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Intergenerational Relations and Future Generations

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Edited by Andrzej Klimczuk



Intergenerational Relations and Future Generations - Theory, Empirics, and Policy

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The social sciences, as a form of scientific knowledge anchored on epistemological foundations, theories, and specific methodologies, both in their fundamental and applied dimensions, are paramount for understanding and, consequently, developing instruments that contribute to improving social and environmental living conditions. This Social Sciences book series, based on the concept of the social sciences as key elements in the promotion of scientific knowledge and its inherent consequences, has as its primary goal to be a space for the dissemination of relevant information on various objects of study, aimed at specialists, students, policymakers, and others interested in the challenges facing humanity. Thus, the aim is to promote scientific progress through the sound and rigorous dissemination of studies that, from the perspective of the social sciences, either through a specialised disciplinary approach or through interdisciplinary perspectives, foster a deeper understanding of the objects under analysis, clarifying the issues addressed and their implications.

Meet the Series Editor



Dr. Sandro Serpa is an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of the Azores (UAc), Portugal. His career in social sciences and education began at UAc in 2000. He earned his Ph.D. in Education, specializing in Sociology of Education, from UAc in 2013. He is also an integrated researcher at the Interdisciplinary Centre of Social Sciences of the Azores Centre (CICS. NOVA. UAçores). Dr. Serpa has demonstrated a strong commitment to higher education throughout his career. He has served in various positions at UAc, including Head of the Department of Sociology, Director of the Bachelor's in Social Work, Coordinator of the Scientific-Pedagogical Supervision Team for Social Work Internships, Member of the Pedagogical Council of the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences, and Member of the Quality Commission. Additionally, he held the position of Deputy Director of CICS. UAc. Currently, he serves as Senior Editor (Sociology Section) for Social Sciences & Humanities Open (Elsevier), among several other journals. He previously held the position of Senior Editor - Sociology Section for Cogent Social Sciences (Taylor & Francis) from 2020 to 2022. Dr. Serpa maintains a distinguished research profile, evidenced by over 400 publications in international journals, books, and other scientific outlets across a wide range of countries: Brazil, Canada, China, United Arab Emirates, Germany, India, Kazakhstan, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States of America. His research interests encompass Teaching Sociology, Sociology of Education, Sociology of Organisations, Organisational Culture, Scientific Communication, Digital Society, Digital Literacy, Society 5.0 and Sociology of Artificial Intelligence. Dr. Serpa emphasizes the importance of integrating academic knowledge with service to the university and society at large.

Meet the Volume Editor



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Preface

This volume, *Intergenerational Relations and Future Generations – Theory, Empirics, and Policy*, inspired by the recent United Nations *Declaration on Future Generations*, critically explores generational dynamics [1]. It focuses on the twin challenge of achieving the current Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and building pathways for fair development beyond 2030. This book brings together diverse social science perspectives and focus on the following topics: conceptualizing and theorizing intergenerational relations; social structures, demographics, and intergenerational dynamics; intergenerational equity, justice, and solidarity in policy and practice; environment, technology, and the future of intergenerational bonds; and governance, participation, and intergenerational dialogue for sustainable futures [2, 3, 4, 5].

The chapters in this collection provide both research insights and practical recommendations, spanning disciplines such as critical studies, demography, economics, ethnography, management, social policy, and sociology. The presented volume comprises five chapters by eight authors from Germany, Iran, Poland, South Korea, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

The chapters comprising this volume begin with a brief introduction to contemporary studies on intergenerational relations. It shows a transition from family-centric microsociology to a global public policy focused on the “governance of time” of current and future generations. Also, the introduction shows that the Anthropocene’s “polycrisis” makes this theoretical shift even more important and, in fact, institutionalised by the recent work of the United Nations, because it underlines not only voices of already living subjects, but also the “voiceless unborn.”

The next topic undertaken in this volume is the exploration of the mechanisms of human development and economic mobility. Authors examine the nature-versus-nurture debate through a quantitative lens, analyzing how parental skills and investments, both in terms of time and parenting style, shape their children’s cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes. Using longitudinal data, the research presented shows the persistence of skills across generations that influence future economic success.

Expanding the scope to societal structures, the focus shifts to the challenge of population aging. The presented discussion centers on innovative residential solutions that bridge the gap between age groups. By finding the enablers and barriers to creating supportive intergenerational living arrangements, contributors provide recommendations for policymakers. The study shows that shared housing is not merely a logistical necessity but also a factor of social equity and sustainable community development.

The subsequent study presented in this volume underlines legal frameworks and cultural transformation in South Korea. This analysis is dismantling a patriarchal

household registration system that long defined family lineage through male heirs. The research highlights the interplay between modern democratic values and traditional Confucian ethics, illustrating how legal reforms can serve as both a mirror of societal change and a source of deep intergenerational conflict, especially regarding gender equality.

Finally, this edited book concludes with an ethnographic study of material culture within the diaspora. Focusing on Ghanaian immigrant families in Germany, the selected research investigates the logistical and symbolic processes involved in getting traditional textiles from the homeland. The study reveals that the physical transfer of wax prints and kente cloth serves as a tangible link between parents and children and a practical solution for preserving cultural identity.

This book is a valuable resource for academics and professionals focused on intergenerational theories, solutions, projects, and programs. It offers evidence-based insights and recommendations, serving as an essential resource for academics, policymakers, students, and practitioners seeking to understand and address contemporary intergenerational challenges.

I would personally like to thank every author for their contribution to this volume. We took a small step to fill selected research gaps in the field of intergenerational studies. I would also like to thank Maja Bozicevic and Dajana Pemac Polegubic of IntechOpen, who, through excellent organizational skills, supported the editorial and publication process.

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Introductory Chapter: Intergenerational Relations and Future Generations

Andrzej Klimczuk

1. Theoretical foundations and ontological challenges

Intergenerational relations are the interdisciplinary study of interactions, obligations, and resource exchanges between distinct temporal cohorts. Traditionally, the etymological roots of this discipline are traced to microsociology, focusing on diverse configurations of the family. Classic studies focus on topics such as intergenerational solidarity, caregiving dynamics, and inheritance within kinship networks [1, 2].

However, contemporary interrelated challenges, described as “polycrisis,” are driving the discipline toward a fundamental redefinition. This is especially evident in the context of the “Anthropocene”-related discourse, which describes the current geological age during which human activity is deeply changing the climate and the environment of our planet. Consequently, studies on intergenerational relations are increasingly highlighting the “governance of time,” that is, the analysis of how the political, economic, and ecological decisions of the present generations constrain or enable the ontological possibilities of future generations [3]. Having said that, in the first decades of the twenty-first century, we are experiencing not only theoretical but also practical implications of two distinctive concepts. The first is “intragenerational equity,” which concerns justice or fairness among contemporaries, for example, between the people living in the Global North and Global South. The second notion is “intergenerational equity,” which addresses the vertical distribution of rights, risks, and resources across “deep time” [4]. This second dimension introduces the idea of the “intergenerational multiplier effect.” In simple terms: actions taken today – particularly regarding climate change, economic debt, and technology – do not merely persist but compound and create disproportionate impacts for downstream populations [5].

There is another level of complexity in the field’s definitional boundaries. In recent years, we noticed a critical theoretical evolution focused on the decoupling of “youth” from “future generations.” While for some scholars and practitioners these notions are synonymous, this is no longer the case from the perspective of social policy, which underlines distinct ontological categories with diverging interests. “Youth” are living subjects with immediate needs such as education, employment, and political agency; they are the generation “incoming” in the short-term period. “Future generations,” by contrast, are defined as “those who do not yet exist.” Thus, the focus is shifted to a long-term perspective for those who have no agency, no voice, and no capacity to consent [6]. This distinction is crucial for resolving the

philosophical “non-identity problem” articulated by Derek Parfit, which challenges the logical possibility of harming specific future individuals whose very existence depends on the timing of present actions [7]. Taking these challenges into account, contemporary studies on intergenerational relations have moved toward ideas such as “threshold conceptions” and “impersonal principles,” which define intergenerational justice not as the preservation of specific identities, but as the maintenance of a “sufficientarian threshold” of planetary habitability and the protection of the ecological commons [8, 9].

2. Institutionalizing the rights of future generations: Toward a new governance framework

The institutionalization of these concepts has been most visibly advanced through the recent “temporal turn” in international law and multilateral governance, led by the United Nations (UN). The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic was “a wake-up call” that influenced the Secretary-General’s “Our Common Agenda” (2021) report, which diagnosed a global “crisis of long-termism” and argued that the multilateral system was structurally incapable of addressing “long problems” due to the short-term cycles of politics [10]. This observation was subsequently operationalized through specific policy briefs dedicated to future generations, laying the groundwork for the Summit of the Future (2024) [11]. This summit led to the announcement of the “Pact for the Future” and its annexed “Declaration on Future Generations” (DFG). The DFG represents the first comprehensive international instrument dedicated to safeguarding the needs and interests of future generations, formally codifying the definition of future generations as “all those generations that do not yet exist, and who will inherit this planet” [12]. This document marks a shift from vague rhetorical commitments to sustainable development to a specific, actionable governance framework.

The DFG establishes a new institutional framework for intergenerational relations that goes beyond abstract philosophy. It mandates the appointment of a UN Special Envoy for Future Generations, a role designed not as a global police officer but as a “norm entrepreneur” and “system weaver.” This Envoy will function as an “ombudsperson for the unborn,” tasked with giving a voice to future generations and advocating for long-term interests across the UN’s three pillars of peace, development, and human rights [13]. Furthermore, the “Pact for the Future” may lead to organizing future Forums on Future Generations, recurring high-level plenary meetings. This mechanism may serve as a “forcing function” for accountability, requiring member states to report on their progress in upholding intergenerational equity, thereby creating a more regular review of related challenges. Moreover, the UN documents collectively try to construct a “democracy of the long term,” confirming the use of strategic foresight and “anticipatory decision-making” as standard competencies of global governance rather than niche exercises [14, 15].

3. Emerging directions for research

Research into intergenerational relations is consequently undergoing a transformation and opening several potential directions for future-oriented studies.

First, it is noticeable that theoretical inquiries are moving from the study of “solidarity” to the analysis of “power.” Scholars are increasingly using conflict theory to analyze “intergenerational tyranny,” in which the living exercise arbitrary power over the ecological carrying capacity of future generations. Such research requires innovative sociological and economic metrics. For example, while the Gini coefficient measures inequality among the living, scholars are calling for “intertemporal Gini coefficients” to model inequality between current and future cohorts.

Second, the field of intergenerational relations is promoting “anticipatory sociology.” This methodological shift moves away from retrospective empirical analysis toward speculative research methods and tools that have been used so far, for example, in future studies and design research. Examples of such approaches include participatory futures, scenario planning, and backcasting. The aim is to study the “imagined future” as a social fact that influences present behavior and to analyze how distinct societies construct and colonize their futures [14].

Third, a critical area for future research lies in the “political economy of time,” particularly the divergence between the Global North and the Global South. The negotiations surrounding the DFG revealed deep inequalities: while the Global North focused on existential risks such as climate change and the development of artificial intelligence, the Global South (represented by the G77) emphasized the “right to development” as the primary means of advancing intergenerational justice. Thus, future research must investigate how intergenerational equity is operationalized in development contexts – specifically, whether it is used as a tool for “eco-conditionality” to restrict industrialization in developing nations, or whether it can facilitate a just and sustainable transition.

Fourth, scholars can study the “proxy representation” mechanisms, such as the UN Special Envoy for Future Generations. Research is needed to understand whose values these guardians of the future project and whether they can effectively represent the interests of the unborn without overrepresenting the political biases of the present.

Finally, legal scholars can explore the intersection of the DFG’s “soft law” commitments with “hard law,” especially in the context of responding to climate change. For example, it is possible to track how courts use these international declarations to establish a positive state obligation to protect the “intertemporal guarantee of freedom” [9, 16].

In summary, the study of intergenerational relations has evolved into an applied science of “deep time.” It combines the ethical frameworks of philosophy, the formal mechanisms of international law, and the speculative methodologies of foresight to address the “temporal asymmetry” of the Anthropocene. As the “Declaration on Future Generations” moves from text to implementation, the discipline can provide the essential vocabulary and analytical tools needed to develop a social contract that is better suited to the future – in other words, ensuring that it encompasses not just the living, but the “silent majority” of those yet to be born.

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The Nature versus Nurture of Intergenerational Mobility: A Focused Study on the Impact of Parental Skills and Investments on Children's Economic Outcomes

Christa Marr

Abstract

This chapter explores the role of parental investment in shaping child outcomes. One way to measure parental influence is through intergenerational mobility. While traditional measures of mobility focus on the persistence of income across generations, recent work extends the analysis to education, cognitive skills, and non-cognitive traits. Findings reveal substantial persistence of skills across generations and heterogeneity in mobility outcomes depending on parental income levels, gender, and family environments. This work seeks to assess the impact of parental investments on child outcomes, including time and parenting style, to unveil the importance of quality versus magnitude of investments at different stages of childhood development by measuring the direct impact of parents' skills on children's skills (nature) and the impact of parental investments on children's outcomes (nurture). This chapter includes baseline measurements to contextualize the results using the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY) and preliminarily tests the nature versus nurture arguments.

Keywords: parental investment, intergenerational mobility, cognitive and non-cognitive skill formation, nature versus nurture, National Longitudinal Survey of the Youth (NLSY), childhood development, intergenerational elasticity

1. Introduction

Foundational work beginning with Becker [1], and Becker and Tomes [2, 3] establishes the importance of incorporating both time and financial resources into the household production function, highlighting the long-term effects of parental investments on children's human capital. Traditionally, this is measured as an elasticity of the child's and parents' income, which can be interpreted as the persistence of income across generations ([4], 1999).

Recent work extends the analysis to the intergenerational persistence of education, cognitive skills, and non-cognitive traits [5]. These measures estimate the elasticity between children's and parents' years of schooling, cognitive scores, and non-cognitive scores (as captured by personality tests). Findings reveal both substantial persistence across generations and heterogeneity in mobility outcomes depending on parental income levels, gender, and family environments [6, 7].

However, children's skills and subsequent economic outcomes are not only determined by parents' skills but also by parental investments, among other factors. [8], for instance, show that parental inputs, such as parenting style, intermediate the transmission of skills from one generation to the next. [9] suggest time investments may complement or substitute for goods investments. They argue that parents may spend time with their children to assess their abilities (and hence their potential return on investment) more accurately. Taken together, there's evidence that parents' genetic transmission and choices made in raising offspring both matter in their children's outcomes.

Building on this framework, research has emphasized the impact of timing, type, and quality of parental inputs on child outcomes. Studies such as [10–12] underscore the especially high returns to early childhood investments, while those by Del Brono et al. [11], and [13] show that how time is spent, particularly in cognitively stimulating activities, matters as much as the quantity of time invested. In addition, emerging evidence highlights the influence of parenting style as an endogenous determinant of child outcomes [8, 14]. This research also explores heterogeneous impacts based on parent background.

Marr [15] focuses on how *maternal* investments impact children's skills and economic outcomes. Using maternal linkage in the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY) dataset, the paper explores how maternal inputs impact children's cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes directly and indirectly. Marr uses a cumulative value-added (CVA) model adopted from [16] to show that the more time a mother spends with her child during early childhood and school years (ages 3–9), the higher the child's cognitive and non-cognitive scores. The impact of maternal time on cognitive skills is larger than on non-cognitive skills (0.12–0.17). The study finds evidence of a direct transmission of skills between generations but does not find that maternal time investments impact the direct channel. While this is not a test of the nature versus nurture model, the study explores the formation of the child's skills and the impact of the parent in skill development.

This chapter seeks to identify mechanisms through which intergenerational mobility is determined, including parents' direct transmission of income and skills to their children (nature) versus the indirect impact of parents on children's skills through money and time spent (nurture). The next section reviews literature on intergenerational persistence of skills and defines the nature and nurture models. Section III provides baseline estimates of intergenerational income elasticities. Section IV explores the nature argument based on the direct transmission of skills between parents and their children. Section V tests the nurture argument and assesses the impact of parental investments, including time and income, on child outcomes. Section VI discusses the two models and concludes.

2. Nature versus nurture argument

Past work has evaluated the intergenerational persistence of income, education, and skills between parents and their children. From this literature, researchers have sought to reveal mechanisms through which the transmission strengthens versus weakens. The nature argument emphasizes the direct effect of parents' cognitive and non-cognitive abilities on those of their children.

Rather than estimating income elasticities between generations, this model assesses how strongly parental skills predict child skills. Early work, such as studies by Anger and Heineck [17], Gronqvist [18], and Anger [19], demonstrates that both genetics (or latent ability) and parental investment contribute to children's cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes. Many works, including studies by Branden et al. [6], and Kourtellos et al. [7], find a strong relationship between parent and child cognitive scores. Hanushek et al. [20] are able to identify a causal impact of parents' math and language skills on their children's respective skills using a unique dataset that controls for within-family and between-subject variation.

However, there is increasing evidence for the direct transmission of non-cognitive skills as well. For example, Gronqvist et al. [18] shows that the intergenerational transmission of non-cognitive traits is almost as strong as that of cognitive traits in Swedish data. This is of particular importance as recent works, such as Eden et al. (2022), find a growing return to non-cognitive abilities in the labor market. Kroger et al. [21] find an important impact of non-cognitive skills on mobility with respect to education and socioeconomic outcomes. Further, Gil-Hernández [22] explores cognitive and non-cognitive skills as related goods and finds a high substitutability effect of non-cognitive skills for cognitive skills among children from affluent backgrounds. In other words, a child's highly developed non-cognitive skills, such as conscientiousness, lead to better economic outcomes in spite of low cognitive skills for children from high-income households only.

On the other side, the nurture argument contends that socioeconomic background, parenting behavior, time investment, educational opportunities, neighborhood effects, and family environment significantly shape children's skills and economic outcomes. In other words, nurture moderates, amplifies, or compensates for inherited ability.

Evidence suggests that while genetic endowments play a role in transmitting skills, their full expression depends on the richness of the child's environment [23]. Black and Devereux [5] conclude that "given that cognitive skills are influenced by both genetic and environmental factors and are correlated with many other family background characteristics, no clear causal mechanisms have been uncovered by this literature." However, past studies have been able to assess birth versus adopted children in the same home. Studies such as [24] do find both nature and nurture important for child outcomes, even when separating the genetic component from the parental inputs alone.

Taken together, this literature highlights the complex interactions between biological inheritance, family environments, and parental choices. By synthesizing these strands, the chapter underscores the pivotal role of parental investments – especially time and style of engagement – in shaping children's long-term economic trajectories and opportunities for upward mobility.

This chapter estimates models of both the nature and nurture arguments. I test the nature model by estimating the direct transmission of skills between the parent

and child for both cognitive and non-cognitive scores. I test the strength of the nurture argument by (1) assessing the impact of socioeconomic background on children's skills, (2) measuring the impact of income on the direct transmission of skills, and (3) estimating the impact of parental time on children's skills.

Both "nature" (parents' skills) and "nurture" (parental investments) jointly shape intergenerational mobility outcomes. Using a sample of mothers and their children from the NLSY, I find evidence for both arguments; results suggest that nature and nurture are deeply intertwined in intergenerational transmission. Parental ability (both cognitive and non-cognitive) has a measurable, robust direct effect on children's outcomes. Similarly, the scope, type, and timing of parental and societal investments, the socioeconomic background, and environmental inputs mediate and moderate the impact of genetics, demonstrating the role of a child's nurtured upbringing in determining outcomes.

3. Baseline: Intergenerational income persistence

Intergenerational income elasticities have been measured at length in the literature on income inequality in the United States and across the world. The consensus is that the intergenerational income persistence between fathers and their sons is about 0.40 in the United States (Solon, 1999). Typically, the estimates are calculated as intergenerational income elasticities using the child's and parents' permanent income measures.

$$\log(Y_1) = \alpha + \beta \log(Y_o) + e \quad (1)$$

The coefficient, β , captures the intergenerational income persistence of the percent of income that is predetermined and theoretically not based on the child's skill or effort. This is a static model, assessing the permanent income of parents and children as compared to studies such as Nybom and Stuhler [25], who measure a dynamic model to account for structural changes.

Earlier literature on intergenerational income mobility has primarily focused on the elasticity between fathers and sons [26, 27]. More recent studies, however, incorporate maternal income in measuring intergenerational income elasticity [28–30]. In this study, I measure family income as a composite of both maternal and paternal earnings and measure elasticities separately for sons and daughters.

In the baseline estimates, I find an elasticity of 0.39 between sons and their parents (**Table 1**, Column 1) and 0.31 between daughters and their parents (Column 3). These results remain robust when controlling for the ages of both children and mothers. The elasticities are consistent with prior work, such as [31], who report an intergenerational income elasticity of 0.33 using the NLSY79 cohort. [5] offer a very detailed review of intergenerational mobility estimates for both sons and daughters and settle on a consensus of the intergenerational income elasticity (IGE) of about 0.4 for daughters, while also citing past works such as Jäntti et al. (2006), who determine a range of 0.181–0.385 for daughters in the United States.

However, these estimates are subject to change based on the population of interest. Not only do they vary widely across countries (Denmark, for instance, boasts an IGE of 0.071 in Jäntti et al.'s work) but also based on socioeconomic

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Parent Income (logged)	0.395*** (23.33)	0.368*** (14.39)	0.417*** (18.58)
Child Age	0.851*** (8.41)	0.916*** (6.87)	0.748*** (4.99)
Child Age Squared	-0.0134*** (-7.86)	-0.0145*** (-6.49)	-0.0116*** (-4.60)
Mother Age	-0.0631 (-0.87)	-0.196** (-2.12)	0.104 (0.93)
Mother Age Squared	0.000930 (0.90)	0.00285** (2.20)	-0.00149 (-0.92)
Constant	-6.377*** (-3.35)	-4.719* (-1.88)	-7.998*** (-2.83)
N	6,095	2,966	3,129
	Full Sample	Sons	Daughters

t-statistics in parentheses [$p < 0.001$, ***; $p < 0.05$, **; $p < 0.01$, *]. The dependent variable is logged child income. Row headers are labeled as the independent variable used in the regression. Age controls and their squares are included in the estimation but not reported. All variables are standardized. Reported coefficients are measured as intergenerational elasticities of income. Standard errors are robust. Data adopted from Marr [15].

Table 1.
Intergenerational income elasticity baseline measurement.

background within a country. Using the NLSY cohorts, **Figure 1** shows that intergenerational elasticity estimates over the parental income distribution vary in a bell-shaped pattern, with children from middle-income households exhibiting lower mobility compared to those from lower- or higher-income families. As in studies by Kourtellos et al. [7], and Durlauf and Kourtellos [32], refer to these as status traps.

These results suggest a fair amount of income persistence between generations and heterogeneity across socioeconomic backgrounds, but provide little insight into why incomes remain static. Is it purely due to inheritance, or are there other intermediaries that make wealthier parents raise wealthier children? In the next sections, we seek to answer this by testing versions of the nature and nurture models.

The figure shows the results of a varying coefficient model where IGM [β from Eq. 1] changes based on the parents' income. The green dotted line represents the average estimate of intergenerational income elasticity from the baseline equation. Figure taken from Kourtellos et al. [7].

4. Nature model: Direct transmission of skills

In this chapter, the nature model measures the direct transmission mechanism through which parents' skills impact children's skills. I use two cohorts of data from the NLSY. First, I use a dataset that tracks individuals starting in 1979 (NLSY79) as

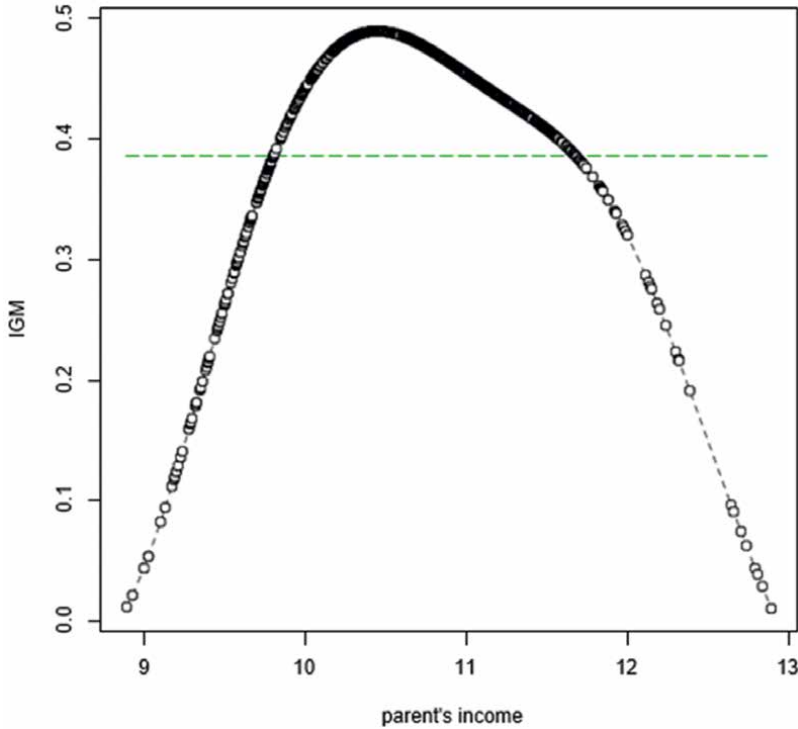


Figure 1.
Intergenerational income elasticity over parental income distribution.

well as a dataset that surveys their children born to NLSY79 mothers in the NLSY79YA dataset. This dataset collects a wide variety of information over time for each cohort and includes cognitive test scores and non-cognitive test scores. While some information is available on both mothers and fathers of the NLSY79YA cohort (e.g., income), cognitive and non-cognitive scores are only available for mothers. Therefore, the nature model is primarily testing the direct transmission of abilities between mothers and their children. Previous research, such as Grönqvist et al. (2009), finds that cognitive skills are more strongly transmitted through mothers than fathers, supporting the validity of this maternal-focused analysis.

4.1 Intergenerational transmission of cognitive skills

I start by estimating the intergenerational transmission of cognitive scores in **Table 2**. I use the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) composite scores as a measure of cognitive ability for mothers. The AFQT score is a percentile score based on performance on four tests of math and reading. The measurement is assessed as a comparison to other test takers in the same period. This AFQT is consistently used in the literature as a cognitive measure in works by Kourtellis et al. [7], Durlauf and Kourtellis [32], and Cunha et al. [33].

Children's cognitive skills are measured using Peabody Individual Achievement Test (PIAT) scores, as in a multitude of works in this area, including [34], [12–35]. The PIAT tests assess a child's vocabulary, reading comprehension, and reading

	(1) PPVT Vocabulary	(2) PIAT Math	(3) PIAT Reading Recognition	(4) PIAT Reading Comprehension
AFQT	0.260*** (21.48)	0.309*** (25.93)	0.317*** (27.04)	0.318*** (26.76)
Constant	0.0166 (1.34)	0.0173 (1.42)	0.0141 (1.15)	0.0163 (1.34)
N	5,857	5857	5857	5857

t-statistics in parentheses [$p < 0.001$, ***; $p < 0.05$, **; $p < 0.05$, *]. Column headers are labeled with the dependent variable used in each regression, while row headers are labeled as the independent variable used in the regression. Age controls and their squares are included in the estimation but not reported. All variables are standardized. Reported coefficients are measured as intergenerational elasticities of cognitive skills. Standard errors are robust. Data adapted from Marr [15].

Table 2.

Intergenerational transmission of cognitive skills.

recognition, as well as his or her math skills. Tests are scored as a percentile rank and are designed such that higher scores correlate to higher academic skills and ages alike.

Table 2 shows a positive and significant transmission of cognitive skills between mothers and children. Each of the four columns, measuring the impact of mother's AFQT score on PIAT subject tests, is positive and significant. Looking at column 4, for instance, a one standard deviation increase in mother's AFQT score leads to a 0.318 standard deviation increase in her son or daughter's PIAT Reading Comprehension score. There is no statistical difference between the impact of mother's cognitive scores on sons versus daughters' scores. The full sample is used in the estimation for **Table 2** results.

Studies by Kourtellos et al. [7], use the NLSY dataset to find the intergenerational transmission of cognitive skills estimates in a similar range to **Table 2**. In their study, the authors measure the intergenerational elasticity of cognitive abilities at around 0.34 using the PPVT Vocabulary Test and 0.24 using the PIAT Math Test. The mother's AFQT score is used for the mother's cognitive score in both cases. These results are also in line with [36], who measure intergenerational elasticities of cognitive skills between fathers and sons at 0.35 using Swedish data. Hanushek et al. [20] also find a positive and significant impact of parent's cognitive skills on children's cognitive skills, but of lower magnitude. However, their methodology allows them to assert a causal connection.

Our results suggest that the strongest transmission channel is through reading. However, the AFQT is a composite score based on nine subject tests in the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB). The scores are decomposed and available in the NLSY. Therefore, to more directly test intergenerational transmission of cognitive abilities, we assess the elasticity by subject. Results are in **Table 3**.

Table 3 shows the intergenerational persistence of cognitive skills using ASVAB scores. The impact of a mother's score on a child's cognitive abilities is stronger when using subject-based tests compared to the composite AFQT score. Reading recognition continues to have a large impact on a child's reading scores. A one standard deviation increase in a mother's word knowledge leads to a 0.45 standard deviation increase in the child's reading recognition. Similarly, mothers who score

	(1) PIAT Math	(2) PIAT Math	(3) PIAT Reading Recognition	(4) PIAT Reading Comprehension
ASVAB Math	0.417*** (23.95)			
ASVAB Arithmetic Reasoning		0.414*** (22.80)		
ASVAB Word Knowledge			0.454*** (25.75)	
ASVAB Paragraph Comprehension				0.397*** (21.10)
Constant	-0.0630*** (-4.79)	-0.0629*** (-4.79)	-0.0740*** (-5.71)	-0.0614*** (-4.71)
N	5,733	5,741	5,728	5,719

t-statistics in parentheses [$p < 0.001$, ***; $p < 0.05$, **; $p < 0.01$, *]. Column headers are labeled with the dependent variable used in each regression, while row headers are labeled as the independent variable used in the regression. Age controls and their squares are included in the estimation but are not reported. All variables are standardized. Reported coefficients are measured as intergenerational elasticities of cognitive skills. Standard errors are robust. Data adapted from Marr [15].

Table 3.
Intergenerational transmission of math and reading (ASVAB).

higher on the arithmetic reasoning test raise children with higher PIAT math scores. Once again, there is no statistical difference in the impact of a mother's cognitive skills on her son's versus her daughter's skills.

Similarly, Anger and Heineck [17] find that the intergenerational persistence of cognitive skills is 0.44–0.51. Focusing specifically on the intergenerational persistence between mothers and their children, the elasticity measure falls to 0.22 to 0.28. The authors use Speed and Word Fluency tests from the German Socioeconomic Panel Study to measure intergenerational persistence of cognitive abilities. The authors similarly seek to test a nature versus nurture model and use the Speed test (coding speed) to capture innate ability (nature), while the Word Fluency test measures “knowledge and skills acquired in the past” (nurture). To this end, our results of the direct transmission of Word Knowledge (**Table 3**, Column 3) and Paragraph Comprehension (Column 4) are evidence of the nurture model.

The authors similarly find no statistical distinction between the impact of a mother's scores on a son's versus a daughter's cognitive abilities, yet they do find a higher intergenerational persistence in word fluency than in the speed test. Once again, there is no statistical difference in the impact of a mother's cognitive skills on her son's versus her daughter's skills in my sample.

Our study also examines the intergenerational elasticity of math scores. The results show that both the ASVAB Math and Arithmetic Reasoning tests are strong indicators of the child's future performance on PIAT Math tests. The results are significant at the one percent level and show that a one standard deviation increase in the mother's ASVAB Math (Arithmetic Reasoning) score leads to a 0.41 increase in

her child's PIAT Math score. These results do not present a causal mechanism as in Nybom and Stuhler [25], as they do not account for unobservables such as the lag effect of rising skills on mobility.

To fully test the nature model, this chapter also considers the direct transmission of non-cognitive skills. Results and discussion follow in the next subsection.

4.2 Intergenerational transmission of non-cognitive skills

Parents play a central role in shaping their children's economic success, not only through the transmission of cognitive ability but also through the inheritance of non-cognitive traits. While higher cognitive ability is associated with improved labor market outcomes – for instance, parents with greater cognitive skills tend to raise children with similar advantages [17] – non-cognitive traits such as perseverance, self-control, sociability, and emotional stability are also critical.

Past work establishes a clear connection between parents' and children's non-cognitive skills. First, there is a strong tie between economic outcomes and personality traits. Gil-Fletcher and Wolfe [37], for instance, argue that non-cognitive skills are a "critical factor in predicting a range of important adult outcomes." Gil Hernández [22] shows a strong role of conscientiousness and effort in economic outcomes. Secondly, the literature establishes a clear connection between parent-child personality traits. [38] show that non-cognitive genetic effects explain a large share of genetic variation in education. Anger (2017) tests the validity of non-cognitive skill transmission as a genetic component by using sibling correlations. He finds that sibling correlations in non-cognitive skills range from 0.22 to 0.46, suggesting there is a strong direct transfer, albeit less than the cognitive correlation (0.50).

To test the non-cognitive nature model, I use Rosenberg Self-Esteem scores and Pearlin Mastery Scores for both the mother and the child. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem test is comprised of 10 questions ranked on a Likert scale. A higher value for this measure indicates higher self-esteem. The Pearlin Mastery Score is based on a seven-question test measured on a Likert scale. Higher values of the Pearlin score indicate a stronger locus of control. These scores are widely used in past work (i.e., 12, 33, 32). **Table 4** presents the results of the non-cognitive variation of the nature model.

The results show a weaker transmission of non-cognitive skills between mothers and children, albeit still significant. For the full sample (**Table 4**, Columns 1 and 2), an increase in a mother's non-cognitive abilities by one standard deviation increases her child's self-esteem by 0.06 standard deviations and internal locus of control by 0.07.

It is commonplace in the literature to find a lesser impact for non-cognitive versus cognitive skills. [39] use the decomposition modeling approach, where the product of the effect of parental income on ability and ability on child income shows how much of the intergenerational income coefficient is explainable through cognitive and non-cognitive abilities. [40] use the British Cohort Study and National Child Development Survey and find that non-cognitive skills can explain 19% of intergenerational income persistence, while cognitive abilities can explain 27%. [41, 42] also find a weaker intergenerational persistence of non-cognitive abilities. The elasticity falls to 0.21 for non-cognitive skills from 0.35 for cognitive skills.

	(1) Rosenberg Self- Esteem	(2) Pearlin Locus of Control	(3) Rosenberg Self- Esteem	(4) Rosenberg Self- Esteem	(5) Pearlin Locus of Control	(6) Pearlin Locus of Control
Mother Rosenberg Self- Esteem	0.0596***		0.0432***	0.0745***		
	(8.75)		(4.46)	(7.80)		
Mother Pearlin Locus of Control		0.0669***			0.0640***	0.0695***
		(8.14)			(5.36)	(6.13)
Constant	0.287***	0.284***	0.299***	0.277***	0.296***	0.273***
	(43.82)	(43.76)	(32.00)	(30.08)	(31.28)	(30.61)
N	5,508	5,413	2,677	2,831	2,629	2,784
	Full Sample	Full Sample	Sons	Daughters	Sons	Daughters

t-statistics in parentheses [$p < 0.001$, ***; $p < 0.05$, **; $p < 0.01$, *]. Column headers are labeled with the dependent variable used in each regression, while row headers are labeled as the independent variable used in the regression. Age controls and their squares are included in the estimation but not reported. All variables are standardized. Reported coefficients are measured as intergenerational elasticities of non-cognitive skills. Standard errors are robust. Data adapted from Marr [15].

Table 4.
Intergenerational transmission of non-cognitive skills.

When we look at children by gender, results show a stronger impact of a mother's personality traits on her daughter's non-cognitive skills compared to her son. (Table 4, Columns 3–6). A mother's self-esteem has a statistically different impact on daughters' versus sons' self-esteem and the largest impact of all non-cognitive abilities (Column 4).

Kourtellos et al. [7] also show the importance of the impact of a mother on her child. The authors demonstrate that the intergenerational persistence of cognitive skills is strongest between mothers and daughters, particularly in lower-middle-income households. The heterogeneity raises the question of whether there are other determinants, such as maternal time investment or parenting style, that affect the elasticity of skills between parents and their children. This is of particular interest between mothers and daughters, as their persistence of skills is strongest.

The results suggest a clear role of the nature model – or direct transmission of parents' skills – on children's skills. The model provides evidence that smarter parents raise smarter children, but it fails to decompose the academic components into genetic versus learned skills. One cannot estimate the specific genetic component in these exercises. The question remains: is a child better at math because his or her mom is a proficient teacher of her own skills, or is there truly a direct genetic transmission?

In the next section, I estimate the nature model – a more nuanced model that accounts for the role of parental time and monetary investments in developing children's skills and shaping their economic outcomes.

	(1) PIAT Math	(2) PIAT Reading Recognition	(3) PIAT Reading Comprehension	(4) Rosenberg Self- Esteem	(5) Pearlin Locus of Control
AFQT	0.247*** (16.79)	0.241*** (16.67)	0.249*** (16.95)		
Parent's Income	0.149*** (7.65)	0.183*** (9.62)	0.168*** (8.73)	0.00547 (0.63)	0.0372*** (4.43)
Mother Self- Esteem				0.0583*** (8.18)	
Mother Locus of Control					0.0568*** (6.67)
Constant	-1.586*** (-7.54)	-1.951*** (-9.52)	-1.783*** (-8.62)	0.229** (2.45)	-0.114 (-1.26)
N	5857	5857	5857	5508	5413

t-statistics in parentheses [$p < 0.001$, ***; $p < 0.05$, **; $p < 0.01$, *]. Column headers are labeled with the dependent variable used in each regression, while row headers are labeled as the independent variable used in the regression. Age controls and their squares are included in the estimation but not reported. All variables are standardized. Reported coefficients are measured as intergenerational elasticities of cognitive skills and non-cognitive skills, as well as the impact of socioeconomic background on skills. Standard errors are robust. Data adapted from Marr [15].

Table 5.
Impact of parental income on child skills.

5. Nurture model: Return to parental inputs

As posed in Section IV, what is the mechanism that connects parents' and children's skills? Previous studies offer an alternative association between parental income and children's abilities. I estimate the nurture model in three parts. I will present the first two arguments in this section. To begin, I explore the impact of parental income on children's skills while controlling for parent's skills (**Table 5**). Then, I estimate a model of children's income to determine not only intergenerational income elasticity and labor market returns to skills but also the interaction between socioeconomic background and skills (**Table 6**).

Table 5 shows the regression results assessing the impact of parental income on children's skills after accounting for the intergenerational persistence of cognitive skills. Columns 1 through 3 and 5 show that parental income positively impacts skills. Higher parental income leads to higher cognitive skills. A one percent increase in parents' income leads to a 0.15–0.18 standard deviation increase in cognitive scores. This is in line with past work, which suggests that higher income affords better education, enrichment activities, and/or tutoring. For instance, Dahl and Lochner [25] recognize a vast body of literature while estimating that a \$1,000 increase in income for families of low socioeconomic status increases children's cognitive scores by 2.1%.

There is still a significant direct transmission mechanism for cognitive skills, though the impact falls from 0.3 (**Table 2**, Columns 2–4) to 0.25 (**Table 5**,

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Parent's Income	0.283*** (15.57)	0.357*** (18.39)	0.367*** (17.49)	0.444*** (22.23)	0.427*** (21.30)	0.354*** (17.47)
PIAT Math	0.228*** (6.60)		2.362*** (6.73)			
PIAT Reading Recognition	0.0929*** (3.66)	1.693*** (6.39)				
PIAT Reading Comprehension	0.134*** (4.17)					2.244*** (7.26)
Parent's Income*Math			-0.186*** (-5.76)			
Parent's Income*Reading Recognition		-0.133*** (-5.40)				
Parent's Income * Reading Comprehension						-0.177*** (-6.18)
Rosenberg Self-Esteem				1.837*** (4.89)		
Parent's Income * Self-Esteem				-0.141*** (-4.05)		
Pearlin Locus of Control					1.791*** (4.62)	
Parents' Income * Locus of Control					-0.130*** (-3.63)	
Constant	-4.380* (-1.71)	-3.374 (-1.36)	-3.861 (-1.52)	-4.096* (-1.86)	-3.619 (-1.62)	-5.184** (-2.07)
N	5,475	5508		5,514	5,515	5,493

t-statistics in parentheses [$p < 0.001$, ***; $p < 0.05$, **; $p < 0.01$, *]. Logged child income is the dependent variable used in each regression, while row headers are labeled as the independent variables used in the regression. Age controls and their squares are included in the estimation but are not reported. All variables are standardized. Reported coefficients are measured as intergenerational elasticities of income, cognitive skills, and non-cognitive skills. The labor market return to skills is also assessed. Standard errors are robust. Data adapted from Marr [15].

Table 6.
Impact of abilities and parental income on children's income and mobility.

Columns 1–3). These results suggest that parental monetary investments and skills are substitutable to some degree.

Non-cognitive skills are also shown to be formed, in part, by parental income. Zumbuehl et al. [43], for instance, use the Big Five Personality Traits from the German Socio-Economic Panel to show that parental investments matter in shaping attitudes and personality types. **Table 5** shows that children from more affluent economic backgrounds also have a higher locus of control, inasmuch as they believe

their future is within their own control (Column 5). This accords with evidence previously cited in Fletcher and Wolfe [37], who find that children from higher-income families have higher non cognitive scores. Specifically, they estimate that a one standard deviation increase in income leads to a 0.35 standard deviation increase in self-control. Our results do not show universal support for the impact of income on non-cognitive scores, as higher socioeconomic background does not appear to impact self-esteem (Column 4).

Nordin and Rooth (2011)[44] contend that genetic and learned effects are inherently intertwined and, therefore, difficult to disentangle, as individual development reflects the interaction of inherited traits and environmental influences. For this reason, they argue that policy-relevant empirical analysis should focus on how intergenerational mobility varies conditional on cognitive and non-cognitive abilities. Such an approach abstracts from the precise formation of these skills and instead highlights populations that may be particularly vulnerable. Their findings indicate, for example, that children of average cognitive ability exhibit the greatest degree of income persistence across generations. Consequently, policies designed to promote mobility should be directed toward these groups to reduce structural barriers and enhance economic opportunity.

Table 6 assesses the interaction of abilities with intergenerational mobility and economic outcomes. Column 1 estimates an expanded intergenerational mobility model, controlling for the child's cognitive skills. The intergenerational income elasticity drops to 0.283, while all cognitive skills have a positive payout in the labor market. Math scores appear to increase income more than reading scores. Looking at Column 3, children with higher math scores are also more mobile. However, the results indicate that reading comprehension increases mobility more than any other skill, cognitive or non-cognitive (**Table 6**, Column 6). Children from the same socioeconomic background with higher reading comprehension skills can expect a 0.177 lower intergenerational income elasticity. Once accounting for the interaction of parental income and skills, intergenerational income persistence falls below 0.2. Overall, higher skills both increase labor market outcomes and mobility. This demonstrates an important mechanism through which intergenerational income persistence is formed.

Past research suggests that the impact of parental income on a child's income and skills is not uniform across the population. The impact of parental investments and skills varies based on demographics. For instance, Carneiro and Rodrigues find a negative payoff of maternal investment for younger children and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. In the next section, I will continue to test the nurture model by controlling for a wider range of determinants of children's skills.

6. Parental time investments

To continue testing the nurture model, I explore the role of parental time investments in children's skills while controlling for a broad range of demographics and family characteristics. This model assesses the impact of parental time on children's skills.

The economics literature has long considered the importance of parental time investments in children's human capital accumulation. Becker's [1] household production model was seminal in incorporating parental time, alongside

consumption goods, as an input in child development. Building on this foundation, dynamic models of skill formation highlight the critical importance of timing in parental investments. [33] and [45] emphasize that investments in early childhood yield especially high returns, given the existence of sensitive periods in cognitive and socio-emotional development. More recently, [46] finds that intergenerational income persistence drops by 7% to 8% when accounting for heterogeneity in parental time investments.

The impact of parental time investments is tested with rigor in past works such as [11, 12, 47, 35]. Based primarily on the work in [15], I present a single regression model to assess the impact of maternal investments and a range of other determinants in **Table 7**. This table uses the Home Observation Measure of the Environment (HOME) scores to measure maternal investment. The specific measures in this assessment depend on the age of the child. In a child's toddler years, the HOME score includes responses to questions about how often the mother reads to the child and whether the mother teaches colors or letters, along with a range of other questions aimed at capturing the parent's cognitive and emotional stimulation of the child. When the child reaches elementary school, this measure shifts to record the child's hobbies and enrichment activities (i.e., number of visits to the museum), among other indicators. The measurement is popular in the literature, tested in a variety of works such as [48].

In **Table 7**, Columns 1 through 3, the HOME score positively and significantly impacts the child's cognitive skills. In this sample, I present only the HOME score recorded during early elementary years (6–9 years old), as the impact of maternal time is the largest for this age group. The timing of assessment differs across the literature. Carneiro and Rodrigues [12] use data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics to find that maternal time investments are most impactful for children between ages three and six, while Del Boca et al. [47] show that adolescent outcomes depend more on children's own investments than on maternal time. Similarly, [11], drawing on the UK Millennium Cohort Study, demonstrates that early maternal investments in educational and recreational stimulation improve cognitive scores, with parenting style exerting an independent effect on child development. Yum [46] shows a large impact of parental time investment up to age 5, which tapers thereafter. Comparative results from children at all age ranges are reported in Marr [15].

Looking at **Table 7**, a one standard deviation increase in HOME scores leads to a 0.27 [PIAT Reading Comprehension] to 0.29 [PIAT Reading Recognition] standard deviation increase in the child's cognitive skills. The results are in line with past work, such as [49–53]. Fiorini and Keane [13], using the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children, find that time spent with parents in educational activities boosts cognitive outcomes, while time spent with mothers alone does not yield the same effect. Todd and Wolpin [52] use the HOME score to assess how the time and good inputs provided in the home vary by race and lead to persistent inequality. Carneiro and Ginja [53] use the HOME assessment to explore how changes in parental inputs react to changes in family income. In all, the results suggest that a more stimulating home environment leads to higher cognitive skills, lending support for the nurture model. Results in **Table 7** suggest a more stimulating environment in general increases cognitive skills, as pre-school attendance raises cognitive skills by 0.12–0.19 standard deviations.

	(1) PIAT RR	(2) PIAT RC	(3) PIAT Math
HOME Scores	0.290*** (7.93)	0.273*** (8.21)	0.207*** (6.14)
Birthweight	0.00124** (3.04)	0.00120** (3.20)	0.000924* (2.41)
Pre-Mature	-0.0462* (-2.45)	-0.0497** (-2.86)	-0.0421* (-2.35)
Birth Order	-0.0778*** (-6.35)	-0.0757*** (-6.80)	-0.0342** (-3.10)
Only Child	0.0414 (1.59)	-0.00751 (-0.31)	-0.0123 (-0.52)
Preschool	0.123*** (3.48)	0.164*** (4.64)	0.187*** (5.30)
Daycare	0.0174 (0.72)	-0.00248 (-0.11)	0.0213 (0.98)
Single Mother	0.0755** (3.07)	0.0638** (2.87)	0.0493* (2.27)
Mother Age at Birth	0.233*** (7.84)	0.0600* (2.05)	0.0757** (2.62)
Mother Age at Birth Squared	-0.00412*** (-7.09)	-0.00073 (-1.27)	-0.000918 (-1.62)
Mother's Education	0.0532*** (10.55)	0.0520*** -11.13	0.0451*** (9.79)
Female	0.164*** (7.02)	0.0782*** -3.62	-0.00268 (-0.13)
Black	-0.202*** (-6.75)	-0.242*** (-8.94)	-0.257*** (-9.49)
Hispanic	-0.0774* (-2.43)	-0.119*** (-3.96)	-0.172*** (-5.92)
N	4,651	4651	4651

t-statistics in parentheses [$p < 0.001$, ***; $p < 0.05$, **; $p < 0.01$, *]. Column headers are labeled with the dependent variable used in each regression, while row headers are labeled as the independent variable used in the regression. Age controls and their squares are included in the estimation but not reported. Income is logged in the estimation, while HOME scores, cognitive, and non-cognitive variables are standardized. Constants are included but not reported. Standard errors are robust. Table taken from Marr [15].

Table 7.
Impact of maternal investments and HOME scores with controls on children's cognitive and non-cognitive abilities (early childhood).

Complementing this, Guryan [54] documents that more educated parents devote significantly more time to skill-enhancing activities with their children, suggesting that parental human capital shapes not only the amount of time but also the type of engagement. Carneiro et al. [35] extend this insight, showing that maternal

education enhances the quality of the home environment and amplifies the returns to parental time investments in both cognitive and non-cognitive domains. Our results show a positive return to maternal education on both the child's math and reading scores. A mother with a high school education (12 years) versus a college education (16 years) increases her child's cognitive scores by about 0.2.

The relationship between parental employment, childcare, and child outcomes provides another lens on time allocation. Ruhm [55] shows that maternal employment during the first year of life can have adverse effects on children's cognitive development, though effects vary by family income and caregiving arrangements. Bernal and Keane [56] highlight the importance of childcare quality in this trade-off, finding that high-quality care can mitigate negative impacts, while low-quality care exacerbates disparities in cognitive outcomes. Expanding to a policy context, Havnes and Mogstad [57] provide evidence from Norway's expansion of subsidized childcare, showing that publicly provided, high-quality care can improve children's long-run educational attainment and earnings. There is no evidence in this study that childcare increases or decreases cognitive skills.

Rosales-Rueda [58] further demonstrates that families adjust time and financial investments in response to child health shocks, but such reallocations depend on parental resources, often reinforcing inequality. Collectively, these studies underscore how structural factors shape the effectiveness of parental time investments. These results show a significant impact of pre-school attendance on children's cognitive skills. Children who attend pre-school have higher reading and math scores, while daycare does not have an impact on scores. This result may capture the impact of a more structured academic curriculum in preschool as compared to daycare. It may also capture an age impact.

The results show that demographics and background do play a significant role in cognitive skills formation. **Table 7**, Columns 1–3, shows that Black and Hispanic children have lower cognitive scores during early elementary years compared to their white counterparts, while females have higher scores compared to males. First born children also score higher across the board on cognitive tests. There is also evidence of the impact of family size on cognitive and non-cognitive skills. While only children do not have significantly higher or lower scores, earlier-born children [implying the existence of a sibling] have higher skills. Past works, such as Lo [59], find that accounting for family size does not impact intergenerational *income* persistence. However, the author finds evidence for resource dilution as the number of children increases. Perhaps the decrease in skills as birth order rises is evidence of such resource dilution as it relates to skill development.

Attanansio et al.[60] further demonstrate that family background conditions the returns to parental investments, with higher-educated parents realizing larger payoffs from the same time allocations. These findings suggest that investments are not uniformly productive; instead, they interact with broader family environments and parental characteristics. I explore the interaction between parental skills and time investments in **Table 8**. The results show that parental skills consistently increase children's skills. More maternal time spent (as measured by HOME scores) increases cognitive skills but decreases non-cognitive skills of the child. The interaction variable (HOME Score * AFQT) is less intuitive for cognitive skills. Columns 1–3 show that the interacted variable has a negative impact on the child's PIAT scores. This implies that mothers who spend more time with their child *and* have higher cognitive ability decrease the child's cognitive score. On the other hand,

	(1) PIAT Math	(2) PIAT Reading Recognition	(3) PIAT Reading Comprehension	(4) Self- Esteem	(5) Locus of Control
HOME Score * AFQT	-0.0158** (-2.39)	-0.0293*** (-4.42)	-0.0180*** (-2.72)		
HOME Score	0.0528*** (6.91)	0.0454*** (5.91)	0.0419*** (5.50)	-0.321*** (-53.37)	-0.320*** (-51.76)
AFQT	0.310*** (24.30)	0.329*** (25.60)	0.324*** (25.34)		
HOME score *Self-Esteem (Mother)				-0.00438 (-0.69)	
Mother Self-Esteem				0.0554*** (5.29)	
HOME Score* Locus of Control (Mother)					-0.0150** (-2.23)
Mother Locus of Control					0.0622*** (5.87)
Constant	0.00639 (0.51)	0.0113 (0.90)	0.0108 (0.86)	0.165*** (15.74)	0.167*** (15.92)
N	5,760	5760	5760	5,993	5993

t-statistics in parentheses [$p < 0.001$, ***; $p < 0.05$, **; $p < 0.01$, *]. Column headers are labeled with the dependent variable used in each regression, while row headers are labeled as the independent variable used in the regression. HOME scores, cognitive, and non-cognitive variables are standardized. Standard errors are robust. Data adapted from Marr [15].

Table 8.
Assessing the impact of the interaction of maternal investments and parental skills on children's cognitive and non-cognitive abilities (early childhood).

children with less cognitively able parents who spend less time with their parent score higher on cognitive tests.

The interaction of maternal time investments and her non-cognitive skills paints a different picture of the impact on children's personality traits. Mothers with higher self-esteem who spend more time with their children increase their children's self-esteem. This is more in line with the aforementioned literature by Attanansio et al. [[60]].

Taken together, this body of literature establishes that parental time investments are a crucial determinant of child outcomes, but their effectiveness is heterogeneous and context-dependent. Timing, quality of engagement, parental education, family resources, childcare arrangements, and parenting style all mediate the impact of parental time. This complexity underscores the need to analyze parental time not in isolation, but as part of a broader ecosystem of family decisions, institutional supports, and structural constraints that shape intergenerational mobility.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter highlights the multifaceted role of parental skills in shaping child skills, emphasizing the interplay between inherited abilities (nature) and environmental influences (nurture). By examining both the direct transmission of skills and the indirect impact of parental endowments through time and money investments (and their interactions with skills), this work seeks to identify channels that create intergenerational persistence of outcomes.

The nature model shows a direct transmission mechanism that is strong, particularly in cognitive skills. The persistence of reading skills is strongest, which is often argued to be a nurtured (rather than genetic) impact. The transmission of a mother's non-cognitive skills to her child's non-cognitive skills is weaker, yet a mother with higher self-esteem or locus of control raises a child with higher scores in those dimensions as well. As opposed to cognitive transmission, there is a heterogeneous impact based on gender. The direct transmission of non-cognitive skills is significantly larger between mothers and daughters than between mothers and sons. However, the model cannot identify a genetic transmission as written. Future work in this area could aim to isolate the genetic component. This could be done by matching observations of siblings with different upbringings (raised by the parent versus not by the parent).

The nurture model is more extensive, and there is a wide range of evidence to support that the impact a mother has on skill formation is influenced by socioeconomic background, time spent with the child, in addition to a wide host of other controls. Parental income increases a child's skills. This could be due to access to a broader range of resources that range from localized (i.e., paying for a tutor) to global (affording housing in a better public school system, peer effects, etc.). The direct transmission of skills holds up beyond the impact of socioeconomic status.

There is also evidence of an interaction between skills and socioeconomic background on a child's income level. Affluence reduces the positive return to skills in the labor market. However, higher-income parents and higher skills separately increase the child's economic outcomes and outweigh the interaction effect.

When considering time investments, more time spent with the mother increases the child's skills across the board. The more engaged the mother is with her children, the higher their cognitive skills. These results provide support for the nurture model. The interaction between skills and time investment is less intuitive. Results suggest that children who spend more time with their smarter (as opposed to less smart) parents are cognitively weaker. It could be that this estimation fails to properly identify the model.

Demographics and family characteristics also play a large role in a child's skills. This robustness check is necessary to acknowledge the wide range of factors outside of one's parents that influence a child's skill formation and subsequent economic outcomes.

Both the nature and nurture models suggest substantial persistence in outcomes across generations, while also revealing important heterogeneity shaped by parental income, gender, and family environment. These findings suggest that policies aiming to enhance mobility must account not only for economic resources but also for the quality and quantity of parental engagement, as both dimensions contribute meaningfully to the developmental trajectories of children. Ultimately, this analysis

advances the understanding of how parental inputs – both innate and acquired – combine to influence the distribution of skills and socioeconomic outcomes across generations, while paving the way for future work to further advance our understanding of mobility.

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Perspective Chapter: Unlocking Success in Intergenerational Housing – Global Lessons for Sustainable Aging Through Bridging Generations

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Abstract

In the face of a rapidly aging global population, the urgency for innovative housing solutions has reached unprecedented levels. This study investigates the transformative potential of intergenerational housing as a strategic response to the multifaceted challenges posed by demographic shifts. Central to this research is the identification of key factors that influence the effectiveness and sustainability of intergenerational housing initiatives across diverse socio-cultural and policy contexts. Through a comprehensive analysis, we illuminate the enablers and barriers impacting the implementation of these initiatives, providing actionable insights and concrete recommendations tailored for stakeholders and policymakers. By delving into the intricate fabric of intergenerational relationships, the study aspires to elevate the discourse on intergenerational housing, positioning it not only as a viable solution for housing but also as a cornerstone for sustainable community development and social equity in an increasingly complex world.

Keywords: intergenerational housing, active aging, aging in place, senior housing, intergenerational solidarity

1. Introduction

The aging of the global population represents one of the most profound demographic and social transformations of the twenty-first century. Driven by declining fertility and increasing life expectancy, the global population aged 60 and over is projected to nearly double by 2050, with the share of older adults rising from 10% in 2022 to 16%, totaling 1.6 billion individuals [1].

This demographic shift brings complex challenges: rising prevalence of chronic illnesses, cognitive decline, and disabilities intensifies the demand for long-term care

and social support [2, 3, 4]. At the same time, aging reshapes housing, labor markets, and social cohesion, while exerting pressure on pensions, insurance systems, and workforce stability [5, 6]. Although advances in healthcare and living standards have extended life expectancy [7], they also raise critical questions about the sustainability of economic and social systems and the role of community-based solutions in future models of care. These challenges highlight that aging is not only about longer lives but also about transforming societal expectations, care systems, and social contracts as a shared global phenomenon [8, 9].

This trajectory is not only a challenge for the present generation but also carries profound implications for future generations. As articulated in the United Nations Declaration on the Responsibilities of the Present Generations Toward Future Generations, societies bear a duty to safeguard the rights, opportunities, and resources of those yet to come [10]. From this perspective, the discourse on population aging extends beyond immediate care needs, encompassing the redefinition of social contracts and the design of policies that strengthen intergenerational bonds while laying a sustainable foundation for the future.

In response to this dual horizon, addressing both present challenges and future responsibilities, the concept of active aging has become central to contemporary aging policies. Defined by the World Health Organization as the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation, and security to enhance quality of life in later years, active aging encompasses physical well-being, social engagement, lifelong learning, and intergenerational solidarity [11]. Within this framework, intergenerational housing has emerged as a remarkably powerful paradigm. One striking case comes from Spain, where 200 affordable units, carefully designed to bring together older adults over 65 with younger residents under 35 in an 80:20 balance, produced far-reaching benefits for both communities [12]. What makes these initiatives transformative is not only their capacity to provide shelter, but their ability to reweave the social fabric. They dismantle age-based prejudice and expand inclusion [13], while also fostering psychological resilience through intergenerational co-residence [14]. These environments cultivate deep bonds, a sense of belonging, and systems of mutual care, while simultaneously renewing cultural vitality, dimensions rarely achieved by conventional aging services [15]. Nonetheless, several challenges persist: co-residence can lead to negative outcomes such as interpersonal tensions and privacy concerns, and it also faces broader economic and housing market pressures that further limit its adoption [14, 16]. These realities underscore the need for thoughtful policies and community designs that optimize benefits while mitigating risks.

Despite growing interest in intergenerational housing, the understanding of factors that support its long-term sustainability, affordability, and adaptability remains limited. Much of the literature focuses on localized cases or individual outcomes, rarely examining how stakeholders, socio-economic conditions, and governance mechanisms intersect to influence successful implementation. Accordingly, this study aims to answer the following questions:

RQ1. What structural, demographic, and socio-cultural drivers give rise to the emergence of intergenerational housing models in different national and community contexts?

RQ2. How do institutional, policy, and relational factors either strengthen or constrain the long-term viability and effectiveness of intergenerational housing initiatives once established?

By grounding these questions in demographic trends and policy frameworks, the chapter sets the stage for examining how various enabling and constraining factors influence the sustainability of intergenerational housing across diverse settings.

2. Methodology

2.1 Methodological approach

This study adopts a systematic review approach, integrating insights from aging studies, housing research, social policy, and intergenerational solidarity literature. Rather than generating new primary data, the chapter consolidates existing empirical findings and theoretical contributions to derive design principles, governance recommendations, and critical enablers for intergenerational housing [17, 18]. This approach enables the development of a coherent analytical framework that situates intergenerational housing within broader discourses of active aging, aging in place, and social cohesion [11]. Illustrative cases drawn from diverse socio-cultural contexts (e.g., Spain, Malaysia, Canada, USA, and China) serve to contextualize the review and enhance practical relevance.

2.2 Review strategy and data collection

Following the guidelines of systematic literature reviews [17, 18], we conducted a multi-step search process across major scholarly databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, Emerald, and SpringerLink. Complementary searches were carried out on Google Scholar to ensure comprehensiveness.

To build the initial database, a structured search string was developed, combining thematic keywords related to intergenerational housing, active aging, aging in place, social cohesion, multigenerational co-residence, housing policy, and sustainable communities. Keywords in both English and related terms in other languages (e.g., “intergenerational living,” “multigenerational housing,” “aging in place,” “co-housing,” and “intergenerational solidarity”) were applied to maximize coverage. The search was limited to peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, reports, and conference papers published between 1980 and 2025, ensuring both historical depth and coverage of recent developments.

An iterative snowball sampling strategy [19] was employed to identify additional sources through citation tracking and reference list scanning. This process yielded an initial pool of approximately 583 studies, which was systematically screened according to predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria, resulting in a final set of 243 studies. These studies were then subjected to qualitative content analysis [20, 21].

Using open coding, the study identified key categories such as drivers, enablers, barriers, outcomes, and trade-offs of intergenerational housing, which were subsequently clustered into higher-order themes, including structural, socio-cultural, institutional, and health-related factors. Through an iterative process of discussion, categorization, and synthesis, the analysis reached theoretical saturation [22], ensuring that additional sources added little new insight. This structured procedure informed the development of the research framework (see **Figure 4**), which illustrates the dynamic interplay among drivers, enablers, barriers, and outcomes.

3. Conceptual foundations

3.1 Defining intergenerational housing

Intergenerational housing broadly refers to living arrangements where multiple generations share a household or a common living environment. It includes community-based forms of co-residence, as well as institutionalized models such as home-sharing, co-housing, and structured initiatives, for example, Spain's Alicante project, where younger and older adults live together under formal agreements [12]. In post-industrial societies, intergenerational housing is increasingly promoted through shared housing with young adults and multigenerational home designs [13].

Beyond simple co-residence, these approaches incorporate social dimensions by deliberately fostering interactions that strengthen intergenerational bonds and social cohesion. In doing so, they facilitate resource sharing and generate social benefits, including reduced loneliness and an improved quality of life for older adults [23]. As Chazan and Whetung note, they also involve "commitments to intergenerational relationships beyond biological ties, and existing within interspecies networks of relationships" [24]. Within this social framework of intergenerational housing, intergenerational programs serve as the central mechanism that structures interactions and channels these benefits. Generations United (1986) defines these programs as "activities that foster cooperation, integration, and exchange between people of different generations" [25]. From this perspective, they are understood as encounters between individuals from different generations without family ties, designed to generate both individual and societal benefits [26].

While the terms intergenerational living and intergenerational housing are sometimes used interchangeably, they refer to different phenomena. Intergenerational living usually denotes informal multi-generational co-residence within families or households, where everyday life is shared across age groups [24]. In contrast, intergenerational housing refers to deliberately designed residential models, supported by policy, planning, or institutional frameworks, that bring together people from different generations in structured settings [12, 13]. This study focuses exclusively on intergenerational housing, deliberately excluding informal intergenerational living, which primarily pertains to social and family dynamics, in order to examine housing as a formal, scalable approach to promoting sustainability, social cohesion, and active aging.

3.2 Theoretical frameworks: Active aging, aging in place, and social cohesion

Understanding intergenerational housing requires situating it within broader theoretical frameworks that explain how aging, environments, and community relations intersect. Three perspectives – active aging, aging in place, and social cohesion – provide complementary foundations (**Figure 1**).

The active aging paradigm, advanced by the World Health Organization, reframes older adults as autonomous and engaged citizens rather than passive care recipients, a perspective reinforced by studies highlighting their active roles in participation and social contribution [11, 27]. Moreover, the principle of aging in place, central to environmental gerontology, highlights the importance of ensuring a good fit between individuals and their environments as a foundation for wellbeing in later life. Classic theories of person–environment interaction emphasized this

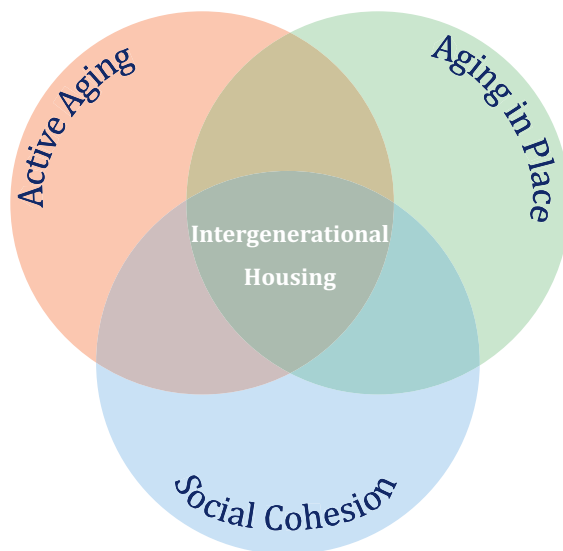


Figure 1.
Theoretical foundations of intergenerational housing.

relationship [28], and more recent studies confirm its continuing relevance by showing how supportive social and physical settings enable older adults to maintain independence and quality of life [29, 30]. Empirical research demonstrates that remaining in familiar environments supported by social networks can offer a viable and often preferable alternative to institutional care, reinforcing the principle of aging in place [30, 31]. Within this context, intergenerational housing emerges as a natural extension.

Equally important is the framework of social cohesion, which emphasizes the relational dimensions of such arrangements. Contemporary initiatives illustrate how intergenerational housing models can foster inclusive, culturally enriched networks that provide continuity of place while creating opportunities for connection across age groups [26]. From a broader community perspective, these models demonstrate how supportive social and physical environments can underpin positive aging futures, reinforcing the reciprocal ties between individuals, their communities, and the spaces they inhabit [24, 32–34].

Taken together, these perspectives position intergenerational housing not only as an age-friendly and community-anchored practice but also as a bridge between present needs and future-oriented responsibilities. The conceptual foundations of intergenerational housing, therefore, intersect with broader debates on intergenerational justice. Drawing on Rawls' just savings principle, which underscores the moral responsibility of each generation to preserve adequate resources and opportunities for those that follow [35], intergenerational housing can be understood as more than a mere response to demographic change. It also reflects the ethical commitments highlighted in the UNESCO Declaration on the Responsibilities of the Present Generations Toward Future Generations [10], demonstrating how societies can uphold obligations to future generations while promoting fairness, solidarity, and continuity across time [36, 37].

4. Benefits and challenges of intergenerational living

4.1 Positive outcomes

One of the primary advantages of intergenerational co-residence lies in its financial dimension. By bringing together residents of different age groups, these housing models can optimize the use of communal amenities and resources, lower individual living costs, and facilitate access to shared recreational spaces [36]. For younger and older residents alike, intergenerational housing can alleviate financial pressures, promote affordability, and enable investments in community services that enhance the quality of life for all generations [37].

Beyond financial benefits, intergenerational housing fosters the exchange of non-material resources. Intergenerational arrangements provide care, companionship, and mutual support across generations, resulting in both practical assistance and emotional well-being [38]. A recent systematic review demonstrates that participation in intergenerational programs significantly improves psychological outcomes for both older and younger adults, raising self-esteem, motivation, optimism, and confidence [26]. Additionally, empirical research in Europe shows that co-residence can reduce depression, alleviate loneliness among older adults, and enhance quality of life overall [14]. Purpose-built intergenerational housing models further extend these benefits by fostering cultural exchange and mutual learning: older adults experience greater civic engagement and reduced isolation, while younger generations gain new skills, social opportunities, and experience in community life [12]. In this vein, intergenerational transfers, such as employment opportunities passed from retiring adults to younger family members [39, 40], illustrate the strategic and practical value of these arrangements.

4.2 Potential drawback

While intergenerational housing can offer valuable social and practical benefits, it also poses interconnected challenges that affect residents' health and communal dynamics. Evidence indicates that overcrowded living conditions, which are often inherent in intergenerational housing arrangements, are associated with an increased risk of infectious diseases [41, 42]. Household crowding has been linked to higher transmission rates of respiratory, gastrointestinal, and skin infections [41], with inadequate ventilation and increased exposure to pathogens further elevating health risks [42]. In addition to physical health concerns, the mental health of older adults can be negatively impacted in shared living environments. While intergenerational housing may offer benefits such as reduced loneliness, it can also be associated with increased stress and anxiety, as well as challenges to residents' sense of autonomy, potentially contributing to depressive symptoms [43].

Another central challenge lies in the everyday negotiations of differing needs, expectations, and habits across generations. Such tensions can erode mutual respect and complicate daily interactions. Conflicts frequently arise around privacy, autonomy, and responsibility. In collaborative housing models, for example, decision-making often emphasizes seniors' agency [44]. While empowering older residents, this dynamic can inadvertently marginalize younger participants, leaving them with less influence over household norms and routines. Everyday rhythms, such as tolerance for noise, use of shared spaces, or culturally inflected practices,

Dimension	Benefits	Mechanisms	Long-term potential	Challenges	Risks	Long-term potential
Social	Reduced loneliness, stronger inter-generational ties	Shared activities, daily contact	Stronger community cohesion & solidarity	Interpersonal tensions	Privacy conflicts, lifestyle clashes	Erosion of trust & withdrawal from shared life
Economic	Financial affordability	Shared costs, optimized use	Sustainable affordability & housing resilience	Overcrowding	Pressure on facilities, inequity in contributions	Housing instability & resistance to co-living
Cultural	Social capital & cultural exchange	Mutual learning, cultural transmission	Cross-generational solidarity & cultural vitality	Generational conflicts	Value clashes, stereotypes	Cultural fragmentation & rejection of shared models
Personal	Improved mental & physical health	Support networks, reduced isolation	Health-promoting housing & aging in place	Health risks from crowding	Higher exposure to diseases, stress	Health-system burden & reluctance to join projects

Table 1.
Benefits, challenges, and long-term potentials of intergenerational housing.

further magnify these divergences, often beyond the reach of formal design or management solutions.

Overlooking these risks could allow them to develop into major barriers, slowing the long-term progress of intergenerational housing. On the other hand, a clear understanding of its benefits, combined with wise investment in them, can transform them into powerful drivers of sustainable growth. **Table 1** provides an overview of both the advantages and drawbacks of intergenerational housing.

5. The multi-layered forces driving intergenerational housing

Intergenerational housing arises from the intersection of multiple factors rather than a single cause. Demographic changes, economic pressures, policy and welfare frameworks, cultural traditions, and health-related needs are key forces that shape its development. Understanding the interaction of these factors provides a foundation for analyzing why and how intergenerational housing emerges and gains significance. **Figure 2** provides a summary of the key factors shaping intergenerational housing.

5.1 Structural dimensions

5.1.1 Demographics & global ageing

Globally, societies are experiencing population aging at an unprecedented pace. As of 2023, approximately 1.1 billion people worldwide were aged 60 or

S	Structural Drivers	• Demographics Change • Economic Pressures • Policy Drivers	Includes global ageing trends, affordability crises, and welfare regimes shaping housing provision.
S	Socio-Cultural Drivers	• Culture & Values • Individual Preferences	Encompasses traditions of filial piety, collectivism vs. individualism, and evolving preferences for independence or shared living.
H	Health and Care Drivers	• Physical Needs • Psychological Needs	Addresses increasing chronic illnesses, long-term care needs, and the importance of tackling loneliness and depression.

Figure 2.
Multi-layered drivers of intergenerational housing.

older, a number projected to reach 1.4 billion by 2030, meaning that one in six individuals will soon be an older adult [1]. Looking further ahead, this population is expected to rise to 2.1 billion by 2050, increasing its share of the global population from 12% in 2015 to 22% [45]. Asia exemplifies this accelerated transition: Malaysia, for example, had about 11.6% of its population aged 60 and over in 2024, with projections reaching 17.3% by 2040 [46]. Indonesia is following a similar trajectory, with its elderly population projected to rise from 7.56% in 2010 to 15.77% by 2035 [47]. At the same time, China’s demographic shift, given the sheer size of its aging population, remains a central focus in comparative gerontology [40]. Europe, already home to the highest share of older adults globally, is experiencing significant shifts as well: As of early 2024, around 21.6% of the EU population was aged 65 and above [48], a figure projected to rise to about 27% by 2040 [14]. More specifically, in France and England, projections indicate that nearly one-third of the population will be over 60 by 2035 [49]. Importantly, these demographic trajectories coincide with a steady rise in single-person households, affecting both older adults and younger professionals. These shifts reflect evolving lifestyles and family structures while simultaneously creating new pressures and opportunities for intergenerational housing, underscoring the need to adapt living arrangements to increasingly diverse household forms. **Figure 3** illustrates the projected increase in the global population aged 60 and over between 2020 and 2025 [50].

5.1.2 *Economic pressures & opportunities*

The rapid aging of populations is profoundly reshaping societies, creating both urgent economic pressures and unprecedented opportunities that are redefining the landscape of housing [45, 50]. Rising demand for care, coupled with older adults’ growing purchasing power and demand for age-friendly environments, is catalyzing innovative housing models that are inclusive, financially resilient, and supportive of vibrant intergenerational living arrangements [50–54].

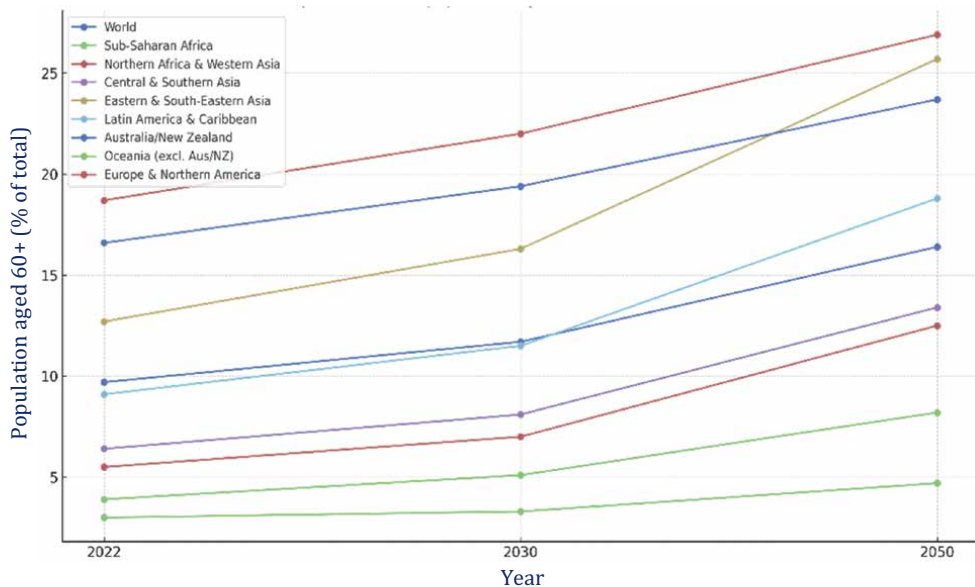


Figure 3.
 Population aged 60+, 2020–2025.

From an economic perspective, constraints remain a central factor shaping intergenerational co-residence, particularly given the limited affordability of independent dwellings and the challenges of accommodating multiple generations within constrained housing markets [51, 52, 55]. For instance, in high-income countries such as Canada and parts of Europe, escalating housing costs and insecure labor markets have made younger generations increasingly reliant on temporary co-residence during times of strain [56]. Similarly, in Britain, a deepening housing crisis, characterized by limited affordable homes and declining homeownership among young adults, has intensified the reliance on shared or multigenerational living arrangements. According to the English Housing Survey 2023–24, only 57% of private renters and 25% of social renters expect to buy a home in the future, underscoring growing dependence on intergenerational housing solutions.

In Asia, financial pressures combined with demographic aging sustain co-residence. For example, in China, historical housing shortages, ongoing affordability challenges, and care needs continue to support these arrangements [57, 58]. Overall, these examples demonstrate that economic conditions not only drive intergenerational housing as a practical response to demographic and financial pressures but also shape its potential for fostering sustainable, inclusive, and socially cohesive living arrangements.

5.1.3 National and global policy drivers

National policy frameworks, political structures, and welfare regimes together shape how societies accommodate aging populations through intergenerational housing. For example, in Europe, demographic patterns are broadly similar, yet policy orientations diverge. France and England both exhibit comparable aging profiles, with around one-third of their populations aged over 50 and growing

proportions of those aged 65 and 80 + [59]. By 2050, post-retirement age groups are expected to represent roughly a quarter of the population (23% in England, 27% in France), while the “oldest old” (80 +) will account for nearly one-tenth (9% and 11%, respectively). However, France has preserved elements of welfare collectivism under the principle of *solidarité*, while England’s stronger embrace of neo-liberal reforms has shifted responsibilities toward individuals and markets [59]. These institutional contrasts condition the extent to which aging populations turn to intergenerational co-residence as a coping mechanism.

Beyond these national contrasts, global policy frameworks also serve as important drivers of intergenerational housing. The *UNESCO Declaration on the Responsibilities of the Present Generations Toward Future Generations* [10] explicitly frames housing and social policies as part of a moral duty to safeguard the rights, resources, and opportunities of those yet to come. By emphasizing the ethical responsibility toward future generations, this framework situates intergenerational housing as a concrete expression of solidarity across time. In parallel, *Sustainable Development Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities* [60] establishes a policy agenda that links housing with broader goals of inclusiveness, resilience, and environmental sustainability. By providing a concrete roadmap for designing urban environments that remain socially and environmentally viable over time, SDG 11 positions intergenerational housing as a strategic tool for building sustainable and equitable communities. Taken together, these frameworks highlight how intergenerational housing can simultaneously respond to immediate demographic pressures and contribute to the long-term sustainability of future societies.

5.2 Socio-cultural dimensions

5.2.1 Family culture & collective values

Cultural context plays a pivotal role in shaping the norms, expectations, and practices that sustain intergenerational housing arrangements. In East Asian societies such as China and Japan, longstanding traditions of filial piety and family continuity foster a collective mindset in which multiple generations living in shared housing arrangements are culturally supported and socially expected [61, 62]. In Indigenous communities of Canada, collective responsibility and land-based connections similarly reinforce multigenerational housing as a culturally congruent model that integrates social, environmental, and intergenerational values [24]. These collective values not only guide family practices but also make intergenerational housing an appealing option, as residents perceive shared spaces as supportive of mutual care, social cohesion, and practical cooperation. By contrast, in countries with stronger individualistic norms, such as the United States, cultural emphasis on independence and privacy reduces the perceived desirability of intergenerational housing, influencing both personal housing choices and the design of residential units [40]. In Malaysia, reluctance toward intergenerational arrangements arises from the unpopular notion of having to share facilities with strangers and the complexities of ethnic and religious diversity [12]. Overall, these examples illustrate that cultural orientation toward collectivism or individualism strongly shapes the demand for and acceptance of intergenerational housing, with collectivist societies showing a stronger preference for shared, multi-generational residential solutions.

5.2.2 Individual preferences for Independence or collective living

While cultural context shapes general patterns of intergenerational housing, personal choices and preferences for independence can diverge significantly from these norms and vary among individuals. Many older adults express a strong desire to remain in their own homes, valuing privacy and self-determination, and may resist collective arrangements such as modular housing, shared property models, or intergenerational housing [40]. In contrast, those who place greater value on interdependence and community are more inclined to support or create collective housing solutions.

Fox and Giles provide a theoretical framework that helps explain these divergent orientations [63]. They argue that excessive accommodation of dependency needs can erode autonomy and self-worth. Conversely, appropriate and balanced forms of interaction allow older adults to maintain a sense of competence and dignity. This theoretical perspective helps explain why some individuals resist collective arrangements perceived as overly paternalistic, while others embrace forms of co-residence that enable supportive yet respectful interaction.

Emerging housing models demonstrate how these preferences translate into practice. For instance, assisted living caters to individuals who wish to maintain autonomy while receiving supportive care, whereas intergenerational co-housing and broader “age-friendly” initiatives appeal to those who value collective interaction and integration into community life without segregation [64]. Thus, individual preferences act as key drivers in the evolution of intergenerational housing.

5.3 Health and care dimensions

5.3.1 Physical and care needs

Older adults’ physical health and care needs play a central role in shaping housing arrangements. In the United States, rising rates of disability and chronic illnesses, from mobility limitations to heart disease and dementia, have intensified the demand for long-term care and supportive environments [64]. These realities underscore the necessity of housing designs that can flexibly accommodate escalating care needs while still enabling residents to age in place [64]. In response, shared and intergenerational housing models are increasingly recognized as viable solutions. Van Gasse and Wyninckx demonstrate that such arrangements not only meet modest care needs but also foster social support networks, reduce isolation, and enhance older adults’ independence and well-being [65]. Thus, intergenerational housing is not merely a cultural or economic phenomenon but increasingly a direct response to the health-related demands of aging populations.

5.3.2 Psychological and social needs

Beyond physical health, older adults face significant psychological and social challenges that strongly influence their housing preferences. Social isolation, loneliness, and depression are particularly prevalent among those living independently, underscoring the importance of environments that enable daily interaction and emotional connection [66]. Intergenerational and community-based

housing directly address these needs. Izuhara et al. demonstrate that co-housing models foster intergenerational social support, promoting meaningful engagement across age groups, mitigating loneliness, and enhancing emotional security [67]. Evidence further indicates that such arrangements strengthen emotional security and foster a sense of belonging [66], with the most beneficial outcomes emerging when older adults participate as active contributors rather than passive recipients of care [63]. Taken together, these insights frame intergenerational housing as not merely a logistical arrangement but a psychosocial infrastructure that anchors wellbeing in later life.

6. Critical enablers of intergenerational housing success

While structural drivers establish the fundamental need for intergenerational housing, its long-term success depends on a set of critical enablers that determine whether such initiatives can move from vision to practice. These enablers, ranging from institutional support and cross-sector collaboration to design excellence and community engagement, shape the conditions under which intergenerational housing can thrive.

6.1 Institutional support and policy alignment

Institutional support and policy alignment are central to sustaining intergenerational housing, as governance structures shape both access to care and housing options [68–70].

At the national level, policies on pensions, long-term care, and social housing shape the broader environment in which intergenerational housing can develop. Coordinated governance is, therefore, essential to support multigenerational residential models beyond individual households. For example, South Korea's introduction of long-term care insurance in 2008 demonstrates how state intervention can reduce reliance on family caregiving [71] and foster a more predictable context for establishing intergenerational housing projects. By contrast, limited rural pension support and urban–rural disparities in China leave older adults financially dependent on others [72], constraining the planning and sustainability of multigenerational housing initiatives. In Canada, affordability challenges have been described as an “intergenerational injustice,” highlighting how unequal access to housing across age groups can limit the feasibility of shared, multigenerational residential models [56].

At the regional level, policies increasingly integrate housing with broader social and spatial planning to support aging populations. In England, the Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighborhoods (LHLN) Strategy adopted a life-course approach, embedding housing within community and neighborhood development, explicitly aiming to prevent the “ghettoisation of older people” by promoting mixed, multigenerational environments [59, 73]. Complementing this, the Opportunity Age Strategy demonstrates how national frameworks can translate these aims into practice, enhancing independence, well-being, and social participation for older adults [74]. Across Europe, integrated strategies increasingly emphasize the coordination of housing, health, and social care services, recognizing the interdependent roles of family, community, and local services in supporting older

adults to age in place [75]. In Australia, government aging policies intersect with grassroots initiatives and indigenous traditions, framing intergenerational engagement as both social innovation and a cultural practice [76].

Beyond regional initiatives, global networks such as the WHO's Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and UNICEF's child-friendly programs illustrate how intergenerational principles can inform urban planning and community development, fostering knowledge exchange and policy innovation [62].

At the local and experimental level, municipalities and cities are testing innovative governance models. For example, the 2013 revision of the Brussels Housing Code expanded support for cooperative and collective housing, including Community Land Trusts and modular transit housing, creating opportunities for multigenerational living [77]. Similarly, some local governments are exploring hybrid public-private care models that integrate intergenerational support, combining publicly funded home care with private initiatives to enhance flexibility, reduce caregiving burdens across generations, and improve outcomes for older adults [78].

These examples demonstrate the importance of comprehensive policy frameworks that align physical infrastructure with social and healthcare support, promoting independence, well-being, and social participation among older populations.

6.2 Cross-sector synergies

The sustainability of intergenerational housing relies on collaboration among families, government agencies, non-profit organizations, and the private sector, as no single actor can fully address the complex needs of aging populations. At the local level, municipal authorities, educational institutions, and community organizations collaborate to sustain intergenerational housing and related services. For example, America's Best Intergenerational Communities report highlights local governments partnering with schools, businesses, and cultural organizations to create supportive environments for all generations [79]. Similarly, university-campus intergenerational housing programs in the United States demonstrate how academic institutions can work with community agencies to maintain both housing and social services for older adults [80]. In France and Canada, programs pairing students with older adults address housing affordability challenges while fostering reciprocal care and social engagement [81].

A notable local example is Kuala Lumpur's Centre for Sustainable Innovation, which developed a living lab for intergenerational care that integrates active aging, sustainable design, and knowledge exchange, while also serving as an educational platform promoting intergenerational learning and sustainable lifestyles [12]. At the national and institutional level, broader initiatives complement and reinforce these local efforts. In China, for example, media campaigns and residents' committees have promoted family responsibility and mediated household conflicts, contributing to the stability of multigenerational households and supporting intergenerational housing strategies more broadly [16]. These examples illustrate that successful intergenerational housing relies not only on physical infrastructure but also on multi-level, coordinated collaboration across sectors.

6.3 Technology as enabler

Technology serves both as a safety net and a bridge in intergenerational housing, supporting independence, care, and cross-generational engagement. For older adults, in-home management systems and community-based services, covering healthcare, transportation, and dementia care, form the foundation of aging in place [82]. Innovations such as AI, robotics, and smart home devices enable real-time health monitoring and reduce reliance on institutional care, expanding opportunities for independent living [83]. Embedded smart home infrastructures, from telemedicine platforms to wearable monitoring devices, enhance safety and autonomy, demonstrating measurable benefits for health and well-being while ensuring housing environments adapt to changing needs [84]. By enhancing safety, autonomy, and connectedness, these technologies act as key enablers of intergenerational housing, supporting shared living, caregiving, and meaningful cross-generational interaction.

Technology also strengthens intergenerational connections, with platforms like Facebook and Instagram facilitating communication and engagement among program participants [85]. During the COVID-19 pandemic, digital tools, including skill-sharing initiatives, helped bridge generational divides and maintain social inclusion, with younger adults often supporting older residents in using devices and online platforms [85]. At the same time, technological inclusion presents challenges; limited digital literacy and concerns over accessibility and online safety remain significant barriers for many older adults [84]. Nevertheless, when effectively integrated, technology supports intergenerational housing by enhancing independence, facilitating shared caregiving, and promoting cross-generational engagement.

6.4 Income level & financial viability

Socioeconomic status fundamentally shapes intergenerational support and housing outcomes, with affordability often determining whether such arrangements are viable. As Fox and Giles emphasize, broader structural factors such as wealth and status lie beyond individual control, yet exert a strong influence on intergenerational dynamics [63].

Comparative contexts illustrate these disparities. In Hungary, affluent parents are more likely to provide substantial financial and housing support, reinforcing class-based inequalities [52]. In Indonesia, access to homeownership depends heavily on income, employment, and parental resources, with family loans or bailouts often serving as critical enablers [58]. In the United States, limited resources constrain housing choices for older adults, with nursing home residents often being poor or having exhausted their savings [64]. Historically, only the wealthiest seniors could afford retirement communities, highlighting persistent accessibility gaps [86].

At the household level, shared living projects underscore how informal financial support, covering debts, pooling resources, or providing small-scale aid, directly shapes residents' stability and well-being [65]. Overall, these examples show that intergenerational housing is fundamentally an economic choice, with long-term success depending on affordability and inclusiveness [87].

6.5 Design excellence: Architecture of belonging

Design excellence is fundamental to intergenerational housing, as it must accommodate diverse age-related needs while fostering meaningful interaction across generations. Successful models, therefore, combine private spaces for autonomy with communal areas that encourage connection, ensuring that households remain both adaptable and inclusive [49]. The principles of Universal Design reinforce this approach, emphasizing equitable use, flexibility, intuitive operation, and adaptability through features such as modular furniture and accessible layouts [47, 88]. In Malaysia, intergenerational community centers encourage daily encounters by integrating inclusivity and sustainability with open courtyards [12]. Conversely, poor design, such as the absence of elevators, directly undermines older adults' independence [16].

Beyond the home, urban design and planning play an equally decisive role. Age-friendly initiatives and neighborhood elderly hubs demonstrate how public spaces, services, and resilient infrastructures can promote community-based aging [89]. Walkable neighborhoods with greenery, adequate lighting, and accessible sidewalks provide safe mobility and inclusion [12], while shared spaces and facilities appear to provide the most beneficial opportunities of urban living [62]. In this way, design excellence, spanning interior arrangements to city planning, becomes the architecture of belonging, enabling intergenerational housing to thrive as both a social and spatial practice.

6.6 Community engagement & co-creation: The human fabric

At the core of intergenerational housing lies co-creation: communities thrive when residents actively shape and sustain them. As Hinrichs notes, in intentional communities, "there are no spectators"; every member contributes, preventing exclusion and strengthening cohesion [90]. This principle is evident in Boston's GrandFamilies House, where purpose-built housing, combined with on-site programs and advocacy, supports grandparents raising grandchildren, embedding stability within a participatory social fabric [91].

In addition, volunteer and peer networks, from senior initiatives to mutual aid groups, promote reciprocity and active lifestyles. When genuinely valued, older adults often act as catalysts for intergenerational bonding by sharing experience and wisdom [90]. Shared housing models further demonstrate that even unrelated individuals can form strong ties and assume mutual caregiving responsibilities, transforming households into resilient support networks [90]. Participation in community activities, whether through senior clubs, volunteering, or local programs, not only sustains health but also reinforces belonging and solidarity across generations, creating a dynamic environment where intergenerational relationships can flourish [66].

7. Core barriers and trade-offs in intergenerational housing

7.1 Relational barriers and generational misalignment

Motivational misalignments frequently challenge intergenerational living arrangements. Younger residents may perceive interactions as temporary or low in

reciprocity, investing little in long-term ties, whereas older residents often seek enduring companionship and mutual support. This divergence in expectations can lead to mismatched commitments that are difficult to reconcile [92, 93]. Age-based stereotypes further exacerbate these tensions: younger residents may view older adults as dependent or resistant to change, while older residents may see younger individuals as unreliable or disengaged [94]. Even subtle assumptions of this kind can erode trust and weaken the reciprocity essential for sustainable intergenerational housing. Without intentional norms for dialogue, structured mentoring, or conflict-resolution strategies, these barriers may accumulate over time, ultimately threatening both social cohesion and the long-term sustainability of intergenerational communities [95].

7.2 Exclusion risks and limits of participation

Although intergenerational housing is often promoted as inherently inclusive, it carries significant risks of exclusion. Some projects adopt a narrow focus, reinforcing bonds only within specific groups rather than extending engagement to the broader community. Such insularity may unintentionally limit participation to those who are already familiar with, or culturally aligned to, the project's values and practices [96].

Economic barriers can limit participation in intergenerational housing. Co-housing and shared-equity models often favor middle-class participants with financial capacity, leaving economically vulnerable households at risk of exclusion. Ironically, these are the very groups that intergenerational housing initiatives aim to engage [92].

Exclusion also occurs along cultural, geographic, and identity-based lines. Minority ethnic groups and individuals with disabilities are frequently marginalized when initiatives implicitly cater to majority populations or neglect inclusive design. Geographic inequalities exacerbate these risks: projects are disproportionately concentrated in urban centers, while rural communities remain underserved due to zoning and planning restrictions. Taken together, these intersecting forms of exclusion illustrate that intergenerational housing cannot be assumed to be universally adaptable.

7.3 Institutional and regulatory barriers: Inertia and short-termism

Institutional inertia remains a significant obstacle to the broader adoption of intergenerational housing. Despite growing evidence of its social and economic benefits, governments have been slow to formally recognize or actively support such arrangements. As Simpson et al. observe, intergenerational living arrangements are not something that the government recognizes or helps families to pursue [97]. This lack of recognition translates into limited targeted funding, enabling policy frameworks, and long-term planning strategies [97].

Structural and regulatory barriers provide a tangible example of this inertia. Zoning regulations in many jurisdictions continue to restrict mixed-use or mixed-age developments, particularly in low-density suburbs. Rooted in outdated assumptions about residential patterns, these rules favor nuclear households and homogeneous communities, while innovative models that integrate housing, social, and care functions face delays, ambiguity, and financial uncertainty [81].

Closely linked to institutional inertia is the dominance of short-termism in both policy and research. Funding mechanisms often prioritize immediate cost savings

over long-term social benefits, leaving initiatives reliant on temporary or fragile support. Similarly, research evaluations frequently focus on short-term attitudinal changes rather than the cumulative outcomes of sustained engagement. Lawrence (1981), for instance, cautioned that studies relying on single interviews or brief encounters underestimate the transformative potential of ongoing intergenerational contact [98]. Such methodological short-termism weakens the evidence base and reinforces institutional reluctance to invest. As a result, policymakers may perceive intergenerational housing as experimental or peripheral rather than as a strategic solution to demographic aging and social cohesion. Overcoming these barriers requires more than demonstrating effectiveness; it demands a cultural shift in governance, from reactive, short-term responses to proactive, long-term investment in bridging generations. Without such a shift, intergenerational housing risks remaining a marginal practice rather than a central pillar of sustainable aging policy.

8. Summary of key lessons

8.1 Policy recommendations and government initiatives

Advancing intergenerational housing requires a comprehensive, multi-level governance framework that integrates policies across international, national, and local levels. Rather than relying on fragmented initiatives, governments should strategically align resources, standards, and incentives to ensure housing systems actively foster intergenerational interaction, strengthen social cohesion, and promote active aging.

At the international level, global policy frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide essential guidance. In particular, SDG 10 (reduced inequalities) and SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities) highlight the importance of inclusive and accessible living environments that support all generations. These goals underscore the need for policies that prevent the isolation of older adults by embedding them within dynamic, multi-generational communities. As Sánchez-Cazalla and Gutiérrez-Domingo note, the adoption of the SDGs in 2015, alongside the World Health Organization's Decade of Healthy Aging (2021–2030), marked a critical step in incorporating intergenerational perspectives into global aging agendas [26].

In the context of intergenerational housing, local governments play a crucial role in translating national and international directives into tangible community outcomes [99, 100]. They can incentivize such initiatives through subsidies, tax benefits, and flexible zoning regulations, while also linking housing strategies with healthcare, social services, and financial assistance. This integrated approach supports the creation of holistic communities where older adults retain access to essential services and opportunities for social participation. Hillcoat-Nallétamby et al. stress the importance of promoting “mixity,” the cohabitation and interaction of multiple generations, over age-segregated housing schemes [59]. Municipalities can operationalize this principle through urban planning and land-use policies that facilitate the construction of adaptable, inclusive spaces for intergenerational exchange.

Yet, cultural and generational attitudes toward privacy, independence, and autonomy may present challenges to multi-level governance. Overcoming these barriers requires governments to extend their role beyond housing policy and implement cultural strategies that reshape societal values and normalize cohabitation

across generations. As Cheng and Yan illustrate through China's Family-Based Old Age Care Policy, linking housing initiatives with cultural frameworks, such as state-supported childcare and eldercare, can reinforce intergenerational solidarity, strengthen family networks, and enhance community cohesion [101]. Encouraging family participation in co-living, whether through formal housing schemes or informal arrangements, addresses practical needs and emotional well-being. It also helps deepen bonds across generations.

8.2 Actionable guidelines for planners, architects, and developers

For intergenerational housing initiatives to succeed, planners, architects, and developers must look beyond the physical form of housing to also address the social dynamics that sustain community life. At the core of intergenerational design lies flexibility, as spaces must evolve in step with residents' changing needs. Cheng and Yan highlight the importance of "bi-directional design": layouts that are multifunctional and adaptable, supporting coexistence and mutual assistance between younger and older generations [101]. Similarly, Tarpio and Huuhka note that flexibility in both common areas and private units is essential to ensuring the longevity and continued relevance of intergenerational communities, highlighting how adaptable design supports evolving needs and sustained social interaction [102].

Equally essential are safety and accessibility. As Haryadi and Husin emphasize, circulation systems should reflect elderly mobility patterns, complemented by features such as non-slip flooring, wide doorways, handrails, and appropriate lighting [47]. Enhancing these measures, the integration of smart technologies, from voice-activated systems to fall-detection sensors, allows older adults to retain independence while offering convenience to younger residents, provided that such tools remain intuitive and adaptable [101].

Beyond functionality, successful intergenerational housing must cultivate social connection and meaningful interaction. Shared facilities, such as gardens, libraries, and kitchens, combined with organized activities like arts or gardening workshops, foster cooperation, intergenerational learning, and a sense of community [26, 47]. This is consistent with findings by Manzo and Perkins, who argue that the design of collective spaces is central to developing place identity and belonging, motivating residents to engage more deeply with their communities [103]. At the same time, privacy must be carefully safeguarded through well-considered public-private divisions, ensuring personal autonomy without isolating residents from community life [101].

Finally, sustainability operates both as a design imperative and a shared social value. Energy-efficient construction, green roofs, water-saving systems, and community gardens not only reduce environmental impact but also promote physical health, psychological well-being, and intergenerational solidarity [59, 104]. By embracing this holistic approach, planners and developers can create living environments that are responsive to demographic realities while nurturing resilient, inclusive, and supportive communities across all generations.

8.3 A model for evaluation: Metrics of success and inclusion

Evaluating the effectiveness of intergenerational housing requires a comprehensive framework that captures both quantitative and qualitative

dimensions. Such an approach enables policymakers, planners, and developers to assess not only structural outcomes but also the lived experiences and well-being of residents. A holistic evaluation ensures that housing initiatives genuinely foster inclusion, improve well-being, and strengthen social cohesion across generations.

As Sánchez-Cazalla and Gutiérrez-Domingo suggest, pretest and posttest assessments using validated instruments, such as the UCLA Loneliness Scale, the Satisfaction with Life Scale, and the PHQ-9, allow researchers to monitor changes in emotional well-being and mental health over time [26]. These indicators are central to one of the key aims of intergenerational housing: reducing loneliness and promoting social connectedness. Structured activities, as well as spontaneous intergenerational interactions, play a vital role in alleviating isolation and fostering a stronger sense of belonging.

Physical and cognitive health outcomes serve as additional markers of success. Regular assessments of mobility, healthcare utilization, and the prevalence of depression or anxiety reveal how intergenerational living environments contribute to healthier lifestyles. Design features such as non-slip flooring, safe circulation paths, and accessible layouts further reinforce residents' well-being by reducing the risk of accidents and supporting independence [47]. Additionally, proximity to public transport and spaces that encourage social interaction reinforce a sense of belonging and community among residents [47, 103].

Beyond individual outcomes, success extends to broader community engagement and the development of social capital. Volunteer opportunities, co-created events, and mutual support systems foster networks of trust and reciprocity, which enhance social cohesion within intergenerational housing models [105]. Equally important is inclusiveness in design, which enables residents of all ages and abilities to participate fully. Furthermore, energy-efficient construction, green roofs, water-saving systems, and community gardens reduce environmental impact while promoting physical health, psychological well-being, and intergenerational solidarity [59, 104]. Regular monitoring of affordability, long-term financial stability, and integration into the wider community ensures that projects remain socially meaningful, economically feasible, and resilient over time.

Looking forward, evaluation frameworks must also account for the contribution of intergenerational housing to the rights and prospects of future generations. In line with the *United Nations Declaration on the Responsibilities of the Present Generations Toward Future Generations* [10] and the Brundtland Commission's principle of sustainable development [106], indicators of success should not be limited to present outcomes of inclusion and well-being. They should also capture the extent to which housing models mitigate intergenerational inequities, sustain long-term social solidarity, and advance environmental responsibility. Recent scholarship further underscores that intergenerational initiatives provide enduring benefits across age cohorts, thereby supporting both today's aging populations and those yet to come [26, 62]. From this evaluative perspective, intergenerational housing is best understood as both a response to immediate demographic challenges and a forward-looking investment in the resilience and equity of future generations. In conclusion, intergenerational housing is neither a simple policy instrument nor merely a design solution; it is a long-term social project intertwining cultural values, health imperatives, and sustainability goals. Its success depends on balancing economic feasibility with inclusiveness, embedding respect, reciprocity, and dialogue at the

heart of co-living arrangements, and continuously monitoring outcomes across social, health, and environmental dimensions.

9. Conclusion and future directions

Intergenerational housing is more than a housing typology; it functions as a social infrastructure that strengthens solidarity, fosters sustainability, and enhances community resilience. While structural pressures create the conditions that make such housing models necessary, socio-cultural orientations determine their meaning and legitimacy within communities. Moreover, health and care imperatives turn intergenerational living from an optional choice into a pressing necessity.

Beyond immediate financial benefits, intergenerational housing offers far-reaching social and environmental advantages. By optimizing the use of space, reducing resource consumption, and fostering collective capabilities, it contributes to more sustainable and resilient communities. However, its significance extends beyond practical efficiencies: intergenerational housing should be understood as both an innovative response to population aging and a moral and practical commitment to intergenerational justice. Its long-term success hinges on the degree to which it strengthens solidarity across age groups, safeguards resources for future generations, and helps build societies that are equitable, inclusive, and sustainable.

Achieving these outcomes, however, requires aligning institutional and community capacities with inclusive governance, flexible legal frameworks, and participatory processes. In addition, cross-sector coalitions, affordability mechanisms, and engagement in co-design can convert its immediate benefits into enduring community assets. **Figure 4** presents the research framework, illustrating the main drivers, enabling factors, and limiting conditions that shape intergenerational housing.

At the same time, this study has several limitations that must be acknowledged. Built primarily on secondary evidence, it relies on qualitative synthesis rather than primary data collection, which limits the ability to draw causal inferences due to the heterogeneity of study designs and contexts. Despite efforts to ensure broad coverage, English-language and indexed sources remain overrepresented, while gray literature and locally grounded, non-indexed initiatives may have been overlooked. The selected time frame (1980–2025) further constrains historical depth, and the transferability of findings is influenced by variations in cultural, policy, and market contexts. In addition, the conceptual framework presented here is interpretive and requires empirical validation across diverse settings and over time. While these limitations delineate the scope of the study's claims, they simultaneously highlight key avenues for future research.

Looking ahead, advancing the field will require both empirical rigor and practical innovation. Longitudinal and mixed-method evaluations are essential to capture the cumulative impacts of intergenerational housing on well-being, moving beyond short-term assessments. Future research must also prioritize equity and inclusion by examining the barriers faced by low-income, rural, minority, and disabled populations, while co-designing affordability and accessibility standards

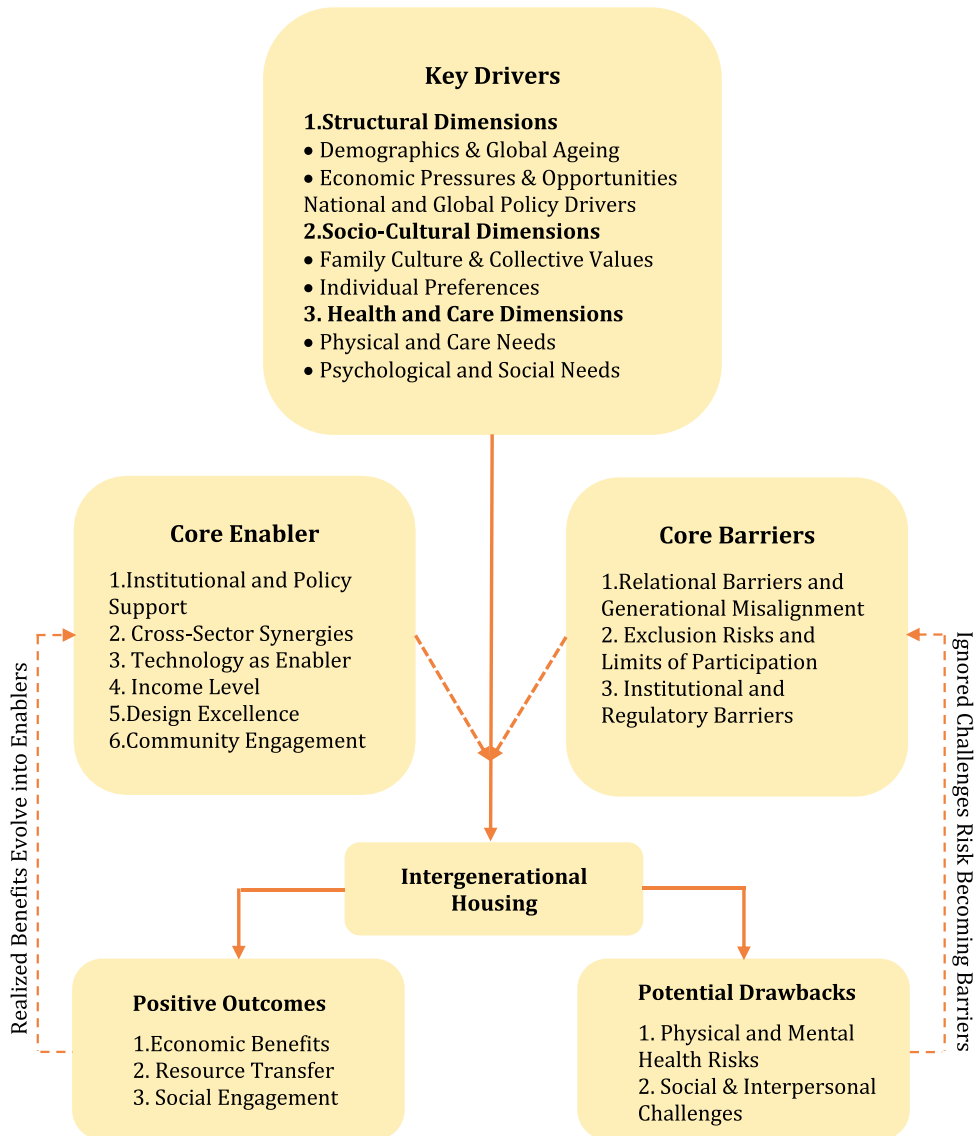


Figure 4.
 Research framework: dynamics of intergenerational housing.

that prevent middle-class exclusivity. Furthermore, comparative policy learning across different welfare regimes and local contexts can help identify strategies that are scalable and transferable, without compromising cultural or institutional specificity.

Taken together, these insights frame intergenerational housing as far more than a response to demographic change; it represents a forward-looking investment in justice across generations. By fostering strong connections between age groups today, while simultaneously safeguarding opportunities and resources for future generations, intergenerational housing charts a path toward resilient, inclusive, and sustainable communities.

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Chapter 4

The Abolition of the *Hoju* System and Intergenerational Conflict in South Korea

Eon-Ha Park

Abstract

The abolition of the *hoju* (호주제) system in 2005 marked a watershed moment in South Korea's legal and cultural history. Originally institutionalized during the Japanese colonial period and reinforced in post-liberation Korea, the *hoju* system designated the male "head of household" as the legal representative of the family, thereby embedding patriarchal authority and limiting women's legal individuality. While administrative in function, the system symbolized deeply rooted Confucian values that prioritized paternal lineage and suppressed gender equality. As South Korea underwent rapid industrialization and democratization after the Korean War, feminist organizations, civil rights activists, and legal scholars increasingly challenged the system's constitutionality. They argued that it violated principles of human dignity, equality, and international commitments to gender rights. In 2005, the Constitutional Court of Korea declared the *hoju* system unconstitutional, framing its abolition as essential to advancing democratic and constitutional principles. Beyond its legal significance, the reform highlighted broader cultural shifts and intensified intergenerational tensions. Older generations, influenced by Confucian ideals of hierarchy and filial piety, often perceived the reform as destabilizing traditional family structures. Younger Koreans, by contrast, embraced the change as a necessary dismantling of patriarchal norms and an affirmation of individual rights. This chapter discusses the abolition of *hoju* in Korea as a case study in how legal reform can function both as a reflection of societal transformation and as a catalyst for cultural change, underscoring the dynamic interplay between law, tradition, and modernity in Korea's ongoing negotiation of identity, family, and gender equality.

Keywords: *hoju* system, gender equality, Confucian values, legal reform, intergenerational conflict

1. Introduction

The rapid social and economic transformation of South Korea in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries has brought with it significant changes in legal structure, family dynamics, and societal values. In particular, the 2005 abolition of the *hoju* (호주제) system for individual and familial registration – which institutionalized a family model based on hierarchy, patriarchal inheritance, and filial piety – represents

a landmark in the nation's family law reform. The Confucian values enshrined in the *hoju* system served as a stabilizing force during Korea's post-war recovery; however, they have increasingly come into conflict with evolving democratic and egalitarian ideals. Cho [1] notes that reforms like the abolition of *hoju* do not merely revise legal codes; they also reflect profound cultural and ideological shifts within society. This chapter discusses the relationship between the abolition of the *hoju* system and intergenerational conflict in South Korea, focusing on how legal reform can both reflect and intensify cultural transformation.

2. Research questions

1. What are the implications of the abolition of the *hoju* system in South Korea?
2. How has the abolition of the *hoju* system affected intergenerational relations in Korean society?
3. To what extent do institutional or policy changes require time to implement?

3. Background

The *hoju* system originated from a blend of traditional Confucian values and colonial legal structures. During the Japanese colonial period (1910–1945), the Japanese *koseki* (family registry) system was imposed on Korea, which emphasized patriarchal lineage and administrative control of families [2]. After liberation, South Korea retained and localized this structure in its 1953 Civil Code. Under this system, women and children were registered as dependents of the *hoju*. In addition to reinforcing a hierarchical, male-centered family model, the system also functioned as a legal mechanism that denied women equal standing in matters such as inheritance, parental rights, and family identity [3].

As South Korea modernized rapidly after the Korean War, voices critical of the *hoju* system grew louder. Feminist movements, civil rights activists, and legal scholars began to question the constitutionality of a system that institutionalized gender discrimination. Some argued specifically that the system violated Article 36(1) of the South Korean Constitution, which stipulates that “marriage and family life shall be entered into and sustained on the basis of individual dignity and equality of the sexes” [4].

Key legal concerns with respect to the application of the *hoju* system included inheritance inequality, child custody and family identity, as well as the restrictions that the system imposed on women's legal agency. Under *hoju*, sons were legally favored over daughters in matters of family succession and ancestral rites. Similarly, children were automatically assigned their father's surname and lineage, thereby marginalizing the maternal role. Moreover, married women could not act as legal representatives of their families without the *hoju's* consent [3].

In the 1990s and early 2000s, such criticisms inspired the Korean Women's Associations United (KWAU) and other feminist groups to spearhead a campaign to abolish the *hoju* system. Through public protests, legal advocacy, and strategic

alliances with politicians and media, these groups framed the system as a remnant of feudal patriarchy that was incompatible with a modern democratic state [34]. Cho [1] notes that these movements did not merely target legal revision; they represented part of a larger feminist awakening in South Korea that sought to deconstruct traditional gender roles across institutions, from the household to the workplace.

The abolition of the *hoju* system and the subsequent implementation of the Family Relation Registration System in Korea have fundamentally reshaped the legal framework governing family relations [5]. These reforms have prompted a reorientation of judicial reasoning in the field of family law, particularly in relation to the principles of human dignity, gender equality, personal autonomy, and the protection of children's rights. As a result, a growing body of jurisprudence from both the Supreme Court and lower courts has underscored the emerging primacy of the "best interests of the child" as the guiding principle in resolving disputes concerning custody, guardianship, and surname changes.

Historically, the surname functioned as a legal marker of paternal lineage, thereby reinforcing the patriarchal character of Korean family law. However, the increasing recognition of women's rights, coupled with the rise of individualism, has diminished the legal and cultural weight of patrilineality. In contemporary jurisprudence, the surname is regarded more as a marker of individual identity than as a symbol of paternal descent [6]. Moreover, the diversification of family structures – through remarriage, adoption, and the rise of single-parent households – has complicated the application of traditional family law principles. In such contexts, children frequently encounter disadvantages when restrictions on surname changes prevent them from fully integrating into new familial environments. Courts have acknowledged that prohibiting children from adopting the surname of a stepfather or adoptive father can create legal and social hardships, thereby undermining the constitutional guarantees of personal dignity and equality [4]. Specifically, the Constitutional Court has emphasized that denying the possibility of surname changes in cases of remarriage or adoption constitutes an infringement on personal rights, particularly the right to personality. In other words, since a surname is closely tied to one's identity and social relationships, the forced continuation of the biological father's surname in all circumstances has been deemed unconstitutional [6].

4. Generational divide

In its landmark March 2005 ruling that found the system unconstitutional, the Constitutional Court of Korea stated that *hoju* violated the rights to human dignity, equality, and freedom of family formation as guaranteed under the Constitution [4]. This decision prompted the government to revise the Family Register Law. A transitional period was enacted, and on January 1, 2008, the *hoju* system was officially replaced with an individual-based registry that allows every citizen to be recorded independently of gender or family role [1]. This change promoted gender equality, but it also revealed underlying tensions between generations with differing views on tradition, authority, and individual rights. According to [1], this discord reflected a broader intergenerational rift with respect to the relationship between social modernization and traditional values. Thus, while younger generations largely embraced the legal change as a necessary progression toward equality, many older

South Koreans – raised under Confucian norms that emphasized lineage, hierarchy, and filial piety – expressed concern and resistance.

Indeed, for many older Koreans, the *hoju* system was a cultural institution that ensured revered features of traditional society, such as continuity of lineage and respect for elders and authority. It also represented the palpable social and familial order that many associated with recovery in the post-war era [2]. Many older Koreans also feared that the removal of the *hoju* system would erode traditional morality, lead to family disintegration, and confuse members of the younger generation about their familial duties [3].

In contrast, younger Koreans largely embraced the reform. They saw the *hoju* system as a symbolic barrier to gender equality, legal independence, and democratic progress. The generational divide was reflected in surveys, interviews, and media discourse, which revealed that young people often found themselves in ideological conflict with their parents and grandparents [1].

5. Intergenerational conflict

Conflict is an enduring social phenomenon that emerges across time and context, encompassing dimensions of class, gender, religion, race, region, labor, ideology, culture, and economy. During the last decade, intergenerational conflict has gained heightened visibility in Korea. According to the 2023 Social Integration Survey, 55.2% of respondents considered intergenerational conflict in Korean society to be serious, indicating widespread concern about tensions between younger and older cohorts [7]. This development reflects broader social transformations driven by rapid economic growth, demographic shifts, and technological advancements, which have combined to foster distinct value systems and lifestyles across generations.

Generational differences are natural and, to some degree, inevitable. Nevertheless, serious unresolved intergenerational conflict can generate substantial social costs and undermine long-term social integration [8, 9]. Intergenerational conflict refers to disputes or tensions that arise from differences in experiences, perspectives, and values between generational cohorts [10]. Conflict of this kind emerges when different age groups compete for such limited societal resources as employment opportunities, welfare benefits, and housing [9, 11]. According to social identity theory, individuals categorize themselves and others into groups, leading to in-group favoritism and out-group bias. In the context of intergenerational relations, younger cohorts may positively valorize their group while negatively stereotyping older groups, and vice versa, intensifying generational antagonism [12, 13].

The contact hypothesis suggests further that insufficient intergroup interaction fosters prejudice and misunderstanding. Limited meaningful contact between generations reduces opportunities for mutual understanding, thereby perpetuating stereotypes and reinforcing conflict [14]. By contrast, positive, structured contact under conditions of equal status, cooperation, and shared goals can help reduce prejudice and foster solidarity [15, 16].

5.1 Communication and interaction

Intergenerational communication is a factor in determining conflict intensity. Research emphasizes that both the frequency and the quality of communication

shape whether interaction mitigates or exacerbates conflict. While frequent, respectful dialogue fosters empathy and understanding [17, 18], poor or poorly managed communication can cause stereotypes and hostility to become entrenched [35] Jung, 2009; [10]. Generational integration, therefore, requires fostering conditions of equal status, cooperative engagement, and mutual respect [19].

5.2 Perceptions of justice and fairness

Justice is critical to maintaining social legitimacy. When one generation perceives itself as disadvantaged – whether in terms of distributive, procedural, or interactional fairness – conflict intensifies [20, 21]. In particular, younger generations in Korea, such as the MZ cohort (that is, Millennials and Generation Z collectively), increasingly express grievances about inequitable access to opportunities, which contributes to perceptions of generational injustice [Kim, 2017; 19].

5.3 Age discrimination and the generation gap

Age discrimination exacerbates intergenerational conflict by reinforcing stereotypes and marginalizing particular cohorts. Generational differences in values and lifestyles, especially in societies undergoing rapid social change, often manifest as structural discrimination [22, 23]. When generational gaps are expressed through ideological clashes or exclusionary practices, they escalate into systemic conflict [24].

6. International and comparative perspectives

The case of South Korea has drawn international interest as an example of how legal systems evolve under the influence of social movements and global human rights norms. Comparisons have often been made to reforms in Japan and Taiwan, where similar patriarchal registries persist. For example, in Japan, the *koseki* system still enforces surname unity in marriage, which feminist activists argue disadvantages women Fukikura, 2010. In Taiwan, meanwhile, family registry reforms implemented in 2008 achieved some egalitarian goals, yet traditional inheritance practices still favor sons in rural areas.

According to United Nations reports [25], South Korea's legal restructuring is frequently cited as a model for balancing tradition and international human rights obligations. The *hoju* case illustrates how countries can legally dismantle institutionalized patriarchy while navigating social resistance [26].

Kim [2] argues further that South Korea's abolition of the *hoju* system demonstrates how constitutional law can serve as a powerful tool to accelerate cultural change – though not without resistance. According to Kim, it also illustrates how generational conflict can become a critical site for negotiating national identity and legal values.

Legal systems, after all, do not develop in a vacuum; they both shape and are shaped by cultural values. The *hoju* system represented more than a family registry: it embodied Confucian principles of hierarchy, male authority, and filial piety [27, 28]. As such, its abolition was interpreted by many as a disruption of the traditional moral order rather than as a simple administrative update. One of the most complex outcomes of the reform was the tension it revealed between liberal democratic principles (e.g., individual rights and equality) and collective cultural values

(e.g., family hierarchy and lineage). This reflects a broader East Asian challenge, in which legal modernization often collides with Confucian traditions [29, 30]. In this regard, Park [31] argues that legal reforms in Korea typically follow a pattern of “constitutional idealism versus social conservatism,” wherein laws may be progressive in theory but face resistance in implementation due to entrenched cultural norms.

6.1 Intergenerational dialogue as a mechanism for legal reform

In the case of *hoju*, while the younger generation supported the reform on the basis of its contribution to individual, women’s, and children’s rights, many older Koreans viewed it as a betrayal of the nation’s cultural heritage. In this context, [1] emphasizes that the repeal of *hoju* was not merely a bureaucratic or gender-neutral decision, but one that struck at the heart of South Korean cultural identity. The move redefined what it meant to be part of a family – and even what constituted a family – in the legal and moral imagination of the nation. The reaction to the abolition of the *hoju* system revealed a communication gap between generations: younger individuals viewed it as an overdue liberation, while many members of the older generation perceived it as moral disintegration. Efforts to bridge this sort of divide require more than legislative change. As Lee [3] suggests, legal education, public engagement campaigns, and community-based forums can create spaces for inclusive dialogue. Narrative reconciliation, moreover, through which traditional values are reinterpreted in ways that align with contemporary norms, can foster more sustainable transitions.

According to Chung [32], the analysis of institutional and policy reform necessitates careful attention to the temporal or time-lag factors embedded within both the internal and external dimensions of reform processes. The pursuit of successful reform requires not only the identification of institutional constraints and environmental conditions but also a systematic examination of the time delays and sequential dynamics inherent in such elements. Only through this recognition can reform strategies be appropriately calibrated to the specific stages of policy implementation and institutional transformation.

Given that institutional and policy change is fundamentally dynamic, the formulation of effective reform strategies must adopt a temporally sensitive perspective. A time-lag approach enables policymakers to anticipate transitional challenges, mitigate resistance, and align reform initiatives with evolving socio-political contexts. In this regard, temporal analysis provides a critical foundation for the design of sustainable and successful institutional reforms, highlighting the fact that the trajectory of change is as significant as its substantive content.

6.2 Temporal congruence and preconditions for reform

Institutional reforms rarely generate immediate or straightforward outcomes.

When reforms falter or appear stagnant, the tendency has been to attribute failure to the resistance of vested interests or to bureaucratic inertia. While such explanations may capture part of the problem, they obscure deeper structural factors that condition the trajectory of institutional change. As Chung [32] argues, the success or failure of reform initiatives is more fundamentally shaped by two interrelated temporal dimensions: institutional congruence and the time-lagged dynamics of causal relationships.

The first dimension concerns the problem of temporal congruence. Policy design does not occur in a vacuum but unfolds within a web of institutional, social, and political factors. The effectiveness of reform depends not only on the internal coherence of policy content but also on the sequencing and prioritization of external conditions that shape implementation. Certain institutional prerequisites must be met – either prior to or simultaneously with the introduction of a new policy – for reform to succeed. Absent these conditions, reform efforts are likely to stagnate or collapse, regardless of their substantive quality. This perspective resonates with insights from historical institutionalism, which emphasizes the importance of timing, sequencing, and critical junctures in shaping institutional outcomes [33].

The second dimension involves the temporal dynamics of causality. For causal mechanisms to exert meaningful effects, the temporal intervals within which they operate must be acknowledged. Reforms often require extended periods before their intended effects become visible. Questions of timing – how long implementation takes, when outcomes are realized, and whether external conditions remain stable – are thus central to understanding reform trajectories. In periods of rapid social transformation, these temporal considerations become especially salient. Shifts in societal conditions can disrupt established causal linkages or destabilize congruence between institutional elements, thereby undermining reform efforts. Such dynamics highlight the fluidity of institutional arrangements and the fragility of reform processes in contexts of accelerated change.

7. Conclusion: Implications for future legal reforms

The abolition of the *hoju* system and the introduction of the Family Relation Registration System represent a paradigm shift in Korean family law. These reforms signify a decisive move away from patriarchal, lineage-based principles toward a system grounded in human dignity, gender equality, and the protection of children's rights. Indeed, since the abolition of the *hoju* system, significant progress has been made in safeguarding the rights and welfare of children from remarried families, adoptive families, and single-parent households. The increased flexibility regarding surname and family name changes has facilitated greater social inclusion and personal identity formation for children. Nevertheless, ongoing challenges remain in legal practice, as courts are continually required to navigate novel scenarios while upholding the overarching principle of the child's welfare.

In general, intergenerational conflict in Korea should not be understood solely as a by-product of demographic change but rather as a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by structural inequalities, cultural narratives, and communication patterns. While conflict is inevitable given the diversity of generational experiences, its escalation into entrenched antagonism undermines social cohesion. Importantly, intergenerational conflict in Korea mirrors global trends, in which younger cohorts face structural disadvantages in labor markets and housing, while older cohorts are often portrayed as beneficiaries of economic growth and welfare systems. These dynamics highlight the need for policies that balance resource distribution and promote cross-generational solidarity.

In light of the literature-based case study presented in this chapter, we can conclude that successfully addressing intergenerational conflict requires attention to at least the following three elements:

1. Enhancing communication through meaningful intergenerational contact based on equality and cooperation.
2. Promoting fairness in distributive and procedural justice to alleviate perceptions of structural inequality.
3. Combating age discrimination, thereby reducing stereotypes and fostering mutual respect across cohorts.

As also discussed, moreover, the outcomes of institutional reforms seldom appear simultaneously with their formal introduction. The embedding of new norms, practices, and technologies involves processes of diffusion, legitimation, and institutionalization, each of which unfolds over time. These processes do not follow uniform or predictable trajectories; rather, they exhibit diverse temporal dynamics shaped by context-specific factors. Furthermore, the durability of reforms varies widely, with some institutional arrangements stabilizing quickly and others remaining fragile or contested. As a result, time itself must be regarded as an intrinsic variable in institutional analysis. The success of reform thus depends on the capacity of policymakers to recognize temporal mechanisms, anticipate delays, and design strategies that accommodate the evolving nature of institutional congruence. By integrating considerations of temporal congruence and time-lagged causal dynamics, policy makers can better understand why reforms succeed or fail, as well as why outcomes often diverge from initial intentions. Ultimately, institutional change is not only a matter of substantive design but also of timing, sequencing, and adaptation within a dynamic temporal framework. Recognizing these dimensions is essential to advancing both the theory and practice of institutional reform.

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Getting Hold of “Traditional” Clothing across Generations

Paul Agoe

Abstract

This paper looks at the various means immigrants and their adult children use in getting hold of “traditional” clothing related to the parents’ country of origin, thus, an intergenerational way of analysing means of acquiring these material objects. The paper focuses on the case of Ghanaians in Germany, and typically on the *kente* and wax print clothes being the material objects. It brings out the relevance of these material objects for which they are obtained and answers the research question, ‘what ways do immigrant parents and their children utilise to acquire ‘traditional’ clothing from their home countries?’ The main source of data for this paper was drawn from two distinct research projects conducted by the author: one focusing on Ghanaians residing in Oldenburg, and the other examining the experiences of children of Ghanaian descent living in Germany with the clothing. Interviews served as the primary method of data collection in both studies. In analysing gathered data inductively, the first and second rounds of coding for both studies were undertaken using a software for qualitative data analysis, MAXQDA and further analysis processes for both studies were done manually. Results and analysis show that the two generations employ both same and different sets of means to acquire these objects. The core argument of the paper is that the immigrant family plays a crucial role in making the clothing available to its and other members from across borders. It also brings to the fore a material aspect of intergenerational relations in immigrant families.

Keywords: getting hold of clothes, across generations, clothing and dress, immigrant families, cultural transmission

1. Introduction

Migration, it has been observed, has become a “family based project” in diverse forms such as the collective relocation of family units, forming families after migrating, and providing forms of support to family members remaining in the country of origin [1]. Family migration is a growing phenomenon and has seen an increased interest in regulation from states [2] and an interest in scholarship. As has been noted, restructuring of family life, stretching, and reshaping of intergenerational relations in new socio-cultural settings is at the center of the migration experience [3]. Similarly, the experience of migration varies markedly across generations and often intensifying generational differences and contributes to shifts in family dynamics [1, 3]. In this respect, shifts in intergenerational

relations are a recurring consequence while at the same time reflect the core relationships that sustain family cohesion before, during, and after the migratory experience [4].

At the destination, i.e. in diaspora settings, immigrants establish communities with the intention of preserving their cultural heritage and recreating, to the extent possible, the familiar setting of their previous homeland [5]. In this context, the transmission of cultural norms, values, and practices across generations is pivotal in creating familial intergenerational bonds [6], and clothing can be a medium for this.

An observation from [7] is that there are too few studies that have explored impacts of migration on intergenerational relationships. But recently, there has been a growing interest in the nature of this subject in immigrant families by scholars, typically between immigrant parents and their children [8]. The collection in the edited book, *Citizenship, Belonging and Intergenerational Relations in African Migration* contributed to this by examining the reconstitution and transformation of family relations both in the host and home countries. Again, a central thread that run through the articles in the book is the influence of migration on transmitting family practices, culture, and tradition across generations, and how intergenerational relationships adapt and evolve in the context of migration [3] [9]. looked at intergenerational hair narratives and black adolescent identity development, arguing that the presence of mothers in hair stories suggest the critical role they play in shaping her study participants' overall perspectives on beauty, identity, and self-worth. However, there is a growing need for knowledge on issues of immigrant families and issues on their intergenerational relations [10].

Against this background, this paper contributes to this growing interest of intergenerational relations in immigrant families by looking at a material aspect of the phenomenon, specifically, in getting hold of "traditional" clothing and dress. With a focus on Ghanaian immigrants living in Germany and their adult children, it explores various strategies both generations employ in acquiring these material objects, seen as cultural, in their place of abode. It thus focuses on the linkages in obtaining these material objects across the generations. The paper highlights the pivotal role immigrant families play in making the clothing available to its and other members, including from across borders. It does so by answering the central research question, "what ways do immigrant parents and their children utilise to acquire 'traditional' clothing from their home countries?" The paper also argues that purchasing "traditional" clothing is a form of cultural transmission. This can be seen in line with an observation from the UN Declaration on Future Generations that many social, cultural and religious practices seek to safeguard future generations and promote intergenerational solidarity and responsibility [11]. This paper's contribution to this can be seen as a material aspect of cultural practice and solidarity.

Primary data for the paper was gathered from two different research projects conducted by the author, one on Ghanaians living in Oldenburg, and the other on children of Ghanaians living in Germany. Results highlight both same and different strategies both generations employ in acquiring the clothing. Among them, both buy wax prints from Europe and make with tailors in Ghana and in Germany or buy already made dresses. Generational differences are clear in forms and styles made. The fashionability of wax prints is a booster in making more clothes and dresses.

2. Intergenerational relations in migration contexts: Cultural transmission

There has been flourishing studies in the field of intergenerational relations and its subfields, including in intergenerational cultural transmission as an aspect of it [12]. The latter has been defined by [13 p.126] as "the way values, knowledge, and practices that are prevalent in one generation are transferred to the next generation". The author further emphasised that socialisation and transmission are not the same, classifying socialisation as part of intergenerational cultural transmission "insofar as it is part of the transmission belts and usually aims at ensuring a certain outcome" [13, p.129]. Major characteristics of intergenerational relations, according [14, p.548] are "familial norms of responsibility and feelings of closeness". According to [15], transmission of cultural knowledge and skills from the older to younger generation are important to be passed on because they have impact and benefits. The authors further identified "culturally relevant activities" in "strengthening relations across generations": songs, storytelling/myths, the spiritual world, animals, plants, skills in nature/home and handicrafts, community involvement, family cohesion, language, way of life, games, spending time with older people, traditions, and rituals [15]. Clothing can be seen under way of life [16]. looked at familial experiences with transnational intergenerational relations and found that various families have different experiences regarding transnational intergenerational communication based on life stage, linguistic capability, and socio-economic backgrounds.

In migration contexts [14], have summarised intergenerational relations in immigrant families as mainly between immigrant parents and their children born or raised in their receiving societies, and primarily hinging on intergenerational conflict and factors that shape it. This is characterised by mutual affection and support in disagreements and disputes between the generations in combining the two cultures they live in [10, p.26]. Additionally, there is the gendering of roles and boundaries, which both generations have to engage in processes of adaptation, conflict, and negotiation [17, p.12]. Adopting an intergenerational lens to migration, it has been argued, provides an insightful starting point for examining how migrant families integrate, seek resources, and anchor themselves within new surroundings [4, p. 166].

Furthermore, new dynamics of intergenerational relations in these settings are due to different and changing social, economic, cultural, and political conditions and arrangements which inherently affect intergenerational family structures and relationships as well as the individuals living within those families [14, 18]. Similarly, familial themes such as authority, communication, and cultural habits etc. must be reassessed and rearranged [10, p.11]. Consequently, differences in expectations and values are inevitable in raising children in a new sociocultural environment [17]. In these situations, reciprocity become a key aspect in intergenerational relations, with immigrant parents and their children providing support to one another based on their distinct social, economic and information resources [10, p.12]. In this respect, children of immigrants have been found to positively facilitate their parents' and whole family's integration into their host societies particularly through providing information about workings of the receiving society, helping with language, and finding social contacts through their contacts [10, p.12]. In other words, migration processes have been found to have a strengthening effect on intergenerational relations [19, p.1,701]. In all these, the transmission of core cultural traditions across generations is the central importance of the family group [4, p.173].

And the family, as the unit that signifies continuity in the migration process, is the place where familiar habits and items are preserved [10, p.22] and transmitted, including those on and relating to clothing.

According to [4, p.173], the intergenerational transmission of core cultural traditions and familial values and obligations across generations constitute a critical dimension that transcends national boundaries within existing research, revealing broader cultural processes rooted in immigrants' home society's traditions. While some families navigate and reconcile these cultural paradigms effectively, it is a source of intergenerational conflicts in others as these dynamics often give rise to discord between the normative frameworks of the host society and those of the country of origin. Thus, immigrant families face tensions and cultural challenges [3]. has Identified four of such primary obstacles; the loss of extended family support and socialisation, perceived dangers in the new culture around safety and supervision, changes in children's behaviour around independence and boundaries, and lastly, unfamiliar institutional structures and practices that require different types of parenting. These normally serve as the themes around which many intergenerational conflicts arise [14]. identify the specific issues of discipline and respect, parental worries about the corrupting influence of mainstream culture, parental pressure to marry within the ethnic group, high and often intense academic expectations for children, expectations of children to be cultural brokers for translating, mediating and interpreting, gender, class, and legal status. [17, p.9] also point out diminishing respect as a result of migration. To ease tensions, engaging in frequent and continuous negotiations regarding the space, borders and responsibilities, i.e. adjusting and relaxing boundaries of the second generations and their parents is necessary [10, 17]. Moreover, embracing new parenting approaches in the host society is key [17, p.12]. Such constructive attitudes of parents are thought to have positive effects on the general view of life and ambitions of their children [10, p.12].

Based on their studies on intergenerational relations of African immigrant families, [4, p.172] have stressed the pivotal role of the family in welfare provision in migration situations. They note that contemporary African migrant family structures are characterised by their multi-generational composition and geographically dispersed configurations. These exhibit a high degree of flexibility and fluidity, adapting to contextual conditions by oscillating between being more nuclear or being more extended. Providing welfare through these family structures, the authors argue, is manifested through enduring intergenerational dynamics, and is depicted by exchanges of gifts, obligations of debt, and moral sentiments of guilt. With the geographically dispersed configurations [4] and even those not dispersed, technological advancements are great tools in contributing to fostering intergenerational relations as they are radically changing our world, including through ICT [20].

3. Methodology

Primary data for this paper stem from two separate research projects conducted by the author. One focused on the significance of "traditional" clothing among Ghanaian immigrants living in Oldenburg, a city in north-western Germany [21, 22], carried out for a master's thesis. The other explored its meaning for children of Ghanaian immigrants in Germany [23], undertaken as part of a doctoral dissertation. The two studies are independent, with no overlap among participants. The first study, conducted between 2015 and 2017, included 13 participants – all Ghanaians residing in

	First Study		Second Study	
Gender (of all Participants)	Males	9	Males	8
	Females	4	Females	25
Generational cohort	First generations	12	First generations (significant others)	3
	Second generation	1	Second generations	30
Place of residence	All in and around Oldenburg		Bavaria	1
			Berlin	14
			Brandenburg	1
			Hamburg	1
			Lower Saxony	4
			North Rhine Westfalia (NRW)	11

Source: Fieldwork.

Table 1.
Table showing biographical and other data of research participants of both studies.

Oldenburg. The second, carried out between 2018 and 2024, involved 33 participants who were either born in Germany to at least one Ghanaian parent or had migrated to Germany as children (aged 0–12). The findings of both studies on the economy of clothing and dress are the focus of this paper. **Table 1** below gives a summary of the gender, generational cohort, and place of residence of participants of both studies.

Three first-generation participants from the second study were identified as “significant others” due to their influential roles within the Ghanaian communities of their respective cities, including their engagement with children of immigrants. In this paper, they are referred to as *3-B Male*, *SO* recognised for his leadership in organizing the Ghanaian community in his city; *4-B Male*, *SO* known for coordinating and actively participating in Ghanaian associations’ events within his region (these comprise various groups of people whose members mainly come from Ghana and have objectives they pursue. Such groups include Ghana Unions, clubs, women’s associations, churches, hometown associations etc.); and *31-B Female*, *SO* valued for her strong connection with children of Ghanaian immigrants and acknowledged as an “expert” in the study. *31-B Female*, *SO*’s expertise stems from her work in designing, producing, and selling African prints, cloth materials, and items of dress, which qualifies her interview as an expert interview.

Participants are identified in this paper as follows: *1-A Female* and *1-B Male* – the figures represent the sequence in which they participated in the respective study and the letters show which study, *A* for the first study and *B* for the second. *Male* and *female* show gender of the participant and *SO* mean “significant other” i.e. first generations who participated in the second study.)

Two participants from the second study have parental origins outside of Ghana. *8-B Female* is originally from Cameroon, while *32-B Female*’s mother is from Burkina Faso and a German father. They were included in the research due to the shared cultural meanings attributed to “traditional” clothing across the West African sub-region. In particular, wax prints are similarly valued in Cameroon for their color, texture, and patterns. Likewise, smocks (*fugu*) serve comparable cultural functions in both Ghana and Burkina Faso. Furthermore, Cameroonians represent the fifth-largest immigrant group from Sub-Saharan Africa residing in Germany [24, 25], underscoring their relevance within the broader context of the study.

In this paper, the terms “*children of immigrants*”, “*children in migrant families*”, and “*second-generations*” are used interchangeably to describe individuals born in Germany to at least one Ghanaian immigrant parent. Nonetheless, the expressions “*children of immigrants*” and “*children in migrant families*” are preferred, because these individuals have not have migration experience themselves like their parents [26]. It is important to note that these terms refer to adults.

Both studies employed a qualitative research design, chosen for its effectiveness in exploring complex topics in depth [27]. Rather than adhering to a single traditional methodology, a variety of qualitative tools were utilised. For instance, ethnographic techniques such as observations and field notes (jottings) were used during data collection, while the analytical approach aligned more closely with constructivist grounded theory [28]. Participants in both studies were recruited using the snowball sampling method. The first study began with individuals personally known to the researcher, with initial participants selected based on familiarity and established rapport, who then referred others. In the second study, recruitment began through convenience sampling – the first participant was selected due to her easy accessibility. Subsequent recruitment expanded through her recommendations, i.e. an email mailing list (move-on-up@listi.jpberlin.de) and further referrals from friends and colleagues. Additionally, social media platforms – including Facebook groups and a *WhatsApp* channel – were leveraged to reach more participants.

In both studies, interviews served as the primary method of data collection, complemented by informal discussions and photographs. In the first study, the interviews explored the relevance of “traditional” clothing within a foreign context, while in the second, they centered on the meanings ascribed to these cultural artifacts by the participants. **Table 2** provides an overview of data collection tools used in gathering data for both studies.

	First Study	Second Study
1. Number of participants	13 (two interviewed together)	33 (two interviewed together)
2. Interviews	15 (including three follow ups)	36 (including four follow ups)
a. Period interviews were conducted	December 2016 – May 2017	January 2019 – November 2020
b. Type of interviews	Face-to-face	12 Face-to-face
	Telephone interview	1 Whatsapp Audio
		Facebook Audio
		Whatsapp Video Telephone interview
c. Form of interviews	Semi-structured	Semi-structured
d. Average length of interviews	30 minutes	44.5 minutes
3. Informal discussions	2	6

Source: *Fieldwork*.

Table 2.
Table showing data collection techniques employed in conducting both studies.

In both studies, interviews were primarily recorded using a tape recorder, with the exception of one interview in the second study, for which detailed notes were taken. Informal discussions were not audio recorded but documented through field jottings to maintain accuracy and detail [29]. All recorded interviews were transcribed, and during the transcription process, emerging themes and leads informed subsequent interviews – serving both to refine emerging categories and support theoretical sampling [28, p. 96,100]. Initial and focused coding were done inductively [28, 30], supported by the qualitative data analysis software MAXQDA to generate analytical categories. Further analytic steps, including sorting categories into themes and grouping themes into topics aligned with the respective research questions, were conducted manually. Informal discussions and memos were integrated into the overall dataset for analysis.

4. Getting hold of “traditional” clothing and dress across generations

Intergenerational relations in immigrant families have predominantly been examined through the lens of interactions between immigrant parents and their children [14]. This section highlights a material aspect of this, and more specifically, on acquiring “traditional” clothing. It probes diverse ways both generational cohorts employ in acquiring the clothing, highlighting both similar and different means used.

4.1 Similarities

4.1.1 Through Social Media

The relevance of technological advancements in fostering intergenerational relations [20] was realised in respect to obtaining clothing in both studies. In this stead, mainly through social media, which has become a huge resource in many ways, including in relation to clothing and dress. There are similarities in the use of its sites, handles, and pages in regard to obtaining “traditional” clothing between the two generations. For the older generation, *WhatsApp* is typically employed in sharing clothes and ideas about them, and particularly for those who sell, in advertising stock to customers and potential buyers. The clients use the same medium in choosing their preferences. A participant in the first study explained:

‘some also sell here, for them, they do not sell all the time, once a while, clothes are brought to them and they sell, mine is specifically brought to me from Holland to sell here. When they are brought, I show them to people here, and most like African wear, so they’re interested and make orders, ...I know a lot of people, Africans, and have their contact numbers, even if I don’t have and see one person in town, I ask for their numbers to call them, or ask them to inform them that I have new consignment of wax prints,...now there’s Whatsapp, so I send it to them on Whatsapp, and reply with their preferences back on Whatsapp (12-A Female).

For children of immigrants, *WhatsApp* is commonly used to share information like preferred designs, updated body measurements, or sewing costs with especially their personal tailors mainly in Ghana, and who they maintain contact with. These information are also shared with siblings living in Ghana who make clothes for them. Both generations utilise the *WhatsApp* platform in ways fit for them. Though the

older generation was not found to be using *WhatsApp* as their children, that cannot be ruled out. Data for both studies indicate that participants in general personally know or have relatives and friends who are tailors, and for those of the second study, they follow them and others on social media where they can place orders online. The younger generation also use social media in other ways in connection with clothing, which I have discussed in Chaps. 4.5 and 6.5 of my thesis [23]. These subchapters are titled “*Sociocultural Influences on Dress*” and “*Social Media and Clothing and Dress*” respectively. This practice can be seen as transnational intergenerational relations [16] since the tailors interacted with are of the older generation. Though both generations may use social media handles differently in relation to obtaining the clothing, an intergenerational aspect seen here is the mutual conversations leading up to choosing particular clothing and the preferred forms and styles. Consequently, technology is helping people connect [20] to acquire clothing, including those in transnational family situations.

4.1.2 From Tailors

Besides social media, both generations make clothes with tailors in Ghana and in Germany. This is a normal practice for Ghanaians and those in the diaspora, with the older generation much familiar with this since it was part of their socialisation. This has also extended unto their children. “Tailor” is used synonymously with “seamstress” to refer to a person who makes or sews dresses for a fee. In Ghana and among her diaspora, a male is popularly known as “tailor” and a female a “seamstress” or ‘dressmaker’. “Tailors” mostly specialise in male attires and “seamstresses” in female dresses but any may specialise in the clothing of the other gender. Both are also sometimes referred to as “fashion designers”.

Making clothes in Ghana was found to be popular among participants of both studies. The older generation make clothes for themselves and their children during visits, mostly on their own: *“we try to inculcate our traditional ways into them to learn ours as well so when they grow, they know where they’re from. It’s important for us here to let them know, so mostly when I go home, I sew extra African wear for them . . . It’s difficult to get someone to bring their sizes, but mostly anytime I go, or my husband goes home, we sew African dresses for them”* [12-A Female]. 27-B Female also stated, *‘mostly if you went there with your parents, they will make sure that you have like Sunday dresses that you can wear to church’*. At other times, the parents make upon request from their children; *“he always asks me ‘what do you want?’ He tells me ‘I’m going to Ghana which colour, which style do you want’, then I tell him and he brings me what I want. . . every time he went to Ghana, he asked me whether I want something, and I often said yeah, bring me t-shirt, bring me a skirt or something, and he does it”* [1-B Female]. Ghanaian immigrants also bring what their children have left with their tailors or buy already made on their own or on requests. Parents making or buying the clothing for their children depict an intergenerational cultural transmission [12, 13] i.e. carries prevalent values, knowledge, practices (cultural), and information to the next generation [13, 31] in material ways and in the the acquisition of the material objects. It also shows the parents, as part of the family group in transmitting core cultural traditions to the next generation, as one of its central importance [4, p.173]. Again, this signifies the family’s role in preserving familiar habits and items [10], in this instance, a habit of making clothes (with tailors), which is not a common practice at the destination society.

Children of immigrants also directly make clothes from their (personal) tailors or buy already made or make and bring along on visits: 27-B Female stated: *“mostly after the visit in Ghana, I definitely always come with stuff that you got sewn there”*. 22-B Male added, even as *“a student, I was not rich, but I managed to get enough clothes”*. These were corroborated by 4-B Male, S.O; *“and it’s also something we know that when they [children of immigrants] are returning, in most cases they bring a lot of these dresses along which have been sewn in Ghana”*. In making the clothing, sometimes, the form and style have to be brokered, they express their preferences both verbally and visually, while the tailors also contribute their own perspectives leading to a collaborative compromise: *“it’s rather classical European, it’s shorter than normally dresses are in Ghana, I had to negotiate with the tailor, she didn’t want to make it that short, yeah”* [1-B Female]. The conversations with tailors leading to the final outfit is something 22-B Male admires; *“and then there’s also a kind of communication between you and the tailor. So for example, this is a really simple design, but I asked him (his tailor) a very long time for this, because he also has his own idea. So I liked this kind of interaction with the tailors, because you discuss with him, you want this, he wants that for you, that kind of stuff”*. In the end, their shared vision, i.e. his imagination and the tailor’s craftsmanship resulted in a beautiful outfit. Some of the personal tailors are relatives, like 11-B Female, who shared what she normally does: *“well, for me, I just take a screenshot of what I see and like and keep it. And at some point, I say to my cousin, okay, I liked this part of this picture and on that, this part. And then I’ll tell her to put it altogether. And then she will draw it and show me, and I’ll be like, that’s exactly what was in my mind”*. 22-B Male enjoys this type of interaction with the tailors due to the creative approach they take in crafting something uniquely suited to each client.

Majority of participants of both studies prefer making their “traditional” African clothing in Ghana, *“there are even tailors here who sew, but most buy from Ghana when they get there or sew from there”* [3-A Male]. Some participants in the second study who are in transnational family situations, like 9-B Female and her elderly sister who lives in Ghana makes clothes for her. She asks for her measurements, and she sends to her sister via *Whatsapp*, and her mother brings them and other clothes to her from visits. 12-B Female has one specific tailor she likes to sew from in her hometown, but he is far away from Accra, so she now sews from another in the capital. 30-B Female added, *“I look up on social media, which style I want to buy in Ghana. Then I go to the tailor and then I tell them I need this style and they do it for me. I can also send them a picture from here that I need this and they have my measurements, they will do it for me”*. 17-B Female also makes her “traditional” clothes from Ghana always: *“I don’t buy them from here. And I also don’t have a tailor here who would do it for me, so I always do it in Ghana”*. Similarly, 24-B Female also buys and sews African clothing only in Ghana. 22-B Male who *“actually don’t own any European top overcoat,”* and *“literally cannot go out without having some African cloth on”* bought or made them in Ghana. He does not *“have any shirt, sweatshirt or anything that is not from Ghana except one or two”* a friend brought him from Liberia. Children of immigrants reported often purchasing wax prints in Germany, send them to Ghana for tailoring, and then return with the made clothes. Others choose to buy the materials directly there and have them sewn, and carry the made clothes back. These underlie the significant role immigrant families play in making made clothes available to family members, including their children. It also shows an intergenerational transfer of culture.

It is not only the forms and styles that are negotiated with tailors, participants in both studies also negotiate the cost of making clothes, specifically the artisanal labour involved in sewing. *27-B Female* reported mostly giving extra money as a sign of gratitude: “I let him tell me what I have to pay, so that’s what I pay. And mostly what I do is like, I even give more because the price that they give me is mostly low for me, but they say like, this is the price. But I also give them some extra money because I want to tell them, or like, I want to give them the feeling that I appreciate their work”. The data for both studies point to cost, the relatively high cost of tailoring services in Germany heightens the preference for making clothes in Ghana. This active process of making African clothes stand in contrast to Western fashion norms, where clothing is typically purchased ready-made. For children of immigrants, strong relationships established with tailors in Ghana and the intention to support their livelihoods also play an important role in this choice. These clothes – whether tailored or purchased – typically make their way back to Germany through the return journeys of the individuals themselves, via friends, relatives, or acquaintances.

One interesting finding from the second study regarding making clothes is an inspiration garnered from the clothing: *31-B Female*, *SO* was spurred to start her business after observing people in *Friday Wear* as part of the “*National Friday Wear Programme*” on a visit to Ghana in 2012. She observed that wax prints were now being transformed into innovative and contemporary forms, styles, and designs beyond the traditional *kaba* and *slit* (women’s form of dress), which had previously dominated their usage prior to this initiative. These new forms and styles became popular. She also saw wax prints used to make other items like bags and shoes. These became attractive to her and “*just wanted everyone to wear African wear*”. Therefore, she decided to bring these to Germany, and more particularly, to mix with European styles. Similarly, *27-B Female* was inspired to use African clothing also on a visit by observing a peculiar usage after the “*National Friday Wear Programme*” was introduced:

“and when I was there in Ghana, I went out sometimes with my sister to her office, and they were having this kind of every Friday they would wear African wear. So I thought ok, that’s why it’s a common thing for Ghanaian people to wear their clothes on Friday. So this also made me to take this into me, I wasn’t wearing it every Friday in Germany then, but like at least once a week or once a while I would also take like a top and wear it with a normal jeans and people will be asking where did you buy it, even Germans would ask me and then I’ll tell them well, I got it made in Ghana and it’s like handmade and all that”.

These observations may be underlying factors for tailors to be up to date and make clothes into different and modern forms and styles appealing to the younger generation [32]. argue that *buy local* campaigns like the “*National Friday Wear Programme*” are to encourage the patronage of local products, and are national, regional, community or sectoral in nature. This paper furthers this proposition, that such campaigns can also go beyond these arenas to international, spreading unto diaspora communities, and these do not only remain among the immigrants, but also extends unto their children.

The “*National Friday Wear Programme*” initiative was introduced by the government of Ghana in 2004 with the aim of projecting a unique Ghanaian identity through the extensive use of local fabrics and designs and as business wear [33, 34]. It

sets Fridays for all public offices and the private sector, as much as practicable, to wear locally designed garments produced from locally manufactured fabrics, typically wax prints. It aimed at promoting made-in-Ghana goods and to revitalize the textiles and garments industry. Due to this policy, government ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) and other public institutions as well as private firms and institutions customize their logos, designs, and mottos etc. on wax prints from local textile manufacturing companies and employees use these as business or office wear on Fridays.

Participants of both studies make and sew clothes in Germany with tailors as well. Some of the first generations are tailors and run their businesses from shops they have opened. In the first study, I interviewed one in his shop (i.e. 4-A Male). During an observation for the second study in an Afro Shop, the attendant recommended a Gambian tailor who had recently moved to the city and worked near her shop to a customer (older generation). She mentioned that he tailored clothes for both men and women and “*he’s very good*”. Tailors in other European countries are also patronised; “*there are some in Bremen, but for me some from Belgium, my brother’s children are there so if I give it to them they sew and bring it to me*” (3-A Male).

Just like their immigrant parents, the younger generation also visit tailors from where they operate to make clothes, most participants in the second study know tailors and where to find them. 14-B Female observed that although some have dedicated shops, most in Hamburg work from home. This makes it difficult for her to refer her non-Ghanaian friends who show interest in having clothes made. 15-B Female also remarked that in the same way in Hamburg, most seamstresses in Berlin also work from home, and appointments usually need to be made in advance before bringing clothes for sewing.

The younger generation often choose their preferred forms and styles – particularly for wax prints based on fashion trends, online visuals, recommendations from tailors, and personal aesthetic preferences. Ghanaian tailors based in Germany browse online platforms for inspiration across various designs and integrate fashion influences from both Ghana and Germany when making clothes for their clients. Yet, many tailors predominantly draw on their own creativity and original concepts. This reflects a dynamic exchange in fashion, where styles featuring wax prints and other “traditional” clothing often originate in Ghana or other West African countries and flow into the diaspora and vice versa.

Tailoring services are commonly found in bigger cities. 3-B Male-SO shared that he personally knows three tailors who make clothes for both men and women. Similarly, 4-B Male-SO mentioned that his wife, a seamstress, has been making various styles of African wear for children in migrant families in primarily European formats such as trousers, shirts, evening gowns, and formal dresses. These garments are crafted using wax prints and *kente*. 5-B Female primarily makes her clothes in Ghana; however, with time constraints related to events, she makes clothes in Hamburg – where she was born and raised – and in Berlin, where she now resides and indicated that “*there are many tailors in Hamburg,*” giving her three distinct locations where she can have clothes tailored to her preferences.

14-B Female observed that tailors in Hamburg are modern and stylish, i.e., they make clothes in Western forms and styles, that “*they are on point*”. She noted that both long-established tailors in Germany and those who have recently migrated possess this capability. However, 24-B Female offers a counterperspective, suggesting that recently arrived tailors tend to be more attuned to contemporary

fashion trends in Ghana. This familiarity enables them to integrate current stylistic elements from both Ghana and Germany more effectively than their long-standing counterparts. Given that these two individuals reside in different cities, their assessments may reflect city-specific experiences or interactions and with a limited number of tailors. Nonetheless, these insights point to a broader tendency among Ghanaians in Germany to seek alignment with evolving clothing forms, styles, designs, and trends prevalent in Ghana.

The fashionable forms and styles can be observed through posters and fashion magazines of latest styles normally hanged or pasted on walls in tailors' shops [22], through the normal media, and social media. However, these are mostly preferred by the older generation. **Figures 1** and **2** are examples of forms and styles first generations prefer their "traditional" clothing to be made into.

The younger generation prefer to check fashionable forms and styles online and present for sewing: *"yea, social media has an influence because if I want to sew a dress, I check on the internet. Which style is available [trending, fashionable], this clothing is available, the styles I can sew, there are so many pictures online; google, Pinterest, and so on. It was not previously so, one had to go to a tailor or a seamstress and choose a design/style from pictures on the wall, but now you go and you choose fast"* (14-B Female).

Furthermore, immigrant churches play an active role in fostering clothing-related economic activities. Children of immigrants also engage in the acquisition and tailoring of church-specific themed wax prints and other clothing for the church's activities and events such as anniversaries. Such may also be for groups within the church and are normally designed with the church's logo or motto, or that of the group. It could also be pictures of notable people, edifices, or writings of the church. In fact, some of the churches produce these materials from textile companies in



Figure 1. On the left, a poster showing trendy “kaba” and “slit” forms and styles for women hanged in a tailor’s shop, and on the right, already made boubou for women and dashiki for sale in a tailors shop. source: fieldwork, pictures taken by author on 10th January, 2017.



Figure 2.
 The front and back of a fashion magazine, “homeland: african fashion magazine Vol. 2.” source: fieldwork, pictures taken by author on 31st may, 2019.

Ghana and carry to Germany for their members. Some also buy some of these for their relatives in Ghana. These wax prints are subsequently made into personalised styles and designs by tailors, some of whom are themselves members of the congregations.

One notable advantage of making clothes from a tailor, whether for religious or personal purposes, lies in the flexibility it offers for modifications and alterations, as well as its relatively lower cost, especially when made in Ghana, compared to purchasing already made clothing from retail outlets or online platforms. Nonetheless, a commonly reported drawback of patronising tailoring services in Germany study participants highlighted is the potential for delayed delivery of made clothes. This issue prompted individuals such as 27-B Female to discontinue patronage of local tailors due to dissatisfaction with timeliness; *“actually there are people who sew, but what I don’t like here is that they take a very long time to do the work that I request, and yes, I think that’s also the reason why I don’t sew here in Germany anymore”*. While such an experience cannot be generally attributed to all tailors, it does indicate deficiencies in customer satisfaction. Additionally, the high cost of tailoring in Germany is a significant deterrent, which led majority of research participants in both studies to make clothes in Ghana. For instance, despite many tailors in Berlin operating from home-based setups, the average cost of sewing a single outfit costs around € 50, so *“buying the cloth here, the cloth alone is like € 35 or € 40 for 6 yards and then going to sew alone, they charge like € 50 to € 60, so I don’t think a parent will buy the cloth and say ‘gye kɔ pam’ (go and sew). At the end you spend like 100 euros on an outfit”* (31-B Female, SO). Consequently, from an economic standpoint, tailoring clothes in Ghana is a more cost-effective option, particularly

when making outfits for an entire household. Wax prints are normally sold in yards, 6 yards as a half piece, or in 12 yards as full piece.

Aside the issues that revolve around the making of clothes with tailors discussed above, other observations about the theme came up in the second study. For instance, 22-B Male noted of making clothes from tailors: *“one of the things that I enjoy about these clothes, I mean, they are tailored, they’re literally made for me, for my body. So I can wear something that I choose the fabric, the design, then I choose the tailor who made it for me, but it’s so much more personal, it’s literally mine, it might not even fit you”*. He thus highlights the individualised, customised, and tailored aspects of “traditional” African clothing, emphasising the personal decisions involved in achieving preferred styles and fits. These interactions can be seen as an intergenerational cultural transmission [13, 15], since the tailors look at the designs/motifs in the cloth or their proverbial meanings to create outfits at the intersection of these and the client and to fit him/her.

In another vein, 26-B Male observed that tailoring services are predominantly utilised by the older generation, whereas younger individuals tend to favour purchasing ready-made clothes, stating; *“I don’t think they go to a tailor that much”*. This viewpoint is based on the clientele base of his mother, a seamstress, whose services are largely patronised by the first generations. However, this perspective may not be generally applicable, particularly in the context of children of immigrants, as 4-B Male-SO mentioned his wife sews for the second generations as well.

5-B Female remarked that making handwoven *kente* requires a significant level of craftsmanship: *“I do like it [‘kente’] a lot but the issue is it’s expensive and not everyone knows how to sew, how to put it together. I have heard it’s not a simple thing to sew. You find a good tailor to do it, if it’s messed up it’s messed up. It’s not like the African print that you can change it into a different style”*. As a result, not every tailor possesses the expertise to craft *kente* into the desired styles, particularly those tailored for women. From the discussions above on making clothes, the art of making clothes may be seen as part of “culturally relevant activities” in “strengthening relations across generations” [15] since tailors, whether in Ghana or Germany, are mostly of the older generation and make for the younger generation.

4.1.3 Already Made

In addition to utilising social media to acquire clothes and making from tailors, already made or sewn clothes/dresses can be bought from several avenues. Some tailors have them available in their own tailoring shops, both in Germany and in Ghana. Besides, two participants of the second study noted that some clothing stores now sell sewn clothes, with H&M and Zara specifically mentioned, albeit at relatively high prices. This has been made possible thanks to collaborations between the fashion outlets and African designers, and for example, Palesa Mokubung is the first African designer to collaborate with H&M in 2019 [35].

I did not come across any shop or outlet dedicated exclusively to African clothing, and this is precisely what 12-B Female hopes to change. She envisions opening a store that offers a wide range of items, *“everything made out of ‘ntoma’ (wax prints), but more than designs basically”*. As someone who prefers in-person shopping over online options, she wants to give others the opportunity to purchase wax print products directly. She also aims to align this initiative with her personal development journey.

Another motivation behind the project is to create employment opportunities, particularly for tailors in Ghana, as well as in Germany. In this way, clothing becomes more than just a form of expression, it is also a source of income and empowerment.

Moreover, Afro Shops are another avenue both generations buy sewn and unsewn clothes. Data from both studies suggest that it is the older generation who patronise Afro Shops more for both forms of clothes. The shops get consignment of wax prints mostly from Holland and other European countries, and some have hand woven *kente* from Ghana. Other types of clothing available are lace materials, bazin, “*abrokyire kente*”, and “*meba wo abrokyire*”, with the latter two described in [21, 22] etc. Sewn clothes include *dashiki/Angelina* and *boubou* etc. **Figure 3** show an assortment of “traditional” clothing for sale.

Similarly, already sewn clothes together with items of dress and cloth materials can be procured from retailers that specialise in culturally diverse artifacts from all over the world, from specific regions of the world, and on fair trade basis like the *Weltladen* shops. I engaged voluntarily with the *Weltladen & Ökumenisches Zentrum Oldenburg e.V* in Oldenburg which specialises in the sale of fair-trade products while conducting the second study. The shop does not only sell food and beverage products, but also other products including material objects such as items of dress, clothing materials, artefacts etc. from all over the world including from Ghana.

There is a shop in Düsseldorf (*Afrotex Textiles*) and another Essen (*Unique African Textiles*) that specialise in African “traditional” clothing, typically wax prints, lace materials, “*meba wo abrokyire*”, “*abrokyire kente*”, head scarfs/head gears etc. on both wholesale and retail basis. In the course of fieldwork for the second study, I visited the former and met two men who were employees. They demonstrated knowledge about wax prints regarding colours, designs, motifs, and meanings. They also exhibited expertise in the accompanying or appropriate colour of cloth for various occasions i.e., cloth playing functional roles in society [36]. For instance, in an Afro Shop that also sells wax prints, the attendant showed me a white cloth and explained that it is appropriate for funerals or for funeral thanksgiving service, and it

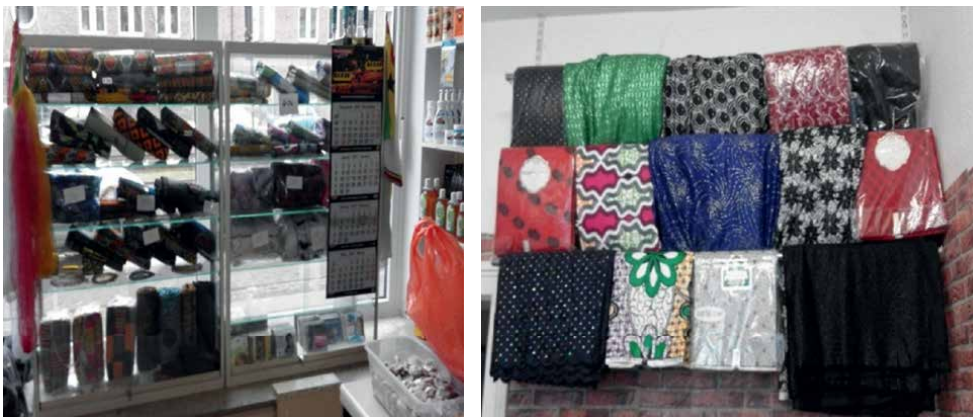


Figure 3.
Different types of unsewn clothes displayed for sale in two different afro shops. on the left are wax prints, handwoven kente, and “meba wo abrokyire” clothes, and on the right are wax prints and lace materials source: fieldwork, pictures taken by author on 4th and 11th February 2017 respectively.

costed € 70. But this same cloth cannot be used by a mother who has freshly delivered, though white cloth is needed for both events. These competences are helpful for customers in making choices as to what to buy. They are also familiar with the preferences of or what “fits” the different generations. Hence, the attendants can guide, advice, or make recommendations on what to buy based on information provided by the client, such as the person one is buying for (elderly or young), occasion to attend, and available cash at hand etc., and recommendations can vary from wholesale to retail buyers. The shop gets all of its stock of supplies from Holland, where they are produced

Moreover, especially in the summer, events such as African festivals (like the *African Festival* in Düsseldorf, *African Day* in Hamburg, the *Alafia Festival* in Altona, and the *OWL Afro Festival* in Bielefeld), music festivals (reggae festivals, music concerts), and other African related cultural events are places these and other material objects can be acquired. People mount small stands and sell African clothing, cloth materials, items of dress, and artefacts at such events. Clothes that can be worn alongside matching earrings, necklaces, and bangles are likewise available at such events. *14-B Female* observed that certain distinctive earrings are generally unavailable in conventional retail outlets, and may only be obtained at African cultural festivals, online platforms, or directly from the producers/artisans themselves. She noted:

‘I used to make earrings and chains. . . I created earrings from the kente, that’s almost eight years ago, in 2012. That’s how I started, and the first time I wore the earrings on stage, everyone said it’s nice because I made it in the form of the African continent, it was just a map with kente material. As people said it was nice, I made a photo shooting and started creating different designs, people liked it. But I didn’t really continue, and all of a sudden, people were requesting for more, that was it. During the summer and summer festivals, I wear to promote it. I like such things, and people also like them’.

In addition to the above named events, especially items of dress (accessories) can be bought from annual festivals organised by cities, for example, I have visited such a stand at a *Kramerkmarkt*, which is a folk festival celebrated annually in Oldenburg. At such events, sellers mount stands from where they sell their wares. Handmade markets are also avenues, which are basically specific markets for handmade items, including clothing, items of dress, and cloth materials held in cities across Germany. For instance, before the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown, a handmade market was held in Kreuzburg, Berlin every Saturday. Moreover, Christmas markets are also places these items can be acquired. Similarly, small scale enterprises or start-ups like *AYE Collections* that specialises in African clothing and items of dress (accessories) and based in Berlin are also helpful, and normally sell such products at the above-named events. Some of these start-ups have online presence, typically websites and social media handles and pages. Furthermore, clothing such as wax prints and *kente* are also sold or distributed through informal channels, notably by women who sell them directly from their homes. Moreover, some of the younger generation make use of their parents’ connections and social networks in acquiring these items.

Furthermore, already-made clothes are purchased online, which is more popular to the younger generation. Two participants, *2-B Female* and *9-B Female* mentioned that they have previously bought “traditional” African clothes online – specifically from *Amazon*. Other online markets and social media handles are also utilised, for

example, 26-B Male mentioned *OXUM African Market*, which is an online start-up shop that offer a range of African products including clothing, items of dress, and cloth materials in Germany. He explained that the founder aims to introduce Ghanaian products to the German market, with all items featured being Ghanaian brands, promoted and sold through a dedicated website and active social media platforms like *Facebook* and *Instagram*. Comparable online stores like *Abbiexpress* also specialise in African goods, including clothing and items of dress.

An intergenerational aspect seen in the foregoing discussion, i.e. a projected shop to make available different assortments of made clothes from wax prints, buying from Afro Shops and African related cultural events and other festivals is the older generation, as tailors, making for the younger generation – and also for future generations. This shows an interconnectedness of the past, present and future, and these events will have an impact on future generations [11] in acquiring these material objects because entrepreneurs would like to maintain businesses (even across generations) and the events will continue to be organised. Thus, future generations will get access to these items through these events.

4.1.4 As Gifts

Further to the various means of getting hold of the clothing discussed above, another channel of acquiring “traditional” African clothing by both generations is presenting or being presented to as gifts. Both Ghanaian immigrants and their adult children buy wax prints from Germany to Ghana to present as gifts to relatives and friends;

‘recently a man asked me to bring him ten pieces, they like to send it home. Because if you go home, you can send something along, there are a lot of things from this place for sale at home, but ‘gb ε faa nii ni y ε ɔf ε ɔ’ (Ga language meaning a gift from a journey is nice), so when he buys from this place, the mother will be very happy’ (12-A Female).

The intergenerational aspect of this is seen in 30-B Female. She emphasised the esteem in which Dutch Hollandais wax prints are held, noting that she often gifts them to relatives and friends, particularly women during visits to Ghana. The recipients deeply value these gifts, as the fabrics are considered highly prestigious.;

‘we carry wax prints from here to Ghana, when we travel, we always buy wax prints from Holland and then we give it as a present. Like my father’s sisters, most of the time, and I have two sisters so when I travel then I have to bring it to them. And also when people visit me, they are also bringing me some, in Germany or in Europe. . .and Ghana sometimes too. So if you give someone, it’s a gift, especially for a woman, it’s a very high gift, you’re very appreciated’.

For 19-B Female, her family members buy African clothing for her as gifts or souvenirs, and this gesture holds special significance: “and also like when I go to Ghana, my grandmother would just buy, um, you know, fabrics for me and just make some dresses for me to wear”. For others, their parents bring along as gifts from visits to Ghana which are from other relatives and friends. Thus, these serve as material forms of social remittances that flow in both directions between Ghana and Germany

[23, 37]. In this context, material gifts from family members play a vital role in nurturing familial bonds. Once given, these items serve as lasting mementos of the moment, the individuals who offered them, and the relationships they represent. Again, this extends the welfare role of the family in migration contexts [4] in material forms. Thus, when presented or received as gifts, the clothing become material forms of welfare and to maintain social relations. Similarly, such acts are a form of promoting intergenerational solidarity [20] that span generations and across borders. Moreover, they depict the creation of familial intergenerational bonds [6] and the maintenance of such. The clothing as gifts may reflect a material aspect of familial experiences in transnational intergenerational relations [16]. This also portray an intergenerational transmission of core cultural traditions, familial values and obligations across generations that transcends national boundaries [4] in material forms.

4.2 Differences

Contrasting means of acquiring the clothing between the generations are discussed below. Some of the first generations sell (unmade) clothes on retail basis, and especially from their homes, however, no participant of the second study reported retailing “traditional” clothes like the older generation. This may signal generational differences in how the clothing is seen as an avenue of employment, though *12-B Female* expressed the interest to establish a shop or outlet to fill this gap.

For the immigrant first generation, various marketing strategies are particularly employed by individuals who sell cloth to advertise and promote their products: *“I mostly sell here in Oldenburg, because there are people who sell in Berlin, Bremen and other places, which are big cities, ...so far I’ll say yes, market is good, the clothes in the last consignment I brought are finished, a few of the lace materials remained, all the wax print clothes sold out”* (*12-A Female*). Such approaches include personal contacts, familiarity with customers, personal relationships, and rapport built with people over time. In addition, convenience to customers is also considered in reaching them; *“I put the clothes in my husband’s car and send to the people who choose their preferences”* (*12-A Female*).

One means of getting the clothes to resell is through the post system. Clothes are also posted to the research participant who sells through the normal post system from her supplier (retailer) in Holland for customers when she does not have stock and some customers need them. She then transfers the money, i.e. cost of the posted clothes through *Western Union* back to her supplier. This normally happens when the supplier is unable to come to Oldenburg, or she is also unable to go to Holland to pick new stock or consignment. Her supplier also uses the post system to supply clothes to other customers around Europe.

An alternative way of leveraging personal connections is employed in marketing and promoting clothing in larger urban areas: *“I know someone who goes to sell in Afro-Shops. Someone makes a phone call that another person is coming to sell clothes (wax prints) in Afro-Shops, so Ghanaians there gather and meet the person and sells to them at a cheap price. Like my sister who is in Berlin, she has the contact of the person who comes to sell, if the fellow tells her the day she’ll come and sell to Afro-Shops, she in turn will call other people she knows and they’ll gather to buy when the seller comes, they’ll pick their choices from the clothes in the vehicle”* (*12-A Female*). Thus, personal contacts and familiarity is crucial in the buying and selling of clothes and other cloth materials.

Various factors influence the choice of particular “traditional” clothing purchased. An important factor that makes the clothes sell fast, including those that are timeless like the lace, wax prints, and *kente*, is the cloth materials in their “hey” days i.e. are the latest, common and predominantly used at specific periods of time, or simply put, fashionable: *“the lace materials also have names, and if the designs are common now (predominant now), it sells faster”* (12-A Female). Designs can even be predicted to become fashionable, *“we also look at what will be the latest (predominant) to buy, ... the lace materials also have names, and if the designs are the latest (predominant now), it sells faster”* (12-A Female). Another factor is the names on or of the clothes, which are important, as 4-A Male explained, that the elderly (*“titi foɔ”*-Twi language meaning advanced in age) know the names of clothes, so they normally buy with names in mind. Another respondent added, *“...and the names of the clothes, ... recently I brought some which are very old designs, some look at the names and remember it, I have this one, I don’t have this”* (12-A Female).

Moreover, some buyers consider the niceness, attractiveness, beauty, elegance, or design of clothing. When it comes to design, some individuals seek specific patterns for their wardrobes, carefully evaluating their existing collection before making a choice. 4-A Male explained that some customers purchase the clothes primarily for their aesthetic appeal: *“some also look at the beauty/niceness of the cloth, ...and the designs of the cloth, ...buy if they don’t have that particular design”* (12-A Female). This confirms that owning good quality clothes as a sign of a woman’s maturity, financial well-being, and accumulated wealth passed on as inheritance [7, 8, 38–40] is also practiced in the diaspora [21]. In making clothes, the beauty, heritage, “depth of communication”, “proverbial knowledge”, “deep idea of design”, and “playful abstraction” of African clothing are attractive to 22-B Male.

Furthermore, the quality of the cloth is also important in deciding what to buy: *“they look at the quality of the cloth, ...you’ll see from the name written on the paper on the cloth, and the names at the edge as well, so that’s what you use to see if the cloth is durable (Holland cloth) or not”* (12-A Female). Similarly, the amount of physical cash prospective buyers have at hand impacts their purchasing decisions: *“some also buy according to the money they have”* (12-A Female) and the flexibility in the payment process, i.e. paying on credit with individual’s who sell is also important, such transactions are normally based on mutual trust. In both studies, tailors mentioned are all first generations, no participant in the studies mentioned a second generation being a tailor.

4.3 ‘Traditional’ Clothing As A Source of Intergenerational Conflicts

As has been noted, intergenerational relations in immigrant families are mainly between immigrant parents and their children and revolves around intergenerational conflict and factors that shape it [14]. In relation to material objects, “traditional” African clothing may serve as an underlying factor for this, especially in its usage. An example that came up in the second study was: *“one of my cousins, it was a punishment for him [to wear] because he didn’t pack his bags for the dormitory, so he had to wear the African clothes to go to school”* [8-B Female], which suggests tension. Again, this can be seen in light of differences in expectations and values [17] of clothing and dress and in the use of other materials from parents. Thus, the usage of the clothing may be seen as part of the tensions and cultural challenges immigrant families face [4] in material ways, in other words, material tensions. This may also fall under

the changes in children's behaviour around independence and boundaries as a form of intergenerational conflicts classified by [3]. The acquisition and usage of these material objects may also fall under cultural habits as a familial theme that must be reassessed and rearranged in immigrant families [10].

5. Implications

An implication of the paper that arises is in line with protecting a cultural heritage for future generations, especially of children of immigrants living in “two worlds”, i.e. combining the immigrant parents' “world” at home and that of the host society outside the home [41]. It also spotlights on the crucial role of maintaining cultural practices in diasporic settings, which intergenerational relations is a vehicle in achieving. Furthermore, the usage and keeping of “traditional” African clothing serve as a central element of diasporic cultural expression and play a key role in the intergenerational cultural transmission [13] from first-generation immigrants to their descendants. This practice reinforces cultural continuity within transnational social spaces, where clothing is recognized as a vital symbol of cultural identity.

6. Limitations

Both studies exhibited gender imbalance among participants, more males than females in the first, and more females than males in the second. These disparities were unintentional as they resulted from the sampling techniques utilised in recruiting participants for both studies.

7. Conclusion

The paper highlights on a material dimension of intergenerational relations in immigrant families, with a focus on acquiring “traditional” African clothing. In answering the research question, the paper identified and explored ways of acquiring these material objects as through social media, making from tailors, buying already made, and presenting or receiving as gifts. As these processes are forms of intergenerational cultural transmission [12, 13], they may be seen as part of oblique transmission which functions through socialisation institutions and other agents [42]. In this vein, the immigrant family serves as the core institution of socialisation in procuring these items, alongside other such institutions in diasporic settings like African Shops and immigrant churches [23].

In transmitting cultural values unto their children, immigrants adopt different approaches to get them understand and relate to the cultural practices of their place(s) of origin by selecting the aspects, consciously making choices about which aspects to pass on [17]. The paper argues that “traditional” clothing and dress is a critical part of this, and acquiring them for children of immigrants, whether on their own or upon requests, is a way of achieving this. Children of immigrants thereby get “to understand and relate to the cultural practices” of their parents' [17, p.14] through these material objects. The paper highlights on the acquisition of

“traditional” clothing as part of the central relevance of the immigrant family in transmitting core cultural traditions across generations [4].

In this regard, the paper points out that an observation from the UN Declaration on Future Generations [11], about the interconnectedness of past, present and future can be seen in the clothing, in acquiring, using, and keeping. These will have effects and impact on future generations in diverse ways because the clothing, particularly wax prints, have become fashionable even in Western fashion circles, and this fashionability is reflected in styles and forms appealing to the younger generations [23]. It will be interesting to see how future generations react to these developments with the clothing.

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Conflict of interest

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