



Solidarity Typologies in Dynamics Between Portuguese Emigrants and Their Parents

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Received: 3 July 2023 / Revised: 6 October 2023 / Accepted: 6 October 2023
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Abstract

Motivations for migratory movements tend to be contextualised at an individual level and refer to opportunities related to the country of destination. In the Portuguese context, this view is increasingly limited when we analyse the emigration of young adults since this process directly involves family figures in the country of origin, as they tend to be the first source of support. This paper aims to explore the dimensions of intergenerational solidarity, analysing conflict as transversal dimension and the presence of ambivalence, for a proposal of behaviour typologies in Portuguese transnational families. Using a qualitative approach, young Portuguese adults who emigrated in the European space and Schengen area ($N=22$) were interviewed addressing questions about their migratory projects, as well as their dynamics with their parents in Portugal. A thematic analysis was carried out with the support of the *NVivo* software. The results indicate four behaviour typologies: (1) high cohesion and dependence, (2) full solidarity tested with resilience, (3) affective and functional solidarities, with normative and value divergences, and (4) no solidarity and irreconcilable differences. The findings suggest the impact of intergenerational norms and values, as they may be at the origin of communicational patterns that increase well-being and resilience in migration projects.

Keywords Intergenerational solidarity · Typologies · Transnational families · Portuguese emigration · Cross-cultural psychology

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Introduction

Portugal has a large proportion of emigrants, with increasingly diversified and qualified profiles (Pires et al., 2022). There have been more frequent studies on this phenomenon of *Brain Escape*—young adults who find in emigration a form of autonomisation (Gomes et al., 2015). Although these new motivations for migratory movements may reframe the migration process in eminently individual needs and related to opportunities in the destination country, it is limitative to situate this process only in individual contexts. The psychosocial impact of this process involves the household of origin in Portugal, since the family tends to be the first source of social support in migration support (Coimbra & Mendonça, 2013; Coimbra et al., 2013), and should be considered in a multisystemic context (Gomes et al., 2015; Rodrigues, 2013).

Framed by the importance of psychosocial factors of the experience and taking into account the importance of the family role in the migratory reality, we intend to analyse the patterns of family intergenerational solidarity, specifically bridging a deficit pointed out in the literature on intergenerational family support (Mendonça & Fontaine, 2013; Saraceno, 2008).

Families are conceptualised in the literature as networks of interdependent relationships, characterised by behavioural and emotional dimensions that are associated with the interaction and mutual support between elements of different generations (e.g. grandparents, parents and children) (Bengston & Mangen, 1988; Lowenstein, 2007). The intergenerational solidarity (IS) model represents an effort to conceive family relationships in adulthood and develop a theory about the differences between dyads of parent-adult child figures in these relationships.

First proposed in the 1970s, it was a taxonomy to describe feelings, behaviours and attitudes in family relationships (Roberts & Bengston, 1990), which emerged and has continued through the initiative of Bengston and his various collaborators until today (e.g. Bengston & Oyama, 2007; Bengston et al., 2002, 2003), with the purpose of intervening in the resolution of different needs throughout the life cycle of elements of different generations. The IS model (Bengston & Oyama, 2007) have six dimensions: (a) affectual, which refers to affective ties; (b) associative: how the duration and frequency of contact between generations influence the dynamics; (c) consensual: if opinions, values and orientations between generations are shared; (d) functional: referring to material support or daily tasks; (e) normative: referring to the perception of support obligations in the family; and (f) structural: how geographical proximity influences contact. Later the conflict dimension was added (Lowenstein, 2007).

Although this literature hints at how migration influences the ties between migrants and their parents, the available evidence still focuses mostly on families residing in the same country and largely adopts the parent's perspective. Living transnationally can be seen as a threat to family solidarity due to geographical distance (King & Lulle, 2016), and yet, detached relationships seem to be quite rare (Rooyackers et al., 2016).

Considering the specificity of transnational families, it stands out as an important construct to understand the essentiality of the dynamics in supporting the ageing of elderly relatives and the autonomisation of young adults, influencing the internal and external adjustment, promoting well-being in different situations of vulnerability, where emigration is no exception (Bengston & Oyama, 2007). However, families are perceived as a territory in which there are close emotional relationships and conflicting and ambivalent relationships (Antonucci et al., 2007; Lowenstein, 2007). These various elements introduce a certain

degree of instability in interpersonal relationships and make us understand the multiplicity of family dynamics (Phillipson, 2003).

It seems to be missing, on the one hand, to consider intergenerational solidarity in transnational contexts and, on the other hand, to consider the wide network of meanings and expectations, since the lack of qualitative studies on the subject is almost unanimously mentioned in the literature. It is also necessary to consider conflict as a transversal and natural dimension of families, exploring its destructive or constructive character and a proposal of typologies of intergenerational solidarity.

Approaches that Focus on Typologies to Explain Solidarity

More frequent studies attempt to intersect data from the various dimensions of the intergenerational solidarity model (Bengston & Oyama, 2007; Lowenstein, 2007) into typologies, to show the complexity of relationships and how the presence/absence of dimensions is reflected in increased or decreased intimacy and negotiation in relationships (Baykara-Krumme & Fokkema, 2019).

Silverstein and Bengston (1997) verified the presence of five types of relational behaviours aggregated into typologies, being (i) close and tight-knit, (ii) sociable, (iii) intimate but distant, (iv) obligatory and (v) detached. The model was considered to be too circumscribed to the USA cultural reality and was further developed by Guo et al. (2012). It was found that, in the presence of different cultural contexts and realities, it is important to consider sociodemographic variables, namely gender, age and marital status. Also, whether the support is ascending or descending in the family, not forgetting the resources and needs of each participant in transnational families: both migrants and residents in the country of origin (Baykara-Krumme & Fokkema, 2019; Guo et al., 2012), as they are vital to understand transitions throughout the life cycle and may interfere with the adaptation and resilience of family participants (Bordone & de Valk, 2016; Schenk & Dykstra, 2012). Thus, when analysing the directionality of the support, it was found that (Dykstra & Fokkema, 2011; Karpinska & Dykstra, 2018) when parental figures are female, there tends to be more descending solidarity, while male figures show more bidirectional or ascending patterns. The trend in the data varies according to age and health status, with the healthier people feeling more willing to provide support and the less healthy and older people feeling more willing to receive any support. It was also found that widowed or divorced people tend to interact more as caregivers.

All the data is cumulative and intersectional, also noting the importance of the presence of more or less family-centred culture: dynamics in southern Europe tend to be more interdependent than autonomous, the opposite is true in the north, but always stressing that transnational family dynamics are less evident in the attempt to create patterns (Glaser et al., 2004).

Thus, although the same typology is found to be present in the aggregation of IS dimensions, it is necessary to integrate the heterogeneity in which migration is experienced at the risk of decontextualising the typologies (Dykstra & Fokkema, 2011; Karpinska & Dykstra, 2018).

Baykara-Krumme and Fokkema (2019) developed a study on IS applied to transnational family contexts, having created a continuum between *full solidarity* and *autonomous*, mediated by IS typologies focused on material or advice/affective support (advice-oriented and material-oriented), highlighting that there is compatibility of relationship typifications, since.

“The full-solidarity and the autonomous types correspond with the tight-knit and the detached types in the typology of Silverstein and Bengston (1997) and the full-interdependence and independence types found by Rooyackers et al. (2014). Here adult non-co-resident children and their parents engage in either all or none of the contact and support dimensions in question, while both types are characterised by strong normative support to family obligations. Although these two types are common in solidarity typologies (Guo et al., 2012), not all analyses actually identify the full-solidarity type (Dykstra & Fokkema, 2011). By identifying this solidarity type, our data underline the important role of the family previously shown in research.” (p. 17)

Considering that at European level and integrating the family from the micro to the macro context the levels of solidarity are generally high, several authors refer to the importance of exploring the spatial contexts, along with the individual meanings of the perception of adaptation and integration (Baykara-Krumme, 2008; Dykstra & Fokkema, 2011), going beyond the classical analysis of dimensions, but rather connecting them to the experiential contexts of each individual migrant and/or resident, especially the specificities time and micro cultural context (Rooyackers et al., 2014).

Lüscher and Hoff (2013) also refer that it is necessary to reflect on the fact that intergenerational relationships inherently concentrate ambivalence, in an approach in which they explore typologies. They alert to the possible dual relationship between intergenerational solidarity vs. intergenerational ambivalence, since they refer that solidarity tends to “hide” psychological or sociological ambivalence, for the sake of family cohesion, and highlighting what is common in the various structures and changes throughout the life cycle.

To this end, Lüscher and Hoff (2013) propose a model that is divided into four dimensions in understanding family ambivalence, being (a) solidarity, which aims to underline cohesion in the family, with emphasis on the strengths of the intergenerational relationship; (b) emancipation, which means openly recognising ambivalence, in order to negotiate the relationship, as a way to preserve cohesion; (c) the state of captivity, in which the individual feels an inert victim of the family network, in ambivalence and without resolving the factors that are at its origin; finally (d) atomisation, in which tense, conflictive relationships develop, even after the separation of the family members. Later, they point out the importance of putting ambivalence on pause (e.g. if a family member emigrates, the tension is likely to reduce, but later on it finds a way to manifest itself), and it is relevant to study ways of reducing it for its regulation and negotiation so that it does not manifest itself at the most varied moments with innocuous “triggers” throughout the life cycle (Coimbra et al., 2013; Van Gaalen et al., 2010).

Finally, there is a need for studies on the European and intra-European migratory reality, since there are few studies on the aggregation of dimensions in IS typologies in this geopolitical context, in which there is free movement of goods, people and services, but different cultural identities (Rooyackers et al., 2014). In this migratory reality, there may be variation in state protection (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001), changing the perception of minority status, social policies or even divergence between the need for material vs. affective support (normative and affective solidarity). This variation may also intervene in the frequency, sharing and intensity of relationships (associative, structural, normative and consensual solidarity), and the conflict may vary and transversally alter their configuration (Albertini & Kohli, 2013; Senyüürd & Detzner, 2008).

In this paper, using a qualitative exploratory approach based on the intergenerational solidarity model (Bengston & Oyama, 2007), we will explore the dimensions of intergenerational solidarity, analysing conflict as a procedural and transversal dimension, exploring

meanings in the perception of young adults emigrants with parental figures in Portugal. It also allows us to explore specific aspects of this psychosocial context, which can contribute to an exploratory approach to the changing profiles of emigrants. Specifically, we pretend to contribute with a typology of behaviour in transnational intergenerational family solidarity with the Portuguese population, whose typological intersections may help in understanding and intervening in family dynamics, in order to increase the perception of families as multidimensional units (Barros, 2023).

Materials and Methods

Participants

The participants in the study were young Portuguese adult migrants ($N=22$). According to their self-identification, most of them were female ($n=17$) and some were male ($n=5$). Their ages ranged between 23 and 33 years ($M=28.90$; $SD=2.44$) and they had lived outside Portugal between 2 and 14 years ($M=4.81$; $SD=2.83$).

All of them were from Mainland Portugal and emigrated to European and Schengen area countries, with at least one parent residing in Portugal. Data were collected between the years 2018 and 2019.

Instruments

A script for individual semi-structured interviews was developed, which was previously applied and discussed with experts on the topic ($n=4$) and with people with identical profiles ($n=4$) to ensure the necessary precision and flexibility.

The interview guide integrated five main themes: (i) characterisation of the family; (ii) the migration process, experience, adaptation and future aspirations; (iii) family relations after migration, including affective and associative aspects; (iv) support networks and material aspects; and (v) normative and transmission of values. Before any interview, a brief sociodemographic questionnaire was applied and informed consent was signed.

Procedures and Data Analysis

The selection criteria focused on young Portuguese aged between 18 and 35, resident in another EU Member State for more than one year, with at least one parent resident in Portugal. A snowball sampling technique was used in collaboration with key actors to solicit participation. Contacts were made with several Portuguese communities abroad, parish councils/ municipalities in Portugal, the media, emigrant associations, and entities associated with the Diplomatic Institute. A website and social networks (data hidden for review) were designed to publicise the project and recruit participants.

In accordance with the American Psychological Association ethical code (2018) and with approval by the University Ethics Committee, all interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed and subsequently destroyed, with participants' names and sensitive data changed to ensure confidentiality.

The interviews lasted between 50 and 70 min, were recorded, transcribed *ad verbum* and anonymised. The narratives presented here use pseudonyms and a numerical identification after the letter *P* (participant). All the data was coded in *NVivo* software, using thematic

analysis to better understand the richness and potential of the narratives (Charmaz, 2006, 2008; Kuzel & Engel, 2001). The data were then analysed and organised using a framework matrix at the individual case level as a tool to map connections across different dimensions and conflicts of intergenerational solidarity. This allowed for an effective organisation of the similarities between the cases and included the perceptions that emerged during each participant's analysis (Averill, 2002; Kuzel & Engel, 2001). This achieved two main objectives: first, it allowed us to identify the ways in which conflict in one dimension impacted solidarity in other dimensions; and second, it allowed us to classify different combinations of solidarity across dimensions and form a typology.

Results

We constructed a typology by classifying the interview data into four relationship types, defined not only by the presence of similar solidarity patterns but by the presence/absence and specific impacts of conflict and ambivalence. The four relationship types are as follows.

Type One: High Cohesion and Dependence

This type of relationship pertains to around a fifth of the respondents and is characterised by high levels of affective solidarity and consensus, which coexist with low conflict and low ambivalence. Affective support is sustained through almost daily contact and regular encounters, as Joana (P17) describes in relation to her mother's daily telephone call:

"I don't feel it is a moment that I'm waiting for every day, because it happens every day, it is very natural, it is my mother: 'is everything okay? Did you already have dinner?'"

Material functional support is weak for this group and assumes a more affective than monetary nature including practices of transnational social care.

This group self-narrates the migration project as being temporally delimited. In fact, several respondents do not self-identify as migrants, testifying to the desire to remain anchored in Portugal rather than elsewhere. The aspiration to return is often related to future responsibilities such as providing care to ageing parents—demonstrating how strong norms of filial obligation can shape migration futures. This is often expressed in feelings of ambivalence towards the migration project as some of the interlocutors described feeling guilty for not being physically present in Portugal to support their family during difficult times. Patricia (P9) relates the experience of losing her grandmother:

"In the case of my grandmother, she was bedridden for a long time and I really feel it would have been good to be closer, but yes, it hurts more because you know that you are not giving support and help to the people who are there."

Given the finite nature of their migration project, new social networks are not a substitute for family relationships but rather complementary, with the absence of conflict seemingly enhancing levels of adaptation and social well-being. The following narrative provides some insight into the simultaneity that characterises life "here" and "there" and the intersections that emerge between both:

"I started to live in a shared house, we are six [...] it was like living with a family again [...], it doesn't replace it ... when I need my parents, I need my parents In the

first year I invited them to go to Portugal on vacation ... my parents were also here, they stayed here ... my parents do not speak English fluently... one of the ways of sharing that we have, the Portuguese, is food, so whenever my mother comes here she cooks for everyone and, even not understanding or speaking the same language, it ends up being a connection.” (Joana, P17)

Despite strong affective relationships extending to common values (normative and consensual solidarity), high levels of dependency can impinge on emotional well-being. Patricia (P9) describes the emotional costs of attachment to her parents and new mechanisms she is developing with the help of her boyfriend to cope with this,

“It is a great challenge and he helps me a lot [her Argentinian boyfriend], because he is much more disconnected, I am very attached, so anything at all and I would be crying or worried, but detachment is sometimes good, and he taught me that a lot ‘Your mother is living her life, so, no ... don’t overreact’.”

As such, this narrative also demonstrates the role of migration experiences and new relationships in the process of transitioning from dependence towards greater autonomy in family relationships. Little is known, however, regarding type 1’s capacity for conflict resolution and subsequent resilience, given that family relationships are not so much defined by the existence of conflict, but by the degree to which they manage to resolve it (Barthassat, 2014; Goeke-Morey et al., 2007).

Type Two: Full Solidarity Tested with Resilience

The distinctive feature of type 2, which represents almost half of the respondents, is that total solidarity across all dimensions coexists with conflict as the forces that structure family relationships. Given the fact the participants perceive freedom and security to express and incorporate divergent ideals, norms and values, the family bond naturally becomes more resilient and arguably more intimate than type 1. Conflict and ambivalence are freely expressed, and the core is less about whether there is conflict/ambivalence, and more about how it is dealt with.

The respondents perceive interaction with their parents as a constant stabilising force that reduces the uncertainties inherent in the migration process. Indeed, all dimensions of solidarity are elevated and lived intensely.

Family support of the migration project can be seen as a facilitator of adaptation and well-being in the country of destination, representing a safe source to support acculturation [15], but not in competition with it as this group is highly adapted. In this context, ambivalence in the relationship has a constructive nature as both parties struggle to create a space of respect for each other’s decisions. This is evident in Alice’s (P2) retelling of her parent figure reaction when she told her of the plan to emigrate:

“she wept with joy, wept with sorrow... but she supported me... supported me in my decision, she told me that I always had the possibility to come back, but that she wanted the best for me, she knew that from the moment I came here, that I would gain wings and... supported me!”

The foundational nature of the relationship, while reinforced in normative terms by clearly defined parent and child roles, is spliced with moments of conflict. Among this type, ambivalence arises most frequently in the affectual and consensual dimensions. In some instances, this caused a temporary breakdown in the relationship, which was

reinstated with a greater degree of autonomy on the part of the adult–child, as illustrated by Catarina’s experience (P10):

“Sometimes, a few moments of tension, especially with my mother ... I’ve gone four months without talking to my parents.... because of a big discussion that we had.... [now] I’m independent because I have my life, because I want to, when I go home or when I’m talking to my parents it’s a completely different situation than being under their roof and surviving on their account, basically.”

This is akin to the idea of constructive conflict defined in the literature as leading to resilience. In fact, according to studies on conflict, parental conflict behaviours can range from very destructive to constructive, such as the extent of the resolution of the conflict, which constitutes a spectrum from no resolution to full resolution (Barthassat, 2014; Goeke-Morey et al., 2007). Correspondingly, the impacts of parental conflicts on children’s emotions and behaviours are considered as a continuum from negative to positive.

In type 2, family relationships are necessarily positioned in the constructive and resilience pole, in which conflict results in the resolution of problematic issues, thus increasing the quality of relationships rather than harming them (Parrott & Bengston, 1999). Indeed, in type 2, it is common for contact to even intensify and sentiments to be articulated more frequently. The fact that it takes shape across digital means often results in upward functional support as the adult children help their parents adapt to new digital communication technologies.

Still, while these respondents alluded to the presence of a shared consensus on some aspects, especially relating to work ethics and interpersonal relationships, they experience rupture at both the consensual and normative level due to divergent values relating to same-sex marriages and accepted forms of career management—for example, parents fail to understand the affirmation of individual well-being, but rather hierarchical obedience at work. This example is evidence of an emotional regulation capacity to safeguard family well-being among this type.

Type Three: Affective and Functional Solidarity with Normative and Value Divergence

The distinctive characteristic of type 3 relationships is the absence of conflict from all solidarity dimensions except normative and consensual solidarity, where it is disruptive to the extent that it completely corrodes the IS dimension. This implies that there is little negotiation when it comes to family values, norms and obligations. Like type one, association, affect and function are conflict-free and are a source of support for respondents, including almost daily contact, physical gatherings for celebrations and help with day-to-day aspects as Eduarda (P3) describes below:

“If my father knows that I have an important task to deliver on a particular day, he is sweet, he will pass the day sending me messages, to encourage me or wish me luck, it’s the same thing with my mum, and me to them.”

Cleavages are created that enable frequent and positive contact in the midst of deep-seated conflict. One of the starkest examples is the avoidance measures that Rodrigo (P2) adopts to hide his sexuality from his parents. In this particular case, migration is a strategy that enables continuity of affective and associational dimensions as it provides the means with which to “live another life” without disrupting parental expectations:

“Having to omit my sexuality when I am in Portugal, I am basically living another life [...] all my friends know about my sexuality, but the same is not true of my family [...] everything that goes on in my life at the affective level is very important to me. [...] I don't think about it when I'm in Portugal because I visit for a short time”.

Other respondents also described feeling as though their parents disrespected their individuality and identity. For example, one migrant described his father's tendency to be authoritative about his career, which results in a withdrawal from sharing. Others felt a rift with their parents due to a lack of convergence on global ideas such as tolerance and respect for diversity. In cases such as these, ambivalence and conflict are managed through avoidance resulting in the absence of negotiation and the adoption of a cleavage mechanism. This mechanism of coping with conflict and ambivalence serves to protect the dimensions of affection and association, which become more complex. In many ways, migration and the distance it entails provide an interface to relieve ambivalence. Moreover, new communication technologies enable easier control of the emotional content or level of exposure involved with interactions between adult children and their parents, as respondents attempt to balance life in the migration destination while simultaneously compensating the family back home.

In contrast with type 1, type 3 respondents do not have return aspirations, which likely results from the emancipatory function that migration plays in the self-realisation of the respondents. As migration is simultaneously an identity project, which promotes well-being, these respondents tend to be well integrated in international or diasporic communities in the places they live, as Eduarda (P3) describes in her own words:

“I already have a small network of people that I can trust, with whom I count, I live daily, who I feel that they care for me, who help me when it is necessary, and whom I also help daily, we keep each other company [...] we make different plans, we have many tastes in common and it is a very friendly and very multicultural network.”

This narrative would suggest ambivalence does not have a negative relationship with adaptation and social well-being. The cleavage mechanism appears to be protective of both the parental affective relationship and well-being and social adaptation in the destination. As such, conflict, and consequent cleavage, varies and alters across the configuration of associative, affective, normative and consensual solidarity, intervening differently in the frequency, sharing and intensity of relationships.

Type Four: No Solidarity and Irreconcilable Differences

This type is the least frequent relationship form, accounting for only three of the respondents. It is characterised by the absence or reduced expression of solidarity. Moreover, it is aligned with the autonomous relationship type as described by Baykara-Krumme and Fokkema (2019), which they define as having very low probability of intergenerational solidarity across all dimensions with very low cohesion.

Filial relations are conflict-ridden, or in one instance completely disintegrated, as ambivalence was present between wanting to negotiate family norms and values, that is, normative solidarity, but without actually having the space to do so. This led to confinement of family relations with siblings or others from the same generation. Mariana's (P6) description of the relationship with her mother illustrates the destructive nature of the conflict:

“It is always received as a giant attack, even I start to doubt what I am saying as I see her and it is as if I am attacking her in every situation... if we have type of argument in the morning then it as tough everything is received as a criticism... in silence...”

The expression of associative and structural solidarity, while facilitated by communication technologies, is limited to mechanic parent–child obligations (conflictual normative solidarity), as shared by Guilherme (P20):

“I call directly to my mother at least daily... just to say everything is ok, I’m alive, I haven’t been in an accident, there hasn’t been an attack... and every so often I talk to my father, but it is mostly with my mother just to give a tick...”

The values and norms are not negotiated as differences are general perceived as irreconcilable, as Guilherme’s (P20) experience suggests:

“They got used to it because I told them soon: I will not change, this is who I am! Full stop! So it’s like it, or they like it or they don’t like it, that’s how I was even educated, so from a certain point on they just accept.”

In this relationship type, the lack of negotiation leads to family devaluation, disinvestment and sometimes rupture. There is evidence of avoidance and an extreme reduction of contact, without an affective language present or dialogue. As evidenced by Fingerman et al. in a previews study (Fingerman et al., 2004, 2008), intense negative feelings can fail to trigger ambivalence, since high levels of conflict and intense negative feelings can lead to a reconceptualisation of the relationship, resulting in a perception that it is no longer close, promoting the distance between its elements. In fact, ambivalence and destructive conflict typically seem to promote a malaise attested to by Mariana’s (P16) depiction of giving up: “She has an idea, it is hers, I have mine and I try to impose it and she won’t let me, so it is like this then, I don’t try to impose!”.

The decisions of these respondents to withdraw from the relationship with their parents actually led to increased well-being facilitated by the distancing effect of migration, as Maria (P15) puts in her own words:

“Through drawing way and with the distance, I realized that, really, I wanted to decide my own limits and that I didn’t have to accept what they wanted me to do. [...] taking stock I think it helped to see people from other cultures, who live life differently and have different priorities.”

The transference of normative and consensual solidarity to other same-generation family members or an entirely new family formed in the migration destination acts as a coping mechanism, while relationship dynamics with parents are reduced to obligations. Thus, ambivalence and conflict do not result in a concomitant decrease in social well-being, since affective investment is directed to other non-family sources and may even enhance the migratory experience.

Discussion

This study reveals important contents on intergenerational family solidarity in a transnational context, as it explores the perceptions of adult children about their relationship with their parental figures, potentially understanding the *continuum* between solidarity-ambivalence-conflict in a migratory context. Furthermore, it allowed establishing a parallel between the

empirical data and the literature, especially the most recent literature that tries to establish patterns/typologies in this research area.

Understand and Connect Typologies

Although at supposedly distant poles, it is important to indicate the similarities in the identification of the relationship types we term *high cohesion and dependence (type one)* and *no solidarity and irreconcilable differences (type four)*. In the former strong emotional family bonds were developed and coexisted in the context of high levels of adaptation to the destination country and low levels of ambivalence and conflict. On the one hand, this contradicts the literature that suggests intimate relations due to intense feelings generate more ambivalence (Fingerman et al., 2004, 2008). Yet, on the other hand, it reiterates findings that show relationships with a high level of affective solidarity and consensual tend to coexist with low conflict and low ambivalence, even if countries differ in norms and societal rules (Lowenstein, 2007). Intense acculturation and situational adaptation do not have to disrupt solidarity ties and can even increase family cohesion (de Haas, 2010).

The latter, *no solidarity and irreconcilable differences (type 4)*, corresponds with the “autonomous” type proposed by Baykara-Krumme and Fokkema(2019), the “detached” type by Silverstein and Bengston (1997), and the “independence” type by Rooyackers et al. (2014). Although this type is the least expressive in the number of participants, it is important to highlight that in research on adult children and their parents do not engage in any of the dimensions of contact and support, and even normative support to family obligations is absent, in agreement with “detached” type described as having low commitment to norms of filial obligation (Silverstein & Bengston, 1997). Nonetheless, this type seems to coexist with successful integration in the destination country, along with a high perception of ambivalence and conflict towards their families. The very low affective intergenerational solidarity appears to be indicative of a process of disinvestment suggesting that the family dynamic has become secondary in their lives. The data demonstrate the presence of high ambivalence, and of destructive conflict, capable of undermining all forms of solidarity in this pattern. At first glance, this might be interpreted as being evidence that acculturation may create difficulties (Phinney & Vedder, 2006). However, the significant levels of conflict and ambivalence point to a connection between migration and a high frequency of previous detached ties. Certainly, the data showed that the desire to escape destructive or inhibitive family relations acted as a migration driver. This also explains high levels of adaptation among this pattern as migration provides room for independence.

A very high solidarity pattern was identified only in *full solidarity tested with resilience (type 2)*. This novel very high solidarity type is a result of the addition of conflict as a transversal dimension and represents almost half of the interlocutors in the study. It sheds light on the constructive role that conflict can play in transnational families. The resilience created by addressing ambivalence results in higher levels of well-being and solidarity across dimensions (Barthassat, 2014; Goeke-Morey et al., 2007; Parrott & Bengston, 1999).

Potentially, the family network affectively supports the migration project and can be seen as a facilitator of adaptation and social well-being in the destination country, and this is a secure resource in the face of acculturation challenges (de Haas, 2010; Rooyackers et al., 2016). However, the observed indicators documented regarding family connectedness and cohesion in type 2 failed to be fully expressive. Still, it seems to resemble that found by some authors in the literature. Baykara-Krumme and Fokkema (2019) describe this type as

“total solidarity”, with high family cohesion. It is characterised by a high probability of contact, more frequent than weekly and equal high probability in all indicators of solidarity and support. This type may also correspond to “tight-knit” in Silverstein and Bengston’s (1997) typology and to “full-interdependence” found by Rooyackers et al. (2014).

Finally, *affective and functional solidarity with normative and value divergence (type 3)* could be considered a gradient of type 1 (*high cohesion and dependence*), if the focus of attention is placed on the conflict. In fact, an aspect that seems striking is the fact that all dimensions reveal an absence of conflict, with only those dimensions in which this conflict exists and shows itself to be disturbing being negatively affected, being capable of corrupting the dimension of solidarity to which it is attached, namely the one related to the negotiation of values, principles, and family norms and obligations (affecting normative and consensual solidarity).

If in type 1 there were reservations about how the family dealt with confrontation and ambivalence, in the face of them, here it seems clearer that the form of resolution, given the capacity to deal with the conflict (too destructive), will be a cleavage mechanism. Curiously, this coping strategy with conflict and ambivalence may make it possible to keep other dimensions of solidarity relatively intact, namely by endowing associative solidarity with a more complex meaning than the search for proximity. Intermittent contact and closeness/ departure from the relationship may happen in order to mitigate the ambivalence felt. Even digital ways of communication can be a new form of contact that maintains a disapproximated closeness, which allows one to live always in a state of ambivalence (Fingerman et al., 2004, 2008), managing through it some discomfort of being in another context, with another life, and, at the same time, trying to compensate the family, as seen in general family ambivalence behaviours that we discussed earlier (Van Gaalen et al., 2010).

Still, in this type 3 *affective and functional solidarity with normative and value divergence*, it is evident through the narratives analysed that the origin of ambivalence and conflict comes from the need to have autonomy and differentiation from the family paradigm in terms of values, rules and obligations (Fingerman et al., 2004, 2008). In some cases, we cannot disregard the fact that the migration process has potentiated this through exposure to new social norms and values, exacerbating potential divergences. This is one of the particularities to consider in transnational families (King & Lulle, 2016): the cross-cultural context can potentiate individual well-being and, consequently, individual mechanisms that lead to more resilience.

Implications for Practice

Transnational families are influenced by individual, cultural and social factors. The typologies within the intergenerational solidarity model (Baykara-Krumme & Fokkema, 2019) allow practitioners to consider these factors and tailor interventions accordingly. Cultural sensitivity becomes crucial in recognising and respecting diverse cultural values and expectations (Bordone & de Valk, 2016; Schenk & Dykstra, 2012). By incorporating cultural perspectives and adapting interventions, practitioners can have a sensitive approach and better support the unique needs of these individuals and families.

Each family’s unique circumstances, cultural background, and values must be considered when designing interventions and diverse social politics. Practitioners should engage in ongoing assessment and dialogue with families and communities to identify their specific needs, goals, and resources.

In this study we have identified typologies that are not intended to be (statistically) representative, but rather to alert to the impact of expectations, narratives and perceptions on how these parental/generational dynamics can be understood in adulthood and, equally important, the emphasis that needs to be placed on understanding the new motivations for migration and how these change the dynamics of the transnational family to which they are linked (Gomes et al., 2015). Nevertheless, the study of Portuguese reality allows us to understand how the behaviour of these young adults can be integrated into transnational families that are based on a very familistic context (Coimbra & Mendonça, 2013).

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Study

The study of the perceptions of people who emigrate, be it about themselves, their family or the destination environment where they live, may have limited our access to more macro-level and sociological variables that point to a multiplicity of factors that can help to better understand the narratives and typologies found. Also in this sense, research would benefit from knowing these same realities, including the perspective of other family members in the country of origin, as well as of social actors in the host country. For all these reasons, it is important to follow up studies that deal with the same reality of intergenerational solidarity in Portuguese transnational families, as they represent an exploratory effort that will have an impact on intervention and research.

Nevertheless, the importance of having a more intersectional perspective that considers gender issues, deepening of the down/upward support and the perception of how digital forms in the post-COVID have accentuated dynamics and the consequent individual and collective resilience is stressed (Walsh, 2020).

Conclusions

The heterogeneity of the patterns and respective typologies identified in young adult emigrants illustrates the heterogeneous forms that migration impresses in transnational family relationships. While the host country context plays an essential role in the integration process, the evidence suggests that intergenerational relationships between parents and adult children in a transnational context depend on the dynamics developed in response to the presence, intensity and degree of conflict negotiation and ambivalence.

In general, some dimensions of intergenerational solidarity appear to be more permeable to coexist with ambivalence and conflict, such as consensual and normative solidarity. But how their presence interacts with the other dimensions of solidarity depends on their internal negotiation, which is capable of triggering various interactions/patterns that affect all dimensions of connection between the two generations. For example, it can intensify conflict in all dimensions (e.g. *no solidarity and irreconcilable differences*) or be devalued and used to protect all other dimensions (e.g. *affective and functional solidarity with normative and value divergence*).

The affectual dimension of relationships—mainly, satisfaction with affective ties, which will also drive further dynamics—is presented as crucial, although not systematically discussed, since it can be a starting point for conflict and ambivalence mediation in relationships, driving all the others in the aggregation of dimensions of the IS into typologies.

The study also points to the fact that solidarity and resilient relationships can coexist with an integration process without threatening existing cohesion and emotional support.

Moreover, the high frequency of contacts and the strong commitment to transnational ties are elements that reinforce cohesion and may increase the relational and psychological competencies of the family and individuals, bringing even more intimacy (e.g. *full solidarity tested with resilience* vs. another form of dynamics but with less individual autonomy—*high cohesion and dependence*).

The analysis of ambivalence and conflict enriches our understanding of relational complexity in intergenerational solidarity issues, as it covers a broad *continuum*, from the ability to engage individuals in its negotiation and resolution to disengagement with parent-adult child relationships.

Acknowledgements To the participants in the study. To the research experts at the University of Lisbon who helped to reflect on the data.

Author Contribution Conceptualization, C.B., J.M., A.S.S.; methodology, C.B., J.M.; software, C.B.; validation and formal analysis, C.B., J.M., A.S.S.; writing—original draft preparation, C.B., J.M., A.S.S.; writing and editing, C.B.; supervision, J.M., A.S.S.; Review, I.A., E.M.; Consultancy on research methods and technical themes I.A.

Funding Open access funding provided by FCTIFCCN (b-on). Data collection during a Doctoral Grant from the Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia, under reference PD/BD/128345/2017. Elaboration of the article with a Post-Doctoral Fellowship from the Universidade Católica Portuguesa, with the support of PORTICUS, under reference GR-074770.

Availability of Data and Materials The datasets generated and analysed during the current study are not publicly available since they constitute an excerpt of research in a Doctoral Thesis [<http://hdl.handle.net/10451/50377>] with ethical protection of participants' interviews, but general data are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. It has to state that at this research the transcribed interviews are available in Portuguese.

Declarations

Ethical Approval and Consent to Participate In accordance with the ethical principles of research, the project was approved by the Specialised Committee on Deontology of the Faculty of Psychology of the University of Lisbon and also complies with the code of the American Psychological Association (2018). Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Competing Interests No interests of any kind apply, except for the dissemination of data with attention to social impact.

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