



Transitions in Giving and Receiving Intergenerational Financial Support in Middle and Old Age

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Abstract

The growing population of elderly households, and their diverse economic circumstances, underscores the need to study the patterns of financial assistance in advanced ages. The proposition presented conceptualizes intergenerational financial support as contingent and dynamic. Data are drawn from Wave I to Wave VI of SHARE-Europe. The empirical examination models changes over time in financial support. The study's findings show that steady giving and receiving is quite exceptional. Most respondents did not engage in giving or receiving financial support at any two time points during the 12 year period covered by our study. Aging, changing living arrangements, and especially economic circumstances affect the likelihood of shifting between giving and not giving as well as receiving or not receiving financial assistance. Comparisons across four European welfare regimes reveal that the propensity to refrain from giving any financial support is salient mainly in Mediterranean and Eastern European states, whereas the likelihood of not receiving sustained financial support from offspring is salient mainly in states characterized by the Continental and the Mediterranean welfare regimes. There appears to be no reciprocity with respect to financial support in Social Democratic and Continental welfare regimes, but we do find evidence of such reciprocity in the Mediterranean and Eastern European regimes. Nonetheless, patterns of intergenerational exchanges of financial and social support are manifested in all welfare regimes.

Keywords Financial support · Reciprocity · Social stratification · SHARE

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1 Introduction

Intergenerational financial transfers between parents and adult children in economically advanced societies are the subject of a sizable body of literature. Although the issues addressed by researchers and the data sources that support empirical investigations are quite diverse, a number of broad understandings have emerged from this body of research. First, while the flow of resources in traditional and developing societies tends to go from younger adults to older generations (Frankenberg et al. 2002), in highly developed countries the “downward” flow, from parents to offspring, is more prevalent (Albertini et al. 2007; Logan and Spitze 1996; Szydlik 2016). Second, intergenerational financial transfers are embedded in a web of what Leopold and Raab (2011) term “heteromorphic exchanges”—exchanges that take a variety of forms, including temporal, financial, social, and emotional. Third, the motives for intergenerational financial support are complex and it is difficult to discern a single underlying motive for such family exchanges. Fourth, in addition to personal motives, family circumstances and societal attributes either facilitate or hinder intergenerational financial transfers.

The social significance of intergenerational financial transfers for the family as an institution derives from the obligations and interdependency among family members that family support and resource exchange create. These, in turn, tend to stabilize social relations and enhance intergenerational solidarity (Blau 1964; Motel and Szydlik 1999). From a broader societal perspective, intergenerational support patterns have been gaining importance as population aging challenges pension and social security systems and labor markets offer less stability and promise to many young adults.

Most studies on intergenerational financial support focus on the motives for such exchanges and typically examine a single instance of giving or receiving support. These studies explicitly or implicitly view the observed support patterns as rather fixed relationships between the generations. Variation in support patterns is primarily sought in the characteristics and needs of the receiving side, with less attention given to the attributes of the givers other than their economic circumstances (Litwak 1985; Szydlik 2016). Some studies (e.g., Cantor 1979; Finch and Mason 1993) aim to capture multiple dimension of support from multiple actors within and outside the family, but they are typically less interested in the circumstances of short-term changes from giving to non-giving support and vice versa.

The current study produces a detailed portrait of shifts in giving and receiving financial support between parents and adult offspring as well as the dynamic association between financial support and social support. Specifically, we examine “downward” as well as “upward” financial support between parents in middle and old age and their offspring. We explore intergenerational financial support patterns in several European welfare regimes and investigate the familial circumstances associated with continuity and discontinuity of support over time. The main purpose of this study is to test for the existence of an intra-family dynamic in patterns of parental financial support for children and, conversely, patterns of parental acceptance of financial support from children. An additional goal is to map the set of factors that explain the observed patterns of support continuity and discontinuity. By doing so, we aim to expand the understanding of intergenerational financial support.

2 Theoretical Considerations

2.1 Motives for Intergenerational Financial Support

Scholarly work on financial transfers between parents and offspring focuses largely on the motives for such transfers and is dominated by two main theoretical perspectives (Silverstein 2005). One line of argumentation traces transfers to altruistic motives, mainly those of parents toward offspring. According to this theory, parents are concerned for the welfare of their offspring and support them in order to enhance their wellbeing. Following the same reasoning, Albertini and Radl (2012) argue, from a social stratification perspective, that financial transfers are intended to maintain social class across generations. In deciding on such support, parents take account of their children's needs and achievements and the economic status and class to which the parents want them to belong (McGarry and Schoeni 1997; Berry 2008).

The second theoretical approach centers on interrelations, arguing that transfers between parents and offspring take place within the framework of reciprocal exchanges and cannot be explained by altruism alone (Cox 1987; Altonji et al. 1995). Given the long-term nature of these interrelations, the money and aid provided by each side over the years have an "offsetting" effect (Antonucci and Jackson 1990). The long-term interrelationship in this context is typified by an investment by parents that matures years later (Silverstein et al. 2002). Parent-offspring reciprocity also characterizes short-term relations and serves to preserve the self-esteem of the parties involved; it also alleviates intergenerational tensions (Leopold and Raab 2011).

With respect to intergenerational exchanges, Attias-Donfut and Wolff (2000) found that women are more involved in time transfer than men. Other studies, however, found no gender difference in this type of transfer (Lennartsson et al. 2010). Lennartsson et al. (2010) reported that parents who maintain weekly contact with their offspring are more likely to transfer money to them than are parents whose contact is less frequent. No significant gender difference in giving financial support has been found, but Swedish women are more likely to receive aid than are men (Fritzell and Lennartsson 2005). In addition, a degree of dependency has been found between the type of transfer and the family's earning ability (Couch et al. 1999).

In studies that support the reciprocation theory, different types of transfers are found to be substitutable. Parents who receive social services from offspring are more likely to transfer money to them (Brandt and Deindl 2013; Deindl and Brandt 2011; Norton et al. 2013). Offspring who help parents by means of time transfer are twice as likely to receive a financial transfer as are those who do not help their parents (Leopold and Raab 2011). Conversely, parents who provided support to their children expect to receive aid (physical or emotional) from them when they become ill (Lin and Wu 2014). In many cases, time assistance and financial aid are given coincidentally, i.e., a family member in need of help may receive several kinds of assistance concurrently (Deindl and Brandt 2011).

Returning to the theoretical discourse, some researchers consider the distinction between the motives of family altruism and interrelatedness vague and difficult to disentangle. Various findings may support both motives concurrently (Grundy 2005) and consideration should be given to integrating the two (Arrondel and Masson 2006). In fact, it is important to note that financial transfers between parents and adult offspring occur less frequently than might be expected on the basis of altruism or reciprocity (Leopold and Raab 2011; Swartz 2009). Furthermore, there is no reason to assume that

intergenerational financial support is a stable and continuous phenomenon. This is demonstrated by research showing that estimates of financial support at a discrete point in time are lower than estimates based on longer periods (Swartz 2009).

2.2 Circumstances that Facilitate or Hinder Financial Support

Studies identify three salient sets of attributes—socio-demographic, state of health, and economic circumstances—that are associated with intergenerational assistance. Grundy (2005), for instance, found that among married parents, older age reduces the likelihood of a financial transfer to offspring (see also Mudrazija 2014). Fathers are more likely to make such transfers than are mothers and the chances of a financial transfer to offspring are greater from parents with intermediary or higher-level education than from poorly educated progenitors (Albertini et al. 2007). The likelihood of a financial transfer from parents to offspring is greater in small families and a first-born is four times more likely to receive a transfer than a fourth-born offspring in the same family (Emery 2013). Living with a spouse or a partner increases the likelihood of giving a financial transfer and raises the amount provided (Brandt and Deindl 2013).

With regard to geographic distance between parents and offspring, research seems to produce inconsistent findings. While Brandt and Deindl (2013) find that offspring who live farther away from parents are more likely to receive a financial transfer than are offspring who live nearby, Mulder and Van Der Meer (2009) determine that the smaller the distance between parents and offspring, the greater the likelihood of help. Family structure also appears to be a consideration. Henretta et al. (2014) find differences between offspring and step-offspring in the extent of financial support that parents provide. A larger number of grandchildren raises the probability of making a financial transfer to an offspring among married parents but not among parents who are no longer married (Grundy 2005).

Many studies find an effect of parent's state of health on parent–offspring relations. Parents in poor health are less likely to give financial support to offspring and are less generous in such support when given (Albertini and Radl 2012; Attias-Donfut et al. 2005; Brandt and Deindl 2013; Deindl and Brandt 2011; Henretta et al. 2002; Leopold and Raab 2011). A sick or disabled offspring is more likely than a healthy offspring to receive a transfer from his or her parents. Conversely, when a parent is in poor health, his or her offspring tend to provide more assistance (Silverstein et al. 2002).

Unsurprisingly, studies show that economic circumstances are important determinants of the likelihood of providing and receiving intergenerational transfers and of the form of such transfers. Both parents and offspring with high incomes tend to give money instead of time (Attias-Donfut et al. 2005). According to the literature, the better off a family is, the more likely it is to provide financial support and the larger each financial transfer will be (Albertini et al. 2007; Brandt and Deindl 2013; Henretta et al. 2002; Leopold and Raab 2011). Parents from higher social classes make larger financial transfers than do their lower-class counterparts (Albertini and Radl 2012; Mulder and Smits 2013). Jiménez-Martín and Vilaplana Prieto (2015) find that the probability and size of a financial transfer to a child increase when the child is unemployed, but this is tempered by the level of the regional jobless rate. Albuquerque (2014) notes an asymmetry in that the likelihood of a financial transfer to children increases if the parents' financial situation is good but that financial situation is not a predictor of transfers from children to parents.

2.3 Welfare Regimes and Patterns of Support

Intergenerational support between parents and offspring should be understood in context. Indeed, diverse patterns of transfers of time and in funds are found across countries (Attias-Donfut et al. 2005; Brandt 2013; Lowenstein et al. 2004). Given that intergenerational transfers are meant largely to maintain or enhance the recipient's wellbeing, their patterns are likely to be moderated by the social welfare regime of the country in question. Building on Esping-Andersen's (1990) influential work published three decades ago, several scholars have developed a conceptual typology of welfare regimes. Although the terminology and the basis for differentiation among regimes vary somewhat, one finds considerable overlap and a substantial consensus among scholars around a four-regime typology (Esping-Andersen 1990, 1999; Albertini and Kohli 2009): Social Democratic, Liberal, Continental, and Mediterranean (or South European). However, comparative studies of European countries often add a fourth type: East European or, post-Socialist (Antonova et al. 2015). While diverse patterns do exist across these regime types, no empirical support has been found for the hypothesis that a welfare policy that attends more effectively to older populations' needs is associated with lower levels of transfers between parents and offspring (the crowding-out hypothesis). Indeed, the relations between welfare policy and intergenerational transfers appear to be more complex (Albertini et al. 2007; Künemund and Rein 1999).

The larger the share of government expenditure on social services, the more likely a financial transfer is, chiefly from parents to offspring. The opposite effect is found with regard to the amount of money transferred: the larger the share of government expenditure on social services, the smaller the financial transfer (Brandt and Deindl 2013; Deindl and Brandt 2011). Furthermore, the probability of a parent-offspring exchange that includes financial transfers from parents and time transfers from offspring, is greater in Social Democratic countries than in countries characterized by a Continental welfare regime (Leopold and Raab 2011). In countries characterized by Continental or Mediterranean welfare regimes a different form of intergenerational financial aid is observed whereby adult offspring and parents are more likely to live together. Evidently in these countries living with parents serves as a distinct form of intra-familial support (Albertini and Kohli 2013). Furthermore, parental financial support for offspring declines more rapidly with age in Mediterranean countries than in countries with a Social Democratic welfare regime (Mudrazija 2014).

In view of the varied logics of the welfare regimes and past research findings, our study focuses on the relationship between support dynamics and individual and household characteristics, examines the particular and general patterns across welfare regimes, characterizes the dynamics of intergenerational financial transfers in each of welfare regime separately and seeks to reveal both patterns that are more general, as well as those that mark a particular welfare regime. We hypothesize: (1) that across all regimes financial support is sensitive to household circumstances and hence expect to find considerable short-term fluctuations. (2) Worsening of economic and health conditions will lead to termination of financial giving and will hinder the onset of support. (3) Concomitantly, such changes are expected to generate situation of receiving financial support when such support was not previously forthcoming. (4) We expect more prevalent "downward" support in welfare regimes in which the elderly are better protected (social democratic and continental), and that there will be less financial reciprocity within these regimes.

Table 1 Countries investigated, by waves and years

Welfare regime	Country	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6
Social Democratic	Denmark	2004	2006/07	2011	2013	2015
	Sweden	2004	2006/07	2011	2013	2015
Continental	Austria	2004	2006/07	2011	2013	2015
	France	2004/05	2006/07	2011	2013	2015
	Germany	2004	2006/07	2011/12	2013	2015
	Switzerland	2004	2006/07	2011	2013	2015
	Belgium	2004	2006/07	2011	2013	2015
	Netherlands	2004	2007	2011	2013	
	Luxembourg				2013	2015
Eastern Europe	Czech Republic		2006/07	2011	2013	2015
	Poland		2006/07	2011/12		
	Slovenia			2011	2013	2015
	Estonia			2010/11	2013	2015
Mediterranean	Spain	2004	2006/07	2011	2013	2015
	Italy	2004	2006/07	2011	2013	2015
	Greece	2004/05	2007			
	Israel	2005/06	2009/10		2013	2015

3 Data and Methods

3.1 Data

To address the issues outlined above, we employ data from the Survey of Health, Aging and Retirement in Europe (SHARE), a multinational (European) panel study comprised of representative samples of the population aged 50+ in multiple countries. A central goal of SHARE is to provide information on persons and households in middle and late life and changes in their wellbeing as they age.

We use data from Wave I through Wave VI (with the exception of the retrospective Wave III), collected between 2004 and 2015, to investigate changes between successive waves in the granting of parental financial support for children and vice versa. Throughout the years of the panel there is natural dropout of participants in the study. The attrition increases as time progresses (Malter et al. 2016). The main reasons for this are death and lack of responsiveness. In light of this, and in order to ensure the highest possible number of cases, the present study focuses on changes over any two successive points of investigation (hereinafter referred to as Time 1, or the first investigation period, and as Time 2, or the second investigation period).

Our study includes data from seventeen countries that represent various welfare regimes in Europe—Social Democratic (Denmark and Sweden), Continental (Austria, France, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, Netherlands, and Luxembourg), Eastern Europe (Czech Republic, Poland, Slovenia, and Estonia) and the Mediterranean (Spain, Italy, Greece, and Israel) (Srakar et al. 2015; Silverstein et al. 2020). No Liberal welfare states are among the SHARE countries. The list of countries and the waves in which they participated are presented in Table 1.

The total number of respondents from these countries was 30,434 in Wave I, 37,174 in Wave II, 58,184 in Wave IV, 66,221 in Wave V, and 68,231 in Wave VI. The main reason for the rise in the number of respondents along time is the increase in the number of countries participating in the survey. Our study includes only those households that participated in successive waves: I and II (20,916); II and IV (18,781), IV and V (39,009), and V and VI (47,523). In total there are 126,229 such paired observations. Since households vary in the number of respondents interviewed, we selected only the “financial respondent” in each household—the person providing information on financial matters—in order to have one respondent per household. We excluded from our working sample the households of persons without children. Our sample, therefore, includes respondents aged 50+ at Time 1 who were parents and for whom we have information on giving or receiving financial support at two points in time. There are 85,035 cases with valid data on providing financial support in the year before the survey and 85,330 cases with valid data on receiving financial support that year. The large number of cases permits a detailed examination of intergenerational support even though the phenomenon is not very common.

3.2 Variables

3.2.1 Dependent Variables

Our dependent variables are reports on giving and receiving financial support during the 12 months preceding the survey. They are derived from responses to the following questions: “Now please think of the last 12 months. Not counting any shared housing or shared food, have you (or your partner) given any financial or material gift or support to any person inside or outside this household amounting to 250 euro (in local currency) or more?” A similarly word question asked about receiving such financial support. These are binary variables that are labeled “yes” when respondents reported that they (or their spouses/partners) gave financial support to (or received financial support from) an offspring in the previous 12 months, and “no” otherwise. Unfortunately, participants were asked about the size of the financial transfer that they received or gave only in the first two waves of SHARE and the information is unavailable in the ensuing waves. Thus we can only study the patterns of giving or receiving financial transfers over time, without the sums attached to such exchanges.

Responses to the questions on financial support specify the participant’s relation to the recipient or provider of financial support (parent, sibling, other relative, etc.). Since our focus is on patterns of intergenerational exchanges we consider only financial support between parents and offspring. Unfortunately, however, the dataset does not include the names of financial support providers or recipients. Lacking the children’s names and lacking sufficient identifying attributes over successive waves, we were unable to analyze specific dyadic exchanges.¹ We are, however, able to identify support from parent to offspring and receipt of support from offspring, reflecting changes in intergenerational support patterns over short periods of time.

Giving financial support (to offspring)—Cross-classifying the financial support information at two points in time yielded four patterns of transitions and stability over time:

¹ Only in the first wave were the data sufficiently detailed to permit the study of dyadic exchanges (e.g., Brandt and Deindl 2013).

gave financial support at both points in time; gave financial support at Time 1 but not at Time 2 (i.e., stopped giving financial support), did not provide financial support at Time 1 but gave such aid at Time 2 (i.e., began to give financial support), and did not give financial support at either point in time.

Receiving financial support (from offspring)—As in the procedure above, we cross-classified the binary financial-support variable at two points in time to yield a four-category variable representing transitions and stability over time: received financial support at both points in time, received financial support at Time 1 but not at Time 2 (i.e., stopped receiving financial support), received no financial support at Time 1 but received such aid at Time 2 (i.e., began to receive financial support), and did not receive financial support at either point in time.

3.2.2 Explanatory Variables

The theoretical discussion at the outset of this paper identified several clusters of variables associated with giving and receiving patterns. The first group includes *socio-demographic attributes*: age, gender, family characteristics, and living arrangements. **Age**, **number of parents alive**, and **number of offspring** are defined in a straightforward manner as numeric variables. **Gender and living arrangement** are used to create a categorical variable indicating whether the respondent is living with a partner or whether the respondent is a single female or single male. **Change in living arrangement** is a variable with three categories: no change, living with a partner at Time 1 and living alone at Time 2, and living alone at Time 1 and living with a partner at Time 2.

The second group of explanatory variables captures *health and functioning characteristics*: **Chronic illness** is the count of chronic conditions that the respondents reported. The list of illnesses includes heart attack (therein: myocardial infarction), hypertension/high blood pressure, high cholesterol, stroke, diabetes, chronic pulmonary disease, asthma, arthritis, osteoporosis, cancer or malignant growth, ulcer, Parkinson's disease, cataracts, and hip fracture. **Change in chronic illness** represents change in the number of reported chronic conditions between Time 1 and Time 2. It has three values: no change, decrease in the number of illnesses, and increase in the number of illnesses.

The third group consists of *economic indicators*, reflecting the economic circumstances of the household. This group includes two variables. **Total net income**, captures the inflow of economic resources. The second variable, **change in net income**, has three values: decrease of 10% or more, no change (representing a range from a decrease of less than 10% to an increase of less than 10%), and an increase of 10% or more. This is a non-trivial change in over a period of 2 years and likely to affect economic behavior.²

To evaluate the role of reciprocity, we also included in the analysis an indicator of giving and receiving social support at Time 1. Our indicator of “social support” is based on responses to the question: “Now please think of the last 12 months. Has any family member from outside the household, any friend or neighbour given you (or your partner) any kind of help? ((1) Dressing, bathing or showering, eating, getting in or out of bed, using toilet; (2) With home repairs, gardening, transportation, shopping, household chores; (3) Filling out forms, settling financial or legal matters.)” A similarly worded question asked about providing such social support. This was followed by information on who

² Alternative cut-off points of 7.5% and 12.5% did not alter the results of the multinomial logit models.

the provider/receiver was. Hence, **Received social support** indicates whether or not the respondent received intergenerational social support of any kind. **Gave social support** indicates whether or not respondent provided intergenerational social support of any kind.

3.3 Method of Analysis and Model

The statistical analysis includes descriptive statistics and multivariate analysis. The descriptive statistics illuminate the patterns of intergenerational financial support and provide estimates of the extent of transitions between states of giving/not-giving and states of receiving/not-receiving. For the multivariate analysis, we used the multinomial logit (MNL) model to estimate the probability of being in a particular state out of several unordered alternatives. More specifically and similar to previous studies of transitions between states (Achdut et al. 2015; Glewwe et al. 2002; Justino et al. 2008; Niimi et al. 2004, 2007), we employed this methodology to examine transitions between states of giving and not giving, as well as receiving and not receiving, financial support at the two points of time. As noted above, there are 4 possible states of giving financial support: giving financial support at both points in time, giving financial support at Time 1 but not at Time 2, not giving financial support at Time 1 but giving such support at Time 2, and not giving financial support at either point in time. Likewise, there are 4 parallel states of receiving financial support.

The probability that an individual belongs to any of the four categories is given by the conditional probability model in Eq. 1.

$$\Pr_{ij}(y = j | x_i) = \frac{\exp(x_i \beta_j)}{1 + \sum_{k=1}^J \exp(\beta_k x_i)} \quad (1)$$

where y is the outcome experienced by individual i , x_i is the $(n \times 1)$ vector of characteristics for individual i , and β_j is the $(n \times 1)$ vector of coefficients on x_i applicable to individual in state j . In these analyses, the x_i includes personal characteristics, health and functioning characteristics, economic wellbeing, and indicators of reciprocity. To interpret the findings in a meaningful way, contrasted outcome groups must have an identical point of departure. Therefore, we estimated each multinomial model $J/2$ times, J representing the number of categories in the phenomenon being studied. From these models, we derived coefficient estimates for two transitions while taking into account the prevalence of stability: (1) for those who gave financial support at the first point in time, the transition to not giving at the second point in time; (2) for those who did not give financial support at the first point in time, the transition to giving at the second point in time. Transitions in receipt of financial support are analyzed similarly. The models were estimated for each of the four welfare regimes.

4 Findings

4.1 Descriptive Overview

Table 2 presents the distribution of cases across different patterns of giving and receiving financial support at the two points in time. The table shows the absolute number of observations in each of the four previously described states as well as the unweighted

Table 2 Stability and change in giving and receiving intergenerational financial support (percentage in parentheses)

	Time 1	Yes	Yes	No	No	Total
	Time 2	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Giving from parents to offspring	N	7941	15,554	11,875	49,666	85,035
	%	(9.3)	(18.3)	(13.9)	(58.5)	(100.0)
	Weighted %	(9.8)	(18.9)	(13.4)	(58.2)	(100.0)
Receiving by parents from offspring	N	1466	4431	4641	74,792	85,330
	%	(1.7)	(5.2)	(5.4)	(87.7)	(100.0)
	Weighted %	(2.0)	(5.3)	(5.6)	(87.1)	(100.0)

Table 3 Relation between transition states of giving/receiving financial support to/from offspring and welfare regime (percent)

Provision of financial support at Time 1	Yes	Yes	No	No	F/ χ^2
Provision of financial support at Time 2	Yes	No	Yes	No	
<i>Giving financial support</i>					
Welfare regime					
Continental	11.14	17.80	14.46	56.60	98.56**
Social Democratic	12.61	22.61	15.78	49.00	
East European	8.60	16.52	14.52	60.36	
Mediterranean	9.87	12.75	11.40	65.98	
<i>Receiving financial support</i>					
Welfare Regime					
Continental	1.36	4.43	4.36	89.85	173.48**
Social Democratic	2.26	5.22	5.76	86.76	
East European	2.77	7.59	8.98	80.66	
Mediterranean	1.02	4.19	3.90	90.89	

Significance levels: ** $P < 0.01$; * $P < 0.05$

and weighted share (percentages) of each group. The data in Table 2 provide two important insights regarding financial exchanges across generations. First, intergenerational financial support is not very common. Pooled across several survey waves, most respondents neither gave nor received intergenerational financial support at any point in time. Second, intergenerational giving and receiving fluctuates greatly. The number of parents who shifted between waves from giving to not giving to their offspring, or vice versa (18.9% and 13.4%, respectively), was more than three times larger than the number of those who provided assistance at both points in time (9.8%). The fluctuations are even greater when it comes to receiving support from offspring. The number of households that shifted from receiving financial support from offspring to not receiving, or from not receiving to receiving, is six times larger than the number of steady receivers. Intermittent financial support to offspring is much more common than continuous giving; similarly, inconsistent receipt of financial support from offspring is considerably more common than continuous support. Thus, an examination of the correlates of such transitions will help illuminate the contingent quality of intergenerational financial support.

A comparison among the four European welfare regimes shows that refraining from giving any financial support is salient mainly in Mediterranean and East European states, whereas elders under Continental and Social Democratic welfare regimes are more likely to continuously give such support to offspring (Table 3). On the other hand, we find that respondents living under Continental and Mediterranean welfare regimes are less likely than others to receive sustained financial support from offspring. The likelihood of receiving such support on a sustained basis stands out chiefly among seniors who live under Social Democratic and East European welfare regimes.

To obtain a sense of how support patterns are related to sociodemographic and economic characteristics of individuals and families, we conducted bivariate analyses. It is noteworthy that people who gave no financial support were 3–6 years older on average than those who gave financial support to offspring at one point in time or more (Table 4). The state of health of those who tended not to provide financial support was worse than that of others, while the average household income among parents who tended to continuously provide financial support was significantly higher than those in all other states. The difference is largest when contrasted with respondents who gave no financial support to offspring at either point in time. Respondents who receive no financial support at Time 1 are less likely to be providers of financial support to offspring, while persons who received support from parents are the most likely to provide offspring with continuous financial support. Persons who received social support from offspring at Time 1 are somewhat more likely to be givers of financial support to offspring, suggesting a discrete pattern of intergenerational exchanges.

The bivariate analysis for states of receiving financial support from offspring is presented in Table 5. The analysis reveals significant relations between all individual and family indicators and membership in each group of situations of receiving financial support. Persons who did not receive financial transfers from offspring are significantly younger than those who received transfers at one point in time at least. Females living alone are more likely to receive financial support from offspring than are males living alone or persons living with a partner. In addition, respondents who did not receive financial transfers are better off economically than those who received support, especially continuous support. The same is true for the relationship with state of health. Those who received financial support, especially continuous support, reported more chronic conditions than did others. Respondents who reported that they provided social support to offspring at Time 1 were more likely than others to receive financial support from offspring at both points in time, although the difference is quite small.

4.2 Modeling the Likelihood of Giving and Receiving Patterns Across Welfare Regimes

Since many of the individual and family characteristics associated with giving and receiving support are interrelated, we estimated the multiple associations simultaneously in multivariate analysis carried out separately for each welfare regime.

Coefficient estimates from a multinomial regression analysis and the average marginal effect are presented for models of change in giving financial support (Table 6) and for receiving financial support (Table 7). The marginal effect of each explanatory variable indicates the change in the probability of a transition between situations of giving and not giving, or receiving and not receiving financial support, associated with a unit change in the explanatory variable. The advantage of calculating marginal effects is that

Table 4 Relation between transition states of giving financial support to offspring and selected individual and household attributes (means and percent)^a

Provision of financial support at Time 1	Yes	Yes	No	No	F/ χ^2
Provision of financial support at Time 2	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Gender and living status					
Female alone	3.09	11.09	6.96	78.87	190.50***
Male alone	6.14	17.68	7.59	68.60	
Living with partner	8.19	14.92	10.56	66.33	
Age (mean)	60.74 (7.61)	63.66 (9.31)	62.33 (9.05)	66.60 (10.29)	118.10***
Number of parents alive at Time 1 (mean)	0.53 (0.68)	0.35 (0.61)	0.45 (0.66)	0.27 (0.55)	50.64***
Number of offspring (mean)	2.32 (0.99)	2.40 (1.11)	2.30 (1.09)	2.02 (1.50)	47.42***
Change in living status					
No change	6.13	12.65	8.51	72.70	34.85***
Time 1—living with partner	4.59	13.47	8.63	73.30	
Time 2—living alone					
Time 1—living alone	2.16	12.67	12.50	72.67	
Time 2—living with partner					
Chronic diseases					
Number of chronic diseases (mean)	1.28 (1.35)	1.57 (1.46)	1.49 (1.45)	1.81 (1.58)	33.81***
Change in number of chronic diseases					
No change	7.16	13.42	8.94	70.48	39.15***
Less	4.89	11.42	8.40	75.29	
More	5.77	13.06	8.30	72.88	
Income					
Total income (ln) (mean)	10.61 (0.75)	10.23 (0.97)	10.24 (0.91)	9.95 (0.94)	141.12***
Change in income, Time 1 to Time 2					
10% decrease	6.42	13.05	8.15	72.38	27.10***
No change	5.41	12.12	7.12	75.36	
10% increase	5.88	12.59	9.80	71.72	
Receipt of financial support at Time 1					
Didn't receive	5.58	12.16	8.38	73.88	237.47***
Received from other	5.79	14.79	12.94	66.49	
Received from parent	25.95	20.17	16.66	37.22	
Received from offspring	3.49	24.07	3.58	68.86	
Social support at Time 1					
Didn't receive or received from other	3.01	11.38	7.19	78.42	26.03***
Received from offspring	5.62	17.24	8.05	69.09	

Significance levels. *** $P < 0.01$; ** $P < 0.05$; * $P < 0.1$

^aFigures in parentheses are standard deviations

Table 5 Relations between transitions states of receiving financial support from offspring and selected individual and household attributes (means and percent)^a

Provision of financial support at Time 1	Yes	Yes	No	No	F/ χ^2
Provision of financial support in Time 2	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Gender and living status					
Female alone	0.87	4.37	3.79	90.97	104.78***
Male alone	0.11	1.63	1.26	97.00	
Living with partner	0.31	1.47	2.54	95.67	
Age (mean)	67.10 (7.79)	66.61 (9.04)	66.46 (10.27)	58.40 (10.14)	26.67***
Number of parents alive at Time 1 (mean)	0.07 (0.26)	0.18 (0.41)	0.23 (0.50)	0.32 (0.59)	6.15***
Number of offspring (mean)	2.98 (1.09)	2.78 (1.17)	2.88 (1.45)	2.07 (1.40)	33.68***
Change in living status					
No change	0.43	2.08	2.62	94.87	95.51***
Time 1—living with partner	0.15	1.67	1.85	96.33	
Time 2—living alone					
Time 1—living alone	0.00	4.02	0.00	95.98	
Time 2—living with partner					
Chronic diseases					
Number of chronic diseases (mean)	2.58 (1.60)	2.25 (1.57)	2.04 (1.65)	1.70 (1.55)	13.35***
Change in number of chronic diseases					
No change	0.44	1.74	2.09	95.73	24.07**
Less	0.60	2.55	2.51	94.34	
More	0.22	2.06	3.11	94.61	
Income					
Total income (ln) (mean)	9.60 (0.87)	9.74 (0.95)	9.84 (0.92)	10.07 (0.95)	21.95***
Change in income, Time 1 to Time 2					
10% decrease	0.43	2.08	2.62	94.87	95.51***
No change	0.15	1.67	1.85	96.33	
10% increase	0.00	4.02	0.00	95.98	
Giving financial support at Time 1					
Didn't give	0.36	1.62	2.37	95.65	29.34**
Gave to other	0.23	3.07	3.23	93.47	
Gave to parent	1.31	3.61	2.91	92.17	
Gave to offspring	0.64	3.09	2.85	93.42	
Social support at Time 1					
Didn't give or gave to other	4.91	2.18	1.84	91.07	26.09***
Gave to offspring	8.32	3.49	2.11	86.08	

Significance levels: *** $P < 0.01$; ** $P < 0.05$; * $P < 0.1$

^aParentheses denote standard deviation values

Table 6 Multinomial logit models of transition between states of giving financial support to offspring for parents aged 50+ at Time 1 (marginal effects)^a

	Continental ^b			Social Democratic ^b			East European ^b			Mediterranean ^b		
	Model I—stop giving	Model II—begin giving	Model I—stop giving	Model I—stop giving	Model II—begin giving	Model I—stop giving	Model I—stop giving	Model II—begin giving	Model I—stop giving	Model II—begin giving	Model I—stop giving	Model II—begin giving
	Number of offspring	-0.026***	0.018**	-0.009*	0.025***	-0.018**	0.007*	-0.014**	0.016**	-0.014**	0.016**	-0.014**
Living with spouse/partner (reference)												
Female living alone	0.019**	-0.018***	0.022**	-0.012**	0.031***	-0.020**	0.009*	-0.019**	0.009*	-0.019**	0.009*	-0.019**
Male living alone	0.017**	-0.014**	0.014*	-0.010**	0.016**	-0.023***	0.021**	-0.025**	0.021**	-0.025**	0.021**	-0.025**
Change in living arrangements												
No change (reference)												
With spouse/partner to alone	0.042**	-0.013**	0.031**	-0.010	0.052***	-0.017*	0.046**	-0.019*	0.046**	-0.019*	0.046**	-0.019*
Alone to with spouse/partner	-0.018*	0.036**	-0.010*	0.029**	-0.025**	0.018*	-0.028**	0.042***	-0.028**	0.042***	-0.028**	0.042***
Age	0.009**	-0.008**	0.012**	-0.003*	0.017**	-0.012**	0.023***	-0.014**	0.023***	-0.014**	0.023***	-0.014**
Number of parents alive	0.012*	-0.011*	0.008	-0.006	0.019**	-0.005	0.016**	-0.016**	0.016**	-0.016**	0.016**	-0.016**
Number of chronic conditions	0.015**	-0.016*	0.011**	-0.019**	0.025***	-0.023*	0.014**	-0.034**	0.014**	-0.034**	0.014**	-0.034**
Change in chronic conditions												
No change (reference)												

Table 6 (continued)

	Continental ^b			Social Democratic ^b			East European ^b			Mediterranean ^b		
	Model I—stop giving	Model II—begin giving	Model I—stop giving	Model II—begin giving	Model I—stop giving	Model II—begin giving	Model I—stop giving	Model II—begin giving	Model I—stop giving	Model II—begin giving		
	Fewer chronic conditions (better health)	-0.011*	0.013**	-0.025**	0.031***	-0.039***	0.010*	-0.018**	0.019**	-0.018**	0.019**	
More chronic conditions (worse health)	0.021**	-0.012*	0.013*	-0.026**	0.025**	-0.017**	0.017**	-0.024**	0.017**	-0.024**		
Total family net income	-0.030**	0.026***	-0.009*	0.016***	-0.047***	0.043***	-0.039***	0.020**	-0.039***	0.020**		
Change in total income												
Total income the same (reference)												
Total income 10% or more decrease	0.013**	-0.015*	0.011**	-0.011**	0.008*	-0.027***	0.019**	-0.016**	0.019**	-0.016**		
Total income 10% or more increase	-0.010**	0.028***	-0.014**	0.019***	-0.016**	0.017**	-0.020**	0.023**	-0.020**	0.023**		
Receipt of financial support at Time 1												
Didn't receive (reference)												
Received from other	0.041***	-0.048**	0.088***	-0.012*	0.008	0.023**	-0.057***	0.038***	-0.057***	0.038***		
Received from parent	0.034**	-0.079***	0.027**	-0.058***	-0.021**	0.027**	-0.034**	0.029**	-0.034**	0.029**		

Table 6 (continued)

	Continental ^b			Social Democratic ^b			East European ^b			Mediterranean ^b		
	Model I—stop giving	Model II—begin giving	Model I—stop giving	Model II—begin giving	Model I—stop giving	Model II—begin giving	Model I—stop giving	Model II—begin giving	Model I—stop giving	Model II—begin giving	Model I—stop giving	Model II—begin giving
	Received from offspring	0.061***	-0.068**	0.131***	-0.075***	-0.029**	-0.012*	-0.082***	-0.031**			
Received social support from offspring	-0.076***	0.049***	-0.081***	0.033**	-0.041**	0.039**	-0.092***	0.025**				
Time elapsed between two waves	0.006	-0.011*	0.003	-0.007	0.004	-0.008*	0.006*	-0.002				
Observations	37,792		11,552		18,345		17,346					

Significance levels: *** $P < 0.01$, ** $P < 0.05$; * $P < 0.1$

^aUnless stated otherwise, values of explanatory variables were measured at Time 1

^bContinental regime comprises Austria, Germany, Netherlands, France, Switzerland, Belgium, and Luxembourg; Social Democratic regime comprises Sweden and Denmark; East European regime comprises Czech Republic, Poland, Slovenia, and Estonia; Mediterranean regime comprises Spain, Italy, Greece, and Israel. The classification is based on Srakar et al. (2015)

Table 7 Multinomial logit models of transition between states of receiving financial support from offspring for parents aged 50+ at Time 1 (marginal effects)^a

	Continental ^b		Social Democratic ^b		East European ^b		Mediterranean ^b	
	Model I— stop receiving	Model II— begin receiving	Model I— stop receiving	Model II— begin receiving	Model I— stop receiving	Model II— begin receiving	Model I— stop receiving	Model II— begin receiving
Number of offspring	-0.016**	0.011**	-0.023***	0.008*	-0.008*	0.013**	-0.014**	0.017***
Living with spouse/partner (reference)								
Female living alone	-0.021**	0.016**	-0.009***	0.013*	-0.017**	0.011*	-0.013*	0.009*
Male living alone	-0.014*	-0.012*	-0.017**	-0.015**	-0.010**	-0.009*	-0.019**	-0.018**
Change in living arrangements								
No change (reference)								
With spouse/partner to alone	-0.019**	0.009*	-0.014**	0.018***	-0.021***	0.012**	-0.017*	0.031***
Alone to with spouse/partner	0.014*	-0.021***	0.031***	-0.026***	0.017**	-0.016**	0.013*	-0.023***
Age	-0.011	0.009*	-0.010**	0.018***	-0.003	0.013**	-0.013**	0.015**
Number of parents alive	0.008*	-0.014**	0.009**	-0.010**	0.006*	-0.004	0.018***	-0.021***
Number of chronic conditions	-0.017**	0.013*	-0.024***	0.011**	-0.018***	0.015**	-0.023***	0.013*
Change in chronic conditions								
No change (reference)								
Fewer chronic conditions (better health)	0.019**	-0.025**	0.023**	-0.020*	0.021**	-0.017*	0.015**	-0.019**
More chronic conditions (worse health)	-0.022***	0.021**	-0.010**	0.013**	-0.012*	0.020***	-0.020***	0.014**
Total family net income	0.018**	-0.012**	0.031**	-0.018***	0.014**	-0.019***	0.022***	-0.016**
Change in total income								
Total income the same (reference)								
Total income 10% or more decrease	-0.006*	0.011**	-0.012**	0.007*	-0.013**	0.014**	-0.023***	0.016**
Total income 10% or more increase	0.015**	-0.016***	0.021***	-0.019***	0.019**	-0.012**	0.018**	-0.010*
Giving of financial support at Time 1								
Didn't give (reference)								
Gave to other	0.013*	-0.008*	0.034***	-0.012**	-0.012**	0.010*	-0.019**	0.015**

Table 7 (continued)

	Continental ^b		Social Democratic ^b		East European ^b		Mediterranean ^b	
	Model I— stop receiving	Model II— begin receiving	Model I— stop receiving	Model II— begin receiving	Model I— stop receiving	Model II— begin receiving	Model I— stop receiving	Model II— begin receiving
Gave to parent	0.028***	-0.023***	0.025***	-0.027***	-0.020***	0.017**	-0.031***	0.042***
Gave to offspring	0.017**	-0.027***	0.021**	-0.016**	0.015**	-0.021***	0.014*	-0.025***
Gave social support to offspring	-0.012*	0.020**	-0.014**	0.013*	-0.019**	0.015**	-0.014**	0.008*
Time elapsed between two waves	-0.015*	0.009*	-0.010	0.010*	-0.021	0.005	-0.009*	0.003
Observations	37,706		11,520		18,176		17,928	

Significance levels: *** $P < 0.01$; ** $P < 0.05$; * $P < 0.1$

^aUnless stated otherwise, values of explanatory variables were measured at Time 1

^bContinental regime comprises Austria, Germany, Netherlands, France, Switzerland, Belgium, and Luxembourg; Social Democratic regime comprises Sweden and Denmark; East European regime comprises Czech Republic, Poland, Slovenia, and Estonia; Mediterranean regime comprises Spain, Italy, Greece, and Israel. The classification is based on Skarar et al. (2015)

in addition to providing significance tests, they facilitate comparison of the size of the effect for the same variables among the diverse situations of giving/receiving financial support across the multinomial models used in the study.

4.2.1 Giving Financial Support to Offspring

4.2.1.1 Termination of Financial Support Model I shows marginal-effect estimates of the probability of ceasing to provide offspring with financial support between Time 1 and Time 2, and Model II estimates the probability of beginning to provide financial support between the two points in time. The models are estimated separately for each of the four welfare regimes.

Focusing first on Model I, we find that the probability of terminating financial support to offspring decreases commensurate with the number of offspring. Females and males who dwell alone are more likely to terminate financial support than do those who live with a spouse/partner. Similarly, those who transition from living with a spouse/partner to living alone are more likely to terminate financial support than are those who experience no change in their living arrangements, possibly due to the economic uncertainties associated with such a change. The mirror image of this pattern arises in the case of those who lived alone at Time 1 and shifted to living with a spouse/partner by Time 2. They are less likely to cease giving financial support than are persons who experienced no change in their living arrangements. The probability of ceasing to grant financial support to offspring increases in older age and increases with the number of parents alive.

The more chronic conditions a respondent reported at Time 1, the more probable it was that he or she terminated financial support by Time 2. Those who experienced a decrease in a number of chronic conditions are less likely to have terminated financial support to offspring than were those who reported no change in the number of chronic illnesses. By contrast, those who experienced an increase in the number of chronic illnesses were more likely to take this step. The effect of net household income, an indicator of the household's economic wellbeing, is negative. That is, the higher the income, the less likely is termination of financial support for offspring. Furthermore, a decrease in net household income over time is found to increase the probability of terminating financial support, whereas an increase in net income has the opposite effect.

For all the variables described thus far, the direction of the relation is similar across the four welfare regimes but the size of the marginal effect varies. Such is not the case with respect to reciprocity. Persons who live under Continental or Social Democratic welfare regimes and received financial support from offspring, parents, or others are more likely to terminate financial support as time passes. In contrast, under East European or Mediterranean welfare regimes persons who received financial support from offspring or parents are less inclined to terminate financial support as time passes. Receiving financial support from others was found to have a negative significant effect on financial support giving patterns under Mediterranean welfare regimes only.

Receiving social support from offspring at Time 1, however, is negatively and significantly associated with the likelihood of terminating financial support to offspring under all welfare regimes. That is, persons who received social support from their offspring at Time 1 are more likely to continue financial support over time than are those who received no social support from their offspring.

4.2.1.2 Commencing Financial Support What individual and household characteristics are associated with the likelihood that parents aged 50+ will start providing their offspring with financial support? This question is addressed in Model II in Table 6. In most respects, Model II is the mirror image of Model I in that the factors associated with an increase in the probability of shifting from giving to not giving financial support are also associated with a reduced probability of shifting from not-giving to giving. As these are quite straightforward and similar across welfare regimes, we will refrain from detailed discussion of the results in reference to socio-demographic, health, and economic factors.

Where reciprocation is concerned, however, the results show more complex patterns. Receiving financial support from offspring at Time 1 is associated with reduced likelihood (in comparison with those who received no financial support at Time 1) of parents' reciprocating and beginning to provide their offspring with financial support. This is true under all welfare regimes. Financial support received from parents or others at Time 1 reduces the likelihood of starting to provide offspring with financial support under Continental and Social Democratic welfare regimes but has the opposite effect under East European and Mediterranean regimes. Receiving social support from offspring increases the likelihood of parents' shifting from not providing offspring with financial support to providing it, under all welfare regimes.

4.2.2 Receiving Financial Support from Offspring

While we saw that almost 40% of parents provided offspring with financial support in at least one of the two points in time (Table 2), the proportion of parents receiving financial support from offspring at any point in time was approximately 10%. These figures square with the "downstream" hypothesis, which states that parents are more likely to provide financial support to adult offspring than the other way around. Nevertheless, it is of interest to examine the circumstances under which parents receive such support from offspring and the social and demographic attributes associated with receiving such support. Turning then to the question of receiving financial support over time, we examined the transition between situations of receiving and not receiving financial support from offspring among persons aged 50+. Model I in Table 7 focuses on the probability of ceasing to receive financial support among those who received such support at Time 1. Models II in Table 7 estimate the effect of individual and household characteristics on the probability of receiving financial support in the second time period, conditioned on their not having received it during the initial period.

4.2.2.1 Terminating Financial Support The estimates of the marginal effects of Model I in Table 7 indicate that the probability of a change from receiving to not-receiving financial support from offspring is negatively associated with number of offspring. Those who live alone are less likely to experience termination of financial support than those who live with a spouse/partner. Furthermore, relative to those who do not experience change in their living conditions, those who move from living with a spouse/partner to living alone are less inclined to experience the ending of financial support from their offspring. The mirror image of this pattern emerges for those who had lived alone and shifted to living with a spouse/partner by the second time period; they are more likely to experience termination of financial support. Parents' age is negatively related to the probability of offspring ceasing to provide financial support under Social Democratic and

Mediterranean welfare regimes but has no significant effect under Continental and East European regimes.

Poorer health reduces the likelihood that financial support from offspring will be terminated. Furthermore, relative to those who experience no change in the number of chronic illnesses, those who report a decrease in the number of chronic illnesses are more likely to shift from receiving to not receiving financial support, while those who report an increase in the number of chronic illnesses are less likely to shift from receiving to not receiving financial support.

The effect of net household income is positive; that is, the higher the respondents' income, the more likely it is that their offspring will terminate financial support. Furthermore, financial support from offspring is related to parents' changing economic circumstances. A decrease in net household income over time is found to reduce the likelihood of termination of financial support, whereas an increase in net income has the opposite effect.

Stability and change in receiving financial support is also embedded in reciprocation. Persons who live under Continental or the Social Democratic welfare regimes and provided financial support at Time 1 are more likely to experience termination of financial support from offspring as time passes. This is true irrespective of whom they supported in the initial time period. This suggests that giving financial support at Time 1 may be an indicator of economic wellbeing. Consequently, there is a greater probability that such support will not be received at Time 2. By contrast, persons who live under East European or Mediterranean welfare regimes and provided financial support to parents or others at Time 1 are less likely to experience the termination of financial support from offspring as time passes, while those who provided offspring with financial support at Time 1 experience the opposite effect.

Social support works differently and seems to encourage reciprocity. Persons who provided offspring with social support at Time 1 are less likely to stop receiving financial support from their offspring as time passes than are those who did not give their offspring social support. This pattern is similar across all welfare regimes.

4.2.2.2 Beginning to Receive Financial Support In many respects estimates of the probability of shifting from not-receiving to receiving financial support from offspring (model II) are the mirror image of what we found regarding the cessation of financial support. Indeed, the same factors associated with an increase in the probability of terminating financial support are associated with a reduced probability of shifting from not-receiving to receiving. This is the case for the socio-demographic factors (except for males living alone) as well as state of health and household economic attributes.

The coefficient estimates relating to reciprocation square with what we found in Model I, albeit with opposite signs. Under Continental and Social Democratic welfare regimes, respondents who provided others with financial support in the first time period are less likely, than those who did not do so, to start receiving financial support from offspring by Time 2. Providing such support in the initial period suggests that these persons are less in need of support and hence more likely not to become recipients of such support.

A less coherent pattern is found for households under East European or Mediterranean welfare regimes. Households that gave financial support to parents or someone else at Time 1 are more likely to become recipients of financial support at the later point in time, while those who gave financial support to offspring are less likely to become recipients of financial support than those who did not. Social support to offspring is reciprocated under all four welfare regimes. That is, households that provided offspring with social support in

the first time period are more likely than other households to shift from non-receivers to receivers of financial support from their offspring.

5 Summary and Conclusions

Many studies on intergenerational transfers have noted the “downstream” pattern of financial support. For many households in industrialized societies, however, the aging process is accompanied by a decline in standard of living. Some seniors amass considerable debts (Lewin-Epstein and Semyonov 2016), and many have an income that relegates them to poverty. At the same time young adults face uncertainty and stagnant wages in a rather precarious job market. In fact, during the recent international economic crisis, pensions had a protective effects among retired people, compared to younger age groups (Karpinska et al. 2016). Indeed, with the retreat of the welfare state, familial relations and support are likely to take on greater importance as determinants of wellbeing.

In view of these developments, the goal of this study was to investigate stability and change in financial support between middle and older aged persons and their offspring. A deeper understanding of the dynamics of intergenerational financial support is important both the theoretical and the practical points of view. The proposition we put forward is that intergenerational financial support patterns are rather unsteady and contingent on rapidly changing circumstances. Such a perspective does not negate the normative postulates but permits an examination of the conditions under which intergenerational financial support begins and ceases.

We presented data on changes in giving and receiving financial support using five waves of data collected via the SHARE project. What we found is that steady intergenerational giving and receiving is exceptional. Most respondents (aged 50+) neither gave nor received intergenerational financial support at either of the two points in time studied. The number of parents who shifted from giving to not giving to their offspring or vice versa was much larger than the number of those who provided assistance at both time points. The fluctuations were even greater in receiving support from offspring. Importantly, however, “downward” financial support is still much more prevalent than support given to middle and older age parents by their offspring. These patterns appear to be robust and recurred when stability and change in support were examined between the time before the economic crisis of 2008 (Wave II) and immediately after (wave IV) and sometime later (wave V). This concurs with the point made by previous research that old age pensions were less affected by the crisis than jobs and earnings (Karpinska et al. 2016).

The sizable shifts in intergenerational financial support between two points in time underscore the relevance of household circumstances in precipitating changes in patterns of giving and receiving financial support. To investigate these circumstances, we studied four spheres of life: socio-demographic attributes, state of health, economic wellbeing, and reciprocity. The joint estimation of these four dimensions yielded a comprehensive and detailed composite of the dynamics of older citizens giving and receiving financial transfers.

We found that as age rises, so does the probability of terminating financial support to household members. Yet older age per se does not increase the probability of becoming a recipient of intergenerational financial support. We also found that persons who live alone, especially women, are more likely than couples to stop providing such support and are more likely to become dependent on such support. These patterns reflect

the greater uncertainty that older and single-member households face regarding their economic wellbeing. The probability of having to cope with growing needs makes them more cautious. Our longitudinal investigation supports this explanation by finding that a change in the living arrangements of older citizens significantly affected their tendency to terminate financial support for family members.

Health also has an important effect on intergenerational patterns of giving and receiving financial support. In line with previous findings (Brandt and Deindl 2013), poor health influenced the pattern of parents' financial transfers to offspring (*ibid.*). Households characterized by poorer or deteriorating health were more likely than others to terminate financial support to offspring. Concomitantly, worsening state of health increased the probability of receiving financial support from offspring.

Intergenerational support is clearly linked to households' economic wellbeing. Households that experienced an income decline were more likely than others to halt financial support for their offspring. This corresponds to previous findings regarding the economic uncertainties of elder households and their tendency to save in order to ensure their economic future (Belke et al. 2012). Similarly, a downturn in the economic situation of an older citizen's household reduces the likelihood of his/her ceasing to receive financial support from offspring, whereas an improvement in the household's income flow has the opposite effect.

An important and consistent finding of our study, one that bears directly on the perspectives of parental altruism and intergenerational reciprocity, concerns the relationship between parental giving and receiving at an early point in time on stability and change over time. It is in this regard that we also found differences among welfare regimes. Under Continental or Social Democratic regimes, persons who received financial support from offspring, parents, or others in the first time period are more inclined to terminate their financial support than are persons who received no financial support. They are also less inclined to start providing support if they did not do so at Time 1. These findings appear to negate the notion of economic reciprocity and better fit an asymmetric relationship of need. Providing financial support indicates economic wellbeing and does not necessitate a return in kind, at least in intergenerational relations under the wealthy Social Democratic and Continental welfare regimes.

The relation between providing financial support and receiving it is less consistent under East European and Mediterranean welfare regimes, where economic reciprocity is more common under these regimes. In particular, having received financial support from parents or others reduces the likelihood of terminating support to offspring and increases the likelihood of commencing such support. In a similar vein, having provided financial support to parents or others at an early time reduces the likelihood that support from offspring will be terminated and increases the likelihood of shifting from not receiving to receiving financial support from offspring.

Although our findings yielded only partial evidence of intergenerational financial reciprocity, this does not negate the proposition that intergenerational support is embedded in reciprocal relationships. Indeed, we found very consistent evidence across welfare regimes for the exchange of social support for financial support. Thus, parents who received social support at one point in time were more likely than other parents to start providing financial support and less likely to stop providing financial support that they had been providing. The pattern recurred when the intergenerational flow moved in the other direction. Clearly, then, reciprocity as well as changing life circumstances play an important role in intergenerational relations of financial support.

An important limitation of our study with respect to reciprocity is that we lacked the kind of data that would let us capture specific dyadic relations and simultaneously investigate the circumstances of both sides of the exchange. Yet by examining the issue from the vantage point of parents, once as providers and then as receivers, we believe we were able to provide a rather comprehensive portrait of the generalized intergenerational reciprocal relations. As for the generalized notion of parental altruism, which may shape the tendency to support offspring, actual support shifts quite frequently and is tempered by the fluidity of circumstances. Finally, the patterns observed across welfare regimes are less differentiated than one might expect on the basis of the underlying rationale of the various regimes. Household circumstances such as structure, economic wellbeing, and state of health correlated similarly with stability and change in intergenerational support. While such findings are somewhat surprising, they are not out of line with previous findings showing that intergenerational financial relations are little affected by welfare regime (Albertini and Kohli 2013). Differences did emerge, however, in the way financial reciprocity was structured: reciprocal obligations seem more prevalent under East European and Mediterranean regimes whereas the observed correlations under Social Democratic and Continental regimes suggest that the relations were driven primarily by need. These differences may reflect societal characteristics other than welfare institutions, such as cultural preferences or level of prosperity. Given the data at hand, we have no way of distinguishing among these alternative explanations. Taken as a whole, we believe that the present study augments the theoretical literature by calling attention to the dynamic aspects of intergenerational transfers and contributes substantially to our empirical knowledge of these relations across many societies.

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Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of interest The authors declared no potential conflict of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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