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Intergenerational transmission of parenting as a value

Abstract

While intergenerational similarities and differences are of key importance for tracking social change, relatively little is known about the transmission of values regarding parenting in Poland. Therefore, this paper explores the process of intergenerational transfer, focusing specifically on the transmission of parenting as a value. From a methodological perspective, the article is based on a combined dataset from two projects completed with a multi-perspective approach. The ensuing qualitative thematic analysis offers intergenerational comparisons of dyadic interviews with pairs consisting of 51 young adults and one parent of each (n=102). As a result, three patterns – straightforward transmission, lagging transfer, and broken intergenerational value-normative connectivity in regard to parenting as a value – are discussed. Ultimately, the paper contributes a better understanding of the public and private aspects within long-term socialisation effects, explored here as residing at the intersection of changing values and intergenerational contexts of family life in Poland.

Keywords: parenting, transmission, values, socialisation, generations

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Introduction

The process of intergenerational transmission refers to the extent to which similarities in attitudes, beliefs and behavioural patterns observed between members of the same family persist across generations (Bertaux & Thompson, 1993; Kajta & Pustulka, 2023; Maccoby, 2007; Min et al., 2012; Schönplflug, 2001; Wałęcka-Matyja, 2022). In essence, scholars are interested in how the norms and values of parents and children (and their children) compare over time, mainly, because questions about whether fundamentals remain intergenerationally congruent or begin to diverge are significant for sociological understandings of social change, and useful for effective formulation of family policy (see: Belsky, 1984; Chen & Kaplan, 2001).

This paper deals with parenting as a particular component of the intergenerational transmission process, acknowledging that both parenting as a value, and its transmission, reflect the dynamic relationship between parents operating as individual actors in a private sphere, and these very parents being rendered producers of “citizens” from a more public, state-driven perspective of socialisation and policy (Cano & Hofmeister, 2023; Sikorska, 2016). Recognising the inherent tensions between societal (public) and individually preferred (private) values (Rohan & Zanna, 1996; Perales et al., 2021), parenting is here framed as a particular value, with attention paid to whether parents and their adult children share beliefs about the general importance of family, as well as observing congruence/divergence in their views on the specificity of experienced and aspired to parent-role (Schönplflug, 2001).

The research gap addressed by the analysis pertains to the Polish context of family transmission of values (see: Jasińska-Kania, 2012; Slany, 2002; Kajta & Pustulka, 2023). It posits that personal views and choices observed among young adult individuals typically need to be seen as a reconciliation between the influences of intergenerational family transmission in the private sphere and broader discourses about values – including parenting – present in the public sphere (Sikorska, 2016). Moreover, the paper accounts for the temporal dimension of socialisation processes, recognising that transmission of parenting can only be studied when children become adults and are either old enough to reflexively ponder reproduction, or even become parents themselves (see: Manlove, 1997). Resultantly, intergenerational models of parenting are temporally inscribed in the investigations of the family lifecycle (Pustulka, 2020) and life course (Elder & Caspi, 1988). To account for the passage of time, the concept of transmission lag (Cunningham, 2001; Min et al., 2012; Monk, 2011) is leveraged in this study.

The aim of this paper is to highlight the intergenerational dimension – including the transmission’s potential lag effects – within parenting as a value situated at the junction of private and public influences. To fulfil the paper’s objective, a combined dataset from two qualitative, intergenerationally multi-perspective studies has been created. Then, a two-stage, focused thematic data analysis was applied to interview data collected from 51 intergenerational dyads consisting of young adults and their parents. Sixteen interviewee pairs were interviewed across two waves of the

GEMTRA study (S1)² and 35 dyads participated in the QLS component of the UL-TRAGEN project (S2)³.

In the following sections, the theoretical framework, which is primarily rooted in the studies on intergenerational transmission and parenting, is presented first. This is followed by a section on the study and methods. The findings are divided into three sections to illustrate (1) evident intergenerational transmission of parenting, (2) ambivalence across the axio-normative transmission, and (3) the apparent absence of intergenerational transfer of this value in the studied families. Concluding remarks complete and summarise the contribution.

Key concepts and studies of intergenerational transmission of parenting

The theoretical model adopted for the analysis is embedded in the study of family and parenting as values in Poland, as well as the body of work on socialisation and intergenerational transmission. Linking the two, the final subsection sheds light on researching transmission of parenting as a value, and the framing of transmission lag dictated by the multi-perspective approach.

Family and parenting as values in Poland

Values ensconce ideals, beliefs and principles that determine what is held correct, desirable, significant or morally proper by a given collectively, for instance, a society or a social group (Jasińska-Kania, 2012; Rohan & Zanna, 1996; Szafraniec et al., 2017). In capitalist societies, the dynamic of values is framed by the societal transition from values that Inglehart (2010) refers to as traditionalist and materialist, to those deemed rational-laicised and postmaterialist. Poland serves as an interesting research setting, as hybrids of value orientations characterise its citizens (cf. Szafraniec et al., 2017; Jasińska-Kania, 2012; Pustułka & Sarnowska, 2021). In that sense, traditional “family values” carry the heritage of being rooted in patriarchal, pastoral, and hierarchical infallibilism of family as an institution legitimised by church and state (cf. Slany, 2002; Sikorska, 2016). However, these coexist with a more open-ended framing of families and intimacies through a more equal relational setup in the parent-child bonds (Sikorska, 2019), which echoes postmaterialist desirability of affinity, closeness, and high-quality bonds (see: Perales et al., 2021).

It is important to clarify that studies centred on values refer generally to “family” rather than specifically conceptualising “parenting”, as the latter is seen more as an aspiration linked to procreative plans (CBOS, 2019b). In this realm, data consistently show that “family” tops the ranks of what Poles consider to be the most important

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(CBOS, 2017). Moreover, when Polish people are asked about the meaning of life, different generations converge in their selection of “family” as the most important value (Kajta & Pustulka, 2023; Frąckowiak, 2007). Longitudinal data shows that vast majority of respondents chose it, both in 1997 and in 2017 (CBOS, 2017).

In a representative study of values important for everyday life, “family happiness” was the answer indicated by 80% of the respondents (CBOS, 2019a). Only about one in 10 Poles (11%) posited that one can be equally happy without a family, while the average valuation of a family has slightly increased between 2008 and 2019. Given the aspirational dispositions, having a family and being a parent can be considered as values that mothers and fathers may wish to instil in their children as important and desirable (cf. Farnicka, 2016).

Connected to familism, meaning the cultural value of positive feelings towards one’s family (Campos et al., 2014; Wałęcka-Matyja, 2022), parenting shares with familism its prioritisation of collectivist kinship roles over one’s own individualistic value orientations. Particularly in the female, matrilinear line, familism strongly overlaps with family-centric value-orientations. For instance, Repetti et al. (2011) found that mothers commonly wished their daughters to be family-oriented, while fathers were rather forging individualism and self-development for sons. Mothers are also the main conductors of values related to gender orders (Perales et al., 2021), as also shown by Farnicka in the Polish context (2016). In this study, women – across three generations – were more inclined to foster family values, as well as more rigid when it came to their offspring having children of their own. This observation requires a nuanced understanding of cross-generational transfers.

Socialisation and intergenerational transmission

Socialisation, seen as parental responsibility over individuals’ preparedness for living in the surrounding society (Guhin et al., 2021; Maccoby, 2007) conceptually lies at the crossroads between personal and public. While it is shaped by values and orientations that are important – from the perspective of the state – for an individual to become a good citizen (Guhin et al., 2021), it also strongly hinges upon values that the parents – as individuals – hold dear and manifest in their private life (Cano & Hofmeister, 2023; Min et al., 2012).

These “private” and “public” realms are intertwined, with significant interdependencies between socially desirable values promoted by institutions and those passed down from generation to generation (Roest et al., 2010; Vedder et al., 2009). Denoting the scope of continued similarity within attitudes, beliefs, and behavioural patterns observed between members of the same family across generations (Bertaux & Thompson, 1993; Min et al., 2012; Wałęcka-Matyja, 2022), intergenerational transmission in families reflects – to different degrees – the axiomatic value-system (Rohan & Zanna, 1996) and *Zeitgeist* (Vedder et al., 2009) of the society in which the families operate. Moreover, value transfers rarely happen through explicit measures, instead occurring through parents’ everyday actions, during shared meals, when telling ancestral stories, as well as through disciplining and rewards (Bertaux & Thompson, 1993;

Schönpflug, 2001). It is quite clear that these private acts might not register as value transmission, thus explaining the blurry boundaries between the mutually influential public and private value realms.

Yi and colleagues (2004, p. 526) argue that there is a widespread belief that transmission between parents and their children takes place, but researchers still fail to analyse this process in a detailed manner. Simply put, research consistently shows strong value-coherence between parents and their children (see: Copen & Silverstein, 2008; Min et al., 2012; Vollebergh et al., 2001; Maccoby, 2007; Kajta & Pustułka, 2023). However, other variables and public values may determine the extent of intergenerational similarity and difference. For instance, close relationships in the family increase solidarity and improve the process of intergenerational transmission (Bengtson et al., 2002), while conflicts and structural reshuffling (e.g., social mobility) might be associated with divergent attitudes and values of parents and children (Lawler, 2002).

The Polish context is vital here, as values commonly accepted by a given society (in the times the individuals live in) are the easiest to transfer (Schönpflug, 2001). On the contrary, transferring values that are considered “new” may encounter greater inter-actor resistance (Roest et al., 2010). According to this premise, it would be more challenging to intergenerationally foster reproductive ambivalence than to communicate the validity of a traditional transitional path towards marriage and having children (cf. Perales et al., 2021; Schönpflug, 2001; Wałęcka-Matyja, 2022).

Transmission of parenting and lag effects

As with the broader transfer of values, studies generally confirm intergenerational continuity within parenting, which effectively means that present-day parents repeat parenting practices they were “parented with” as children (Min et al., 2012; van Ijzendoorn, 1992). Three main characteristics of the body of literature on the issue of intergenerational transmission of parenting should be featured. First, data mostly stems from quantitative approaches, with the operationalisation of “parenting styles” rather than values. Second, research on problematic contexts (e.g., cycles of abusive parenting; cf. Cox et al., 1985) is more prolific than studies on “typical” families. Third, insights into intergenerational transmission of parenting originate primarily from the Western contexts (Chen & Kaplan, 2001).

To provide some examples, when new parents are observed and probed for explaining their behaviours, they recall (good and bad) parenting strategies that have seemingly been transmitted (van Ijzendoorn, 1992). On the positive side, female participants of longitudinal and retrospective studies who reported having supportive and constructive parents were more likely to present positive adaptations in their own mothering later (Cox et al., 1985). In a more problem-oriented approach, classic work by Belsky (1984) provided insights into the dysfunctional transfer of child abuse, with a person’s memories or experiences of neglect and violence identified as a strong and consistent predictor of the same patterns of behaviours towards one’s offspring, trumping variables like SES (see also: Capaldi et al., 2003; Elder & Caspi, 1988).

In the public realm, evidence indicates that policy programmes and constructive relationships outside of the family (i.e., between children and non-parent socialisation agents like teachers or counsellors), may act as mediating mechanisms for the cessation of problems across generations (Capaldi et al., 2003, Egeland et al., 1988). Still, variable implications of constructive and destructive parenting translate into intergenerational outcomes in other areas, e.g., educational achievement/failures and aspirations, health prospects, social capital, and sociability (Chen & Kaplan, 2001). Therefore, the process of intergenerational transmission of parenting is political in the context of family welfare cultures, or in regard to breaking the cycle of abusive parenting, both of which represent politically significant agendas of family policy (Belsky, 1984; Dahl et al., 2014).

From an intergenerational standpoint, it should be noted that 84% of the surveyed Poles would like their family of procreation to be similar to their family of origin. Moreover a family with children (nuclear or multigenerational) is a desired form of family life for as many as 87% of the respondents (CBOS, 2019b). As such, Polish parents retain their importance as axio-normative anchors and socialisation agents for individuals, also during adulthood (Pustulka & Sarnowska, 2021), yet some practices, traits or tasks may still be considered (un)desirable, even if they differ in execution from what has been known or learnt from previous family generations (Farnicka, 2016).

In essence, subsequent years of parenting mean that socialised and transferred values can change (Guhin et al., 2021; Maccoby, 2007). This is addressed by the concept of “transmission lag”, which acknowledges that not all results of intergenerational transmission can be immediately tracked and determined, instead reflecting the delayed nature of socialisational transfers (Cunningham, 2001). In other words, for some values, there is a temporal pause between children’s socialisation and the significance of certain fundamental beliefs or ideas. The effects of being parented in a given way may remain dormant (Min et al., 2012, p. 116), for instance, during adolescence.

The consequences of the passage of time are vivid when research focuses on the durability of intergenerational transmission at the “empty-nest” stage of families of origin after the children have grown up (cf. Schönplflug, 2001). Particularly for parenting and reproduction, only when the children reach adulthood, it is possible to track what has been transmitted in a “delayed” manner, i.e., the possible value-related messages obscured and suffering from a transmission lag (cf. Cunningham, 2001; Min et al., 2012). This concept explains the reawakening of values present in parental socialisation, which can be triggered by achieving transitional milestones. Specifically, transmission lags broadly occur when intergenerational transmission becomes traceable because new events in later life trigger values and norms instilled by parents during childhood (Cunningham, 2001).

These may include getting married and having a child, but also more practical realms like choosing educational paths or actions at work (cf. Pustulka & Sarnowska, 2021). Becoming a parent is particularly known to “activate” reflections and evaluations of one’s mother or father, even if these topics have remained latent for longer periods of time prior to a new role. Transmission lag may also come to the fore when, later in life, adult children lose a loved one and recall how their parents have handled such events, also from a value-orientation stance (cf. Cunningham, 2001; Min et al.,

2012). In all these contexts, the acquisition of new roles or experiences revitalises the validity of questioning whether and how young adults' values continue to align – or diverge – from those of their parents (see: Copen & Silverstein, 2008; Min et al., 2012).

Identifying the gaps in research on transmission lag, Min et al. (2012, p. 116) argue that “almost all studies of intergenerational transmission of values have examined this issue in cross-sectional data, where it is not possible to examine whether transmitted values persist or even emerge in children as they grow up and assume adult role status”. By taking a qualitative look at the intergenerational transmission among young adults and their parents, this study attempts to contribute to research on transfers of parenting as a value by providing multi-perspective accounts from Polish families.

Study and methods

The data has been drawn from two research projects on intergenerational family relations (see: Pustułka, 2023; Kajta & Pustułka, 2023), both conducted with the use of longitudinal and multi-perspective designs (Vogl et al., 2019). Crucial for the included analyses is the multi-perspectivity feature of the data collection, which means that more than one person from a given unit – in this case, a family – has been interviewed for each study. Both projects include interviews with young people who undergo transitions, with the GEMTRA study (S1, 2018–2022) focusing on women who become mothers for the first time, and the ULTRAGEN study (S2, 2020–present) exploring transitions-to-adulthood.

Sixteen mother-daughter pairs (32 interviewees) were subsampled from the first study, titled GEMTRA: *Transitions-to-motherhood across three generations of Polish women*. As the study focused on transitions-to-motherhood, all interviewees from the younger generation had children during the second wave of interviews in 2021. For S2, called ULTRAGEN: *Becoming an adult in times of ultra-uncertainty: intergenerational theory of “shaky” transitions*, 35 young adults and one parent of each were interviewed, resulting in a dataset of 70 IDIs. Although the subsamples were drawn from the larger studies, the analysis was conducted on a combined dataset of 51 intergenerational family dyads. Thus, it renders the delineation of the socio-demographic characteristics of the interviewees in two family generations important.

Given the project's thematic foci, the young adult interviewees for S1 are all cis-gender women. The average age for this subsample stands at 30.5 (age range 26–40). S2 participants are comparatively younger, with an average of 24.2 (range 18–36) and this sample boasts gender variability (16 men, 18 women, and one non-binary person). Similarly, in the generation of parents, S1 again includes only women, and they are 49 to 69 (average of 56.9) and S2 offers the perspectives from both women (21 mothers) and men (14 fathers). In the latter, the interviewees were between 41 to 69, with an age average expectedly lower than in S1 (50.7 years). While SES and residential conditions of the interviewees were not found important analytically, it should be noted that younger generation respondents from S1 and S2 were generally better educated and resided in larger cities. About one-third of all parents did not have a university education. Finally, it is important that 20 of 51 young adults already had children,

while the remaining 31 (all from S2) talked about parenting as an aspiration, recognising or rejecting its value prospectively. This was seen as an asset, as comparative analyses of transitional settings could be conducted across and within generations.

For the analysis, the selection of transcripts from the projects was topically justified and rooted in the category of family generation (Bengtson et al., 2002), thus allowing for a purposeful and comparative angle for looking at intergenerational transmission. A thematic analysis was carried out. In the first-cycle coding (Saldaña, 2013), data from both projects was thematised on the meanings of parenting, with excerpts pertinent primarily to the direct questions on the value-transmission from parents to their (now-adult) children, which were posed in both projects. While some data was scattered across different probes, the most crucial questions spanned: “What values did you wish to pass on to your children?” / “What values did your parents try to pass on to you?”, and “Has this process succeeded?”, alongside a more general: “What is important in life?” probe. In the second-cycle coding, axial methods were used to focus on intergenerational multi-perspectivity (Vogl et al., 2019), with special attention paid to the presence of convergence and divergence in parenting, value-orientations, and framings. An explicit focus was then set on the processes of intergenerational transfer and indicators of the lag. Differently situated pairs (i.e., young adults who were parents vs. those who were not) were used to validate the final outcomes.

Findings

The findings are organised on the continuum of the traceable evidence of intergenerational transfer of parenting as a value in dyads, starting with examples of congruence of values between young adults and their parents. The second type addresses ambivalence and illustrates the transmission lag, while the third type showcases intergenerational dyads in which parenting has evidently not been transmitted as an intergenerationally shared value.

Parenting as an intergenerationally transferred family value

The first type found in the data focuses on family dyads where having children is not only consistently present in the narratives of adult children and their parents, but it is also similarly narrated, usually as a non-negotiable value. The analysis of the collected material generally revealed that parenting – as a component of a broader idea of “family” – is one of the key values that parents wished to instil in their now-adult children.

As such, this qualitative finding is in line with outcomes of the quantitative studies on parenting/family values and the persisting significance of intergenerational transfer (cf. Min et al., 2012; van Ijzendoorn, 1992, Maccoby, 2007; Roest et al., 2010; Rohan & Zanna, 1996; Repetti et al., 2011). In many intergenerational dyads studied, the transfer can be observed and clearly succeeded in aligning the attitudes to parenting and family across generations. The conviction about the importance of family is mirrored closely, as can be seen in the excerpts from interviews conducted for S2.

S2, Jacek, 51, father

Family is clearly a key value. For me, it is important. It is the most important. [It is crucial] to be in touch, to have good relationships.

S2, Witold, 46, father

[For a good life,] it is important to have this internal conviction that, as a man, one has an order in family [life], that there are no major troubles there.

S2, Eryk, 23, son

I'd say that family is the most important thing for me. I've always been pro-family and I would have done anything for my family. This is the most important thing, to have this relationship based on love and trust. This is about how I see my girlfriend, but it applies to my whole family.

S2, Magda, 20, daughter

Good life [hinges] on being with one's loved one [...] and with one's family.

In the cases of evident value transfer, the “lag” effect (Cunningham, 2021, Min et al., 2012) within transmission is explicitly not traceable, as the parents and adult children display consistent attitudes and values. The transmission of parenting faces little resistance within the broader Polish society, hence what parents transfer about family values is consistent with societal worldviews and preferences (cf. Slany, 2002; CBOS, 2019a).

Illuminating the irrevocability of “family” and “having children”, these two constructs were often equated in this data pattern. Individual interviewees highlighted strong convictions that one does not get married unless one wants to become a parent, while statements about couples who have no children not being *real families* emerged in this context. Excerpts from interviews with 54-year-old Elsa, a mother of five and a grandmother, are below set next to the narrative of her 29-year-old daughter, Martyna, who is pregnant with her second child. Neither mother nor daughter imagines life without motherhood, and they talk extensively about parenting ideals and reproductive aspirations.

S1, Elsa, 54, mother

We always wanted to have many children. You know, even twins, I don't have to explain myself to anyone, (since I had five). [...] I remember how one Christmas Martyna was crying. I asked “Baby, why are you crying?”, and she said: “Mom, when you meet your siblings, there are so many of you and there's only three of us”. After some time, I was pregnant with twins [...].

S1, Martyna, 29, daughter

As far as I remember, I always wanted to have children [...]. Such a family with only a mom, a dad and a child is a bit incomplete. Because I had two older brothers, I was the third one long before the twins were born, I always wanted to have three children, [...], I never thought that only one (would be enough). We always had a big family and everyone told me that an only child would just be so unhappy that my son would be unhappy because he is an only child. It stuck with me that people with no siblings are unhappy [...]. Three would be ideal.

Particularly interesting in this mother-daughter pair are the reflections of the wider values. Elsa, who is a devout Catholic (e.g., *we are a Christian family, we are believers*), had to reconcile her faith with some choices that her offspring made in their personal lives, especially, when they cohabitated with their romantic partners without being married, or had children out of wedlock. While Elsa seems to intentionally skirt around these topics, she also blames this on the *pitfalls of the secular modern world* rather than socialisation at home, insisting that she was always *clear about the right values*. Still, she is absolutely insistent on the central meaning of children across her family generations, and even forgives value-transgressions, as long as her children have offspring. Martyna explains that her brother *should get married but since a child happened to be on the way, everyone had to focus on the child being safe and sound, as that's the only thing that matters*. With this example, an interplay between intergenerational transfer in families, and the broader society can be noted (cf. Monk, 2011). Multi-perspective accounts specifically demonstrate quite successful intergenerational transfer of parenting as a value and precondition to life that is happy and worth living in the interviewees' view.

Subtle transmission and transmission lag

Looking at the second type of intergenerational accounts, in this case, the transmission of parenting was much more subtle, making it harder to distinguish which values or views around parenting and procreation are related to family transfer, and which have been adopted from other socialisation agendas (cf. Schönplflug, 2001). One data example contrasts accounts of Gertuda and her daughter Maria, who frame the desire to have children in a completely different manner, despite the fact that both are mothers.

S1, Gertruda, 55, mother

I never imagined anything else than being a mother. Children give all meaning to life, what else does that? Now, it's just the two of us, [...] alone at home, [...] but for us, it wouldn't make sense to be together if it was just the two of us at the beginning. You live for someone, you do everything in life for somebody, this is the meaning of life. One starts a family to have children.

S1, Maria, 32, daughter

I wanted children, but it was never this primary need. I saw myself as a career girl first, getting my career going, with children in the background, but not something at the top of my list [...]. Then I met my husband and [...] it was very clear from the beginning that we don't want to be engaged for years, [and] that we would not wait long to have children [...]. We knew we wanted children together

For the older generation of interviewees becoming a parent was often framed as “natural” and something that simply “happened” to a person, with little degree of agency (cf. Pustulka, 2023). Especially among women, being a mother was a *de facto* defining role for the parents' generation, while the younger women and men appeared more ambivalent. This can be attributed to multiple roles competing for peo-

ple's attention in an individualist society (Vollebergh et al., 2001; Yi et al., 2004; Copen & Silverstein, 2006). Quoted above, Maria serves as an example of numerous stories where young men and women underlined their desire to *make something of themselves* career-wise, to succeed economically and in terms of biographic aspirations and professional goals (cf. Inglehart, 2020; Szafraniec et al., 2009). However, it is also clear that both narratives in the end hinged upon meeting a partner to have children with, as both Gertruda and Maria speak of their husbands in relation to the crystallisation of parenting as their own value-aspiration (cf. Roest et al., 2010).

The transmission of values is mediated by individualist values and demographic change, yet appears in the stories of transitions-to-parenting around the age of 30, with consideration towards reproduction and parenting acting as a key transmission belt (cf. Schönplflug, 2001; Roest et al., 2010). The delay and permissibility towards reproductive ambivalence in one's 30s results in a transmission lag in relation to parenting as a value, personal aspiration and actual role. This is echoed in the narratives of Maryla (57) and her son Tymoteusz (24). The fact that Tymoteusz wishes to postpone becoming a father does not mean that he is rejecting the values of his mother. Quite the contrary, the excerpts show that the transfer of parenting as a value is strongly present during the transitions-to-adulthood, even if the broader societal trends indicate later entry into parenting and more reproductive ambivalence.

S2, Maryla, 57, mother

My husband and I have been together for 38 years [...]. He tells me he loves me all the time [...]. He's not afraid to announce to everyone who'd listen that he loves me and I'm the most important person in his life. I need a tissue because now I am crying [...]. For me, to have a good life is to raise good children. To raise your children well. [...] I have six children. Four have their own families and I have seven grandchildren. It's a party when they all come round.

S2, Tymoteusz, 24, son

I would certainly like to have a wife in the future [...]. I would like to spend my life with someone I will love and respect, and who will love and respect me. As for children, I'd rather not have them before turning 30, this I'm quite sure of. I'd like to settle down first and be able to provide so that we could then decide to have children together. [...] Kids usually like me [...] but I'm not ready for them yet [...]. I'd be willing to get married though.

Distinguishing between younger respondents with and without children, the data clearly shows that intergenerational transfer of parenting might not have been activated yet for the latter. In contrast, actual transitions-to-parenthood shift the previously lagging focus on family values and parenting. This could be traced longitudinally in S1 with the intergenerational accounts of Laura and Aida. When interviewed during her first pregnancy, Aida had a lot of ambivalence about having children. Unlike her mother and sister, whom she saw as very dedicated to being a parent and subjugating their other aspirations to motherhood, Aida wished to first organise her life to the point when having a child *made sense*. While Laura became a mother via an unplanned pregnancy at 22, Aida's first and very much planned baby was going to be born after she turned 35.

S1, Laura, 62, mother

When I got pregnant for the first time, it was not ideal, my doctor's first question was whether I was going to get rid of it [because I was in medical school]. But my partner actually behaved well, [...] we sped up the wedding because of the pregnancy [...]. I think having children is something absolutely natural, generally.

S1, Aida, 34, daughter

I did not always want kids. Actually, I don't like kids to be honest. [...] Unlike my sister, for whom this was somehow the pinnacle of her life aspirations, having kids was not my dream at all. But at some point, I realised that I kind of wanted to have a small unit of my own. [...] I looked at my nephews and I realised that, given my age, probably, I maybe should have kids, that now it is really time to have them [...]. We felt, with my partner, that maybe something was missing, that we have a doggy, but maybe we should also have a baby.

At Wave 2, both women spoke about family and motherhood in similar, practical terms. After Laura's husband's infidelity, they see having children as a way to guarantee kinship support that cannot necessarily be counted on in regard to men/partners. When their stories about transferring values onto children are juxtaposed, a clear shift towards stronger intergenerational transfer can be observed:

S1, Laura, 62, mother

For me, it was very important for my daughters to be [...] a bit egoistic so that they don't lose themselves in their relationships like I did. My two daughters are the most important people in my life. They are my pillars of strength. [...] Family is really, really important. I am very glad they have each other.

S1, Aida, 34, daughter

Given that I have a son, I want to teach him that family is important and respecting women is very important. [...] We are now trying for another baby [...]. It's this safety net for us and for him: even if we're gone, he has this other person.

More so than transition-to-adulthood as a longer process, transition-to-parenting as a defined key moment (Pustulka, 2023), evidently "activates" the transfer of broader values around being a parent as a role fulfilled in life at a certain time (cf. Cunningham, 2021; Min et al., 2012). Shedding light on intergenerational transmission lag, longitudinal research enabled tracking of "missing" or "dormant" values in non-parent young adults, versus those "emerging" and "pronounced" value-transfers in the parenting domain of young respondents with children.

Challenges to intergenerational transfer of parenting

Finally, the third type found in the data shows that sometimes no clear transmission could be attested to. In many cases, a lot of discrepancies in how two members

of the family generations thought about family, having children, parenting, and reproduction, have boiled down to general social change that reshuffles the values of the younger generation. More specifically, the older generation (i.e., the young adults' parents) tended to subscribe to collectivism and familism (cf. Campos et al., 2014; Wałęcka-Matyja, 2022; Farnicka, 2016). As such, they were similar to older interviewees' generation from the first type, underlining that being a parent was their most important life role. Contrarily, younger interviewees in this type differed strongly from their parents:

S2, Izabela, 50

*I was a student and it turned out we'd have a baby. This was not planned [...] but I still believe that this was **one of the best surprises in my life**. [...] My son claims he is certain about **not wanting to procreate**, about his wish not to have children [...]. It has such an effect on me that I can't see him as an adult. [...] His decision means he can stay immature longer [...]. **It's a lesser adulthood than one you acquire through having children** [...]. **I'd like to be a grandmother** [...] so **I'm clearly not happy about it**.*

S2, Marek, 25

*My rejection of wanting children has been unwavering and I think this won't change until I die. Firstly, because I don't like children. Children annoy me, **I see no benefits in having a child for myself**. **Having a child is difficult**, it requires sharing your resources – temporal, financial. It all seems superfluous to me. Secondly, **creating more human beings is morally questionable**. We should not allow beings to suffer [...], so having them is risky [...] when our planet will no longer be unsuitable for any type of life [...]. Even without this, I'm against having children.*

In the third type, there is a strong resistance to transfer attempts from the mother to her son. Moreover, not recognising parenting as a value might be a site of intergenerational conflict, given that Izabela refuses to recognise her otherwise independent son as an adult due to his rejection of parenting as a valuable life role (cf. Bengtson et al., 2002).

In S1, where all interviewees had children, parenting was “a given”, so the lack of transfer in many dyads was more about the different framing of family and parenting as values between mothers and daughters:

S1, Daniela, 62

*Someone told me I have very strong family attachments, emotions and bonds in the family [...]. **I have had this traditional family model in my mind**, even when I was a teenager [...]. **Family is everything**. **It has always been my dream** [...]. University is something added but my biggest dream was to have a family, to have children. Family, my daughters, they are my entire life [...]. My children appreciate*

S1, Magda, 30

*Family is a broad term for me because **I also consider my friends my family**. Sometimes I can count on them more than on my family members [...]. I always thought that I'd like to have children. But I also always thought that **I'm not what is called “mother material”** [...]. I was busy with other things, education, work, travelling [...]. My focus was elsewhere [...]. I still have doubts about how I'm going*

family, but they also see it differently [...]. We do have quite a few fights about my daughter's parenting [...]. Things I don't stand for, it comes down to values... They are not the same [...]. I didn't think she was coping with [being a mother].

to make it [...] but we are quite old already, more mature. **I'm counting on my mum's help, she was the one who wanted a grandchild [...]. I don't see [parenting] as my cup of tea...**

In the analysed data excerpts, the value shift in terms of parenting is consistent with the change from collectivist to individualist orientations, as well as postmaterialist values expressed by younger generations (cf. Inglehart, 2020). When comparing mothers and daughters in terms of values considered important within their respective parenting (cf. Cox et al., 1986; Farnicka, 2016), it becomes clear that the older generation focuses much more on the fundamental role of “family values”, alongside respect and hierarchy. Contrarily, contemporary young parents tend to centre their ideas on individual happiness and their own and their offspring's metaphysical fulfilment (cf. Sikorska, 2019):

S1, Olena, 66

Family is everything to me, my entire life [...]. It is everything that I consider most important in my life. I can say that I live for my children, for my family, my immediate family [...]. My children have all the best values, they run in the blood. These are respect, telling the truth and love for one's family, which is the foundation for everything. When these values are taken on board, and the person has good family relationships [...], then that person can also succeed everywhere else, at work, with others [...]. If this is not the case, and the family life is not in order, [...] then such a person will fail in other spheres.

S1, Adela, 37

*I feel close to women in my family, more so than to men. There's an affinity there [...]. **Family to me is a microcosm, based on safety and love [...]** but family can also be destructive [...]. I would like my children to have self-respect. I want them to trust the world, so these values around cooperation, or maybe community, [...] are the most important [...]. I want them to have this inner peace [...]. I want them to know that even if they get lost somehow, they will be able to [find a way] good for them. I want them to lead life in accordance with what is most important to them, personally.*

In sum, the changing values make the transfer of parenting much harder, preventing also occurrence of transmission lag, since younger generations do not at any point recognise that the socialisation efforts of their parents were valid as far as their attitudes to parenting are concerned. Thus, it can be argued that data presented for the final pattern may signal a broader precipice of value-normative change in Polish inter-generational family bonds.

Conclusions

The paper contributes new knowledge pertaining to intergenerational transmission of parenting as a value, doing so in the context of competing visions of family life in Poland (cf. Sikorska, 2019, Slany, 2002; Wałęcka-Matyja, 2022). It illustrates the value-alignment of young adults with globally recognised shifts towards individualism and post-materialism (Inglehart, 2020), yet more clearly confirms that intergenerational transmission in family perseveres as a significant source of value-normative order-production, at least when it comes to parenting (cf. Belsky, 1984; Farnicka, 2016). Thus, policy agendas should recognise both the potential and the inherent challenge that comes with parents shaping young people's desires to embrace or reject the ideas about parenting, as these flow from one generation to the next within families.

Given that the findings are set on the continuum, they seem to showcase the hybridisation of value orientations in Poland (Jasińska-Kania, 2012; Szafraniec et al., 2009). In the domain of family and parenting, the context of transmission may be used to track tensions and reconciliations of, on the one hand, the "traditional" thinking about parenting as a process that is "natural" and occurring without much agency on personal timelines and, on the other hand, the growing agency that young people execute to break away from the cycle of parenting they have known from their elders (cf. Egeland, 1988).

When set side-by-side, the values transpiring from the narratives of the parents' generation are often quite different from those of their young adult children. For the parents' generation, parenting and family are embedded in hierarchical relationships and implicitness of family roles (especially being a mother; cf. Manlove, 1997). Parenting becomes a key source of identity-valuation, and a backbone of the axio-normative value system (cf. Campos et al., 2014; Bertaux & Thomson, 1993). The narratives of young adults, contrarily, showcase much more variability, with stories ranging from full embracement of parenting as a value, through in-between attitudes, to full denial of parenting's significance.

First, the paper shows that parenting can have a bounding and bonding effect for family dyads, wherein young adults and their parents demonstrate consistent centralisation of parenting as a crucial value (cf. Chen & Caplan, 2001; CBOS, 2019a; 2019b). In such families, social coherence is high and, arguably, it can be expected that the intergenerational transmission will continue towards the subsequent generation under familism (cf. Campos et al., 2014). Second, the paper makes a contribution by qualitatively tracking the "transmission lag" in the context of parenting (Min et al., 2012; Monk, 2011; Cunningham, 2020). Reproduction yields itself well to such analyses, as transitions (to parenthood and to adulthood) trigger biographic reflections about values, including parenting and procreation. The data indicates that parenting may indeed be a dormant value, which becomes awakened and shifts from intergenerational ambivalence to intergenerational alignment when young adults ponder about being parents and reflect on what their parents believed in terms of the central role of family in one's life (cf. Schönplflug, 2001; Vollebergh et al., 2009). Finally, the data expectedly confirms the effects of value changes in Poland (see: Slany, 2002; Jasińska-Kania, 2012; Kajta & Pustułka, 2023) and the temporal dynamics of relationships in the life

course (Elder & Caspi, 1988). The global diffusion of individualism and post-materialism cannot be disregarded in this context (Inglehart, 2020; Vedder et al., 2001).

Using a generational approach to compare and contrast family dyads, the data offers important insights into three matrices of intergenerational transmission. More broadly, parenting should be seen and studied as one of the values transmitted in the “lagged” manner, namely, that the entry into adult roles can trigger latent predispositions towards parenting or its contestation (cf. Min et al., 2012; Cunningham, 2020). To an extent, these can be interpreted – through a qualitative lens – as a result of intergenerational socialisation and earlier family transfers.

Going forward, the study suggests that more research into the interplay of intergenerational transmission and social change is required to further clarify the directionality of changes and the propensity for each intergenerational setting of (non)transfer of parenting and reproduction aspirations. As a pillar of socialisation, the boundaries of intergenerational transmission examined over time can also serve as a pivot to researching intergenerational tensions, conflicts, and solidarity (cf. Repetti et al., 2009; Capaldi et al., 2003; Bentson et al., 2002; Roest et al., 2010). As this study shows, transmission belts between parents and young adults in Poland appear to be affected by the political sphere introducing intergenerational polarisation on key matters around natalism into the private family space.

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