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“We may disagree, but are happy to help”: Informal help, disagreements and happiness in family configurations

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INTRODUCTION

Conflict of generations is a classic theme in research. It can be understood as a cultural conflict, such as in the case of the 60’s generation and its predecessor (see Purhonen, Hoikkala, Roos 2008). It can also be understood as a conflict between the soon to be retired baby boomer generation and its children, who will have problems in supporting their parents (see Esping-Andersen, Sarasa 2002, who present a positive solution)

The purpose of this paper is to examine conflicts and contacts in adult cross-generational interactions in Finland. Generational transfers have been an important topic in family studies during the last decade. However, the role of “negative” or absent exchanges and of disagreements has been very little studied yet. We first ask whether disagreements correlate with the forms and amounts of help provided and received, and if so, in which way – do disagreements diminish all kinds of contact or are they an inevitable part of close interaction between relatives? We then study how disagreements and helping are related to happiness. The paper is written in connection with the Gentrans-project (Academy of Finland, 2006-2009, see blogs.helsinki.fi/gentrans), whose aim is to study generational transfers between the baby-boomer generation and its children.

This ongoing study is based on a two-pronged theoretical fundament (Roos 2005). On the one hand it develops *research on generations and the family*. For us, family is not primarily a legal or social construct but a highly context- sensitive biosocial institution based on kin relationship. We understand the family as a system extending beyond the nuclear family to comprise at least three generations. A literature research by Jakoby (2008) on leading American and German family study journals¹ demonstrates that relationships with so-called “distant kin” – secondary and tertiary kin, such as aunts and uncles, nieces and nephews or cousins – are neglected by family sociology. “Generally, you can hardly find any theoretical or empirical articles on family relationships outside the nuclear family”, Jakoby states. We are eager to participate in filling this gap.

On the other hand, our research group ponders on *giving, reciprocity and altruism, and sibling as well as parent-children conflicts*. In friendship and many kin interactions, giving is normally related with an expectation of reciprocity, of a “tit for tat”. This is partly true also in family relationships. However, degrees of relatedness and perceived proximity may alter these expectations towards more altruistic behaviour. Generations do not help each other abstractly, or due to legalistic obligations, but on the basis of complex patterns of emotions, sense of family, morality, and perceived need for and possibility of care provision. We shall consequently consider family

¹ Journal of Marriage and the Family (USA) and the Journal of Family Research (Germany).

relationships by incorporating evolutionary theory, as a step towards multidisciplinary, integrated study of human behaviour (Boyer 2005; Sanderson 2001).

The dynamics of intergenerational relations are characterized by diversity rather than unconditional and conflict-free solidarity. In mainstream sociology, this has been theorised as a conflict between kin obligations and individualisation. For instance, Sýkorová stresses how the relations among family generations produce solidarity and conflict at the same time:

“The mentioned psychological and sociological ambivalence in the relations between parents and children in adulthood is generated by desire of both sides for frequent interaction, pressure on altruistic support nourished by the ‘aura of indissolubility’ ascribed to biological kinship [Lüscher 1999:5] and the antagonistic tendency to liberalisation from tying bonds, endeavour and independence, the balance of profits and losses in the exchange.” (Sýkorová 2008, 3)

In a similar way but with somewhat different theoretical explanations and predictions, evolutionary theory claims that kin relations will be characterised by both much altruistic help and strong conflicts. According to this view, the conflictual nature of close ties has been typical also for premodern societies and stems from the tensions related to parental investment, parent-offspring conflict and sibling rivalry (for an accessible overview of these concepts and findings see Salmon & Shackelford, eds, 2008).

The amount of altruistic help transmitted in extended families has been shown to correlate with genetic relatedness and gender (Euler et al. 2001; Euler & Michalski 2008). People help close relatives more than distant ones and there women help other women slightly more than men do. (Pollett, Nettle & Nellisen 2006 and 2007.) We therefore use three background variables. The first is *gender* which probably predicts many forms of togetherness, and being and doing together. The second is closeness of *kin relations*. We suppose that people collaborate and perhaps also quarrel more with close blood relatives than with in-laws and distant relatives. The third type of predictors consists of *social background*: size of kin network, education, income, and health status.

Jallinoja (2008) has distinguished two types of solidarity in the family: togetherness and being together. *Togetherness* indicates relatedness as it is experienced. In our study lack of disagreements between six types of relatives, partly divided by gender: grandparents, parents, children, grandchildren, siblings, in-laws and other relatives may stand for Jallinoja’s concept of togetherness. *Being together* means actualized interaction. We have measured the frequency of contacts between parents, parents-in-law, adult children and siblings. We added a third term, *doing together*, which denotes informal help as a way of doing things together. It includes practical and financial help given and received by different kin members.

As a criterion of quality of life in different *family configurations* composed of the above-mentioned dimensions we use *happiness*. It was measured by subtracting the number of negative life events reported in the questionnaire from positive ones (see Roos & Haavio-Mannila 2008).

DATA

In 2007 we collected mail survey data on the functioning of family and kin configurations in three Finnish generations: baby boomers born 1945-50, their adult children and their parents. The middle group was on average 58 years, the younger group 33 years and the oldest group 82 years of age.

Here we concentrate on the study of data given by members of two generations: baby boomers (N=1115) and their adult children (N=1435).

RESULTS

Family configurations were fairly similar on the three dimensions studied here – togetherness, being together, and doing together. The closest ties were found between (former) nuclear family members: parents, children and siblings. They helped each other in practical chores and parents helped their adult children financially. But they also had conflicts with each other more than with the other relatives.

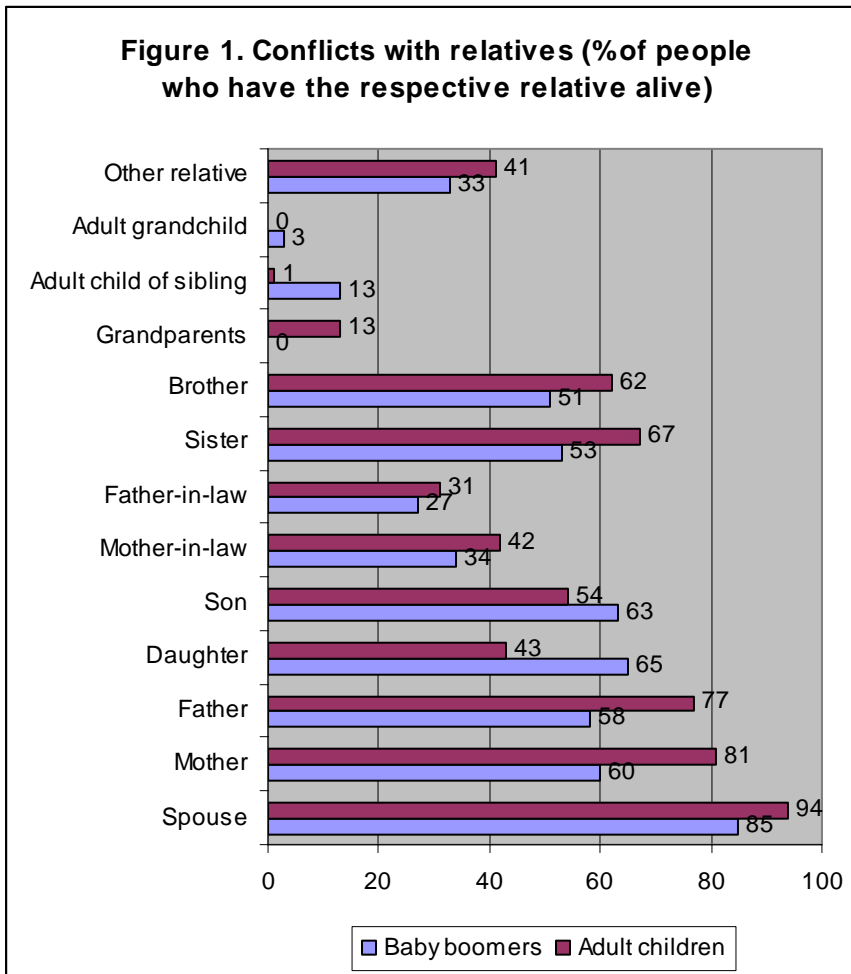
Composition and size of kin network

Kin configurations can be described by the existence of different relatives alive. Among baby boomers, the most common living relatives belonged to the same generation: a majority (70-90%) had cousins, sisters and brothers (Table 1). Many baby boomers now in their sixties also had living relatives in the one-step younger generation. About 60% had sons or daughters and 40 % children-in-law. Many baby boomers had already had lost their parents. One third had the mother alive but only one tenth had the father. The respective shares of parents-in-law were a little lower, 24 % and 7 %.

The kin configurations of the adult children of baby boomers were quite different. On the average, they reported on the average 9.6 kinds of living relatives whereas baby boomers reported only 9.0. Adult children of baby boomers more commonly had grandparents, parents, parents-in-law, aunts, uncles, and cousins. Due to the method of data collection, all of them had at least one parent alive. Almost all, 99%, had the mother and 92% the father still living. Also almost all had aunts, uncles and cousins. About 50-60% had at least one mother-in-law, father-in-law, grandparent, sister, brother or child of a sibling living. Sister- and brother-in-laws were less common, about 40% reported about them. Due to the young age of children of baby boomers, very few had adult children.

Table 1. Percentages of baby boomers and their adult children having different living relatives and conflicts with them often, sometimes or seldom

Relative	Kind of relative alive, % of all respondents		Conflicts with respective living relative (% and N)	
	Baby boomers	Adult children	Baby boomers	Adult children
Spouse	73	70	85 (784)	94 (1018)
Mother	33	99	60 (613)	81 (1398)
Father	10	92	58 (470)	77 (1309)
Mother-in-law	24	67	34 (452)	42 (948)
Father-in-law	7	58	27 (328)	31 (919)
Daughter	62	3	65 (621)	43 (46)
Son-in-law	42	3	..	..
Son	63	4	63 (627)	54 (50)
Daughter-in-law	40	3	..	..
Sister	72	61	53 (685)	67 (945)
Brother-in-law	70	36	51 (675)	62 (934)
Brother	71	58		
Sister-in-law	59	43		
Grandparents	0	55	..	13 (846)
Child of sibling	82	52	13 (694)	1 (91)
Grandchild	57	0.6	3 (170)	..
Aunts, uncles and/or their spouses	65	98	..	..
Cousins, second-cousins and/or their spouses	90	97	..	..
Other relative	..	..	33 (771)	41 (1146)
Number of types of kin	8.96	9.59		
N	1115	1435		



The availability of relatives determines the frequency of personal, telephone or e-mail contacts with them. The number of brothers and sisters of baby boomers was larger than that of their children. This partly explains the higher proportion of baby boomers than their children who had weekly contacts with sisters or brothers (at least one of the four siblings studied). As so many parents of baby boomers had died, it is understandable that so few had contacts with them. An interesting gender difference emerges in weekly meetings with parents among adult children of baby boomers. Contacts with mother were more common (80%) than those with father (57%) even though almost the same proportion of mothers and fathers were alive (99% and 92%). Differences between male and female parents-in-laws in weekly contacts were smaller. This indicates that mother can be contacted separately from father whereas contacts with parents-in-laws take mostly place at the couple level. There are no gender gaps in contacts with children and siblings. In both generations, the effect of genealogical proximity can be seen in the much more frequent contacts with biological parents than with parents-in-law.

Table 2. Weekly contacts with and help to and from close relatives. Baby boomers who have the respective relative alive. Percent and number of respondents (N).

Relative	Weekly contacts with	Gave practical help to	Gave financial help to	Received practical help from	Received financial help from	N
Mother	73	54	3	13	4	368
Father	66	45	1	5	8	114

Adult daughter	29	41	29	18	1	698
Adult son	27	26	27	21	1	689
Mother-in-law	43	32	0	2	1	267
Father-in-law	54	35	0	2	0	83
Sister	38	16	3	10	1	779
Brother	25	12	2	8	1	756
Some of them (all respondents)	83	84	47	36	4	1115

Conflicts

Of all baby boomers 43% and their children 62% had often or sometimes had conflicts with family and kin. Even though 23% of all baby boomers often or sometimes had conflicts with their spouse, disagreements with other relatives were rare. Of all baby boomers 6-9% reported conflicts with parents, children or siblings, 4% with mother-in-laws and less than that with other kin. In the younger generation disagreements with spouse were somewhat more common: 33% disagreed with the partner often or sometimes. Adult children reported more frequently parental conflicts than their parents told about quarrelling with their parents: 26% had often or sometimes had conflicts with mother and 20% with father. Disagreements with other kin members were rare.

When only those respondents who have respective relatives were taken into account, differences between generations diminished (Table 3). While only 9% of all baby boomers and 26% of all adult children disagreed with their mother, among those whose mother was alive, 16% and 27%, respectively, had had conflicts with their mother. Intergenerational relations seem to be more strained in the age of thirty than sixty.

Table 3. Percentages of baby boomers and their adult children reporting conflicts often or sometimes according to gender. Respondents whose respective relatives were living.

Relative	Baby boomers		Adult children	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Spouse	86 (338)	84 (446)	74 (465)	82 (748)***
Mother	62 (261)	58 (352)	74 (546)	84 (880)***
Father	55 (202)	60 (268)	73 (528)	76 (829)
Daughter	61 (274)	68 (347)	46 (24)	41 (22)
Sister	53 (292)	52 (393)	52 (420)	62 (649)**
Son	60 (270)	65 (357)	50 (24)	58 (26)
Mother-in-law	30 (192)	37 (260)	27 (450)	38 (719)***
Brother	52 (295)	49 (380)	47 (404)	54 (639)*
Father-in-law	27 (132)	27 (196)	21 (427)	26 (663)*
Adult child of sibling	12 (307)	14 (387)	21 (38)	21 (53)
Grandchild	16 (69)	22 (101)	3 (234)	4 (314)
Grandparent	..	..	14 (420)	18 (674)*
Other relative	33 (333)	34 (438)	30 (535)	36 (850)*

Asteriks indicate the statistical significance of the gender difference: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

Table 3 also shows that there were some gender differences in the proportion of having conflicts with kin. In the baby boom generation, women disagreed more than men in their relationships to spouse, mother-in-law, nephew or niece and other relatives. Among their adult children, there were more statistically significant gender differences. Women had more often than men conflicts with spouse, mother, sister, son, mother-in-law, and other relatives.

A kinship conflict network as reported by baby boomers and their children is shown in Figure 1. In addition to information given in Table 3 above, it shows the reciprocity of conflicts between generations. Reports of kin conflicts were not quite reciprocal. For example, parents reported less conflicts with children than children with parents. When 15% of baby boom mothers said that she had conflicts with some of her daughters, 32% of the daughters told that they had had conflicts with their mother. Father-son conflicts were reported more consistently: 10% of baby boom fathers had had conflicts with some of their sons whereas 19% of the sons told about disagreements with the father.

Of baby boomers 31% and of their children 47% reported some relatives (no including the spouse) with whom they had disagreements. The social background of people having conflicts with kin in the two generations is presented in Table 4. We briefly go through them. More women than men reported conflicts with kin. Living with others or alone did not have an impact on the number of relatives disagreed with. Among baby boomers the large size of kin and numerous weekly connected parents(-in-laws) and siblings weakly predicted the number of kinds of relatives with whom the respondent had conflicts. Among children of baby boomers there was no connection. Good health decreased conflicts with relatives. Education had nothing to do with the propensity of conflicts between relatives. Low income increased the likelihood of having many conflicting relatives only in the younger generation.

Perhaps contrary to public beliefs, helping and getting help were positively connected with having kin conflicts in both generations (for children of baby boomers this only applies for financial help). Social interaction in helping situations can lead to conflicts. Without interaction, there is nothing to disagree about.

Figure 1. Conflicts between family members often or sometimes when there is a relative alive, percent. Based on replies by baby boomers and their adult children.

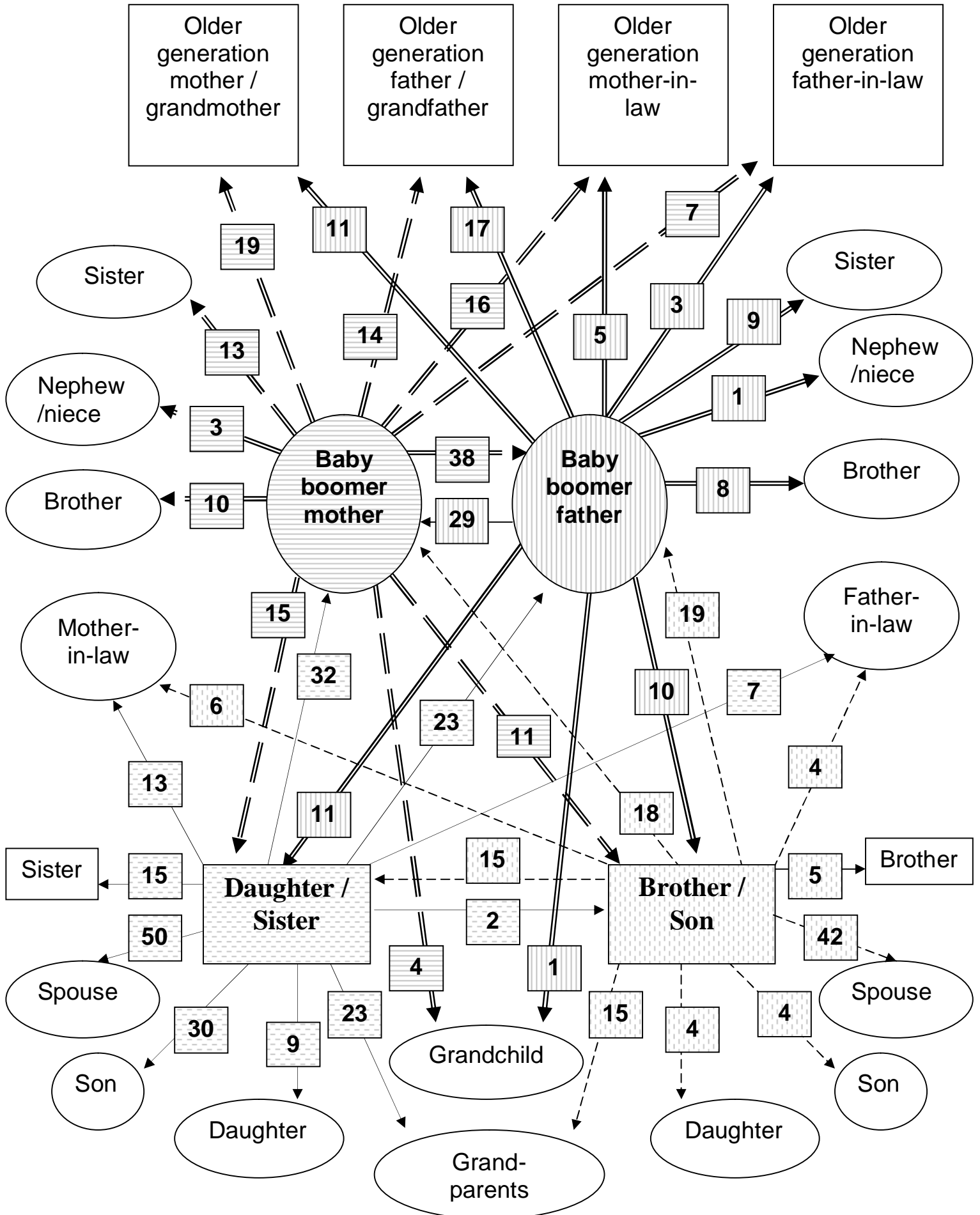


Table 4. Percentages reporting disagreements often or sometimes with kin according to social background, happiness and helping. Conflicts with spouses are excluded because we want to make the results comparable with the available data on informal help by and to people outside the household.

Social background	Baby boomers	N	Adult children of baby boomers	N
Total	31	1115	47	1435
Gender				
Man	26	489	37	550
Woman	35**	626	53***	885
Household composition				
Lives alone	32	262	48	281
Lives with others	31	853	44	1154
Number of types of relatives alive				
0-4	19	91	42	38
5-8	30	351	49	443
9-12	33	544	46	777
13-16	38*	129	47	177
Weekly contacts with parents(in-law) and siblings				
0	21	160	42	66
1	28	213	48	103
2	34	287	51	167
3	36	233	43	148
4+	33*	222	44	266
Own opinion of health status				
Poor	35	109	57	28
Moderate	33	490	56	235
Good	30	412	47	813
Very good	25	101	41	355
Education				
Basic	34	343	53	236
Vocational	32	432	47	685
College	27	240	45	399
University	28	100	47	215
Income, euro				
<899	29	188	51*	288
900-1199	27	186	51	145
1200-1499	31	177	51	247
1500-1999	33	203	39	373
2000-2499	32	130	45	181
2500-	36	119	45	128
Gave practical help				
Yes	34***	938	48	1121
No	16	177	44	314
Gave financial help				
Yes	38***	528	59***	234
No	25	587	45	1201
Received practical help				
Yes	36*	397	47	1296
No	29	718	47	139
Received monetary help				
Yes	41	44	50*	773
No	31	1071	43	662

Happiness				
-1	32	154	59	63
0	26	317	42	286
1	36	182	58	231
2	34	216	49	284
3	33	120	49	212
4	32	126	40***	359

Giving and receiving informal help

Practical help. In the questionnaires, there were 12 alternative ways of helping and respondents could choose several of them. The tasks were afterwards divided into three groups based partly on the gendered division of labour:

Housework

- Help with household chores e.g. with making food, cleaning, shopping, gardening
- Help with childcare
- Help with caring pets
- Personal care or help e.g. help with washing, eating and dressing

Transportation and repairs

- Help with home repairs
- Help with transportation
- Help with repairs and care of car, domestic appliances etc.

Information help

- Help concerning vacation
- Help with paperwork such as filling forms, settling financial or legal matters
- Help with technical appliances e.g. help or assistance using mobile phone, computer, Internet or digital set-top box
- Other kind of help which is related to the helper's professional skills
- Other help

Financial help was related to informal financial or monetary support of even a small amount (less than 250 euro as in the SHARE study), given to and received from adults living outside the household in the last 12 months. By financial assistance we mean giving money, or covering specific types of costs such as schooling, travel, or purchases, and also loans but not inheritances. There was no expectation of returning the monetary support. Thus the monetary support can also be named as a gift.

Givers and recipients of help were measured using the same categories of relatives as shown in Table 1 above. The mean number of kin categories and the percentages of respondents who had helped or been helped are used as indicators of the amount of help in Table 5. Among baby boomers, the number categories of helped relatives was very large (2.44) compared to givers of monetary help, recipients of practical help and especially recipients of monetary gifts. Also the percentage of practical help givers was much bigger than in the case of other kinds of help.

Table 5. Number of helpers and helped in different kinds of help in the two generations

Generation	Gave practical help	Gave monetary support	Received practical help	Received monetary support
Baby boomers				
Number of helpers/helped	2.44	0.81	0.60	0.06
Percentage of helpers/helped	84	47	36	4
Adult children of baby boomers				
Number of helpers/helped	2.13	0.21	2.88	0.70
Percentage of helpers/helped	78	16	90	54

Among adult children of baby boomers, a different picture emerges. They received practical help from more people (2.88) than to whom they gave it to (2.13). Very few had given financial help to kin.

Dimensions of helping and social background

Next we try to find out how the different types of helping are tied together using factor analysis as the method.. We conducted factor analyses separately for baby boomers and their children. The factor dimensions among baby boomers were (1) *reciprocal helping* excluding, however, receiving monetary help which is extremely rare in this generation and (2) *onesided receiving* of both practical and financial help.

Table 6. Factors of helping among baby boomers

Type of helping	Factor	
	1	2
Gave practical help	,787	,233
Gave monetary support	,811	-,116
Received practical help	,404	,621
Received monetary support	-,128	,857
Eigenvalues	1,59	1,06

Cumulative percentage of explained variance 66.1.

Adult children of baby boomers show a different pattern. The dimensions of help were (1) *reciprocal giving and receiving practical help* and (2) *reciprocal giving and receiving financial help*. The dividing line between the two factors is the character of help, either practical or financial, not the direction of help.

Table 7. Factors of helping among adult children of baby boomers

	Factor	
	1	2
Gave practical help	,797	,155
Gave monetary help	-,062	,867
Received practical help	,849	,007
Received monetary help	,181	,551
Eigenvalues	1,47	1,00

Cumulative percentage of explained variance 61.8.

We use the results of the factor analyses for ordering the types of help in Tables 8 and 9. The tables illustrate the closeness of the helping patterns in regard to their predictors. In the following text we report the statistically significant predictors of the four types of help in the two generations.

Gender of the respondent has not very much effect on helping in Finland, when measurement of help includes both traditionally male and female tasks as is the case in our survey. According to the regression analysis below, the only statistically significant gender differences in giving and receiving help were that baby boomer women received more practical help than men and that younger generation men gave more practical help to their relatives living outside the household than women did (Tables 8 and 9). Same sex relatives had somewhat more contacts, help actions and conflicts than relatives of different gender.

Table 8. Baby boomers. Predictors of giving and receiving practical help and money. Standardized regression coefficients (beta) and their statistical significance.

Predictor of helping	Factor 1 Reciprocal help			Factor 2 Onesided receiving of monetary help
	Gave practical help	Gave monetary help	Received practical help	Received monetary help
Gender	-.03	.01	.10**	-.01
Lives with others	-.04	.03	-.11	-.13***
Contacts with parents(in-law), adult children and siblings	.34***	.25***	.09**	.02
Size of kin	.22***	.10**	.11***	.06
Income	.07*	.21***	.03	-.08*
Healthy	.04	.02	-.05	-.01
Wealthy children	-.02	-.24***	-.06*	.02
Proportion of variation explained	.221	.190	.041	.019

Table 9. Adult children of baby boomers. Predictors of giving and receiving practical help and money. Standardized regression coefficients (beta) and their statistical significance.

Predictor of helping	Factor 1 Practical help		Factor 2 Monetary support	
	Gave practical help	Received practical help	Gave monetary help	Received monetary help
Gender	-.16***	.00	-.01	-.01
Lives with others	-.04	.09***	-.07*	-.04
Contacts with parents(in-law) and siblings	.11***	.18***	.03	.04
Size of kin	.18***	.23***	.07*	-.08**
Income	.07**	.04	.02	-.28***
Healthy	.05*	-.01	-.09***	-.05*
Wealthy parents	.04	.09***	-.11***	.14***
Proportion of variation explained	.076	.137	.024	.111

Family composition, i.e. living alone or with others, had some effects on helping. In the older generation, people living alone often received both kinds of help. In the younger generation, family

members had received practical help - including child care - more commonly than people living alone.

In both generations, people with a wide kin network and weekly contacts with many parents, parents-in-law and siblings gave both kinds of help more than those not having so many relatives and contacts. Although the size of the kin network and numerous contacts with parents(in-law and siblings) correlated ($r = .17^{***}$), these two variables predicted helping behaviour independently when the influence of the other variable was controlled. Large kin and frequent kin contacts contributed to getting practical - but not monetary help - from many relatives.

Education did not correlate with helping behaviour but income did. Education was thus left out of the regression analysis. High income baby boomers often gave both practical and financial help to their kin and the poor ones received financial help. Among adult children, high income slightly increased the likelihood of giving of practical help and low income strongly amplified receiving monetary help.

Illness, especially in older age, often creates situations where informal care at home is expected. In our data on baby boomers, health did not explain any kind of helping. In the younger generation, healthy adult children of baby boomers gave practical care to more people than ill ones. For still unknown reasons, giving and getting money were more common among the ill than the healthy people.

Baby boomers did not give money to many people when the economic situation of their children was good – monetary gifts mostly go to children. Correspondingly, adult children did not donate money when their parents were well off. Adult children often got financial support when they had wealthy parents. Monetary transfers had thus the effect of transferring resources from well off in the older generation to the poorer in the younger generation

Figures 2 and 3 show the importance of size of kin on helping patterns. Among baby boomers, giving practical help grew linearly with size of kin. Giving monetary support as well as receiving practical help increased only slightly with the number of kinds of relatives. Receiving monetary support was not at all related to size of kin.

The situation is clearly different with the adult children: both receiving and giving practical help increased with the size of kin among adult children of baby boomers. Giving and getting financial help was not affected by the number of kinds of relatives. This is an important result: practical help is the only kind of help which is affected by number of kin.

Figure . Number of givers and receivers of practical and monetary help by number of close living kin

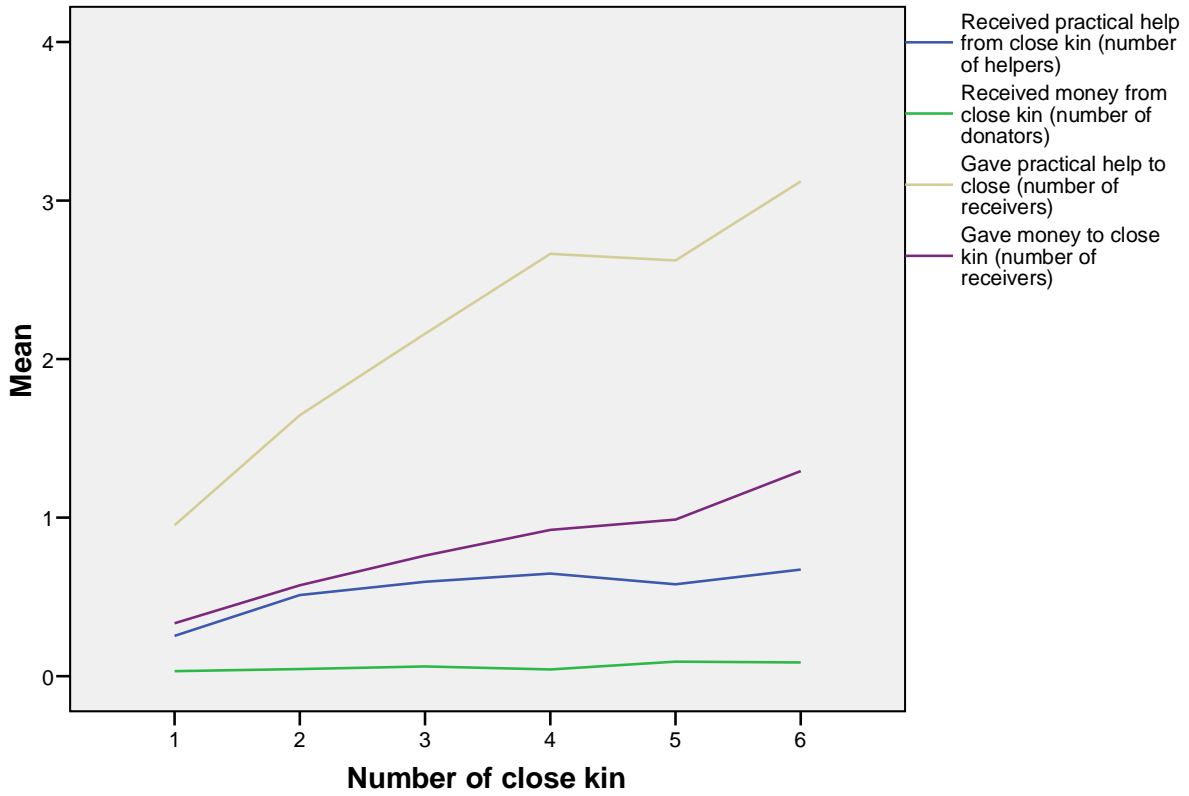


Figure 2. Types of helping by size of kin - baby boomers

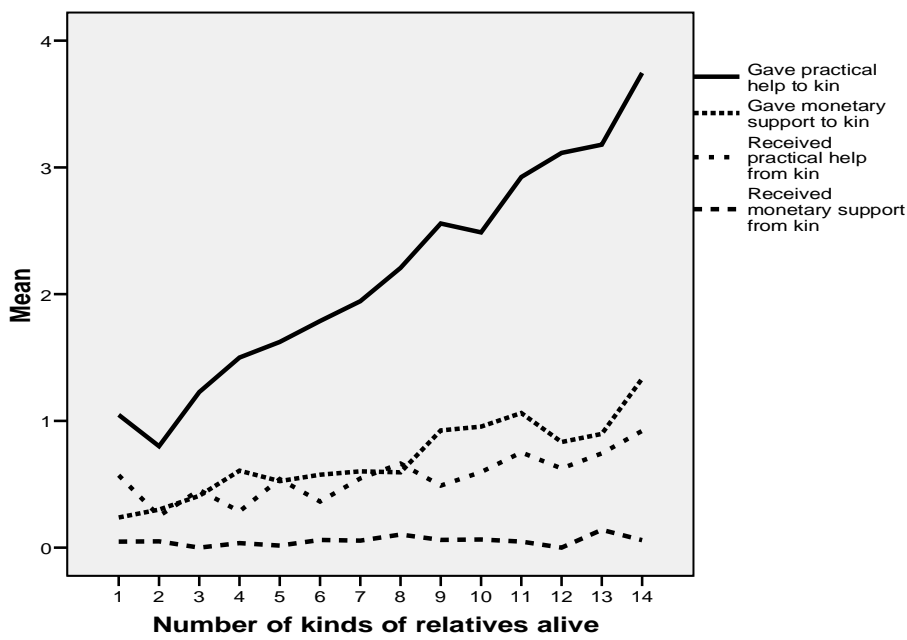
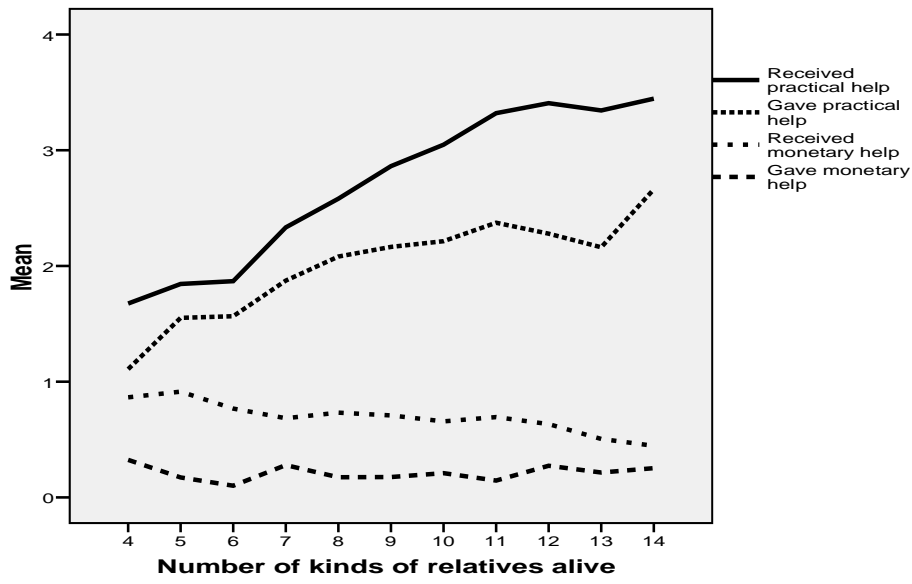


Figure 3. Types of helping by size of kin - adult children of baby boomers



Helping, conflicts and happiness

Finally we investigate relationships between different kinds of togetherness, being together and doing together on the one hand and conflicts and happiness on the other. Conflicts and happiness were not at all associated with each other in the older generation ($r = -.00$). This is a good example of the ambivalence in intergenerational relations, i.e. that conflicts are more or less independent of happiness. In the younger generation there was a low but statistically significant negative correlation between happiness and conflicts ($r = -0.11^{***}$).

Weekly contacts and helping correlated with both conflicts and happiness (Table 10). The correlations were calculated for eight relatives (mother, father, mother-in-law, father-in-law, sister, brother, daughter and son). The number of relatives thus ranges from 0 to 8. High values mean that the respondent has interacted with many relatives.

Table 10. Correlations between conflicts ¹⁾ and happiness with number of close relatives, having weekly contacts with them and giving and receiving help. Baby boomers who have the respective relative alive.

Generation and type of emotions	Number of types of close kin (max 8)	Weekly contacts	Gave practical help	Gave monetary support	Received practical help	Received monetary support	N
All baby boomers							
Conflicts with kin	.08**	.01	.14***	.12***	.03	.06	1098
Happiness	.15***	.13***	.14***	.19***	.04	-.09**	1098
Baby boomers with parents alive							
Conflicts with mother	-.07	.12*	.08	.03	-.00	-.01	368
Conflicts with father	-.08	-.09	.03	.15	.05	.01	114
Baby boomers parents-in-law alive							
Conflicts with mother-in-law	.02	-.01	-.04	-.02	-.04	-.08	267
Conflicts with father-in-law	-.00	-.05	-.14	a	.04	a	83
Baby boomers with brothers or sisters							
Conflicts with brothers	.06	-.01	.08*	-.02	-.05	.06	786
Conflicts with sisters	.05	.01	-.03	.05	.02	-.03	804
Baby boomers with sons or daughters							
Conflicts with sons	.00	.03	.00	.12**	.00	.03	698
Conflicts with daughters	-.08*	.15***	.12**	.17***	.04	.06	689

1) Conflicts with respective relative 1 never, 2 seldom, 3 now and then, 4 often.

a Cannot be computed because at least one of the variables is constant.

Figure . Conflicts and happiness by giving practical help

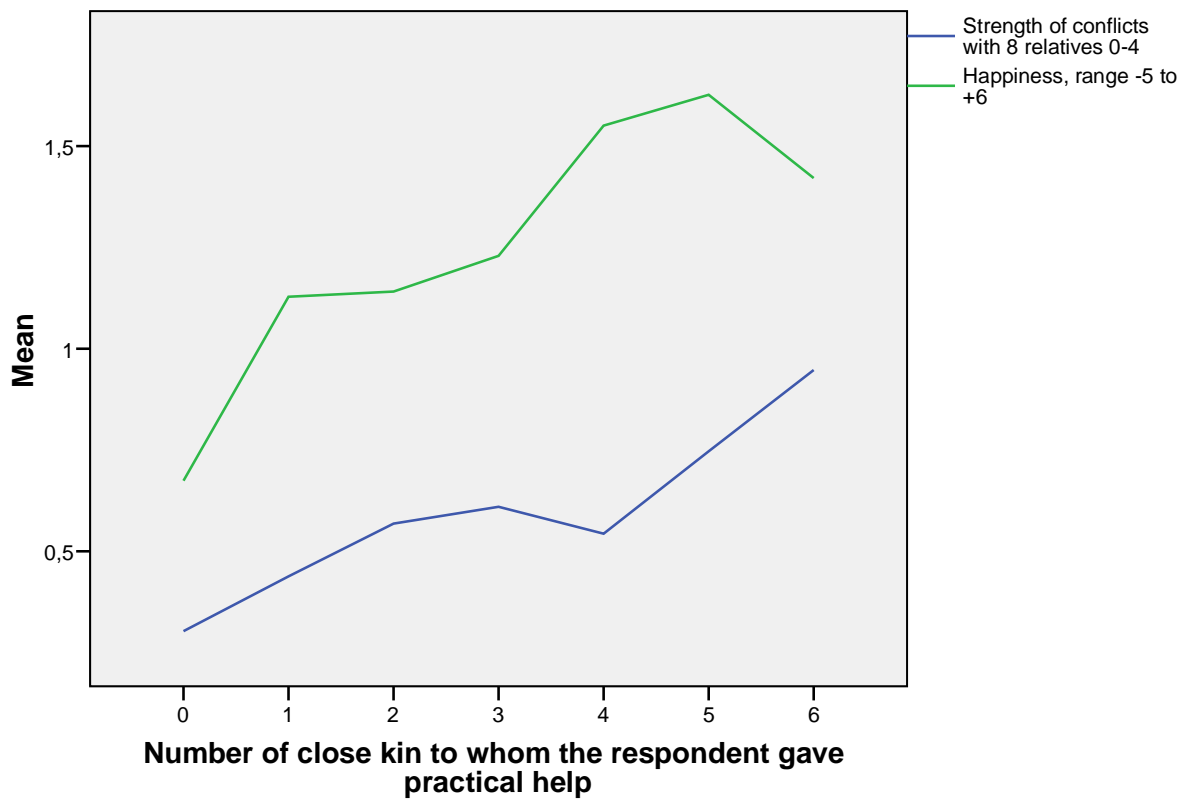


Figure . Conflicts and happiness by giving monetary help

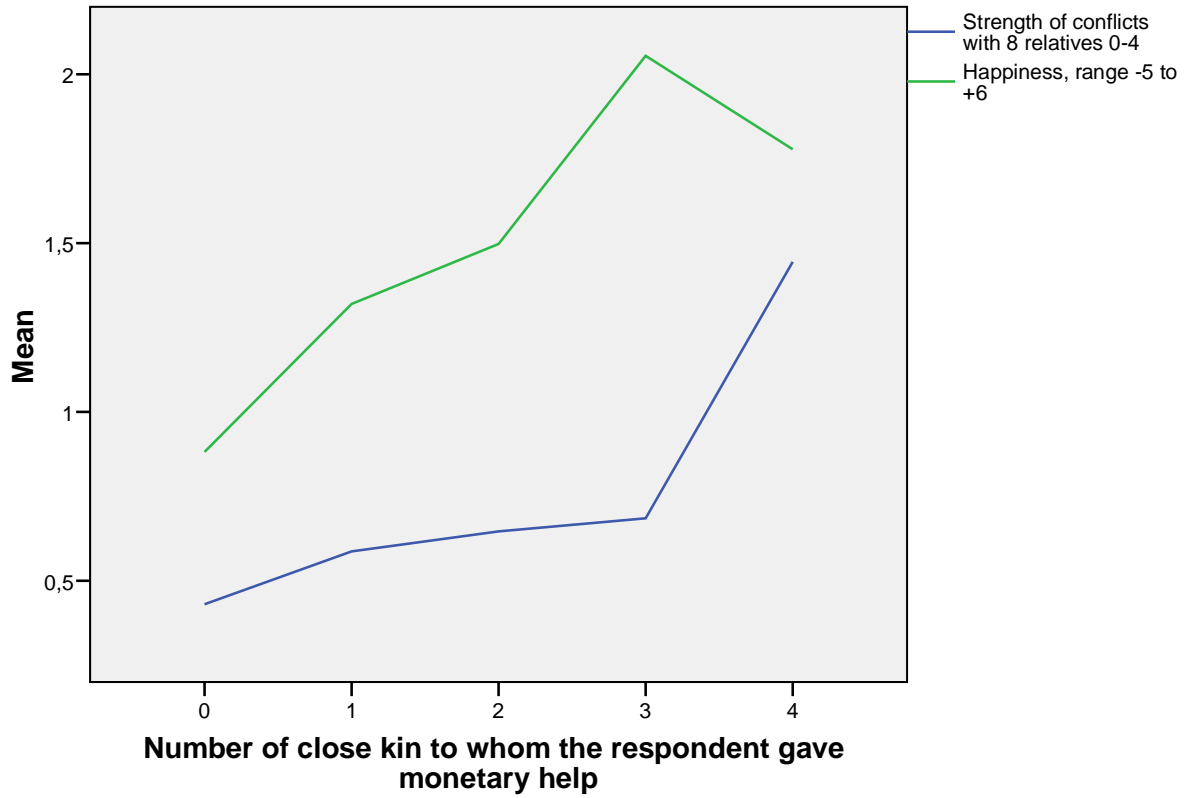


Table 11. Correlations between conflicts and happiness with number of relatives, having weekly contacts with them and giving and receiving help. Adult children of baby boomers who have the respective relative alive.

Adult children of baby boomers	Number of types of close kin (max 8)	Weekly contacts	Gave practical help	Gave monetary support	Received practical help	Received monetary support	N
Conflicts with kin			.05	.21***	.00	.15***	1435
Happiness			.10***	-.05	.25***	-.11***	1435

Coefficients .028(a)

Model		Baby boomers		t
		Conflicts	Happiness	
1	(Constant)			
	k4other Lives with others	,07		,23***
	k1 Sukupuoli	,08*		-,04
	Antoi käytännön apua 8 sukulaiselle	,08*		,04
	Sai käytännön apua 8 sukulaiselta	,02		,07
	Sai rahaa 8 sukulaiselta	,09*		-,08*
	Antoi rahaa 8 sukulaiselle	,06		,08*
	Kontakteja viikottain 8 sukulaisen kanssa	,06		,02
	k106k Pitää terveyttään hyvänä	-,04		,10**
	k91 Vastaajan tulot keskimäärin kuukaudessa verojen jälkeen	,04		,02
	R square	.028		.078

a Dependent Variable: Konfliktit usein, joskus, harvoin lähisuvun kanssa abcdgghi

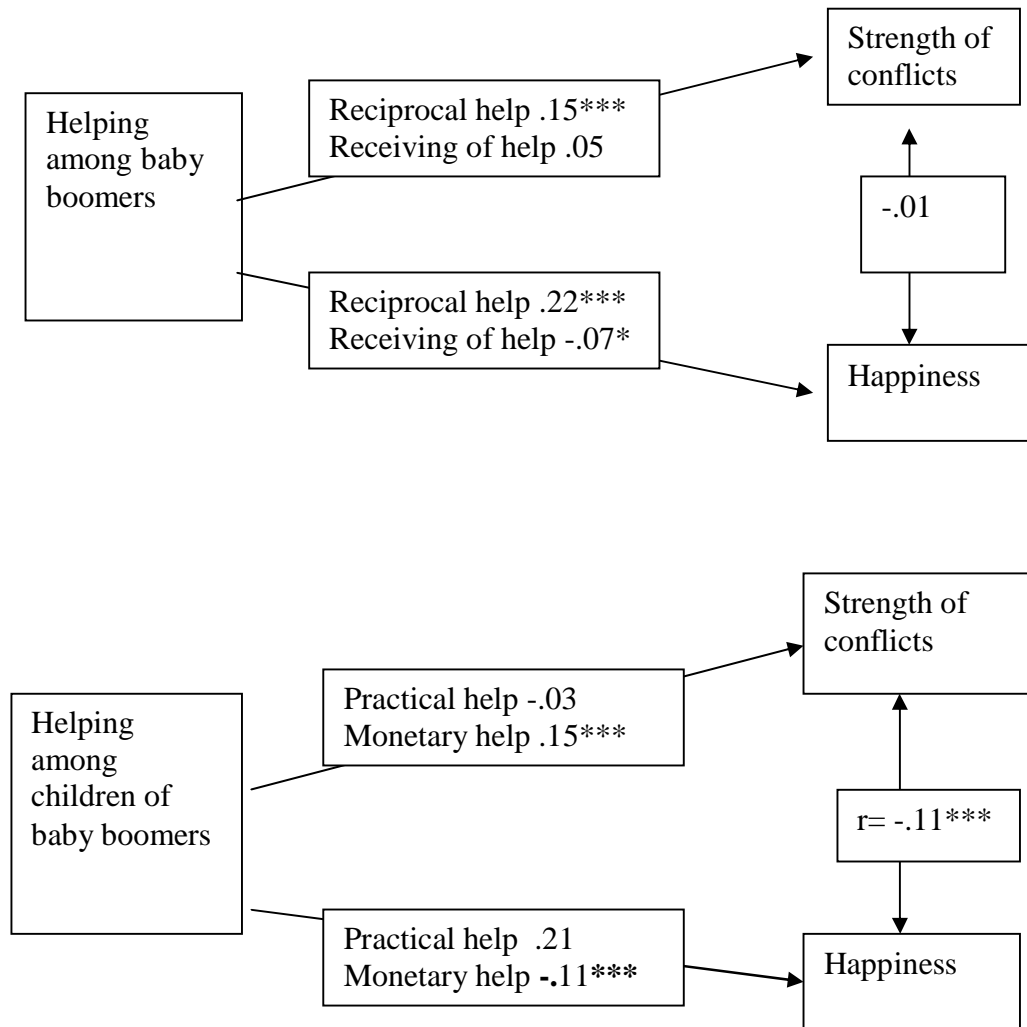
Figure 4 illustrates the relationships of the three phenomena among baby boomers and their children. Helping is measured by the factors presented above. Correlations are calculated between the factor scores and happiness as the difference between positive and negative life events. Strength of conflicts is a sum-scale, where conflicts taking place often got the value 2, conflicts happening sometimes the value 1 and the other answers (seldom, not relevant and missing answer) the value 0.

The ambivalence of helping is particularly obvious among baby boomers. Helping correlated with both conflicts and happiness. Contacts in the helping situations give opportunities to disagree. If you have nothing to do with a relative, it is not likely that you start quarrelling with him or her. In the younger generation, monetary actions – both giving and getting financial gifts - increased the

likelihood of conflicts and unhappiness. Giving practical help was connected to happiness but not related to conflicts.

Correlation analyses between on the one hand, the four helping types and, on the other hand, conflicts and happiness gave - of course - similar results as analyses between helping factor scores on the one hand and conflicts and happiness on the other. According to Table 10, among baby boomers, conflicts with kin correlated with giving and receiving of practical help and receiving financial support. Happiness, too, correlated with giving both kinds of help but it had a negative relationship to receiving monetary support. For adult children, disagreements correlated with giving and receiving financial help and happiness with giving and receiving practical help.

Figure 4. Associations between types of helping (factors), conflicts and happiness. Correlation coefficients and their statistical significance.



Helping is related to conflicts and happiness in different ways in the two generations. *But in both generations, one-sided receivers of monetary help reported conflicts with kin and were unhappy. Poor and needy relatives have traditionally annoyed the richer ones both in real life and in literature.* Also in kinship relations, reciprocity of helping is expected.

CONCLUSIONS

In the beginning, we proposed to study the interaction of conflicts and happiness from three perspectives: kinship, togetherness and gender. It can be immediately noted that the third, gender, did not give rise to any conclusions. It is possible that with further elaboration, it would be possible

to discover differences, but at present we can conclude that both men and women display the same relationships concerning conflicts, helping and happiness.

Once more, the role of kin is shown to be very important: only close kin give and get support from each other. Yet it is important to note that in practical help, the number of kin is important: the larger the extended family is, the more practical help is given and received. It is also important to note that if the respondent does not give help (practical or financial), there are significantly more conflicts.

If we look at conflicts, we can say that especially in the case of the children of baby boomers, the larger the family and the closer the contacts, the more positive and negative interactions there are. It seems also to be the case that helping by itself is related to conflicts, so that giving monetary support also increases conflicts (or vice versa). While receiving practical help increases happiness. These relationships are not symmetrical: giving help makes people somewhat happier (and/or vice versa!) but receiving money is clearly related to unhappiness. Here we might assume that unhappiness is related to need of monetary support but that the support is not sufficient.

The other explanatory variables used in the analysis: gender, education, income and health were mainly unimportant or gave expected results: the rich give and the poor receive. Yet it is not easy to explain why there are no gender differences. A few of the relationships should be elaborated further, e.g. education and gender.

Our main result is: Being together and doing together, i.e. reciprocal care and financial support among distant relatives was associated to happiness but also with conflicts. Togetherness, which Jallinoja defines as “relatedness as it is experienced”, consists not only of positive interaction and contacts. Relatedness accepts occasional disagreements. Conflicts may even strengthen the solidarity of the extended family. At least they indicate that there are exchanges of opinions inside the kin network. To return to the title of this paper: “We may disagree but are happy to help”.

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