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**The problem of not helping in welfare states**  
**Draft 16.10.2011**

**Introduction**

There are situations when we are all supposed to help other people if we can: A person in life-threatening danger, close relatives in need, especially children and parents, those who have helped us (reciprocity), absolutely helpless people, and everyday low-cost helping. We have nowadays lots of research about helping relatives, helping others, giving to people and so on. And we know a lot about helpers, altruism, and charity. We often think of helping as the norm. However, non-helping is not discussed.

The question of helping, especially among kin (e.g. intergenerational transfers) has been seen as relevant in many different contexts, for instance with regard to the baby boomer generation and its rapidly approaching withdrawal from working life, as a more general question of interaction between generations, as an alternative way to respond to the growing help needs of a rapidly aging population, and as a possible alternative to the welfare state (in Europe e.g. Attias-Donfut, 1995; Attias-Donfut and Segalen, 1998; Lowenstein et al., 2001; Bengtson et al., 2002; Brandt et al., 2009). The results of these studies indeed confirm that the phenomenon of helping is important, that it has varying motivations and that it varies between countries with different family structures, etc. In this article we are interested in the opposite question, that of why people

do not help their relatives and others.

Informal helping is not common. Almost every second, 44.6%, of the respondents of the surveys conducted in 12 European SHARE countries and Finland in 2007 do not give any help at all (see Table 1 below) and one third, 33.1%, are financial non-helpers. Financial non-help outside family is the rule.

There are many possible reasons for not helping, for instance, individualization and selfishness, welfare state is crowding out helping, own resources are insufficient, own family situation is demanding, and own situation is worse than that of the kin and relatives. Next we present some theoretical points of view which might help to understand non-helping.

### **Theoretical perspectives**

A theoretical sea change has taken place in the research of helping. In traditional Darwinian evolutionary theory, the basic model used to be selfish individuals (and genes) fighting for survival. Nowadays we have an inverse situation: altruism and cooperation dominate and selfish non-cooperators are the exception. Success in reproduction is the key.

#### **Altruism**

Whether homo sapiens is a fundamentally altruistic species or not is a widely debated question. The history of humans shows evidence for and against: on the one hand wars and genocide, inconceivable cruelty and ignorance, but on the other hand co-operation, unselfish heroism and

the altruistic helping of kin, neighbours and even strangers (see e.g. Smith, 2007; Zimbardo, 2008). In the case of altruism, acquaintances it is important to separate altruism towards one's own children, kin, and other unrelated people. Furthermore, familiar acquaintances (friends, colleagues etc.) and strangers have to be distinguished from each other in any analysis of altruistic behavior (see e.g. Smith 2007, 137–141; de Waal 2008). The latter (strangers) are not the subject of this article.

From an evolutionary point of view, it is particularly important to distinguish help provided to biologically related kin and that given to friends because the genetic link (or alleged link) is essential. Evolutionary theory predicts that help between relatives is based on the theory of kin selection. According to kin selection theory, which was originally formulated by W. D. Hamilton (1964a; 1964b), greater genetic relatedness is associated with higher levels of altruism. In biological terms, altruism is defined as behavior which benefits another organism at the cost of the performer. Hamilton (1964a; 1964b) illustrates that an individual can enhance his or her inclusive fitness by supporting a close relative's reproduction capability (indirect fitness) at the cost of his or her own direct reproductive fitness. Hamilton's rule,  $rB > C$ , where  $r$  is the genetic relatedness of the recipient to the actor,  $B$  is the additional reproductive benefit gained by the recipient of the altruistic act and  $C$  is the reproductive cost to the individual of performing the act, predicts when altruism towards kin is worthwhile and when it is not. In other words, the closer individuals are related, the more altruistically they behave towards one another. According to kin selection theory, it is essential that altruistic behavior benefits the reproduction of the recipient, hence altruism is directed more towards to younger more fertile generations than it is towards older ones (see also Sarmaja, 2003; Trivers, 1972). As long as the costs do not exceed

the benefits, reciprocal altruism is also beneficial in relationships other than those among genetically related kin (Trivers, 1971).

### **Individualisation**

In modern society, people are more individualized, independent and free and therefore do not help, whereas in more traditional societies people had to help. Darwinian theory predicts the opposite: we prefer light altruism and help each other when we are free to do so and it is not too costly (relative to resources).

Individualisation marks a shift in our social relations which value individual autonomy over social inter-connectedness. It emerges clearly from the works of Beck (1992), Giddens (1990; 1991; 1992; 1999 Polity), Beck & Gernsheim (2002, Sage) and Bauman (1993). But we even can trace in the discussion about individualisation some of the concern in earlier Marxist theory about the drift from social solidarity towards an atomization through which individuals are separated from one another and social cohesion weakened ([www.alastairhudson.com](http://www.alastairhudson.com)). Bauman (1994, VII) suggests that rather than returning to old beliefs “we need to transcend the antimonies of traditional thought: of state versus community, individual versus community, which have so distorted much of our political culture. Only then can we better understand the connection, rather than contradiction, between the health of common institutions concerned for common fates and the active engagement of millions of questioning, self-directed and often awkward individuals.”

The theory of individualization is relevant in the question of helping non-relatives. People help those they want to help, due to emotional proximity and regardless of kinship. The theory assumes that as traditional social norms loosen, helping diminishes and intensifies: it is only given to those we really feel intimacy towards. When that feeling diminishes, also helping decreases. Thus, the overall diminution of helping should be related to modernization and should favor non-relatives, as obligations towards relatives lose their importance.

### **Welfare regimes and crowding out / in**

Gösta Esping-Andersen's typology (1990) of welfare states has provided a framework for many analyses of European countries. His categorization of welfare regimes goes as follows: liberal (e.g. United States, Britain), corporatist or conservative (e.g. Germany or Italy) and social democratic welfare regimes (e.g. Sweden, Denmark). *Liberal* welfare regimes in general focus on individuals and their responsibility for providing for their families through paid employment. Governments in these countries invest relatively low levels of public money in social programs. Furthermore, neoliberal regimes (such as the United States) pay benefits only to those considered deserving. Liberal welfare regimes emphasize efficiency and individual responsibility. In Europe there are very few countries with clearly liberal regimes. In *corporatist* welfare regimes social insurance programs are typically developed collectively from employees' salaries and by employers groups, trade unions, and governments. The regimes are financed by payroll deductions from employees' salaries and by employer contributions, which are sometimes matched with government contributions. Corporatist regimes are also called *conservative* because they stabilize employee incomes and contribute to social stability and cohesion for employers and governments. *Social democratic* welfare regimes were designed to use taxes to

redistribute income, to maintain full employment, and to prevent poverty. These states offer benefits to individuals as citizenship rights and attempt to minimize inequalities.

The role of informal help in welfare states has recently been the topic of extensive scientific research. Some researchers have assumed that the development of the welfare state has diminished the relevance and meaning of the family as a provider of help and care (Kazepov, 2008; Bengtson, 2001). This 'crowding out' hypothesis predicts that public assistance and benefits have become a substitute to tasks which formerly belonged to families, resulting in a weakening of people's motivation to provide informal assistance (Ostrom, 2000). However, many recent studies have supported the claim that informal help represents an addition to public assistance and benefits in modern welfare states rather than an alternative. The counter argument to the crowding out hypothesis is the crowding in hypothesis (Daatland, 2001; Kohli, 1999; Künemund & Rein, 1999), which predicts that despite broad public assistance, people still help often, especially in the case of their relatives.

In particular, the crowding in hypothesis has been studied in the case of elderly people and their care (Künemund & Rein, 1999; Brandt et al., 2009). The latest results support the specialization hypothesis. The medical care of elderly people is the task of professionals and thus the responsibility of the state, but the family is more likely to provide spontaneous help which is less demanding (Brandt et al., 2009). In addition, empirical studies of child care in Europe indicate that child care help offered by parents to their adult children is very common even in generous welfare systems (Hank & Buber, 2009). The influence type of the welfare state exerts is evident from the intensity of informal assistance. For instance, comparative studies of upward and downward help within the family in different kinds of welfare states imply that a strong

welfare state can enhance the amount of helpers but reduce the intensity of help (Igel et al., 2009; Lingsom, 1997; see also Fokkema et al., 2008; Hank & Buber, 2009).

We can summarize the welfare regime theory connected to it in the following way. The extent of helping depends on the kind of welfare regime and its basic ideologies and practices. According to the crowding out theory the safety net of public services means that we need not help others because there are safety mechanisms in place; therefore we give less help. According to the crowding in alternative people give more help because they feel themselves safe.

## **Research questions and hypotheses**

First, we assess the nature and amount of non-helping among baby boomers born between 1945 and 1950 under different welfare regimes and in different countries. Second, we study the effects of demographic and socio-economic factors, conflicts with family and friends, and attitudes toward the welfare state on non-helping. Finally, we deepen our analysis and look for the variables connected to not caring for grandchildren in Finland.

We ask the following three research questions: 1. What is the scale and type of non-help in different welfare regimes and countries in Europe, how many baby boomers have not given

- financial help to children, other relatives (kin), friends, colleagues and neighbours (non-kin);
- practical help to children, other relatives (kin), friends, colleagues and neighbours (non-kin);
- any help at all?

2. How these types of helping are related to the social and economic background of the respondents?

3. Last we study the role of grandparents in the care of their grandchildren.

The assumed predictors are the following: welfare regime, gender, age, marital status, number of household members, number of children and grandchildren, education, income, grandparent's socio-economic status, grandparent's average distance to grandchildren, conflicts with nearby people, and attitudes towards welfare state.

In addition to description of non-helpers in several European countries, we test the following hypotheses:

1. Based on evolutionary theory, we expect that not giving any help to kin is uncommon in Europe.
2. We assume that not helping one's own children is less common than not helping other kin and non-kin.
3. We also test the crowding out and crowding in hypotheses. According to the crowding out hypothesis, in strong welfare states and among the informal supporters of state care, informal non-helping is common. The crowding in hypothesis suggests the opposite: informal non-helping is rarer in strong welfare states (than in weaker welfare states) where helping simply complements public assistance.

## **Data, concepts and methods of analysis**



We examine the phenomenon of not giving financial or practical help to adult children, other relatives and friends using data from Finland and from 13 other European countries studied in the second wave of the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE) around 2007. Finland was not included in this large project, so we use comparable Finnish from GENTRANS study in 2007. The core population is the baby boomers. Their situation has provoked widespread interest and concern both in Finland and elsewhere in Europe. The original meaning of baby boomer is simply someone born at the time of the dramatic post-war increase in births. However, the duration of this increase differed considerably between countries, thus baby boomers are a culturally varying phenomenon. For instance, in the US the term is understood in a very broad sense, depicting people born in the 20 years following the war. In many European countries the baby boom period was also longer than in Finland. In Finland the increase in birth rates was very marked, starting immediately (i.e. nine months) after the end of hostilities between Finland and the Soviet Union in 1944 with the return of soldiers from the front continuing until the early 1950's. The decline in the birth rate was very gradual, which means that the cut-off point could equally well be 1949 or 1955. However, our operational definition of baby boomers in this article is people born between 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1945 and 31 December 1950.

Finnish baby boomers who were born and were presently living in Finland were randomly chosen from the population register by Statistics Finland. The sample size was 1,998. In March 2007, these people were contacted by post. In our bilingual country, the questionnaires were in Finnish and Swedish. People who had not returned the questionnaire in the first round were contacted three times, once via a reminder letter and twice by sending the introduction letter and

the questionnaire again. 56.0% returned the questionnaire appropriately filled. The number of study subjects belonging to the baby boomer generation is 1,115 (489 men and 626 women).

Women responded more actively than men. Single people, who perhaps found the questionnaire irrelevant, were more passive than those who were, or had been, married. There were no differences in language, residential area or province between respondents and non-respondents. Demographic and economic information on the study subjects from official registers was combined with the survey data.

Here we compare Finns with the respondents of the second wave of the SHARE project, which covers 15 European countries in 2007<sup>1</sup>. SHARE data cover a larger range of birth cohorts (50+) than are covered by the Finnish data. We only analyse those SHARE study subjects who were born between 1945 and 1950, in order to make valid comparisons. We use data from the SHARE modules CH, DN, FT, and SP. The GENTRANS and SHARE questionnaires are similar in part, but some of the questions were formulated and placed in the questionnaires differently, which makes comparisons problematic.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper uses data from SHARELIFE release 1, as of November 24th 2010 or SHARE release 2.3.1, as of July 29th 2010. The SHARE data collection has been primarily funded by the European Commission through the 5th framework programme (project QLK6-CT-2001- 00360 in the thematic programme Quality of Life), through the 6th framework programme (projects SHARE-I3, RII-CT- 2006-062193, COMPARE, CIT5-CT-2005-028857, and SHARELIFE, CIT4-CT-2006-028812) and through the 7th framework programme (SHARE-PREP, 211909 and SHARE-LEAP, 227822). Additional funding from the U.S. National Institute on Aging (U01 AG09740-13S2, P01 AG005842, P01 AG08291, P30 AG12815, Y1-AG-4553-01 and OGHA 04-064, IAG BSR06-11, R21 AG025169) as well as from various national sources is gratefully acknowledged (see [www.share-project.org/t3/share/index.php](http://www.share-project.org/t3/share/index.php) for a full list of funding institutions).

The dependent variable here is non-helping, which can be financial or practical or both. Let us first look at how *financial non-helping* is defined. Both in Finland and SHARE countries, not giving financial help means that the respondent had not given financial gifts worth 250 euro or more during the last 12 months (i.e., they may have given smaller amounts but these are not included).

In Finland, questions regarding the respondent's own children on the one hand and other kin and non-kin on the other were different. The Finnish respondents were asked about monetary gifts which they had given to their *own children* in the following way: "The next questions concern the financial support you have given to your own children aged 18 years and over in the last 12 months. By financial assistance we mean giving money, or participating in covering costs such as schooling, purchases or travel. Do not include money given as inheritance. In the last 12 months, have you given any financial support to your children? No – Yes, about \_\_\_\_€". The question was presented separately regarding each child respondent had up to the fourth child.

In the Finnish questionnaire, financial gifts given *people other than own children* were inquired in the following way: "In the last 12 months, have you given any financial support to some other adult person? Yes – No." If yes : "To which people other than your own children did you give financial support in the last 12 months? How much?" Five categories of euro ranging from less than 50€ to over 1,500€ were presented as response alternatives. The list of other people consisted of kin (mother, father, mother-in-law, father-in-law, sister or her family, brother or her family, grandchild, adopted or partner's child, and other relative, and non-kin (friend, colleague). The respondent could select as many people as he or she wanted.

In the SHARE survey, the questions on giving financial gifts were phrased: “Now please of the time since the last interview, that is since ... /in the last twelve months, not counting any shared housing or shared food, have you or your husband/wife/partner given a financial or material gift or support to any person inside or outside your household amounting to 250 euro or more?” This was followed by the following classification from the interviewer: “By financial gift we mean giving money, or covering specific types of costs such as those for medical care or insurance, schooling, down payment for a home. Do not include loans or donations to charities”. “To whom did you or your husband/wife/partner give such financial assistance or gift in the last twelve months?” Interviewer: “Instrument allows us to go through the ‘give’ loop up to three times”. The list of recipients consisted of children, both recipient’s own natural children and other children, mother, father, mother-in-law, father-in-law, stepmother, stepfather, brother, sister, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, grandchild, grandparent, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, and non-kin: friend, (ex)-colleague, neighbour, ex-spouse/partner, and other acquaintance. In our categorization, ‘spouse/partner’ was excluded. The main difference between the questions in the Finnish and SHARE survey was that in Finland the respondents could mark as many people as they wanted as recipients of assistance, whereas in the other European countries the maximum was three people.

In the SHARE questionnaire, the following items measured practical helping: (1) *personal care* or help, e.g. help with washing, eating and dressing, (2) *household* help including assistance with household chores, e.g. with making food, cleaning, shopping, gardening, (3) help with *home repairs*, (4) *help with transportation*, and (5) help with *paperwork*, such as filling in forms, and

settling financial or legal matters. The equivalent questions in the Finnish questionnaire were selected for this study.

Four types of helper were constructed: (1) overall helper, who gave both financial and practical help, (2) financial non-helper, (3) practical non-helper, and (4) overall non-helper who gave neither financial nor practical help. In some cases we combined categories 2 and 3 and use only three types: (1) the overall helper, (2) the partial helper, and (3) the non-helper. The latter interval variable can be used in linear regression analysis.

The following variables were examined as assumed to predict non-helping:

Both areas:

- *Gender*.
- *Age*: birth year ranging from 1945 to 1950; dichotomy: older (born 1945-46), younger born (1947-50).
- *Marital status*: Finland: married or in a registered couple relationship; other European countries: legal marriage in which the couple lives together or a registered couple relationship.
- *Number of own biological (natural) children*: Finland 0-16, other European countries 0-12.
- *Education*: years in education, four categories: 0-9, 10-12, 13-15, 16+.

- *Support of the welfare state*: opinions about the responsibility for the care of the elderly – the family or the state – were measured using a sum scale composed of three items: (1) Financial support for the older person who is in need, (2) help with household chores for the older person who are in need such as help with cleaning and washing and (3) personal care for older person who is in need, such as nursing or help with bathing or dressing. The respondents selected from the following five alternatives: exclusively the family, mainly the family, both the family and the state equally, mainly state and exclusively state. The reliability of the sum scale (Cronbach's alpha) is .83 and the values range from 3 to 15. In the other European countries, scores are based on country averages in the drop off questionnaire and the range is from 3.4 to 8.2.
  
- *Welfare regime*: the 15 countries were classified into three welfare regimes in the following way: the Nordic model: Finland, Sweden and Denmark, the continental model: Ireland,, Germany, Netherlands, Belgium, France, Switzerland, Austria, The Czech Republic and Poland and the family-based model: Greece, Italy and Spain. Some analyses do not cover Greece and Spain. This will be corrected later.
  
- *Monthly income after taxes*.
  
- *Conflicts with kin or non-kin*: the frequency of conflicts with the following 14 types of relatives and friends were mentioned (spouse excluded): mother, father, adult daughter, adult son, spouse, mother-in-law, father-in-law, grandparent, sister or her spouse, brother or her spouse, adult child of a sibling, other relative, friend, colleague and neighbour. Replies of “often” were given 2 points, “sometimes” 1 point and “seldom, never or does not apply”, 0 points. The points were summed giving a scale ranging from 0 to 8.

- *Number of grandchildren:* Finland 0-20.
- *Opinions about grandparents' duty to look after young grandchildren.*
- *Socio-economic status:* upper middle class, lower middle class, blue collar, entrepreneur, pensioner, unemployed or student.
- Grandparent's average geographical distance to grandchildren.

Most results are described as percentages or means in the tables. The associations between dependent and independent variables are examined using linear and logistic regression analyses.

## **Findings**

### **Non-helping and welfare regimes**

Non-helping clearly varied according to the welfare regime (Table 1). *Complete or overall non-helping*, giving neither practical nor financial help, was least common in the social democracies of Finland, Sweden and Denmark. Overall non-helping was most common in countries with a family-based welfare regime (Italy, Greece and Spain) where complete helping was rare. *Only practical non-helping* did not vary much between welfare regimes. *Only financial non-helping* diminished from Nordic welfare regimes to family-based welfare regimes. *Overall helping*, i.e. helping both practically and financially, was most common in the Nordic welfare regimes and least common in the family-based welfare regimes. In other words, the individualization-modernization theory was not supported by our data, but rather the opposite: the more modern and individualized the society, the more help was given.

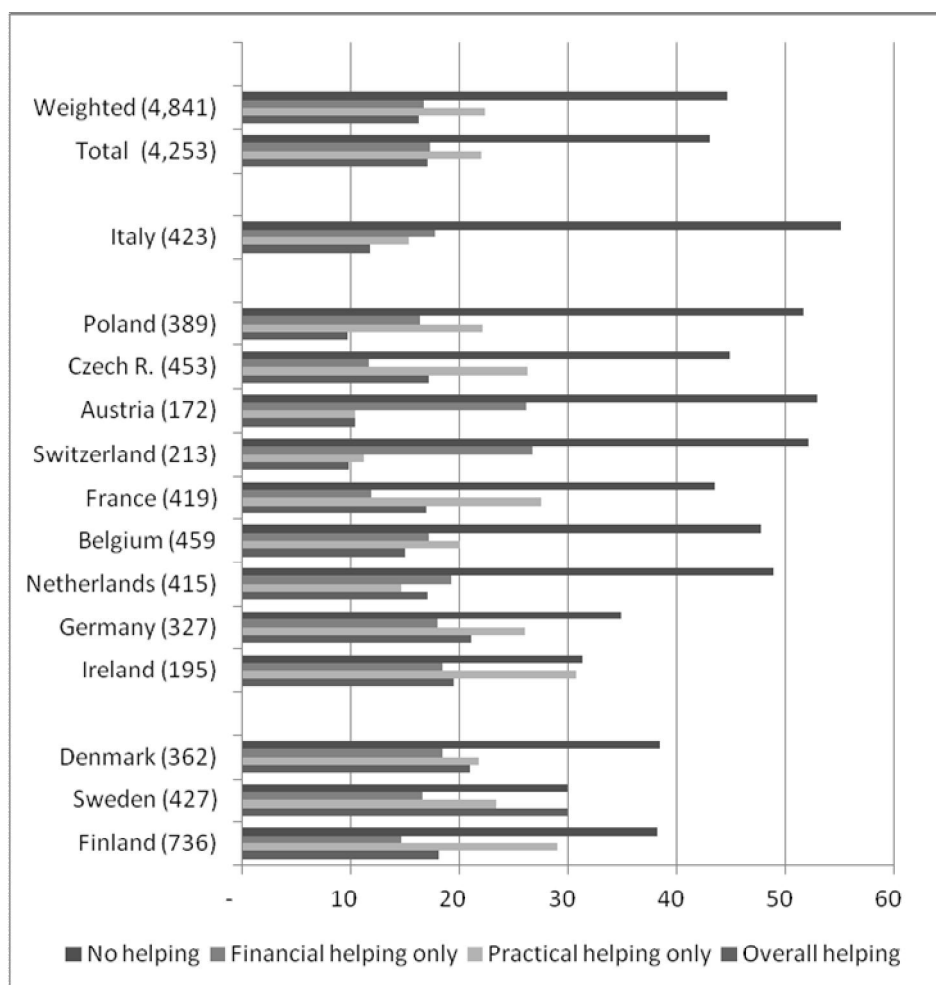
Table 1. Type of helping by welfare regime (%). People born in 1945-50 in Finland and 12 SHARE countries. Weighted data. Greece and Spain are excluded for technical reasons.

Type of helping	Welfare regime			
	Nordic	Continental	Family-based	Total
Overall helping	24.5	19.2	13.4	16.3
Practical helping only	24.5	23.2	21.6	22.4
Financial helping only	16.7	18.7	15.5	16.8
No helping	34.3	38.8	49.5	44.6
Total	100	100	100	100
N	306	1,798	2,737	4,841

A country by country examination of non-helping reveals some variation inside the welfare regimes (Figure 1). Among the states with Nordic welfare regime, Finland deviates from Sweden and Denmark through its lower proportion of both financial and overall helpers. This may be related to the slightly different way the Finnish survey asked about helping. In Sweden, there are more overall helpers than in Finland and Denmark, where the share of people solely giving practical help is larger. The proportion of non-helpers is about the same in Finland and Denmark and lower in Sweden.

Figure 1. Types of helping in 13 countries (Greece and Spain are lacking)(%).





Continental countries are fairly similar with the exception of Ireland and Germany, which resemble the Nordic countries. The proportions of non-helpers are between 40% and 50% whereas in the Nordic countries, Ireland and Germany they range from about 30% to about 40%

Italy is the only family-based welfare regime in Table 1. There the proportion of non-helpers is the highest among the 13 countries examined, 55%. Comparable data on the four types of helping from Greece and Spain are the following:

Country (N)	Overall help	Practical help only	Financial help only	Nonhelping
Greece (449)	11	11	25	53
Spain (241)	4	19	10	67

These two countries resemble Italy in the high proportion of non-helping. They will later be combined to the 13 countries in Table 1.

### Financial helping and relationships

Our hypothesis was that biological children are less often left outside the circle of help than other kin, and that non-kin people are helped least of all. That seems to be the case in financial help (Tables 2a, 2b and 2c, weighted data).

**Table 2a. To whom the financial gift was given, person 1**

	Percent, N=1,602
refusal	,5
don't know	,1
spouse/partner	2,4
mother	1,8
father	,4
mother-in-law	1,5
father-in-law	,2
stepmother	,1
stepfather	,0
brother	1,1
sister	1,7
child 1	49,8
child 2	16,0
child 3	5,8

child 4	1,4
child 5	,8
child 6	,1
child 7	,1
other child	2,4
son-in-law	,1
daughter-in-law	,1
grandchild	4,7
aunt	,2
uncle	,1
niece	1,1
nephew	1,1
other relative	1,4
friend	2,3
(ex-)colleague	,3
neighbour	,4
ex-spouse/partner	,0
other acquaintance	2,0
Total	100,0

**Table 2b. To whom the financial gift was given, person 2**

	Percent N=742
spouse/partner	,3
mother	,9
father	,6
mother-in-law	,8
father-in-law	,3
stepmother	,1
brother	,5
sister	1,3
child 1	11,0
child 2	60,7
child 3	5,3
child 4	2,2
child 5	,4
child 6	,2
child 7	,3
other child	2,7
son-in-law	,1
daughter-in-law	,3
grandchild	3,9
niece	,3
nephew	1,2
other relative	1,5
friend	1,8
(ex-)colleague	,6
neighbour	,8
ex-spouse/partner	,3
other acquaintance	1,6
Total	100,0

**Table 2b. To whom the financial gift was given, person 3**

	Percent N=198
spouse/partner	,2
mother	3,4
brother	1,2
child 1	6,1
child 2	8,1
child 3	54,5
child 4	1,2
child 5	1,9
child 6	1,0
other child	3,1
son-in-law	,1
daughter-in-law	2,0
grandchild	8,6
uncle	1,2
niece	2,1
nephew	,7
other relative	,3
friend	2,8
ex-spouse/partner	,2
other acquaintance	1,4
Total	100,0

The most important single conclusion we can draw is that non-helping is actually quite common.

Giving financial assistance to other relatives than children and to non-kin is very rare among

European baby boomers.

### **Predictors of non-helping**

How do our background variables predict non-helping? We tried to reveal this by using linear regression analysis. The dependent variable is non-helping. The independent variables are

gender, age, marital status, number of own children, education, support of the welfare state, type of welfare regime, and in Finland only income and conflicts with nearby people.

Non-helping is predicted fairly well by the available or relevant background factors.

According to the linear regression analysis, 9.1% of the variance is explained by the chosen background factors (Table 3).

Table3. Predictors of not helping. Odds Ratios (Exp(B)), confidence intervals, and number and percentage of respondents in multi-nominal logistic regression analysis. People born in 1945-50 in 13 countries. Weighted data<sup>1</sup>.

Predictor	Exp(B)	95% Confidence Interval for Exp(B)		N	%
		Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Intercept	.000				
INDIVIDUAL LEVEL					
Age					
Younger, born 1945-47	1,13*	1,01	1,27	2518	52,4
Older, born 1948-50	1			2291	47,6
Health status					
Chronic illness	1,18*	1,05	1,33	2014	41,9
No chronic illness	1			2796	58,1
Education years					
-9	3,18***	2,65	3,83	1370	28,5
10 to 12	2,27***	1,92	2,68	1483	30,8
13 to 15	1,44***	1,24	1,68	1078	22,4
16+	1			878	18,3
Number of children					
No children	2,15	0,61	7,61	780	16,6
One child	1,23*	1,01	1,50	721	15,0
Two children	1,10*	0,95	1,28	1889	39,3
Three or more children	1			1400	29,1

Distance to children on average					
No children	0,58	0,16	2,04	810	17
51 or more km	1,36**	1,11	1,68	1330	27,6
15 to 50 km	1,57***	1,26	1,95	968	20,1
Less than 15 km	1,16	0,94	1,43	1079	22,4
Lives in same household	1			623	13,0
COUNTRY LEVEL					
Gini Index					
Inequality GI .32+	1,22*	0,99	1,51	2248	46,7
Equality GI<.32	1			2561	53,3
% children in same household					
Low -15,4	1,35***	1,17	1,55	2715	56,5
High 15,5+	1			2094	43,5
Welfare regime					
Family-based	1,26	0,90	1,76	2722	56,6
Continental	1,12	0,89	1,40	1788	37,2
Nordic	1			300	6,2
Total				4810	100,0

The reference category is 1.

Pseudo R Square  
Nagelkerke .091

<sup>1</sup> Weights were calculated on the basis of the number of respondents and the population of the country by Dr. Netta Mäki, Department of Social Sciences, September 2011.

compute weight = 1 .

if country=1 weight = 0.109861 ./\*FIN\*/

if country=7 weight = 0.7255568 ./\*AT\*/

if country=6 weight = 3.746668 ./\*DE\*/

if country=3 weight = 0.340111 ./\*SE\*/

if country=4 weight = 0.559239 ./\*NL\*/

if country=15 weight = 2.633681 ./\*ES\*/

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if country=11 weight = 2.079746 . /*IT*/
if country=12 weight = 2.319328 . /*FR*/
if country=2 weight = 0.221057 . /*DK*/
if country=13 weight = 0.377486 . /*GR*/
if country=9 weight = 0.567761 . /*CH*/
if country=5 weight = 0.337503 . /*BE*/
if country=10 weight = 0.346589 . /*CZ*/
if country=14 weight = 1.555392 . /*PL*/
if country=8 weight = 0.337064 . /*IR*/
EXECUTE.

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Younger age, poor health, short education, having one or two children and long distance to children on average are statistically significant individual level predictors non-helping. High Gini index meaning income inequality and a large proportion of adult children living in parents' household are statistically significant country level explainers of non-helping.

People living in Nordic welfare regimes are least often non-helpers, then come respondents from continental countries and most non-helpers emerge from family-based welfare regimes. The differences between regimes are not statistically significant when the influence of the other variables is adjusted for. The finding is not statistically significant because high Gini index and high proportion of adult children living in the household are characteristic to countries with family-based welfare regime. Controlling their effect takes away the influence of welfare regime.

### **Not caring for grandchildren**

Next we focus more closely on those Finnish baby boomers who do not look after their grandchildren. For this analysis, we have selected from the data of Finnish baby boomers those respondents who have biological grandchildren  $n=509$  (women = 264, men=245).



The dependent variable was formed from questions “In the last 12 months, have you looked after your grandchild(ren)?” and “ On average, how often did you look after your grandchild(ren), in the last 12 months?” The scale was 1–6, 7–12, 13–25, and over 25 times. The answers were dichotomized so that 1=no help and 0=other.

In Finland 23% of baby boomers who have grandchildren do not look after them. The difference between men and women is clear: only 17% of grandmothers had not cared for their grandchildren even once during the past 12 months, whereas among men the figure was 30%. Nevertheless, compared to the practical non-helping of children, Finnish baby boomer grandparents seemed to be more helpful.

Next we explore those independent variables which might be connected to not caring for one’s grandchildren. The dependent variable is no childcare assistance during the past 12 months and the independent variables are the respondent’s gender, number of children, number of grandchildren, the respondent’s socioeconomic status, marital status, average distance to the grandchildren and the respondent’s opinion on grandparent’s duty to look after grandchildren . We predicted a grandparent’s likelihood of not looking after his or her grandchildren by logistic regression analysis. Logistic regression model was constructed so that every step was documented separately and in this way the model shows how each controlled variable affects the others (Table 4).

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TABLE 3. Grandparents who have not looked after their grandchildren (%)

<i>Childcare help</i>	<i>Man</i>	<i>Woman</i>	<i>Total</i>
Yes	70	83	77
No	30	17	23
Total	100	100	100
N	245	264	509



\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

The effect of gender increases at almost every step, and in the last model it is extremely statistically significant. Grandfathers are clearly more likely not caring for their grandchildren than grandmothers, even when several distorting effects are controlled for.

The more grandchildren people have, the less likely they are to care for those grandchildren. This was true of people who had two grandchildren or five or more grandchildren compared to those who had only one grandchild. Grandparents who had two or three grandchildren also were frequently non-carers but they did not differ statistically significant from those who had only one grandchild. Grandparents' socio-economic status was statistically significant only in the case of blue collar workers compared to the upper middle class. Workers had substantially higher odds of not caring for their grandchildren than upper middle class.

Never married, divorced or widowed grandparents were more likely not to looking after their grandchildren than those who were married or living with a partner, but the significance of the difference disappeared when the opinion on the duty of grandparents to look after small grandchildren was added to the model. The farther the average distance between a grandparent and the grandchildren was, the more likely it was that the grandparent did not looked after the grandchildren, but here the difference also disappeared when the opinion on a grandparent's duty was added to the model. A grandparent's opinion on the question "Grandparents' duty is to help their grandchildren's parents in looking after young grandchildren" was strongly connected to the likelihood of not caring for grandchildren. Those who disagreed with the statement were more likely not to look after their grandchildren than those who agreed with the statement. This result is consistent with the opinion on state responsibility for caring for the elderly and the effect

it has on not helping. Those who do not feel obliged to care (whether it is for the elderly or for children) do not offer care. Here then, opinions seem to have a strong effect on actual behavior.

#### **4. Summary and discussion**

The purpose of this study was to analyze non-helping and non-helpers in practical and financial matters in Finland among baby boomers born between 1945-50 and to compare the Finnish findings with those from 14 other European countries surveyed in the SHARE-project. Our theoretical framework was based on altruism as it is seen from an evolutionary perspective. Helping one's genetically related kin, especially one's offspring, and also altruistic behavior towards people with whom one has a close or positive relationship, is "natural" in respect to evolutionary theory. The surrounding environment has its effect on people's helping and non-helping behavior and thus we have studied many possible background variables which may predict non-helping among baby boomers.

First, we studied non-helping in relation to welfare state regime classification formulated by Gösta Esping-Andersen (1990). The result was that non-helping varied clearly according to the welfare regime. Overall non-helping was least common in Finland, Sweden and Denmark – Nordic welfare regimes – and most common in countries with family-based welfare regimes: Italy, Greece and Spain. There was also some variation between welfare regimes with the same classification.

Second, we scrutinized not helping according to the type of help and the type of receiver. Our results showed that non-helping clearly varied between different forms of help and different types of receiver. The most important single conclusion we can draw is that overall non-helping is quite common. The number of people who do not give any help at all was actually quite

substantial, about half of the baby boomer population in the 14 European countries. However, in Finland the proportion of overall non-helpers was much smaller, only one fifth. Both in the 14 European countries and in Finland, financial non-helping those other than a person's own children was common. However, in Finland particularly, children were helped financially. In this Finland differed substantially from the other European countries (not helping children financially: Finland 56%, the other European countries 83%). Practical non-helping was somewhat less common than not helping financially, and it did not vary as systematically as financial non-helping. In the SHARE countries, not giving practical help to non-kin and not giving practical help to one's own children was more common than not helping kin, whereas in Finland, not giving practical help to non-kin was more usual than for kin and one's own children.

The differences between Finland and the other countries are probably partly due to differences in the formulation of the questions. Fortunately, associations between dependent and independent variables are almost certainly not influenced by the disparity between the questions.

Some of the connections between background variables and not helping support the prediction that the cost of helping does influence non-helping behavior. This result is in accordance with both evolutionary theory and Hamilton's rule of kin selection. According to our results, non-helpers are older, have few children and low levels of education and income. Thus, potentially they might be less fortunate than the helpers, which could mean that helping exacts a higher cost. The connection between being married and non-helping might be related to the resources one has. Married or cohabiting people are likely to direct their help towards their family, which means that overall helping is reduced. It is costly given the limited helping capacity of the helper. The connection between a small number of conflicts with nearby people and reduced helping may simply indicate the infrequency of communication between relatives and friends.

Some, but not all, of the hypotheses presented at the beginning of this article were supported by our findings:

H1: Not giving any help to kin is quite rare Europe. This hypothesis was found to be incorrect. Both in Finland and in the other 12 European countries (no data from Greece and Poland) 80% of the respondents had not given practical help to their relatives and 74% vs 79% had not helped them financially.

H2: We assumed that not helping one's own children was less common than not helping other kin and non-kin. The results of this study, which are in line with evolutionary theory, partly support the hypothesis. In Finland, 56% of respondents had not given financial support to their own adult children living outside the household and 98% to other kin and non-kin. In the SHARE countries, the proportions were respectively 83% (to own children), 95% (other kin) and 98% (non-kin). In the SHARE countries, the figure also included children living in the same household and underage children. Helping behaviour was generally seen to be directed downward to more younger and fertile generations. However, non-helping in practical chores proved to be an exception. Not helping one's own children was actually more common than not helping kin or non-kin in the SHARE countries. In Finland, it was also slightly more common than not helping other kin. This could be partly due to the formulation of these variables. First, compared to financial help, the practical help consists of many different forms of help and second, kin and non-kin are much larger categories than the category of children. Thus there are more potential forms of help and receivers of help in the categories of no practical help to non-kin and kin than there are in the category of no practical help to one's own child. However, the result is interesting and it requires further study.

In addition, we examined the non-helping behaviour of Finnish grandparents. The form of studied non-help was childcare, which can be considered a type of practical help. Childcare can also be interpreted from an evolutionary viewpoint as a direct investment both in an individual's future grandchildren and also in his or her own children ( e.g. Pollet et al. 2006; 2007) and thus is a good indicator of kin selection theory (Dawkins 1989/1976). Several background variables were connected to not caring for grandchildren: the grandparent's gender, the number of grandchildren, the grandparent's socioeconomic status and marital status, the average distance to the grandchildren and the grandparent's opinion on grandparent's duty to look after young grandchildren. When the number of grandchildren increased the likelihood of for not caring for them decreased, and the further the average distance to grandchildren the more likely the grandparents had not looked after them. The fact of a grandparent having a lower socioeconomic status and his or her never having been married, divorced or widowed increased the likelihood of not looking after the grandchildren, which can be explained as being a result of the same cost-effect mentioned above. Those in a worse position incur greater costs from helping than those in a better position. The opinion on grandparents' responsibilities was also strongly connected to non-helping behavior. This is an interesting result, although it is not absolutely certain which comes first, the opinion or the non-helping behavior.

H3: The crowding in theory gained more support from our data than did the crowding out theory. Non-helping was least common in countries with social-democratic welfare regime, and in family-based welfare regime countries most common. This result is in accordance with previous studies (e.g. Igel et al. 2009; Hank and Buber 2009), which claim that a strong welfare state can enhance the number of helpers, although the intensity of help is reduced. Our study did not take into account the frequency of help.



Interestingly, attitudes to the role of the state regarding care for the elderly were connected to non-helping, although the relationship was weak. People who supported state care were more often non-helpers than people who considered care for the elderly to be the duty of family. However, when the type of welfare regime was adjusted for, the connection disappeared. These results show the complex nature of people's helping behaviour. Between different welfare regimes total non-helping follows the crowding in theory (the stronger the welfare state, the smaller the amount of complete non-helping). However, among non-helpers, a positive opinion about welfare state and its responsibilities might increase their non-helping behaviour. The possibility of remaining anonymous, which takes the responsibility to act off one's shoulders, has been shown to be an important factor for not helping, especially in the case of helping strangers. It is also widely recognized that familiarity usually increases willingness to help (e.g. Zimbardo 2008, 301–305). Here, we have an important question for further study: how these variables – the welfare state regime and opinions about state responsibilities – interact with each other and what is the effect on people's helping behavior? It is also important to notice that these attitudes were elicited concerning the care of the elderly.

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