

**The influence of grandparents on grandchildren's schooling:
Testing social heterogeneity in the nuclear family system**

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Abstract

Recent studies have argued that grandparents exert a direct effect on grandchildren, net of parental resources. While there is growing evidence for the existence of a 'grandparent effect', very little is known about the mechanism by which grandparents affect grandchildren. A main explanation is that grandchildren can benefit from grandparent's socio-cultural resources. If this is the case, we would expect heterogeneity in the grandparent effect, which means that the effect of grandparents mainly exists in families where grandparents are more involved in the lives of their grandchildren. In this study we test this hypothesis using unique Dutch data on three generations that were specifically gathered for this purpose. We examine how grandchildren's educational attainment is affected by three grandparental resources: education, occupational status, and cultural resources. Next we explore how these effects vary by (1) the strength of the tie between grandparent and grandchild, and (2) the residential proximity of the grandparent. Our study has three main findings. First, we find no evidence for a main direct grandparental effect. Second, we do not find that the grandparent effect varies with the strength of the tie between grandparent and grandchild. Finally, we find some evidence that grandfathers significantly affect children's educational attainment when they live closer. Overall, our study provides little support for social heterogeneity in the grandparent effect, and thus questions one of the main explanations for why grandparents would affect the socioeconomic chances of their grandchildren.