

# Doing Family over Time: The Multilayered and Multitemporal Nature of Intergenerational Caring through Consumption

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Care is a central dimension of family consumption. Previous studies have explored it as interpersonal, emotional work performed through everyday consumption practices. Most of these studies have investigated care as articulated in the present time and within nuclear families. This study sets out to explore the relations between grandparents and grandchildren, arguing that it provides an intriguing case for enriching the current understanding of care in family consumption and its multitemporal nature. To this aim, the study conducts qualitative interviews and employs a narrative version of the theory of generativity to conceptualize the multifaceted ways in which caring manifests through consumption in grandparent–grandchild relations. As a result, the study offers a *processual framework of intergenerational caring through consumption (ICTC)*. The analysis identifies, first, the *multilayered nature of ICTC*, consisting of three layers of caring enacted through generative acts. Second, it identifies three temporal perspectives to ICTC, revealing its *multitemporal nature*. The framework provides novel insights into how familial caring is done from generation to generation, and how a desire to care is kept alive in today's consumer society.

*Keywords:* family consumption, grandparent–grandchild relations, caring, narrative, generativity, temporality

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*Editors:* Linda L. Price and June Cotte

*Associate Editor:* Zeynep Arsel

*Advance Access publication 22 October 2022*

## INTRODUCTION

Researchers within the consumer culture theory (CCT) tradition have established that family consumption is relational in nature and consists of various shared and collective goals, practices, and identities (Epp and Price 2008; Epp, Schau, and Price 2014; Godefroit-Winkel, Schill, and Hogg 2019). It is situated within a network of caring relations between family members. Grandparental relations provide an interesting, yet still rarely investigated, context to further theorize the connections between consumption and caring. Taking care of grandchildren has potential health benefits for grandparents. According to the “grandmother hypothesis,” grandparenting is an ultimate evolutionary mechanism that has helped to increase human life expectancy by increasing prosocial behavior toward both kin and non-kin (Buchanan and Rotkirch 2018).

Furthermore, grandchildren can become caretakers of their grandparents as adults. Thus, intergenerational caring clearly has dimensions that have not been fully explored in family consumption research.

Our research question is: How does caring manifest in grandparent–grandchild relationships in today’s consumer society? Prior research has demonstrated how the family is seen to be at the nexus of caregiving arrangements (Barnhart, Huff, and Cotte 2014). For instance, Epp and Velagaleti (2014) explored parenting through assemblages of care, highlighting family as a context of “love, sacred status and caring relationships” (912). However, care has been investigated mainly within the nuclear family, even though recently the focus has been moving toward family practices (Cappellini, Molander, and Harman 2021).

Our research extends the conceptualization of care in family consumption research by employing the theory of generativity. Generativity can be defined as “concern and activity dedicated to contributing to the welfare of others” (Grossman and Gruenewald 2017). In this article, we build on the notion of generative actions (McAdams, Hart, and Maruna 1998), which are connected to consumption practices, and generative narration (McAdams et al. 1998), which ties the theory together with our narrative research methodology. Caring for others is described as the most fundamental aspect of generativity (Erikson 1968). Therefore, generativity and caring are closely connected concepts. We adopt an understanding of care from Erikson’s theory to mean “to care to do” something, to “care for” somebody or something, “to take care of” something that needs protection, and “to take care not to” do something destructive (Evans 1967, 53).

In this article, we introduce the concept of *intergenerational caring through consumption (ICTC)*. This form of caring was enacted in our study via the interpersonal relations between grandparents and grandchildren. However, as shown in our narrative interviews with 14 grandparents and 9 grandchildren (young adults), the concept extends to caring for more than just each other and beyond the present time. Hence, we argue that ICTC is generative in nature. It highlights the multitemporal, dynamic, and processual aspects of caring—how caring changes and evolves over time and how caring produces more caring.

Our work contributes to consumer research in three ways. First, we introduce a processual framework for ICTC. Building on a narrative form of generativity theory, we argue that generativity is a culturally shared master narrative and a resource that is employed and enacted by grandparents and grandchildren in their relations through consumption. In our treatise, we show how ICTC actualizes this master narrative. We argue that it is multilayered—it consists of the self, family, and socio-ecological layer where care is enacted through generative acts that include consumption in many forms (creating, transmitting, and protecting acts). We also argue that it is multitemporal

by identifying three temporal perspectives to ICTC: temporal context, temporal performance, and temporal navigation.

Second, we reveal how families are kept together over generations. By introducing a processual framework with its multilayered and multitemporal features, we establish ICTC as an important part of “doing family” (Epp and Price 2008; Huff and Cotte 2016). In contrast to previous work in the family consumption literature that emphasizes present time and nuclear families, our work focuses on the multiple layers of care as well as a more nuanced and dynamic conceptualization of time in caring. Through enacting the master narrative of generativity, a desire to care is kept alive in our consumer society. Thus, our work builds on and extends both the current literature on caring in family consumption (Barnhart et al. 2014; Epp and Velagaleti 2014) and previous work in CCT related to time, often discussed in terms of subjective and objective time (Cotte, Ratneshwar, and Mick 2004; Türe and Ger 2016).

Finally, we contribute to generativity theory in consumer research (Lacroix and Jolibert 2015) by conceptualizing generativity as a sociocultural resource and a master narrative rather than an individual’s trait. In the discussion, we elaborate on the contributions and implications for consumer research, marketers, and policymakers.

## THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

### Caring in Family Consumption Research

The family consumption research stream has evolved from studying purchase decision-making of families toward a broad focus on the entire scope of the consumption cycle. In recent family consumption research, giving and receiving care are central in the acts of “doing family” (Epp and Price 2008; Epp and Velagaleti 2014; Huff and Cotte 2016; Kerrane, Bettany, and Hogg 2014). In their article on care in consumption, Shaw et al. (2017, 416) stated that “care may refer to attentive interest, concern, as well as actions arising as a result of such attention.” These actions are often acts of consumption, as the literature on family consumption has shown.

Existing work often highlights the productive, moral, and ethical aspects of family caring (Shaw et al. 2017; Tronto 2013; Thompson 1996). In the childcare context, for instance, care may involve activities such as reading bedtime stories, feeding the child, or being present for “developmental firsts,” such as learning how to ride a bike (Epp and Velagaleti 2014). Thompson (1996) identified working mothers as caring consumers who juggled the demands of family life and work life through consumption, including shopping, household care (Miller 1998), childcare, and managing the household’s financial activities. Working mothers were always considering their children’s

future consumption needs and were simultaneously aware of how they are constantly creating lasting memories for their children's lives. The current study further extends this notion of caring as multitemporal. Hogg, Curasi, and MacLaran (2004) identified motherly care as consisting of both production-led chores (e.g., cooking and cleaning) and consumption-led chores (e.g., gifts and purchases), with the former dominating in the full-nest phase and the latter in the empty-nest phase. Thus, care evolves over time, and different consumption activities are relevant in different stages of the family life cycle. In the context of eldercare, caring through consumption may mean adult children helping their parents make purchases (Barnhart and Peñaloza 2013). Here, caring is often conceptualized as resource-intensive and emotionally burdening work, associated with sadness due to loss of independence and approaching death (Barnhart and Peñaloza 2013; Dean, Kellie, and Mould 2014; Huff and Cotte 2016).

In recent years, family consumption research, especially within CCT, has emphasized relationality. Families consist not only of individuals but also of relational bundles that may have shared or conflicting identities, goals, and consumption practices (Epp and Price 2008). Hence, intergenerational relations are recognized as an important part of family consumption. However, relations between grandparents and grandchildren seem to have gone largely unexplored. Hunter-Jones (2014) highlighted how grandparents are influential socialization agents in the context of leisure traveling. Godefroit-Winkel et al. (2019) identified many consumption practices, including gift giving and everyday caregiving, in grandparental relations. However, the focus was on interpersonal identities rather than caring. Gram et al. (2019) explored the temporal and emotional dimensions of grandtravel. The findings showed how even short and mundane family holidays can generate integrative well-being for grandparents and grandchildren. Nevertheless, the focus of the study was not on caring.

A stream of research in consumer behavior has explored intergenerational influences on consumer behavior (Carlson, Laczniak and Walsh 2001; Moore 2018; Moore and Wilkie 2005; Moore, Wilkie, and Lutz 2002). Intergenerational influence has been defined as “the within-family transmission of information, beliefs, and resources from one generation to the next” (Moore et al. 2002, 17). The importance of studying this phenomenon in consumer research is underlined by noting that this kind of transmission is how a culture maintains and reproduces itself (Moore-Shay 1997). Having its roots in socialization theory, the focus has mostly been on the socialization processes of children, as well as on brand and product choices and preferences. A broader focus on intergenerational relations across the life courses of individuals and the variety of processes through which generations influence each other's consumption has been called for (Moore-Shay 1997). Moore et al.'s (2002) findings showed that

intergenerational influences are subject to variations in time as children grow older—including reverse influence flows; however, the findings centered on parents and children.

In summary, even though previous research on family consumption has highlighted care as important, studies have conceptualized care mostly as emotional work related to “doing family,” particularly in dyadic parent-child relationships. Caring activities through consumption that extend outward from the sphere of the family have not been addressed. In most previous studies, care was regarded as flowing from one party in a caregiving role to another party as the receiver of care. As suggested in a recent model of care proposed by Shaw et al. (2017), caring in consumption involves many stakeholders and can take more diverse forms.

Recent research on family consumption has moved the focus outside of the household setting in studying intergenerational relationships and how families are kept together over geographical distance in today's global and digital world (Epp et al. 2014; Kerrane et al. 2014). Studying grandparents and grandchildren allows us to extend conceptualizations of the temporal dimensions of care. To date, the temporal scope has mostly been limited to the present. Studies have determined how consumers use time (conceived as a resource; see also Festjens and Janiszewski 2015) to execute acts of care, such as Christmas gift shopping (Fischer and Arnold 1990), creating cherished memories together (Epp and Price 2008; Gram et al. 2019; Hogg et al. 2004), or acts of parental care (Barnhart and Peñaloza 2013). Furthermore, many studies have focused on how consumers try to balance tensions arising from time pressures—whether to allocate time for self-care or care for others (Godefroit-Winkel et al. 2019; Thompson 1996). However, understanding is limited regarding how the wide temporal structure of the past, present, and future (Bergadaa 1990) plays a role in familial care. Recently, Robinson, Veresiu, and Rosario (2022) argued that consumers engage in timework to harmonize multiple temporal orientations in their daily lives. An example of this in the family consumption context is how heirlooms can be rejuvenated by heirs to renegotiate their value in the present and future (Türe and Ger 2016) or how family identity is continuously upheld through family traditions and rituals (Epp and Price 2008). Our study builds upon and extends these insights by employing the theoretical notion of generativity, as explained below.

### Generativity, Consumption, and Intergenerational Caring

Generativity provides a fruitful theoretical lens for conceptualizing ICTC. In Kotre's (1996) words, “generativity is a concept that invites us to see the entire range of ways human beings leave their stamp on the future.” Erikson

(1963) highlighted care as a part of generativity, as the developmental task of the seventh of eight successive stages in the human life cycle (Erikson 1963). Erikson (1968, 138) proposed that generativity is a normative ideal: an individual is expected to leave a positive legacy of the self in the world by demonstrating care for future generations. Thus, care was associated with the existential question, “*Can I make my life count?*” Today, generativity is no longer seen as tightly associated with a certain phase in the human life cycle but as a multifaceted concept that may ebb and flow over the life course and that is shaped by social and cultural forces (Hebblethwaite and Norris 2011; Kotre 2000; McAdams and Logan 2004). It is defined as “concern and activity dedicated to contributing to the welfare of others” (Grossman and Gruenewald 2017) and characterized by a wish to nurture, guide, and ensure the well-being of future generations and to leave a legacy after death (Rubinstein et al. 2015). According to McAdams and Logan (2004), every life story has a component of generativity.

Having strong roots in development theory, most generativity research still focuses on midlife or later adulthood. Only in recent decades has generativity become an independent research object related to topics such as well-being, community involvement, and identity. An emerging body of research in these fields suggests that young adults consider it important to “contribute” to society or “leave behind” a legacy, for instance, via volunteering, and that giving and contributing may stimulate the development of a sense of generativity among adolescents (Lawford et al. 2005; Lawford, Doyle, and Markiewicz 2013). Generativity theory also identifies generative actions: creating, maintaining, and offering (McAdams et al. 1998). These actions have elements of consumption—such as the use and transmission of consumption objects as well as the creation of consumption experiences—within them, and consumption is often the means through which these actions are performed in today’s consumer society.

In consumer research, generativity has mostly appeared in association with philanthropy and prosocial behaviors related to the environment (Shiel, do Paco, and Alves 2020; Urien and Kilbourne 2011) and gift giving (Price, Arnould, and Curasi 2000). Most studies view generativity from a cognitive perspective, for instance, as a characteristic of consumers (Lacroix and Jolibert 2015). Consumer generativity refers to adults’ motivation to invest themselves in consumption activities that benefit future generations—by taking care of them or by leaving a positive legacy of the self (Lacroix and Jolibert 2015, 785). Urien and Kilbourne (2011, 82–83) indicated that generativity is positively related to eco-friendly behavior intentions. Price et al. (2000, 196) suggest that possession transfers are an act of transferring cultural capital to a new generation—a way to influence the future lives of others and the

biographies of special things. Generativity has also been related to grandparents’ consumer behavior (Hebblethwaite and Norris 2011).

Adopting a sociocultural standpoint, we consider generativity not as a life stage or characteristic of an individual but as a resource—a culturally shared master narrative—that is employed by grandparents and grandchildren in enacting ICTC. The master narrative represents a culturally shaped generalized story (McLean and Syed 2015) that dominates in a given culture and reflects the idealized view of an acceptable life course. Generativity encourages people to maintain continuity from generation to generation and determine what should be transmitted to others through generative action (Kruse and Schmitt 2012). Communal generativity reflects an individual’s desire to be needed and willingness to sacrifice one’s own good for the sake of others. Agentic generativity represents the need to influence others and to be remembered. Thus, the master narrative of generativity can reflect both altruism and self-interest, which makes it particularly fruitful for consumer research.

From the point of view of time, generativity is ultimately oriented toward the future, driven by a wish to care for the next generation and to leave a legacy of the self. Generative acts take place in the present and may be motivated by temporal issues—including how people allocate time for family members (Epp and Price 2008) or how they engage in various time flows (Woermann and Rokka 2015) inscribed in caring activities. Generativity is a dynamic process constructed from interactions between generations; grandparents can leave a legacy if their grandchildren are open to receiving it (Hebblethwaite and Norris 2011). This relational dynamic of giving and receiving is also evident in care theory, where care is conceptualized as a relational activity involving a dependency between a caregiver and a care receiver (Held 2006) where a receiver must be receptive and responsive (Noddings 2003). The past is also tightly inscribed in generativity, as the wish to leave a legacy is based upon the idea that something of the past stays alive. The past may take the form of nostalgia and memory (Borghini et al. 2009; Närvänen and Goulding 2016) or tangible consumption objects (Epp and Price 2010). Although the past, present, and future tend to be conceived as separate and successive phases, this strict linear model has been challenged theoretically and empirically (Bergadaa 1990; Robinson et al. 2022)—the past, present, and future become intertwined, as our empirical analysis will illustrate. Therefore, generativity allows us to think of ICTC in a novel way. It highlights the prolonged aspect of caring, as it is manifested not only in the present but also in the past and future. ICTC opens a path for the consumer to tell and retell a narrative driven by the desire to care.

## METHOD

### Narrative Approach

This work takes a narrative approach to studying ICTC (Holt and Thompson 2004; Hogg et al. 2004; Shankar, Elliott, and Fitchett 2009). Leaning on a constructionist lens on narrativity, we see narratives as the key means through which people interpret social reality and construct it (Moisander and Eriksson 2006; Polkinghorne 1988; Shankar, Elliott, and Goulding 2001). As Shankar et al. (2009, 79) indicated, “the process of telling stories is an act of creation and construction and not simply an act of remembering or retelling.” In articulating and making sense of personal experiences, people draw from an ensemble of existing sociocultural narratives into which they have been socialized—known as *master narratives*. They provide contents for the members of a culture for the construction of their own life stories (McLean and Syed 2015).

Previous family consumption research has shown how strong these narratives are and how much they affect consumption as they relate to parenthood (Fischer, Otnes, and Tuncay 2007; Thomas and Epp 2019). When grandparents and grandchildren make sense of their individual and emotional experiences, they draw from the available culturally shared narratives that can be followed, modified, or contested in everyday life through consumption practices. A narrative approach accords considerable attention to temporality, referring to episodes or sequences of certain events involving a beginning, a middle, and an end (Shankar et al. 2001). It provides a suitable methodological approach for eliciting and theorizing temporally structured sociocultural narratives through interviews.

*Data Collection via Narrative Interviews.* We employed narrative interviews as a vehicle for producing cultural talk around grandparents and grandchildren’s relationships that involve ICTC (Arsel 2017; Moisander, Valtonen, and Hirsto 2009). Narrative interviewing aims to produce stories: small, spontaneous stories and big ones. When telling their stories, people do not necessarily share stories that are “true” or completely their own; instead, they borrow from appropriate and available narrative and discursive resources (Moisander et al. 2009, 334).

In the first phase of the study, the lead author conducted narrative interviews with 14 grandparents. In the second phase, nine interviews were conducted with grandchildren, young adults at the time of the interview. All the authors participated in the second phase. These two sets of informants provided two key perspectives to the research. The selection of the informants was purposive, with the aim of ensuring that they could elaborate on the topic through their own experiences. Informants were expected to have spent time with their grandchild(ren) or grandparent(s) during their life course. Shared consumption experiences were not a requirement for qualification, because of the

assumption that the informants’ perspective of consumption might be narrower than ours and, thus, form an irrelevant barrier for participation. All the grandparent informants and most grandchild informants were introduced to the authors via professional and personal networks, and some were recruited from university premises. All informants were given a short written or oral description of the study background, including information on the use and handling of data and the data privacy policy, and a gift card as a thank you for their participation.

All informants were Finnish and middle class by Finnish standards. The grandparents ranged in age from 45 to 80 years, and the grandchildren from 18 to 36 years (figure 1). Half of the grandparents lived in a city, others in a small town or rural village. Six grandparents were still in the workforce, and the remainder were retired. All grandchild informants were full- or part-time students. When referring to informants, we employed randomly chosen pseudonyms. The informants were assured that their identities would remain anonymous and that the authors would only hold permission to use the data for research purposes.

When conducting the interviews, the authors aimed to create a cozy atmosphere to facilitate open and free-flowing conversations. Most of the interviews with grandparents were conducted in the informant’s home. The grandchildren’s interviews were conducted on university premises. The interviews started with two narrative-eliciting questions: “*When was the last time you were in contact with your grandchild or grandparent?*” and “*What did you do?*” The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim, resulting in 377 pages of data. The total amount of recorded data was over 25 hours. The length of the interviews with the grandparents varied from 1 hour and 10 minutes to 1 hour and 48 minutes, and those with the grandchildren from 38 minutes to 1 hour and 15 minutes. Data generation continued until the data were perceived to be theoretically saturated.

*Analysis.* The collaboratively conducted analysis (Thompson et al. 1989, 140–1) followed a basic iterative interpretative process where analysis began already during the interviews by making notes of the conversation. Then, a structured analysis was performed on the transcribed data following the principles of the narrative approach. First, we conducted a thematic and structural reading of the narratives, focusing on understanding how the story is told and the various ways consumption is involved in grandparent–grandchild relations. Then, we sought to identify the narrative elements that guide and structure ICTC. First, we identified caring as a central theme and revealed three layers of caring: family, socio-ecological, and self. Next, we drew from generativity theory (McAdams et al. 1998, 2004), paying attention to generative acts. As a result, we gradually developed an understanding that generativity constitutes a master narrative. The final round of analysis

FIGURE 1

## INTERVIEWS AND INFORMANT PSEUDONYMS

Grandparents						Grandchildren					
Pseudonym	Sex	Age group	Profession	Number of grandchildren	Interview duration	Pseudonym	Sex	Age	Profession	Number of grandparents	Interview duration
Anitta	Female	50-59	Employed	1	1:20	Aino	Female	24	Student	4	1:15
Eija	Female	50-59	Employed	1	1:35	Amanda	Female	25	Student	0	0:51
Ilpo	Male	70-79	Retired	9	1:47	Ellen	Female	22	Student	3	0:58
Katri	Female	80-89	Retired	11	1:30	Emil	Male	32	Student	3	0:51
Marjatta	Female	60-69	Retired	3	1:24	Jan	Male	20	Student	2	0:38
Marjo	Female	40-49	Self-employed	1	1:25	Leo	Male	24	Student	2	0:53
Mikko	Male	70-79	Retired	10	1:48	Marius	Male	18	Student	4	0:43
Pirkko	Female	70-79	Retired	10	1:48	Oliver	Male	20	Student	4	1:05
Riitta	Female	60-69	Retired	4	1:15	Sara	Female	19	Student	3	0:46
Seppo	Male	60-69	Retired	3	1:10						
Tapio	Male	70-79	Retired	4	1:24						
Tuija	Female	50-59	Employed	2	1:38						
Tuomo	Male	60-69	Semi-retired	2	1:34						
Ulla	Female	50-59	Employed	2	1:18						

helped us identify temporal perspectives of ICTC and build the processual framework. Thus, our analysis proceeded from a detailed reading of empirical data to interpretation through generativity theory (Spiggle 1994, 492).

### Context: Grandparent–Grandchild Relations in Finland

In Finland, children have an average of 2.9 grandparents (SVT 2011). Of Finnish children (0–18 years), 6% have no grandparents and 39% have all four grandparents alive, excluding grandparents living abroad and step-grandparents. Half of Finnish men and nearly 60% of women over 60 years old have young grandchildren. Most first-time grandparents are still employed. The lengthened lifespan of grandparenthood leads to long-term relationships between grandparents and grandchildren being composed of several distinct periods (Attias-Donfut and Segalen 2002; Gauthier 2002). Finnish grandparents have no official rights or duties. Generally, in Europe, the role of grandparents in family life is increasing, and one-third of respondents aged 65 years and over reported participating in looking after their grandchildren on a daily basis, spending an average of 4.6 hours per day (SHARE n.d.). The Nordic consumer culture is influenced by a strong welfare system, gender equality, and social mobility (Østergaard et al. 2014), where relatively inexpensive childcare enables both parents to participate in working life. However, grandparents generally help their children through childcare and financial support. Until the late 1900s, Finland was an agrarian society where generations often lived together. Today's grandparents no longer

commonly live with their offspring but are still often involved in their lives. The Finnish context framed our findings, as the data commonly described, for example, the relationship with nature and outdoor activities, such as skiing, trekking, and berry picking.

## FINDINGS

### Findings Overview

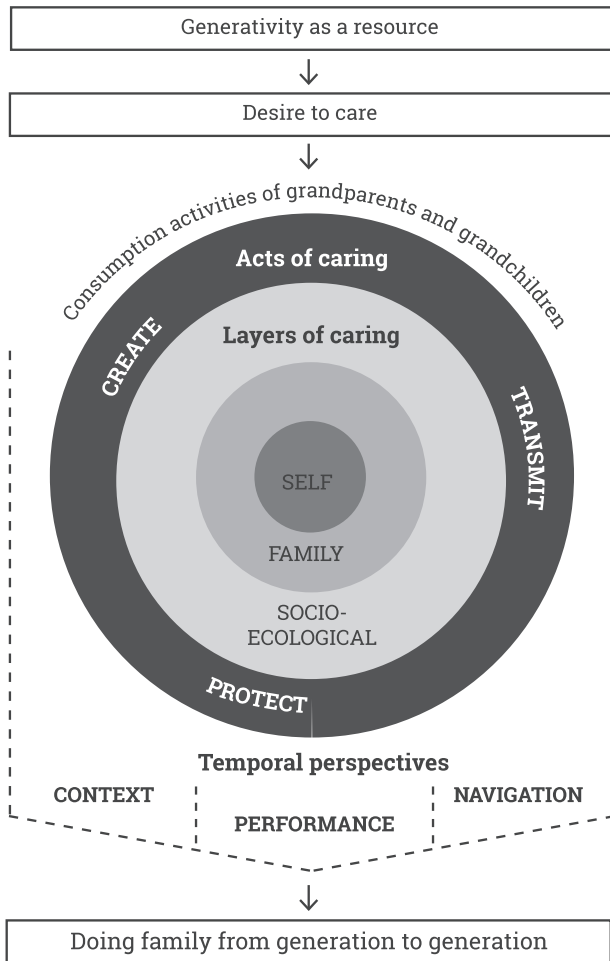
Our analysis of the narratives builds a processual framework for ICTC (figure 2).

The figure starts from the top, identifying the master narrative of generativity as a cultural resource in ICTC. Generativity, in turn, creates a desire to care that is enacted by grandparents and grandchildren. In the middle of the figure are the different layers of caring: self, family, and socio-ecological. All layers facilitate the fundamental generative wish to nurture, guide, and ensure the well-being of others and to leave a legacy.

In the outer circle surrounding these layers, we identify three types of acts of generative caring: *creating*, *transmitting*, and *protecting*. First, *creating* means bringing something new into existence. In the context of ICTC, it involves concrete things, such as food, or abstract things, such as new traditions. Second, *transmitting* refers to moving concrete or abstract things from one generation to another. Both concrete heirlooms and sociocultural values and ideals, such as “good citizenship,” were transmitted. This definition is close to what McAdams et al. (1998) referred to as *offering* (i.e., giving away something you have). We have chosen the word *transmit* to emphasize

FIGURE 2

PROCESSUAL FRAMEWORK OF ICTC



that both parties are active (grandparents and grandchildren) and to support the notion that transmitting may go beyond the dyadic relationship. Third, the act of *protecting* means protecting something valuable. It resembles McAdams’ notion of *maintaining* (i.e., keeping traditions alive). The word *protect* further highlights the meaning of “keeping safe and out of harm,” which is closer to the notion of caring.

Finally, the framework highlights the multitemporality of ICTC by introducing three temporal perspectives: *temporal context*, *temporal performance*, and *temporal navigation*. These perspectives reflect the widely used distinction between objective time—measured with a clock and a calendar—and subjective time, viewed as socially constructed and experienced (Carlson et al. 2019; Cotte et al. 2004; Festjens and Janiszewski 2015). In our treatise, *temporal context* is based on objective time, pointing out

how ICTC is always shaped by a contextual sociohistorical frame that families are situated in and how the passing of time changes the nature of ICTC. *Temporal performance*, in turn, is based on the subjective view describing how the everyday enactment of ICTC is founded on the subjective use of present time and on related decisions on how to allocate temporal resources, for example, across social and private, or sacred and profane time (Carlson et al. 2019; Epp and Velagaleti 2014; Thompson 1996). The third perspective, *temporal navigation*, is also based on the subjective view, referring to how ICTC guides grandparents and grandchildren to navigate between past, present, and future (Schau et al. 2009; Türe and Ger 2016). By introducing these three temporal perspectives on ICTC, our framework renders understandable the particular characteristics and dynamics related to the layers and acts of caring, and the processual nature of doing family from generation to generation. Next, letting figure 2 structure our discussion, we first discuss the layers and acts of caring with the help of our empirical data. Second, we discuss the three temporal perspectives.

### Multilayered Nature of ICTC

This section opens up the multiple ways in which caring is articulated in our data: we discuss *what* is cared for and *how* care is enacted through consumption in the layers (family, socio-ecological, and self) and acts of generative caring (protecting, creating, and transmitting).

*Family Caring.* The layer of family caring includes grandparents, their children, and their grandchildren, as well as members of extended families—those who are alive or have passed away. It concentrates on providing and receiving care to and from different generations in a family, both in concrete and abstract ways. In Grandpa Ilpo’s words: “My great idea and aim is to keep this family together so that they will always share that nice feeling of belongingness.”

In this layer, *protecting* entails generations nurturing each other via concrete consumption practices. Grandparents’ familial caring was often actualized in mundane everyday help, especially when grandchildren are young. They described organizing their lives so that they could help their children take care of their families, or “to help the child and grandchild have an untroubled life” as one of our interviewees put it. For new grandparents, this could mean babysitting or assisting in household chores, or later driving grandchildren to hobbies and keeping them company after school. These examples align with previous literature on the productive and labor-related aspects of caring in the nuclear family context (Epp and Velagaleti 2014; Shaw et al. 2017; Tronto 2013), including empty nests (Hogg et al. 2004).

For many grandchild interviewees, the most memorable things about grandparental caring were related to food. Emil, a grandson, described how his grandmother came to their house when he was young and made breakfast every morning because his parents left early for work. Cooking and baking together, frequently present in our data, allow grandparents to pass on family and cultural traditions and recipes, and perhaps shape how they would be remembered by their grandchildren (O'Donohoe et al. 2021). In this way, food and nurturing extend from the act of protecting to the act of transmitting.

Furthermore, grandparents see financial support as an opportunity to pave the way and help the grandchild be safe and happy. Grandparents frequently contribute to the first big purchases of the young family, such as car seats and prams, and later to hobby equipment, insurance, and bank accounts. As the grandchildren grow older, financial support ranges from pocket money, shares, and long-term deposits to guaranteeing mortgages. Ellen, for instance, describes how she had only mentioned buying an apartment, and her grandpa “started making an Excel sheet about it right away.” Grandparents also help their grandchildren avoid making costly purchases by lending them their own possessions, practicing one form of sharing (Belk 2010). Leo, for instance, described sharing a car with her grandmother.

The opportunity for grandparents to take care of the family also allows their own children to be good parents. Despite the ambivalences and tensions resulting from the interplay of the grandparent–parent–child triad (Mason, May, and Clarke 2007), most grandparents indicate that their duty is to *help* raise the children. Grandparents carry out activities with their grandchildren, but they also encourage young families to have some special time together—for instance, by organizing opportunities through babysitting or providing funding. One grandma described how she first bought new skates for her granddaughter and then for her daughter so that they could go skating together. Thus, grandparental caring may also facilitate the maintenance of collective and relational identities (Epp and Price 2008) that do not even involve the grandparent themselves.

The narratives suggest evidence of reciprocity in family caring. After years of receiving care from their grandparents, grandchildren provide care in return; they frequently visit their grandparents, help them use technological devices, and do grocery and pharmacy shopping. That way, grandchildren also affect their grandparents' mundane consumption routines. Some informants described how they improve the healthiness and quality of their grandparents' diet by making the purchase decisions on their behalf. Previous studies (Barnhart and Peñaloza 2013; Dean et al. 2014) also highlight the critical role of care in integrating family members who are unable to consume independently.

The act of *creating* is enacted by inventing and establishing new family traditions and rituals, often connected with special occasions and places that are important to the family. Some traditions are relational (i.e., enacted between grandparent and grandchild), whereas others are meant for the entire family (i.e., keeping the family together). New traditions that grandparents create often begin with the first grandchild and are later repeated with others. These traditions commonly refer to confirmation, graduation, or birthday presents or regularly held special rituals, such as shopping trips (Borghini et al. 2009). Oliver described a shopping tradition that his grandmother created:

“We have had this tradition for some years now with my grandma, that whenever me or one of my two brothers have a birthday or at Christmas, we all three and her, we together go to a mall to do some shopping. So, it has become a tradition now. [...] and it has been nice to spend time together and for her, an easy way to give us gifts.”

As witnessed in Epp and Price's (2008) research on relational identity practices, these traditions, including gift giving (Price et al. 2000), help reinforce the bond between the grandparent and grandchild. They are personal and are meant to last for a lifetime, whereas others include a silent wish to be passed onto future generations. According to Hogg et al. (2004, 250), rituals are major forces that cement relationships and bind the extended family together. One of our informants, Amanda, described a traditional Father's Day celebration that consisted of a certain sequence of activities of going shopping together at the market hall and then having cake at her grandpa's. Grandparents also enact caring by creating opportunities and new experiences, often hedonic, extraordinary, or luxurious in nature (Gram et al. 2019), such as going to movies, restaurants, theme parks, downhill skiing, and trips with their grandparents. In addition, grandchildren can create new experiences for their grandparents. Grandpa Mikko remembered his and his wife's first tram ride during a visit to his granddaughter's. Hence, in addition to being caregivers, teachers, or socialization agents (Hunter-Jones 2014) for their grandchildren, grandparents are also caretakers and learners.

From financial matters to family gatherings, grandparents serve as the “glue” connecting the family. Gauthier (2002, 301) describes how family is the place for a genuine underground economy, whose main protagonists are the grandparents, making efforts to keep it together and take care of their own children and grandchildren, even pets. Caring for the family, they actively create new routines, rituals, and even companies, as in Ellen's example:

“My grandma and grandpa are the ones organizing the meetings so that we meet with each other often. They have been the connecting factor. So, without them, we [the extended



family] would not have so much in common. For example, they have companies that are related to taking care of their property, and they have a member from each of the families on their board. They have created these common things so that we would all stick together.”

*Transmitting* in familial caring is enacted by passing on family-related skills and competencies from generation to generation and keeping memories of past generations alive via storytelling and material items. Similarly, Turkish families transmit the dowry chest from mother to daughter, alongside “family-specific stories of origin and rituals, the macro history of the dowry in Turkey and the cultural narratives and imaginaries surrounding its preparation and consumption” (Türe and Ger 2016, 5). To transmit the enthusiasm for Lapland inherited from her father, Grandma Marjatta described how she bought a cabin in the north with her husband. It has served as a site for extended family get-togethers during the Christmas holidays and as a place of recreation for families. Grandparents see that their life experience obligates them to teach important skills and extend the somewhat narrow life perspectives of the youngest generation. Grandparents prefer teaching productive skills, such as fishing, cooking, baking, and crafting—or in the words of Katri, doing “something useful because it’s fun and you can see your own achievements.” Instead of merely spending time together, this reflects the serious component of “serious leisure,” as defined by Moisiso, Arnould and Gentry (2013, 313). Skills such as playing an instrument, doing sports, or having philosophical conversations, depending on the grandparent’s own interests, were often mentioned by both grandparents and grandchildren. Another form of transmitting is to keep family memories and traditions alive, for instance, through pictures of preceding generations, stories about them, and their special belongings. Rubinstein et al. (2015) considered the maintenance of relationships with preceding generations as an extension of generativity oriented to the past. Ellen’s example illustrates this: she describes knowing “what has happened to my family since the late nineteenth century.”

In some narratives, the entire idea of familial caring is transmitted from generation to generation. As one grandmother, Tuija, described it:

“Somehow, you want to pass on what you have. She [her own mother] was such a great help and pillar of support many times, so you somehow want to help your own children in the same way, to pass forward what you once had.”

In summary, the familial caring layer contributes to the notion of doing family from generation to generation by showing how caring is extended beyond the nuclear family to grandparent–grandchild relations, consisting of purchases, shared use of consumption objects, and productive activities. The same consumption practices of “doing family” that are frequently identified in previous family

consumption research, such as family rituals related to food and traveling (Epp and Price 2008; Gram et al. 2019; Hogg et al. 2004), change and evolve over time as different generations enact them in their own ways.

*Socio-Ecological Caring.* This layer highlights how caring extends from the members of the family to the neighborhood, community, society, and the environment. It is highly contextualized with Finnish nationalist values, such as frugality, the Lutheran work-ethic, and living in harmony with nature. Borghini et al. (2009) showed how the retailscape of American Girl Place invites consumers, often grandmothers and granddaughters, to adopt and cherish the brand’s ideology, which is very much connected to nationalist ideals and nostalgic values of femininity. In contrast, Finnish grandparents protect and transmit values mainly through non-commercial practices and productive activities that involve learning together how to temper consumption desires.

The acts of protecting, creating, and transmitting are targeted toward environmental and societal well-being. Unlike in the layer of familial care, the very essence of the relationship between grandparent and grandchild is not their relation as such but the way it contributes to nature and society. In terms of generativity, the fundamental aim is to develop and maintain such societal institutions and natural resources without which future generations will not be able to survive (Schoklitsch and Baumann 2012, 263). In the narratives, the grandparents are portrayed as role models for their grandchildren, demonstrating and teaching what it means to be “a good consumer” and “a good citizen.”

*Protecting* is enacted by offering guidance on how to respect nature, nurture cultural values, and adopt good manners. Concerned for the future, grandparents want to do their share in protecting the world through guiding the younger generations toward sustainable values, in Grandma Marjatta’s words: “respect for nature and living on the terms of nature.” Urien and Kilbourne (2011, 71) highlight the future orientation of sustainability, suggesting that the needs of those today should not be satisfied at the expense of future generations. Shiel et al. (2020, 7) suggest that older people are likelier to be concerned about future generations and that this concern is an integral part of sustainable development and an indicator of green consumption values, buying behavior, and prosocial attitudes. Responsibility for environmental concerns is identified as an important dimension of care (Shaw et al. 2017).

Passing on care for the environment reflects the fundamentals of generativity. Respect for nature is best obtained on grandchildren’s own terms through providing positive and memorable experiences and new interesting lessons. Excursions into the forest or mountains, picking berries, and naming trees are fine examples of instilling natural

values into the minds of the young generations. Grandma Katri described this well:

“I often took them to the forest and taught them about the trees. We named them every time: a birch, a spruce, a pine, and the flowers, too. And I remember one time when Tiia [the granddaughter] got a little cut, and I picked a waybread leaf and covered the wound, and it healed at once. She then learned that nature has a healing effect.”

Some grandparents were living in the countryside or on a farm, which provided them with a way to teach various traditional skills for living with nature, such as fishing or bottling the sap from birch trees, as Emil said he had learnt from his grandfather.

Grandparents’ self-sufficient lifestyles in the countryside were also mentioned as an example “that I now admire,” as Aino, a granddaughter, said. She narrates how she has bought a little freezer that “is full of berries that come from my grandparents’ garden.” She values that her grandparents taught her “how food waste can be reduced.”

In the layer of socio-ecological caring, the acts of *creating* and *transmitting* are tightly intertwined. The act of creating refers to the development of novel practices through which the most important values and attendant skills can be educated in subtle ways instead of merely “transmitting.” The outcome of transmission is the idea of good consumerism and good citizenship including norms (see also Moore et al. 2002). Amanda shared:

“And then from my grandpa [...] but the idea of avoiding unnecessary spending. I suppose that is something that shows in my own consumption [...]. I don’t spend a lot. For instance, clothes are something that I never buy, and I use them as long as they last. And some things like tableware, I don’t really need much. I have a few glasses and plates. I don’t need more and I’m not going to buy more, so I tend to be quite reasonable with things and not overspend resources. That is somehow really strongly inherited from him.”

The ideal of being a “reasonable” consumer is frequently present in the narratives. While grandparents often mention consumerism and materialism as societal problems, grandchildren often use the expression “thrifty” when describing their grandparents. For instance, resistance to buying toys is an expression of anti-materialism, which grandparents want to share with their grandchildren. Buying things is not a value and can even cause anxiety. As Ulla, a grandma, put it: “It is the thing that worries me the most as a grandmother that the children never develop a sense of reality in the middle of all that stuff.” In a way, Ulla’s statement is a reaction against the cultural ideology of intensive parenting (Epp and Velagaleti 2014; Thomas and Epp 2019) that puts pressure on parents to “maximize the amount of time, energy, and money to spend on their children” (Thomas and Epp 2019, 568). In contrast, she wants to oppose excess materialism—a lesson learnt by a

grandson Oliver: “We learned right from the beginning that we were not supposed to ask for too much, but we were aware of what is proper to ask or not.” This tacit knowledge of what is considered sufficient and proper in terms of gifts, compared to what is considered over-indulgence, is transmitted to the grandchildren gradually through the creation of repeated traditions. Grandparents’ “thrifty” consumption is also reflected in their enthusiasm for recycling. All informants mentioned saving items, such as clothes, toys, and sports equipment, from their own or their children’s childhood and passing them on to the youngest generation. These items were circulated not only for their symbolism but also for the benefits of reusing them as opposed to buying something new.

Even though the narratives highlight moral standards in terms of consumption choices, compromises and exceptions to the rule are still present. Grandchildren, for their part, reported how they principally lived economically but could occasionally spend all their money traveling, buying luxury items such as bags, or making impulse purchases. Also, grandparents talked about consumption compromises. Grandma Marjo said:

“It’s not that you shouldn’t be so dogmatic in anything. If the girl loves Frozen and that’s what makes her happy, I can buy that for her. And I buy a lot of used things, so I can very well buy something new every now and then.”

This quotation shows how ICTC is also framed by the current consumer culture and its phenomena, such as trendy toys and entertainment brands (Borghini et al. 2009). Being allowed to participate in consumer culture this way was seen as a necessary practice for the grandchild, even though it might sometimes contradict the grandparent’s other values.

Besides becoming “a good consumer,” socio-ecological caring involves becoming good and responsible citizens, who, in turn, will do their part in maintaining the culture and preserving the environment for future generations. Communal values, interest in societal issues, good manners, and knowing right from wrong are essential to pass on. Eating is an example of a mundane consumption practice through which good manners are educated. Marjo described how she frequently dines out with her young granddaughter, believing that it is good for the little child to “learn it from the beginning.” Leo, a grandson, said that he had learned that “you always have to eat everything on your plate. Once you internalize that rule, it is an unconditional rule really.”

Also, media and culture consumption serve the goal of becoming “a good citizen” (Carlson et al. 2001). Amanda reflected on how she used to watch news and televised parliament sessions with her grandpa and how they discussed topical societal issues together. While some grandparents talked about frequent theater and museum visits with their grandchildren, Grandma Katri shared that she had taken

nearly all her grandchildren abroad “to show them the world” and to “civilize them a little.” Respect for work and education were other aspects of good citizenship repeatedly mentioned in both parties’ narratives. Emil shared how his grandparents taught him that “you need to work and there’s no use crying over it.” Tuija, for her part, wanted to pass “an entrepreneurial way of thinking” and “open-minded attitude” to her grandchildren.

Independence is an essential element of good citizenship, and it can be translated into supporting children by giving them the necessary tools and helping them develop the appropriate skills to manage everyday life. This kind of cultural education begins early in childhood. Gradually, the child will be socialized into challenging situations and activities. For instance, being empathetic and volunteering—while taking care of others—were highlighted as important elements of good citizenship. Ultimately, intergenerational caring is a means of ensuring that life goes on. Grandparents seek to enable their grandchildren to live good lives. Compared with familial caring, this kind of socio-ecological caring is more subtle and based on an interactivity in which the grandchildren can themselves contribute. In the words of Ilpo,

“There are really only those two things, which we all practice in unique ways: how do you love your neighbor, and how do you make sure that things go right. This is what you should pass on without too much telling and teaching—just by giving birth to a new thought.”

In summary, the above discussion highlights how socio-ecological values, moralities, and practices are protected, created, and passed on when grandparent–grandchildren relations are enacted. Our analysis thereby exemplifies how “consumers adopt multiple roles and consider multiple caring needs, requirements, and hopes of different stakeholders such as self, family, community, and environment, which demand that the consumer ‘juggle’ a range of concerns” (Shaw et al. 2017, 421). Furthermore, while the range of concerns of care may remain the same (e.g., aims to be a “good consumer” or “good citizen”), they may take different forms in different generations—highlighting a form of negotiation of continuity and change (Türe and Ger 2016) when family legacy is passed on. Overall, the above analysis offers a contextual and dynamic treatise of “doing family,” situating it tightly to the socio-ecological surroundings that partly change and partly remain the same over time.

*Self-Caring.* In the innermost layer, the focus is on the grandparents and grandchildren themselves, and the acts of caring focus on one’s own identity and well-being. McAdams (2001) asserted that generativity not only promotes the greater good but also benefits the individual by enhancing feelings of self-worth. For grandparents, self-caring through consumption extends from its concrete

forms, such as taking care of one’s own health, to the abstract feeling of being needed when financially or practically assisting one’s grandchildren. Caring can also take the form of consumption that supports identity and implicitly or explicitly rejects the negative associations related to grandparenthood (Barnhart and Peñaloza 2013; Schau, Gilly, and Wolfenbarger 2009). In turn, grandchildren help their grandparents stay independent and encourage them to buy services that make their everyday lives easier.

In the narratives, self-caring is strongly present in the grandparents’ aim to *protect* themselves from the stereotypical behavior related to grandparenthood. Becoming a grandparent is traditionally considered a benchmark for the beginning of old age. Thus, although grandparenthood is widely experienced as a positive role (Thiele and Whelan 2006), grandparents generally refuse to accept the elements that make them feel old. Instead, they define themselves as a “different grandparent,” enacting grandparenthood beyond cultural expectations.

Grandma Eija described:

“I’m not like those grandmothers who wear jackets and a tight face and disapprove of everything young people do or say.”

This excerpt shows how grandparents may even emphasize the negative stereotypes of grandparenthood, yet only concerning “other” grandparents. As argued by Papaoikonomou, Cascon-Pereira, and Ryan (2016), when belonging to a negatively stereotyped group, negative stereotyping of the in-group may facilitate the reinforcement of authenticity and a feeling of perceived marginalization. Grandparental consumption may trigger the positive experience of being needed, a form of self-caring, as it nurtures self-respect and self-worth. Grandparenthood refers to a fundamental feeling of trust that one’s own life counts. This manifests communality and generative adults’ desire to nurture and assist, or to be of any important use to others (Erikson 1963). It also reflects the anticipated finiteness of being needed and encourages grandparents to demonstrate their own importance while still possible. Ilpo memorized his first years as a grandfather:

“Soon they started to need a helping hand in practical things, and so grandpa got his opportunity to impress! Buy that, bring that, fix these, install this, build that . . . and I was happy to help. It became obvious that some things just wouldn’t have gone so smoothly without grandpa.”

In the same way, grandparents encourage their grandchildren to be—and be proud of—themselves. Grandchildren value this discreet guidance to self-actualize and enjoy life. Sara shared how she learned to love good food because of her grandmother, who taught her that enjoying life is more important than counting calories. Grandparents are characterized as more understanding, accepting, and supportive than parents. Marius talked about

a “license to be oneself,” illustrating how his grandparents never push a certain model of choice but trust that he will choose right. These comments align with an ethos of self-respect that is deeply intertwined with generativity, contributing to the strength and continuity of subsequent generations (Snarey 1993, 22).

For grandchildren, self-caring in consumption is reflected in the compromises they make to protect their grandparents’ values. These compromises are actualized in modifying behavior, hiding some activities (such as drinking alcohol), or avoiding topics that may cause contradictions. Aino named sharing good things about her life as an act of caring for grandparents that saves them from worrying about her. Leo prefers talking about his studies with his grandmother, knowing that she values his achievements and likes to tell her friends about them. He also shared the compromises he and his cousins make when visiting her:

“If we go out, she immediately asks for our estimated time of arrival. And she won’t get any sleep before we are back, so it’s a little like, you know, that we just must go home early, so that she can go to sleep.”

Drawing boundaries between oneself and other grandparents, grandparents both protect important elements of identity and redefine it by *creating* a new, acceptable grandparental role. Comparing herself to other grandmothers, Katri said that she is not a “cultural grandma” who would take her grandchildren to theaters but travels with them instead. Marjo specifically defined herself as a “cultural grandma,” as a distinction to “playing grandmas” and “material grandmas.” Riitta named herself “funma” as she never intended to act like a “real” grandmother. She wants to go shopping and dining with her teenage grandchildren, even get a tattoo, but refuses to play children’s games or babysit. Furthermore, Eija, a grandmother, said:

“I will do anything for her but sports. I get so irritated if I sweat. Sled hills are fine, but I won’t ski, I won’t skate, I won’t do slalom, nothing like this. Well, I could go to the swimming hall, but that’s it. I just won’t do sports.”

Although grandparents value their current consumption preferences and routines, they are willing to compromise. This inspires the creation of new consumption practices. Anitta revealed her plans with her newborn granddaughter:

“Oh, and then we’ll go shopping, stroll along the city streets, fancy and fine. Shopping is not really me at all, but I want us to walk over there. I’m no shopper at all. They always laugh that it will be great to see me shopping, but then we will learn that together.”

For grandparents, self-caring is dominantly realized in a lifestyle that supports being by the grandchildren’s side for as long as possible. Grandparenthood is an important motivator to stay fit and healthy, often turning into the creation of new routines, such as healthy dieting or exercising. This

indicates the anticipation of approaching an end-of-life stage. The uncertainty of “getting everything done in time” is present in Tuija’s words:

“You never know if there will be a chance to do these things. It is important for me to take care of myself.”

Grandparents anticipate a time when their grandchildren will no longer want to spend time with them (Gram et al. 2019). Grandma Marjatta said she is always ready to go to movies or to the theater with her grandchildren “as long as they want to go with me.” Yet, even grandchildren realize the finiteness of time together. It makes Emil, a grandson, organize time to visit his grandparents’ cabin every year: “I understand that they aren’t here forever, so these are very important moments to me.”

In principle, the grandparents seemed more eager to pamper their grandchildren than themselves. However, some elements of self-caring can also be identified in gift giving. Tuija keeps buying presents, especially books, for her grandchildren despite being advised not to. She says that gift giving “makes her happy,” as she is a “gift person” who loves to get and to give presents. Marjatta literally refers to gift giving as an act of self-caring where “you care for yourself at the same time.” Katri excuses her generous travel gifts with her own interest and the lack of companionship:

“Now that my husband won’t travel anymore, but I still want to go, it is a good excuse to take grandchildren along.”

The self-caring nature of gift giving and its relation to identity have been well documented in consumer identity studies (Sherry 1983; Price et al. 2000), indicating that our identity can be confirmed by presenting it to others in the objectified form of a gift. Thus, by giving presents that reflect their own interests and values, grandparents care not only for the recipient but also for themselves. Then again, most grandchildren tell how their grandparents precisely refuse to accept any presents. “I already have more than I need” is a widely used excuse when grandparents try to keep the chain of gift giving unidirectional. Alternatively, grandchildren try to persuade their grandparents to make consumption choices that facilitate their own well-being. The informants shared guiding their grandparents in health issues and pushing them to buy new shoes, walking poles, or welfare services that grandparents think they cannot afford. While consuming services, such as taking a taxi and dining out, is performed every day for the younger generation, paying for a service only for one’s own comfort may appear strange for their grandparents.

For grandparents, self-caring in consumption appears as a wish to be remembered after passing away. They seek to *transmit* their possessions, values, stories, consumption preferences, and interests—even personality traits. Whether expressed in shared memories or in concrete

accomplishments, leaving a trace is important for the grandparents. The concrete traces that they leave range from self-made craftwork, paintings, and woolen socks to houses and summer cabins. The informants are modest about their own creations but express strong emotions toward the “family treasures,” as Grandma Katri calls an old baptism dress inherited from past generations. For these artifacts, the chain of generations moves in both directions: grandparents save precious items that were once received from their parents or grandparents. The narratives are rich with examples of how grandparents have transmitted their interests and consumption preferences to their grandchildren. Seppo told us about inspiring his grandson in photography, leading to the young child preferring the same brands and equipment. Riitta interpreted her young granddaughter’s preference for nail polish over a toy as an example of passing on her feminine consumption style.

While leaving a trace is not present in the spontaneous stories of grandchildren, the younger generation plays an important part in enabling it. After all, passing something on requires someone to accept it. Having family heirlooms or possessions that the younger generations are willing to take over provides a sense of familial self-continuity that extends beyond death (Hebblethwaite and Norris 2011). Aino appreciates artifacts that remind her of her grandparents.

“I have my grandma’s old dinner table in my own apartment. She bought it in the 1950s for her own first apartment. I always think that it is great to have things like that.”

Price et al. (2000) considered the importance of choosing the best recipient for important possessions. Despite a rich bundle of different tactics that the consumers apply, they all target caring not only for the recipient but also for the cherished object and for themselves. Consistently, the grandparents of our study want to ensure that not only their special possessions but also their contributions and values live on. Grandpa Ilpo considered the recipient of an old family farm carefully, as he wanted to make sure that it ends up with someone who values it.

“I see this [the farm] more as a burden than a present. You have to be ready to work hard and still enjoy it.”

Emil talked about being his grandpa’s “chosen one” to share his respect for economical skills and to care about the economy after he no longer can.

“[He] was a bank manager and he always had me singled out as somebody that he wants to pass it forward to, as [he thought that] in Finland, people have such lousy skills with money. They don’t know how to handle it, and someone after him should care about this matter as well.”

Amanda inherited some money from her grandfather, who lived very economically, so she felt contradictory about

spending it. Despite her own interests in traveling, she thought of renovating a family cabin, which was an important place for the grandfather. Aino thought that her grandparents have influenced her life story for better or worse. Being able to place herself on a continuum has been helpful in life crises: “I see that they [grandparents] have had a big impact on how I see myself and how I position myself in this world.”

In summary, self-caring in ICTC relates to one’s own well-being. It emerges in an intent to protect one’s own life and self-worth, to create new roles, routines, and consumption activities through compromising, and to transmit the ideas of self in activities, materials, and memories. Our analysis thereby extends the current understanding of doing family from caring for others to include also caring for the self. This caring may be concrete or relate to staying honest to one’s own identity and transmitting one’s own self-respect to others.

## Multitemporal Nature of ICTC

In this section, we discuss the multitemporal nature of ICTC by detailing the temporal perspectives we identified in our data: temporal context, temporal performance, and temporal navigation.

*Temporal Context.* Building on an objective view of time (Carlson et al. 2019), temporal context highlights how ICTC is always sociohistorically shaped and contextually situated. It also notes the passage of time where the generative acts change during the life course of a family. Different aspects of generativity may ebb and flow, and new generative concerns arise at different times over the course of life (McAdams and Logan 2004). The ways in which generative acts are performed and interpreted depend on the broader sociohistorical setting (time and place) in which grandparents and grandchildren are situated. The grandparents interviewed for this study lived their youth after World War II (WWII), which was a time of scarcity in Finland followed by rapid economic reconstruction. Grandchildren, for their part, are representatives of consumer society characterized by materialism and overconsumption. These different sociohistorical periods coexist in the narratives, rendering understandable negotiations and tensions around, for instance, the notions of “good consumer” and “good citizenship.” Our data are filled with talk about whether to buy branded toys for grandchildren as a gift, and grandchildren, for their part, frequently reflect on whether they have “the right” to consume their grandparents’ savings (that they have saved for their lifetime) rapidly.

As most Finns lived in the countryside after WWII, this frames the values and skills that grandparents want to transmit to their grandchildren: nature-based skills, growing vegetables, fishing, and berry picking. The

sociohistorical timeframe of scarcity and the presence of wartime memories are also visible in the way grandparents teach to be always prepared for the likely lack of food. Ellen shared that her grandmother always buys her coffee—a regulated luxury item during and after the war—so that “it will never dry up.” Aino tells us about her grandparents’ economical and self-sufficient way of life and how it has affected her consumption preferences:

“I bought a small freezer for my apartment that is now full of berries, picked from my grandparents’ yard. I kind of admire their way of life . . . to have a kind of conservative attitude towards food, to freeze and save it for future.”

Generational tensions, or social dramas, may emerge from norms that change in the course of time (Epp and Price 2008). Our data suggest that what is considered appropriate or meaningful in intergenerational caring may change over time in society. Türe and Ger (2016) describe how, in Turkey, the rapid urbanization of society has resulted in an urban–rural hierarchy governing everyday life, impacting intrafamily gender roles, for instance. Currently, in Finnish society, raising children is the parents’ responsibility, and grandparents are assumed not to participate in their grandchildren’s education. This makes the relationship between grandchildren and grandparents more liberal and playful than it was during the childhood of most grandparents.

Then again, as discussed by Barnhart and Peñaloza (2013), the sociohistorical construction of old age is changing as people tend to live active lives for longer than before. Grandparenthood is one of the most positive roles for aged consumers in society today (Thiele and Whelan 2006), and it may resolve some of the tensions of getting old but still having agency over one’s consumption decisions by consuming for and with the grandchild, as our data illustrated. However, the time span between grandparents and grandchildren is quite long—usually at least around fifty years—which makes their life experiences and worldviews different from each other. This is particularly evident when considering consumption practices and values, which have rapidly changed over the years. As we highlighted above, the values of frugality and avoiding wastefulness are transmitted from one generation to the next, but the framing of these values has changed from highlighting economic necessity to the current environmental crisis.

From the perspective of temporal context, the nature of ICTC changes as (objective) time goes by. Like the changing roles and identities identified in the context of elder-care (Barnhart and Peñaloza 2013; Dean et al. 2014), ICTC changes as children grow up, and the dynamics of the grandparent–grandchild relationship change. Concrete acts of shared consumption are often replaced by advice, guidance, and financial support. Important is that grandparents can be involved in their grandchildren’s lives in all turns, from the early days full of productive consumption

activities to financing their first big purchases, such as driving licenses, high school books, or first apartments. Later, grandchildren start to take care of their grandparents, whether in terms of concrete acts or by making compromises and taking them into account in their life choices. As time goes by, the dynamics of the grandparent–grandchild relationship change so that the grandchild may become the caregiver and the grandparent the one receiving care, even to the extent that in Ellen’s example the granddaughter portrays her grandmother as a child-like person who needed to be handled with care and persuaded to act in a certain way.

“I called her yesterday because my mom and I thought that her not feeling well could be a consequence of not eating properly, so I called her and told her I would make a diet plan for her and she must commit to it. So, she is very stubborn, and she tells me she eats . . . so I have to use some tricks, like I know how to handle my grandma.”

Passing of time is also evident in the way generative acts continue to be performed from one generation to the next; what was once created by one generation may once again be protected by the following generations, even though they were ancestors living only in memories. Ellen told us about their Swiss family roots and how her grandfather wanted to make sure that the younger generations never lost that connection. He frequently took the grandchildren on vacation to Switzerland when they were young and showed them the family coat of arms in a local church.

The inevitable passage of time may materialize in familial artifacts, as Epp and Price’s (2010) examination on the family table suggests. This was highlighted by Amanda, who wanted to have her grandpa’s old books that they used to read together. She already plans to pass the tradition on to the next generation.

“The books are in a terrible shape, after decades of use. No sense, but great emotional value, that I have them. I have thought that if I ever have children of my own, I will definitely read the books with them.”

The objective nature of the temporal context materializes when new family members are born and old ones are lost, in memories and future plans, in material artifacts, and in birthday parties and traces in the aging bodies. While the death of individual family members is present in the data, the core of the narrative is to keep the self and family legacy—to “leave a trace”—as the very notion of generativity (Rubinstein et al. 2015) suggests. Besides the human side, the data highlighted the need to leave the Earth for future generations.

*Temporal Performance.* The second perspective is reflected in enacting ICTC in the present time. This subjective viewpoint reveals how time has multiple and varied, socially constructed meanings. One of them is to view time as a resource that is somewhat controllable and

manipulatable. In our analysis, we denote how grandparents and grandchildren use time as a resource (Festjens and Janiszewski 2015) for planning ahead (Cotte et al. 2004), engaging in consumption activities or care work, and creating cherished memories together (Epp and Price 2008; Gram et al. 2019; Hogg et al. 2004). Time is also a resource when grandparents and grandchildren balance between taking care of themselves and devoting time to each other. Retired grandparents may feel obliged to assist their children in babysitting, but even some working grandparents organize their everyday, for instance, by working reduced hours, to be there for their grandchildren. In turn, adult grandchildren devote time to being with their grandparents. Ellen described how she travels with her grandmother to her sister's sports events, describing these events as "good excuses" to take her grandmother away from her routines and spend time together, knowing how much she appreciates it.

As argued by many family consumption researchers, families exist as the result of concrete performances, interactions, and activities between family members (Barnhart et al. 2014; Epp and Price 2008). However, time is experienced by people as a perishable resource that cannot be stored; hence, meaningful activities have more value than less meaningful activities (Festjens and Janiszewski 2015). Thus, we also identify the qualitative distinction between social time and personal time familiar from previous research (Cotte et al. 2004). While today's time-poor parents may have to balance and deconstruct time by outsourcing mundane caring activities (Epp and Velagaleti 2014; Barnhart et al. 2014), for the grandparents in our data, almost any activity performed with their grandchildren is seen as protected, sacred time. According to Gram et al. (2019), the limited duration of together time makes it more special for grandparents and grandchildren, creating a virtuous circle that allows both generations to focus less on rules and discipline and more on enjoyment.

There are also nuances in which activities are considered more precious than others. Even though the grandparents described helping with everyday chores—expected to take place routinely and take up a lot of time—particularly the highlights like traveling together and offering new experiences to the grandchildren are narrated as memorable. Gram et al. (2019) suggest that such experiences are not only meaningful at the time but they also become shared resources, facilitating further bonding afterwards. Riitta's confirmation present for her granddaughter—a trip to London—is an example of a special time becoming a family tradition:

"Our plan is to travel on her terms, to do only those things she wants, and to visit the places that she is interested in. Her younger brother has already made me promise that it will be a tradition."

Grandchildren remember the times spent with their grandparents in the past as warm memories. In the present time, they must "make time" (Carlson et al. 2019, 147) to meet their grandparents specifically, which may require prioritization. Aware of the finiteness of time together, both grandparents and adult grandchildren perceive it as a valuable use of time, worth cherishing. Although our grandparent informants were relatively healthy, they expressed some anxiety toward the future, referring to possible health issues that might negatively affect their use of time. Grandchildren repeatedly told how sorry they would be if "something happened" to their grandparents and they had skipped a visit. Our findings thus highlight the master narrative of generativity as an important resource for using and valuing time in the context of ICTC.

*Temporal Navigation.* This perspective refers to how ICTC guides grandparents and grandchildren to navigate across temporalities. It is related to a subjective notion of time, and especially to orienting in time. When enacting ICTC, consumers break away from the clear linear structure of past, present, and future (Bergadaa 1990). Previous research has identified how heirlooms (Türe and Ger 2016) and identity projects (Schau et al. 2009) facilitate consumers' negotiation of past, present, and future. Similarly, ICTC guides grandparents and grandchildren to move fluidly across different temporalities. ICTC represents itself in a narrative that is dynamic over time. Its roots are in the past, in grandparents protecting and transmitting old ideas of self, family, and society. Still, it is most visibly implemented in the present, as grandparents and grandchildren devote time and money, create new traditions, negotiate, and make compromises in favor of the unique relationship. However, rather than being merely a "here and now" activity, ICTC is strongly oriented toward the future. Grandparents want to guide their grandchildren toward happy adulthood and good citizenship and to stay by their side for as long as possible. Grandchildren, on the other hand, help their grandparents stay active, engaged, and independent.

Instead of being clearly bounded, the past, present, and future blur in our narrative data. For instance, grandma Marjatta simultaneously evokes the past, present, and future when narrating the story about the importance of Lapland for her family:

"I was three months old when they took me to Lapland for the first time. And the tradition remained . . . and now we have the cabin. It is great to have the opportunity to take the children there and teach them about life there, to make them understand that it's not just entertainment like in the ski resorts, but you can show them what it really is . . . we hope that the tradition remains, and the place gathers the families together long after we are gone."

The story illustrates that while the specific format of this tradition changes slightly, it, similarly to physical heirlooms, moves “across multiple temporalities” (Türe and Ger 2016) in the family. Türe and Ger show how heirs engage in different processes of rejuvenation of concrete objects from the past, allowing them to negotiate their multiple meanings and bring more “zeitgeist value” into them in the present time as well as orient toward the future. Similarly, ICTC enables this through not only objects but also through shared experiences.

In the grandchildren’s narratives, food is a memory-triggering element capable of simulating nostalgic, emotion-laden moments, and temporal navigation. Food-related memories tend to remain and remind people of their late grandparents. In Amanda’s words:

“He [grandpa, who has already passed away] would always cook us mashed potatoes and minced meat sauce; that was the best. And he would make us pancakes. Those are the kinds of food I still like to eat occasionally, just to remember.”

Grandparents and grandchildren’s interest in thinking of and relating to the past, present, and future of the family may change. For example, Leo first refused to share her grandmother’s interest in family history until he understood its value for them both:

“I wasn’t really interested in people I’d never met and so on. But the older I become, the more I understand how important it is to her and how important it is for something to go on, for there to be at least a book or something where everything is listed so that we know where we are from.”

Echoing consumers’ desire to exert mastery over time (Husemann and Eckhardt 2019), the grandparent–grandchild relationship offers a chance to break out of the limits of universal time. Grandfathers identified a second chance to be a parent and valued the “second show,” the opportunity to live again the phase of having young children around and do things differently this time. Similarly, by transferring a possession to a grandchild, grandparents can influence and be part of the future lives of others, even over multiple generations. This provides a sense of familial self-continuity that extends beyond death. Following this, the bond between grandparents and grandchildren is not restricted by the limits of a lifetime; rather, it offers a sense of temporal extension into the afterlife. Thus, the master narrative of generativity serves both as a present arena for ICTC and as a future arena, allowing generations to maintain continuity and an individual to outlive the self. The temporal extension is inherent in the master narrative of generativity—nourishing the lives of future generations, for instance, through heirlooms or sustainable consumption choices, requires people to consider time frames beyond their own (Urien and Kilbourne 2011, 72).

Our analysis demonstrates how ICTC guides grandparents and grandchildren to navigate across temporalities. In everyday situations, the temporalities come together as grandparents and grandchildren reflect upon what is, what has been, and what will be. This kind of negotiation often takes place with the help of consumption objects and practices (Robinson et al. 2022; Türe and Ger 2016; Woermann and Rokka 2015), be it tattooing (Roux and Belk 2009), consumer identity renaissance (Schau et al. 2009), or heirlooms (Türe and Ger 2016). Our findings highlight how the master narrative of generativity frames these negotiations in the context of grandparent–grandchild relations. Similarly, we suggest that embedded in the master narrative of generativity, grandparents and grandchildren engage in an ongoing dialogue between past, present, and future. When narrating, our informants relive their own past, reflect on their thoughts and emotions at present, and connect them with visions for the future.

A sense of connectedness of one generation with another is implied in the master narrative of generativity, referring to immortality through acts and works that will survive the individual (McAdams 2001). Grandparents explicitly refer to leaving a trace or transmitting “pieces of themselves” to their grandchildren for the time when they no longer exist. Grandchildren turn to special places, books of childhood, photos, and music—or even particular diets—to revitalize their late grandparents’ memory. Yet, in the master narrative of generativity, immortality goes beyond individuals and families to the wider concept of humanity. As Grandpa Tuomo said, “The most important thing is that life goes on and that we can make it possible.” The above elaboration illustrates how integrating multiple temporal perspectives into ICTC is relevant for gaining an adequate understanding of how families are kept together over time.

## DISCUSSION

In this study, we have demonstrated ICTC to be dynamic, constructed from the interaction between generations, and implemented in the rich arena of consumption. Grandparents and grandchildren engage in acts of generative caring that involve consumption in diverse ways, from gifts and shared meals to investments and shared consumption experiences. Our processual framework shows the multilayered and multitemporal nature of ICTC, where the dynamics of the layers and acts of caring are rendered understandable with the analysis of diverse temporal perspectives. By using the master narrative of generativity as a cultural resource, grandparents and grandchildren enact caring and, in doing so, keep the family together over generations. Through theorizing ICTC, we contribute to consumer research in the following ways.



## Family Consumption

First, we introduce the concept of ICTC into family consumption research. Despite the social and cultural significance of intergenerational caring between grandparents and grandchildren, previous consumer research has not addressed it sufficiently. In contrast to studies (Godefroit-Winkel et al. 2019; Gram et al. 2019) that present the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren as a dyad, we argue that ICTC represents a non-dyadic, extended agency that involves the self as well as all family members, including past and future generations, the community, and the environment. In this way, our work also goes beyond identifying family collectives (Epp and Price 2008) and elderly consumption ensembles (Barnhart and Peñaloza 2013) that mainly involve relations within a shorter timeframe, such as within the everyday life of one or two generations. Importantly, in our treatise, caring through consumption is extended from family members to abstract matters, such as cultural values and ideals, and concrete possessions, including important places and a family's material and financial property. In contrast to work that has examined intergenerational influence (Carlson et al. 2001; Moore 2018; Moore and Wilkie 2005; Moore et al. 2002), our work extends the notion of intergenerational consumption from transmitting the use and purchase of certain objects, such as heirlooms (Price et al. 2000; Türe and Ger 2016), brands, consumption preferences, and values to a broad view. Drawing from generativity theory, we reveal that ICTC consists of the creation, protection, and transmission of a broad set of consumption values, skills, goals, practices, and ideals reflected in diverse acts of caring. Thus, our study shows that by doing family through intergenerational caring, it is not just the family itself that continues but also a set of societal ideals and values, such as volunteer work in communities and looking after nature.

Second, the family consumption research stream has recently paid more attention to care work—the emotional and physical labor related to caring through consumption (Barnhart and Peñaloza 2013; Epp and Velagaleti 2014). We complement this by conceptualizing ICTC as giving form to a desire to care beyond the extended family. Recent studies on generativity and caregiving in other academic fields have noted that feelings of generativity have positive effects on caregivers (Grossman and Gruenewald 2017). Through the culturally shared master narrative of generativity that we identified, consumers are invited to produce more care. Our findings show a path toward broadening the conceptualization of caring through consumption from interpersonal relations to caring for society and the environment (Shaw et al. 2017).

## Multitemporality

By theorizing the multitemporal nature of intergenerational caring, our work extends the existing understanding

of caring in the family consumption literature. While extant work uncovers a range of caring practices that help keep a family together over spatial distances (Epp and Velagaleti 2014; Huff and Cotte 2016), we show how a family is kept together through the passage of time. In their seminal article, Epp and Price (2008) argued that families produce a sense of who they are and the notion of family continuity over time through repeated, continuous family traditions, rituals, and consumption practices. Here, we provide in-depth empirical evidence and offer a theoretical, processual conceptualization of *how* this is accomplished, also showing how caring evolves. Our findings further highlight how familial caring—intergenerational caring in our case—is closely framed by a temporal context, that is, the objective sociohistorical time, which renders understandable what forms caring takes and how it is valued. We also present how subjective time is reflected in ICTC in the forms of temporal performance—perceiving, using, and valuing time—and temporal navigation: guiding grandparents and grandchildren to move across past, present, and future.

In doing so, our findings complement earlier studies on familial caring (Barnhart and Peñaloza 2013; Dean et al. 2014; Epp and Velagaleti 2014; Thompson 1996); yet, whereas they have commonly discussed time used for mundane care work, our analysis highlights the significant role of shared experiences, such as travel or leisure activities, in creating and maintaining familial bonds over generations. Finally, we identify how grandparents and grandchildren negotiate past, present, and future; during the interviews, they relived their own past, reflected on their thoughts and emotions at present, and connected them with visions for the future. This implies that in ICTC, the past, present, and future are fluid and blurring (Bergadaa 1990). Our findings resonate with the study of Türe and Ger (2016), who examined the processes of heirloom transformation, showing how heirs engage in different processes of rejuvenation of concrete objects. Besides material heirlooms, our study highlights how special places, television programs, music, attitudes to consumption, or even particular diets may enable the revitalization of memories or trigger future wishes, grandparenthood representing itself a “second chance” to relive one's life, weaving the past, present, and future together (Schau et al. 2009). In sum, utilizing the theory of generativity—generativity being intrinsically processual and future oriented—has allowed us to carve out three temporal perspectives in ICTC, revealing its multitemporal nature and contributing to a better understanding of familial caring.

## Generativity

Previous consumer research has defined generativity cognitively or psychologically as a characteristic of a consumer and as something motivating adults' consumption

choices (Lacroix and Jolibert 2015, 785). The theory of generativity has psychological roots and is still mainly used from an individualist perspective (Grossman and Gruenewald 2017). Our way of conceptualizing generativity as a culturally shared master narrative (Shankar et al. 2001) brings a novel perspective to this theory. Generativity is perceived not as a characteristic of an individual but as something that is socioculturally shared and reproduced. Furthermore, by focusing on generative acts, the theory connects with the established idea of “doing family” through consumption practices. Through our empirical findings, we show that generative consumption goes beyond everyday consumption acts, such as purchasing durable, educational, or valuable goods (Shankar et al. 2001) or transmitting cherished possessions (Price et al. 2000; Türe and Ger 2016) to the next generation. McAdams et al. (1998, 20) see generative concern as an overall orientation regarding generativity in an individual’s own life and social world. We show that ICTC invites both grandparents and grandchildren to accomplish acts of generative caring.

Complying with the idea of an active, agentic consumer who simultaneously produces while consuming, grandparents and grandchildren generate more care by caring. As evidenced in previous research on productive consumption in the DIY and cooking contexts (Hogg et al. 2004; Moisio et al. 2013), productive activities (e.g., learning skills, cooking, and painting) are abundant in our data. Thus, ICTC appears to be a recurring, self-fulfilling concept that tends to multiply through practice. Our findings, therefore, complement the understanding of productive consumption as part of solving and negotiating conflicts related to identities and social roles (Moisio et al. 2013; Schau et al. 2009) and view it as a central part of ICTC. Productive consumption is viewed as a collective, relational effort that is transmitted and carried out from generation to generation.

As in generativity, reciprocity is an important aspect of intergenerational caring. ICTC requires both a giver and a recipient. Generativity is a dynamic resource for interactions between generations. The grandparents in this study could leave a legacy because their grandchildren were open to receiving it. Furthermore, grandparents invite grandchildren to join them in using the narrative of generativity. Reflecting on their own experiences of intergenerational caring, grandparents and grandchildren maintain family traditions and “pass on the good they have got,” or do the opposite—deliberately stand out from past generations and do things better.

### Further Research

While we focus on the context of grandparents and grandchildren, our study also broadens the view to consider other relations, such as how siblings care for each other

through consumption. We also invite other researchers to continue broadening from the nuclear family to focus on extended families, single-parent families, same-sex families, and other aspects considering diversity in the composition and practices involved in “doing family” (Cappellini et al. 2021). The insights of our study are bounded by its sociocultural context of a Nordic welfare state in Finland, and middle- or upper-social-class consumers. Our grandparent informants were able-bodied and generally healthy and had predominantly positive experiences of grandparent–grandchild relations, which offers a mainly optimistic perspective on ICTC. However, some narratives of grandchildren gave us a complementary viewpoint illustrating ICTC with grandparents who have diminished independence and physical limitations. Previous family consumption research shows the multiple tensions involved when families balance between the market and family life (Epp and Velagaleti 2014) or between independence and dependence (Barnhart and Peñaloza 2013). Our findings point to the way contradictions and conflicts may emerge due to the different lifestyles and preferences of generations. These conflicts may also emerge between grandparents and parents, as grandparents need to juggle between caring but not interfering. These contradictions involved in ICTC and how consumers cope with them warrant further research attention. Future research should also focus on other than Western contexts, where grandparenting plays a different role in society and consumption. Grandparental relations in the context of immigration would also be an interesting further study topic.

In conclusion, our study has broad societal implications. It brings forth the important societal relevance of intergenerational caring. The role of grandparents should be fully explored by consumer researchers, as they can be seen as central transmitters of culture from one generation to another. Their contributions to the well-being of families and society are valuable and need to be better acknowledged. Our findings can also be interesting for policymakers, for the renewal of social welfare systems and family-related policies. For instance, grandparents could be allowed to use paid family leave in place of parents, and their role in family life could be officially recognized in childhood education and schools.

In closing, our work highlights the concept of ICTC as an important extension to understanding family consumption as a temporally unfolding phenomenon. We reveal diverse layers and acts of intergenerational caring that illustrate the importance of consumption for keeping families together over time. Equipped with the theoretical notion of ICTC, marketers and policymakers can plan for services and solutions that consider the importance of grandparent–grandchild relationships for families and societies at large.

## DATA COLLECTION INFORMATION

In the first phase of the study, the first author conducted all of the interviews herself in Finland between February and April in 2016. The second author closely supervised the process. Data were discussed and analyzed on multiple occasions by all three authors between 2017 and 2019 using the first author's field notes, photographs, and text files. In the second phase of the study, in November–December 2019, nine more interviews were conducted. These data were collected, discussed, and analyzed jointly by all three authors. The final analysis was jointly conducted by all three authors. The data are currently stored in a Google Drive folder managed by all three authors.

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