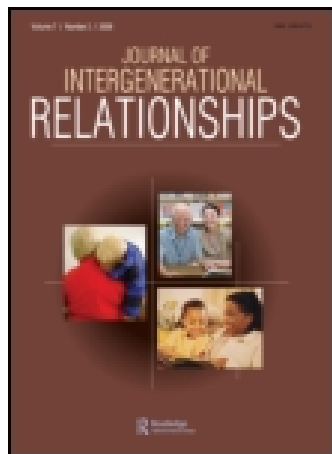


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Emotional Relations With Grandparents and Received Support: The Adolescent View

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Following concepts of solidarity and intergenerational ambivalence, the present study focuses on the perspectives of high school students (N = 155) aged 12 to 21 to describe their relationships to maternal and paternal grandparents with respect to (a) emotional quality and (b) grandparental support. Based on the frequency of positive and negative emotions, a classification approach is adopted to determine patterns of relationship quality. Parental lineage differences are found with regard to size and profile of clusters. Cluster comparisons regarding appraisals of received grandparental support (emotional, instrumental, material) indicate that support is significantly diminished if relations become disharmonious or detached.

KEYWORDS *maternal, paternal, grandparent–grandchild relations, adolescence, intergenerational solidarity, ambivalence*

INTRODUCTION

Demographic and social changes of the past years have modified family structures not only with respect to the nuclear family but also regarding relations between three and more generations. Due to increasing life expectancy and decreasing fertility rates, vertical family relations (between members of different generations) have become more common, while the size of each generation has diminished (Knipscheer, 1988; Uhlenberg & Kirby, 1998). Family members of different generations share more common lifetime; thus, not only the probability that grandparents are still alive at the birth of their

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grandchildren but also the likelihood that they see them growing up has increased (Smith, 1991). The present paper will address these issues with respect to the notions of (a) emotional quality of grandchild–grandparent relations and (b) grandparental support provision.

Relationships Between Grandparents and Grandchildren

Recent publications describe grandparent–grandchild relations in a rather positive manner in the way that both grandparents and grandchildren play important roles for one another (Askham, Ferring, & Lamura, 2007; Connidis, 2001; Smith, 1991; Tinsley & Parke, 1987). Publications based on the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE) report that in the participating European countries a total of 58% of grandmothers and 49% of grandfathers provided some kind of care for grandchildren up to the age of 15 (Hank & Buber, 2009). When grandchildren become older, the tasks of grandparents change and encounters between grandparents and their grandchildren are to a lesser extent initiated by the parental generation (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1986). However, strong bonds between grandchildren and their grandparents often persist until early adulthood of grandchildren and beyond and grandparents continue fulfilling important functions for their grownup grandchildren (Askham et al., 2007).

The Meanings of Grandparents for Grandchildren

Many studies on grandparent–grandchild relationships from the perspectives of grandparents used classification approaches and demonstrated a great variety in how the grandparental role is accomplished. For instance, Neugarten and Weinstein (1964) classified grandparents in their seminal study on 70 pairs of U.S. middle class grandparents as formal, fun seekers, surrogate parents, reservoirs of family wisdom and distant figures (Neugarten & Weinstein, 1964). Another classification stems from Cherlin and Furstenberg (1986) who distinguished on the basis of a larger, U.S. telephone survey between remote, companionate, and involved grandparents.

Fewer articles have emphasized the grandchildren's view, and most of these studies described general dimensions of grandchild–grandparent relations rather than providing a classification of grandparental relationship quality from the adolescent perspective. In a study by Van Ranst, Verschueren, and Marcoen (1995), the values attributed to grandparents by grandchildren in early ($M = 12.5$ years), middle ($M = 15.7$ years), and late ($M = 18.9$ years) adolescence were assessed on 11 dimensions for 563 participants in Belgium. The most important meanings that adolescents attributed to their grandparents were to give emotional support and affection and reassurance of worth as well as to be reliable allies, mentors, and role models. In a study on Swiss adolescents aged between 12 and 16 (Hoepflinger &

Hummel, 2006), grandparents were, in the first place, valued for just being there when needed, serving as generalized family attachment figures. Especially when the parent generation is affected by problems such as teen pregnancy or mental or physical illness, grandparents may also take over the role of custodial parents (e.g., Pinazo-Hernandis & Tompkins, 2009).

The intergenerational support exchange is mostly imbalanced; grandparents generally provide more instrumental and financial support than they receive from their grandchildren (Hoff, 2007). Nonetheless, grandparents often benefit from the relationship to their grandchildren as grandparenthood may contribute to experienced generativity and psychological adjustment (Drew & Silverstein, 2007; Erikson, 1974; Mayer & Filipp, 2004).

Theoretical Models on the Relation Between Grandchildren and Grandparents

The present study draws on two complementing approaches that have been widely adopted in research on intergenerational relationships in families, namely the solidarity paradigm and the ambivalence approach. Both approaches aim at a comprehensive description of family relations, especially within the context of demographic and societal change, and they should also allow for a description of diverse aspects of the grandchild–grandparent relation.

The solidarity approach is one of the most prominent conceptual frameworks for the analysis of intergenerational family relations (Bengtson & Roberts, 1991). It realizes a multidimensional description of family relations on six dimensions depicting affectual, associational, consensual, functional, normative, and structural solidarity. Silverstein, Giarrusso, and Bengtson (1998) applied the model of intergenerational solidarity to relations between grandchildren and grandparents by elaborating the importance of each aspect for these relationships; they conclude that the model allows for the study of nonadjacent as effectively as for adjacent intergenerational relationships. Following critique about the neglect of conflicts in the solidarity model (Connidis & McMullin, 2002; Luescher & Pillemer, 1998), Bengtson and co-workers widened their theoretical perspective, adding “conflict” as a further dimension to the description of intergenerational relations (see Bengtson, Giarrusso, Mabry, & Silverstein, 2002).

The concept of ambivalence as it was introduced by Luescher and Pillemer (1998) represents a description of a specific combination of solidarity aspects that was not provided in the model by Bengtson and colleagues, namely the dynamics of simultaneous attraction and repulsion in families. On the one hand, ambivalence describes incompatibilities resulting out of social structures and role systems of individuals (sociological ambivalence). On the other hand, it addresses the occurrence of opposed

feelings, action tendencies, and behaviors (psychological ambivalence). Especially, transitions during the life span are likely to elicit ambivalence in intergenerational relations as they might be associated with incompatible norms, expectations, tasks, behaviors, and sentiments (Luescher & Pillemer, 1998; Pillemer & Suito, 2002). Adolescence can be described as such a phase of transitions; it entails an array of developmental tasks that shape intergenerational relationships such as identity development and the dual process of individuation (Erikson, 1974; Havighurst, 1948; Youniss & Smollar, 1985). The importance of grandparental relations for grandparents and for grandchildren, the altered shape of grandparental relationships (widened grandparental tasks, unclear role prescriptions), differing value orientations and aspirations as well as developmental transitions in adolescence could imply simultaneous opportunities for intergenerational attachment and support as well as negative aspects such as conflicts and strain. The concept of ambivalence may thus represent an adequate framework for the analysis of grandparental relationships in adolescence (c.f. Luescher & Pillemer, 1998). As Dolbin-MacNab, Rodgers, and Traylor (2009) put it in their retrospective, qualitative study on relations between grandchildren and their grandparents who raised them, coping with intergenerational ambivalence might be a central task in grandchild–grandparent relations. Though, while ambivalence in adult child–parent relations has been studied empirically in more detail (e.g., Ferring, Michels, Boll, & Filipp, 2009; Lüscher & Lettke, 2004), it has only recently been addressed with respect to grandchild–grandparent relations (Dolbin-MacNab et al., 2009).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Although grandparents have often been described as globally important for their grandchildren, specific relationship patterns have been less often investigated from the perspective of adolescents. The present study takes up this gap by focusing on patterns of grandchild–grandparent relations of high school students. The study combines the two theoretical models of intergenerational solidarity and intergenerational ambivalence. With respect to the intergenerational solidarity model *sensu* Bengtson, two dimensions are focused on, namely, (a) affectual solidarity (emotional quality of relations) and (b) functional solidarity (received grandparental support). Drawing on the ambivalence approach, the question of interest is if positive and negative aspects coexist in grandchild–grandparent relations.

The first aim is to determine patterns of emotional relationship quality in grandchild–grandparent relations adopting a classification approach (see Bergman, 2001); different relationship types will be described by the frequency of positive and negative emotions, since the presence or absence of emotions may represent “valenced reactions” toward one’s grandparents

(Ortony, Clore, & Collins, 1988; cf. Ferring et al., 2009). With regard to adult children and their parents, similar attempts to describe patterns of relations have been carried out, for instance, by Silverstein, Bengtson and Lawton (1997), Bengtson and colleagues (2000), and Ferring et al. (2009).

The present study investigates if types of relationship quality (solely positive, tense, detached, ambivalent) that have been found in relations between adult children and their parents can also be observed in grandparental relations from the perspectives of youth and young adults. According to socially constructed roles, women are often regarded as kin keepers, which implies stronger relations in the maternal line (Rossi & Rossi, 1990; Spitze & Ward, 1998). Stronger relations between daughters and parents may also enhance closeness between their own children and their maternal grandparents compared to paternal ones (see also Attar-Schwartz, Tan, & Buchanan, 2009; Chan & Elder, 2000; Eisenberg, 1988; Mills, Wakeman, & Fea, 2001; Silverstein et al., 1997). Based on this often-cited idea of a “matrilineal tilt” (e.g., Silverstein et al., 1997), this study will focus on paternal and maternal grandparents separately, and a central question is if relationship patterns differ depending on parental lineage. We expect maternal grandparent–grandchild relationships to be characterized by higher emotional closeness or enmeshment than paternal relationships.

Second, the study investigates differences in received grandparental support between emotional relationship patterns by distinguishing between three types of support content, namely emotional, instrumental, and material support. Different support profiles may (a) serve as a validation criterion of the found typologies and (b) provide better insights in the interrelations of perceived grandparental support and relationship quality.

METHOD

Sample

A total of 155 high school students aged between 12 and 21 ($M = 15.91$; $SD = 2.24$) were recruited in 2007 at a high school in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg¹ and agreed to fill out anonymous questionnaires on their relationships with their grandparents. Students came from grade 7 (first high school class) to 1 (last high school class) of a Lycée Classique, which is a college-bound school track. Prior to data collection, the general institutional approval by the head of the school was obtained, and underage respondents presented a signed parental authorization. In any case, the conditions of informed consent were secured.² From each class level, a number of 17 to 26 students participated in the present study. The eligibility criterion was to have at least one living grandparent either on the maternal or the paternal side. If respondents had no living grandparents on one side or the other, they were asked to rate the side where they had at least one living grandparent;

in those cases where grandparents on both sides were still alive, they had to rate both the maternal and paternal grandparents.³ A total of 81 (52.9%) respondents were male and 72 (47.1%) were female. The majority ($n = 128$; 82.2%) reported to be of Luxembourgish nationality. Core family structures were described as follows: 1 respondent had a deceased mother, 5 a deceased father, and 26 (17.0%) students had divorced parents. The majority of respondents (139; 92.1%) reported to have siblings: 81 (52.3%) had 1, 45 (29.0%) had 2, and 13 (8.6%) had 3 or more siblings.

A total of 135 (90.0%) students reported to have at least one living grandparent on the maternal side: both maternal grandparents alive: 76 (50.7%), a widowed grandmother: 47 (31.3%), a widowed grandfather: 12 (8.0%). Maternal grandparents' ages, perceived health status and living conditions are shown in Table 1. Most grandparents were between 70 and 79 years old. Grandmothers tended to be slightly younger than grandfathers. On a scale ranging from (1) "very poor" to (5) "very good," grandfathers' health was generally perceived by their grandchildren as fair or good while grandmothers' health was mostly perceived as good or very good. The majority of grandfathers on the maternal side lived together with their spouses, while 12% lived alone. In contrast, the relative frequency of grandmothers living

TABLE 1 Frequencies of Reported Age, Health and Habitation Mode of Grandmothers and Grandfathers of the Paternal and the Maternal Lineage

	Maternal grandparents		Paternal grandparents	
	Grandfather	Grandmother	Grandfather	Grandmother
Total	88	123	69	112
Age				
40–49	1	1	0	0
50–59	3	4	1	2
60–69	17	38	8	29
70–79	46	57	41	54
80+	17	17	13	21
Health				
very bad	0	2	1	2
bad	9	6	7	9
fair	27	23	21	38
good	40	63	21	42
very good	8	24	13	18
Housing				
with spouse	64	64	55	54
in the same household as the respondent	2	4	0	0
alone	10	41	4	34
nursing home	0	1	1	4
home for the aged	2	0	0	4
somewhere else	5	8	4	13

alone was quite elevated, which is certainly due to lower life expectancy and higher mortality among men.

A total of 120 subjects (83.4%) reported at least one grandparent of the paternal side being still alive at the time of the survey: both paternal grandparents alive: 42.4% ($n = 61$), widowed grandmother: 35.4% ($n = 51$), widowed grandfather: 5.6% ($n = 8$). Thus, the availability of paternal compared to maternal grandparents was slightly lower. Paternal grandparents tended to be older than maternal grandparents, with the majority being older than 70 years (as shown in Table 1). Grandparental health was overall rated as fair or good. Most of them lived together with their spouses. Again, grandmothers living alone were far more frequent than grandfathers living alone (31.2% compared to 6.3%).

In general, the proportion of grandparents living in an institutional setting (nursery or home for the aged, 3.2% of the total sample) or together with the respondent and his or her family (1.5% of total sample) was low in the present sample.

Measures

An Emotion Checklist was used to assess respondents' experienced relationship quality with their grandparents. Similar instruments have proven useful in preceding studies analyzing relationship quality of middle aged adults with their elderly parents (c.f. Boll, Ferring, & Filipp, 2003). Referring heuristically to taxonomies of emotions (Ortony et al., 1988), a list of emotion terms was generated that seemed suitable to describe positive and negative affective dimensions in intergenerational relations. On a five point, Likert-type scale ranging from (1) "never" to (5) "always" respondents had to rate how often they felt a given emotion when they thought about their maternal and paternal grandparents. Starting from a pool of $k = 26$ items, two scales were built on the basis of the results of Principal Axis Analyses (on both parental sides, the factors with the highest eigenvalues were retained) that regrouped the same items with respect to maternal or paternal grandparental relationships. The first dimension was composed of six items describing positive emotions (e.g., deep affection, secure) and was characterized as "affection/closeness." This scale proved to be consistent in describing the relationships with maternal and paternal grandparents (maternal grandparents: $M = 3.22$; $SD = 0.99$; $\alpha = .89$; paternal grandparents: $M = 3.22$; $SD = 1.09$; $\alpha = .92$). The second scale regrouped six items indicating the prevalence of negative emotions (e.g., choked, frustrated). This dimension was named "dislike" and was reliable regarding the relationships with maternal ($M = 1.58$; $SD = 0.57$; $\alpha = .86$) and paternal grandparents ($M = 1.50$; $SD = 0.51$; $\alpha = .83$).

A Support Questionnaire that was based on some of the items of the Berlin Social Support Scale (Schulz & Schwarzer, 2003) was applied to assess emotional, instrumental, and material types of received

grandparental support. Respondents had to rate the $k = 10$ items on a four point, Likert-type scale from (1) “doesn’t apply at all” to (4) “totally applies.” The scale measuring emotional support basically refers to circumstances of feeling loved and valued and the availability of support in times of need (c.f. Sarason, Levine, Basham, & Sarason, 1983). It consists of three items (e.g., “I can always rely on my grandparents”) that were reliable for maternal and paternal grandparents (maternal grandparents: $M = 3.24$; $SD = 0.75$; $\alpha = .86$; paternal grandparents: $M = 3.12$; $SD = 0.81$; $\alpha = .83$). Received instrumental support from grandparents was conceptualized as the perceived availability of enacted types of help. This scale regrouped three items (e.g., “My grandparents give me advice when I am at a loss”) and was satisfactorily reliable in maternal and paternal grandparent relationships (maternal grandparents: $M = 1.94$; $SD = 0.78$; $\alpha = .77$; paternal grandparents: $M = 2.11$; $SD = 0.84$; $\alpha = .80$). Perceived material grandparental support was measured by a scale comprising four items (e.g., “I regularly get money from my grandparents”) and was sufficiently reliable with regard to grandparents of both parental sides (maternal grandparents: $M = 2.25$; $SD = 0.73$; $\alpha = .77$; paternal grandparents: $M = 2.60$; $SD = 0.73$; $\alpha = .78$).

Repeated measurement analyses by MANOVA showed for both parental lineages that emotional support was rated highest, followed by instrumental and material support (maternal grandparents’ support: $F(2, 252) = 189.1$; $p < .00$; paternal grandparents’ support: $F(2, 212) = 95.2$, $p < .00$). Paired t-tests showed, furthermore, that more instrumental support was provided by the paternal side ($t(91) = 2.6$, $p < .01$).

RESULTS

Types of Relationship Quality With Maternal and Paternal Grandparents

For both sides of grandparental lineage separately, the z-standardized “affection/closeness” and the “dislike” scales were entered in hierarchical cluster analyses using the Ward algorithm. Both analyses suggested a four-cluster solution entailing reasonably low error sum of squares accumulation and sound parsimony. To further optimize cluster membership, k-means cluster analyses were carried out. Figures 1a and 1b show the average scores of the z-standardized, “affection/closeness” scales and the “dislike” scales in the relationship quality clusters for maternal and paternal grandparents.

Grandparental relationships of the maternal lineage were characterized by a high proportion of respondents reporting higher “affection/closeness” scores ($M = 0.74$; $SD = 0.52$) and lower “dislike” scores ($M = -0.49$; $SD = 0.41$). This cluster comprised 50.7% ($n = 70$) of the respondents having at least one living maternal grandparent and was termed “amicable.” The

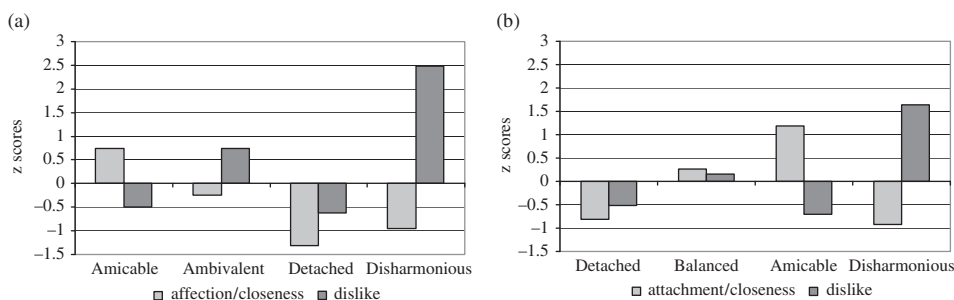


FIGURE 1 Patterns of Relationship Quality With (a) Grandparents of the Maternal Lineage and (b) Grandparents of the Paternal Lineage.

second cluster combined “attachment/closeness” scores that were slightly below zero ($M = -0.24$; $SD = 0.52$) with higher “dislike” scores ($M = 0.75$; $SD = 0.48$). This cluster, which comprehended 22.5% ($n = 31$) of the respondents, was characterized as “ambivalent.” The third cluster was named “detached” since low “attachment/closeness” scores ($M = -1.31$; $SD = 0.58$) were paired with lower “dislike” scores ($M = -0.62$; $SD = 0.39$); 18.8% ($n = 26$) of the sample was assigned to this cluster. Finally, the fourth cluster included respondents with low “attachment/closeness” ($M = -0.95$; $SD = 0.80$) and high “dislike” ($M = 2.48$; $SD = 0.54$) and was thus termed as “disharmonious.” This was the smallest cluster, including 8.0% ($n = 11$) of the respondents having at least one living maternal grandparent.

Although four cluster solutions were retained on both grandparental sides, clusters of relationship quality with paternal grandparents tended to differ in size and in profile from those on the maternal side. With respect to paternal grandparents, three clusters were almost equal in size. The largest cluster (28.0%; $n = 33$) regrouped respondents with low, “attachment/closeness” ($M = -0.81$; $SD = 0.61$) and low “dislike” ($M = -0.52$; $SD = 0.45$); this cluster was described as “detached” given that it combined low emotional attachment and low frequencies of negative emotions. A percentage of 27.1% ($n = 32$) was assigned to a cluster named “balanced.” This description seemed adequate given that both the average “attachment/closeness” and “dislike” scores were located around zero (affection/closeness: $M = 0.26$; $SD = 0.41$; dislike: $M = 0.16$; $SD = 0.54$). The third cluster was described as “amicable” since it grouped 27.1% ($n = 32$) of the respondents that were characterized by high levels of “attachment/closeness” ($M = 1.18$; $SD = 0.41$) and low levels of “dislike” ($M = -0.71$; $SD = 0.33$). The smallest cluster in grandparental relationships of the paternal lineage (17.8%; $n = 21$) showed high “dislike” scores ($M = 1.64$; $SD = 0.89$) and low “attachment/closeness” scores ($M = -0.93$; $SD = 0.62$); consequently, this latter cluster was termed “disharmonious.”

Convergence and Divergence Between Maternal and Paternal Lineage

Differences in relationship quality regarding maternal and paternal lineage were investigated by confronting the relative frequencies of the clusters within both relationships of those adolescents who still had grandparents on both sides ($n = 110$); the differences between maternal and paternal sides were significant with $\chi^2(3) = 35.97, p < .01$ (see Table 2). Maternal grandparent–grandchild relationships were mostly described as “amicable” while other relationship types had lower frequencies. On the paternal side, the relationship types were more evenly distributed so that the relative amount of “detached” and “disharmonious” relationships was higher than for maternal grandparents.

For a third of the whole sample, relationship patterns converged for both parental sides in the way that those adolescents who were classified amicable, detached, or disharmonious with regard to maternal grandparents were classified equally regarding paternal grandparents. While 27.3% of the adolescents who had an emotionally close relationship to their maternal grandparents (amicable or ambivalent) had, at the same time, detached or disharmonious relations to their paternal grandparents, only in 5.5% of the cases the reverse pattern was found with emotionally close patterns of relationship on the paternal side while emotionally distant or negative relations on the maternal side (see Table 2).

Relationship Quality and Received Support

Differences in received support were determined between clusters of grandparental relationship quality toward maternal and paternal grandparents. Figure 2 shows the mean values of three types of support in the clusters of relationships with maternal grandparents. Concerning emotional support, significant differences between the clusters were found ($F(3; 123) = 22.35; p < .01; \eta^2 = .35$)⁴; Tukey’s HSD pairwise comparisons indicated that “amicable” relationships came along with significantly higher emotional support than the other three clusters. “Ambivalent” relationships were associated

TABLE 2 Cross-Tabulated Frequencies of Respondents in Relationship Clusters of Maternal and Paternal Grandparent–Grandchild Relationships ($n = 110$)

Maternal grandparents	Paternal grandparents				Total
	Balanced	Amicable	Detached	Disharmonious	
Ambivalent	9	6	3	7	25
Amicable	18	20	12	8	58
Detached	2	2	13	2	19
Disharmonious	0	2	2	4	8
Total	29	30	30	21	110

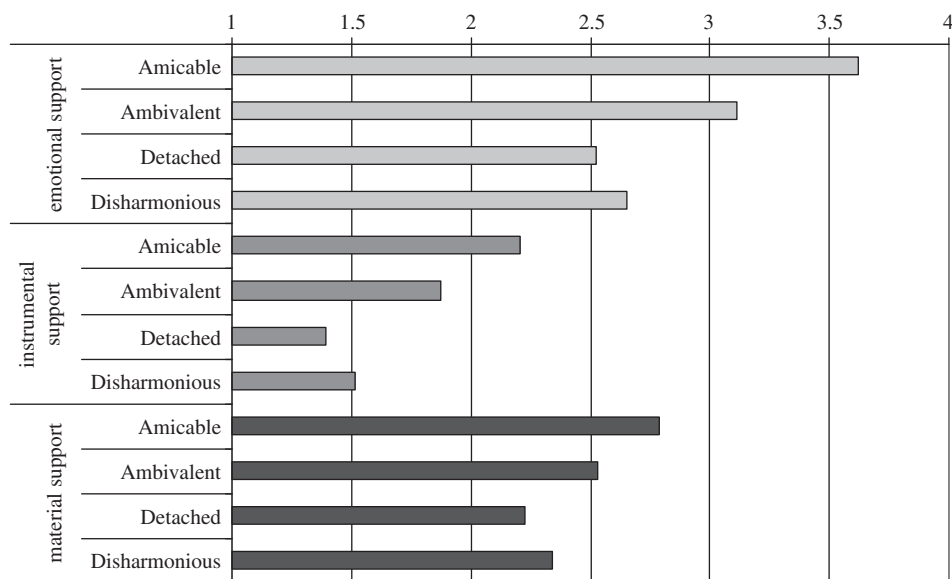


FIGURE 2 Mean Values of Emotional, Instrumental, and Material Support in the Clusters of Relationship Quality on Maternal Grandparents.

with higher emotional support than “detached” relationships; no significant differences were found between, “detached” and “disharmonious” relations. The relationship clusters were further associated with different levels of instrumental support ($F(3; 123) = 8.66; p < .01; \eta^2 = .17$). While post hoc tests revealed no significant differences between “amicable” and “ambivalent” relations, both clusters were found to indicate higher instrumental support than “detached” and “disharmonious” relations. The latter two clusters did not differ significantly regarding instrumental support. Furthermore, the clusters differed in terms of material support ($F(3; 123) = 4.24; p < .01; \eta^2 = .09$). Here, only one pairwise comparison reached statistical significance, namely the mean difference between “amicable” and “detached” relationships. Regarding variance explanation (in terms of η^2), the influence of cluster membership on emotional support was highest, followed by indicators of instrumental support. Indicators of material support were less dependent of cluster membership.

Differences of support patterns between clusters of the paternal lineage turned out to be quite similar to those of the maternal side (see Figure 3). The clusters yielded highly significant differences in received emotional support ($F(3; 102) = 17.17; p < .01; \eta^2 = .35$). Pairwise comparisons (Tukey’s HSD) showed that adolescents with “amicable” relations reported significantly higher emotional support than “balanced” relations, the latter being followed by “detached” relationships. No significant differences were found between “detached” and “disharmonious” relationships. Furthermore,

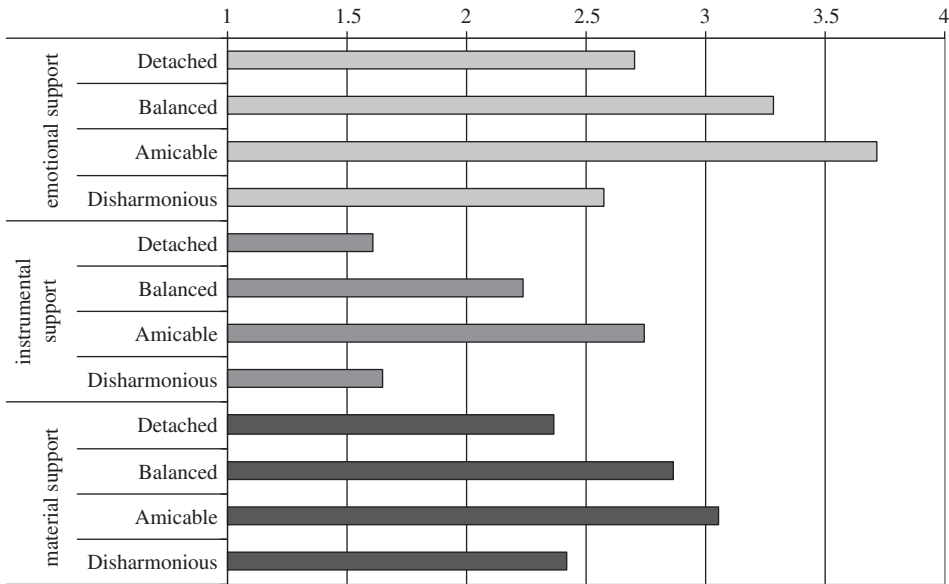


FIGURE 3 Mean Values of Emotional, Instrumental, and Material Support in the Clusters of Relationship Quality on Paternal Grandparents.

cluster differences in received instrumental support turned out to be significant ($F(3; 102) = 16.48; p < .01; \eta^2 = .33$). Again, pairwise comparisons indicated significantly higher instrumental support in the “amicable” cluster followed by “balanced” and “detached” relationships, while no statistically significant mean differences were found between “detached” and “disharmonious” relations. Finally, significant differences in material support emerged as well between the clusters of relationship quality on the paternal lineage ($F(3; 102) = 6.39; p < .01; \eta^2 = .16$). Post hoc analyses (Tukey’s HSD) indicated no significant differences between “amicable” and “balanced” relationships, while respondents in the latter clusters indicated higher material support than respondents in “detached” or “disharmonious” relationships. As with maternal grandparents, cluster differences in emotional and instrumental support seemed to be more pronounced than differences in material support.

DISCUSSION

Regarding lineage effects in patterns of relationship quality, it can be generally concluded that the paternal lineage was characterized by emotionally more distal types of relationships. This finding is in line with those of Van Ranst and colleagues (1995) who reported that grandchildren felt

closer to grandparents of the maternal side than those of the paternal side (see also Spitze & Ward, 1998). Furthermore, psychological ambivalence in grandparent–grandchild relations (as conceptualized in the present study by the joint appearance of positive and negative emotions) could only be observed within the relationships with maternal grandparents; no equivalent relationship pattern was observed regarding paternal grandparents. This result further highlights the enhanced closeness and presence of strong emotions in relationships with maternal grandparents and adds to the notion of a matrilineal tilt in intergenerational relations; these relations may entail a larger array of various functions, roles, and expectations that could be at the core of ambivalence (cf. Chan & Elder, 2000). The analysis of convergence versus divergence in relationship patterns on both parental sides provided further evidence for different relations toward maternal and paternal grandparents. Relationship patterns are far from being uniform over different relations; only in one-third of the cases, grandchildren's relationship types toward maternal and paternal grandparents converged. Instead, results point to a tendency of “filial favoritism” toward the maternal side in more than a fourth of cases; these adolescents reported emotionally close (amicable or ambivalent) relations to their maternal grandparents but detached or disharmonious relations toward the paternal ones. The role of the middle generation as mediator in grandparent–grandchild relations may account for differences in emotional closeness, influencing grandchild–grandparent relations, for instance, by organizing meetings, determining contact frequencies, or serving as role models for grandchildren concerning how to behave toward the older generation (Spitze & Ward, 1998). Moreover, many studies have provided evidence that, at least in Western societies, the adult daughters seem to have tighter relationships to their elderly parents than sons do (e.g., Connidis, 2001). It is thus conceivable that gender specific relationship patterns may arise between adult children and their elderly parents, further shaping the relationship quality between grandchildren and maternal and paternal grandparents (see also Attar-Schwartz et al., 2009).

Besides these gender and kinship issues, the results indicate a great diversity in the relationship quality in grandparent–grandchild relations. At least in maternal grandparental relationships, a fourfold scheme could be observed that reflected all of the possible combinations of positive and negative emotions. These results highlight the importance of assumptions underlying the ambivalence approach or the Solidarity–Conflict Model for the description of grandparent–grandchild relationships. Grandparental relationships cannot be described as solely positive or negative, but more complex patterns can be observed such as detached or ambivalent relationship quality. As a further finding, the found relationship typologies differed across various types of received grandparental support. Here, amicable or balanced relations came along with higher support, whereas relationships termed as detached or disharmonious were characterized by lower

support. It is an interesting finding that, on the maternal side, the relationships qualified as ambivalent came along with comparatively high levels of received support. This finding again points at the enhanced closeness in ambivalent relations. In accordance to the assumptions of Luescher and Pillemer (1998), higher solidarity (i.e., support) may be, in itself, a prerequisite of ambivalence. In this case, received grandparental support might contradict autonomy aspirations among youth or young adults, and these inconsistencies between autonomy and dependence could illicit ambivalent emotions.

Finally two caveats should be mentioned: (a) The data were collected in the Luxembourgish national and societal context; generally, the question could be raised if the reported findings can be generalized across other national or cultural contexts. (b) The cross-sectional nature of the data might conceal dynamics of relationship regulation. In fact, the observed relational states might not be the endpoint of relationship regulation, but relationships are subjected to changes (see Ferring et al., 2009); for example, an “amicable” relationship might become “ambivalent” depending on the situational context, life course events, and the way individuals deal with the latter.

NOTES

1. For comprehensive insights on Luxembourg's socioeconomic and educational properties, see EUROSTAT (2010).
2. All procedures were in line with the ethical code of the American Psychological Association (www.apa.org).
3. The study design thus did not provide a test of the difference regarding gender of grandparents.
4. On some indicators of received support, increased variance heterogeneity was found between clusters. In these cases, the ANOVA procedures were cross-checked with robust Welch tests (Tomarken & Serlin, 1986), respectively Dunnett's T3 tests for multiple comparisons.

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