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Polish Grandparents and Grandchildren Mutual Normative Expectations

Jacek Kurczewski and Agata Oklej

Institute of Applied Social Science

University of Warsaw

e-mail: J.Kurczewski@uw.edu.pl , agucio@o2.pl

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Abstract

The paper presents two sets of research findings. One is three surveys of attitudes in the senior people institutions asking for detailed listing of the mutual expectations; second is survey of attitudes of children and youth and of senior people who took part in the joint social activities sponsored through the charitable action. Though there is no attempt to control the effect of the inter-generational cooperation it can be inferred from the comparison with the opinions on the subject of seniors not involved in the project. The main finding concerns the partial mismatching of the mutual expectations in our culture. Though seniors most often rightly expect the caring love as something most expected by youngest generation on their part, especially from senior women, there is a lot of expectations which are not expressed by youngsters while seniors are willing to offer that is moral education and advise, wisdom of life, respect for people, beliefs, honesty and responsibility and knowledge of family traditions. The difference explains the ambivalence underlying the generations that meet often though for the relatively short time.

Keywords: generational divide / intergenerational bond , transgenerational families, intrafamily transfers, genderisation, interests and expectations

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Polish Grandparents and Grandchildren

Mutual Normative Expectations

Jacek Kurczewski¹ and Agata Oklej²

Institute of Applied Social Science, University of Warsaw

This paper was presented in the “Family Change” session at the Conference ‘How can the well-being of children’s society be ameliorated? Convergence and divergence patterns from a European perspective’; Final Conference of the EU project on ‘The well-being of children: the impact of changing family forms, working conditions of parents, social policy and legislative measures’ financed under the 6th Framework Programme, Barcelona, 8th-10th February 2007

Historically one of the aspects of the family that has permanently undergone change is the relationship between the generations, that is between the parents of one’s parents and the offspring of one’s children. When the normal breeding age used to be earlier than in most of the world today, the chances of the meeting of these two elder/younger generations were higher, today with the increase in longevity the chances are again on the rise. More significantly, however, due to the relative increase in the number of the elderly, their percentage share in the population makes it important to both use their longer life amongst the younger as well as to secure care for them which cannot be left only to state or private agencies. The availability of the breeding option for the older woman as evidenced in some recent cases also makes it possible that long-standing assumptions as to the physical fitness of parents may change. We do not assume that the individual’s need to give birth coinciding with the society’s need to rebuild the demographic base in the most developed countries will lead to the two layers of mothers, the younger and the more elderly, coexisting at home, though certainly the degree of such blurring of the generational divide will significantly increase in the coming decades leading further to a change in the notion of the traditional family and transform it from a crystallized group with strict boundaries into a flexible network of relations (Fuszara and Kurczewski 2005; in print).

¹ Professor, University of Warsaw, Chair in Sociology of Custom and Law, Institute of Applied Social Science; International Associate, Oxford Centre for Family Law and Family Policy; J.Kurczewski@uw.edu.pl

² MA in Sociology, Institute of Applied Social Science, University of Warsaw; agucio@o2.pl

This does not mean that transgenerational families are absent in the contemporary experience. The senior author may bear witness to the contrary as he was raised in the early 1950s by his grandmother and her female friend while his 4 year older brother was brought up by his grandfather and the aforementioned two women. War and political terror, which exterminated, imprisoned or forced into exile large sectors of the parental generation was in the 20th, and still is in the 21st, centuries a sad fact that makes the assumption of „the normality of the parental family” unrealistic.

The research presented in this paper is of limited scope but it resonates well with wider knowledge. The project on „Normative Expectations Across the Generations” run by the Chair of Sociology of Custom and Law, University of Warsaw consisted of two elements. In the Warsaw metropolitan area three hundred grandparents were approached and interviewed as to their experience and more importantly as to their normative expectations concerning their relationships with their grandchildren (Oklej 2006). Secondly the project „Bridge Across the Generations” set up by an insurance agency who asked us to make an evaluation study (Łączymy pokolenia 2006) provided an opportunity to compare the opinions of people from both generations who went through the extra contact in form of transgenerational exchange.

The demography of Poland at the moment is such that in the period 1950-2000 the percentage of people over 60 years of age has doubled from 8.3% to 16.7% of the population (Statistical Yearbook 2001:100, Table 1). In the longer perspective this is even more manifest, at the beginning of 20th century there were 13 grandparents alive for every 100 grandchildren, while at the end of the century there were 51 grandparents for every 100 grandchildren (Szatur-Jaworska 1997:13). The number of three-generational households is, however, on the decrease – 9.3% of all Polish households in 1995 and 7.5% in the year 2002 (Own calculations based on http://www.stat.gov.pl/dane_spol-gosp_dom/tab_wyn.xls, Table 2). If however one adds the households in which grandparents are living with their grandchildren the share of such households that include both elderly people and the young is 17.2% .. Though most of the elderly do not live together with their offspring, contact is frequent. According to a survey undertaken in 2000 by the Polish Gerontological Society most, i.e. 71% of people over 65 living separately, had seen their children during the previous week, and 69% had seen their grandchildren. Only 10% had seen their children over 1

month or longer ago. As for Christmas 4.3% of the elderly spent their holidays alone, 18% in the company of their life partner, 28.1% at their children's home and 49.7% in their own home with their children and grandchildren (Czekanowski 2002).

Leon Dyczewski characterised the Polish family as being based upon a strong sense of community, with a high position for woman-wife-mother, a high value of home that functioned for centuries as a shelter against the alien public authority, family religiosity and festive rituals. All that strengthens intergenerational bonds and places grandparents in a special position as moral guardians of the family, so the cross-generational bond between grandparents and grandchildren is often stronger than that between parents and children (Dyczewski 1981). Dyczewski discerns 4 types of intrafamily transfers: offering a residence or assistance in acquiring housing; material assistance in kind or in money; child care and other services. Despite all its peculiarities, as elsewhere in the West. intrafamily transfers in Poland work in contrast to public transfers: from the elderly to the young. As regards housing we know from the 2000 survey that 28.2% of people aged 65 years or more have offered co-residence to their offspring on a regular basis and 11.1% sporadically (Czekanowski 1000:165). In 1995 a survey of households receiving external financial assistance, most, 56.7%, declared that aid came from their parents, especially in the case of child rearing families. In general 13% of households received financial assistance and almost 18% received assistance in kind, mostly food, medicine and clothing. Of the households receiving financial assistance 10.5% received it from their children and 56.7% from their parents, as regards assistance in kind the figures are respectively 15.9% and 59.9%. Almost 15% of households were assisted in child care, and in 91.7% of cases this assistance came from grandparents. As for the other services the direction is inverse as it was offered by adult children to 61.2% of households in need and by parents to adult children in 16.5% of cases, though there were only 7% of households in such need amongst the all households (Golinowska 1999:82).

All these scattered data where generations are mixed may be summed up by stressing that the birth of grandchildren leads to a substantial change in the relationships between the new parents and their own parents, if they are still alive. The grandparents start the new role, which is apparently a revival of their role in youth, that is, at least in part, nursing and caring for the new generation in the family. But this is a new role, as age as such, as well as its threatening correlates such as ill health, physical weakness,

and a dramatically shortened life perspective make grand-parenting a new task that challenges the elderly. For the grandchild, on the other hand, the grandparent is usually not a substitute for a parent but a different significant other with their own peculiar characteristics.

The Normative Expectations of Grandparents

The relationship between grandparents and grandchildren does not depend solely on the whims of individual love and affection. Polish law regulates the transgenerational bond. The Family and Tutelage Code of 1964 (with further amendments) in article 128 sets out the general duty of maintenance (*obowiązek alimentacyjny*) which is defined as „the duty to provide the means of subsistence, and according to need also the means of upbringing” upon all relatives in direct line irrespective of the degree of relationship. The next article 129 paragraph 1 of the Code sets forth the sequence in which the duty is to be assumed by saying that „the duty of maintenance is due to descendants before ascendants, and to ascendants before kin; and if there are more ascendants or descendants it is due to closer relatives before more distant ones”. Article 132 specifies also that „the duty of maintenance of someone more distant arises if there is nobody closer or if such a person is unable to fulfil their duty or if providing the needed maintenance in time is impossible or linked to overburdening difficulty”. In the event of poverty (great)grandchildren may thus ex lege request maintenance by the (great)grandparents.

The letter of the law seems to be, in this case, less important than the living law or intuitive law that governs family relations (cf. Petrażycki 1901). In Petrażycki’s heterodox theory the law develops anywhere the recognition of mutual rights and obligations emerges, and intimate family relations, according to him, are full of such normative expectations, which give rise to an effective unofficial family law in force within private family social settings. In order to discover the normative expectations held by the elderly as part of such an unofficial family law in the period from July 2005 to April 2006 a survey of the so-called “Third Age Universities” and “Senior Clubs” was conducted in which about three hundred questionnaires were distributed and which included questions on the normative duties of grandparents to grandchildren and vice versa. More than half, i.e. 180 questionnaires were filled in and returned to the

researcher who decided that 153 are clearly enough answered to be the subject of the systematic analysis, the most relevant findings of which are here reported (Oklej 2006).

As to the grandparents duties, out of the list of 24 options offered in the questionnaire, respondents were allowed to select up to 8 and to rank them from 1 to 3, the results are presented in the Table 1 below.

Table 1. Grandparents' duties in their own opinion.

	chose n	I place	II place	III place
	N = 144			
	%*			
Transmitting moral principles	71,5	34,0	9,0	9,7
Readiness to listen to confessions	71,5	9,0	17,4	13,9
Passing religious beliefs	45,1	4,9	14,6	7,6
Common walks	33,3	1,4	5,6	5,6
Transmitting practical skills (e.g.: housekeeping, do-it-yourself)	25,7	0,0	3,5	6,3
Transmitting the knowledge about national history	38,9	0,0	4,2	9,7
Financial assistance in critical situations	34,7	2,1	4,9	2,8
Transmitting a flat / a house	11,8	0,0	0,7	1,4
Transmitting hobby, interests	19,4	0,7	0,7	0,7
Giving titbits	24,3	0,7	0,0	2,8
Permanent financial assistance	6,2	2,1	0,0	0,7
Hugging (giving a sense of security)	59,7	6,3	11,8	7,6
Assistance in doing homework	16,7	0,0	1,4	0,7
Taking care while parents are away	77,1	17,4	9,0	6,3
Invitations for Sunday dinners	20,8	0,0	1,4	3,5
Transmitting inheritance	7,6	0,0	0,0	0,0
Common holidays, weekends, etc.	24,3	0,0	1,4	2,1
Giving love	56,9	15,3	6,3	6,3
Giving pocket money	15,3	0,0	1,4	2,1
Transmitting knowledge about the family	51,4	1,4	3,5	4,9
Reading books	32,6	2,1	0,7	1,4
Preparing everyday meals	6,9	1,4	1,4	0,7
Spoiling, i.e. fulfilling dreams	25,7	0,7	1,4	2,8
Others	4,2	0,7	0,0	0,0

* The given table cannot be added up, neither the columns nor the lines, to 100% as the people under study were asked to choose 8 duties from 24 in the order of their importance.

Grandmothers obviously moralise their role, as for one third of them (34%) the transmission of moral principles is the first rank generational duty. Notably, when taken

together irrespective of the rank the foremost place is taken by the more practical duty to take care of the grandchildren when their parents are absent (77% as compared with 71% in the case of moral principles). Taking into account the total, there is also a third element amongst the duties listed by the overwhelming majority, that is the readiness to listen. (71%), known from the literature as the fact that it is easier to confess one's problems, doubts and queries to relatives a step further beyond one's parents themselves (also uncles and aunts),

Next in popularity comes the affine duty to offer psychological security through hugging (59.8%) and giving love in general (56.9%), ending the set of affective duties acknowledged by more than 50% of the surveyed grandparents. A small majority (51.4%) imposes the duty of transmitting the knowledge of family history upon themselves.

The more general duties are mentioned by minorities of the respondents. Of these the most often mentioned is transmission of religious faith (45.1%), followed by the duty to transmit a knowledge of national history (38.9%).

Practical duties are mentioned by no more than a third of the respondents from the elderly generation. This set is headed by financial aid in a crisis situation (34.7%), joint walks (33.3%), reading of books (32.6%), which is followed by transmitting the various practical skills, such as house keeping, or do-it-yourself (25.7%), helping with school homework (16.7%) and giving pocket money (15.3%). Of another character are duties such as fulfilling dreams (25.7%), offering liked delicacies (24.3%), joint holidays (24.3%), offering Sunday meals (20.8%) and transmitting interests and hobbies (19.4%). Among those rarely mentioned are serious duties such as transferring the house (11.8%), leaving a legacy (7.6%), preparing daily meals (6.9%), and permanent financial support (6.2%) of the grandchildren.

We observe a striking homogeneity in these answers. Education which is usually the most differentiating influence on Polish public opinion has no influence here. It may result from the special character of the sample that does not exclude the lesser educated, and on the other hand involves people who are interested in further learning. Nevertheless, it is remarkable that people with a university education (N = 66) and without (N = 76) hold similar views on the duties to offer moral, religious or political socialisation, practical duties or psychological support to the younger generation.

Most of our respondents were women. The effect of gender on their opinions cannot be studied, but the gender differentiation of the grandparental roles could. From such a

comparison a picture of opinions emerges that involves the gender-neutral core of the role and the gender-related versions.

As to the first, one must list transmission of moral principles which is expected equally from women (59,6%) as from men (55,3%), another one is reading books. Then there is a set of more often male oriented expectations – joint walks, teaching interests, hobbies and practical skills, transmission of national and family history, and financial help in crisis. The rather female oriented duties involve a readiness to listen, hugging, transmission of religious faith, providing delicacies and fulfilling dreams, care in the absence of parents, offering love and Sunday meals. This genderisation of the grandparental role is also irrespective of the level of formal education in our survey.

Table 2. Grandmother and grandfather's duties in their own opinion

	chosen		I place		II place		III place	
	GM *	GF* *	GM	GF	GM	GF	GM	GF
	N = 94							
	%***							
Transmitting moral principles	59,6	55,3	41,5	35,1	3,2	4,3	2,1	2,1
Readiness to listen to confessions	69,1	23,4	10,6	3,2	23,4	9,6	11,7	5,3
Passing religious beliefs	30,9	10,6	4,3	2,1	12,8	3,2	8,5	2,1
Common walks	11,7	36,2	0,0	10,6	4,3	10,6	1,1	7,4
Transmitting practical skills (e.g.: housekeeping, do-it-yourself)	22,3	45,7	1,1	16,0	4,3	6,4	6,4	14,9
Transmitting the knowledge about national history	8,5	37,2	0,0	3,2	3,2	19,1	3,2	7,4
Financial assistance in critical situations	11,7	25,5	0,0	3,2	2,1	6,4	8,5	5,3
Transmitting a flat / a house	5,3	5,3	0,0	1,1	0,0	2,1	1,1	1,1
Transmitting hobby, interests	5,3	38,3	0,0	2,1	1,1	6,4	1,1	18,1
Giving titbits	18,1	8,5	2,1	0,0	2,1	1,1	6,4	2,1
Permanent financial assistance	2,1	5,3	0,0	2,1	0,0	1,1	1,1	0,0
Hugging (giving a sense of security)	46,8	13,8	7,4	0,0	8,5	5,3	16,0	2,1
Assistance in doing homework	5,3	19,1	1,1	0,0	1,1	5,3	1,1	1,1
Taking care while parents are away	54,3	29,8	9,6	6,4	14,9	3,2	12,8	7,4
Invitations for Sunday dinners	20,2	3,2	1,1	0,0	1,1	0,0	1,1	0,0
Transmitting inheritance	1,1	8,5	0,0	0,0	0,0	1,1	0,0	2,1
Common holidays, weekends, etc.	11,7	16,0	0,0	2,1	1,1	0,0	5,3	3,2
Giving love	36,2	26,6	12,8	5,3	6,4	3,2	3,2	3,2
Giving pocket money	4,3	17,0	0,0	1,1	1,1	3,2	2,1	0,0
Transmitting knowledge about the family	20,2	37,2	0,0	3,2	3,2	5,3	2,1	9,6
Reading books	19,1	21,3	1,1	1,1	4,3	3,2	0,0	3,2

Preparing everyday meals	10,6	1,1	1,1	1,1	1,1	0,0	3,2	0,0
Spoiling, i.e. fulfilling dreams	21,3	9,6	4,3	1,1	1,1	0,0	1,1	1,1
Others	2,1	2,1	2,1	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0

* GM – grandmother’s duties

** GF – grandfather’s duties

*** The given table cannot be added up, neither the columns nor lines to 100% as the studied people were asked to choose 5 duties from 24 in the order of their importance.

Genderisation may also involve the gender of the grandchildren concerned. The number of answers here was much smaller, one may assume that it follows from the conviction of the majority that differences do not matter. However, those who answered the question definitely sustain the partially gendered concept of the upbringing. As for granddaughters, nobody mentioned transmitting national history and almost nobody mentioned introducing family history, while psychological security needs (readiness to listen, hugging, giving love) were in general three to two times more often mentioned in relation to them than with the grandsons.

Grandmothers (mostly) were also asked what is due to them from their grandchildren. Most of them (92.7%) think there is such a normative counterpart Here, two detailed questions were asked, one addressing the duties of the small grandchildren, and secondly – the adults, and, naturally, these two questions need to be discussed separately.

Table 3. Grandparents’ expectations towards their young and adult grandchildren in the opinion of studied people.

	Expectations chosen		I place		II place		III place	
	From children	From adults	From children	From adults	From children	From adults	From children	From adults
	N=93	N=111	N=93	N=111	N=93	N=111	N=93	N=111
	%*							
Shopping	18,3	54,1	3,2	6,3	3,2	5,4	1,1	4,5
Readiness to listen to confessions	32,3	51,4	4,3	9,9	3,2	4,5	1,1	5,4
Common sport activities	7,5	9,0	1,1	0,0	0,0	0,9	0,0	1,8
Common walks	67,7	37,8	7,5	4,5	7,5	4,5	9,7	6,3
Giving presents	12,9	10,8	1,1	0,9	1,1	0,0	1,1	0,9

Going together to the cinema, theatre, etc.	21,5	18,0	0,0	1,8	3,2	2,7	1,1	1,8
Financial assistance in critical situations	3,2	35,1	0,0	2,7	1,1	7,2	0,0	6,3
Sharing a flat in order to take care of grandparents	9,7	31,5	0,0	7,2	1,1	6,3	2,2	3,6
Taking care of physical health (going to a doctor, giving medicines etc.)	7,5	41,4	1,1	4,5	1,1	8,1	1,1	8,1
Remembering about the Grandmother's Day and Grandfather's Day	81,7	56,8	11,8	5,4	10,8	9,9	11,8	6,3
Permanent financial assistance	3,2	2,7	0,0	0,0	1,1	0,0	2,2	0,0
Hugging	68,8	19,8	11,8	2,7	14,0	3,6	9,7	4,5
Comforting the joie de vivre	66,7	72,1	15,1	15,3	10,8	8,1	12,9	12,6
Providing the contact with modernity	18,3	53,2	1,1	3,6	4,3	7,2	2,2	6,3
Invitations for family dinners	7,5	31,5	1,1	0,0	0,0	3,6	0,0	1,8
Giving congratulatory scrolls and drawings	77,4	2,7	5,4	0,0	7,5	0,0	16,1	0,0
Common holidays, weekends, etc.	23,7	10,8	0,0	0,0	2,2	1,8	4,3	1,8
Giving love	68,8	53,2	22,6	14,4	9,7	5,4	4,3	4,5
Remembering about (grandmother's, grandfather's) anniversaries	60,2	54,1	9,7	5,4	8,6	6,3	9,7	9,0
Patient care in serious illness	14,0	63,1	1,1	12,6	1,1	7,2	4,3	8,1

Reading books	15,1	2,7	0,0	0,0	1,1	0,0	0,0	0,0
Preparing everyday meals	4,3	10,8	0,0	0,9	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,9
Giving attention	34,4	25,2	0,0	1,8	5,4	2,7	2,2	0,9
Others	2,2	2,7	1,1	0,9	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0

* The given table cannot be added up, neither the columns nor lines to 100% as the studied people were asked to choose 8 duties from 24 in the order of their importance.

As for the small grandchildren, their most often expected duties are of a psychologically supportive character. Hugging and offering love is expected by almost three quarters of the respondents (68.8%), slightly less speak of joint walks (67.7%) and sustaining joy of life (66.7%). These psychologically substantive expectations are paralleled by the expectation of the ritualised expression of love and concern for the elderly on the part of grandchildren such as remembering of the Grandma's Day and Grandpa's Day (81.7%), offering hand made commemorative paintings and drawings (77.4%), remembering of the birthdays etc. (60.2%). A minority mentions practical duties such as shopping (18.3%), nursing in illness (14.0%), living together in order to offer help (9.7%), preparing meals (4.3%), financial help in times of crisis, permanent financial aid (3.2%). Listing some of the duties that sound correlative to the inverse duties of grandparents themselves suggests their more mutually supportive character than is apparent when taken in isolation. Thus apart from joint walks already mentioned by large majority, a significant minority of grandparents lists a readiness to listen to them (32.3%), joint holidays (23.7%) and reading books (15.1%).

The overall picture changes with age and already adult grandchildren are expected above all to help and nurse in the event of serious illness (63.1%) as well as in shopping (54.1%). Psychological affective support remains expected at the same level or increased (sustaining the joy of life – 72.1%; offering love – 53.2%; a readiness to listen – 51.4%), while a minority expects other strongly practical duties to be performed by grandchildren such as helping with health protection by giving medication, visits to a doctor (41.4%), living together in order to help the grandparent (31.5%), financial help in times of crisis (35.1%). Ritualised expressions of love is slightly less often expected when grandchildren are adult, but still by a majority. It is worth noting that when grandchildren reach adulthood their duty is to keep grandparents in touch with modernity (18.3% in case of small grandchildren and 53.2% in case of the adults).

Symptomatically, here the difference between the less and more educated grandparents is notable. While 12% of grandparents with less than university education expect their small grandchildren to introduce them to (post)modernity and 42.9% expect the same of the adults, the relevant figures for grandparents with university level education are 25.6% and 66.7%, which just goes to prove that that more one knows the more one wishes to learn.

We observe that while education played no role in the normative self-expectations of the grandmother, it does in more than one case as to what is expected from the grandchildren. Apart from the „modernisation” of grandparents, the better educated more often expect their adult grandchildren to provide financial help in a crisis situation, a readiness to listen and to walk together. To sum it up, it appears that better-off people expect more verbal action on the part of their grandchildren, they may also have grandchildren in a better economic position to provide the financial aid.

Transgenerational Mutual Expectations

The research linked with the project Bridging the generations (Łączymy pokolenia 2006) provided the opportunity to compare the experience of two generations, as in the project both young people aged from 7 to 25 years and older people from their 50s well into their 80 were set some common tasks such as listening to history etc.. The evaluation of the project involved interviewing 100 young and 100 elderly people sampled from those who took part in the project and two 100-person groups with matched socio-demographic characteristics (gender, age, locality) of young and the elderly participants. Apart from open interviews the structured questionnaires were filled in by the interviewers. In the interview some questions related to the mutual expectations of two generations were asked. First of all, however, the three generations were scrutinised as both “grandchildren” and “grandparents” were asked what they owe to their own grandparents. It means that today’s grandparents were asked about their grandparents who were alive at least 50, and mostly 60 or 70 years ago, while today’s grandchildren about their grandparents alive at least 25 and mostly 15 to 10 years ago. The answers to these questions are presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4. What do the grandchildren owe to their grandparents (% in 1950s/% in 1990s)

	Grandmothers of participants	Grandmothers of non-participants	Grandfathers of participants	Grandfathers of non-participants
Care and upbringing	77/88	81/84	70/67	75/66
Feeling one is loved	84/93	98/87	84/90	84/80
Religious faith	80/79	86/66	77/68	70/48
Moral principles	86/77	84/64	88/77	79/63
Love for country	80/64	65/47	82/76	79/65
Traits of character	73/61	75/61	79/75	77/67
Knowledge of family history	77/85	79/83	84/90	77/72
Knowledge of historical details	41/52	60/61	81/77	73/71
Interests, hobbies	41/36	44/38	48/57	61/51
Practical skills	69/59	81/56	67/38	60/51

The experience of love was the most common gain from the relations with the elder generation. Almost the same level of satisfaction was derived from cultural transmission of moral values, irrespective of gender, and religious faith and political values with female ancestors slightly more responsible for the former and the males for the latter. Though about three quarters of those interviewed recognise care and upbringing by their grandparents, there is also a majority who had been taught some practical skills like cooking, DIY, etc and even to some degree the learning of interests and hobbies remains high. Though, of course, gender issues may be subject to the generalising reworking of memory, the only consistent difference being that fathers have more influence on the historical memory of the younger generation.

The last point is self-evident for those who know the contested versions of history from their own background. Poland belongs to large number of nations that, due to their complex political history, have lived with over generations the difference between the official history supported by the state school and state political apparatus and the history preserved privately, often in clandestine. Under the communist dictatorship certain facts about national history were totally neglected for some years and most of modern history was interpreted in a way contrary to the experience and sentiments of the people who lived through these events, like the Polish-Soviet war of 1920, the Molotov-Ribbentrop secret partition of Poland in 1939, the anti-German Warsaw rising of 1944, and the imposition of Communist rule by the Red Army after WW2. At home the official version was contested and the opposite version was provided together with „normal” family history forming together powerful affectively loaded knowledge.

When it comes to the generations currently alive, the picture changes only slightly. First, as regard general care and upbringing the role of the ancestresses is now slightly more widely acknowledged (by more than 80% as compared with under 70% when it comes to grandfathers). The male role in political socialisation is more marked and goes together with the grandfathers’ importance in transmission of history. What is interesting is that despite the fact that the younger generation in our study is the first generation has reached adulthood in a politically independent Poland since 1939 the private transmission of history remains as important though this time perhaps as an argument in favour of this or that interpretation of what is now openly disputed public history.

Another way of approaching the mutually normative perspective of two generations was by asking the younger generation “And what is above all expected by you from your grandmother(s)/grandfather(s)?”. As the question was open the figures in the Table 5 cannot be directly compared with those previously reported.

Table 5. What the younger generation expects from their grandparents today

	Grandmothers of participants	Grandmothers of non-participants	Grandfathers of participants	Grandfathers of non-participants
Upbringing	8	14	3	2
Acceptance and	20	1	8	13

sympathy				
Contact	10	24	7	2
History	4	4	2	4
Practical skills	-	-	2	3
Financial support	2	11	2	6
Health	8	6	5	4
Change	5	3	2	3
Love	32	34	18	23
Psychological support	18	24	12	16
Joy	8	2	5	2
Others	1	2	2	2
None	7	6	8	11
Doesn't apply	2	4	2	4

It turns out that the expectations of the youth are various, though love, psychological support, acceptance and sympathy dominate.

As for the elderly we asked them first, what they owe to their grandchildren receiving fewer responses than in the previous questions:

	Grandparents participants N = 56	Grandparents non- participants N = 55
Love	16	24
Happiness	29	38
Concern	18	18
Assistance	14	24
Change of perspective	29	11
Satisfaction with grandchildren	16	16
Other	2	11

The answers illustrate the fact that contact with grandchildren is mostly rewarding per se and thus may be added to the psychological well-being of the elderly person. It is worth noting that there are slight differences between participants in the

project and non-participants that point to the possibility that contact under the pre-arranged conditions led some to change their way of seeing the world and to question their unconditional acceptance of their grandchildren.

Finally, we also asked what grandparents think grandchildren expect from them and the answers to this question are presented in Table 6 below.

Table 6. What grandchildren today expect from their grandparents according to the latter

	From grandmothers (participants)	From grandmothers (non-participants)	From grandfathers (participants)	From grandfathers (non-participants)
Love	63	59	41	43
Acceptance and sympathy	22	23	12	16
Upbringing and education	30	38	44	38
Transmission of tradition	9	11	12	17
Care and help	50	48	34	35
Financial support	10	16	7	11
Joy and play	3	9	2	7
Other	3	4	3	4
Don't know	3	6	9	14
total	100% = 106	100% = 104	100% = 106	100% = 104

On the one hand, in both groups the elderly rightly most often consider themselves that grandchildren expect love from them, especially in case of grandmothers, on the other hand, there are many other things which are not expected by grandchildren in contrast to the expectations of their grandparents. This is, above all, the widely understood upbringing and education, including transmission of the moral values, religious faith, respect for other people, honesty and responsibility and

transmission of family tradition. This offer is not neglected by the grandchildren as it is mentioned by them when asked directly what they owe to grandparents, but is put lower down the scale. It seems therefore that the relatively short-lived happiness offered by grandchildren to grandparents might be supplemented by those, more practical aspects of the transgenerational bond.

Here we may start to compare the upbringing experience as remembered by Poles brought up in the 1940s or 1950s and in the 1980s or 1990s. Understandably in an era of television and rapid acceleration of technological change learning practical skills from grandparents is reported more rarely today, but the same is true for the basic complex values: as regards religious faith in 3 out of all 4 possible comparisons it is less often mentioned, as to moral and political principles in all 4 cases. Even as for the traits of character the role of the older generation seems to be slightly on the decrease. What remains, nevertheless, relatively stable is the affective bond, general care and upbringing and on the other hand, the instigation of (some, we guess) interests and hobbies.

CONCLUSIONS

The family, as in other social fields, is not only what happens but also what people think and feel about it. In our study we have focused on the normative aspect of transgenerational relations understanding that this permeates the frustrations and aspirations people have about their own and the others' life. The future is to be seen not only through the practices of past and present but also by the more hidden aspects of 'how it should look like' and 'what is the direction I would the most like it to go'.

Love, trust and personal security seem to be the affective capital that is provided by the relationship with one's own grandparents and, it seems to be replicated in the mutual exchange and offered by grandchildren.

Both surveys also revealed the uneasiness respondents feel with the strictly normative discourse on family relations. Many have written on the questionnaire form that grandparents do not have a duty, but they should offer a given service in so far as it is possible. As some explained „nursing the grandchild is for me not a duty but my pleasure”. Taken literally, it would mean, of course, the total rejection of the normative

basis of the cross-generational transfer of services. Instead, one should propose a hedonistic discourse of „grandparental pleasures and joys”, similar to the „joys of motherhood and paternity”.

Let us observe here three points. First, we find in normative psychology, as described long ago by Leon Petrażycki (1901), the free duties and bound duties or obligations to which the rights to expect the fulfilment of the given duty on part of its the addressee correspond. In his theory only the latter and all the latter relationships are defined as the juridical ones. Petrażycki defined Christian ethics as of the first type, that is of the free, unbound duty to love thy neighbour irrespective of what he does or wishes. The classic example of such, a purely moral duty is a beggar to whom we may give alms but who does not (unless we think otherwise) have the right to expect the gift. The contemporary psychology of family relations may be of a similar moral type in that grandparents feel the duty to do good though they do not consider that a grandchild has the correlative right to expect its provision from the grandparents.

Though that may be right in some cases it is not our impression that this is the dominant normative characteristics of cross-generational relations. Instead one may start to question as unnecessary the tendency to link a sense of duty with a lack of pleasure. Some duties may be self-rewarding and quite obviously this is in the case of face-to-face relations with people with whom one shares one’s life. This where family love enters as a psychological reality. As long as love continues the relation remains unproblematic, it is only when it fails and crisis appears that the relationship is reinterpreted in terms of mutual rights and obligations.

In this respect the Polish Supreme Court (Civil and Administrative Chamber) issued on 14th June 1988 a symptomatic verdict (III CZP 42/88) that provided a binding interpretation of the law when it was asked by a lower degree court if in light of the Family and Tutelage Code grandparents have the right to request from parents contact with grandchildren. The case was brought before the Supreme Court after a divorced mother had appealed the verdict by a lower court which decided that the mother of her former husband had the right to meet with her grandchild twice a month. The Supreme Court declared that “grandparents may request the regulation of their personal relations with grandchildren if it is in the interest of the children”. Though the Court acknowledged that only the relations between parents and children are regulated by law it does not mean that other relations cannot be regulated. “Parents [...] have a duty to care for the development of the child for the sake of its well being. For full personal

development they should thus enable the child to maintain contact with its relatives (grandparents) assuming their attitudes are proper and their influence on the child is beneficial. Such contacts often arise out of the strong emotional ties especially between grandparents and grandchildren coming from the infancy and may provide for better upbringing and spiritual development of the child and allow for the continuation of ties within the multi-generational family. Such behaviour on the part of grandparents, showing an attachment to and care for grandchildren not only does not conflict with the interest of the child but is in its own good interest. The tutelary court [...] shall be able to, in circumstances where relatives (grandparents) disorganise the proper direction of the upbringing of the child, forbid the direct link with the child or in the case, when without due reason, disallow or seriously hamper contacts between relatives (grandparents) with the child forbid such behaviour on part of the parents and regulate the way in which the personal contacts of those relatives with the child.” In their ruling the Supreme Court referred to the fact that in law parental authority does not give a monopoly on personal contact with the child and that the said authority should be applied in the interest of the child. In fact, the Court referred more profoundly to the social practice starting their grounds with a statement to the effect that “in the social conditions of our country great importance is attached to multigenerational families due to family traditions as well as to the special role of grandparents in the actual performance of care of minor grandchildren. This is why the support of contacts between members of the three-generational family in conditions of no conflict is absolutely normal”. The old (and still binding) judicial interpretation of the official law explicitly links it with the intuitive law as felt by the population (insofar as our scanty data allow us to such generalisation). The obvious fact that with the decline in demographic growth the number of the possible cross-generational ties, whatever their value for both sides is declining may also be complimented by a counterweight to in the various attempts to develop foster grand-parental relations are on the rise. The very project run by one of the insurance companies in which the people from two generations are matched together irrespective of their genealogical relationship is a telling sign of change also. Just at the moment of writing we are listening to the Polish media talking about a competition for foster grandparents won by an elderly person who was welcomed to the “normal” nuclear two-generational family which felt the need to fill the generational vacuum in their intimate family life.

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