

English abstract

Hans Hämäläinen: Help between family generations. Support provided by Finnish baby boomers to their elderly parents and adult children.

This doctoral dissertation explores the provision of financial aid and time transfers (care, childcare and practical help) by Finnish baby boomers (born 1945–1950) to their elderly parents and adult children. The research questions are: Do baby boomers provide more help to their adult children than elderly parents? How are the opportunities and needs associated with the help given by baby boomers to their elderly parents and adult children? How do the baby boomers reason their support to elderly parents and adult children? To answer these questions, the study utilizes three datasets: theme interview data and two nationally representative postal questionnaires which were all collected from Finnish baby boomers as a part of General transmissions in Finland project. The dissertation consists of four articles and a summary chapter.

Articles I and II explore the direction of intergenerational support provided by baby boomers who are in the position of a middle generation. Article I shows that the financial aid given by baby boomers is directed almost entirely to adult children while only a few supports their parents financially. According to article II, baby boomers are also more likely to offer childcare help to their adult children (i.e. grandparental care) than care to their own elderly parents. However, baby boomers provide more practical help to their parents than children. Article III investigates how opportunities and needs are associated with the intergenerational time transfers. According to the results, care and practical help to elderly parents are primarily associated with the parents' needs for support. In contrast, the childcare as well as practical help to adult children are positively associated, along with the needs, more widely with the baby boomers' opportunities to help. Respectively, according to article I the opportunities and needs are related in the same way to the financial aid provided to adult children. Article IV explores how baby boomers reason the intergenerational support they provide. The results indicate that baby boomers reason the help they give to their parents with their parents' needs for support. Needs are also an essential reason to support children. However, in addition baby boomers emphasize their willingness to help their children as much as possible, regardless of needs.

The results are interpreted in the contexts of family sociology and evolutionary theory. These fields of research are perceived as complementary to each other. Sociological and evolutionary family studies often investigate the same subjects from different viewpoints. Therefore, combining these approaches is both necessary and productive.