Perceptions of a generation gap by contact and perceptions of intergenerational responsibility

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PERCEPTIONS OF A GENERATION GAP BY CONTACT AND
PERCEPTIONS OF INTERGENERATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

BY

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B.A., Cedar Crest College, 2005

THESIS

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ABSTRACT

PERCEPTIONS OF A GENERATION GAP BY CONTACT AND
PERCEPTIONS OF INTERGENERATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

By

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University of New Hampshire, September, 2007

As the Baby Boomers begin to retire in 2011 and federal monies become more strained, it will be useful to determine whether there are actual divisions or points of agreement between grandparents and grandchildren in regards to value differences. Cross-sectional data from the Longitudinal Study of Generations are used to examine the differences in perceptions of intergenerational responsibility and a generation gap between grandparents and grandchildren. Variations in these potential differences as a function of grandparent-grandchild contact and caregiving are also examined. Findings indicate grandparents perceived more responsibility toward younger generations while grandchildren perceive more responsibility toward older generations; grandparents also perceived a smaller generation gap than did their grandchildren. Grandparents’ perceptions of intergenerational responsibility were influenced by their level of education and geographic proximity to their grandchildren, when all other factors were controlled; grandfathers perceive a larger generation gap than do grandmothers. No consistent predictors of grandchild perceptions were found.
CHAPTER I

PERCEPTIONS OF GENERATION GAPS AND INTERGENERATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY:

PAST KNOWLEDGE AND FUTURE IMPORTANCE

This research aimed to determine if the perception of a "generation gap" between grandparents and grandchildren can be partly attributed to differences in perceptions of intergenerational responsibility. It also attempted to discover if there is a relationship between the amount of contact between grandparents and grandchildren and perceptions of intergenerational responsibility and made a preliminary examination of how these perceptions may be moderated by caregiving received by elders from the middle generation. The research was guided by the following research questions:

1. Do grandparents and grandchildren differ in their perceptions of a "generation gap"?
2. Do grandparents and grandchildren differ in perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older and younger generations?
3. Are differences in contact between grandparents and grandchildren associated with different perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older and younger generations?
4. Are differences in contact between grandparents and grandchildren associated with perceptions of a "generation gap"?
5. Is there an association between caregiving and contact between grandparents and grandchildren?
6. Is there an association between caregiving and perceptions of responsibility toward older and younger generations among grandparents and grandchildren?
7. Is the relationship between grandparent and grandchild contact and perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older and younger generations moderated by caregiving?

8. Are perceptions of a “generation gap” between grandparents and grandchildren related to differences in perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older and younger generations among grandparents and grandchildren?

9. Is there an association between the middle generation’s caregiving and perceptions of a “generation gap” among grandparents and grandchildren?

**Background and Significance**

The family is the primary agent of socialization, attempting to pass on values, beliefs, and codes of behavior. Parents are charged with teaching their children to become responsible members of society so that society can continue to function dependably. Grandparents take on a much more voluntary role in the lives of their grandchildren; there are few specific codes of behavior that grandparents must follow and no specific lessons that grandparents must teach their grandchildren (Glass and Huneycutt 2002; Aldous 1987). However, as Bengtson (2001) suggests, multigenerational family relationships are becoming as, if not more, important as primary bonds in American families. Grandparents have become a source of emotional and financial support for their grandchildren in times of need (Bengtson 2001). At the same time, grandchildren may be important sources of emotional support and caregiving for aging grandparents as health declines (Cherlin and Furstenberg 1986; Piercy and Chapman 2001).

The twentieth century offers potentially more contact with multiple generations that was not available in the past due to short life expectancies and other demographic changes (Stearns 1989; Bengtson 2001). For example, the smaller number of individuals in each generation creates the potential for more contact between individual members of familial generations (Bengtson 2001). However, contact between the generations may be hampered by long distances and busy
schedules (Steams 1989). Furthermore, the longevity that has allowed increased generational contact also has a negative side: as grandparents’ age, they may become dependent upon younger family members for daily activities (Bengtson 2001). Adult children may have to take on extensive caregiving responsibilities for their elderly parents, highlighting the physical and age differences between grandparents and grandchildren but also potentially causing conflict due to the inability of the middle generation to meet all of the needs of both groups. Thus, while the potential for intergenerational understanding is greater because of the ability of grandparents and grandchildren to share life experiences, generations may also be too physically or emotionally separated for true understanding, and its associated respect and responsibility, to be developed.

The importance of the multigenerational family bonds offered in contemporary society has been counterbalanced by concerns about value gaps between the generations; much has been written about the generation gap between older and younger members of society. Bengtson and Kuypers (1971) described the generation gap as “the differences in behavior and attitudes exhibited by emerging generations...[that] develops with the reaction of older generation to these innovations; and...reaches a climax with the changes in configuration of culture which results” (p. 249). Generation gaps repeat themselves constantly, as a new generation is always attempting to change society while older generations resist this change. Commentaries have been written in mainstream media about the gap in workplace values, skills, knowledge, morality, and music between younger and older generations (Coolidge 1999; Jennings 1998; Leland and Samuels 1997). This research is important because it examined whether perceptions of a “generation gap” jeopardize or erode the potentially positive outcomes, such as intergenerational concern, that may develop from the increased contact and understanding between grandparents and grandchildren.

Intergenerational understanding also has policy implications: the divide between the youth and elder generation has been characterized by monies spent through age-graded government programs for the elderly, such as Social Security and Medicare, and needy youths, such as Medicaid and Temporary Aid to Needy Families. Eligibility that is age-graded does not
allow programs to focus on the neediest populations, but instead on those populations that fall into one specific age group, creating age-based interest groups (Torres-Gil 1992). These interest groups, such as the American Association for Retired Persons (AARP), have achieved some national prominence in gaining services for the elderly. Yet age-grading and these interest groups have created a rift between the elderly and younger generations: social priorities have shifted away from younger generations so that more children than elderly live in poverty and there is a belief that the elderly are a population undeserving of federal programs because of their cost to the general public (Torres-Gil 1992).

This debate over federal monies will potentially gain more force as the Baby Boomer generation begins to retire around the year 2011, when federal aid will need to increase in order to cover more elderly than ever before. In the year 2000, the elderly population—those who were sixty-five years of age or older—included thirty-five million persons; by the year 2010, one year before the Baby Boomer generation is eligible for retirement, the elderly population will have risen to include forty million persons (United States, Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Aging 2005). The elderly population will continue to increase to fifty-five million persons by the year 2020 as the Baby Boomers begin to retire (United States, Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Aging 2005). Also of significance is the life expectancy; not only will more people live to the age of sixty-five, they will be living longer after that age than ever before (United States, Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Aging 2005). The average life expectancy for persons reaching the age of sixty-five is an additional 18.5 years, almost twenty additional years of life in retirement when an elderly person is eligible for age-graded federal subsidies (United States, Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Aging 2005).

Currently, the Baby Boomer generation is caring for their elderly parents and shaping their children’s views of the needs of the elderly and younger generations’ responsibilities toward them. The middle generation is having to balance caregiving responsibilities for their children
with caregiving responsibility for their elderly parents. Although contact between grandparents and grandchildren may create an atmosphere conducive to the creation of intergenerational alliances for the best allocation of federal monies, concern about the caregiving responsibility of the middle generation may erode the positive outcomes of grandparent-grandchild relationships. Furthermore, the need for caregiving may emphasize the age and functional differences between grandparents and grandchildren and increase perceptions of a "generation gap" between those two groups.

This thesis focuses on the perceptions of economic responsibility for other generations. However, intergenerational matters often involve non-materialistic issues. Research from the 1970s found gaps between the generations concerning traditional morality, views on the use of birth control pills, religiosity and issues having to do with the Bible, activism, liberalism, and expectations of future happiness (Payne, Summers, and Stewart 1973; Keeley 1976; Friedman, Gold, and Christie 1972; Thumer, Spence, and Lowenthal 1974). However, Thumer, Spence, and Lowenthal (1974) also found that children believed that current value differences with their parents would decrease as they aged; children believed that when they were their parents' age, their values and outlook would be similar to their parents. More recently, Wiscott and Kopera-Frye (2000) found that, although grandchildren believe that their views on religion, identity, family and work are moderately influenced by their grandparents, their views on sexuality and polity were not. Although these gaps are not the focus of this research, they may have an important influence on the contact between generations and on perceptions of economic responsibility, which is the focus of this research. Grandchildren and grandparents whose values diverge to a large extent may have little contact by choice; contact may be reduced because of value differences between grandparents and their adult children that affect the grandparent-grandchild relationship. Contact that does occur between grandparents and grandchildren with divergent values and beliefs may follow a specific set of acceptable topics- like television or the weather- that do not truly influence intergenerational understanding.
Caregiving, federal budget allocation, and non-economic responsibility are all different facets of intergenerational responsibility. This thesis defines perceptions of intergenerational responsibility as the responsibility that one generation senses in regard to another generation and the responsibility that one generation feels another has toward it. Grandchild and grandparent perceptions of intergenerational responsibility are both measured in terms of their own generation's responsibility toward their counterpart grandparent/grandchild generations and the responsibility that they perceive other generations have toward their peer generation.

The concept of a “generation gap” has been circulating in American society for decades; much of the discussion comes from an era that was facing similar social division: the late 1960s and 1970s. It was in 1970 that Bengtson clarified the generation gap debate into three positions: “great gap,” no gap, and “selective continuity and difference.” The “great gap” is the idea that there are fundamental differences between generations that cannot be reconciled (Bengtson 1970). One of the more extreme statements supporting this position was made by Friedenberg (1969) who stated that the gap is due to the exploitation of younger generations by older generations, as depicted in the Selective Service Act for example.

The second position refers to the belief that there is no generation gap that separates the members of society but rather that there are other, more salient divisions between society’s groups (Bengtson 1970). These divisions could be based upon ideology, age, life-history, or cohort experience (Bengtson 1970; Markides 1978; Troll 1982; Brunswick 1970). Krotki (1975) wrote about the impossibility of a generation gap from the standpoint of sociology and demography: the actual divisions between generations are not clear and these divisions do not mean that successive generations will be in some way fundamentally different.

The final position of “selective continuity and difference” is based upon the idea that the generations share most of the same values but that there is value conflict at the edges; a second tenant to this idea is that the gap may be due to differences in behavior when generations are
acting on shared values (Bengtson 1970). This position has weaknesses due to the inability of researchers to clarify which values are shared by generations and which are not (Bengtson 1970).

Bengtson and Kuypers (1971) offer the developmental stake hypothesis to explain the differences between parents and children that form the gap. They theorize that cohort and age-based differences between parents and children create divergent intentions that become a gap in beliefs and values (Bengtson and Kuypers 1971). Initial differences between parents and children are present in the historical environments in which they live and grow, the development of social institutions and individual psychology, and life-cycle differences in age and status (Bengtson and Kuypers 1971). These differences translate into different intentions for parents and children: parents want to maintain continuity with their children while children desire separation from their parents (Bengtson and Kuypers 1971).

Theoretically, this thesis is important because it extends the developmental stake hypothesis to examine differences between grandparent-grandchild cohorts. Practically, this research is important in understanding the ways in which values that directly relate to youth and the elderly are influenced by contact between grandparents and grandchildren and whether these differences amount to large perceptions of “generational gaps” between those groups. It is important to discover perceptions of intergenerational responsibility and the ways in which these develop and play out in the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren in order to create policies and programs for society that best reflect the beliefs and ideals of those two generations.

**Literature Review**

Previous research offers insight into grandparent-grandchild relationships, perceptions of intergenerational responsibility, and perceptions of a “generation gap.” However, the literature does not seem to overtly connect perceptions of intergenerational responsibility with perceptions of a “generation gap.” This thesis attempted to connect these two bodies of literature and develop
a more complete understanding of the grandparent-grandchild relationship by attempting to
determine the influence of grandparent-grandchild contact on perceptions of intergenerational
responsibility, understand how perceptions of intergenerational responsibility are influenced by
the interaction of caregiving and contact, and understand the ways that perceptions of
intergenerational responsibility are associated with perceptions of a generation gap. This thesis
also attempted to understand the basic differences between grandparent and grandchild
perceptions of intergenerational responsibility and a generation gap.

Grandparent-Grandchild Relationships

The relationships between grandparents and grandchildren are influenced by a number of
factors. First, the type of grandparenting role that will be enacted is influence by a number of
sociodemographic characteristics. Grandparents with higher education are more likely to be
influential or supportive and are also more likely to play an instrumental role in the lives of their
grandchildren (Mueller and Elder 2003; Silverstein and Marenco 2001). This supportive or
influential type of grandparenting is less likely to occur with the addition of each grandchild;
grandparents with less education are more likely to play a symbolic role for their grandchildren
(Mueller and Elder 2003; Silverstein and Marenco 2001). Grandparent-grandchildren
relationships that are supported by the middle generation are also much more likely to result in
influential, supportive, or authoritarian grandparenting (Mueller and Elder 2003). However, in
typical circumstances, grandparents do not have an important role in the actual raising of children
(Cherlin and Furstenberg 1986).

Grandparent contact with grandchildren is influenced by a number of factors, including
support from the grandchild’s parent. Stronger grandparent-parent relationships support contact
between grandparents and grandchildren (Silverstein and Marenco 2001; Whitbeck, Hoyt, and
Huck 1993). However, grandparents are likely to have less contact with grandchildren when their
mothers have high levels education or when the middle generation experiences a divorce (King et
al. 2003).
Contact between grandparents and grandchildren is also related to a number of other factors. Grandparents who had contact with their own grandparents participate more in the lives of their own grandchildren (King and Elder 1997). Contact between grandparents and grandchildren is more likely to occur when there is less geographic distance between them, especially when grandchildren live in their parental home and when they are part of rural farm families (Whitbeck, Hoyt, and Huck 1993; King et al. 2003; Silverstein and Long 1998; Mueller and Elder 2003; Cherlin and Furstenberg 1986). Finally, more contact is likely to occur between young grandparents and young grandchildren, grandparents with more grandchildren, and grandmothers and grandchildren (Silverstein and Marenco 2001; Silverstein and Long 1998). Silverstein and Marenco (2001) also found that higher levels of contact increase the likelihood of grandparents and grandchildren discussing personal matters.

Cohesion with grandparents varies by grandparent characteristics. Associations with grandmothers are stronger with granddaughters than grandsons and increase as the age of the grandchild increases (Mills 1999; Silverstein and Long 1998). Solidarity with maternal grandmothers is associated with living adult children (the grandchild’s parents), the grandchild living in the parental home, and a higher number of male siblings and a lower number of female siblings (Mills, Wakeman, and Fea 2001). Perceptions of agreement with maternal grandmothers is lower for those grandchildren whose parents are divorced, do not live in the parental home, and who are granddaughters (Mills, Wakeman, and Fea 2001).

Grandchild associations with grandfathers are characterized differently than those with grandmothers. Grandfathers have stronger associations with grandsons than granddaughters and these become less strong as grandchildren age (Mills 1999). Solidarity with maternal grandfathers also increases when grandchildren have a higher number of brothers and when grandchildren live in the parental home (Mills, Wakeman, and Fea 2001).

Contact and solidarity between grandparents and grandchildren does not seem to have a large influence on the values and beliefs of grandchildren. Research shows that there is very little
transmission of attitudes from grandparents to grandchildren (Cherlin and Furstenberg 1986). However, grandchildren do report that their grandparents moderately influenced their beliefs about religion, family, education, work, and moral and personal identity, but not on political and sexual beliefs (Wiscott and Kopera-Frye 2000).

Some of the studies presented above have limitations that must be identified. Many of the studies have small sample sizes, three hundred or fewer respondents, which may inhibit the ability of the researchers to generalize to all grandparent-grandchild relationships (Mills, Wakeman, and Fea 2001; Silverstein and Long 1998; Wiscott and Kopera-Frye 2000). Sampling bias is present for the studies based on college undergraduates by Wiscott and Kopera-Frye (2000) and Mills, Wakeman, and Fea (2001). There may also be a generational bias in the research by Silverstein and Long (1998) because only grandparents were asked to report on their associations with their grandchildren.

This thesis attempted to build on the current descriptions of grandparent-grandchild relationships using the concept of a generation gap, which is currently absent from this body of literature. Descriptions of this sort will help to further understand the differences and similarities between grandparents and grandchildren.

**Intergenerational Responsibility**

Perceptions of intergenerational responsibility vary by a number of factors. Pyke (1999) describes one of the most basic of these: the family type. The collectivist family type is characterized by strong family ties and filial norms whereas individualist families believe in the individual’s ability to care for him/herself (Pyke 1999). Elderly in collectivist families have little power but more consistent involvement and help from their adult children; elderly in individualist families have higher power but less assistance (Pyke 1999). Between these two extremes are ambivalent individualists—those elderly who desire more assistance but are not willing to concede any of their power in exchange for it (Pyke 1999).
Other research also provides insight into the perceptions of caregiving responsibility for elderly parents. Women, individuals with only one living parent, and young adults report feeling more obligation than others (Stein et al. 1998; Elmelech 2005; Coleman, Ganong, and Cable 1997; Silverstein, Parrott, and Bengtson 1995). Those with religious backgrounds and family norms of caregiving also feel obligated to provide care (Piercy and Chapman 2001; Fruhauf, Jarrott, and Allen 2006). Parents also receive more assistance from daughters if they have the same intensity of private religion and the same religious denomination (Myers 2004). Research also finds that individuals believe that children should care for parents regardless of the sacrifice involved and report that they would help care for elderly more than they probably should (Ganong and Coleman 2005; Elmelech 2005).

Caregiving is also influenced by the quality of the parent-child relationship (Hamsen 1997). Contact, especially between daughters and parents, reflected the assistance given to parents; the more contact, the more assistance (Spitze et al. 1994; Silverstein, Parrott, and Bengtson 1995). However, neither parental expectations of assistance nor past affection between children and parents are associated with parents receiving support or assistance from their children (Lee, Netzer, and Coward 1994; Parrott and Bengtson 1999). Current affection was associated with high levels of support (Silverstein et al. 2002). Reports consistently depict that mothers receive more support than fathers (Silverstein et al. 2002; Silverstein, Parrott, and Bengtson 1995).

Research has also found that differences exist between elderly of different races and ethnicities. Burr and Mutchler (1999) found that perceptions of filial responsibility are stronger among minority elderly than elderly whites. Similarly, those elderly that are married, have higher incomes and educations, and that are in better health have lower expectations of support (Lee, Netzer, and Coward 1994). The elderly also supported giving less assistance to parents than younger groups (Elmelech 2005).
Reports of assistance exchanged by parents and adult children do not always seem to coincide. Although Levitt, Guacci, and Weber (1992) found that the generations agreed on support exchanged, other research has found that a discrepancy exists between reports by parents and adult children. Shapiro (2004) found that adult children are likely to overreport the amount of help they give to their parents; Streib (1965) found that there was an inconsistency between reports of financial assistance by adult children and parents. However, increased geographical distance between parents and adult children was associated with more agreement by parents and their children on the support they exchanged (Shapiro 2004).

Opposite of responsibility toward parents is responsibility for children. Elmelech (2005) found that higher levels of parental education only were associated with a high responsibility level for the child’s education. Coleman, Ganong, and Cable (1997) found that grandmothers were perceived to be obligated to care for grandchildren in emergency situations; however, this was often perceived as assisting the parent and not the grandchild.

The support exchanged between the generations may influence the quality of intergenerational relationships. Grandmother-grandchild relationships were found to be significantly associated with support; further, if grandmothers’ felt that they were not receiving enough support, they viewed their relationships with grandchildren as less positive (Levitt, Guacci, and Weber 1992).

The studies presented above also have limitations. Four of the studies have sample sizes under one hundred; however, these studies used qualitative methods- semi-structured interviews and case studies- to provide more depth of understanding (Pyke 1999; Fruhauf, Jarrott, and Allen 2006; Piercy and Chapman 2001; Harmsen 1997). While there are problems with generalizability, this may have been a necessary sacrifice in order to achieve depth of understanding. Five other studies have sample sizes below five hundred (Stein et al. 1998; Levitt, Guacci, and Weber 1992; Coleman, Ganong, and Cable 1997; Ganong and Coleman 2005; Lee, Netzer, and Coward 1994). Small sample sizes create a potential for sampling bias, as they may
not be reflective of the entire population from which they are drawn. This is true even for those qualitative studies and hampers the ability of studies to apply results beyond their sample.

This thesis attempted to build on this body of literature by describing the influence that caregiving by the middle generation has on relationships between grandparents and grandchildren. It also studied the moderating influence of caregiving and contact between grandparents and grandchildren on their perceptions of intergenerational responsibility and perceptions of a generation gap.

Gaps between Parents and Children

Research tends to show a discrepancy between the values of parents and children. Significant differences have been found between parents and children on their beliefs in traditional morals and gender roles, philosophy, societal change ideas, and religiosity (Wingrove and Slevin 1982; Keeley 1976; Friedman, Gold, and Christie 1972). Parents are more likely to accept traditional ideas than their children, who are more likely to adhere to ideas, values, and beliefs that are newly emerging within society (Keeley 1976).

However, Thurner, Spence, and Lowenthal (1974) found that parents and children shared traditional values and morals but differed in their expectations from life; however this was based on a sample of non-matched parents and children. Children were more likely to report expecting happiness and enjoyment from life than parents (Thurner, Spence, and Lowenthal 1974). Similarly, Traub and Dodder (1988) found that differences between parents and children were based more on the extent of acceptance of values than on value differences themselves. Both groups seemed to accept the same values but to a different degree (Traub and Dodder 1988).

Some of the differences seem to be related to cohort or age differences. Thurner, Spence, and Lowenthal (1974) reported that students believed that much of the value difference between themselves and their parents’ generation was due to different life situations; they expected their values to be similar to their parents’ in the future, when they are at a similar stage of life.

Similarly, differences in perceptions of drug harmfulness and exposure found that the differences

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between parents and children increased as the age difference between the groups increased; younger children and older parents had the most different views of drugs (Pearson and Shriner, 2002). Otherwise, parents and children's views of illicit drugs were similar (Pearson and Shriner 2002).

Overall, despite the fact that youth perceive a generation gap within society, they do not believe that the gap is present in their own parent-child relationship (Troll 1982). In fact, Keeley (1976) reports that there is "no simple or dramatic generation gap" between parents and children.

With the exception of the study by Traub and Dodder (1988) and Pearson and Shriner (2002), all of the research presented is based on sample sizes of fewer than six hundred respondents. Traub and Dodder (1988) reports a sample size of just under one thousand while Pearson and Shriner (2002) reports the largest sample size, at over five thousand. Furthermore, the samples of all studies except for Pearson and Shriner (2002) involve undergraduate students. Therefore, these results must be viewed with caution due to sampling bias as previously discussed.

Although perceptions of a generation gap between parents and children were not the focus of this thesis, this literature is helpful in understanding the ways that older and younger generations perceive each other. It seems possible that some of the same reasons that parents and children perceive a generation gap would also apply to grandparents and grandchild perceptions.

**Gaps between Grandparents, Parents, and Grandchildren**

Research on value differences between grandparents, parents, and grandchildren does not seem to clarify generational differences. Cherlin and Furstenberg (1986) found that, although there is some agreement on values between the generations, the extent to which values are shared is low. Payne, Summers, and Stewart (1973) found that significant value differences were reported by specific generational pairs. Grandparents and grandchildren did not report any significant differences in perceptions of personal failure, although both generations reported significantly less severe personal consequences than the middle generation (Payne, Summers, and
Hill et al. (2000) reported that there were not significant differences in perceptions of support between grandparents, parents, and grandchildren. However, significant differences were reported in terms of maternal attachment: adolescents and grandmothers' both perceived greater maternal attachment than the middle generation (Hill et al. 2000). Significant differences in religious, political, and gender ideology were also found between grandparents and their children in the years 1971 and 1985; no significant differences were reported at each time between the middle generation and grandchildren (Miller and Glass 1989). Between 1971 and 1985, the ideological beliefs of the middle generation changed significantly; these changes were matched by their children but not by their parents (Miller and Glass 1989).

Within families, the greatest perceived generation gap is between grandparents and grandchildren and the lowest gap between grandparents and parents (Bengtson 1971). Research has also shown that as generations age, they perceive a smaller gap between themselves and other generations: parents reported a gap size between themselves and grandparents similar to their children in 1971 but a smaller gap in 1985 (Lynnott and Roberts 1997). Parents also reported a decrease in gap width between themselves and their children in 1985 than they had reported in 1971 (Lynnott and Roberts 1997). Similar to parent-child dyads, grandparents, parents, and grandchildren do not perceive that generational gaps within their own families are as extensive as in larger society (Lynnott and Roberts 1997).

The size of the gap reported does seem to be dependent upon sociodemographic variables. Lynnott and Roberts (1997) reported that the gap size decreased as individuals became
more conservative in their values and that women reported a smaller gap than men. Bengtson (1971) also states that the gap reported between generations may be due to other factors, like education level, that stratify society.

Although the studies by Hill et al. (2000) and Payne, Summers, and Stewart (1973) both use student samples, other literature presented in this section use longitudinal data from the Longitudinal Study of Generations (Bengtson 1971; Miller and Glass 1989; Lynnott and Roberts 1997). Previous longitudinal data presented allows the research to understand more clearly how values and perceptions of generational differences change over time within multiple generations of a family (Bengtson 1971; Miller and Glass 1989; Lynnott and Roberts 1997).

This thesis attempted to further discern perception differences between grandparents and grandchildren while additionally focusing on grandparent-grandchild cohort similarities and differences. Also, this research studied the influence of perceptions of intergenerational responsibility on perceptions of a “generation gap” which current research fails to do.

In conclusion, previous research has provided much insight into grandparent-grandchild relationships, perceptions of intergenerational responsibility, and perceptions of a “generation gap.” The ability to grandparent is mediated by characteristics of the grandchild’s parents; however, this literature does not seem to address the influence of the middle generation’s caregiving for their elderly parent on the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren or on the grandchild’s perceptions of intergenerational responsibility (Silverstein and Marenco 2001; Whitbeck, Hoyt, and Huck 1993; King et al. 2003). Interestingly, the elderly who receive more caregiving support giving more assistance to younger generations than older generations while parents face only limited responsibility for providing for their young adult children (Elmelech 2005). However, younger adults reported feeling high levels of obligation to their elderly counterparts and are expected to provide more assistance to aging parents regardless of the sacrifice involved (Stein et al. 1998; Elmelech 2005; Coleman, Ganong, and Cable 1997).
Overall past studies found that grandchildren report that their values were moderately influenced by their grandparents, although value differences between grandparents and grandchildren are apparent (Payne, Summers, and Stewart 1973; Cherlin and Furstenberg 1986; Wiscott and Kopera-Frye 2000). The largest perceived “generation gap” suggested by past research was also found between grandparents and grandchildren and may reflect these belief differences but may also be influenced by age and caregiving needs (Bengtson 1971). This research combined these three bodies of literature in order to determine the influence of perceptions of intergenerational responsibility on perceptions of a “generation gap” but also to understand how this relationship varies by the level of caregiving received by the grandparent.

This thesis attempted to expand the literature on relationships between grandparents and grandchildren in many ways. First, it attempted to determine the influence of grandparent-grandchild contact on perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward both young and older generations. Second, it attempted to understand how this relationship may be modified by the presence of caregiving. Third, it attempted to understand how perceptions of intergenerational responsibility are associated with perceptions of a “generation gap.” Finally, this research attempted to understand basic differences between perceptions of grandparents and grandchildren as well as between grandparent-grandchild cohorts.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis #1: Grandparents and grandchildren will differ in their perceptions of a “generation gap.” Grandparents will perceive a smaller gap than their grandchildren.

Hypothesis #2: Grandparents and grandchildren will differ in perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward both older and younger generations. Grandparents will perceive less responsibility to care for older generations than younger generations while grandchildren will perceive a more equal balance between responsibility toward older and younger generations.
Hypothesis #3: Differences in contact between grandparents and grandchildren will be associated with different perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older generations. Grandchildren who report more contact with their grandparents will perceive more responsibility toward older generations. Grandparents who report more contact with their grandchildren will perceive less responsibility toward older generations.

Hypothesis #4: Differences in contact between grandparents and grandchildren will be associated with different perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations. Grandchildren who report less contact with their grandparents will also perceive more responsibility toward younger generations. Grandparents who report more contact with their grandchildren will perceive more responsibility toward younger generations.

Hypothesis #5: Differences in contact between grandparents and grandchildren will result in different perceptions of a “generation gap.” Those grandparents and grandchildren reporting more contact will perceive less of a “generation gap” than grandparents and grandchildren who report less contact.

Hypothesis #6: The more caregiving, the more contact that grandparents and grandchildren will have.

Hypothesis #7: Perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations will be associated with the level of caregiving. Grandparents who receive more care from their adult children and provide more care to their own parents will perceive more responsibility toward younger generations. Grandchild perceptions of responsibility toward younger generations will not be influenced by caregiving provided by the middle generation.

Hypothesis #8: Perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older generations will be associated with the level of caregiving. Grandparents who receive more care from their
adult children and provide more care to their own parents will perceive less responsibility
toward older generations. Grandchildren whose parents provide more care will perceive
more responsibility toward the older generation.

Hypothesis #9: The relationship between contact and perceptions of intergenerational
responsibility toward younger generations will be moderated by the middle generation’s
caregiving for grandparents. Grandparents who have more contact with grandchildren
will perceive more responsibility toward younger generations when they receive high
levels of caregiving from the middle generation. The relationship between contact and
perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations will not be
moderated by the middle generation’s caregiving.

Hypothesis #10: The relationship between contact and perceptions of intergenerational
responsibility toward older generations will be moderated by caregiving. Grandparents
who have more contact with grandchildren will perceive less responsibility toward older
generations when they receive more caregiving from the middle generation and provide
more caregiving to their own parents. Grandchildren who have more contact with the
grandparents and whose parents provide more care will perceive more responsibility
toward older generations.

Hypothesis #11: Perceptions of a “generation gap” will be associated with the amount of
caregiving. Both grandparents who receive and provide more care and grandchildren
whose parents provide more caregiving will perceive more of a “generation gap” between
themselves and their grandchildren, and themselves and their grandparents respectively.

Hypothesis #12: Perceptions of a “generation gap” between grandparents and grandchildren will
not be related to differences in perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward
younger generations. Grandparents and grandchildren will perceive similar
intergenerational responsibility toward the younger generation.
Hypothesis #13: Perceptions of a “generation gap” between grandparents and grandchildren will be related to differences in perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older generations. Grandparents will perceive less responsibility toward older generations than their grandchildren. This will increase the perceived size of the “generation gap” between grandparents and grandchildren.
CHAPTER II

METHODS

The causal diagram (Figure 1) shows the model on which this research tested the hypotheses developed. Descriptions of the sample and of the concepts follow. Because this thesis compared grandparents and grandchildren, descriptive statistics of the variables under study are contained in Chapter III. According to Figure 1, perceptions of intergenerational responsibility were theorized to be directly affected by contact with grandparents/grandchildren and by the interaction of contact and caregiving. Perceptions of a generation gap were theorized to be directly affected by contact, caregiving and perceptions of intergenerational responsibility.

Figure 1. Causal Diagram

Sample

This research analyzed archived data from the Longitudinal Study of Generations from the University of Southern California (Bengtson 2005). The original sample was drawn from a health maintenance organization database of 840,000 subscribers. The potential sample included
all families with a living grandfather over the age of 60; three hundred families were randomly chosen to participate. All members of those families- all children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, and their spouses- were recruited to participate.

Four generations of longitudinal family data are available (N=3,160); this research utilized cross-sectional data on 870 respondents from the fifth wave collected in 1994. This analysis was restricted to analysis of G2 grandparents and their G4 grandchildren, who will be referred to as grandparents and grandchildren throughout the rest of this study, respectively. Descriptive statistics of the final sample are contained in Table 1.

Table 1: Respondent Characteristics by Generation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Grandparents (n=532)</th>
<th>Grandchildren (n=338)</th>
<th>Total (n=870)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age (n=860)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>66.00</td>
<td>20.88</td>
<td>48.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>5.03</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>22.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex (n=870)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>40.60%</td>
<td>41.42%</td>
<td>40.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>59.40%</td>
<td>58.58%</td>
<td>59.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race (n=678)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not White</td>
<td>3.80%</td>
<td>13.91%</td>
<td>6.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>96.20%</td>
<td>86.09%</td>
<td>93.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education (n=838)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th grade or less</td>
<td>0.96%</td>
<td>0.31%</td>
<td>0.72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>some high school</td>
<td>6.15%</td>
<td>25.47%</td>
<td>13.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hs/voc tech grad</td>
<td>21.54%</td>
<td>19.18%</td>
<td>20.64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spec training post hs</td>
<td>9.81%</td>
<td>4.09%</td>
<td>7.64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>some college</td>
<td>31.54%</td>
<td>38.05%</td>
<td>34.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College/univ grad</td>
<td>12.31%</td>
<td>8.81%</td>
<td>10.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1+ post college, ma</td>
<td>11.35%</td>
<td>4.09%</td>
<td>8.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>post-grad degree (MD, PhD)</td>
<td>6.35%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>3.94%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Measures

*Generation gap* is the belief that there is some kind of generational value separation between grandchildren and their grandparents or grandparents and their grandchildren. This variable was collected in 1994 and was measured by separate items for grandparents and grandchildren; grandparent responses were coded from the question “Many people talk about the ‘generation gap’ in families these days. In your opinion, how big is the ‘gap’ between the generations in YOUR family? Gap between you and your grandchildren?” Grandchild responses were coded from an identical questions asking about the gap between “you and your grandparents (if living).” Responses were coded on a six-point scale ranging from “No Gap Whatsoever” to “Very Wide Gap.”

*Intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations* is the perception of obligation that one generation may have toward the youth generation. Respondents were asked to respond to the following statement: “Families whose children are grown should be willing to pay school taxes to assure the education of future generations.” The item is measured on a four point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree; responses were reverse coded so that higher scores reflect higher levels of agreement. Although it is not ideal to use one item to indicate a broad concept, this was the only indicator asked during 1994 specifically focused on perceptions of responsibility toward younger generations by older generations.

*Intergenerational responsibility toward older generations* is the perception of obligation that a generation may have toward the elderly generation. Similar to above, respondents were asked to respond to the following statement using a four point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree: “Families should assume substantially more responsibility for meeting the needs of elderly retirees.” Responses to this variable have also been recoded so that higher scores reflect higher levels of agreement. The limitation presented above also applies to this variable; this was the only item asked in 1994 that specifically asked about perceptions of responsibility toward the elderly by younger generations.
The independent variable for this research was the amount of contact between the grandparent and grandchild generation. The LSOG measures the frequency of in person, telephone, and mail contact that respondents have had with specified family members— in this case, grandparents and grandchildren— during the last year on a six point Likert scale ranging from daily to never. Mean contact scores have been reverse coded so that higher scores indicate more frequent contact. Respondents were asked about contact with a specific, assigned grandparent or grandchild. Responses from both grandparents and grandchildren to these questions will be averaged and analyzed from the 1994 collection of the LSOG.

Caregiving is measured separately for grandparents and grandchildren. For grandchildren, caregiving indicates the frequency of caregiving provided by their parents, the middle generation. This represents the amount of caregiving that a grandchild witnesses their parents providing. For grandparents, caregiving scores were created based on the idea that grandparents views and perceptions may be influenced not only by the care they witness their children providing but also the amount of caregiving that they provide themselves. Grandparent caregiving scores are an average of the amount of caregiving that they provide and the amount that their children provide. The amount of caregiving provided by grandparents and the middle generation was measured by the averaged frequency reported in response to the following question asked in 1988: “Some of the parents and grandparents in our study are becoming quite elderly. As a result of any health problems that your parents may have, how often do you provide the following?” “managing parents’ funds” “provide financial support;” “household chores;” “assistance with personal hygiene;” “advice or information about how to obtain proper medical treatment, legal assistance, help from agencies, etc.;” “housing in your home;” or “emotional support”? Responses were coded using a five point Likert scale ranging from daily (1) to never (5) but have been reverse coded so that lower caregiving scores correspond to less caregiving. Caregiving questions like these were not asked in subsequent waves of the LSOG, instead focusing on perceptions of the self as a caregiver. Although it was not ideal to use a moderating
variable collected six years before the dependent variable, it seemed plausible that past caregiving experience by a parent could contribute to long-term attitudes concerning intergenerational responsibility and/or effects the extent to which later contact between grandchildren and grandparents influences perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger or older generations.

This research controlled for generation, age and sex of grandparent and age and sex of grandchild, education, geographic proximity, and lineage since these factors had been found by past research to influence grandparent-grandchild relationships. Generation was measured consecutively as G2 grandparents or G4 grandchildren. Age of the respondent was measured in years; sex as male or female. In many cases, two study grandparents were defined; information on the sex of both grandparents was recorded and their ages were averaged. Geographic distance in 1994 was measured by seven ordinal categories, from “we live together” to “more than 500 miles” apart. Education in the year 1994 was measured as the highest level of education attained by the respondent and responses range from “8th grade or less” to post-graduate degree. Lineage is a dichotomous variable representing whether the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren stems from maternal or paternal lines.

**Data Analysis**

The sample analyzed was a subset of the LSOG; the small sample sizes may have been due to the systematic exclusion of some cases: because data analysis relied on the application of caregiving information provided by the middle generation- the amount of caregiving provided by parents was used directly as caregiving witnessed by grandchildren while for grandparents, the amount of caregiving provided by the middle generation was averaged with the amount of caregiving that grandparents themselves provided- any respondents for whom middle generation information was not available have been excluded from the multivariate analyses. This may have resulted in bias from non-response and lent itself to small sample sizes that reduce statistical
power. Therefore, this study yielded only a preliminary look at the contribution of witness or providing caregiving to perceptions of intergenerational responsibility and perceptions of a generation gap.

Data were analyzed using Stata9. Initially, ANOVAs and Chi Squares were used to compare the levels of each variable across grandchildren and grandparents. Comparisons were made for contact, perceptions of intergenerational relationships, and perceptions of a “generation gap”. Comparisons of caregiving provided by the middle generation were made. Given small sample sizes, relationships that approach significance (p<.10), as well as those that reach traditional significance (p<.05), are reported. Although marginally significant results (p<.10) should be viewed with caution, it is reasonable to assume that these association may have reach significance in a larger sample.

Bivariate analyses (correlations) were used to describe the relationship between contact between grandparents and grandchildren and perceptions of intergenerational responsibility among each generation separately. Bivariate analyses were used to describe the relationships between contact and caregiving, caregiving and perceptions of intergenerational responsibility, contact and perceptions of a “generation gap,” and perceptions of intergenerational responsibility and perceptions of a “generation gap.” All bivariate analyses were completed separately for grandparents and grandchildren and for perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward the older and younger generations in order to compare grandparents and grandchildren.

Ordinary least squares (OLS) regression was used to analyze the relationship between perceptions of intergenerational responsibility and perceptions of a “generation gap” as well as the relationship between contact and a “generation gap,” with appropriate controls. It was used to analyze the relationship between contact and perceptions of intergenerational responsibility as moderated by caregiving. Again, separate analyses were conducted for grandparents and grandchildren. These analyses allowed comparisons between generations to determine if there is an association between intergenerational relationships and perceptions of intergenerational
obligation as well as develop a more thorough understanding of the influence of obligatory conceptions on perceptions of a generation gap.
CHAPTER III

DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSES OF GRANDPARENT AND GRANDCHILDREN DIFFERENCES

This thesis attempted to add another dimension to the value and belief differences between generations found by past research (Cherlin and Furstenberg 1986; Payne, Summers, and Stewart 1973; Hill et al. 2000; Miller and Glass 1989). The descriptive results presented below discuss the differences and similarities between grandparents and grandchildren in regards to the amount of contact reported, caregiving enacted and witnessed, perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations and older generations, and perceptions of a generation gap.

Although all data on grandparents and grandchildren are designed with their grandchild or grandparent counterpart in mind, these are not exact dyadic comparisons. Grandparents and grandchildren in the same family were assigned the same grandchild or grandparent when possible, but the sample being analyzed includes all grandparents and grandchildren. Exact dyadic comparisons—such as grandparents’ overreport contact compared to the particular grandchildren interviewed—cannot be made. Also, despite the fact that the respondents were chosen to participate because of their familial connection, their responses were treated as independent observations.

Contact

Contact is the average amount of contact reported with a specific grandchild or grandparent by mail or telephone or in face-to-face situations. Grandparents (M=2.85, SD=1.12) reported a mean contact level similar to that reported by grandchildren (M=2.78, SD=1.03). Both
groups fall most closely to contact "several times a year", although grandchildren report slightly less average contact than grandparents. Oneway ANOVA confirmed that there were no significant differences between the amount of contact reported by each group, $F(1, 578)=0.59$, $p<.44$.

### Caregiving

Caregiving is the mean score for eight indicators of personal and financial caregiving in 1988. Grandchildren were assigned their parents' scores while grandparents' own caregiving scores for their elderly parents were averaged with their children's scores for a mean witness/carer caregiving score.

Grandparents reported caregiving scores slightly higher than grandchildren (M=1.5, SD=.559 and M=1.38, SD=.42, respectively). Although both generations report low caregiving scores, the higher score reported by grandparents is associated with higher levels of caregiving: grandparents' scores lie exactly between "yearly" and "never". Grandchildren witness caregiving at a lower level, more closely to "never".

Oneway ANOVA reported significant differences between the caregiving scores for grandparents and grandchildren, $F(1, 548)=7.51$, $p<.01$. However, as the oneway ANOVA assumption of equal variances was violated (Bartlett's test for equal variances $\chi^2(1)=19.8525$, $p<.0005$), a Kruskal-Wallis was also calculated, which confirmed the results of the ANOVA, $\chi^2(1)=6.4$, $p<.05$ and $\chi^2(1, \text{with ties})=6.516$, $p<.05$. The mean caregiving scores reported by grandparents and grandchildren are significantly different.

This difference would seem to make sense given the age of the grandparents in this study. The middle generation's caregiving score, used to measure the amount of caregiving that grandchildren witness, is in reference to the assistance they provide their parents, the grandparents, in this study. The average age of the grandparents in this study is 66 years (SD=5.03), and may, thus, require less caregiving than older generations; grandchildren in this
study are only witnessing the caregiving provided by their own parents to their own young grandparents. However, the grandparents under study may also be caring for their own elderly parents, which increases their caregiving scores because they are witnessing the care their children provide and caregiving themselves. Grandparents may be providing more caregiving than they are witnessing for their own very elderly parents, which may have pulled their caregiving score up.

Perceptions of Intergenerational Responsibility Toward Younger and Older Generations

Analysis of perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward both older and younger generations is presented in Table 2. Perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations was assessed using the indicators "Families whose children are grown should be willing to pay school taxes to assure the education of future generations." Grandparents and grandchildren reported significantly different levels of agreement with this statement, $\chi^2(3)=16.3939$, $p<.001$. Overall, a higher percentage of grandparents agreed with the statement than did grandchildren (88.49% compared to 80.62%).

Table 2: Perceptions of Intergenerational Responsibility by Generation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pay School Taxes</th>
<th>Grandparents</th>
<th>Grandchildren</th>
<th>$X^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>15.55%</td>
<td>20.62%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>72.94%</td>
<td>60.00%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>10.94%</td>
<td>18.46%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>0.58%</td>
<td>0.92%</td>
<td>16.3939***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fam. Resp. for Retirees</th>
<th>Grandparents</th>
<th>Grandchildren</th>
<th>$X^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>1.37%</td>
<td>5.61%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>45.69%</td>
<td>50.16%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>49.41%</td>
<td>43.30%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>3.53%</td>
<td>0.93%</td>
<td>19.3862***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***$p<.001$
Significant differences were found between grandparents and grandchildren in their perceptions of responsibility toward older generations, \( \chi^2(3) = 19.3862, p<.001 \). This was assessed by the level of agreement each generation had with the statement “Families should assume substantially more responsibility for meeting the needs of elderly retirees.” More grandchildren agreed with the statement than did grandparents (55.77% compared to 47.06%). This would seem to coincide with research by Elmelech (2005) and Stein et al. (1998) that found that the elderly support giving less assistance to parents compared to younger groups.

Hypothesis #2, that grandparents and grandchildren will differ in perceptions of intergenerational responsibility, was supported. However, while grandparents did perceive less responsibility to care for older generations as hypothesized, grandchildren did not perceive a more balanced set of responsibilities. Grandparents favored supporting younger generations far more than supporting older generations (88.49% compared to 47.06%). Grandchildren also favored supporting younger generations than older generations, although by a smaller margin (80.62% compared to 55.77%).

A marked difference in perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger and older generations was found. Although there were significant differences between the generations in regard to perceptions of responsibility toward both older and younger generations, both generations were more in favor of supporting younger generations.

Perceptions of a Generation Gap

Perceptions of a generation gap were measured on an unspecified scale ranging from “no gap whatsoever” to “very wide gap”. Grandparents reported a much smaller gap than their grandchildren (M=3.033, SD=1.412 compared to M=4.418, SD=1.331). Oneway ANOVA reported that there are significant differences between grandparents and grandchildren in terms of the perceived generation gap, \( F(1, 801) = 125.15, p<.001 \).
Hypothesis #1, which stated that grandparents and grandchildren will differ in their perceptions of a generation gap, was confirmed. Grandparents, as hypothesized, do perceive a smaller gap than their grandchildren. This cross-sectional result would seem to be consistent with longitudinal findings from Lynnott and Roberts (1997), who reported that as generations’ age, the size of a generation gap that they perceive between themselves and other generations decreases.
CHAPTER IV

GRANDPARENTS AND GRANDCHILDREN CORRELATIONS

Because of the significant differences found in the descriptive analyses presented above, bivariate analyses were completed separately for grandparents and grandchildren. Bivariate analyses compared perceptions of a generation gap, perceptions of responsibility toward younger and older generations, contact, and caregiving in an attempt to discover how these factors covary.

Grandparents

Table 3 shows the correlations for grandparents. The relationships between contact and perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older generations and perceptions of a generation gap, individually, are significant. More contact with grandchildren is associated with perceiving a smaller generation gap with grandchildren and is also associated with perceiving more intergenerational responsibility for older generations.

Table 3: Correlations for Grandparents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Contact</td>
<td>1.0000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=304)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Caregiving</td>
<td>0.0036</td>
<td>1.0000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=185)</td>
<td>(n=341)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Pay School Taxes</td>
<td>0.0967†</td>
<td>-0.0070</td>
<td>1.0000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=300)</td>
<td>(n=290)</td>
<td>(n=521)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Fam. Resp. for Eld.</td>
<td>0.1319*</td>
<td>0.0707</td>
<td>0.1194*</td>
<td>1.0000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=293)</td>
<td>(n=283)</td>
<td>(n=508)</td>
<td>(n=510)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Gen. Gap</td>
<td>-0.2272***</td>
<td>0.0666</td>
<td>-0.0803†</td>
<td>-0.1245**</td>
<td>1.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=298)</td>
<td>(n=282)</td>
<td>(n=476)</td>
<td>(n=468)</td>
<td>(n=486)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†p<.10  *p<.05  **p<.01  ***p<.001

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Significant correlations were also found for the relationship between agreement to perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations and older generations and for the relationship between perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older generations and perceptions of a generation gap for grandparents. More agreement with perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations is associated with higher perceptions of responsibility toward older generations. Also, higher levels of agreement to perceptions of intergenerational responsibility for older generations are associated with perceptions of a smaller generation gap.

Table 3 also shows that two correlations are approaching significance: the relationship between contact and perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations and the relationship between perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations and perceptions of a generation gap. More contact is associated with high perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations. A higher level of agreement to perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations is associated with perceptions of a smaller generation gap.

Interestingly, the amount of caregiving reported by grandparents was not significantly related to any of the other variables—contact, perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger and older generations or perceptions of a generation gap. Grandparents who reported more caregiving are no more likely than grandparents who reported lower levels of caregiving to support intergenerational responsibility towards younger or older generations or report a large generation gap with their grandchildren. This lack of relationship between caregiving and perceptions of a generation gap, especially, seems surprising as witnessing or providing caregiving would seem to highlight functional and life course differences between grandparents and grandchildren.
Grandchildren

Table 4 shows few significant correlations for grandchildren. Only the relationships between contact and perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations and the relationship between caregiving and perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations are significant. More contact with grandparents is associated with lower perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations.

Table 4: Correlations for Grandchildren

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Contact</td>
<td>1.0000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=276)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Caregiving</td>
<td>0.0854</td>
<td>1.0000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=111)</td>
<td>(n=209)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Pay School Taxes</td>
<td>-0.1207*</td>
<td>-0.1954*</td>
<td>1.0000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=267)</td>
<td>(n=130)</td>
<td>(n=325)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Fam. Resp. for Eld.</td>
<td>0.0149</td>
<td>-0.0927</td>
<td>0.0235</td>
<td>1.0000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=265)</td>
<td>(n=128)</td>
<td>(n=319)</td>
<td>(n=321)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Gen. Gap</td>
<td>-0.0903</td>
<td>0.0465</td>
<td>0.0691</td>
<td>-0.0582</td>
<td>1.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=270)</td>
<td>(n=130)</td>
<td>(n=304)</td>
<td>(n=300)</td>
<td>(n=317)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.10  **p<.05  ***p<.01  ****p<.001

The relationship between perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations and caregiving is similar to the relationship presented previously between contact and perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations. Higher levels of caregiving witnessed are associated with lower levels of perceived intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations.

Although grandchildren reported much higher levels of intergenerational responsibility for the elderly than did grandparents (as shown in Table 2), their perceived levels of responsibility did not seem to be related to the contact that they have with their grandparents. Contact does not have a significant correlation with perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older generations for grandchildren. There may be some mediating influences - like stage in the life course or parents' views - that influence perceived responsibility.
for older generations alone, not for younger generations. This thesis does not examine these potentially mediating influences but future research should attempt to better understand the source of these generational variations.

Summary

The correlations presented in Tables 3 and 4 reflect the differences that exist between grandparents and grandchildren for perceptions of intergenerational responsibility and perceptions of a generation gap. Hypothesis #3 stated that differences in contact would be associated with differing perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older generations. This difference was found for grandparents, as contact was found to be significantly associated with family responsibility for the elderly. However, the relationship found is the opposite of what was hypothesized: grandparents who report more contact perceive more responsibility toward older generations. For grandchildren, no support was found for the Hypothesis #3 that grandchildren who report more contact with their grandparents also perceive more intergenerational responsibility toward older generations.

Hypothesis #4 stated that differences in contact would be associated with differing perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations. Support was found for this hypothesis. For grandparents, higher levels of actual contact were found to be almost significantly associated with higher perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations. Grandchildren who reported more actual contact also reported significantly lower perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations.

Support for hypothesis #5 is mixed. Hypothesis #5 stated that differences in contact would be associated with different perceptions of a generation gap; more reported contact would be related with perceptions of a smaller generation gap. The relationship between contact and perceptions of a generation gap was not significant for grandchildren. The mean age of grandchildren (M=22.97, SD=4.01) is associated with a time in life when grandchildren may feel
the most distant from their families. Their lives may be just becoming structured into careers and
the development of their own families while their grandparents’ lives are declining into
retirement. Although this relationship was not found to be significant, high levels of actual
contact, in this instance, may only serve to increase feelings of psychological distance and
perceptions of a generation gap with grandparents. Issues of age and life stage differences may
be clear in high contact situations, lending to feelings of greater psychological distance and a
greater perceived generation gap. Low levels of contact with grandparents would not necessarily
decrease these perceptions, as there is potentially already a sizeable perceived distance between
grandparents and grandchildren.

Hypothesis #5 was supported for grandparents. For grandparents, lower levels of contact
were associated perceptions of a larger generation gap. This is consistent with the hypothesis as
stated. Grandparents who have more contact with their grandchildren report perceiving less of a
gap between themselves and their grandchildren. Grandparents who have high levels of actual
contact with their grandchildren are seeing their grandchildren go through the same life changes
that they once went through and perhaps a feeling of generational closeness develops because of
this.

No support was found for Hypothesis #6, which stated more caregiving would be
associated to more contact between grandparents and grandchildren. This relationship was not
found to be significant for either grandparents or grandchildren. This relationship may not have
been found because grandparents and grandchildren may simply be more separated;
grandchildren may be more oriented to the family that they have begun rather than their family of
birth and may be focused on their careers. Grandparents may have more contact with their own
parents and children than their grandchildren.

Support for Hypotheses #7 and #8 was mixed. These hypotheses state that perceptions of
intergenerational responsibility will be associated with caregiving. No relationship between
caregiving and perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger or older
generations was found for grandparents. For grandchildren, no relationship between caregiving and perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older generations was found.

However, a significant relationship was found grandchildren for the relationship between caregiving and perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations. Higher actual levels of caregiving are associated with lower levels of agreement to paying school taxes. This relationship was not hypothesized; it was instead thought that grandchild perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations would not be related to their parents' caregiving.

The bivariate results presented above show little support for the hypotheses as initially presented. No relationship was found between contact and caregiving for grandparents or grandchildren. There were also no significant relationships between caregiving and perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger or older generations for grandparents. For grandchildren, there was no relationship between caregiving and perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older generations.

Some relationships between the variables were found. For grandparents, more contact with grandchildren is associated with greater perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older and younger generations and lower perceptions of a generation gap. For grandchildren, less contact with grandparents is associated with perceiving more intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations. More caregiving is also associated with perceiving lower levels of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations for grandchildren.
MULTIVARIATE ANALYSES OF PERCEPTIONS OF
INTERGENERATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY AND
PERCEPTIONS OF A GENERATION GAP

The following analyses have been performed to determine if perceptions of a generation gap and perceptions of intergenerational responsibility were influenced by contact, caregiving, personal characteristics (age, sex, and education) and structural aspects of the grandparent-grandchild relationship (maternal or paternal lineage and geographic proximity). These analyses attempted to determine the independent and relative effects of caregiving and contact on perceptions of intergenerational responsibility and of caregiving, contact, and perceptions of intergenerational responsibility on perceptions of a generation gap.

Three regression models were calculated for perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older and younger generations and for perceptions of a generation gap separately for grandparents and grandchildren. The first model for each analysis tested the main effects of background characteristics- personal (sex, age, and education) and structural (lineage and geographic proximity) characteristics- on perceptions of intergenerational responsibility and perceptions of a generation gap in order to determine their influence. The second model tested the main effects of caregiving and contact, while controlling for these background characteristics, on perceptions of intergenerational responsibility and on perceptions of a generation gap. The final model tested for perceptions of intergenerational responsibility examined the modifying effect of caregiving and contact on perceptions of intergenerational responsibility while controlling for background characteristics, contact, and caregiving. For perceptions of a
generation gap, the final model tested the main effects of perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger and older generations while controlling contact, caregiving, and background characteristics.

A few notes should be made about the data. Although the respondents in this data are not independent because they share familial background, they will be treated as independent observations for these analyses. Also, the sample was potentially biased by the non-response of the middle generation. Because grandchildren were assigned their parents’ caregiving scores, those grandchildren whose parents did not participate in the 1988 wave of the LSOG were systematically excluded from these analyses. When caregiving is added to the models, the sample sizes drop substantially because of this non-response. Therefore, the analyses involving caregiving data provide only a preliminary look at the contribution of witnessing caregiving to the development of perceptions of intergenerational responsibility.

**Perceptions of Intergenerational Responsibility Toward Younger Generations**

Table 5 shows the regression of perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generation, as indicated by agreement- “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”- with the statement “Families whose children are grown should be willing to pay school taxes to assure the education of future generations” on contact, caregiving, and demographic variables. Three models were tested for grandparents and grandchildren separately in order to assess grandparent-grandchild differences.

Model 1 tested the main effects of personal characteristics (age, sex, and education) and structural characteristics of the grandparent-grandchild relationship (lineage and geographic proximity) on perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations. Model 2 tested the main effects of contact and caregiving on perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations while controlling for the main effects of personal (age, sex, and education) and structural (lineage and geographic proximity) characteristics. Finally,
Model 3 tested the modifying effect of contact and caregiving on perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations while controlling for the main effects of contact, caregiving, and personal (age, sex, education) and structural (lineage and geographic proximity) characteristics.

**Grandparents**

Model 1 tested the main effects of personal characteristics as well as structural characteristics of the grandparent-grandchild relationship on perceptions of intergenerational responsibility. Sex and education were significant predictors of perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations, $t=2.71$, $p<.01$ and $t=4.75$, $p<.001$, respectively; grandmothers and grandparents with higher levels of education perceive that older generations have more responsibility for younger generations. Lineage was also a significant predictor of perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations, $t=-2.11$, $p<.05$; paternal grandparents are more likely to perceive intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations than are maternal grandparents. Finally, geographic proximity with grandchildren is approaching a significant relationship with perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations, $t=-1.78$, $p<.10$. Grandparents who live closer to their grandchildren perceive less responsibility toward younger generations. Model 1, which includes personal (age, sex, and education) and structural characteristics (geographic proximity and lineage), was significant overall for grandparents, $F(5,327)=6.59$, $p<.001$. 

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Table 5: Perceptions of Intergenerational Responsibility toward Younger Generations by Generation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Grandparents</th>
<th>Grandchildren</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.005</td>
<td>-0.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexa</td>
<td>0.157**</td>
<td>0.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.082***</td>
<td>0.102***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geo. Proximity</td>
<td>-0.024f</td>
<td>-0.047*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lineageb</td>
<td>-0.115*</td>
<td>-0.092</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact</td>
<td>0.011</td>
<td>0.152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caregiving</td>
<td>-0.009</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact*Caregiving</td>
<td>0.011</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>3.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>0.0915</td>
<td>0.1279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>0.0776</td>
<td>0.0913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>6.59***</td>
<td>3.50**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†p<.10  *p<.05  **p<.01  ***p<.001  

* Female=1  b Maternal=1
Model 2 tested the main effects contact and caregiving on perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations while controlling for personal (age, sex, and education) and structural (geographic proximity and lineage) characteristics. No main effects of contact and caregiving were found. Education remained a significant predictor of perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations, \( t=4.06, p<.001 \). Grandparents with higher education perceive more responsibility toward younger generations. Geographic proximity, which approached significance in Model 1, became a significant predictor of perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations, \( t=-2.20, p<.05 \). Grandparents who live closer to their grandchildren perceive less responsibility toward younger generations. Grandparent sex was no longer significant, as it had been in Model 1. However, similar to Model 1, Model 2, which included personal (age, sex, and education) and structural (lineage and geographic proximity) characteristics as well as caregiving and contact, was significant overall, \( F(7, 167)=3.50, p<.01 \).

Model 3 tested the interaction of contact and caregiving on perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations while controlling for the main effects of personal characteristics, structural characteristics of the grandparent-grandchild relationships, contact, and caregiving. The interaction term was not significant; there is no modifying effect of contact and caregiving on perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations for grandparents.

Grandchildren

Model 1 tested the main effect of personal (age, sex, and education) and structural (lineage and geographic proximity) characteristics on perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations. Education and lineage were significant predictors of perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations in Model 1, \( t=2.90, p<.01 \) and \( t=-3.00, p<.01 \) respectively. Grandchildren with higher levels of education and those responding about paternal grandparents are more likely to perceive intergenerational
responsibility toward younger generations than grandchildren with lower levels of education and those responding about maternal grandparents. Grandchild age approached significance in Model 1, t=-1.77, p<.10; older grandchildren perceive lower levels of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations. Model 1, which includes the background characteristics of personal (age, sex, and education) and structural (lineage and geographic proximity) is significant overall, F(5, 258)=4.19, p<.01.

Model 2 tested the main effects of contact and caregiving on perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations while controlling for personal (age, sex, and education) and structural characteristics (geographic proximity and lineage). The model showed no significant predictors of perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations for grandchildren. The overall model was also no longer significant.

Model 3 tested the interaction of contact and caregiving on perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations while controlling for the main effects of personal (age, sex, and education) and structural (lineage and geographic proximity) characteristics, contact and caregiving. The interaction of contact and caregiving was not significant; there is no modifying effect of contact and caregiving on perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations.

Hypothesis #9 stated that the interaction of caregiving and contact would moderate the relationship between contact and perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations for grandparents. This relationship was not hypothesized to exist for grandchildren. This is partially supported by the analyses presented in Table 5 as in no model for either grandparents or grandchildren was a moderating effect of caregiving found.

Perceptions of Intergenerational Responsibility Toward Older Generations

Table 6 shows the regression analyses of perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older generations on contact, caregiving, and personal and structural characteristics.
Perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older generations was measured by the indicator “Families should assume substantially more responsibility for meeting the needs of elderly retirees.” Responses are coded from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”.

Model 1 tested the main effects of personal (age, sex, and education) characteristics and structural (lineage and geographic proximity) characteristics of the grandparent-grandchild relationship on perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older generations. Model 2 tested the main effects of contact and caregiving on perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older generations while controlling for the main effects of personal (age, sex, and education) and structural (lineage and geographic proximity) characteristics. Finally, Model 3 tested the modifying effect of contact and caregiving on perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older generations while controlling for the main effects of contact, caregiving, and personal (age, sex, education) and structural (lineage and geographic proximity) characteristics.

Grandparents

Model 1 tested the main effects of personal (age, sex, and education) and structural (lineage and geographic proximity) characteristics on perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older generations. Geographic proximity to grandchildren was a significant predictor of perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older generations, t=2.12, p<.05. Grandparents who live closer to their grandchildren perceive more responsibility for elderly retirees.
Table 6: Perceptions of Intergenerational Responsibility Toward Older Generations by Generation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Grandparents</th>
<th></th>
<th>Grandchildren</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>0.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexa</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>-0.053</td>
<td>-0.053</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>-0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geo. Proximity</td>
<td>0.033*</td>
<td>0.045†</td>
<td>0.046†</td>
<td>-0.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lineageb</td>
<td>0.095</td>
<td>0.174†</td>
<td>0.175†</td>
<td>-0.071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact</td>
<td>0.109*</td>
<td>0.143</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caregiving</td>
<td>-0.016</td>
<td>0.051</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact*Caregiving</td>
<td>-0.025</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>2.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>0.0240</td>
<td>0.0652</td>
<td>0.0655</td>
<td>0.0127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>0.0088</td>
<td>0.0256</td>
<td>0.0200</td>
<td>-0.0066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†p<.10  *p<.05  **p<.01  ***p<.001

Female=1  Maternal=1
Model 2 tested the main effects of caregiving and contact on perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older generations, controlling for personal (age, sex, and education) and structural (lineage and geographic proximity) characteristics. Contact with grandchildren was a significant predictor of perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older generations, $t=2.43, p<.05$. Grandparents who had more contact with their grandchildren also perceived higher levels of responsibility toward older generations. Geographic proximity and lineage are both approaching significance, $t=1.71, p<.10$ and $t=1.87, p<.10$ respectively. Grandparents who live closer to their grandchildren and those who are related to their grandchildren through mothers are more likely to perceive intergenerational responsibility for older generations.

Model 3 tested the interaction effect of contact and caregiving on perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older generations while controlling for the main effects of contact, caregiving, and personal (age, sex, and education) and structural (lineage and geographic proximity) characteristics. The interaction term was not significant; there is no modifying effect of contact and caregiving on perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older generations.

Grandchildren

Model 1 tested the main effects of personal (age, sex, and education) and structural (lineage and geographic proximity) characteristics on perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older generations. There were no significant predictors of perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older generations for grandchildren in Model 1.

Model 2 tested the main effects of contact and caregiving on perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older generations while controlling for personal (age, sex, and education) and structural (lineage and geographic proximity) characteristics. There were no main effects of contact or caregiving on perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older generations. Age and lineage approached a significant relationship with perceptions of
intergenerational responsibility toward older generations, $t=1.97$, $p<.10$ and $t=-1.75$, $p<.10$ respectively. Older grandchildren and those responding about paternal grandparents perceive higher levels of responsibility toward older generations.

Model 3 tested the interaction effect of contact and caregiving on perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older generations, controlling for the main effects of contact, caregiving, and personal (age, sex, and education) and structural (lineage and geographic proximity) characteristics. No modifying effect of contact and caregiving was found; perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older generations is not affected by the interaction of contact and caregiving.

Hypothesis #10 stated that perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older generations would be moderated by the interaction of caregiving and contact for both grandparents and grandchildren. Again, the moderating effect hypothesized has not been found for either grandparent or grandchildren.

**Perception of a Generation Gap**

Table 7 shows the regression of perceptions of a generation gap on contact, caregiving, perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older and younger generations, personal characteristics. Grandparents and grandchildren were asked to describe the size of the perceived generation gap from "no gap whatsoever" to "very wide gap."

Model 1 tested the main effects of personal (age, sex, and education) characteristics and structural (lineage and geographic proximity) characteristics of the grandparent-grandchild relationship on perceptions of a generation gap. Model 2 tested the main effects of contact and caregiving on perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older generations while controlling for the main effects of personal (age, sex, and education) and structural (lineage and geographic proximity) characteristics. Finally, Model 3 tested the main effects of perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger and older generations on perceptions of a
generation gap while controlling for the main effects of contact, caregiving, and personal (age, sex, education) and structural (lineage and geographic proximity) characteristics.

Grandparents

Model 1 tested the main effects of personal (age, sex, and education) and structural (lineage and geographic proximity) characteristics on perceptions of a generation gap. Sex was a significant predictor of perceptions of a generation gap, $t=-2.87, p<.01$; grandfathers perceive a larger generation gap than do grandmothers. Overall Model 1, including personal (age, sex, and education) and structural (lineage and geographic proximity) characteristics approached significances, $F(5, 324)=1.91, p<.10$.

Model 2 tested the main effects of contact and caregiving on perceptions of a generation gap while controlling for personal (age, sex, and education) and structural (lineage and geographic proximity). Contact was a significant predictor of perceptions of a generation gap, $t=-2.64, p<.01$; grandparents who have more contact with their grandchildren perceive less of a generation gap. Sex approached a significant relationship with perceptions of a generation gap, $t=-1.73, p<.10$; grandfathers perceive a larger generation gap than do grandmothers. Overall Model 2, containing contact, caregiving, and personal (age, sex, education) and structural (lineage and geographic proximity) characteristics, is also significant, $F(7, 163)=2.08, p<.05$. 

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Table 7: Perceptions of a Generation Gap by Generation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Grandparents</th>
<th></th>
<th>Grandchildren</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
<td>-0.019</td>
<td>-0.018</td>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex(^a)</td>
<td>-0.464**</td>
<td>-0.427(^t)</td>
<td>-0.443(^t)</td>
<td>Sex(^a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-0.053</td>
<td>-0.111</td>
<td>-0.073</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geo. Proximity</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>-0.056</td>
<td>0.067</td>
<td>Geo. Proximity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lineage(^b)</td>
<td>0.121</td>
<td>0.131</td>
<td>0.143</td>
<td>Lineage(^b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact</td>
<td>-0.270**</td>
<td>-0.251*</td>
<td></td>
<td>Contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caregiving</td>
<td>0.223</td>
<td>0.216</td>
<td></td>
<td>Caregiving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay School Taxes</td>
<td>-0.333</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pay School Taxes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fam. Resp. for Eld.</td>
<td>-0.326(^t)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fam. Resp. for Eld.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
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<td>5.9</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>Constant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R(^2)</td>
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<td>0.0819</td>
<td>0.1185</td>
<td>R(^2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R(^2)</td>
<td>0.0137</td>
<td>0.0425</td>
<td>0.0686</td>
<td>Adjusted R(^2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>1.91(^t)</td>
<td>2.08*</td>
<td>2.38*</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(\dagger p<.10 \ \ast p<.05 \ \ast\ast p<.01 \ \ast\ast\ast p<.001\)

\(^a\) Female=1 \ \(^b\) Maternal=1
Model 3 tested the main effects of perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger and older generations on perceptions of a generation gap, controlling for the main effects of personal (sex, age, and education) and structural (lineage and geographic proximity) characteristics, contact, and caregiving. Contact remained a significant predictor of perceptions of a generation gap, $t=-2.37$, $p<.05$; grandparents who have more contact with their children perceive less of a generation gap. Sex and perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older generations approached significant relationships with perceptions of a generation gap, $t=-1.81$, $p<.10$ and $t=-1.78$, $p<.10$ respectively. Grandfathers and those who perceive less responsibility toward older generations perceive a larger generation gap. Overall, Model 3, containing perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger and older generations, contact, caregiving, and personal (age, sex, and education) and structural (lineage and geographic proximity) characteristics, was significant for grandparents, $F(9, 159)=2.38$, $p<.05$.

Grandchildren

Model 1 tested the main effects of personal (age, sex, and education) and structural (lineage and geographic proximity) characteristics on perceptions of a generation gap. There were no significant predictors of a generation gap for grandchildren in Model 1.

Model 2 tested the main effects of contact and caregiving on perceptions of a generation gap while controlling for personal (age, sex, and education) and structural (lineage and geographic proximity). There were no significant predictors of perceptions of a generation gap in Model 2.

Model 3 tested the main effects of perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger and older generations on perceptions of a generation gap, controlling for the main effects of personal (sex, age, and education) and structural (lineage and geographic proximity) characteristics, contact, and caregiving. For grandchildren, there are no significant predictors of perceptions of a generation gap in Model 3.
Hypothesis #11 states that caregiving would influence perceptions of a generation gap held by grandparents and grandchildren. Caregiving was not a significant predictor of perceptions of a generation gap for any of the models presented for grandparents or grandchildren. The grandparents in this study are still young; they may not be in need of amounts of caregiving or retirement services that would influence the perceptions of their grandchildren.

Hypothesis #12 states that perceptions of a generation gap will not be related to differing perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations. Support was found for this hypothesis as paying school taxes was not a significant predictor of perceptions of a generation gap any of the models presented for grandparents or grandchildren.

Hypothesis #13 states that perceptions of a generation gap will be associated with differing perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older generations. Partial support was found for this hypothesis. Family responsibility for elderly retirees was significant in Model 4 for grandparents. For grandparents, lower perceptions of intergenerational responsibility for older generations was associated with a larger generation gap.

Summary

Very little support for the hypotheses as stated initially was found. Although support was found for the idea that perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations do not influence perceptions of a generation gap, no support was found for the idea that caregiving by the middle generation would moderate the relationship between contact and perceptions of intergenerational responsibility or that caregiving would influence perceptions of a generation gap.

However, partial support was found for the idea that perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older generations influence perceptions of a generation gap, when all factors are considered. Grandparents who perceive more family responsibility for elderly retirees perceive a smaller generation gap.
This analysis is also consistent with the findings of Cherlin and Furstenberg (1986) that contact between grandparents and grandchildren does not seem to influence the beliefs of grandchildren. However, this research also found that, when all factors are considered simultaneously, contact does influence grandparents' perceptions of a generation gap and of intergenerational responsibility toward older generations.

Finally, it is important to remember that the analyses presented above are only a preliminary examination of the influence of caregiving on perceptions of a generation gap and perceptions of intergenerational responsibility. The sample used is potentially biased by the non-response of the middle generation in 1988 and, therefore, cases were systematically excluded from this analysis because of missing data.
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The analyses presented previously were an attempt to examine beliefs and values that may be influenced by the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren. The following is an attempt to summarize those findings, present limitations and directions for future research, and relate these findings to practical and theoretical considerations.

Perceptions of Intergenerational Responsibility toward Younger and Older Generations

Grandparents and grandchildren perceive their responsibility toward younger and older generations differently. Grandparents agreed slightly more to the statement “Families whose children are grown should be willing to pay school taxes to assure the education of future generations” than did grandchildren; however, grandchildren agreed slightly more to the statement “Families should assume substantially more responsibility for meeting the needs of elderly retirees” than did grandparents. For grandchildren, lower levels of contact and lower levels of witnessed caregiving by the middle generation to grandparents were associated with perceptions of more intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations; grandchildren who witnessed more caregiving provided by their parents and who had more contact with their grandparents perceived less responsibility toward younger generations. For grandparents, lower levels of contact with grandchildren were associated with perceptions of less intergenerational responsibility toward younger and older generations in general. Also although grandparents favored perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger over perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older generations, perceiving more intergenerational
responsibility toward younger generations was associated with perceiving more intergenerational responsibility toward older generations. Finally, for grandparents, education was a consistently significant predictor of perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations, when all factors were considered simultaneously; grandparents with higher levels of education perceived more responsibility toward younger generations. For grandchildren, there were no consistent predictors of perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older or younger generations.

Perceptions of a Generation Gap

Grandparents and grandchildren also perceive different levels of a generation gap with their grandchild/grandparent counterparts. Grandparents perceive a lower level of generational distance than is perceived by grandchildren. For grandparents, perceptions of a generation gap were also associated with perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older generations; perceptions of less responsibility were associated with perceptions of a larger generation gap. For grandchildren, none of the variables considered- caregiving, contact, and perceptions of intergenerational responsibility- were significantly related to perceptions of a generation gap. Interestingly, perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older generations was an important predictor for grandparent perceptions of a generation gap; grandparents who perceived more intergenerational responsibility toward older generations perceived a smaller generation gap with their grandchildren.

Limitations

The main limitation of this study is its lack of generalizability. The LSOG is based on a sample of families residing in southern California, an area that is not representative of the entire United States or any other larger population. Although families may have moved away from the southern California area since their participation in the LSOG began in 1971, the families are all
connected to one specific area. This sampling bias undermines the ability of this study to
generalize to any intergenerational dyads that have no history of residing in the southern
California area.

This study is also limited to families in which grandparents, parents, and grandchildren
participated in the 1994 waves of the study. Those grandchildren whose grandparents were
unable to participate for whatever reason were not included. This created a layer of selection bias
as the study can only be generalized to those individuals with grandparents living through the
year 1997. Associated with this is the fact that, because there are multiple family members for
each generation, the respondents were not actually independent. For this study, the respondents
were treated as independent observations despite their familial background.

Another limitation is related to the time ordering of certain variables. The caregiving
variable was collected in the third wave of the study completed in 1988 while the main focus of
the study is the year 1994. Caregiving variables were also collected in 1991 (not in 1994) but did
not provide the depth desired for this study; instead, respondents were asked more generally if
they were a caregiver and to whom they were providing care. As these variables did not offer any
insight as to what kind of caregiving activities were being provided nor the frequency of such
activities, the indicators from 1988 were chosen to provide a more complete description of the
caregiving by the parent generation. As caregiving for the older generation tends to increase as
the grandparent ages, the influence of caregiving on perceptions of intergenerational
responsibility should be underestimated by using the 1988 variables.

Although the initial sample is large, this research can provide only a preliminary
examination of the contribution of caregiving to perceptions of a generation gap and perceptions
of intergenerational responsibility. The non-response of the middle generation during the 1988
wave of the LSOG has potentially created a bias that has resulted in the systematic exclusion of
cases because of the development of the caregiving variable.

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Finally, the two perceptions of intergenerational responsibility variables, toward older generations and toward younger generations, were each only indicated by one item. Although this was not ideal, it was necessary in order to get at perceptions of responsibility between grandparent and grandchild generations. While other indicators were available concerning responsibility between adult children and their aging parents, measuring perceptions of responsibility between parents and their children was not the focus of this study.

Conclusions

Despite the limitations presented above, this research does contribute to the understanding of perceptions of intergenerational responsibility and of a generation gap between grandparents and grandchildren. Past literature on perceptions of a generation gap seemed to avoid the issue of intergenerational responsibility, which is the strength of this research.

Although no main effect of perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older and younger generations on perceptions of a generation gap was found, this research was useful because it studied an area that previously had not been examined. Previous research had examined perceptions of a generation gap from the stance of values that affect an individual personally; for example, Payne, Summers, and Stewart (1973) studied perceptions of a generation gap by perceptions of personal failure. This thesis examined perceptions of a generation gap using interpersonal value indicators of intergenerational responsibility, which had not previously been done.

Significant differences were found between grandparents and grandchildren in their perceptions of intergenerational responsibility; however, these differences were opposite of what the media would seem to portray the battle for federal funding. Compared to grandchildren, grandparents perceive more intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations; the converse was true for perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older generations: compared to grandparents, grandchildren perceived more responsibility toward older generations.

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However, perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations was higher overall for both grandparents and grandchildren. These differences would seem to contradict the media’s presentation of lobbying senior and youth groups who can find no common ground in the search for federal funds. The difference between research findings and the popular belief was also found in research by Elmelech (2005) and Stein et al. (1998) which found that, compared to younger groups, elderly persons support giving less assistance to their peers.

This research also was consistent with past research by Mueller and Elder (2003) and Silverstein and Marenco (2001) who reported that grandparents with higher levels of education were more supportive and influential in the lives of their grandchildren. This research found that grandparents with more education reported significantly higher perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations than their less educated counterparts. This would seem to reflect a personal value placed on education; more highly educated grandparents’ place more value on the education of their children and grandchildren, especially as perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations was based on the indicator “Families whose children are grown should be willing to pay school taxes to assure the education of future generations.”

The finding from this research that grandfathers perceive a larger generation gap than grandmothers also seems consistent with past research that found that grandfathers have their closest relationships with grandchildren when their grandchildren are young and decline as grandchildren grow and move away from their parental home (Mills 1999; Mills, Wakeman, and Fea 2001). The grandchildren in this study are young adults (the average age is 20.88 years old); generally, grandchildren at this age are attending college and beginning to create lives independent from their parents’ and their parents’ home. These grandchildren would seem to be past the age of perceived generational closeness with grandfathers found by Mills (1999) and Mills, Wakeman, and Fea (2001). Lynnott and Roberts (1997) also found that females reported a
smaller generation gap than males, which would also seem consistent with the larger gap perceived by grandfathers found in this research.

Future literature should focus on using more indicators of intergenerational responsibility and larger, more complete samples to compare grandparent and grandchild samples. Also, it would be interesting to explore grandparent-grandchild cohorts in order to examine whether there are cohort differences in regards to perceptions of intergenerational responsibility.

Although it was initially proposed that caregiving may influence the perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older and younger generations and perceptions of a generation of grandparents and grandchildren, no evidence of this was found in this thesis. There is no evidence that caregiving erodes or strengthens the potentially positive outcomes or emphasizes the age and functional differences of grandparent-grandchild relationships. Whether grandchildren witness a parent providing high or low levels of caregiving for their elderly grandparents does not influence perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older or younger generations. Grandparent perceptions of intergenerational responsibility and of a generation gap were also not influenced by receiving from their children and providing to their own parents high or low levels of caregiving.

This thesis also found that perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward either younger or older generations do not play a significant role in perceptions of a generation gap. Perhaps perceptions of a generation gap are based more on non-material or non-economic factors—such as, shared morality and religious beliefs—rather than on the material factors tested in this research. Non-material issues may play an even more important factor in perceptions of a generation gap between grandparents and grandchildren considering the often voluntary supportive and emotional role taken on by grandparents (Bengtson 2001; Glass and Huneycutt 2002; Aldous 1987). Further, the presence of the middle generation, who generally become the caregivers for elderly grandparents, may make economic factors less important in perceptions of a generation gap between grandparents and grandchildren. Future research should address the
influence of non-material factors on perceptions of a generation gap while taking into account witnessed caregiving.

The application of Bengtson and Kuypers' (1971) developmental stake hypothesis was met with a certain amount of success. Bengton and Kuypers (1971) theorized that the value gap perceived between generations is based on cohort and age differences, which are due to life-cycle, historical, and institutional differences. Although perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older and younger generations were not significant predictors of perceptions of a generation gap in the full model, there were significant differences between grandparents and grandchildren when these three perceptions were examine individually that would support the developmental stake hypothesis. It is possible that, despite the differences in perceptions of intergenerational responsibility, perceptions of a generation gap rely far more heavily on other factors or value systems.

Erikson (1968, 1997) posited that between young adult intimacy and the decline of old age, adulthood was positively characterized “primarily [by] the concern for establishing and guiding the next generation” (p. 138). This stage, known as generativity, helps to explain the psychosocial reasons that older generations care about younger generations and promote education and tradition (Erikson 1997). This would seem to apply directly to the findings of this thesis: grandparents both perceived a smaller gap between them and their grandchildren and perceived more responsibility toward younger generations. Grandparents were mostly concerned with the younger generations, as Erikson’s (1968, 1997) would describe. This theory, combined with research that has found that as generations age their values become more similar with the values of older generations, would seem to indicate that the grandchildren in this study will hold ideas very similar to their grandparents in terms of perceptions of intergenerational responsibility when they are their grandparents’ ages. Although the grandchildren in this study do perceive more responsibility towards younger generations, they also perceive a great deal of intergenerational responsibility toward older generations; according to Erikson’s (1968, 1997)
theory, grandchildren's perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older generations will decline as they themselves age while their need to care for and establish the younger generations will increase.

Generativity in adulthood, as described by Erickson (1968, 1997) would also seem to contradict the media reports of a generational divide concerning federally allocated monies. According to this theory, groups who lobby for matters concerning the elderly do not do so with the intent of completely blocking all monies from younger persons' needs. The elderly are at a place in their life where they feel the need to take care of younger generations; this would seem to be a point of agreement rather than conflict between older and younger groups.

Although the analyses provide only a preliminary examination of the influence of caregiving on the perceptions of grandparents and grandchildren due to the potential non-respondent bias of the middle generation, an important dimension of grandparent-grandchild relationships was examined. As the Baby Boomers begin to retire in 2011, it will be important to understand the relationship between younger and older generations. Compared to grandchildren, grandparents perceive more responsibility toward younger generations although perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward younger generations were higher overall than perceptions of intergenerational responsibility toward older generations for both grandparents and grandchildren. Grandchildren perceived moderate levels of intergenerational responsibility toward older generations while grandparents perceived less intergenerational responsibility toward their peers. Considering these results- that grandparents and grandchildren both perceive the responsibility to support younger generations and that both groups perceive responsibility toward elderly generations to a lesser extent- it would seem that the media debate concerning the distribution of federal monies is misaligned and that the concerns of both groups are closer than society may perceive.
REFERENCES


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**IRB #: 3921**
**Study:** "Generation Gap" by Intergenerational Responsibility and Contact
**Approval Date:** 28-Feb-2007

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research (IRB) has reviewed and approved the protocol for your study as Exempt as described in Title 45, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 46, Subsection 101(b). Approval is granted to conduct your study as described in your protocol.

Researchers who conduct studies involving human subjects have responsibilities as outlined in the attached document, *Responsibilities of Directors of Research Studies Involving Human Subjects.* (This document is also available at [http://www.unh.edu/osr/compliance/irb.html](http://www.unh.edu/osr/compliance/irb.html).) Please read this document carefully before commencing your work involving human subjects.

Upon completion of your study, please complete the enclosed pink Exempt Study Final Report form and return it to this office along with a report of your findings.

If you have questions or concerns about your study or this approval, please feel free to contact me at 603-862-2003 or Julie.simpson@unh.edu. Please refer to the IRB # above in all correspondence related to this study. The IRB wishes you success with your research.

For the IRB,

Julie F. Simpson
Manager

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