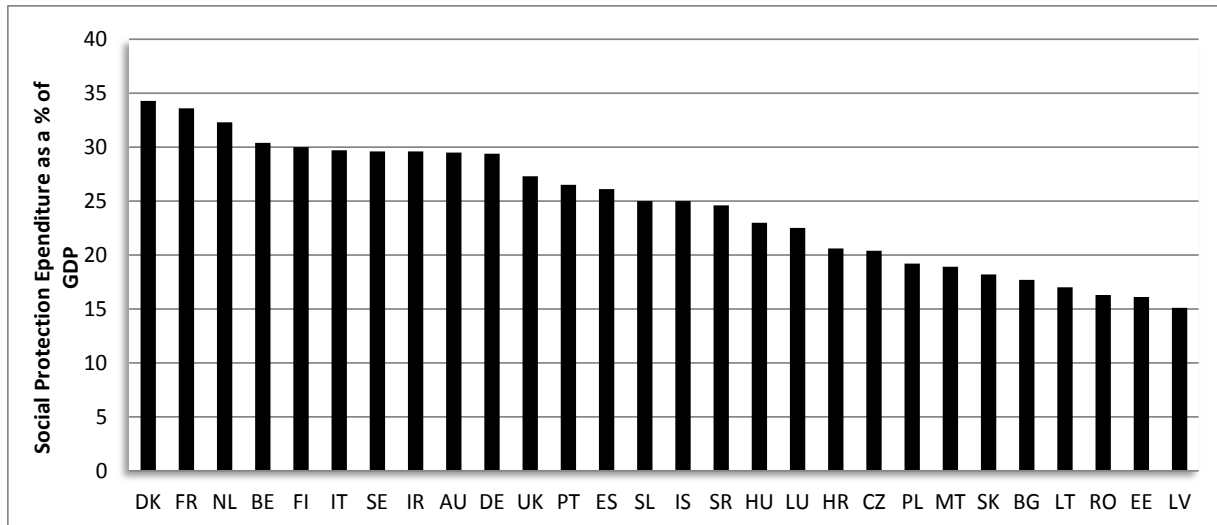


Source: European Quality of Life Survey (Eurofound, 2012)

We obtained the last macro level variable – social protection expenditure as a percentage of GDP in 2011 – from the Eurostat database (Eurostat, 2015a). According to Eurostat’s definition, social protection expenditure encompasses “social benefits, or transfers in cash or kind, to households and individuals with the aim to relieve them of the burden of a defined set of risks or needs” such as disability; old age; parental responsibilities; the loss of a spouse or parent; and unemployment. As can be seen in Figure 4, there are pronounced country differences across Europe. The Nordic and Western European countries have the highest spending on social protection whilst the lowest spending on social protection is found in the post-communist countries.

Finally, since countries with higher levels of modernisation and economic development are also known to have higher levels of individualism (Hofstede et al., 2010) and trust (Delhey & Newton, 2005), and more modern family attitudes (Aassve, Sironi, & Bassi, 2011), we control for GDP per capita. We derived the data on GDP per capita for 2011 from the Eurostat database (Eurostat, 2015b).

Figure 4: Per country social protection expenditure as a percentage of country's GDP



Source: Eurostat, 2015a

#### *Control variables at the individual-level*

Given our focus on examining the role of context in shaping European's choices for a source of support, we treat individual-level characteristics merely as controls. Following theoretical insights into the mechanisms that govern the configuration of support systems at the individual level (Cantor, 1979; Litwak & Szelenyi, 1969) and prior research (i.e. Wenger, 1990), we control for people's socio-economic and demographic background, living arrangements, frequency of contact, and relationship closeness (for detailed information about individual-level variables, please refer to Table 1). In order to control for compositional differences between countries, we furthermore include individual-level generalised trust in the model and grand-mean center all continuous variables. This procedure allows for estimating the true contextual effect of the country-level indicators.

**Table 1: Descriptive statistics of model variables**

Variable	Observations	Mean/Proportion	SD	Range
<i>Country-level characteristics</i>				
Individualism/Collectivism	28	58.21	18.11	25-89
Familialism	28	1.32	0.13	1-2
Generalised trust	28	5.17	0.86	4.01-7.17
Social protection expenditure	28	24.57	5.81	15.1-34.3
GDP	28	24267	11254	8700-68100
<i>Individual-level characteristics<sup>a</sup></i>				
Individual generalised trust	36 295	5.15	2.46	1-10
Age	36 509	50.64	18.02	18-95
Male	36 509	0.57		0/1
Urban	36 444	0.52		0/1
Satisfaction with social life	36 021	7.20	2.18	1-10
Satisfaction with family life	36 061	7.96	2.11	1-10
Contact with relatives	35 637	9.62	8.15	0-25
Contact with non-kin	36 424	13.79	10.34	0-25
Living alone	36 509	0.23		0/1
Living with non-kin	36 200	0.01		0/1
Number of children	36 328	1.58	1.31	0-10
Married	36 308	0.60		0/1
Education	36 360	3.11	1.33	0-6

Note: <sup>a</sup> Descriptive statistics at the individual level are combined for all 4 datasets used for the analysis.

### Method

The categorical nature of our dependent variables combined with the hierarchical structure of the data, where individuals (level-1) are nested in countries (level-2), require a multilevel multinomial model. The first level of the model is comprised of three parts: a sampling model, a link function, and a structural model. The sampling model follows a multinomial probability distribution. The link function is logit and is reflected in  $\eta_{mij} = \log \left( \frac{\phi_{mij}}{\phi_{Mij}} \right)$ , where  $\phi_{Mij} = 1 - \sum_{m=1}^{M-1} \phi_{mij}$ . In other words,  $\eta_{mij}$  is the log-odds of falling in the category  $m$  – kin or professionals – relative to the reference category  $M$  – non-kin. The structural model at level 1 can be written as  $\eta_{mij} = \beta_{0j(m)} + \sum \beta_{qj(m)} X_{qij}$ , where  $\beta$  are fixed effects that vary across categories and  $X_{ij}$  is a  $q$ -

dimensional vector of independent variables at the individual level (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). In this model, unlike the multilevel linear regression model, the level-1 residuals  $\xi_{ij}$  cannot be separately estimated but are fixed to the variance of a standard logistic distribution which equals  $\pi^2/3$  (Hedeker, 2007). The level-2 structural model has a parallel form to the level-1 structural model with the important addition of  $u_{0j(m)}$  – level-2 intercept random effects, one for each category. The model can be formally written as  $\beta_{0j(m)} = \gamma_{00(m)} + \sum \gamma_{s(m)}W_j + u_{0j(m)}$ . Since our dependent variables have 3 unordered categories, we have two sets of structural model equations.

We estimate two models for each of the dependent variables. We begin with the empty models, which allow for the calculation of the intra-class correlation or the percentage of the variance in the probability of selecting any of the categories relative to non-kin that is due to country-level characteristics. Subsequently, we simultaneously include all country-level explanatory variables and the individual-level control variables<sup>5</sup>.

## Results

### *Descriptive results*

In Europe as a whole, and for all types of support, the observed probability to select non-kin is lower than that of kin but higher than the probability of selecting professionals. This pattern largely persists at the country level as well, with some noticeable differences. The most important difference is for help with looking for a job, where, as can be seen in Figure 5, the citizens of some Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries, and Sweden and Iceland have a higher probability to turn to non-kin (between 44 and 47%) than to kin or professionals. Similarly, in some CEE countries we find a relatively high probability to regard non-kin as a primary source of financial help (between 24 and 34%). In contrast, highest probabilities for advice from non-relatives are observed in various Western and Nordic countries, and Italy (around 30%). Finally, as shown in Figure 6, for help with household chores when one is ill, we find that people in all European countries are by far most likely to consider kin as a primary source of support (70% or more). When we compare the likelihood of a person turning to non-kin or professionals, however, we find that in all European countries but Denmark non-kin help is preferred.

Figure 5: Per country observed probabilities for help with looking for a job

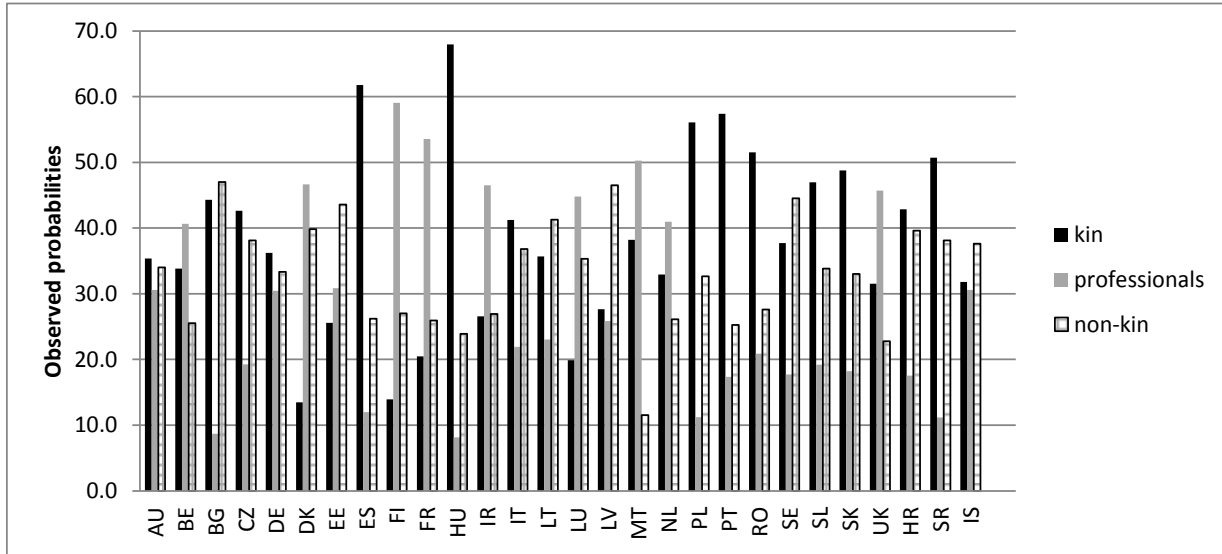
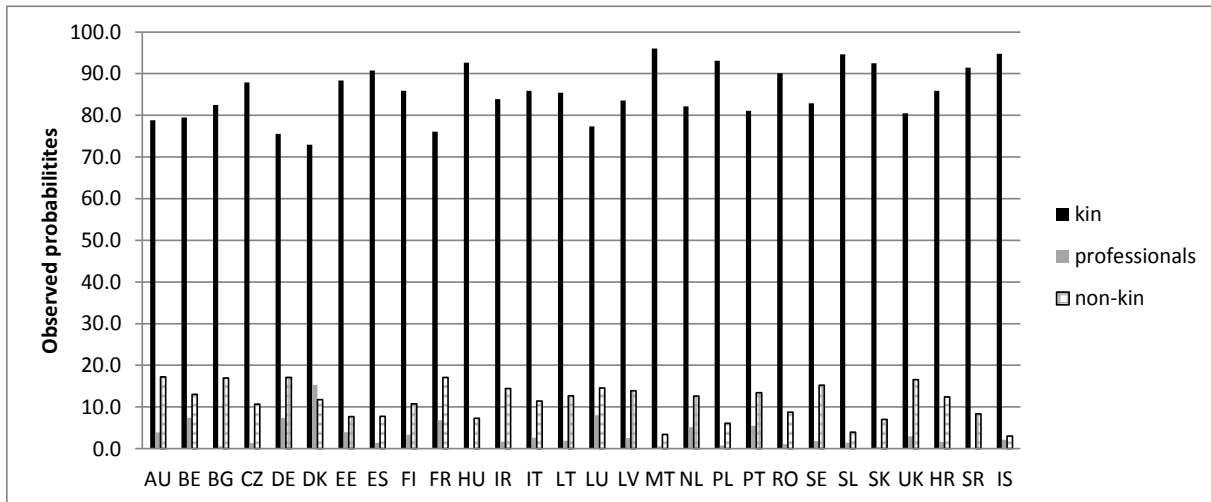


Figure 6: Per country observed probabilities for help with household chores when one is ill



*Multilevel results*

As can be seen in Table 2, we find that in more collectivistic countries compared with more individualistic countries people are more likely to select non-kin over kin and professionals when in need for money, an impact that remains statistically significant after controlling for social protection expenditure, generalised trust, norms of family obligations, and GDP. The impact of living in a more collectivistic country on people’s choice to turn to non-relatives rather than



professionals holds also true for advice, though the substantive importance of collectivism is rather small. For the alternative hypothesis – that in more individualistic countries people will select non-kin over kin more frequently, given they may more easily expand their relationships beyond the family – we find no support for any type of assistance. The impact of familialism, on the other hand, is both substantively and statistically significant for all types of support but advice. As expected, compared with less familialistic countries, people in more familialistic countries seem to be less likely to select non-kin over kin. As to generalised trust, we find an opposite than the expected association: people in less trustful rather than in more trustful societies are more likely to turn to non-kin than to kin for help with household chores and financial help. Our results also yield a substantively strong impact of country-level generalised trust on people's choice for professionals rather than non-kin as a source of advice and financial help, an association that we did not expect following theoretical insights on generalised trust.

Our hypotheses regarding the impact of institutional context are not confirmed. Unlike what we expected, the probability that people will select non-kin over professionals seems not to depend on the generosity of social spending in a country, all else being equal. Yet, it is important to note that if we do not account for cultural context, social protection expenditure has a higher in magnitude and statistically significant impact in the expected direction for all types of support. We also expected that in more generous welfare states people will select kin over non-kin more frequently, but we find the opposite to be true for help with household chores and advice.

Finally, turning to the coefficient of GDP, we find that in countries with higher GDP people are more likely to turn to non-kin than to kin for all types of support but financial help. Living in a country with higher rather than lower GDP, however, seems not to be associated with people's choice between non-kin and professionals (with the exception of household help, where people in high GDP countries seem to be less likely to select non-kin over professionals). Including GDP in the final models does not change considerably the statistical and substantive importance of the remaining coefficients.

**Table 2: Predicted odds ratios for selecting respectively kin and professionals over non-kin as a source of help, macro-level estimates (multilevel multinomial analysis)**

	<b>Help with household chores when ill</b>	<b>Advice</b>	<b>Financial help</b>	<b>Help with looking for a job</b>
<b>Category 1: Kin</b> (reference category: non-kin)				
<b>Fixed Effects</b>	Odds Ratio (CI)	Odds Ratio (CI)	Odds Ratio (CI)	Odds Ratio (CI)
Intercept	<b>16.618***</b> (13.339,20.704)	<b>4.012***</b> (3.380,4.762)	<b>4.650***</b> (3.735,5.790)	0.875 (0.720,1.064)
Individualism/Collectivism (H2,4)	1.003 (0.994, 1.013)	1.006 (0.998,1.015)	<b>1.017**</b> (1.066,1.028)	1.006 (0.997,1.016)
Familialism (H5)	<b>0.275†</b> (0.066, 1.140)	0.389 (0.111,1.365)	<b>0.066**</b> (0.013,0.346)	<b>0.119**</b> (0.028,0.517)
Generalised trust (H1)	<b>1.444**</b> (1.114, 1.870)	1.058 (0.842,1.329)	<b>1.478*</b> (1.093,1.999)	0.929 (0.709,1.214)
Social protection expenditure (H7)	<b>0.943***</b> (0.913, 0.974)	<b>0.953**</b> (0.926,0.980)	0.994 (0.968,1.032)	1.012 (0.978,1.046)
GDP (logged)	<b>0.513**</b> (0.313,0.839)	<b>0.679†</b> (0.438,1.052)	1.074 (0.598,1.926)	<b>0.615†</b> (0.364,1.040)
<b>Random Effects</b>				
Intercept	<b>0.103***</b> (0.321)	<b>0.084***</b> (0.290)	<b>0.146***</b> (0.382)	<b>0.116***</b> (0.340)
ICC (in %)	7.6	4.9	8.8	7.1
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup> (in %)	61.7	48.1	53.8	54.1
<b>Category: Professionals</b> (reference category: non-kin)				
<b>Fixed Effects</b>	Odds Ratio (CI)	Odds Ratio (CI)	Odds Ratio (CI)	Odds Ratio (CI)
Intercept	<b>0.286***</b> (0.186,0.441)	<b>0.157***</b> (0.111,0.229)	<b>0.637*</b> (0.444,0.912)	<b>0.675*</b> (0.515,0.884)
Individualism/Collectivism (H3)	0.993 (0.977, 1.010)	<b>1.014†</b> (0.99,1.030)	<b>1.032**</b> (1.012,1.052)	1.013 (0.997,1.029)
Familialism	5.966 (0.463,76.946)	0.503 (0.050,5.097)	0.203 (0.011,3.831)	0.587 (0.055,6.295)
Generalised trust	1.276 (0.809,2.014)	<b>1.713*</b> (1.133,2.589)	<b>2.068*</b> (1.213,3.523)	1.268 (0.823,1.952)
Social protection expenditure (H6)	1.046 (0.988,1.107)	1.009 (0.957,1.063)	1.009 (0.944,1.079)	1.018 (0.964,1.074)

GDP (logged)	<b>2.325*</b> (1.003,5.387)	0.840 (0.380,1.858)	1.992 (0.718,5.525)	1.484 (0.649,3.397)
<hr/>				
Random Effects				
Intercept	<b>0.296***</b> (0.544)	<b>0.256***</b> (0.506)	<b>0.468***</b> (0.684)	<b>0.314***</b> (0.560)
ICC (in %)	16.1	13.6	29.0	12.9
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup> (in %)	53.1	50.7	65.2	35.6
<hr/>				
Log-likelihood	-61423	-61928	-57658	-45343
Number of observations	32 094	32 549	29 972	23 617
Number of countries	28	28	28	28

Note: \*\*\*  $p \leq 0.001$ , \*\*  $p \leq 0.01$ , \*  $p \leq 0.05$ , †  $p \leq 0.1$ ; numbers in parenthesis for the random effects represent standard deviation; CI = confidence interval; Estimation method: Full penalised quasi-likelihood approximation; The formula used to calculate the intra-class correlation (ICC) for each category can be written as  $\text{Var}(u_{0j}(m))/(\text{Var}(u_{0j}(m)) + \frac{\pi^2}{3})$  (Hedeker, 2007).

## Conclusions and discussion

This study makes three important contributions to research on support. First, it enhances our knowledge on non-kin ties as a source of assistance in Europe; a source that is often overlooked in empirical research despite theoretical insights highlighting its relative importance in one's support system (Cantor, 1979; Litwak & Szelenyi, 1969). Second, the study casts new light on the role of context in shaping Europeans' choices for a source of support. Third, unlike previous research which focused either on culture or welfare provision and thereby saw them as dichotomous alternatives (Viazzo, 2010), we examine cultural *and* institutional contexts simultaneously and contribute to a better understanding of their relative importance.

Our results reveal that both cultural and institutional circumstances matter when selecting a source of support, but cultural context appears to be more strongly associated with whether a person will turn to non-kin rather than to kin or professionals than institutional context is. *Ceteris paribus*, we find a small, statistically significant impact of social protection expenditure only on the likelihood that a person will turn to non-kin rather than to kin for help with household chores and advice. This finding is in contrast not only with our expectation regarding the extent to which social protection expenditure might have an impact on Europeans' choices for a source of support, but

also regarding the direction of that impact. Following notions of crowding in, we hypothesised that increasing generous welfare provision might encourage the receipt of practical and financial help from family, but our results appear to be more consistent with Oorschot & Arts (2005) who, by focusing on social capital in Europe, demonstrated that more generous social spending goes hand in hand with more contacts and stronger feelings towards friends. The scholars embraced an explanation revolving around the idea that well-developed states set an example of taking responsibility for the good of others and create cultural and structural conditions for the development of civil society. Building upon this idea, we put forward that generous welfare spending in Europe creates a sense of solidarity, which bolsters people to shift demands for support from kin to non-kin.

An important strength of the study lies in carefully conceptualising and analysing cultural context. We differentiated between individualistic *values* and *norms* of family obligations and suggested that their effect on one's choice for a source of support may differ. Our findings substantiate this proposition by demonstrating that individualism/collectivism (values) and familialism (norms) have a different in magnitude and opposite in direction impact: Higher levels of familialism seem to be relatively strongly associated with a lower likelihood that people will turn to non-kin rather than to kin for all types of support but advice, whereas higher levels of collectivism seem to have a small and positive impact on one's choice for selecting non-kin over kin or professionals when it comes to financial help and advice. These results point towards (1) the importance of normative expectations in predicting behavioural intentions, and (2) the need to decompose the broader notion of cultural context into more specific and theoretically sound constructs when studying the impact of culture on support provision.

On a different but related note, we do not find support for our hypothesis that in countries with higher levels of individualism people will select non-kin over kin more frequently, given that in more individualistic countries people will be more at ease in expanding their social relationships outside the family. A possible explanation for this result is Triandis' (1993) observation that in more individualistic countries people have larger and more diverse networks, but their ties are also often casual and entail little emotional involvement. Since support provision is determined not only by the number but also by the quality of social relationships (Silverstein, Parrott, & Bengtson,

1995), it is plausible to assume that individualistic values of independence and autonomy may be a better predictor of differences in social networks size and composition than in sources of support. The exact mechanism through which country-level individualism operates, and the theoretical and statistical relationships between the micro and the macro level remain to be scrutinised, however.

As to the last aspect of culture – generalised trust, much to our surprise, we find that in countries with lower rather than with higher levels of trust people are more likely to turn to non-kin than to kin or professionals. This is in stark contrast with prior research suggesting that generalised trust enables the existence of cross-cutting ties and social networks that bind society together and thereby serves as the basis for the development of civil society (Newton, 2001). We offer two possible reasons for the discrepancy between research findings. First, whilst we employ macro-level generalised trust to predict individual-level outcomes, much of the prior research used individual-level trust to conclude about macro-level outcomes, such as social cohesion and economic development. In fact, if we consider the individual-level measure in our models, we can conclude that our findings are much in line with prior research, for micro-level trust is significantly associated with a greater likelihood that a person will turn to non-kin rather than to kin or professionals. Second, we argue that the negative association between macro-level generalised trust and the likelihood to select non-kin (over kin or professionals) might be driven by the inclusion of a vast number of Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries in our analysis (12 out of 28). The CEE countries are characterised by a distinct post-communist context, where numerous weak ties, or wide informal networks, are shown to exist despite prevailing low levels of generalised trust (Mihaylova, 2004). Völker & Flap (2001) argue that these social networks are in fact *provision networks* which had come to exist during the communist era as a response to the shortages created by command economy. In due time from the fall of the Berlin Wall, many of the previously scarce goods and services have become available, yet western commodities have been costly to the (impoverished) average CEE citizen whilst post-communist services have been suffering from a low quality. And whilst levels of generalised trust have further dwindled due to the transformation of society and the state, need seems to still force people rely on their previously established provision networks. It is outside the scope of this study to go into an in-depth discussion of the context of post-communism; what we mean to stress is the need to test theories that stem from the wealthy societies of North America and Western Europe on the transforming

Central and Eastern European nations. Generalised trust, and for that matter context, is a complex phenomenon and it merits a better understanding in comparative sociological research.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> It is important to note, however, that in collectivistic societies people might view relationships with non-kin as family-like or as fictive kin ties (Gaines et al., 1997; Hofstede et al., 2010). Such examples are the institutions of godparents or when addressing neighbours and friends with aunt, uncle, grandmother or grandfather (Heady & Schweitzer, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> In order to avoid confusion, we feel the necessity to note that with hypothesis 2 we do not imply that in more individualistic countries people will generally select more frequently kin over non-kin. In fact, the mechanism we describe does not allow us to suggest that the reverse of our hypothesis is true. In individualistic societies where a sense of a strong community and expectations of reciprocal help are less likely to be present, people may still refrain from turning to kin and instead opt for professional help.

<sup>3</sup> The data were collected originally in 1970 and updated and validated throughout the years. Although data could be deemed old, following Minkov & Hofstede (2011) we argue that cultures do evolve but they move together in more or less the same cultural direction. Hence, the cultural gaps between countries remain the same. A confirmation of this proposition is provided by Inglehart (2008).

<sup>4</sup> We opted for EQLS data on generalised trust instead of European Social Survey and European Value Survey data for the former includes only 23 of our countries of analysis whilst the latter's question on generalised trust could only be answered with yes and no, which reduces the variability across countries.

<sup>5</sup> We also performed the analysis by including separately each macro-level predictor, and by adding all macro-level variables together but GDP. The main difference between these models and the models presented in Table 2 will be briefly discussed in the results section. Exact estimates are available upon request.

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## Appendices

**Table 3: Predicted odds ratios for selecting respectively kin and professionals over non-kin as a source of support, individual-level estimates (multilevel multinomial analysis)**

	Help with household chores when ill	Advice	Financial help	Help with looking for a job
<b>Category 1: Kin</b>				
(reference category: non-kin)				
	Odds ratio	Odds ratio	Odds ratio	Odds ratio
<b>Fixed Effects</b>	(CI)	(CI)	(CI)	(CI)
Male	<b>0.880***</b> (0.815,0.948)	<b>0.916**</b> (0.865,0.969)	<b>1.471***</b> (1.371,1.579)	<b>1.325***</b> (1.243,1.413)
Age	<b>0.998†</b> (0.995,1.000)	<b>1.015***</b> (1.013,1.017)	<b>1.007***</b> (1.004,1.009)	<b>1.014***</b> (1.012,1.016)
Urban	<b>0.921*</b> (0.853,0.993)	<b>0.892***</b> (0.842,0.945)	<b>0.810***</b> (0.753,0.871)	<b>0.861***</b> (0.806,0.920)
Living alone	<b>0.346***</b> (0.307,0.390)	<b>0.825***</b> (0.753,0.903)	<b>0.685***</b> (0.609,0.771)	<b>0.719***</b> (0.643,0.804)
Living with non-kin	<b>0.262***</b> (0.207,0.333)	<b>0.827†</b> (0.662,1.035)	<b>0.771†</b> (0.586,1.015)	0.870 (0.675,1.121)
Contact with relatives	<b>1.039***</b> (1.033,1.044)	<b>1.024***</b> (1.021,1.028)	<b>1.025***</b> (1.020,1.029)	<b>1.017***</b> (1.013,1.021)
Contact with non-kin	<b>0.980***</b> (0.977,0.984)	<b>0.991***</b> (0.989,0.994)	<b>0.994***</b> (0.991,0.998)	<b>0.995**</b> (0.992,0.999)
Individual trust	<b>0.980*</b> (0.964,0.996)	<b>0.976***</b> (0.964,0.988)	0.993 (0.978,1.008)	<b>0.988†</b> (0.974,1.001)
Satisfaction with family life	<b>1.191***</b> (1.167,1.215)	<b>1.154***</b> (1.136,1.173)	<b>1.132***</b> (1.110,1.154)	<b>1.060***</b> (1.040,1.080)
Satisfaction with social life	<b>0.966***</b> (0.946,0.986)	<b>0.971***</b> (0.956,0.987)	<b>0.975*</b> (0.956,0.994)	1.001 (0.983,1.019)
Number of children	<b>1.146***</b> (1.107,1.185)	<b>1.060***</b> (1.033,1.088)	1.003 (0.970,1.037)	0.985 (0.955,1.016)
Married	1.023 (0.913,1.149)	<b>1.415***</b> (1.307,1.531)	<b>0.873*</b> (0.787,0.968)	<b>0.921†</b> (0.842,1.007)
Education	<b>0.906***</b> (0.879,0.933)	<b>0.891***</b> (0.871,0.912)	0.986 (0.958,1.016)	<b>0.814***</b> (0.792,0.836)
<b>Category 2: Professionals</b>				
(reference category: non-kin)				
	Odds ratio	Odds ratio	Odds ratio	Odds ratio
<b>Fixed Effects</b>	(CI)	(CI)	(CI)	(CI)
Male	<b>0.834*</b> (0.721,0.965)	<b>0.853*</b> (0.753,0.967)	<b>1.125*</b> (1.017,1.246)	1.247 (1.163,1.338)

Age	<b>1.034***</b> (1.029,1.039)	<b>1.020***</b> (1.016,1.024)	<b>1.024***</b> (1.020,1.027)	<b>1.008***</b> (1.005,1.010)
Urban	0.945 (0.815,1.094)	<b>0.867*</b> (0.763,0.986)	<b>0.786***</b> (0.708,0.872)	<b>0.971***</b> (0.903,1.044)
Living alone	<b>0.639***</b> (0.491,0.824)	<b>0.891†</b> (0.719,1.104)	<b>0.733***</b> (0.614,0.875)	<b>0.772***</b> (0.685,0.870)
Living with non-kin	<b>0.333**</b> (0.151,0.734)	<b>0.520</b> (0.251,1.077)	0.826 (0.530,1.289)	<b>0.688*</b> (0.516,0.918)
Contact with relatives	0.993 (0.982,1.004)	<b>0.990*</b> (0.981,0.999)	0.997 (0.990,1.004)	<b>0.994**</b> (0.989,0.998)
Contact with non-kin	<b>0.969***</b> (0.962,0.976)	<b>0.986***</b> (0.980,0.992)	<b>0.992**</b> (0.987,0.997)	<b>0.997†</b> (0.993,1.000)
Individual trust	<b>0.971†</b> (0.942, 1.002)	<b>0.975 †</b> (0.949,1.002)	<b>0.957***</b> (0.936,0.978)	<b>0.984*</b> (0.968,0.999)
Satisfaction with family life	<b>1.051*</b> (1.011,1.093)	<b>0.985</b> (0.952,1.019)	<b>1.077***</b> (1.046,1.109)	<b>1.043***</b> (1.021,1.064)
Satisfaction with social life	<b>0.902***</b> (0.866,0.940)	<b>0.896***</b> (0.866,0.928)	<b>0.926***</b> (0.900,0.952)	<b>0.933***</b> (0.915,0.952)
Number of children	0.980 (0.923,1.042)	<b>1.090***</b> (1.036,1.146)	1.010 (0.966,1.055)	<b>1.049**</b> (1.015,1.084)
Married	0.890 (0.691, 1.146)	<b>1.261*</b> (1.041,1.527)	0.882 (0.754,1.032)	<b>0.815***</b> (0.739,0.900)
Education	<b>0.872***</b> (0.824,0.922)	<b>0.931**</b> (0.887,0.977)	<b>0.954*</b> (0.915,0.994)	<b>0.958**</b> (0.931,0.986)

Notes: \*\*\*  $p \leq 0.001$ , \*\*  $p \leq 0.01$ , \*  $p \leq 0.05$ , †  $p \leq 0.1$ ; CI = confidence interval

**Table 4: Correlations between country-level characteristics**

	1	2	3	4	5
1 Individualism/Collectivism	1	0.374	0.418	0.472	0.558
2 Generalised trust		1	0.660	0.550	0.650
3 Social protection expenditure as a percentage of GDP			1	0.348	0.617
4 Familialism				1	0.350
5 GDP (logged)					1

