1	Testing adaptive hypotheses of alloparenting in							
2	Agta foragers							
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43 Abstract

44 Human children are frequently cared for by non-parental caregivers (alloparents), yet few studies have conducted systematic alternative hypothesis tests of *why* alloparents help. Here, 45 46 we explore whether predictions from kin selection, reciprocity, learning-to-mother and costly 47 signalling hypotheses explain non-parental childcare among Agta hunter-gatherers from the 48 Philippines. To test these hypotheses, we use high-resolution proximity data from 1,701 child-49 alloparent dyads. Our results indicate that reciprocity and relatedness were positively 50 associated with number of interactions with a child (our proxy for childcare). Need appeared 51 more influential in close kin, suggesting indirect benefits, while reciprocity proved to be a 52 stronger influence in non-kin, pointing to direct benefits. However, despite shared genes, 53 close and distant kin interactions were also contingent on reciprocity. Compared to other 54 apes, humans are unique in rapidly producing energetically demanding offspring. Our results 55 suggest that the support that mothers require is met through support based on kinship and 56 reciprocity.

57

58 Main

59 Women in natural fertility populations rapidly produce, on average, six to eight highly 60 dependent offspring during their lifetime¹. This frequently entails more provisioning than 61 mothers alone can provide, causing long-term shortfalls in childcare². The cooperative 62 breeding hypothesis argues that such rapid reproduction is only possible due to the assistance from non-parental sources, known as alloparenting. While authors point to humans' large 63 64 social networks, indicating the importance of a diverse array of alloparents, including nonkin^{3–7}, previous literature has tended to focus on key relatives such as grandmothers⁸ and 65 siblings (who are seen as both co-operators and competitors^{9,10}) as well as exploring the 66 adaptive value of allocare in terms of increased child survival and maternal fertility¹¹⁻¹³ or 67 decreases to maternal workload^{14,15}. Thus, it is well established that one type of relative 68 (exactly which depends on ecological context¹¹) has a positive influence on child survival, 69 70 wellbeing or maternal fertility. However, comparatively underexplored is a systematic 71 exploration of the alternative hypotheses for cooperation in breeding.

True altruism is not an evolutionary stable strategy as individuals who choose to help will ultimately suffer from reduced fitness^{16,17}. Consequently, a major question in the evolution of cooperation explores what individuals gain from helping. The answer for cooperatively breeding species has often fallen to indirect fitness¹⁸. Hamilton's (1964) theory of kin selection states that a behaviour that benefits another may be selectively advantageous if the costs (*c*) to the actor are outweighed by the benefits to the recipient (*b*), weighted by the probability of shared genes due to common descent (*r*).

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81 In the hunter-gatherer/subsistence farming literature, several studies have demonstrated 82 that more closely related individuals provide more childcare^{5,20,21}, meeting the expectations 83 of kin selection. For instance, Meehan (2008) demonstrates that in Ngandu infants (aged 8-84 12 months) genetically related individuals were more likely to participate in investment 85 behaviours than non-kin. Similarly, Crittenden and Marlowe (2008) found that the carrying of 86 children (aged under 4 years) was positively predicted by relatedness. While the literature 87 suggests that non-kin provide a significant proportion of childcare²², it has not yet 88 systematically explored what direct fitness benefits (such as future cooperation, mating 89 access or additional parenting skills) non-kin may gain. Furthermore, simply because two 90 individuals are related does not mean that kin selection is the only ultimate explanation for 91 cooperation^{23–26}. It would be erroneous to concluded that kinship is *the* major predictor of 92 childcare without testing it against alterative hypotheses.

93

94 Reciprocal cooperation can evolve if the cost of helping in the present is outweighed by the 95 probability of future benefits²⁷, even if the 'transactions' are not balanced²⁸ as cooperation can be directed at 'needy' individuals²⁹. Therefore, cooperation can occur in the absence of 96 97 indirect fitness benefits³⁰. However, early theorists explicitly stated that 'kinship may be 98 involved'²⁷, indicating that kin selection and reciprocity are not competing hypotheses. Thus, 99 cooperators can receive direct benefits regardless of whether they are related or not²³. The evidence of the importance of reciprocity is now mounting in food sharing³¹, allogrooming²⁴ 100 101 and childcare³² in both human and non-human primates. Furthermore, recent work in 102 vampire bats (Desmodus rotundus) demonstrated that highly related pairs engaged in more 103 reciprocal food sharing³³, as also witnessed in humans^{5,34,35}, however this has not consistently 104 been the case³⁶. Certainly, related reciprocal dyads will receive indirect benefits on top of direct returns, reducing the possible direct fitness losses associated with cheating³⁷.
Furthermore, reciprocity may be more likely in kin due to reduced geographic distance and thus increased opportunity and lower transaction costs, prompting cooperation regardless of relatedness^{18,35}. Consequently, capturing residential proximity may reduce the importance of relatedness as they frequently co-vary^{21,35,38,39}.

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111 Nonetheless, given key predictions from kin selection, while reciprocity can occur among kin, 112 it may be far less important given that the most indirect benefits may be achieved by helping households most 'in need' of this assistance^{36,40}. In this case, aid will be significantly 113 114 unbalanced, or unidirectional⁴¹. For instance, Thomas *et al.* (2018) found among the Mosuo 115 from southwest China that households helped (in terms of farm labour) kin in need, but not needy non-kin⁴². Therefore, theoretically we should expect interactions between nepotism 116 117 and 'need', reciprocity and 'need', as well as between reciprocity and relatedness to be 118 important predictors of behaviour. This is particularly so in hunter-gatherers who reside in 119 high-risk foraging niches, increasing the importance of reciprocity and wider social networks 120 comprised of kin and non-kin³².

121

122 Many hunter-gatherers face unpredictability in foraging returns⁴³, as well as longer-term 123 sickness and disability^{44,45}. Wide-ranging reciprocal cooperation is a key strategy for 124 smoothing over environmental stochasticity⁴⁶. Human foragers must deal with the extremes 125 of a complete failure of a hunt on some days compared to the bounty of returns on others. 126 Here, cooperating with only kin may not be sufficient to balance out shortfalls in returns⁴⁷. 127 Thus, helping non-kin extends an individual's cooperative network^{32,48,49}. This stochasticity in 128 foraging can result in acute childcare shortages as energy is invested away from childcare into 129 food production; thus both kin and non-kin may be important childcare providers. Given that 130 all human societies are comprised of social ties with unrelated individuals²², and huntergatherers reside in camps with a significant proportion of unrelated individuals^{50,51} it seems a 131 132 large oversight to ignore their role in childcare. Accordingly, we expect wide, reciprocal 133 childcare networks including kin and non-kin to be important.

134

Other direct benefits of alloparenting include increasing an individual's mating success and
their future ability to rear offspring. Lancaster (1971) posited that young, non-reproductively

137 active females may alloparent to learn and develop their skills, since more experienced 138 primiparous mothers have better infant outcomes⁵³. Particularly, this should be the case if offspring are highly vulnerable and dependent on high quality care⁵⁴. Accordingly, Baker 139 140 (1991) found that inexperienced, non-reproductive free-ranging golden lion tamarin 141 (Leontopithecus rosalia) females carried offspring more than other allomothers. Furthermore, 142 in Mongolian gerbils (Meriones unguiculatus) first-time mothers with allomothering 143 experience had increased reproductive performance and pup condition⁵⁶. The third possible 144 direct benefit is increased mating success, where males signal their quality to a mate by partaking in costly allocare⁵⁷. Therefore, alloparenting may develop if it increases a male's 145 146 access to females, or if male alloparenting becomes a desirable trait to picky females⁵⁸. For 147 instance, cotton-top tamarins (Saguinus oedipus) males were more likely to engage in successful copulation when carrying infants⁵⁹ and male mountain gorillas (*Gorilla beringei*) 148 who affiliated with more infants sired more offspring⁶⁰. Thus, here we will explore the relative 149 150 importance of both indirect benefits (kin selection) and direct benefits (reciprocity, learning-151 to-mother and costly signalling) in a foraging population, the Agta of Palanan, Philippines.

152

153 We hypothesise that indirect and direct benefits are important and mutually inclusive 154 predictors of alloparenting, allowing for access to a wide-range of cooperators, including non-155 kin. Given the literature cited above, we developed the following predictions: i) frequency of 156 interactions between children and alloparents will increase with indirect benefits (relatedness) and direct benefits (reciprocity, costly signalling and learning-to-mother); ii) 157 158 reciprocity will occur among kin to varying degrees, depending on relatedness; iii) relatedness 159 will positively interact with need; and *iv*) childcare interactions will be influenced by costs 160 which decrease interactions. To test these predictions, we collected high-resolution 161 interaction data from 1,701 alloparent-child dyads (147 alloparents, 85 children in six camps) 162 over roughly one-week in each camp using 1.5-meter spatial proximity as a proxy for 163 childcare.

164

165 **Results**

All model residuals were checked for normality and zero-inflation using the DHARMa packageand descriptive statistics for all variables are given in Supplementary Tables 2-4. All variables

168 in the analysis were standardised over two standard deviations allowing easy comparison of

169 the effect of different predictor variables. All models are two-tailed tests.

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171 Both household-level reciprocity (OR = 1.189, p < 0.001, 95% CI [1.17, 1.20]) and relatedness 172 (OR = 1.184, p < 0.001, 95% CI [1.80, 1.20]) were positive predictors of the number of 173 interactions between alloparents and dependent children in the univariable models, (Tables 174 2 & 3, Figure 1). The number of dependents in the giver's household did not predict 175 interactions (OR = 0.734, p = 0.286, 95% CI [0.42, 1.30]); however, contra expectations, the 176 number of carers available negatively predicted interactions (OR = 0.661, p = <0.001, 95% CI 177 [0.53, 0.82]). Therefore, if alloparents had more carers in their household they were less likely 178 to interact with another's child, not more (Table 3). Receiver household need (i.e. there were 179 more children than providers within the receiving household) was not significantly correlated 180 with the number of interactions between alloparents and children (OR = 0.979, p = 0.177, 95% 181 CI [0.95, 1.01], Table 2). Likewise, the learning-to-mother variable was a non-significant 182 predictor of interactions (OR = 1.433, p = 0.196, 95% CI [0.83, 2.47]), indicating that pre-183 reproductive females were not significantly more likely to interact with dependent children. 184 While the variable for costly signalling (operationalised as reproductively active males) was 185 significant, contra to predictions, the relationship was negative (OR = 0.533, p = 0.016, 95% 186 CI [0.32, 0.89]), as reproductively aged males were associated with fewer interactions.

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188 All variables were entered into two full models (Table 4) to control for confounding effects. 189 The first was the 'between and within households' model (n = 1,701) which contained all 190 variables except household reciprocity, giver's dependents and giver's carers. In this model, 191 all the previously statistically significant variables retained their significance and the non-192 significant terms remained non-significant. Relatedness remained a strong predictor of future 193 interactions (OR = 1.185, p < 0.001, 95% CI [1.18, 1.20]). In the second full model (*n* = 1,615) 194 which included all predictions but removed alloparents from the same household (primarily 195 siblings), household reciprocity remains an equally strong predictor of future interactions (OR 196 = 1.183, p < 0.001, 95% CI [1.17, 1.20]), equal in size to relatedness within and between 197 households. However, once co-residing siblings are removed from the model which looks at 198 between household interactions only, the effect of relatedness, while statistically significant, 199 has a very small effect (OR = 1.015, p = 0.010, 95% CI [1.00, 1.03]). This suggests that while relatedness is a strong predictor of allocare for close, co-residing kin, it was perhaps less important for more distant kin. Likewise, when looking at between household alloparenting only, receiver need becomes a significant predictor of interactions but again with a very small effect size (OR = 1.087, p < 0.001, 95% CI [1.05, 1.13]). Overall, these relationships remained despite the presence of residential proximity in all models, demonstrating that even when households were spatially close, related individuals and cooperative partners still interacted more than unrelated or non-reciprocal dyads.

207

208 Interaction models

A second set of analyses were performed to explore the interaction between relatedness, household-level reciprocity and receiver need. Interactions were run with each of the three kin categories: close kin, distant kin and non-kin, with close kin acting as the reference group. As these models do not explore the relative roles of the alternative hypotheses (and there was little difference between the full and univariable models), these models were run with controls for child age and sex (0 = male) but without the other predictors.

215

216 Model one (Table 5, Figure 2a) reveals that the effect of need on interactions was different 217 dependent on kin type. The relationship between receiver need and total interactions is 218 strongest in close kin (OR = 1.485, *p* < 0.001, 95% CI [1.43, 1.54]), and has a much smaller, and 219 non-significant, influence on interactions with distant kin (OR = 1.041, 95% CI [0.97, 1.11]) 220 and non-kin (OR = 1.01, 95% CI [0.94, 1.08]). The interpretation of these findings may be aided 221 by the relationship between kin group and household-level reciprocity. In model two, 222 interactions with close kin, distant kin and non-kin all increased with increasing household 223 reciprocal interactions (Figure 2b), however the effect is strongest in non-kin (OR = 1.290, 224 95% CI [1.21, 1.38]) as compared to distant kin (OR = 1.208, 95% CI [1.14, 1.29]) and close kin 225 OR = 1.176, 95% CI [1.14, 1.21]). Thus, if non-kin are influenced more by household reciprocal 226 interactions, they may be avoiding 'needy' households because they are poor reciprocators, 227 while close kin receive more inclusive fitness benefits from aiding the same 'needy' 228 households.

229

230 **Discussion**

231 Formalised alternative hypotheses testing of why alloparents provide childcare is rare in the 232 cooperative breeding literature in humans. The focus of the literature in general has been on which kin provide the most childcare and the indirect fitness benefits of this care^{3,9,11,61,62}, 233 234 rather than the broader question of why would anyone cooperate in childcare. This is in 235 opposition to the broader behavioural ecology literature, which has provided a theoretical framework for the evolution and function of cooperative breeding^{52,63–65}. In humans, little 236 237 exploration has occurred to understand the ultimate motivations of non-kin alloparents, for 238 example via alternative hypotheses such as reciprocity. Here, we sought to fill this gap and 239 explore the relative roles of indirect and direct benefits regardless of kinship or lack thereof. 240

241 Relatedness had a strong effect on the number of interactions between alloparents and 242 children, in line with a wide array of literature on cooperation in hunter-gatherers, from childcare, economic games and food sharing^{5,20,21,46,47,66}. We have shown that, following 243 244 Hamilton's rule, benefits are important mediators in breeding cooperatively. Accordingly, we 245 demonstrated that close kin provided more childcare when the indirect benefits (i.e. 246 household need) were high, a finding which has been repeated elsewhere ^{36,41,42,67}. We were 247 not so successful at capturing a measure of giver 'cost', as alloparent households with more 248 carers interacted with children more, not less. It may be that this finding reflects the fact that 249 when there are a lot of carers available, each of these alloparents do less. Further exploration 250 is required to parcel out these effects.

251

252 Our measure of reciprocal household interactions also positively predicted interactions with 253 dependent children, indicating the importance of bi-directional exchanges and direct fitness 254 benefits since the effect of reciprocity was comparable to relatedness. The influence of 255 household-level reciprocity was strongest in non-kin; however, as predicted, reciprocal cooperation was not limited to non-kin; household-level reciprocity was also associated with 256 257 increased interactions in both close and distant kin, but to a lesser degree than non-kin. 258 Similar results have been found elsewhere, as the effects of kinship quickly evaporate as r259 decreases³⁹ and distantly related individuals may receive higher fitness returns from following reciprocal exchanges²⁷. Reciprocity is expected when Bp > C (p = the probability of future 260 261 interactions); thus, even if cooperating individuals are related, the potential of reciprocity will 262 influence behaviour, encouraging cooperation.

263 Kin are not only tied by relatedness, but share multiple social bonds as they often reside at close proximity and experience increased trust and familiarity^{48,68}. As a result, while 264 265 cooperative dyads may be formed due to relatedness, this cooperation is maintained and stabilised by direct benefits^{32,69}, as found in food transfers in the Ache horticultural-266 267 foragers³⁴. Partner choice was originally posited as a form of reciprocity, as individuals can avoid 'cheaters' by switching to a more 'safe-bet' partners, who may often be relatives³⁰. In 268 269 concordance with partner choice models of reciprocity, the small effect of need on alloparent-270 child interactions with distant kin and non-kin may have been the consequence of avoiding 'labour poor' households as childcare assistance may not occur readily in return⁷⁰. Too many 271 272 children relative to providers within a household may signal an inability to reciprocate 273 childcare⁷¹, and thus these households were avoided as cooperative partners.

274

275 The proxy for the learning-to-mother hypothesis was non-significant in the full model, which 276 was perhaps not altogether surprising as there are significant shortcomings in this 277 hypothesis⁷². Primarily, it is unclear why, if infants are so vulnerable, mothers would allow 278 inexperienced, inept juveniles to provide childcare. There is evidence that allomothers present a significant danger to offspring in non-human primates⁷³: a potential reason for the 279 280 lack of alloparenting in non-human apes or baboons⁷⁴. Furthermore, this hypothesis assumes 281 that time spent in allocare directly equates to future reproductive success, while in 282 cooperatively breeding primates, juveniles are often inept and intolerant carers who do not 283 seem to improve their skills by conducting these caring activities⁷⁵. Longitudinal data on 284 juvenile involvement in childcare and later child outcomes would be necessary to test this 285 hypothesis more fully. However, an analysis in the Maya found that girls who spent more time 286 in allocare did not have more surviving offspring⁷⁶. Therefore, currently there seems little 287 support for this hypothesis.

288

Likewise, we found that reproductively aged males interacted with dependent children the least, likely because males were heavily involved in indirect childcare activities such as food production. Thus, this does not support the costly signalling hypothesis which suggests that males copiously signal their quality in direct childcare to achieve increased mating success (of course, here signalling via hunting skills has gone unmeasured). Similar results have been found in callitrichids, where males did not increase care according to mating access, receptiveness of females, state of oestrus, nor was the provisioning of care closely followed by copulation attempts^{77,78}. Motivations of paternal care have also been explored among the Tsimane horticultural-foragers of Bolivia, finding no support for the predictions of costly signalling. As males provided the most passive care (in contrast to conspicuous, 'signalling' childcare) when mothers were absent, it appeared that the division of labour was a more important motivator of male childcare in humans⁷⁹.

301

302 Overall, these findings highlight how the benefits (be they direct or indirect) of cooperation 303 can influence interactions with dependent children differently based on who the alloparent 304 is; indirect and direct benefits are not competing explanations of behaviour. Carter and 305 colleagues (2017), based on their work on food sharing in vampire bats, suggest that 306 cooperation should be considered to exist on a continuous spectrum from 100% direct fitness 307 benefits to 100% indirect benefits. While we fully agree this avoids behaviours being labelled 308 as only nepotistic or only reciprocal, this still implies that increases in direct benefit requires 309 a *decrease* in indirect benefits, which need not to be the case. A layered analogy may be far 310 more suitable, indicating that individuals are built up of different interacting 'motivational 311 layers'.

312

313 A limitation of this work is the use of proximity at 1.5 meters as a measure of 'childcare', as it 314 is not possible to uncover who initiated the interaction, or separate high-investment activities 315 (carrying, feeding, grooming etc.) from low-investment activities (proximate observation, 316 touching etc.). Previous studies, particularly in small-scale societies, have focused of highinvestment childcare^{21,61,80}. However, as the function of childcare is to reduce maternal 317 318 workload, then the definition of childcare should not only be limited to high-quality 319 investment. Sole focus on high-investing caretakers effectively ignores alloparents who 320 engage in passive childcare. While these activities do not take significant effort or attention, 321 individuals who are proximate to children are those who intervene and respond when specific 322 situations arise ⁸¹. This is reinforced here, as we have argued that passive proximity is an 323 important form of childcare for the Agta.

324

325 While motes cannot provide data on the nature of the interaction, they do capture a far wider 326 range of alloparents. Yet, of course, while direct allocare requires close proximity, this does 327 not mean that close proximity equates to allocare. For instance, some interactions maybe be 328 superfluous as two individuals simply walk pass one another, or even antagonistic. There is 329 no way to separate these interactions from the motes data. However, as discussed in the 330 methodological section, there is near perfect overlap between the motes data and the 331 observational data which confirms that the 'motes proximity' is the same as observational 332 'childcare proximity'. Therefore, this inability to separate interactions is not systematically 333 biasing the data. A final consideration is that our measure of 'allocare' is not dependent on 334 the absence of the child's main caregiver. Therefore, some interactions may consist of a ten-335 year old interacting with a three-year-old when the mother is present. This feature has been 336 maintained in the data because it is reflective of reality; by entertaining and engaging with a 337 younger child in the presence of the mother, the older child has significantly reduced the 338 mother's workload allowing her to rest, socialise or conduct other household tasks in the 339 presence of a dependent child. Ultimately, while the motes produce less in-depth data, due 340 to the increased sample size and duration the amount of data allows for more complex 341 analyses required to explore the question 'why care?'

342

343 Here, we have demonstrated that while kinship plays an important role in structuring 344 childcare interactions in a foraging population, this is not the sole explanation. When different 345 predictors of alternative hypotheses are examined together, alongside costs and benefits, we 346 find that different predictors are important for different individuals. For close kin, interactions 347 increased when the inclusive fitness returns are high. However, while both close and distant 348 relatives share genetic material with children, their interactions appeared *also* dependent on 349 household-level reciprocity. This household-level reciprocity may have been maintained 350 because of the increased trust and likelihood of future interactions between relatives, 351 however its maintenance was not solely dependent on indirect benefits. Thus, it is incomplete 352 to argue that nepotistic mechanisms drive cooperation in breeding for humans without 353 conducting multivariate analyses to weigh up different hypotheses and including adequate 354 controls⁸². Without this intensive care from close kin and a wide childcare network of distant 355 kind and non-kin, mothers may not be able to maintain a rapid reproductive rate, particularly 356 in the face of unpredictable shortfalls during environmental stochasticity. In a population with 357 minimal-to-no material wealth, social capital and cooperation from outside the household may provide a 'buffer' to energetic shortfalls⁴⁹. Ensuring cooperation from both kin and non-358

kin alike is likely a major behavioural adaptation to ensure individuals' reproductive success.
By exploring childcare in humans from this perspective, we can offer important new insights
into why both kin and non-kin alloparents care in an unpredictable foraging ecology,
highlighting how ultimate explanations must be considered mutually inclusive.

363

364 Methods

365 The Agta

366 There are around 1,000 Agta living in Palanan municipality in north-eastern Luzon. Riverine 367 and marine spearfishing provides the primary source of animal protein, supplemented by 368 inter-tidal foraging and the gathering of wild foods as well as low-intensity cultivation, wage labour and trade^{83,84}. The Agta are, like any group, a diverse population with some individuals 369 370 engaging in more cultivation and living in permanent camps while others are highly mobile and spend more time foraging^{84,85}. Full ethnographic details about modes of subsistence, 371 372 mobility and diet can be found in the SI. The Agta, as a small-scale population, are ideal for 373 the following analyses because their social networks are predominantly contained within 374 their camps, which are not large (range 6-119 individuals), enabling us to capture the majority 375 of interactions during data collection. Furthermore, like many similar hunter-gatherer 376 populations, the Agta live in camps of fluid membership containing a large proportion of 377 unrelated individuals⁵⁰, as well as being highly cooperative⁶⁶. This stems from highly variable 378 foraging returns, necessitating significant food distribution and cooperation, influencing the 379 social structure of camps⁴⁷. Therefore, we expect there to be significant cooperation between 380 a wide range of individuals.

381

Data collection occurred over two field seasons from April to June 2013 and February to October 2014. We stayed approximately 10-14 days in six camps for two, sometimes three visits during the fieldwork period and conducted genealogical interviews, motes data collection and focal follows. Overall the genealogies collected contained 2,953 living and dead Agta from Palanan and neighbouring municipalities. From this data, it was possible to establish the coefficient of relatedness (*r*) of each dyad. As a small population the sample and its ultimate size is a product of everyone who we met in each of the camps who was willing to participant in the various data collection activities. No statistical methods were used
 to pre-determine sample sizes but our sample sizes are larger than previously reported in
 childcare analyses in foragers ^{20,81}.

392

This research was approved by UCL Ethics Committee (UCL Ethics code 3086/003) and carried out with permission from local government and tribal leaders. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, after group and individual consultation and explanation of the research objectives in the indigenous language. A small compensation (usually a thermal bottle or cooking utensils) was given to each participant.

398

399 Motes and childcare observations

400 Motes are wireless sensing devices which store all between-device communications within a 401 specified distance^{49,86}. The device we utilised was the UCMote Mini (with a TinyOS operating 402 system). The motes were sealed into wristbands and belts (depending on size and 403 preference⁸⁶) and labelled with a unique number and identified with coloured string to avoid 404 accidental swaps. All individuals within a camp wore the motes from a period ranging from 405 five to seven days. The motes create ad hoc networks and require no grounded infrastructure. 406 Therefore, they have the advantage of collecting interactions even when a group of 407 individuals were far from camp foraging. Data was only selected from between 05:00 and 408 20:00 to avoid long hours of recording who slept in the same shelter. If individuals arrived at 409 a camp during data collection, they were promptly given a mote and entry time was recorded. 410 Similarly, if an individual left a camp at any time before the end of data collection, the time 411 they returned the mote was recorded. To ensure swaps did not occur, individuals were asked 412 twice daily to check they were wearing the correct armband. All mote numbers were also 413 checked when they were returned. Any swaps were recorded during data collection and 414 adjusted in the final data processing by associating the individual with the correct mote at 415 any given point during data collection. The total number of interactions became the 416 dependent variable in the analyses, and a term was entered into all models to control for the 417 number of hours each dyad was present in camp and wearing a mote.

419 Each device sent a message every two minutes that contained its unique ID, a time stamp and the signal strength. These messages are stored by any other mote within a three meter radius. 420 421 Being within three meters is a common threshold applied in behavioural studies of human and non-human primates to denote dyadic exchanges^{87–90}, however for increased robustness, 422 423 here we will use a subset of the interactions which occur within 1.5 meters. This threshold 424 captured close interactions, such as playing, hunting, foraging and socialising as well as low-425 investment proximity, such as watching or simply being near to a child and intervening when 426 required. Once these data were processed, we checked and confirmed autocorrelation was 427 not systematically biasing our data (Supplementary Figure 3).

428

429 In order to verify that proximity is associated with actual helping behaviours, we compared 430 the motes proximity with an observational measure of proximity. The observational measure 431 is acquired from two researchers (AEP and SV), following the same focal sampling techniques 432 and protocols^{81,91,92}, observing a child for a 9-hour period and recording who came within 433 three-meter proximity of that child (i.e. sitting within the same shelter as well as directly 434 interacting with that child) and the exact nature of their interaction (i.e. playing, grooming, 435 carrying, watching). These observations are broken into three 4-hour intervals (6:00 – 10:00, 436 10:00 – 14:00 and 14:00 – 18:00), in which the researcher records the activities of the focal 437 child and carers each 20 seconds, stopping for a 15-minute break each hour. These 4-hour 438 intervals were conducted on non-consecutive days to reduce any sampling bias (e.g. if a father 439 was out of camp for those two days). Focal follows were conducted on all children within the 440 sample whose parents were willing to participate in the study. Where there were more 441 children then possible to observe within the timeframe in one camp, we observed at least 442 one child from each household (Supplementary Table 1). This data was compared to the 443 motes data for five children who were observed at exactly the same time as the motes data 444 collection.

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446 Means were produced for the proportion of time these five children spent within three-447 meters of various categories of kin. The differences between the two forms of data collection 448 are minimal, and the distribution of observations is not significantly altered between the two 449 methods. For instance, the motes recorded that the children spent on average $34 \pm 26\%$ (SD) 450 of time with mothers, $11 \pm 5\%$ of time with fathers, $24 \pm 13\%$ of time with siblings and $6 \pm 6\%$,

451 7 + 7% and 23 + 13% for grandparents, other kin ($r \le 0.25$ and ≥ 0.125) and non-kin (r < 0.125), 452 respectively (note these proportions do not sum to 1 since children can be with more than 453 one individual at any given observation). These same children were observed spending 37 + 454 26% of time within three meters of their mothers, $19 \pm 19\%$ with fathers, $24 \pm 19\%$ with 455 siblings and $2 \pm 1\%$, $7 \pm 8\%$ and $24 \pm 20\%$ of their time with grandparents, other kin and non-456 kin, respectively (Supplementary Figure 2). Overall, the consistency between the 457 observational and motes data leads us to conclude motes have a high reliability (specifically, 458 they are not systematically biasing the data with superfluous interactions) and represent a 459 type of proximity which can be considered 'childcare'.

460

461 It is also important to establish what kinds of interactions actually occur between individuals 462 within three meters of one another. Using a larger sample of behavioural observations (which 463 do not coincide with the motes data collection) of 40 children (64.5% males; 20 infants (aged 464 less than two years) and 20 toddlers (aged two to five years)) we explored what 'proximity' 465 actually means. This analysis revealed that alloparents were in proximity (i.e. not engaging in 466 any other activities) for 61% of interactions with children and 63.6% of interactions with 467 infants (Table 1). This includes touching, being at arms-length, or being three meters from a 468 child. In contrast, high investment activities (play, carry, groom, etc.) only accounted for 469 11.8% of interactions for infants and 8.3% for children. Childcare in the Agta, thus, is defined 470 by low-investment, passive childcare, rather than high-investment, active childcare. We 471 would like to reinforce the importance of proximity as a form of childcare, as if the ultimate 472 aim of allocare is to reduce the maternal workload by 'watching' or being 'proximate' to 473 children then our definition of childcare should not ignore these key forms of investment. 474 Here, however, as we are using proximity data in which we do not know the nature of the 475 interaction we have reduced the data down to interactions at 1.5 meters or closer to ensure 476 we are not capturing too many superfluous interactions in which an older individual is simply 477 nearby a child, but pays little attention to that child.

478

479 Motes allowed us to produce high-resolution proximity networks for a larger sample than 480 previously possible. While a one-week snapshot of interactions may not be reflective of a 481 typical week for all individuals, this method greatly increases the sample size and 482 observational time compared to traditional methods. Given the labour-intensive nature of 483 behavioural observations, many previous studies have been limited by small sample sizes. For 484 instance, in previous studies using focal follow techniques, sample sizes are often limited to 15 to 25 children^{20,81}, who are only observed for a total of 9 hours^{91,92}. Thus, while not only 485 486 increasing the number individuals observed, the motes also greatly increase the duration of 487 these observations. This substantially increases the representativeness of the sample and the 488 statistical power of any analysis, allowing more complex methods. This issue of sample size 489 is perhaps one reason why the study of cooperation in breeding within anthropology has not systematically explored alternative hypotheses; more elaborate methods which 490 491 systematically control for the interrelationships between relatedness, proximity and 492 reciprocity require significantly more statistical power. Furthermore, while the motes offer 493 less detail than traditional approaches, they do consist of a less intrusive form of data 494 collection, and therefore the fieldworker does not risk biasing the results due to their 495 presence in following and recording all activities of a focal child.

496

497 Variables

498 Alloparents and dependent children

499 Individuals aged six or over were defined as alloparents following our observations and the 500 wider literature which demonstrates increased production and economic activities after the age of five^{93–95}. As dependent children are all those under the age of 11 years there is overlap 501 502 between the child and alloparent categories (for 33 alloparents or 22.3% of the sample). To 503 avoid this circularity, children could only be 'cared' for by individuals who were at least five 504 years older than themselves. For instance, a child of five years could be 'cared' for by an 505 individual aged ten years, a situation not uncommon from our observations and within the 506 childcare literature in hunter-gatherers ^{61,96}. However, a child of nine years could not be 507 'cared' for by the same ten-year-old. As a result, the youngest child in a camp could not be 508 considered to be alloparent, regardless of whether they were aged six or over. This allowed 509 us to capture the crossover of juveniles as both dependents and carers. To confirm the five-510 year age difference exerted no undue influence on our results we ran sensitivity analysis 511 (Supplementary Tables 5-7) exploring the effect of age difference thresholds of two, five and 512 ten years. These analyses demonstrate the results are robust regardless of the age difference.

513 *Residential proximity*

To capture the effects of residential proximity we captured a measure of geographic proximity. Camp clusters were created based on household proximity in camps; lean-tos and shelters are clustered together in twos and threes, which structure within-camp interactions. For instance, food sharing commonly occurs between these two or three nearby households. Therefore, as a measure of repeated interactions due to shared space, these clusters were used to capture association effects. If a child's parents and alloparent(s) belonged to the same camp cluster they were coded as one, otherwise zero.

521 Household-level reciprocity

522 To test the influence of reciprocity, a reciprocity variable was created for each household 523 dyad based on the observational data to avoid issues of statistical endogeneity⁹⁷. As discussed 524 above, the key prediction of reciprocity can be understood as 'contingency', defined as the relationship between what A gives B and what B gives A⁹⁸. Capturing contingent cooperation 525 526 'on the ground', however, is difficult, particularly as it is frequently not perfectly balanced, 527 nor expected to be^{34,38}. This is especially the case in childcare as dependent children cannot immediately reciprocate care. Furthermore, while tit-for-tat models of cooperation²⁷ include 528 529 a temporal dimension (i.e. if A helps B in interaction 1, B will help A in interaction 2), this need 530 not be the case as reciprocity in the real-world is often far more complex than score-keeping, 531 especially when we understand that imbalance in transactions is to be expected to mitigate 532 risks²⁸. Therefore, taking these considerations into account, we created a continuous measure 533 of contingency which captures the help from household B to household A when a member of 534 household A is the 'alloparent'. We are not capturing individual-level dyadic reciprocity, but 535 rather *household-level reciprocity* in which the original 'help' from household A to household 536 B may be returned from a different person in household B. For example, mother *i* in 537 household A may help child *j* in household B, then in return mother *i* in household B may look 538 after child *j* in household A.

539

This variable was created as follows: for the 'giving household' (household *i*) a composite value was created which captures all *observed* childcare events each dependent child in *i* had received from all carers in the 'receiving household' (household *j*, visualised in Supplementary Figure 1). As reciprocity is a household-level predictor, it was only used in analyses *between* households (i.e. it is not used to predict co-residing sibling care, and therefore the sample is

reduced from n = 1,701 to n = 1,615). As the reciprocity variable was created from the observed childcare interactions between a carer and a child, this measure only contains actual childcare interactions which includes playing, holding, cleaning, feeding, talking to, or watching and/or being in close proximity to a child.

549 *Giver household cost and receiver need*

550 Cost was denoted by two variables at the giver's household level. Firstly, high cost is captured 551 by the giver having many dependents in the household (individuals aged 0-11 years, discrete 552 variable, range: 0-7). Secondly, high cost is measured as having few carers available in the 553 giver's household (individual age six years and above, discrete variable, range: 0-5). Similar to 554 the measure of reciprocity, these cost measures are household-level measures, thus, they are 555 only used in analyses between households (n = 1,615). Receiver household need was 556 produced by dividing the number of dependent children (0-11 years) in the child's household 557 by the number of carers in that household.

558

559 Relatedness and individual categories

560 In the first set of analyses, relatedness was measured by the coefficient of relatedness (r) and 561 ranged from 0 to 0.5. The second set of analyses (focusing on the interaction between 562 relatedness, household-level reciprocity and need), kin was separated into three categories 563 to ease interpretation: close kin, distant kin and non-kin. Close kin referred to all individuals 564 who are related *r* = 0.5, thus only included siblings (as parents are removed from this sample). 565 Distant kin (r = 0.0 - 0.25) included grandparents, half siblings, aunts and uncles and first and 566 second and third cousins. Non-kin (r = 0) included individuals who were completely unrelated 567 or were so distantly related we were unable to track this relationship with the genealogies.

568

To explore the hypothesis that allocare was a form of learning-to-mother, we examined the prediction that pre-reproductive females would be more likely to provide allocare. Therefore, we coded allocarers as either pre-reproductive (aged under 16 years) females as one, everyone else zero. Likewise, the costly signalling hypothesis was explored by examining the prediction that reproductively aged males would be more likely to provide allocare. Therefore, we coded reproductively (aged 16 years or over) aged males as one, everyone else zero.

576 Statistical analysis

577 We ran zero-inflated Poisson mixed-effect models (also known as multilevel models) in R 578 version 3.2.2 using the glmmTMB package to explore the effects of the predictor variables on 579 the total number of interactions a carer had with a child during the data collection period. 580 Some individuals started or stopped data collection at different times, therefore the models 581 were offset with an 'hours' term to adjust for the number of hours both individuals within a 582 dyad were involved in data collection at the same time. All interactions between parents and 583 children were removed from the dataset, thus all remaining interactions reflect alloparents. 584 The unit of analysis in the model was the dyadic relationship (n = 1,701) between a child (n =585 85, 41.9% female, age range: 0.08 - 11 years) and alloparent (n = 147, 50.9% female, age 586 range: 6.22-75 years). Random effects captured clustering at the household (alloparent 587 household n = 42; child household n = 33) and camp (n = 6) levels, as well as the repeated 588 observations from children and alloparents in different dyads. All random-effect variances are 589 presented at the bottom of Tables 2, 3 and 4.

590

591 In each analysis we controlled for child age and sex (0 = male) as well as the age difference 592 between alloparent and child, to capture the fact that children closer in age were more likely 593 to be playing together. Age difference was run in an interaction with carer age (grouped into 594 child (aged 10 or less), adult (aged 10 to 40) and older adult (aged 40 plus) for the sake of the 595 interaction) as the effect of age difference varies between age groups, Supplementary Table 8). As household-level reciprocity and our measures of giver 'cost' (number of household 596 597 dependents and carers) are only measured for dyads residing in different households the 598 sample size was reduced to n = 1,615 for four models. Consequently, two sets of 'full' models 599 are presented in Table 3, predicting allocare between and within households in which cost 600 and reciprocity are not included (n = 1,701), and between households which includes all 601 variables but co-residing alloparents are now excluded (n = 1615).

602

603 Data availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding authorupon request.

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851 Author contributions

A.E.P conceived and designed this study, A.B.M led the research project and supervised the
study. S.V and A.E.P designed the motes, A.E.P analysed the data with M.G.T and wrote the
manuscript with A.B.M. A.E.P, M.D, S.V and D.S collected data. M.G.T, M.D, S.V, D.S, N.C, J.T,
G.S, R.M and A.B.M all assisted in writing the manuscript.

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857 Competing interests

- 858 The authors declare no competing interests.
- 859

876 Figures legends

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Figure 1: Predictors of carer-child interactions. Odd ratios with 95% CI for each of the predictor variables in the univariable mixed-effect models (triangles) and the full mixed-effect models between and within households (circles; n = 1,701) and the full mixed-effect models between households only (squares; n = 1,615). Bars represent 95% confidence intervals, bars spanning the 0 line are non-significant.

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Figure 2: Relatedness, need and reciprocity and carer-child interactions. Model predicted number of contacts based on interactions between kin type and a) receiver household need; b) household reciprocity. Red lines are close kin (r = 0.5), green lines distant kin ($0 \le r \le 0.25$) and non-kin (r = 0) are represented by blue lines. Shaded zones represent 95% confidence intervals

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892 Tables

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894 **Table 1**: Breakdown of the proportion of allocare activities recieved by infants and children.

- 895 Being 'talked to' is when a caregiver may be talking to the focal child within the specified
- 896 levels of proximity.

	Infants	Children
Carried	0.056	0.007
Care for (fed and cleaned)	0.028	0.012
Played with	0.034	0.064
Talked to	0.208	0.189
In a playgroup	0.038	0.119
Touched	0.105	0.057
Arms-length	0.349	0.350
3-meters	0.182	0.203

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Table 2: Results from multi-level models examining different predictors for the number of dyadic interactions between and within households

902 (*n* = 1,701). Standardised odds ratios (OR) are reported alongside 95% confidence intervals. Random effect variances are presented for each

903 specified effect in the model at the bottom of the table. Reference for the adult and old age groups is juvenile (6 – 16 years), the reference for

904 child sex is male (female = 1).

Devementer	Relatedness				Household need			Learning to mother				Costly signalling				
Parameter	OR p		95	95% CI		p	<i>p</i> 95% CI		OR	p	95% CI		OR	p	95	% CI
Intercept	0.004	<0.001	0.002	0.01	0.002	<0.001	0.001	0.004	0.002	<0.001	0.001	0.004	0.002	<0.001	0.001	0.004
Child age	0.995	0.958	0.837	1.184	0.985	0.863	0.831	1.168	0.983	0.845	0.829	1.166	0.964	0.678	0.812	1.145
Child sex	1.336	0.085	0.961	1.859	1.325	0.089	0.958	1.833	1.332	0.084	0.962	1.844	1.332	0.084	0.962	1.844
Adult	3.338	<0.001	1.693	6.579	5.227	<0.001	2.643	10.337	6.004	<0.001	2.896	12.447	6.096	<0.001	3.09	12.027
Old age	3.484	0.004	1.485	8.176	6.983	<0.001	2.969	16.424	8.884	<0.001	3.382	23.341	10.105	<0.001	4.126	24.746
Age diff	0.172	<0.001	0.105	0.284	0.08	<0.001	0.048	0.131	0.08	<0.001	0.048	0.131	0.072	<0.001	0.043	0.118
Proximity	1.51	<0.001	1.478	1.543	1.961	<0.001	1.926	1.995	1.957	<0.001	1.924	1.992	1.957	<0.001	1.924	1.992
r	1.184	<0.001	1.175	1.194	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Need	-	-	-	-	0.979	0.177	0.948	1.01	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Learn	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.433	0.196	0.83	2.473	-	-	-	-
Signal	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.533	0.016	0.32	0.889
Adult*age diff	9.472	<0.001	6.497	13.809	14.597	<0.001	10.029	21.246	14.528	<0.001	9.981	21.148	14.537	<0.001	9.988	21.158
Old*age diff	6.44	<0.001	4.418	9.386	13.738	<0.001	9.454	19.964	13.683	<0.001	9.415	19.887	13.683	<0.001	9.416	19.883
Giver		1.242 (56.30%)			1.278 (59.7%)		1.221 (56.91%)					1.199 (5	7.25%)	
Child		0.508 (23.02%)			0.485 (2	22.67%)		0.484 (22.55%)					0.484 (2	3.09%)	
Give-house		0.159 ((7.22%)		0.144 (6.72%)			0.20 (9.31%)			0.172 (8.19%)					
Child-house		0.049 ((2.22%)		0.052 (2.44%)			0.059 (2.73%)			0.059 (2.82%)					
Camp		0.248 (11.25%)			0.182 (8.47%)		0.182 (8.50%)				0.181 (8.65%)			

Table 3: Results from the multi-level models examining different predictors for the number of dyadic interactions between households only as

909 the three predictors are household level variables (n = 1,615). Standardised odds ratios (OR) are reported alongside 95% confidence intervals.

Random effect variances are presented for each specified effect in the model at the bottom of the table. Reference for the adult and old age

911	groups is juvenile (6 -	- 16 years), the	reference for	[·] child sex is mal	e (female = 1)
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Deverseter		Household F	Reciprocity			Givers depe	endents		Givers carers			
Parameter	OR	OR p		95% CI		p	95%	95% CI		р	95% CI	
Intercept	0.010	<0.001	0.004	0.025	0.013	<0.001	0.005	0.033	0.017	<0.001	0.007	0.041
Child age	1.039	0.686	0.863	1.252	1.010	0.914	0.841	1.214	1.042	0.663	0.866	1.253
Child sex	1.425	0.054	0.995	2.043	1.421	0.051	0.998	2.023	1.420	0.052	0.998	2.022
Adult	1.076	0.846	0.513	2.256	0.657	0.271	0.311	1.387	0.632	0.225	0.301	1.326
Old age	1.397	0.475	0.558	3.494	1.050	0.917	0.419	2.632	0.707	0.468	0.278	1.801
Age difference	0.540	0.034	0.306	0.953	0.734	0.286	0.417	1.295	0.867	0.625	0.489	1.537
Proximity	1.063	<0.001	1.037	1.090	1.326	<0.001	1.298	1.356	1.326	<0.001	1.298	1.356
Reciprocity	1.189	<0.001	1.179	1.199	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Givers depends	-	-	-	-	0.734	0.286	0.417	1.295	-	-	-	-
Givers carers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.661	0.000	0.534	0.817
Adult*age diff	2.686	0.000	1.686	4.281	1.532	0.070	0.966	2.431	1.523	0.074	0.960	2.417
Old age*agediff	2.043	0.002	1.287	3.244	1.503	0.082	0.950	2.377	1.497	0.085	0.946	2.367
Giver		1.260 (4	8.67%)			1.264 (51	.81%)		1.317 (54.4%)			
Child	Child 0.540 (20.88%)					0.546 (22	.37%)			0.549 (22	2.66%)	
<i>Giver house</i> 0.228 (8.80%)						0.236 (9	.7%)		0.217 (8.95%)			
Child house		0.152 (5	5.89%)			0.095 (3	.9%)		0.091 (3.75%)			
Сатр		0.408 (1	5.76%)			0.298 (12	2.2%)		0.248 (10.24%)			

915 **Table 4:** Full models with all variables for model (A) between and within households (*n* = 1,701) and model (B) between households only (*n* =

916 1615). Standardised odds ratios (OR) are reported alongside 95% confidence intervals. Random effect variances are presented for each specified

917 effect in the model. Reference for the adult and old age groups is juvenile (6 – 16 years), the reference for child sex is male (female = 1).

Parameter	(A) Full	model betv househ	veen and olds	(B) Full model between household				
	OR	р	95%	% CI	OR	p	95% CI	
Intercept	0.003	<0.001	0.001	0.008	0.009	<0.001	0.003	0.025
Child age	0.976	0.783	0.820	1.161	1.052	0.599	0.871	1.271
Child sex	1.338	0.085	0.961	1.863	1.455	0.043	1.012	2.091
Adult	4.177	<0.001	2.075	8.412	1.342	0.446	0.630	2.857
Old age	5.713	<0.001	2.208	14.784	1.561	0.390	0.566	4.305
Age difference	0.156	<0.001	0.094	0.257	0.576	0.064	0.322	1.032
Proximity	1.510	<0.001	1.477	1.542	1.048	<0.001	1.021	1.075
R	1.185	<0.001	1.175	1.194	1.015	0.010	1.004	1.027
Receivers need	1.007	0.673	0.976	1.039	1.087	<0.001	1.050	1.126
Learn to mother	1.260	0.386	0.748	2.121	1.338	0.278	0.790	2.265
Costly signalling	0.569	0.028	0.344	0.941	0.628	0.083	0.371	1.062
Reciprocity	-	-	-	-	1.183	<0.001	1.172	1.195
Givers depends	-	-	-	-	1.162	0.359	0.843	1.601
Givers carers	-	-	-	-	0.651	<0.001	0.522	0.811
Adult*age diff	9.457	<0.001	6.486	13.789	2.721	<0.001	1.706	4.340
Old age*agediff	6.424	<0.001	4.407	9.365	2.070	0.002	1.302	3.290
Giver		1.140 (52	2.68%)		1.232	(48.54%)		
Child		0.506 (23	8.38%)		0.543	(21.39%)		
Giver house	Giver house 0.214 (9.86%)						(10.29%)	
Child house		0.052 (2	.44%)			0.171	(6.74%)	
Сатр		0.252 (11	L.64%)			0.331	(13.05%)	

Table 5: Model predicted relationship between need and reciprocity interacting with kin type. In each model, the reference group is close kin (r

919 = 0.5). The predictor is relevant to the model (need in model 1 and reciprocity in model 2). The beta values given for the interactions

920 (predictor*distant or non-kin) denotes the change in the odds ratio (OR) within each kin group compared to the reference group of close kin.

921 The ORs given in text represent the effect of need or reciprocity in each kin group, presented alongside 95% confidence intervals. The reference

922 for child sex is male (female = 1).

	N	1odel 1: N	leed (<i>n =</i> 1	.701)	Model 2: Reciprocity (n = 1610)				
Parameter	OR	р	2.5% CI	97.5% CI	OR	р	2.5% CI	97.5% CI	
Intercept	0.048	<0.001	0.031	0.076	0.008	<0.001	0.004	0.015	
Child age	0.963	0.663	0.814	1.140	1.021	0.815	0.857	1.217	
Child sex	1.363	0.077	0.967	1.921	1.431	0.051	0.998	2.051	
Predictor	1.485	<0.001	1.428	1.544	1.176	<0.001	1.140	1.212	
Distant kin	0.368	<0.001	0.357	0.379	1.551	<0.001	1.437	1.674	
Non-kin	0.322	<0.001	0.312	0.332	1.544	<0.001	1.430	1.667	
Predictor*distant kin	0.701	<0.001	0.681	0.722	1.028	0.095	0.995	1.061	
Predictor*non-kin	0.679	<0.001	0.660	0.699	1.097	<0.001	1.061	1.135	