

Intergenerational relations between adult children and their older parents: A comparison between host nationals and Portuguese immigrants in Luxembourg

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Abstract. Migration and ageing have become key topics of the contemporary world. The situation of older migrants is of particular interest in many European countries. Only few studies have, however, focused on the relationship quality between adult children and their ageing parents in host national compared to immigrant families. Ageing parents in migrant families may experience a special need for intergenerational support and solidarity and therefore develop specific expectations about support exchange. However, due to an acculturation gap between older migrant parents (1st generation) and their adult children (2nd generation), born or grown up in the “new” country, mutual expectations and ideas about family obligations might differ between both generations. In the present study, we will focus on similarities and differences in key issues regarding intergenerational family relations between parents and their adult children in host national and immigrant families.

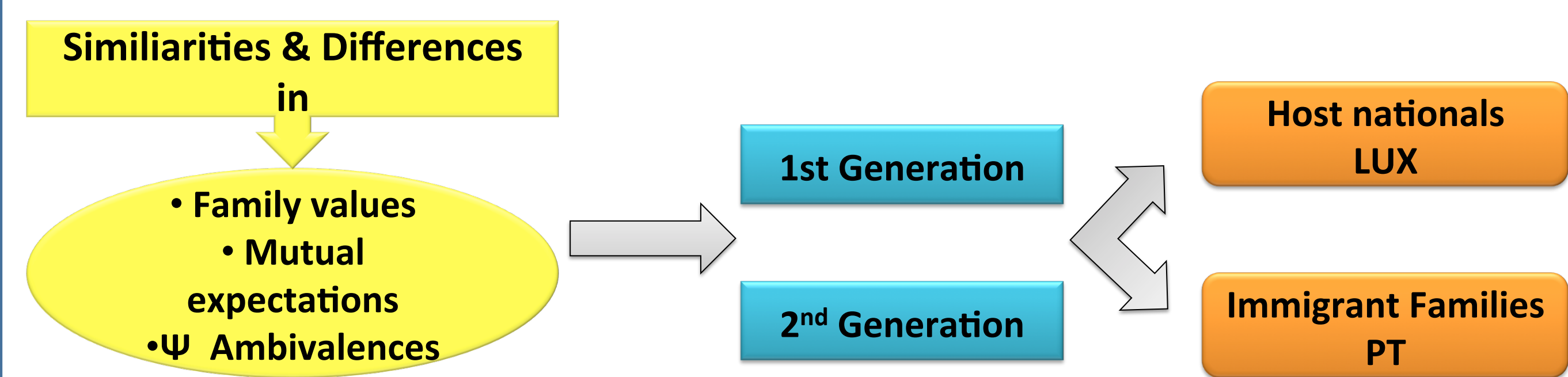
RESEARCH BACKGROUND

In the context of family relations and acculturation, few studies have focused on the relationship quality between adult children and their ageing parents in native families compared to immigrant families. However, western countries are more and more confronted with challenges regarding migration and “graying” societies (Bengtson & Martin, 2001), as well as the growing needs of families evolving in that specific context. Due to the acculturation background, expectations of different generations (1st and 2nd generations) towards one another may be of particular importance in migrant families. Ageing parents in migrant families may experience a particular need for intergenerational support and solidarity when they approach a critical period of their life span such as the transition to retirement. A major question therefore refers to mutual expectations and obligations between family members of different generations as far as emotional and financial support are concerned. An acculturation gap between generations might, however, lead to different expectations regarding family duties and cause intergenerational strain (Albert & al, 2013; Sam & Berry, 2010; Morrison & James, 2009). Furthermore, intergenerational relations arouse psychological ambivalence experienced on the individual level (Luescher & Pillemer, 1998). The acculturation context might possibly intensify these felt mixed feelings for the migrant families leading therefore to higher intergenerational tensions. In a multicultural society such as Luxembourg with currently 44.5% foreigners, these various issues regarding the well-being of elder migrants become more and more primary concerns for the whole population (Statec, 2011).

OBJECTIVES

We aim to analyze:

- the similarities and differences in family values and mutual expectations (with respect to family obligations; received and given support; felt ambivalences) between first and second generations in host national families compared to migrant families living in Luxembourg
- the effects and relations between all the family values and related issues as mentioned previously, the similarities and differences between members of migrant and non-migrant families



SAMPLE

The current study is part of the FNR-funded project on “Intergenerational Relations in the Light of Migration and Ageing – IRMA” (PI: Dr. Isabelle Albert). A cross-cultural comparison between Luxembourgish (LUX) and Portuguese (PT) family triads living in Luxembourg with $N = 120$ family triads (older mothers and fathers and one of their adult children, born resp. grown up in Luxembourg; see Table 1) is being conducted. The focus is specifically put on Portuguese immigrant families, as this is the most represented immigrant group living in Luxembourg (over 16% of Luxembourg’s inhabitants have the Portuguese nationality; Statec, 2011).

Table 1. Sampling plan of the main study.

	Portuguese Families		Luxembourgish Families	
	Mother	Father	Mother	Father
G1	50-60	20	20	20
	61-70	20	20	20
	71-80	20	20	20
G2	± 30-50	60	60	

Note. The full sample will comprise $N = 360$ participants.

The preliminary sample comprises $n = 34$ LUX and $n = 30$ PT family triads.

LUX Families	Age		PT Families	Age		Years living in Lux	
	M	SD		M	SD	M	SD
Mother	55.85	6.81	Mother	54.57	6.59	30.64	7.64
Father	59.03	7.39	Father	57.0	7.03	30.12	8.16
Children	26.76	8.09	Children	26.52	8.02		

¹ Over 60% of the Portuguese adult children were born in Luxembourg, the remainder had come to Luxembourg at an average age of $M = 5.5$ years ($SD = 4.95$). Data collection is still going on.

MEASUREMENTS

Participants had to fill out a standardized questionnaire available in three languages – namely German, French and Portuguese (the different language versions were translated and cross-checked by a group of multilingual psychologists).

Reliabilities of the scales and in the different subsamples were satisfactory, ranging between $.66 < \alpha < .93$ (except for the Cohesion scale for PT-Mothers $\rightarrow \alpha = .45$).

- Obligations toward family (see e.g., Merz et al., 2009; 6 Items, e.g. “I feel obliged to behave in line with our family rules”; 6-point Likert scale from 1 = do not agree at all to 6 = fully agree)
- Given and received intergenerational support (see Albert et al., 2013; 12 items each, e.g. “My mother/father/child handles many things for me that I cannot do on my own; “I handle many things for my parents/my child”; 6-point Likert scale from 1 = do not agree at all to 6 = fully agree)
- Family Cohesion (see e.g. Manzi & al., 2006; 4 Items, e.g. “We always help and support one another”; 6-point Likert scale from 1 = do not agree at all to 6 = fully agree)
- Psychological Ambivalences (see e.g., Michels & al., 2011; 9 Items, e.g. “I like to sit down with my M/F/C but then there are often disputes”; 6-point Likert scale from 1 = do not agree at all to 6 = fully agree)

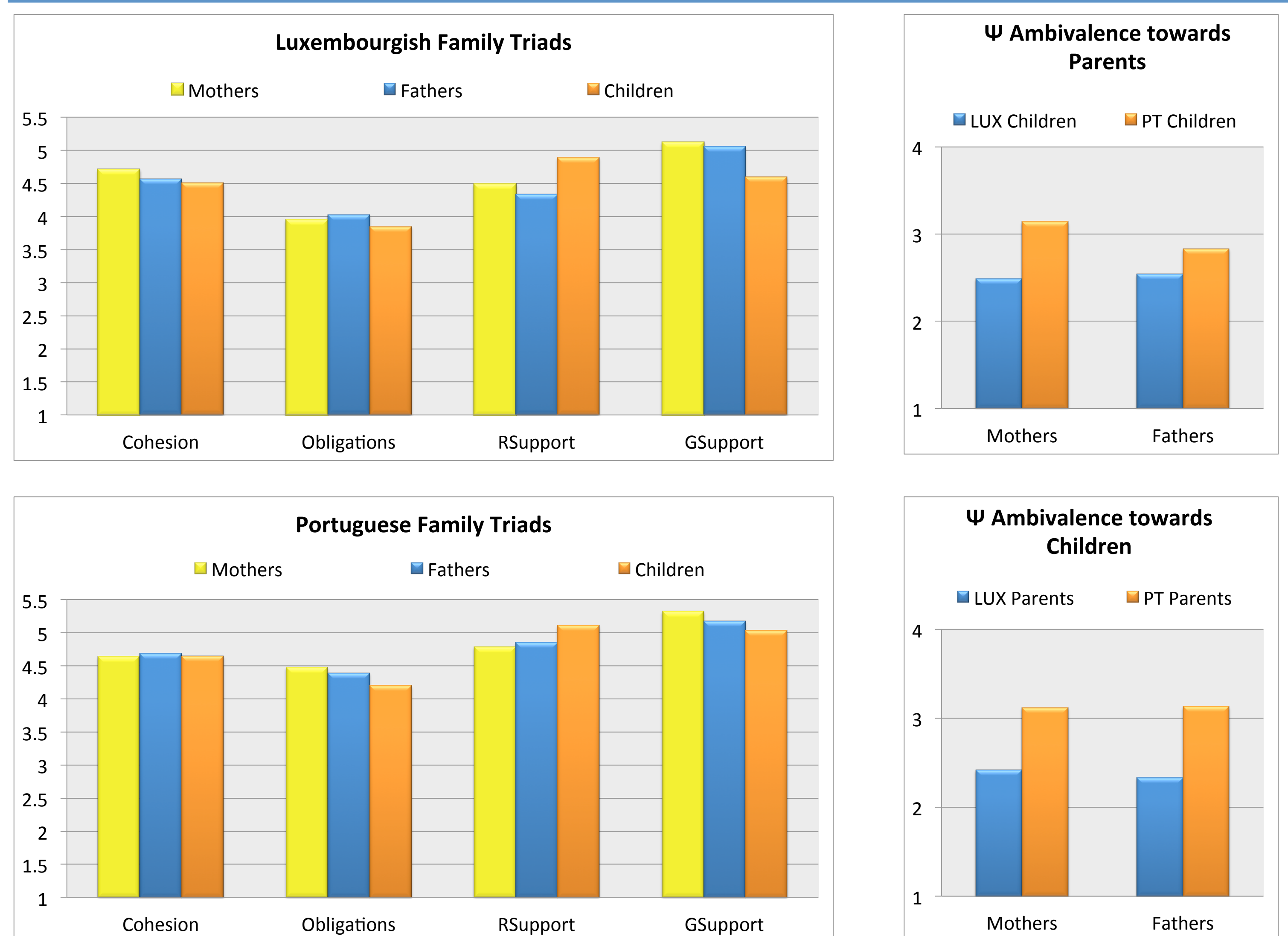
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RESULTS



	Nationality		Position		Nationality x Position	
	F	η^2	F	η^2	F	η^2
Family Cohesion	.16	.003	.29	.005	.46	.007
Family Obligations	8.28**	.12	1.78	.03	.39	.006
Received IG Support	6.90**	.11	6.05**	.09	.94	.02
Given IG Support	5.86**	.09	9.79**	.14	1.20	.02
Ψ Ambivalence: C \rightarrow M	18.35**	.24	.16	.003	.11	.002
Ψ Ambivalence: C \rightarrow F	11.73**	.17	.04	.001	1.66	.03

Note. ² C \rightarrow M / F meaning the psychological Ambivalence felt from the child towards his mother (M) and father (F) and vice-versa

CONCLUSION

- No differences between LUX and PT families were found regarding family cohesion. However, PT families rated their family obligations and mutual intergenerational (IG) support slightly higher than LUX participants.
- Parents and adult children did not differ with regard to family cohesion and obligations but parents communicate a higher provided support to / lower received support from their adult children than the other way around (Pillemer & al, 2007; Morrison & James, 2009). Adult children from both cultures acknowledged receiving more support than they give to their parents.
- PT children also reported to receive as much support from their parents as they give to them, whereas LUX children reported the opposite, they admit receiving more support than they give (see also Albert & al., 2013).
- Regarding psychological ambivalence, PT families differed significantly from LUX families. PT participants rated their psychological felt ambivalence towards their family members (child/mother/father) higher than did parents and children of the LUX families, which may be due to the acculturation context of the immigrant families.
- No significant differences were found between parents and children regarding the psychological ambivalence. Nonetheless, an interesting pattern was revealed at the mean level for PT children. In deed, a marginal significance [$t(26) = 1.91$; $p = .06$] was found between their felt ambivalence towards their mother and their father. They admit having more ambivalent feelings towards their mothers than towards their fathers while LUX adult children reported similar levels of mixed feelings towards both parents.

Further analyses regarding IG relations and SWB in light of migration and ageing will be done to supplement the results reported here.

