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Martin Kohli & Harald Künemund

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What motives for giving?

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FREIE UNIVERSITÄT BERLIN

Research Group on Aging and the Life Course (FALL)

Director: Prof. Dr. Martin Kohli

FREIE UNIVERSITÄT BERLIN
Institut für Soziologie
Garystr. 55, D-14195 Berlin
Tel. +49 30 838 576 51, Fax +49 30 838 576 52
e-mail: fall@fall-berlin.de
home-page: www.fall-berlin.de

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Intergenerational transfers in the family: What motives for giving?¹

Martin Kohli & Harald Künemund

Abstract

Transfers between adult family generations are an important part of the intergenerational link in modern societies. They are still a new field of inquiry, but some of their basic patterns are by now well known: There is a net flow of material resources from the older to the younger generations, both by inter vivos transfers and bequests. But there is no clarity yet about the motives of transfer giving. In the economic literature, there is an unresolved debate about altruism versus exchange models; in the sociological literature, these types of motives are complemented by various forms of indirect or delayed reciprocity. Motives are a key not only to the explanation of transfer giving and to the distributional effects of transfers, but also to their quality for the recipients.

With data from the German Aging Survey, we assess the structure and consequences of motives directly. We show that the empirical structure of motives is less a split between altruistic and exchange orientations than between unconditional and conditional giving. Unconditional giving is more frequent among women and among the better educated. Unconditional motives have a strong positive, conditional motives a negative impact on the propensity to give transfers or other kinds of support. These results suggest that there are typical “styles” of supporting one’s descendants that correspond to other dimensions of socially differentiated family styles.

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Introduction

Private transfers between adult generations in the family are an important part of the intergenerational link in modern societies. The sociological imagination was long truncated by the emphasis of classical modernization theory on the emergence of the nuclear family. This restrictive view has first been transcended by research on the emotional and support relations between adult family generations. But it is only during the last decade that sociology has discovered again the full extent of the family as a kinship and especially a generational system beyond the nuclear household (cf. Bengtson 2001) which includes massive monetary relations and flows as well.

In the meantime we have become aware of the salience of intergenerational transfers not only for the family as such – how the family distributes its resources among and assures the well-being of its members – but also for the broader issues of social policy, social inequality and social integration (e.g., Attias-Donfut 1995; Szydlik 2000). Of special interest is the articulation between the private transfers in the family and the public transfers in the welfare state. In the conventional story of modernization, the emergence of the nuclear family and of the public old-age security system were seen as parallel and mutually reinforcing processes. The basic assumption was that the development of the welfare state would crowd out the private support within families. Recent evidence, however, points to the opposite conclusion: Welfare state provisions, far from crowding out family support, enable the family in turn to provide new intergenerational support and transfers (Kohli 1999; Künemund & Rein 1999).

While intergenerational family transfers beyond the nuclear household are thus still a new field of inquiry, some of their basic patterns are by now well known, at least for the countries where the relevant data exist². There is a net flow of material resources from the older to the younger generations, i.e., from the elderly in retirement to their adult children and grand-children, in the opposite direction of the public transfers through the old-age security system. The former is partly a result of the latter: The pensions paid to the elderly through the public “generational contract” enable them to make transfers to their descendants (Kohli 1999). The flow is by inter vivos transfers as well as by bequests. The intra-family distribution of these two forms seems to be different: Bequests are to a large extent distributed equally across all children in the family (even in countries such as the US where there are very few restrictive rules regarding the disposition

² See for France: Attias-Donfut (1995); for Germany: Motel & Szydlik (1999), Kohli (1999); for Israel: Spilerman et al. (1993); for the US: Soldo & Hill (1993), McGarry (1997).

of one's estate), while inter vivos transfers are made unequally and seem to go in higher proportion to the more needy children.

In other respects, there is less clarity. As an example, the effects of transfers are still under dispute. With regard to their effects on wealth accumulation among the recipients, a few years ago Gale & Scholz (1994:146) noted that "even the most fundamental factual issues remain unresolved". An even more striking example is the lack of clarity about the motives for transfer giving. As McGarry (1997) has observed, much of the economic literature on transfers seeks to explain the motivation behind these inter-generational linkages, with special emphasis on the issue of altruism vs. exchange, in order to understand their distributional effects; but despite this substantial amount of research, "a consensus has not yet been reached about the importance of these alternative models" (1997:1). One of the reasons for this disappointing state of affairs is that most research so far has relied on a static instead of a dynamic framework for testing these models (McGarry 2000). Another reason, however, may be that the motives themselves and the relations among them have not been adequately specified.

In this paper, we empirically assess the structure and consequences of transfer motives. First we discuss the (non-trivial) question why we should be interested in motives and the range of motives described in the literature. Secondly we analyze the empirical structure of motives based on data from the German Aging Survey, a large nationally representative survey of the German population aged 40-85. In the third part we focus on two motives that stand for different motivational clusters, conditional vs. unconditional giving, and examine their socio-demographic correlates as well as their impact on the giving of transfers or other kinds of support.

Transfer motives: An overview

Why ask for motives?

Why should we be interested in the motives for transfer behavior as long as we have sufficient information on that behavior itself and on its objective correlates? It may be feasible to explain transfer giving by socio-demographic variables such as income and wealth of givers or need of recipients, and by relational variables such as geographical or emotional closeness or frequency of contact between the two. This is the explanatory strategy that we (like most other sociologists) have pursued so far, with results that

have clearly demonstrated the significance of these variables (Motel & Szydlik 1998; Kohli et al. 2000).

So why should motives be included? The question is not rhetorical, the more so since past research on motives (or attitudes) and behavior has led to the conclusion that the correspondence between the two is far from perfect, and necessarily so.

A first answer would be that an explanation of transfer giving on the basis of the socio-demographic characteristics of givers and recipients and other objective criteria alone remains incomplete. A „full“ explanation requires encompassing the level of action as well, which means that the orientations that the actors bring to their situations have to be considered.

But this only begs the question: Why do we need such a “full” explanation? Why is it not sufficient to be parsimonious, and to take a shortcut from the objective variables directly to behavior? The answer here can be given in terms of a formal theory of action, decision or choice, such as in the rational choice perspective (e.g., Esser 1999). According to this perspective, different motives or preferences will result in different evaluations of the situation, and thus in different behavioral responses to situational changes. Motives therefore are necessary for predicting the effect of such situational or contextual changes.

This argument is analogous to that of most economists who have studied transfers and other family behavior. Their interest in motives stems from their view that motives are critical for assessing the likely impact of changes in resource conditions (and in the policy measures that create these changes) on transfer behavior. Whether transfers to children are motivated by altruism or by exchange considerations makes a difference for predicting the likely consequences of, e.g., changes in tax (dis-)incentives or in public transfers such as pensions.

In fact, motives are usually *defined* by economists in terms of differential reactions to changing situational conditions, and not in terms of psychological or socio-psychological realities. As an example, Masson & Pestieau (1996) state that the purpose of their classification of transfer motives is not to offer a full psychological explanation, but to assess how people will react to changing incentives, e.g., those of economic policy. Becker (1991) – whose work has pioneered the economics of the family – has made a similar emphasis: „I am giving a definition of altruism that is rele-

vant to behavior – to consumption and production choices – rather than giving a philosophical discussion of what ‚really‘ motivates people“ (1991:279).

Of course, if these conceptual constructions are too far from how people are really motivated (with or without quotation marks), or how motives are negotiated in interaction, they will not be very useful in predicting behavioral responses. And it has to be acknowledged that even if the motives held by a person are adequately measured, we cannot assume that behavior exactly follows from them, i.e., that under equal situational conditions a given motive will always result in the same behavior. This is due to the fact that situational conditions as well as motives are interpreted and negotiated among the participants to a situation (e.g., Finch & Mason 1993). We thus have to brace ourselves for different evaluations of these conditions. This means that the explanatory power of models even if they include motives necessarily remains limited.

The main problem, however, is that the assumption of each individual having a single well-defined motive is unrealistic. There is competition and overlap among motives, and a person may hold several motives simultaneously that seemingly contradict each other (c.f. Finch & Mason 1993; Künemund & Motel 2000). In order to determine the effect of motives on transfer behavior, we therefore need to analyze the motivational space in its empirical structure, allowing for the fact that several motivational tendencies may coexist within the same individuals. For this, imputing motives from behavior (as is usually done in the economic literature) will not do. Instead, motives must be assessed directly, such as through appropriate questioning.

Another reason for being interested in motives stems from their role in the structure of social relations. There is for example good reason to believe that motives are important not only for the incidence and size of transfers but also for their „quality“. For recipients, it makes a difference whether transfers from their family members are motivated by self-interest (only) or (also) by love, benevolence, generosity or a sense of personal obligation. For example, a gift of money has a different quality if given unconditionally, “without strings attached”, or if given conditional on compliance with expectations of exchange, reciprocity, control or status. There may be some cynics who would say of their parents, „I don’t care what they think as long as they hand over the goods“. But in most cases, the motive for giving will be highly salient to the recipient because it carries not only explicit expectations but hidden ones as well. Even if the transfer behavior as such does not change as a function of whether these hidden expectations are fulfilled

or not, the latter will affect the quality of the transfer in terms of the moral burden that it constitutes, or the conflicts that it brings forth.

Finally, on a more general level, transfer motives can serve to address the theoretical controversy in sociology about the autonomy or embeddedness of economic exchange. In a structuralist perspective, money can be seen as a specific code of communication, or as part of the “language” of social interaction, and motives are among its important signifiers. In what is perhaps a more common way of framing this controversy, motives are critical for determining the scope of utilitarian versus normative or interpretive approaches to social relations. While we will not go into this theoretical discussion here, we want to note that family transfers are an especially appropriate field for it because the family potentially partakes in different logics of action (cf. Kohli 1997).

The range of transfer motives

With regard to the economic analysis of bequests, Masson & Pestieau (1996) propose a general distinction into three families: accidental, voluntary and capitalist ones. „Accidental“ bequests occur as a consequence of precautionary savings and deferred consumption: Because of the uncertainty of one’s life span and the imperfections of capital markets (pertaining to, e.g., annuities or housing), individuals and households cannot – contrary to what is claimed in the life-cycle savings model – smooth out the differences between their current income flows by optimizing their saving and dissaving behavior over the life span. Thus, unspent wealth remaining at the end of life represents an information deficit: the inability to exactly predict one’s time of death and the funds needed to reach it (for example with regard to medical costs or the duration of expensive institutionalization when disabled). Perfectly efficient capital markets should be able to solve this problem; it would then be rational to hand over all one’s wealth to a capital fund in return for a corresponding life-time annuity. „Voluntary“ bequests (or inter vivos transfers) range from pure altruism to paternalistic behavior to self-interested strategic exchange. For individuals interested in maximizing their own personal utility only, bequests are rational insofar as they result in a better treatment by the descendants (the „strategic bequest motive“, cf. Bernheim et al. 1985), i.e., give the bequeathing persons some control over the behavior of their descendants. On the other hand, many economists accept the possibility of altruism, or even see it as the primary motive in intergenerational family relations (e.g., Becker 1991). Finally, „capitalist“ or entrepreneurial bequests (or inter vivos transfers) are directed to „accumulation

for its own sake“, or more precisely, to creating and conserving an estate beyond one’s own personal existence.³

“Accidental” bequests are not really motives per se in terms of purposeful action; what is motivated here is the precautionary saving that lies behind them, and does not include an intention to give.⁴ “Capitalist” bequests refer to specific motivations that are not directed at the descendants as persons but only at their role as entrepreneurs and bearers of the family fortune. In the following discussion we will therefore restrict ourselves to the middle one of these three families of bequests, those labeled “voluntary”. It is here that the core issues of how motives impact on transfer behavior arise.

As noted above, the economic literature has not yet been able to resolve the debate about altruism versus exchange motives. In the sociological literature, there is even more unresolved complexity as these types of motives are complemented by various forms of reciprocity. Altruism, exchange and reciprocity are broad categories that each comprises a range of different motivational tendencies that may or may not occur in conjunction. Moreover, it is not sufficient to enumerate the motives for giving only; we also need to examine the reasons for not giving, such as conflicts or motives of independence and separation.

This complexity makes a full overview of the range of motives almost impossible; but an attempt can be made to draw out some of the basic points of agreement and disagreement (Künemund & Rein 1999). The altruism theory assumes affection, or a moral duty, or obligation as a basis for providing help in situations of need. Altruism requires no further instrumental explanation. The exchange theory, on the other hand, posits that one gives to others because one expects them to give in return. Kotlikoff and Morris (1989) offer a radicalization of the logic of exchange by proposing that transfers from the aged to their adult children are simply a bribe. They interpret the finding that the aged parents give money to their adult children and grandchildren as an active inducement to get their children to provide them with services. Consistent with the logic of the strategic bequest motive (Bernheim et al. 1985), we might also simply assume that when the level of surplus is substantial, the children extend help in the

³ Masson/Pestieau (1996:17) mistakenly claim that this type of bequest „concerns only the well-to-do“. The main historical model, however, and one that is still found today is the family farm. Here, the „estate thinking“ (Hofdenken) has meant that the life of the farm takes primacy over the individual lives of the succeeding generations of family members.

⁴ There may of course be a combination with considering the well-being of descendants, e.g., if precautionary saving is motivated by the desire not to burden the children with one’s need, or to be able to cover one’s own living *and* leave a bequest.

expectation of acquiring some portion of these surplus resources. Where such exchange expectations are in effect, it follows that the more resources the elderly have, the more they can receive in turn.

By positing an indirect exchange motive Stark (1995) provides something of a bridge between the economic literature on altruism and exchange and the sociological literature on reciprocity. The basic idea behind the "demonstration effect" is to identify a mechanism by which children get socialized to accept a general normative pattern of obligation to help the elderly. Stark finds that adult children who have young children are likely to visit or call their aged parents ten more times a year than adult children who are childless. The interpretation is that the middle generation treats their aged parents well in order to demonstrate to their children how they would like to be treated when they are aged. Stark assumes stronger demonstration effects from visits, telephone calls and the provision of everyday services than from the giving of money because the children can see and understand what is happening. The demonstration theory thus proposes an extension of the exchange motive in the direction of indirect reciprocity: namely, that you give to a person other than the one from whom you expect the benefit of the exchange.

The economic literature tends to confirm that pure altruism is not the dominant motive, but as noted above the evidence remains inconclusive. The concept of pure altruism is not the only one, however. For example, altruism may be associated with a "joy of giving" or a "warm glow"; here giving may persist even when the need of the recipient is met, or giving takes place even if there is no need at all. This has been labelled "impure altruism" (Andreoni 1989). The same applies when the donor expects to get valued social approval from the act of giving or from signaling income (Glazer/Konrad 1996).⁵

All these various forms of altruism can be contrasted to those of exchange. As to the latter, the evidence is again mixed. Many authors find empirical support for exchange while others such as Börsch-Supan et al. (1990) and McGarry & Schoeni (1997) conclude that there is only weak or no evidence that monetary transfers from the aged to their children are an implicit payment for services that these children give to their aged parents.

⁵ The question of whether there is „pure“ altruism or whether the motive is the joy of giving may seem a moot one as long as we find that the concern is for the well-being of the recipient and not for one's own. Where giving continues even in the absence of need, however, it does seem warranted to speak of "impure" altruism.

In the sociological literature, it is especially the norm of reciprocity that has been subject to numerous studies on the exchange relationships of elderly people (for overviews see Antonucci & Jackson 1990; Hollstein & Bria 1996). In general, it is assumed that giving places an obligation to get something back in return for what was given, and that the values exchanged should be broadly equivalent. The recipient may avoid this obligation either by refusing the gift or by repaying it immediately. Gouldner (1960: 178) assumes that "the norm of reciprocity cannot apply with full force in relations with children, old people, or those who are mentally or physically handicapped" because these groups are less able to reciprocate. As a result, fewer individuals will establish relations with them. From this argument we may conclude that having more resources enables the elderly to stay involved in reciprocal giving and receiving and also places them in a position to initiate an exchange.

Where the relationship is more intimate and stable, such as for example the relationship between aged parents and their adult children, the rules of exchange allow for reciprocity to take place over a long period of time, not as a spot transaction. The implicit rules also allow for an asymmetry between what is initially received and what is later given, and the exchange may involve different types of transfers and support. Antonucci & Jackson (1990:178ff) use the metaphor of "deposits" placed in a "support bank" that can be drawn on in future times of need. The availability of resources— not only current ones but also those that have earlier been placed in the "support bank" — thus reinforces autonomy and self-respect by placing the elderly in a position where they can maintain their social status by being able to give to their adult children. Where the parents become passive recipients, they incur a loss of status.

Another field of sociological inquiry are the norms of responsibility and of family obligations (e.g., Cantor 1979; Qureshi 1990). Family obligations have a special weight in societies with a (neo-)Confucian background (cf. Chen & Adamchak 1999; Koyano 2001), but contrary to many popular assumptions they are also (still) pertinent in Western societies. Finch & Mason (1993) present one of the most interesting analyses of obligations between adult children and aged parents. They argue that "norms about family obligations do get taken into account" (1993:28) and that the principle of reciprocity is usually accepted as well but that the outcome remains open. Whether and how the obligation to give help is felt is the result of a "... process of negotiation, in which people are giving and receiving, balancing out one kind of assistance against another, maintaining an appropriate independence from each other as well as mutual interde-

pendence" (1993:167). Obligations to help one's aged parents thus do not simply follow from an abstract normative principle but are created concretely through interaction over time. This implies that they may also be rejected, for example if the support from the other side that one feels entitled to has not come forth. Obligations are thus not unconditional; whether they are accepted and seen as legitimate depends on other dimensions of the relationship or on its earlier history.

Based on these considerations, it is now possible to construct the contours of a broader motivational space for intergenerational transfers and support than either the economic or the sociological literature have used so far, and to conceptualize some of its main lines. We conceive of these motives as a series of basic orientations including altruism (concern for the well-being of others), direct exchange (concern for one's own interest in getting some return), delayed or indirect or generalized reciprocity (concern for giving back what one has received earlier, or for giving it to others such as the next generation, or for giving so that the recipient may give to others), sense of duty (internalized normative obligation), and separation (concern for keeping autonomy or distance). There are additional possible motives that we have not tried to operationalize, such as control or power (concern for making recipients comply with one's wishes) – a motive which may be distinguished from that of „buying“ services in return for giving transfers – ,status (concern for one's social honor), or compliance with external norms (concern for being accepted or for getting valued social approval).

It needs to be stressed again that the task at hand is not to determine which single motive is the dominant one in a population or in each of its subgroups. Many studies show that the single motive assumption is not valid and that overlap and coexistence (or conflict) of several motives even within the same individual is the rule. Our task therefore is to first examine the empirical structure of motives in order to arrive at empirically grounded typologies of combinations of motives (e.g., Silverstein & Bengtson 1997; Künemund & Motel 2000) as a prerequisite for assessing the impact of motives on transfer behavior.

The empirical structure of motives

Our empirical study is based on the German Aging Survey, a large representative survey of the 40-85 year old German nationals living in private households collected in the first half of 1996. The sample (n=4838) was stratified according to age groups, gender, and East and West Germany. Interviews were conducted orally at the respondents'

homes; in addition, a “drop-off” questionnaire was left to the respondents for self-administration. The survey program comprised sociological measures of the various dimensions of life situations and welfare – among them, intergenerational relations and transfers – as well as psychological measures of self and life concepts (cf. Dittmann-Kohli et al. 1997, 2001; Kohli & Künemund 2000).⁶

The following analysis is restricted to the retired part of the sample, i.e., those above age 55 with neither the respondent nor the spouse fully participating in the labor force. We thus focus on those persons who are the prime recipients of the public generational contract. The demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the sample are shown in Table 1.⁷ The giving and receiving of transfers refers to money and larger gifts in kind to or from kin during the 12 months before the survey as well as to large gifts or support any time before (excluding inheritance). “Support” includes these material transfers plus three forms of services: care for disabled persons, taking care of children or grandchildren, and instrumental help (e.g., with household chores) during the last 12 months. The descriptive results confirm the well-known pattern that intra-family transfers and support are to a large extent confined to the generational lineage – there are few transfers to other kin.

In order to assess transfer motives directly (instead of imputing them from behavior), we have constructed a series of statements referring to the various motivational dimensions discussed above. These items were contained in the self-administered drop-off. The items were introduced by telling the respondents, „The following statements concern the support for kin (*Angehörige*), e.g., parents and children“. We have thus taken account of the fact that transfer motives may apply to the kinship system as a whole but that its most salient part is usually the generational lineage. For each item, respondents were given a choice of four answers: fully agree, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, and fully disagree.

It should be noted that motives in the psychological sense would be difficult or even impossible to assess through simple questionnaire items of this sort. What we obtain are rather values, attitudes and beliefs that may correspond to more deeply ingrained

⁶ The German Aging Survey has been designed and analyzed jointly by the *Research Group on Aging and the Life Course* at the Free University of Berlin and the *Research Group on Psychogerontology* at the University of Nijmegen (Netherlands) together with *infas Sozialforschung*, Bonn, and financed by the Federal Ministry for Families, Elderly, Women and Youth. The sole responsibility for the content of this paper lies with the authors.

⁷ See Kohli et al. (2000a) for a detailed description of all variables and the whole sample.

motivational bases for acting towards one's family members. For reasons of simplicity, however, we use the term "motive", thus retaining the standard terminology of the transfer literature.

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of the sample and frequency of transfers and support

Sex: female	59.0 %
Age: mean / standard deviation	69.0 / 7.1
Region: former GDR	18.5 %
Community: < 2.000	9.3 %
2.000-5.000	6.5 %
5.000-20.000	17.0 %
20.000-50.000	10.2 %
50.000-100.000	4.3 %
100.000-500.000	16.3 %
> 500.000	36.4 %
Living alone	30.8 %
Health: no difficulties	52.0 %
minor difficulties	31.5 %
considerable difficulties	16.5 %
Education: low	26.9 %
Middle	52.5 %
High	20.6 %
Equivalence income (DM): mean / standard deviation	1.930 / 1.197
Occupational prestige: mean / standard deviation	66.0 / 28.8
Has received transfers from parents, parents-in-law, or grandparents	5.7 %
Has given transfers to kin	30.2 %
Has given transfers to children or grandchildren	27.2 %
Has given any kind of support to kin	51.2 %
Has given any kind of support to children or grandchildren	43.8 %

German Aging Survey 1996, n=2.205, weighted (respondents aged 55 to 85; neither respondent nor spouse participating in labor force).

Table 2 presents these various statements on support for kin ranked in descending order of agreement. At this point already, the overall pattern of rates of (full or partial) agreement shows that there must be a high amount of overlap among different and sometimes seemingly contradictory motives (Künemund & Motel 2000). The statement that draws the highest agreement ("If my family members need help I will always be there") is one that expresses family help as a matter of course – in other words, one of self-evident and unconditional ("pure") altruism. More than half of our respondents declare themselves fully and another two-fifths somewhat altruistic with regard to family members. However, the feeling of normative obligation to help ("I think that it is simply

my duty...”) follows closely, with 84 percent agreeing fully or somewhat. In terms of behavior, this would in most cases also be categorized as altruistic, but the motivational properties of these two statements are different. The second most widely shared motive, with 85 percent full or partial agreement, is one of indirect reciprocity (the desire to give to the next generation what one has received from the previous one), and the fourth, of delayed reciprocity (the desire to give back to one’s parents some of what one has received from them). The fifth motivational statement (“If I help my family members, I can expect help from them in return”) is somewhat ambivalent: It may denote an expectation of direct or “pure” reciprocity, but it may also be a simple description of what is likely to happen. It may in other words be either a requirement for reciprocity or a factual statement of its operation. It is closely followed by an assertion of separation in the sense of individualization and autonomy (“Grown-up children should be able to stand on their own feet...”).

Table 2: Motives for family support (percentages)

	Fully agree	Agree somewhat	Disagree somewhat	Fully disagree
If my family members need help I will always be there	52.0	40.5	4.8	2.7
I would like to pass on to the next generation what my parents have given me	41.5	44.0	7.5	7.0
I think that it is simply my duty to help my family members	40.0	44.1	11.2	4.7
My parents have done so much for me that I would like to give them back some of it	39.0	38.6	9.9	12.5
If I help my family members, I can expect help from them in return	27.1	47.7	16.4	8.8
Grown-up children should be able to stand on their own two feet, and not expect support from their parents	32.3	41.2	21.3	5.2
If someone wants to inherit from me, he/she should do something for it	18.0	38.2	28.9	14.9
At my age why should I still save money? My family members can make much better use of it	16.5	32.2	34.7	16.6
If I dislike a family member, I am not going to help them	12.2	25.2	37.2	25.4
There is no need for me to help my family members because there is enough public support	5.0	15.4	46.0	33.6

German Aging Survey 1996, n=1.837, weighted.

An exchange motive in the sense of strategic bequest (that it is right for parents to try to manipulate their children by threatening to disinherit them) splits the respondents in two groups of about equal size. The same applies to a statement that expresses the uselessness of savings in old age. Here again there is some ambivalence: The statement may be read as an indicator of altruism, but it may also mean that by refusing to be precautious one compromises one's future autonomy. That helping should be conditional on having a close affective tie to the recipient – a statement denoting a particular kind of exchange or separation – meets with an approval rate of less than two-fifths. Least frequent is the agreement to our indicator of “crowding out” processes (Kohli 1999; Künemund & Rein 1999): that there is no need to help because the state provides enough support.

The pattern that emerges at this point is one of a strong propensity to help, be it for reasons of altruism, normative obligation or reciprocity. A clear majority also requires that adult children should stand on their own feet. There is in other words a readiness to help when help is needed, but also an expectation that the children do everything they can to not let such situations of need arise. Motives of exchange (such as strategic bequest) or separation are less widely shared.

From the economic literature, we might expect that these items represent a one-dimensional continuum from altruism to exchange. From the sociological literature, on the other hand, we would expect a pluri-dimensional space of motives that overlap and interact in specific decisions to provide help, i.e. norms of responsibility and obligation, reciprocity, affection, altruism as well as exchange expectations (Künemund & Rein 1999). Unfortunately, space and time limitations of the German Aging Survey allowed only for single indicators for most of the theoretically expected motives. But even on this limited basis we can examine the full motivational space, and address the question to what extent its dimensions reproduce the expected motives.

An exploratory nonlinear principal components analysis reveals three dimensions that do not correspond to either of these expectations (Table 3).⁸ With one exception, the statements that load high on the first dimension indicate a readiness for unconditional giving – be it for reasons of an altruistic orientation, reciprocity, or a normative obligation to help family members in need –, while the statements that load high on the second dimension contain an explicit condition that has to be met. These conditions

⁸ For the nonlinear principal component analysis we use the PRINCALS procedure of the SPSS package (for details see de Leeuw & van Rijkevorsel 1980); all variables are treated as ordinal.

also cover a wide range of motives: direct exchange, affective closeness, autonomy, and the (non-)availability of public support. The exception is the statement of direct reciprocity (“If I help my family members...”). As noted above, this statement has indeed a double meaning, and this also applies to the distinction of conditional vs. unconditional giving: It can be understood as either a reason to give or a result of giving, i.e., as either a precondition or a description of an outcome that is not critical for one’s decision to provide help. The (less important) third dimension shows high loading for two statements that express autonomy and separation between the generations: that adult children should be able to stand on their own feet and that parents should continue to save for their own future benefit and independence.

Table 3: Structure of motives (nonlinear principal component analysis)

	Component loadings		
	Dimension I (Eigenvalue .27)	Dimension II (Eigenvalue .18)	Dimension III (Eigenvalue .13)
My parents have done so much for me that I would like to give them back some of it.	.56		
I think that it is simply my duty to help my family members.	.79		
If my family members need help I will always be there.	.80		
I would like to pass on to the next generation what my parents have given me.	.70		
If I help my family members, I can expect help from them in return.	.50	-.54	
If I dislike a family member, I am not going to help them.		-.53	
If someone wants to inherit from me, he/she should do something for it.		-.74	
There is no need for me to help my family members because there is enough public support.		-.54	
Grown-up children should be able to stand on their own two feet, and not expect support from their parents.		-.63	.53
At my age why should I still save money? My family members can make much better use of it.			-.80

German Aging Survey 1996 (only component loadings $\geq .5$; total fit: .59).

The main structural pattern is thus the contrast between unconditional and conditional solidarity. For the remaining analyses we focus on the two statements with the highest component loadings on these two dimensions. They can also be directly interpreted as

indicators of altruism and exchange. In a first step, we examine the predictors of the two contrasting types of solidarity. Table 4 presents the results of ordinal logistic regressions on the degree of agreement to these statements in terms of odds ratios.⁹

Table 4: Predictors of motives (ordinal logistic regressions)

	"Inherit"		"Always"	
	univariate	multivariate	univariate	multivariate
Sex: female (reference: male)	0.72***	0.59***	1.01	1.01
Age group: 70-85 (55-69)	0.94	0.93	1.08	1.15
Region: former GDR (FRG)	1.51***	1.70***	1.89***	2.05***
Community: 2.000-5.000 (< 2.000)	0.78	0.87	0.97	1.07
5.000-20.000	0.68*	0.87	1.11	1.33
20.000-50.000	0.64**	0.80	1.06	1.06
50.000-100.000	0.56**	0.62*	1.19	1.05
100.000-500.000	0.47***	0.61**	1.28	1.34
> 500.000	0.53***	0.72*	1.06	1.18
Living alone (living with others)	0.99	1.11	0.96	0.88
Health: minor difficulties (none)	1.00	0.98	0.89	0.93
considerable difficulties	1.36**	1.33**	0.64***	0.61***
Education: middle (low)	0.82	0.72**	1.28*	1.07
high	0.44***	0.50***	1.32*	1.01
Equivalence income: 2 nd quintile (lowest quintile)	0.91	0.88	1.35*	1.17
3 rd quintile	0.72**	0.80	1.57***	1.33
4 th quintile	0.67***	0.89	1.56**	1.36*
highest quintile	0.56***	0.95	1.42**	1.53**
Occupational prestige	0.99***	0.99***	1.01**	1.00
Received transfers from parents, parents-in-law, or grandparents earlier (no)	1.30	1.25	0.74	0.69
Constant (B): $\alpha=1$	–	2.92***	–	3.44***
$\alpha=2$	–	1.29***	–	2.36***
$\alpha=3$	–	-0.52*	–	-0.19
Pseudo R ² (McFadden)	–	0.03	–	0.03
N	1.399		1.399	

German Aging Survey 1996 (***) = $p < .01$; ** = $p < .05$; * = $p < .1$).

The models show a strong effect of social stratification and gender. The odds to agree to the "strategic bequest" statement, and with that, to conditional giving, decrease significantly with socio-economic variables such as occupational prestige (Wegener 1985) and education. Women are less likely than men to be motivated by an instrumental exchange orientation. On the other hand, respondents with considerable difficulties in

⁹ For details on logistic regression see for example DeMaris (1992). Since education, income and prestige are correlated, not all of these variables remain significant in the multivariate model.

daily activities due to health problems are less disinterested, i.e., more inclined to tie their giving to the condition of direct exchange: The odds to agree to this statement increase by one third with poor health. Agreement is also higher in the former GDR compared to the former FRG, even when all other independent variables are held constant. Having received transfers from one's own parents, parents-in-law, or grandparents decreases the inclination for maintaining a direct exchange condition, but the effect is not significant.

For our statement on unconditional giving ("If my family members need help I will always be there"), the East-West divide is again highly salient, while gender and social stratification are not significant, with the exception of a moderate effect of household equivalence income where those in the highest quintiles are more likely to give without strings attached. Health is also again a highly significant predictor – being in poor health decreases the odds to unconditionally be available for help.

In sum, it seems that having insufficient resources and/or a need for help results in a preference for conditional giving, and vice versa. But the variables of social stratification and gender do not only indicate a resource differential; they also stand for different family styles in terms of emotional closeness and unconditional support, and for different personal inclinations to care for others. The fact that both statements receive higher agreement in East Germany may indicate a style where family solidarity is self-evident and mandatory but where there is also an obligation to reciprocate – where solidarity is seen as necessarily two-way.

As a second step, we ask whether these motives are a relevant predictor of the process of giving between generations (holding other factors constant). Table 5 presents the results of separate logistic regressions on giving transfers and giving any kind of support to kin. In line with our previous research (Motel & Szydlik 1999; Kohli 1999; Kohli et al. 2000) the results show that the odds of transfer giving increase significantly with socio-economic resources as measured by equivalence income and occupational prestige (while the effect of education is absorbed in these other variables). Living alone strongly decreases the odds to give monetary transfers, indicating the fact that many of those living alone do not have children or other kin. A similar predictive pattern holds for providing any kind of support to kin.

Table 5: Predictors of transfer and support giving (binary logistic regressions)

	Giving transfers		Any kind of support	
	univariate	multivariate	univariate	multivariate
Sex: female (reference: male)	0.82*	0.87	1.01	1.15
Age group: 70-85 (55-69)	1.21	1.16	0.80**	0.80*
Region: former GDR (FRG)	0.99	1.03	1.22*	1.23
Community: 2.000-5.000 (< 2.000)	1.42	1.28	0.89	0.86
5.000-20.000	1.14	0.91	0.80	0.72
20.000-50.000	1.20	0.86	0.71	0.55**
50.000-100.000	1.28	0.94	0.82	0.66
100.000-500.000	1.69**	1.22	1.04	0.88
> 500.000	1.09	0.73	0.78	0.66*
Living alone (living with others)	0.66***	0.57***	0.53***	0.50**
Health: minor difficulties (none)	1.01	1.29	0.93	1.01
considerable difficulties	1.01	1.21	0.62***	0.75*
Education: middle (low)	1.21	0.84	0.97	0.77
high	1.83***	0.86	1.27	0.80
Equivalence income: 2 nd quintile (low- est quintile)	1.43*	1.52*	0.88	0.93
3 rd quintile	2.03***	1.96***	1.30	1.31
4 th quintile	2.20***	2.18***	1.31	1.35
highest quintile	3.34***	3.50***	1.36*	1.54**
Occupational prestige	1.01***	1.01***	1.01***	1.01***
Agree to "Inherit" (disagree)	0.72***	0.78**	0.67***	0.71***
Agree to "Always" (disagree)	6.35***	6.07***	4.83***	4.56***
Constant (B)	–	-3.12***	–	-0.94***
Pseudo R ² (McFadden)	–	0.08	–	0.07
N		1.394		1.398

German Aging Survey 1996 (***) = $p < .01$; ** = $p < .05$; * = $p < .1$).

"Any kind of support" includes financial transfers, care for the disabled, child care, and instrumental (household) support.

But the main result for our present purpose is the massive effect of the transfer motives. Controlling for all other variables, agreeing to the unconditional (altruistic) orientation increases the odds to provide monetary transfers by a factor of 6, while agreeing to the direct exchange (strategic bequest) orientation has a strongly significant negative effect. With regard to the more inclusive category, providing any kind of support to kin, the two orientations have a similar impact. Thus, it is not only needs and resources¹⁰ that determine intergenerational support in the family but also the motivation of the givers as assessed by direct questioning.

¹⁰ In a different context we have shown that such orientations prove to be significant even when examining parent-child dyads where characteristics of the recipients and of the relationship between the two are included in the model (Künemund & Motel 2000). We will extend our present analysis in this direction at a later point.

Conclusions

The first conclusion to be highlighted is that the motivation for giving monetary and other support to kin consists of a complex pattern with a large amount of overlap and interaction among different motives. Based on our assessment of the range of the motives that have been conceptualized so far through a limited number of questionnaire statements, we have been able to show that the search for single or dominant motives is misguided, and that we need to search instead for the combinations of motives that typically occur. This should apply both to a person's general attitudes and to concrete single transactions.

Our own search by means of an exploratory nonlinear principal components analysis has resulted in a structure of the motivational space which does not correspond to the commonly assumed altruism-exchange dichotomy nor to its extension into a trichotomy with reciprocity included. What we have found instead is a dichotomy of unconditional vs. conditional giving, with a third (less prominent) dimension denoting independence and separation between the generations. Both unconditional and conditional giving comprise several specific motives, with the former emphasizing altruism, reciprocity and normative obligation, and the latter, direct exchange. The distinction between these two motivational types is reminiscent of similar distinctions in the literature on types of parent-child relationships and styles of socialization.

By focussing on one motive statement for each of these two types it has been possible to determine which socio-demographic conditions have an impact on them, and what impact they themselves have in turn on transfer and support giving. The motives are socially stratified, again corresponding to the stratification of family relationship types. They also vary along gender lines, with women leaning more towards unconditional and less towards conditional giving than men.

As a final step, we have shown that motives contribute in a highly significant way to the explanation of transfer behavior. We cannot ascertain yet whether motives and motivational types make a difference for the meaning and quality of intergenerational transfers in the family, but they do have a strong impact on the incidence of transfer giving. It is therefore not sufficient to infer motives from transfer behavior, or to pass from objective socio-demographic variables and resource conditions directly to the behavior under scrutiny. Motives have to be assessed independently, and to be integrated into any attempt at a fuller explanation of transfer giving.

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