

ARGUMENTS FOR ALSO INTERVIEWING OLDER PERSONS IN GGP

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One of the innovations in the Gender and Generations Programme will be to collect information relating to family formation, child care and employment as well as to intergenerational support and the care for older adults. In that sense the Programme focuses on the interplay between changes in the gender and age systems of European societies on the one hand and developments within the family on the other.

Gender relations within the family have changed (division of labour between spouses; more fragile relationships) as well as the relationships between the generations (more egalitarian; father's authority has been replaced by intergenerational negotiation). The declining number of children and siblings brings about that it is no longer obvious that children or relatives take care of persons getting frail, since they may live too far away or may have too many other competing commitments. Grandparents may, for similar reasons, also not be the obvious 'child care facility' for taking care of grandchildren.

Every society is characterised by an age system which divides 'the life span into recognized seasons of life. The cultural segmentation of life time takes several forms. The periods of life are defined; people are channeled into positions and roles according to age criteria; and privileges, rights, and obligations are based on culturally shared age definitions. Finally, populations are divided into age groups whose interactions are socially structured and regulated (Hagestad and Neugarten, 1985, p. 35).'

The changing nature of the age system has many potential consequences for the relationships between the different generations within families. But this relationship is recursive. The structuring of generational relationships within the family has repercussions for the age system of the society-at-large as well. Some promising topics that urgently need exploring are:

- ?? the actual relationships between the generations within families. We need to know more about how much and what kind of transfers ? material goods, services, information, affection and emotional support? are exchanged between the generations, and whether or not such transfers influence demographic behaviour
- ?? targeting families and individuals that are 'at risk'. Within most European societies intergenerational transfers of one kind or another are important in sustaining individuals and families. Families and individuals who lack sufficient support from parents and/or children can be considered to be 'at risk'. One would like to know their number and characteristics,
- ?? the consequences of demographic changes ? reduction of fertility, lengthening of the life span, ageing of the population, increase in divorce? for the relationships between the generations within families. The reduction of fertility leads to more families with none or only few children. This may increase the burden on the remaining family members to provide transfers ? e.g. to care for frail parents. At the same time, children may profit more from transfers from their parents, because they do not have to share them with siblings. The increase in divorce may change the need for transfers from parents to their adult children. These

transfers may be both tangible ? e.g. temporarily returning to the parental home, providing finances for a new home, taking care of children? and intangible. At the same time, divorce may erode the viability of family ties as relationships between grandparents and grandchildren will often become weaker with a reduction in transfers as a result,

- ?? the interplay between changing gender relationships and changing intergenerational relationships within the family. Several types of linkages between 'gender and generation' within families can be envisaged. For instance, the increase in the labour force participation of women leads to an increase in demand for childcare. This demand can be met by extending formal childcare arrangements, but also by grandparents and other family members taking care of grandchildren. The increase in dual earner families may, at the same time, reduce the time children can spend on taking care of frail parents. Especially women run the risk of being 'sandwiched' between competing demands from parents, children, partner and labour force participation,
- ?? intergenerational relationships and policy. Within Europe, large differences exist in the policies targeted at older adults (health care, pension schemes). Too little is known about the impact of these policies on older adults and on their relationships with other family members. Do the magnitude and type of support that children provide depend on the type of policies that are in place in different countries? What has happened to care arrangements and intergenerational relationships in the countries under transition? But the reverse question has to be posed as well: What types of policies would be needed given the state of intergenerational relationships and care system in respective European countries?

European populations are ageing. The decline of fertility has changed the relative size of subsequent cohorts. This has implications for important societal issues, such as the organisation and feasibility of care arrangements and pension schemes. At the same time the rapid pace of social change results in large differences between cohorts and their knowledge and attitudes. The pattern of age grading in society has changed: the balance of power and of prestige between age groups may well have shifted from older to younger cohorts.

Within Europe large differences exist between countries in the way gender and intergenerational relationships are structured. Of particular interest is the question how these structures are influenced by economic and ideational shifts that occurred in Europe over the past few decades as well as by political factors.

In order to study the interplay between changes in the gender and age systems of European societies on the one hand and developments within the family on the other we propose to target a multipurpose survey to men and women aged 18 years or over. For practical reasons persons aged 80 years or over should be excluded.

In order to be able to study variation within 5-year age groups, 250 respondents is an absolute minimum for each of those age group per sex. Since the age range 18-79 includes at least 12 of such age groups the absolute minimum for the number of respondents is $12 \times 2 \times 250 = 6000$. Given the occurrence of non-response it means that the initial design needs to be larger. An initial design with 10,000 interviews is a good starting point.

In principle the same questionnaire will be used for all respondents, although exact questions to be posed are based on people's position in the life course (filters). For example questions on relationships and parenthood (histories) are important to all age groups, and so are issues that define contexts of decision making concerning gender and intergenerational relationships like social background, values and attitudes, socio-economic circumstances and policy perceptions.

Annex 1:

Also from a more practical sampling design point of view it is most interesting to include almost complete populations irrespective of age, as address designs may suffice in those countries that do not have adequate census or population registers available. Even if persons below 18 year and above 80 years are excluded as respondents there will practicably be no addresses where only non-eligible persons are living (maybe only people living in older persons dormitories) since youngsters up until 18 years practically all live together with one or more eligible persons. According to the table below the chances for coming across addresses with only non-eligible persons of 80+ years is slightly higher in Northern and Western Europe than elsewhere.

Percentage share of population by age group in European regions, 2000 (1998 UN Medium variant)

Age	North	East	South	West	Totaal Europe
0-19	25,1	26,1	21,8	23,0	24,3
20-49	41,6	44,8	44,5	43,4	44,0
50-79	29,3	27,1	30,4	30,0	28,8
80+	4,0	2,0	3,4	3,6	2,9
	100	100	100	100	100

Annex 2:

If a country would only choose to interview youngsters (like in the Family and Fertility Surveys up to now) we will miss information on:

- ?? older person's union and family formation behaviour (smaller range of birth cohorts) and their rationales; although family formation has finished for older female cohorts union formation still continues: it is of increasing importance to study rationales for such behaviour, especially in ageing and divorcing societies; for males life is slightly different: their reproduction continues to old age making second and even third 'nests' feasible for them. Although it could be possible to ask children (youngsters) about the demographic behaviour of their parents, the behaviour of older persons without (living) children cannot be investigated in this way. We would also have to do without views of older persons
- ?? older person's network needs and wishes (may be available from other surveys)
- ?? older person's views on intergenerational support (both giving and receiving) and the possible effect of support on their own behaviour and well-being

If a country would only choose to interview older persons we will miss information on:

- ?? younger person's union and family formation behaviour, which shapes the current base of the age pyramids
- ?? younger person's views on intergenerational support (both giving and receiving) and the possible effects of support on their own behaviour and well-being

The benefit of excluding either younger or older persons would be that:

- ?? the fieldwork is smaller and cheaper.