

## **Intergenerational interest relations in the light of person-environment fit theory**

Interest is a basic category of human experience and behavior. From the perspective of person-environment fit theory interest is defined as a relation between an interested person and an object of interest in emotional, cognitive, and value-related terms. Accordingly interest development is ascribed to interest-related actions. Since such actions accumulate in family environments, intergenerational interest relations are regarded as a worthwhile topic of research. With respect to intergenerational interest relations it is insufficient to apply person-environment fit theory to current person-environment constellations in an undifferentiated way only, as traditionally done. Therefore, the theoretical background is supplemented in particular by the discrimination of objective and subjective environment entities as well as considerations about the variability of intergenerational interest relations.

In an empirical study the interests of 197 students and the interests of both parents were investigated. Moreover, the parental interests as perceived by the students, the experienced family climate and some relevant background variables were assessed. Significant interest correlations and relevant interest similarities between students and their parents were found. The perception of parental interests by students is intertwined in the formation of intergenerational interest relations. At the same time the moderating effects of structural variables on the strength of intergenerational interest relations can be shown, whereas family climate has no moderating effect. Finally the sample can be broken down reliably into subsamples with specific intergenerational interest similarity patterns.

The study supports the understanding of intergenerational interest relations from different perspectives and thereby clarifies important aspects of interest development. Due to the fact that intergenerational interest relations represent an interfamilial variable phenomenon being interweaved with perceptual processes, a deepened theoretical comprehension, well founded research, and the attempt of practical application will be profitable undertakings in the future.

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