

Intergenerational power negotiations on solidarity outside the shadow of social norms

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Background of the study

- The presentation is based on the ongoing SoliPro project (SA 2022–2026)
- The research is funded by Research Council of Finland and by the Finnish Cultural Foundation Satakunta Regional Fund
- The project explores everyday practices of youth solidarity
- It contributes to the theoretical debate on contemporary solidarity among and with young people
- The project engages with practical establishment of strength-based preventive social work

Solidarity and social norms

- This presentation has a starting point which withholds that social norms influence assumptions that an individual may not even be aware of
- Social norms facilitate expressions of solidarity in situations where people care about each other's actions, and it relates to how power relations are communicated
- This is particularly interesting from the standpoint of intergenerational solidarity in schools
- Unquestioned social norms can hinder intergenerational solidarity from developing

How can research participants escape the pressure to say the right thing?

- The data for this study were collected in 2023 using a story completion method
- The participants reasoned solidarities in the school area through fictional stories
- Youth and adults expressed themselves in individually written stories
- The participant had limitless power to include and exclude fictional characters in the school area

Results and social norms

- Without the fear of being judged, violating social norms was made possible, which was reflected in the results
- Almost half of adult participants perceived youth as equal to them but with special skills that adults lack
- The other half perceived youth too different to be held equal
- Overwhelming majority of youth wanted to share power with adults, even when they had the total power to exclude adults

Implications to social work

- Addressing intergenerational power relations can provide a fertile ground for facilitating intergenerational collaboration
- Theoretically and empirically grounded concept of 'solidarity' can help to create social cohesion
- Sense of solidarity can enhance individual *and* communal wellbeing in contemporary communities
- Alternative research methods can be useful, when investigating participants' views on sensitive issues

Implications to social work

- Workers need to be aware of given values and norms
- Belonging to a community is not individual client's skill but *a shared effort within any community*
- Creating meaningful connections require spaces that support interaction outside norm-driven expectations
- The ability to connect with others is co-learned within power relations
- Social workers can learn to recognise possibilities to enhance everyday practices of solidarity

Reference

- Määttä, T., & Korkiamäki, R. (2025). Tracing the rationale for solidarity in teenagers' post-apocalypse stories. *Childhood*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09075682251334343>