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RESEARCH ARTICLE

WILEY

Intergenerational solidarity, proximity to parents when moving to independence, and returns to the parental home

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Abstract

Research on leaving home among young adults has mainly focused on the timing of departures rather than the distance that young adults move when they leave the parental home and establish independent households. We draw on data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) Transition to Adulthood Supplement (TAS) (2005–2015) and the Geospatial Match Files to examine the relationship between intergenerational solidarity and the distance of young adults' first independent household. We also examine whether intergenerational proximity is associated with the likelihood of returning home. The results indicate that young adults from high SES families tend to move farther, while those who have children and a close relationship with their mothers tend to stay nearby. Living far from the parental home deters home returning only for young adults who do not have a close relationship with their mothers.

KEYWORDS

intergenerational solidarity, leaving home, parent–child distance, returning home

1 | INTRODUCTION

Economic, social, and cultural changes in the past several decades have made the transition to adulthood slower and more diversified in western countries (Mitchell, 2017; Settersten & Ray, 2010). In the United States, between 2000 and 2011, the percentage of young men ages 25 to 34 living in the parental home has increased from 12.9% to 18.6% (Mather, 2011). The percentage of women in this age range living with their parents also increased slightly from 8.3% to 9.7%. Not only do young adults in the United States leave home later than before, but about 40% of them eventually return home after living independently (Copp, Giordano, Longmore & Manning, 2017).

Leaving the parental home is considered an important marker in the transition to adulthood, as it often entails economic independence and reduced instrumental and social support from

parents. Previous research has explored factors that propel or deter young adults' leaving home (Bayrakdar & Coulter, 2018; Gillespie, Bostean & Malizia, 2020; Mulder & Clark, 2000; Schwanitz, Mulder & Toulemon, 2017; South & Lei, 2015). However, even though intergenerational proximity defines the opportunity structure for parent–child interactions, very little research has been done on the distance young adults move when they establish an independent household (for an example, see Leopold, Geissler & Pink, 2012)—this is largely due to a lack of available data on young adults' and parents' geographic locations. Still, some have examined factors predicting whether American young adults leave the county or the state upon leaving the parental home, rather than directly examining the distance of the move (Garasky, 2002; Mulder & Clark, 2000).

Theoretically, factors that affect the propensity/timing of leaving home may be quite different from those influencing the distance of

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moves undertaken by young adults when they first establish independent households. For example, previous research found that emotional closeness with parents during adolescence helps young adults establish autonomy and leave home early (Gillespie, 2020), but this likely does not apply to the qualitatively separate issue of how far young adults go when they do leave.

Studies on parent–child geographic proximity have typically been carried out among older parents and middle-aged children, particularly regarding the implications for caregiving to ageing parents (Artamonova, Gillespie & Brandén, 2020; Lawton, Silverstein & Bengtson, 1994; Rogerson, Burr & Lin, 1997). However, intergenerational proximity during young adulthood deserves more attention because it may be closely associated with the amount of support that young adults receive from their parents, which is beneficial for young adults' future socio-economic advancement and well-being (Fingerman et al., 2012). Where young adults move also has implications for their neighbourhood attainment and social mobility (Sharkey, 2012). Moreover, intergenerational distance between young adults and their parents likely affects the quality of the parent–child relationship and geographic proximity in the long run (Leopold et al., 2012), potentially determining the support that older parents receive in the future.

In this study, we examine the determinants of intergenerational proximity when young adults migrate out of the parental home and establish their first independent household. While previous studies have extensively explored the economic motivations and life course correlates of migration behaviours, recent literature calls for the integration of family relationships into the theoretical and empirical models of residential mobility (Gillespie & Mulder, 2020; Mulder & Cooke, 2009). To address this gap, we focus on intergenerational relationships and young adults' migration in the transition to independent adulthood. Specifically, our *first objective* is to examine how different dimensions of intergenerational solidarity affect the young adults' distance from the parental home when they establish economic and residential independence.

Moreover, leaving home and returning home are not independent of each other. Recent studies have examined how age at home-leaving, “off-time” departures, and the routes of leaving home influence the likelihood of returning (Berngruber, 2015; Billette, Le Bourdais & Laplante, 2011; van den Berg, Kalmijn & Leopold, 2019; Warner & Houle, 2018). However, no previous research has investigated how young adults' location relative to the parental household affects their propensity of returning home. Thus, our *second objective* is to examine whether and how intergenerational geographic proximity is associated with the likelihood of returning home during young adulthood.

We analyse longitudinal data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics Transition to Adulthood Study, which followed young adults from 2005 to 2015, and use Geospatial Match Files to determine the distance between young adults and their parents. OLS regressions model the distance of young adults' first independent households to parents and discrete-time event history models examine returns to the parental home.

2 | THEORY AND PRIOR RESEARCH

2.1 | Intergenerational solidarity and distance from the parental home

According to standard economic theory, individuals choose a residential location to maximise their utility (Mincer, 1978; Ritchey, 1976). Young adults make migration decisions by comparing the costs and benefits of moving to alternative destinations. For example, long-distance moves are often linked to educational or occupational opportunities, which can provide economic benefits (e.g., Gillespie, Mulder & Thomas, 2020). However, a long-distance move away from the parental home is also associated with important economic and non-economic costs, including the loss of parents' provision of low-cost services (such as free meals and laundries), fewer opportunities for face-to-face interactions, and possibly less emotional support. Of course, characteristics of the intergenerational relationship could affect the costs and benefits associated with residential moves to different destinations, thereby affecting the distance of young adults' first independent households from the parental home.

We draw on the theoretical model of *intergenerational solidarity* to frame our hypotheses and analysis. The intergenerational solidarity framework identifies several conceptual dimensions that characterise intergenerational relationships, capturing the interaction, cohesion, sentiment, and support between parents and children (Bengtson, 2001). We primarily consider four dimensions of intergenerational solidarity in this study—*affectual solidarity* (emotional closeness between generations), *functional solidarity* (the provision of instrumental and emotional support), *associational solidarity* (frequency of shared activities and interactions), and *structural solidarity* (geographic proximity).

Geographic proximity is referred to as structural solidarity in the framework because it defines the “opportunity structure” for cross-generational interaction (Bengtson, 2001). In this study, we argue that geographic proximity is not merely an exogenous determinant of intergenerational contacts, affection, and instrumental support as theorised in the intergenerational solidarity framework (Bengtson & Roberts, 1991). Instead, it could be an outcome influenced by other dimensions of the intergenerational relationship. The current study examines how different dimensions of intergenerational solidarity affect young adults' locational choices for their first independent households, specifically their distance from the parental home.

Affectual solidarity refers to the sentiments and evaluations family members express about their relationship with other members (Bengtson, 2001, p. 8). When young adults have more positive feelings toward their parents, they are more likely to value the opportunities of face-to-face contact, enjoy support from parents, and make sure they are able to assist parents when parents are in need. Accordingly, young adults with a close relationship with parents will tend to prefer staying within a short distance of the parental home. Indeed, recent research has shown that affectual solidarity, or intergenerational closeness, during adolescence is associated with a closer geographic distance between parents and their children in later

adulthood (Gillespie & Treas, 2017; Gillespie & van der Lippe, 2015). Therefore, we propose that:

Hypothesis 1. Emotional closeness to mother and father are negatively associated with young adults' distance from the parental home when they first establish an independent household.

Functional solidarity is “the giving and receiving of support across generations, including the exchange of both instrumental assets and services as well as emotional support” (Bengtson, 2001, p. 8). Young adults who are used to receiving instrumental help from parents, such as meal preparation and household chores, would likely be reluctant to move far away because the elimination of these services increases the costs of living far away from parents. In addition to instrumental support, some parents, especially those with high socio-economic status (SES), are able and willing to financially assist adult children with paying tuition, utilities, rent, and even purchasing a house. Financial support could have countervailing effects on the distance of moves when young adults first leave home. On one hand, financial transfers from parents enable young adults to pursue post-secondary education and occupational opportunities in destinations far away from home. Young adults from high SES family backgrounds are also more likely to pursue educational and occupational opportunities that require long-distance moves (Mulder & Clark, 2000; Simpson, 1992).

On the other hand, as an exchange, by receiving financial support from parents, young adults may feel obliged to instrumentally and emotionally support parents and thereby decide to stay nearby. An Italian study of married couples indicated that receiving financial support for the home purchase from a spouse's parents was associated with closer proximity between the couple and the spouse's parents (Tomassini, Wolf & Rosina, 2003). It is also possible that functional solidarity is endogenous to children's mobility intentions (Cox & Stark, 1994). For instance, parents might be more likely to provide housing purchase assistance to children who will stay nearby and provide them with support in old age. Therefore, we broadly hypothesise an association without a priori expectations about the direction of the relationship:

Hypothesis 2. Parents' financial capabilities and financial support are associated with young adults' distance from the parental home when they establish independent households.

Associational solidarity refers to “the type and frequency of contact between intergenerational family members” (Bengtson, 2001, p. 8). For young adults who still live together with parents, the frequency of engaging in recreational activities, such as attending arts, music, and sports events, and family activities with parents may vary. As a reflection of a close intergenerational relationship, young adults who frequently do things together with parents may be reluctant to move far away when they leave home. Engaging in frequent activities might also reflect parents' and children's common belief in familism, which values strong family ties and family responsibilities (Bostean & Gillespie, 2018). Young adults with familistic, or collectivist, beliefs

might be more likely to stay nearby after leaving the parental home. Moreover, young adults may not necessarily enjoy doing things with parents, they may need the parents' economic and social resources to attend recreational and social activities.

Hypothesis 3. Engaging in activities with parents is negatively associated with young adults' distance from the parental home when they first establish independent households.

2.2 | Intergenerational proximity and returns to the parental home

Home returning during young adulthood is often triggered by “failure” life course transitions, such as unemployment or the dissolution of a romantic relationship (South & Lei, 2015). Insofar as parents provide assistance out of altruism (Eggebeen & Davey, 1998), letting young adult children move back home is a convenient way to help deal with financial difficulties or emotional distress. Nevertheless, like all types of residential mobility and migration, the decision to return home is based on cost–benefit analyses associated with the move. Distance has long been recognised as a factor that increases the costs of migration (Lee, 1966). However, it is unclear whether distance (from the parental home) matters for returning home.

Living farther away from parents might prevent young adults from moving back for a few reasons. First, distance constitutes an intervening obstacle for migration due to the high economic, psychological, and social costs associated with long-distance moves (Lee, 1966). Longer distances entail higher expenses related to the potential return. Long distance moves are also less likely to happen because of the “drag effects” of social ties—when young adults have developed social ties in places that are far from home, they may be reluctant to return home and thereby lose those ties. Moreover, greater distances between locations might be an indication that the cultural and social contexts in the origin and the destination are drastically different. In this case, the required social adjustments might add to the costs of return migration.

Second, young adults who move farther away from home initially might find the local labour market less attractive than those who stayed nearby. There could be a mismatch between the available jobs in places where parents live and the young adults' skills, which perhaps inspired the initial move away. Thus, job market costs to young adults' career prospects could prevent faraway young adults from moving back.

Hypothesis 4. The distance of the first independent household from the parental home is negatively associated with the likelihood of returning to the parental home.

As we discussed above, longer distances between children and their parents entail higher costs related to home-returning. Yet, this deterring effect of distance could be mitigated by the emotional closeness between young adults and their parents. Those who have warm

and enduring intergenerational relationships would likely find a return home more attractive than those who do not, as those with close relationships would likely have fewer conflicts and enjoy more social, emotional, and possibly instrumental intergenerational support. Parents who are close to their children might also be more likely to economically support the young adults' return or encourage them to do so. Therefore, young adults who have a closer relationship with their parents might be more motivated to overcome distance barriers, given the greater benefits of returning home.

Hypothesis 5. Geographic distance between young adults and their parents has a weaker deterring effect on home return for young adults who have emotionally closer intergenerational relationships.

2.3 | The life course perspective

Admittedly, young adults' residential mobility is influenced by many other factors. We follow the guidance of several principles of the life course perspective in our selection of control variables (Elder, 1998). The life course principle of "heterogeneity" acknowledges substantial inter-individual variation in the timing, pathway, and characteristics of leaving and returning home (Mitchell, 2003). This study examines the heterogeneity in the distance of move when young adults first establish an independent household. Much of the heterogeneity in migration destinations reflects structural differences in parents' and adult children's access to resources and opportunities. Specifically, pursuing post-secondary education is a prominent reason for long-distance migration among young adults. Highly-educated young adults with specialised abilities tend to have the resources and motivations to pursue job opportunities farther away, which can provide higher economic returns to education. At the same time, young adults with higher levels of education might need to move longer distances to find jobs that suit their skills.

The notion of "linked lives" proposes that we live our lives "embedded with kin and friends across the life span" (Elder, 1994, p. 6). It emphasises how characteristics of, and events occurring to, family members influence the life course transitions. Pertaining to leaving home, it directs our attention to how the needs of parents influence the distance to parents when young adults first establish independent households and the likelihood of returning. Although young adulthood is characterised by parents' provision of assistance to satisfy children's needs, adult children are also bounded by the needs of parents when making migration decisions. For instance, they may feel obligated to stay close to a widowed parent or a parent in ill health (Smits, 2010).

The life course principle of "timing in lives" refers to the notion that the antecedents and consequences of life transitions and events vary according to their timing in a person's life (Elder, 1994). Young adulthood is a demographically dense period and key life course events are interconnected with each other. We expect that the life course events that precede or co-occur with leaving home are

associated with the characteristics of leaving home, namely the distance that young adults move. For instance, pursuing post-secondary education is associated with long-distance moves. Previous studies have shown that highly-educated adult children tend to have longer spatial distance to parents (Leopold et al., 2012; Malmberg & Pettersson, 2007; Mulder & Kalmijn, 2006). Employment could be associated with long-distance moves, especially for highly-educated young adults with specialised skills (Thomas, Gillespie & Lomax, 2019), because job opportunities are more dispersed. Having children may lead to short-distance moves because young adults need help from their parents with childcare (Malmberg & Pettersson, 2007; Michielin, Mulder & Zorlu, 2008).

Finally, the life course principle of historical time and geographic location emphasises how individual lives unfold in the broader historical and geographic context (Mitchell, 2003). We recognise that the historical and geographic contexts constrain young adults' educational and occupational opportunities. For instance, young adults living in rural areas might need to move longer distances than those living in large metropolitan areas to find suitable opportunities (Garasky, 2002). Previous research found that parents and children are separated by longer distances in the West, South, and Midwest regions compared with the Northeast region, because population density is lower and inter-urban distance is higher in the Northeast (Lin & Rogerson, 1995; Rogerson, Weng & Lin, 1993). And the Great Recession is one recent historical event that reduced opportunities for young people and potentially affected the distance of moves and returns home.

3 | METHOD

3.1 | Data and sample

We use the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID), a nationally representative longitudinal survey of U.S. residents and their families, and the Transition to Adulthood supplement to the PSID. Members of the initial 1968 panel study of nearly 5,000 families—and almost 18,000 individuals—were interviewed annually through 1997 and biennially afterward. As offspring of the original panel form new households, they are added to the panel as household heads.

In 2005, the PSID began collecting information on adult children in PSID households for their Transition to Adulthood Supplement (TAS). The young adult participants in the TAS were children of the PSID families who were over age 18 and no longer attended high school. All of the young adult TAS respondents had participated in the earlier Child Development Supplement, which was taken in 1997. The dataset contains information on respondents' health, education, employment, living arrangements, marital/cohabitation and parental status, parent-child relationships, and a variety of other topics.

Data for the current project are based on six waves of TAS data conducted biennially between 2005 and 2015. The wave-specific response rates range from 87% to 92% for the six waves of TAS. Young adults ranged from ages 18 to 26. Some data—particularly those related to parental characteristics—were taken from the main PSID interviews.

A number of sample restrictions were placed on the data. The sample consists of young adults who were dependent on at least one parent at the beginning of the TAS but transitioned to “residential and economic independence” between 2007 and 2015. The PSID staff are conservative about this designation and decide on a case-by-case basis whether young adults are only temporarily out of the family unit but should remain there, whether they should be considered institutional, or if they should be considered a “split-off” to become a new household head. The criteria are that they live “permanently” in a separate physical dwelling from their previous family unit and are “economically independent.” “Permanence” and “economic independence” depend on the young adult’s age, the type of move, what they are doing, and how the main family characterises their move out.¹ It is important to note that transition to residential and economic independence does not include movements into institutions, such as colleges or the military, nor do we consider movements from institutions back to the parental home.

Since the dependent variables in both models reflect change in residential location between 2-year observation intervals, only young adults with data from two consecutive waves and with geocode information available in both years were included in the study. The resulting analytic sample for our analysis of distance to parents consists of 975 person-periods during which young adults transitioned into residential and economic independence. Only one period is included for each respondent in this analysis because we only consider the first time that young adults establish independent households. For the event history analysis of returning home, we use 1,659 person-periods, at the beginning of which young adults lived in independent households (or headed their own households).

3.1.1 | Dependent variables

The dependent variable for the first set of analyses is the natural logarithm of the distance between the child and the parental home. Based on PSID-allocated household identification numbers, those who appear to have left one parental household to move into the home of their other parent were not considered to have achieved independence. To estimate move distances, we linked individuals’ addresses to census tract data from the 2010 U.S. Census using the Geospatial Match Files. Geographic distance was calculated between the respondent and the parental household they left in miles from the centroid of the respondent’s tract to the centroid of the tract occupied by their parent.² We admit that this estimation of distance could be inaccurate because census tracts vary in size and the inaccuracy would be more serious in regions with larger census tracts.

One important limitation of the centroid approach is that a “0” distance could indicate coresidence or living very close by, leading to a potential undercount of the number of young adults who moved out but remained in the same census tract. For this reason, when respondents no longer shared a household identification number with either parent, but their centroid distance was “0 miles,” we used a code of “0.2 miles” to indicate that the young adult lived *within the same*

census tract but outside the parental home. This value (0.2) was chosen as an intuitive approximation because the closest non-coresidential distance in the data was 0.3 miles.

The dependent variable for the second set of analyses is whether or not the young adult returned to live in the parental home during any 2-year observation periods between 2007 and 2015, among those who were at risk for experiencing such an event (i.e., they were observed as having left the parental home at an earlier wave). Returns to the parental home were measured as whether the geocode distance to parents returned back to 0, indicating a return to coresidence between the child and their parent(s). Because we use census tract centroids, we again used young adult and parent household identification numbers and whether their distance returned to “0 miles” in order to indicate that the young adult moved back into the parental home.

3.1.2 | Independent variables

Time-varying independent variables for the first set of analyses were measured at the beginning of each 2-year observation interval (time t) during which young adults transitioned into independent households. In the second set of analyses, where we assessed the odds of returning home using multiple person periods for each respondent, the time-varying independent variables were again measured at the beginning of each 2-year observation interval, including a time-varying measure for parent–child distance at t .

Time-varying measures of functional, affectual, and associational solidarity are used in the analysis. As a measure of functional solidarity, parent financial support identified the number of items for which young adults’ parent(s) or other relatives provided support within the last year: house/condo, vehicle, rent/mortgage, tuition, student loans, and other bills/expenses. The index ranged from 0 to 6. Questions about affectual solidarity were asked separately for mothers and fathers, tapping into young adults’ self-reported closeness to each parent. The scale ranged from (1) *not close at all* to (7) *very close*. Similarly, associational solidarity was measured by a question asking how often the respondent did things together with their mother and the father, respectively. The scale ranged from (1) *never* to (6) *every day*.

At the individual level, we included measures for respondents’ age and gender (female = 1, male = 0). Young adults’ race/ethnicity was a categorical variable distinguishing white, black, Hispanic, or other racial-ethnic groups. A logged measure of the respondents’ earnings from work in the past calendar year was also included. Respondents’ self-rated health was measured using a scale ranging from (1) *poor* to (5) *excellent*. A measure for marital status indicated whether the young adult was cohabiting, married, or single.³

Dichotomous variables indicated whether the respondent had children and was employed. An ordered measure for educational attainment indicated whether the young adult had completed (1) less than high school, (2) a high school diploma or the equivalent, (3) some college or was currently enrolled, or (4) college or more. These time varying individual characteristics were measured at t . In

the second set of models—with the dependent variable as returns to the parental home among residentially independent respondents—an additional measure indicated whether the young adult was a renter (= 1), else (= 0).

Given that residential mobility during young adulthood is high, the initial distance young adults move when transitioning to independence is not necessarily the distance to their parents before potentially returning home. Therefore, for the second part of the analyses, we used the parent–child distance at the beginning of each time period to predict the likelihood of home returning during that period.

At the family level, parental household structure at t was coded as both biological parents or a single parent/stepparent household. We included a binary indicator for whether either parent had a college degree by 2005. We also included a binary measure from the PSID main files for whether or not either parent was a homeowner at t . To capture parents' needs for personal care, we included an indicator of whether any parents were in poor health at t . Lastly, a logged measure of the parental household's income in the calendar year preceding t was included.

Regarding geographic and temporal context, a recession move variable was coded 1 if the move took place during the interval between 2007 and 2009. A measure for region indicated whether the young adult lived in the Midwest, Southern, Western or Northeast (reference) region of the United States. We also included an ordered measure of urbanicity that ranged from (1) *completely urban* to (9) *completely rural*.

3.2 | Analytic strategy

Our panel data allowed us to incorporate life events and time-varying individual characteristics to predict the distance between young adults and their parents after they became independent. First, we used a series of OLS regression models to assess the relationships between the independent variables and young adults' distance from their parents in the move to independence between 2007 and 2015. Second, discrete-time event history analyses assessed the relationship between the independent variables—including a time-varying measure of parent–child distance—and the risk of returning to the parental home between 2009 and 2015. Robust standard errors accounted for minimal clustering within households.

For the event history analyses, each person had multiple records depending on when they became independent and when and whether he/she returned. A person started to contribute records when they became residentially independent and stopped contributing records when he/she returned or was otherwise censored (i.e., had not returned before 2015 or she/he was lost in the follow up).

For all multivariate analyses, variance inflation factors indicated there was no severe multicollinearity in the models (average VIF = 1.4). Analysis of the correlation matrix (not shown) indicated that none of the observed relationships between the independent variables in the models were very strong. The strongest correlation (0.48) was between parents' income and parent homeownership.

4 | RESULTS

4.1 | Descriptive statistics

The estimated average distance young adults moved when they transitioned to independence was 195 miles (standard deviation = 433), with a median distance of 13.2 miles. The distribution of intergenerational distance is positively skewed as a result of a few young adults who moved very far away (i.e., the 99th percentile is 2,215 miles). In order to get a sense of the distribution of the dependent variable across different categories of main sociodemographic measures, Table 1 presents different percentiles for the full sample by gender and across racial/ethnic, marital/cohabitation, and educational classifications. As online supplemental material, we have included grouped boxplots that illustrate the distance distributions for the total sample as well as the sociodemographic groups presented in Table 1.

Male young adults moved farther than their female counterparts. White young adults moved farther than black and Hispanic young adults, but at shorter distances than those in other racial/ethnic groups. Married young adults tended to stay closer to parents than cohabitators and the unmarried. Those who were in college or had obtained a college degree moved farther away from their parents than those who did not enter college.

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics for the variables used in the study. Column 1 presents individual-level summary statistics among young adults prior to establishing independence. In terms of demographic characteristics, the average age of dependent young adults was 21 and more than half (56%) were female. The majority of young adults were white (55%), followed by black (35%), other (7.5%), and Hispanic (2.5%). On average, young adults self-reported being in good health. Not surprisingly, the modal marital/cohabiting status of dependent young adults was “neither married nor cohabiting” (76.3%), while 18.4% were cohabiting, and 5.3% were married.⁴ Fully, 18.7% of dependent young adults reported having a child. A majority reported being employed (70%) and the median and modal level of education was “some college or currently enrolled.”

At the household-level, 47.4% of young adults reported having a single parent or a biological parent and step-parent while the remaining had two biological parents. Most had at least one homeowner parent (69%) and 37% had at least one college educated parent. Only 3.3% of young adults had parents in poor health. With regard to intergenerational solidarity, on average, dependent young adults reported receiving financial assistance with one of the six possible items. They reported having reasonably high affectual solidarity with their parents, with emotional closeness to mother being higher than that for fathers, on average. On the activities scale, young adults also reported engaging in more activities with mothers than fathers.

Column 2 in Table 1 presents person-year average descriptive statistics for residentially independent young adults, regardless of whether they returned or not by the next wave of the survey. Person-year summary statistics among young adults who had transitioned to independence were consistent with the summary statistics for dependent young adults, save for several intuitive differences.

TABLE 1 Mean (SD) and percentile distribution of initial distance across independent variables ($N = 975$)

	Mean (SD)	% same tract	5th	10th	25th	50th	75th	90th	95th	99th
Full sample	195.4 (432.9)	11.2%	0.2	0.2	3.6	13.2	143.9	673.8	1,107.7	2,215.1
Gender										
Male	226.4 (477.8)	11.6%	0.2	0.2	3.9	13.9	168.6	802.2	1,479.1	2,253.6
Female	170.6 (392.0)	10.9%	0.2	0.2	3.5	13.0	114.5	568.3	943.2	1,997.5
Race										
White	244.1 (490.3)	12.6%	0.2	0.2	5.2	21.6	190.1	827.8	1,508.7	2,253.6
Black	113.1 (288.8)	8.7%	0.2	1.0	3.0	7.6	41.5	346.5	713.9	1,555.4
Hispanic	105.9 (231.9)	16.7%	0.2	0.2	3.5	10.2	41.4	499.1	557.1	937.7
Other	258.3 (534.6)	11.0%	0.2	0.2	2.5	17.8	259.1	732.2	1,743.2	2,431.4
Marital status										
Married	143.5 (347.6)	11.5%	0.2	1.0	4.1	11.4	96.4	442.0	798.6	2,215.1
Single	207.1 (450.9)	11.6%	0.2	0.2	3.5	14.3	148.6	709.3	1,147.1	2,253.6
Cohabiting	207.0 (428.5)	9.5%	0.2	0.2	3.7	14.9	184.9	628.3	1,336.9	1,927.0
Education										
Less than HS	42.9 (122.7)	4.6%	0.9	1.8	3.1	7.6	14.8	68.6	235.9	710.2
High school or GED	104.0 (307.1)	13.4%	0.2	0.2	1.9	7.1	18.7	286.4	856.1	1,508.7
Some college	207.8 (435.5)	10.8%	0.2	0.2	4.4	19.2	168.6	680.1	1,115.2	2,059.8
College degree +	313.7 (558.3)	12.0%	0.2	0.2	6.3	43.4	332.4	1,020.6	1,821.5	2,383.5

Naturally, the average age of independent young adults was higher than that of dependent respondents. Closer to half (49.9%) of independent individuals were neither married nor cohabiting. Almost 30% were cohabitators, 21% were married, and 39% had children. A large majority of those independent young adults were renters (81%). Household-level statistics were also largely similar between the groups.

4.2 | Multivariate analyses

The first model included measures for emotional closeness to each parent (Model 1.1) and a subsequent model (Model 1.2) had measures for engaging in shared activities with each parent. Both models included instrumental assistance because the functional solidarity measure did not pose collinearity issues with the other measures of intergenerational solidarity. In Model 2, we did not include measures of associational solidarity (i.e., activities with parents) since engaging in shared activities is contingent upon being geographically close.

4.2.1 | Intergenerational distance after the move to independence

Based on the results of the first model (Model 1.1 in Table 3), which included measures of parent-child closeness, we found partial support for Hypothesis 1 (affective solidarity), that emotional closeness would be negatively associated with parent-child geographic distance when young adults first establish independent households. Young adults

with close relationships with their mothers lived closer to the parental home when they became independent. However, the results did not point to a similar relationship for father-child closeness and distance from home.

Regarding Hypothesis 2 (functional solidarity), we did not find direct support that intergenerational instrumental support—by way of financial assistance—was related to parent-child distance. However, individuals with children remained closer to home ($b = -0.47$, $p < 0.05$), which might reflect young adults' need for parental support with childcare.

In partial support of Hypothesis 3, the results in Model 1.2 indicate that associational solidarity was associated with proximity to the parental home. On average, those who engaged in more activities with their mother at the beginning of the observation interval stayed closer to the parental home when they became independent ($b = -0.23$, $p < 0.001$). Again, the same results did not hold for father-child associational solidarity.

One measure of parental SES—having at least one college-educated parent—was associated with moving farther away from home ($p < 0.001$). Young adults with higher levels of education also went farther ($b = 0.35$, $p < 0.001$). Young adults who left a single parent or stepparent household moved farther than those who moved from an intact family household ($b = 0.52$, $p < 0.001$).

4.2.2 | Returning home

We did not find support for our hypothesis regarding returns to the parental home (Hypothesis 4). There was no observed direct

TABLE 2 Sample characteristics for Models 1 and 2: *M* (SD) or %

	Dependent young adults	Independent young adults
Dependent variables		
Distance from parents ₂₀₀₇₋₂₀₁₅	195.4 (432.9)	179.4 (414.3)
Returned to the parental home ₂₀₀₉₋₂₀₁₅	-	12.2%
Individual-level characteristics		
Age	21.0 (2.2)	22.9 (2.4)
Female	55.6%	60.0%
Race/ethnicity		
White	54.7%	50.3%
Black	35.4%	37.6%
Hispanic	2.5%	2.2%
Other	7.5%	9.9%
Renter	-	81.1%
Income logged	6.4 (4.0)	6.0 (4.6)
General health (range: 1-5)	3.7 (0.9)	3.8 (0.9)
Marital status		
Single	76.3%	49.9%
Cohabiting	18.4%	29.0%
Married	5.3%	21.2%
Has children	18.7%	39.4%
Employed	69.6%	72.5%
Education	2.8 (0.8)	2.9 (0.9)
Parent-level characteristics		
Single or step-parent household	47.4%	54.9%
Parent college degree	36.6%	29.5%
Parent homeowner	69.0%	65.2%
Parent in poor health	3.3%	6.7%
Parent income logged	11.0 (1.0)	10.8 (1.1)
Geographic and temporal context		
Urban (range: 1-9)	6.5 (2.4)	6.8 (2.4)
Region		
Northeast	13.2%	10.6%
North Central/Midwest	26.7%	25.3%
South	41.4%	45.5%
West	18.7%	18.6%
Recession move	31.8%	34.3%
Intergenerational solidarity		
Financial assistance (range: 0-5)	1.2 (1.3)	0.6 (1.0)
Mother-child closeness (range: 0-7)	4.7 (1.5)	4.6 (1.7)
Father-child closeness (range: 0-7)	3.1 (1.5)	3.3 (1.7)
Activities with mother (range: 1-6)	3.8 (1.4)	-
Activities with father (range: 1-6)	3.0 (1.6)	-
<i>N</i> (Person-years for Model 2)	975	1,659

Note: Unweighted and unimputed data. For Model 1, time-varying summary statistics were measured the survey wave prior to the young adult establishing residential independence. For Model 2, summary statistics reflect averages across person-observations.

TABLE 3 OLS regression model for young adults' initial distance from the parental home ($N = 975$)

	1.1	1.2
Individual-level characteristics		
Age	0.04	0.04
Female	-0.07	-0.01
Race/ethnicity		
White (reference)		
Black	-0.26	-0.41
Hispanic	-0.24	-0.26
Other	0.08	0.09
Income (logged)	-0.02	-0.02
General health	0.10	0.10
Marital status		
Single (reference)		
Cohabiting	0.05	-0.05
Married	0.22	0.21
Has children	-0.47*	-0.38*
Education	0.35***	0.34***
Employed	-0.23	-0.22
Parent-level characteristics		
Single or step-parent household	0.52***	0.43***
Parent college degree	0.84***	0.75***
Parent homeowner(s)	0.22	0.18
Parent in poor health	-0.31	-0.35
Parent income (logged)	-0.04	-0.04
Geographic and temporal context		
Urbanicity	-0.04	-0.04
Region		
Northeast (reference)		
North Central/Midwest	-0.12	-0.16
South	0.12	0.09
West	0.23	0.22
Recession move	0.17	0.14
Intergenerational solidarity		
Financial assistance	0.07	0.05
Mother-child closeness	-0.17***	-
Father-child closeness	0.05	-
Activities with mother	-	-0.26***
Activities with father	-	-0.03
Constant	1.41	2.07
Adjusted R^2	0.14	0.15

Note: Independent variables were measured in the wave prior to the young adult establishing residential independence.

* $p < 0.05$.

** $p < 0.01$.

*** $p < 0.001$.

relationship between move distance and returning home (Table 4). However, a close mother-child relationship was associated with an increased likelihood of moving back into the parental home ($b = 0.14$, $p < 0.01$). Additionally, several other control variables were significantly associated with returning, home reflecting heterogeneity in the pathways to independent adulthood.

We found partial support for our fifth hypothesis, regarding the moderating effect of parent-child emotional closeness on the relationship between intergenerational proximity and returning home. In results not shown, the interaction term between closeness to father and parent-child distance was not significant. Moreover, since mother-child closeness was the only significant direct effect for intergenerational solidarity in Model 2.1, Model 2.2 presents the results of an interaction term between distance to the parental home and mother-child closeness. Along with a significant and negative direct effect of distance ($b = -0.29$, $p < 0.01$), the interaction term was positive ($b = 0.06$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that distance moderated the relationship between mother-child emotional closeness and returning to the parental home. In particular, distance was an obstacle to returning home when the mother-child relationship was not a close one.

Regarding control variables in both models, older respondents were less likely to return home than younger ones ($p < 0.01$) and renters were more likely to do so ($p < 0.05$). When compared with unmarried non-cohabitators, married young adults ($p < 0.01$) were less likely to return to the parental home, along with young adults who had obtained higher levels of education ($p < 0.05$). During the recession, young adults were more likely to return home ($p < 0.05$).

4.3 | Sensitivity analyses

Since young adults are not equally likely to move out of the parental home, we used Heckman correction for the first model (predicting distance). Consistent with earlier findings on the topic (Gillespie & Treas, 2017), the rho estimate—the correlation between the error terms of the selection and outcome equations—was not significant ($p = 0.99$) and the results stayed mostly the same. This suggests that there was no observed selection and that a standard regression model was appropriate. For the second analysis, for consistency with the dependent variable in the first analysis, we explored the relationship between the initial distance from parents (rather than the time-varying version of distance) and the probability of returning home; the null results remained the same.

Lastly, given the limitations of using tract centroids, we tried different measures for departures from and returns to the parental home that were available in the TAS and have been used in recent research on the topic (Lei & South, 2016; South & Lei, 2015). We used young adults' reports at each wave about the place where they lived most of the time during the previous fall and winter, which included their parents' home (coresidence) and other living arrangements (independence). Although the sample size was reduced using this approach, the results were similar to those using geocode data and

TABLE 4 Discrete time event history analysis for returns to the parental home ($N = 1,659$)

	2.1	2.2
Individual-level characteristics		
Age	-0.10**	-0.09**
Female	-0.29	-0.30
Race/ethnicity		
White (reference)		
Black	-0.09	0.07
Hispanic	0.59	0.60
Other	-0.06	-0.07
Renter	0.64*	0.69**
Income (logged)	-0.01	0.01
General health	-0.11	-0.09
Marital status		
Single (reference)		
Cohabiting	-0.13	-0.14
Married	-0.78**	-0.78**
Has children	0.09	0.06
Education	-0.24*	-0.23*
Employed	-0.28	-0.28
Parent-level characteristics		
Single or step-parent household	-0.06	-0.05
Parent college degree	-0.03	-0.03
Parent homeowner	0.29	-0.33
Parent in poor health	-0.25	-0.20
Parent income (logged)	-0.10	0.12
Geographic and temporal context		
Urbanicity	0.02	0.03
Region		
Northeast (reference)		
North Central/Midwest	-0.31	-0.27
South	-0.19	-0.13
West	-0.28	-0.23
Recession move	0.32*	0.32*
Intergenerational solidarity		
Independence distance (logged)	-0.02	-0.29**
Financial assistance	0.02	0.03
Mother-child closeness	0.14**	0.01
Father-child closeness	-0.07	-0.07
Interaction term		
Independence distance \times Mother-child closeness	-	0.06**
N (person-years)	1,659	

* $p < 0.05$.** $p < 0.01$.*** $p < 0.001$.

household identification numbers to determine whether young adults had become independent or returned home.

5 | DISCUSSION

Establishing residential independence is widely accepted to be a major “turning point” in the transition to adulthood. Along with it comes an increase in autonomy, including economic independence and participation in housing and labour markets. However, in the past two decades, the period of parent-child coresidence and economic dependence have become protracted, reflecting greater heterogeneity in young adults' lived experiences and variability in their pathways to adulthood than experienced in previous generations. A number of multidimensional factors bear on this process that operate on different levels, from individual to household and social and historical.

Despite decades of research on the *timing* on the departure from the parental home, very little is known about the distance young adults go when they transition to independence. Drawing on longitudinal data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics Transition to Adulthood supplement, we explored factors associated with the distance young adults move when they initially transition to independence. In particular, we assessed whether and how several dimensions of intergenerational solidarity were associated with distance out of the parental home.

Broadly, we argued that geographic proximity is not merely an exogenous determinant of intergenerational contacts, affection, and instrumental support. Rather, proximity might well be an outcome influenced by other dimensions of the intergenerational relationship. Additionally, to assess the “reversibility” of the transition to adulthood after youth establish residential independence, we explored whether subsequent distances between young adults and their parents were associated with eventual returns to the parental home.

5.1 | Distance of the departure from the parental home

We found partial support for our first hypothesis—that affective solidarity (parent-child emotional closeness) would be negatively associated with young adults' distance to parents in the transition to residential independence. The results indicate that emotional closeness to mothers is associated with living closer to the parental sphere. Thus, it appears that emotional solidarity impacts not only the timing that young adults leave home (Gillespie, 2020) but also, to some extent, how far they go when they establish residential independence.

We found only mixed support for our second hypothesis—that parent resources and support would be associated with distance. Although there was no observed relationship between financial assistance and distance, there was heterogeneity in young adults' moving behaviour. In particular, and consistent with the linked lives tenet of the life course perspective, having children mattered for young adults' distance out of the parental home. This might be a reflection of the

need for parental support with childcare. However, it could also reflect a stronger overall orientation toward family.

The findings partially supported our third hypothesis—that associational solidarity would be related to remaining closer to home. Engaging in more activities with parents prior to leaving was associated with remaining closer to home, particularly for children and their mothers. This finding highlights the importance of parents as a form of location-specific capital (DaVanzo, 1981) that ties people to a specific place, increasing the costs of moving away. Engaging in activities reflects the strength of these location-specific family ties, indicating potentially greater costs if the ties are broken. In addition, parents and children who engage in common activities might be more familistic, emphasising strong family ties and responsibilities (Bostean & Gillespie, 2018). Youth with familistic, or collectivist, beliefs might be more likely to choose a nearby location upon leaving the parental home.

5.2 | Returning home

In our second set of analyses, examining returns to the parental home, we did not show support for our fourth hypothesis. These null results for the direct effect of distance on returning home are nevertheless interesting. One possible explanation ties to contingency theory. Within contingency theory (Eggebeen & Davey, 1998), parents and grown children provide assistance to one another in response to specific needs. This perspective argues that intergenerational relationships are adaptive and parents will be responsive to difficult life circumstances. In this case, returning home might transcend distance when it is triggered by necessity, such as housing issues, financial need, and separation or divorce (Fingerman, Miller, Birditt & Zarit, 2009; Smits, 2010; Swartz, Kim, Uno, Mortimer & O'Brien, 2011). We find some support for this notion since marital status and education as well as the recession were indeed associated with returns home.

Building on this idea, the moderating effect of distance on the relationship between parent-child closeness and returning home suggests that when the parent-child relationship is emotionally close, distance is not an obstacle to returning home. Thus, the benefits of returning home likely surpass the difficulty of a long-distance move, whereas the same does not hold for those with mother-child relationships that are not close.

5.3 | Limitations and directions for future research

Our data and analyses have several important limitations that must be noted. First, the use of 2-year intervals might miss departures from and returns to the parental home that occur between PSID waves. For instance, if an individual moved out of the parental home in 2010 but returned before 2011, they will not have been counted as having moved out of the parental home or established independence. Second, because the TAS interviews often occurred several months

after the main PSID interviews, measures taken at the TAS may not reflect the characteristics of young adults when they established independent living (which was determined in the main PSID interview). For instance, their marital status and college enrolment status could have changed during these few months. Third, we have only approximated the distance of young adults who settled very close to the parental home—this is obviously a very important limitation in a study of geographic distance between parents and children. However, we were conservative in our approximations and used all available data to determine whether and when the young adult lived away from home but remained nearby.

Fourth, although some have examined how intergenerational cohesion impacts changes in parent and child convergence and divergence (e.g., Silverstein, 1995), in the geocoded data, we were unable to ascertain whether or how far parents moved within this period. Therefore, it might be that the parents moved away from their children (i.e., if a young adult moved out and remained nearby but their parents subsequently moved farther away). However, research has consistently shown that older people are far less likely to move than young adults (Bernard, Bell & Charles-Edwards, 2014; Gillespie, 2017). We do not have information on in-laws as a draw for married young adults' distance from their own parents. It would certainly be an interesting endeavour to explore whether a close relationship between one's partner and *the partner's* parents overrides a poor relationship between an individual and their own parents.

6 | CONCLUSION

This study provides some support for a deeper investigation of transitions to residential independence and returning to the parental home. While some of our results were inconsistent with our expectations, we did find support for our general claim that intergenerational solidarity is associated with proximity between generations—in this case, the distance young adults move from the parental home, although some (i.e., functional solidarity) were less salient than others.

Moreover, distance from the parental home was not associated with returning for young adults who were close to their mother, but the parent-child relationship did deter home returning for those who had poor mother-child relationships. And young adults' emotional closeness to their mothers was associated with a higher likelihood of returning home. These findings provide insight into how intergenerational solidarity is associated with young adults' transition to independence, and they also lend support to the idea that family relationships play an important role in migration behaviours among young adults.

Additional findings were mostly consistent with expectations based on previous theory and research and underscore the heterogeneity in young adults' experiences and the importance of life events and linked lives. These findings further highlight the complexity of establishing independence, moving back home, and the ongoing complexities in the pathways to adulthood. As more complexity comes to

bear on the way young people navigate becoming independent adults, our findings point up the need for a more thorough investigation of how intergenerational solidarity fits into the range of factors impacting the transition to adulthood.

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ENDNOTES

¹ For example, if the family of a TAS-aged young adult moved away from home to go to college, they are rarely considered their own family unit, even if they live in their own apartment and have a job, as it is very likely they will move back in with their parent(s) after the school year is over. On the other hand, if a young adult moved out and is working full time, the PSID is likely to interview them as their own economic unit.

² Specifically, we used the distance from both parents if the young adult resided with their biological mother and father at t and did not live with either parent at $t + 2$. If the young adult still lived with either parent at $t + 2$, we did not calculate a distance for the transition to independence, as it would not mark residential independence since the distance could also reflect the departure of one parent. If the respondent lived with their mother but not their father at t , we calculated the distance from the mother's household at $t + 2$ if they did not transition to coresidence with their father. Similarly, if the youth lived with their father but not their mother at t , we calculated the distance from their father at $t + 2$ if they did not transition into coresidence with their mother.

³ The married category included all married respondents (whether they were living with their spouse or not). The "single" classification refers to respondents who were neither married nor cohabiting.

⁴ The percentage of young adults who were married/cohabiting but still considered a member of parents' household may seem high. This could be because their marital status was measured in the TAS, which took place several months after the main PSID, when their residential status was determined. Respondents could have lived with parents during the main PSID interview and transitioned into cohabitation/marriage by the time that they responded to the TAS interview a few months later. This is also a selective sample that includes only the (2-year) person-periods by the end of which young adults transitioned into independent households. Thus, the cohabiting and married young adults could have lived with parents temporarily and moved out by the next wave.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information may be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

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