

THE MORE THE MERRIER?
MULTIPLE PARENT-ADULT CHILD RELATIONS*

By

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Abstract

Though parent-adult child ties are generally positive, most parents have multiple children whose relations may yield collective ambivalence combining higher and lower quality. Little research has investigated these multiple relations. NSFH respondents aged 50+ with adult children ($N = 2,270$) are used to assess patterns of quality and contact across multiple children in the same family. This illuminates mixed experiences, especially for lowest quality and contact across children, contributing to collective ambivalence in parent-adult child relations within families. Having more children increases prevalence of both positive and negative relations. Stepchildren exhibit more negative relations than nonstepchildren, even in the same family. Mothers have more positive but not more negative relations than fathers; but mothers have more negative relations with stepchildren.

Keywords: families in middle and later life, intergenerational relations, National Survey of Families and Households, parent-child relations.

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