

INTERGENERATIONAL AMBIVALENCE AMONG IRANIAN REFUGEE FAMILIES IN FINLAND

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Abstract

This article focuses on the process through which intergenerational ambivalence is experienced by a group of adult children and their parents with an Iranian refugee background living in Finland. This ethnographic study provides an insight into how the families' struggles to mobilize capital in different forms can contribute to their experience of intergenerational ambivalence. The study indicates that when the parents' social, economic and cultural capitals accumulated prior to migration are not accessible or valuable in Finland, they become dependent on their children's conduct. This produces a contradictory demand on the participants' roles as parents and children, where they face difficulties in navigating their role expectations. The families in this study expressed a significant ambivalence in their intergenerational relationships associated with these stressful conditions.

Keywords

intergenerational ambivalence • refugee • capital • Iranian families • intergenerational relationships

Introduction

As many first-generation migrants in Finland are getting older, it is crucial to pay close attention to the dynamics of intergenerational relationships which could affect their health and well-being (e.g. Fingerman et al. 2008). Scholarship on intergenerational ambivalence suggests that individuals experience ambivalence when holding contradictory feelings towards their role as parents or children (Lüscher & Pillemer 1998; Suito, Gilligan & Pillemer 2011). Research shows that parents who experience greater ambivalence towards their children develop higher psychological distress (Fingerman et al. 2008). Long-term

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ambivalence in parent–child relations also causes a lower sense of well-being, such as depressive symptoms in children (Tighe, Birditt & Antonucci 2016). This ethnographic study develops an understanding of how intergenerational ambivalence is experienced by a group of Iranian refugee families in Finland.

In the field of migration studies, recent research has reflected on the intergenerational ambivalence in transnational families (see Grzywacz et al. 2006; Madianou 2012; Qureshi et al. 2012; Senyuerekli & Detzner 2008), where migrant parents and their children, who have stayed behind in the home country, experience ambiguous feelings towards each other. In addition, there is a body of literature which investigates intergenerational ambivalence between migrant parents and their children who live in the same country (see Albertini, Mantovani & Gasperoni 2018; Portes & Rumbaut 2001; Telzer 2010). These studies often suggest that intergenerational tension and ambivalence are the results of conflicting norms between sending and receiving societies (Portes & Rumbaut 2001; Zhou 2009). The critique towards conflicting norms as explanations of intergenerational ambivalence suggests that the framework itself makes assumptions about migrants' (traditional) values and bypasses intersectional understanding of different ranges of experiences and identities (see Anthias 2009; Keskinen 2009, 2011). Such interpretations reinforce the view that migrant families are “others” who do not fall into the “normal family” discourse (see Berg & Peltola 2015; Peltola 2015), which functions as “less problematic”.

This study approaches intergenerational ambivalence as being produced by the social constraints that are encountered by refugee families. Unlike other studies on intergenerational ambivalence in migrant families, I draw upon the notions of forms of *capital* (Bourdieu 1986) to investigate how intergenerational ambivalence is linked to certain resources, which are acquired before or after migration (e.g. Anthias 2007). One of the main bases for intergenerational ambivalence is when individuals experience a contradictory demand of dependency and autonomy in their role as parents or children (Lüscher & Pillemer 1998). This paper asks precisely how the contradictory demand (between being dependent and independent) in a role (as a parent or a child) is produced when considering the availability of certain resources by the migrant families in this study. By using the notion of capital, this paper shows how intergenerational ambivalence is produced when family members navigate their role expectations while understanding their position as migrants in Finnish society.

This study is focussed on a less-studied group in Finland: Iranian refugees. Despite the fact that Iranians are among the large groups of migrants in Europe (Honari, Bezouh & Namazie 2017), the dynamics of intergenerational relationships among them is not often studied (e.g. Kelly 2017). According to Hakimzadeh (2006), the largest Iranian communities in Europe are respectively in Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and France. In 2017, there were around 8000 people with Iranian nationality living in Finland (Statistics Finland 2017a), of whom over 3000 had Finnish citizenship (Statistics Finland 2017b). Unlike recent decades, most of the Iranian immigrants who moved to Finland in the 1990s and early 2000s are refugees. The participant families in this study are chosen from this group, because they consist of families with parents and adult children.

Intergenerational ambivalence and socio-economic and cultural capitals

The concept of *ambivalence* was first introduced in sociology by Merton and Barber (1963) and Coser (1966). It was used to understand social status, roles and social institutions (Merton & Barber 1963). Later, the concept of *intergenerational ambivalence* was used by Lüscher and Pillemer (1998) to study the ambivalence in intergenerational relationships. According to Connidis and McMullin (2002), ambivalence is “simultaneously held opposing feelings or emotions that are due in part to countervailing expectations about how individuals should act” (p. 558). As a “sensitizing construct” or “concept”, ambivalence is used to study the contradictory dynamics of intergenerational conflict and solidarity (Lüscher 2011).

According to Connidis and McMullin (2002), intergenerational ambivalence could occur when structural arrangements constrain an individual’s ability to fulfil intergenerational expectations. It is likely to happen when family members experience contradictory expectations from their role (Connidis & McMullin 2002). One of the main sources of ambivalence is when individuals experience the paradox between dependency and independency in their role (Lüscher & Pillemer 1998). Studies show that parents develop ambivalent feelings towards their children when their intergenerational solidarity norms of supporting their adult children conflict with their intergenerational independence norms (Pillemer & Suitor 2002). Pillemer and Suitor’s (2002) study shows that when children fail to fulfil their normative expectations of adulthood, such as financial independence, higher education or successful marriage, mothers experience greater ambivalence towards their children.

Intergenerational ambivalence also occurs in the case of adult children when they face contradictory demands between their filial obligation of assisting their immigrant parents and the independence to pursue better opportunities (Lewis 2008). Fingerman et al. (2006) claim that adult children who provide instrumental support to their parents show stronger intergenerational ambivalence. However, understanding how intergenerational ambivalence functions in migrant families requires context-specific investigations.

I use the notion of capital (Bourdieu 1986) to elaborate on the ways in which intergenerational ambivalence is produced. To understand the positions of migrant groups (Cederberg 2012, 2015), the concept of capital has been widely used in migration research (Anthias 2007; Erel 2010; Ryan, Erel & D’Angelo 2015). I employ this concept to unpin the social constraints producing intergenerational ambivalence in the migrant families. Bourdieu (1986) provides an explicit explanation of how capital is accessed and accumulated by distinguishing between the three forms of *economic*, *social* and *cultural capitals*. Economic capital is “immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights” (Bourdieu 1986: 243). Social capital refers to the networks and group membership, which may enable individuals to transfer and reproduce different forms of capitals (economic, social and cultural) (Bourdieu 1986, 1987). According to Bourdieu (1986), cultural capital refers to the symbolic assets associated with different forms of institutional attributes (such as academic degree), objectified attributes

(such as clothing) and embodied attributes (such as accent or linguistic abilities). Each form of capital might or might not be transferable or valuable in different fields (Bourdieu 1987), such as in Iranian and Finnish societies. Thus, Bourdieu (1987) uses the term *symbolic capital* to address the validation and legitimacy of each form of capital in a field. In this paper, I discuss how the migrant families' struggles to access capital in its different forms (Erel 2010) in Finnish society create contradictory demands on their roles as parents and children, which simultaneously leads them to experience intergenerational ambivalence.

Data and methods

Data were collected in the Helsinki metropolitan area between 2011 and 2014 as part of my PhD studies. Because I was a newcomer in Finland and did not know many Iranian families, I used snowball sampling to find the participants. The method of the data collection was ethnography (e.g. Daynes & Williams 2018; Gobo 2008; Hammersley & Atkinson 2007). I followed ten Iranian refugee families who had lived in Finland for 11–20 years at the beginning of my field research. The data consist of field notes from three years of fieldwork, as well as in-depth interviews with six parents (three mothers and three fathers) and six children (three daughters and three sons). In two families, the interview participants were parent–child dyads. The data do not include minors, but rather concentrate on those adult children who are aged 18 years or older. The ages of parents varied between 45 and 65 years, and the adult children varied in age from 19 to 30 years. All of the children moved to Finland with their parents before the age of 12 years.

The themes discussed during the fieldwork and in the interviews covered the participants' experiences of their family relations, and filial and parental obligations. The interviews mainly took place in the participants' homes or public libraries. All the interviews were held in Persian, except for one, which was held in English. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The names used in this article are pseudonyms. The participants were aware of the purpose of my study and the intended use of the information gathered. Throughout the process of collecting data and reporting the outcome of the study, I have kept the names and any information that could reveal the participants' identity confidential (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007; O'Reilly 2009). I have ensured that my field notes and transcripts do not contain personal identifiers.

Being an Iranian myself helped me to create a friendly environment when conducting the interviews. After getting to know the informants, some of them invited me to their homes where I observed the interaction between adult children and their parents. On these occasions, I gained more insights into the participants' family life. All the families belonged to the middle class in Iran, and some of the parents had political activist backgrounds prior to migration.

Moving from Iran to Finland myself as a young researcher positioned me as in between an insider and an outsider throughout the research process. Despite having similarities with the participants (such as language and having migrated from Iran), I felt that I was

positioned differently because I had migrated as a student while the participants in my study had fled Iran as refugees. During the research, I became more familiar with the families' traumatic experiences of persecution. However, as I experienced my own challenges in Finland, I became more aware of my position as an immigrant and this also impacted on the research process.

The data was thematically analyzed (Guest, MacQueen & Namey 2011). To present the results of this study, I first explain how the family members understand their position as migrants in Finland in terms of validated capitals. This section serves as an introduction to the following empirical analysis, which in turn connects the formation of capital to intergenerational ambivalence. Next, I discuss how the families experience intergenerational ambivalence and how the acquisition of capital affects these experiences, in the case of both parents and adult children.

Less resources and dependency on children

Migration played a significant role in the participants' narration of their family relations. Their stories reflect upon the way that they experience their social position differently before and after migration. The parents expressed that entering into an unfamiliar society when moving to Finland has limited their agency to influence their personal and family life. The parents' difficulties in transferring their social, economic and cultural capitals (also see Ryan, Erel & D'Angelo 2015: 4) from Iran to Finland had a dramatic impact on their self-esteem as members of their new society, as well as on their parenting role. The limited availability of social resources to enable them to access information on their rights as new residents of Finland was one of the challenges highlighted by the participants. For example, one of the mothers explains:

Mona: We didn't know where they are taking us, where we are supposed to be, and what is our destiny. I was full of stress. (...) When they told us that we are going to Finland, they said this country is chosen for us because everything is planned in advance. Being a teacher myself in Iran, I thought that the plan will help us to follow what we were doing before. But as the time passed by, we have realized that they have planned based on their own needs but not ours. The only thing was to go to Finnish course one after another. (...) We did not know our rights and no one told us what kinds of right we have so that we could claim for it. (...) We came with an absolute positive attitude here. [We thought that now] we are in Europe, and everything is fine there. But it wasn't like that.

Mona describes how she felt when she was sent to Finland with her family as a refugee. She reflects on having limited information about her rights and opportunities in Finland. Mona had expected to have better opportunities in Finland as a European country than those she had in Iran, but soon experienced challenges to access opportunities, especially when she was not able to do the same work as she used to do in Iran. The parents in this study experience that their cultural capital prior to migration, such as native language

proficiency, work experiences and educational competencies, are not valued in Finland (also see Atwell, Giffod & McDonald-Wilmsen 2009). They rely on social services for obtaining information and financial support, but due to the difficulties in learning the new language their children become their translators. One adult child describes her experiences as her parents' interpreter:

Mahsa: But sometimes I was dealing with translation of financial matters which I didn't want to know because "social" was helping us. [I thought] okay, we are not doing it on our own. And every time that I thought that, I felt lower and lower in the society. Every time that we were in an appointment, it just hit me that I am not Finnish and we are here and "social" is helping us and my parents don't speak Finnish and I have to translate even the smallest thing for them. (...) I started to get emotional in one appointment and I thought that, aha, they are not giving us money and we are going back to Iran or something. So I started crying there, and after that, they [the parents] understood and they didn't take me anywhere [to translate for them], maybe just to doctor, nowhere else. I know that it is hard for them to adapt to a new language and culture and still be happy and strong parents for us. This is the smallest thing I can do for them, to be their translator sometimes. But, now they can manage on their own and don't need us so much.

Mahsa reflects upon her experience as her parents' translator when she was a child. Her account of receiving help from the social services was strongly connected with not being "Finnish". This, to her, represented being the "other" and considered as being a burden on the Finnish society (also see Ghorashi 2005). Mahsa's case shows how younger generations experience their parents' and family's position as being low in Finnish society. As a child, Mahsa was dealing with the feeling of her family's uncertain future. The parents' position in terms of language proficiency made them dependent on their children's help, as the parents thought that the children would know the "correct way of doing things". This is in contradiction with what they regarded as their parental role, namely being their children's guides. As a result, parents experience ambivalence in their parenting role. A mother explains her dual feeling as follows:

Simin: I have been taking care of my children so that they would be raised well, study well and be successful in the new environment, but I didn't manage to learn the language as my children did. When children learn the local language, then parents get dependent on them. At such moments I have had a very bad feeling.

Karimi: How?

Simin: For example, when I need to go to the Unemployment Office and ask my child to come with me and she says "Oh mum I don't feel like coming along," or she says "How many times do I have to come to the Unemployment Office? I don't feel like talking to them". I need her to come, but when she says "Mum, why haven't you learned the

language yet? After 10 years of being here, I have to come with you. You know how to speak. I won't come". At these moments I have a very bad feeling. I have a bad feeling when I look back and see how my child has been very successful at school, which is because of my efforts. I have been very proud that my child was always one of the best in her school! I say to myself: "Look! This is my child. Even in the Finnish language exam she got the best grade, which Finns themselves couldn't even manage. Wow!" This is a mum [referring to herself] who protected her child from any bad experience caused by immigration, protected her from using alcohol and cigarettes and so on. But she herself [the mother] is not successful. This is a very bad feeling.

Simin perceives her position as an unsuccessful person, because she has been unable to represent herself as a successful person in the Finnish context, to both her children and her surroundings. Simultaneously, she considers being a mother who raised a successful child as one of her achievements. On the one hand, she is proud of her child's achievements, on the other, she feels bad about not being a "successful" parent and being dependent on her child. These contradictory feelings experienced by the participant parents, such as Simin, can be identified as ambivalence.

The parents' position in the job market also challenged them to define their role as independent. Only some of the parents in this study had a job after many years of living in Finland and if they had a job, it was in the service sector (e.g. as cashiers or bus drivers). Discrimination in the job market (e.g. Näre 2013), limited social networks and not having proficient Finnish skills created obstacles for the parents to access the Finnish job market. Sometimes, the financial difficulties constrained the parents in fulfilling their expectations of themselves as parents. A father describes the financial difficulties as follows:

Babak: There are families who can afford their children's needs so children are not embarrassed at school. The families who come as refugees here cannot afford to buy even clothing [for their children]. All of this has consequences for both parents and children. (...) The families who migrate often lose their economic resources and have to use social benefits which is barely enough.

In Babak's account, the financial difficulties are tied with the category of refugee, where parents have less space to acquire economic capital. According to Koikkalainen et al. (2011), unemployment of migrants in Finland is a great barrier for their participation and integration. The families in this study were not able to maintain the financial resources they had prior to migration. The difficulties were especially related to the job market in Finland. Kelly's (2017) study also shows that Iranian families in Sweden experience downward class mobility. Despite Iranians' educational achievements in Sweden, they have a high level of unemployment (Hosseini-Kaladjahi & Kelly 2012).

In spite of some parents' ability to use the Finnish language for their daily needs, they have limited social networks and no significant group memberships in valued fields. The parents' limited social networks outside of their family make them more dependent on their

children's presence in their life. This dependency may cause ambivalent feelings in the parents. Here is a father who talks about his ambivalent feelings towards his children:

Darius: It is very sad when they [children] don't understand us. When you talk with the children they might say "our poor father! Our mother left him and we also left him and he doesn't get out of the house". They invite the father because he is alone. They try to arrange to take him on a trip or a boat trip or ask to live with him for a week or vice versa. I feel like they act in a merciful way. I prefer not to have that kind of kindness, which is not coming out of respect.

Loneliness and isolation for the parents, such as Darius, make them very dependent on their children, as being their only strong social bond. As a result, parents may feel as if they are a burden on their children, and the children's attempts to help with loneliness and isolation are perceived as pity rather than a real desire to spend time with the parent. The isolation of the migrant families has a negative effect on its members (Attias-Donfut & Waite 2012) and on intergenerational relationships. One of the biggest concerns of the parents was being alone when they are older. During the fieldwork, one mother, Elaheh, strongly expressed her fear about old age. She told me that she has suffered from depression and was not able to find any social life outside the home and that she is terrified about her future if her children leave her in an old people's home. The ambivalent feelings among elderly parents who are in need of care have also been observed among non-migrant groups (e.g. Birditt et al. 2009). However, this study indicates that the dependency on children could be intensified when the migrant parents have few other available resources that are given value in this particular context.

Investing on children's achievements

The importance of children's success was an aspect emphasized by the parents in this study. Children's achievements were central when the parents expressed their expectations from their adult children. Here a father tells about his expectations:

Mehdi: I would like that my children continue their education. I mean that I lost everything in my life here and I wish that at least they could use the opportunities here to have a better life. Here, the opportunity for education is great. (...) I had a very good position in Iran. I am not saying that I was very successful, but I lived respectfully. (...) It does not matter what kind of field or education they choose, I expect my children to live respectfully. I mean I expect my children to make a good life and reach their goals. I don't know if you understand what I mean. I don't expect them to do anything for me. If I see my children are successful, it is as if my life had a purpose and a result. I would like to see my children successful. It could be in business or anything. They are able to choose their path now at this age. I expect them to choose the right path. That is all.

Mehdi does not currently have the same position as before in Iran. This shows how different contexts may provide different ranges of resources to the parents (see also Anthias 2009). Therefore, the comparisons that the parents make between their positions in Iran (such as having access to prestigious jobs or social networks) and in Finland lead them to perceive themselves as not being successful after migration. However, they find a sense of worth as parents if their children gain capitals. This mainly refers to institutionalized and economic capitals, and also social capital, such as children choosing the “right” friends. In Mehdi’s account, if his children achieve an academic degree in Finland, their education could be then transformed into economic capital. The parents in this study define their parenting role as respectable when their adult children are successful (Karimi forthcoming). That is why Mehdi connects his children’s success and failure to his own success and failure.

Education is one of the important markers for class and success among the Iranian diaspora. Previous research suggests that Iranian parents in Sweden also have great expectations for their children to pursue higher academic achievements (Kelly 2017). The parents in this study strongly encourage their children to engage in higher education to build cultural capital. Attias-Donfut and Waite (2012) also indicate that children’s educational success in migrant families is viewed as making class mobility possible.

In addition to education and career performance, adult children’s choice of partner was an important factor for the parents in defining children’s success. Some parents viewed an adult child’s divorce or unapproved marriage as a failure on their part. This was reflected in both my fieldwork observations and interviews. For example, Sajad and Minu addressed their daughter’s choice of marriage and her subsequent divorce several times. In one occasion, Sajad said, “I felt guilty for her marriage, even though it was her own choice to marry that man”. Sajad’s view reveals that the parents may understand their children’s perceived failure, such as choosing the “wrong” spouse, as being their own parental responsibility. Having a successful marriage shows the value of a family among the Iranian community. My interpretation of these narrations is that Sajad and Minu were also concerned about my judgement when they shared their daughter’s divorce experience with me. In addition, one of the mothers, Azar, expressed that she has been unable to participate in her children’s marriage plans in ways that she traditionally felt she should have. This reveals that the parents also experience that things they value, such as traditional marriage ceremonies and parental participation in them, have not necessarily been valued by their children in the Finnish context.

The parents in this study invest heavily on their children’s success. However, this may become another source of ambivalent feelings for the parents if the children fail to achieve success. In the following excerpt, a father explains his ambivalent feelings towards his child. He feels that he has failed in his parenting because his child is not pursuing a career or education and is surrounded by “unhealthy” friendships, as he describes later in the interview.

Nader: Sometimes I hate myself. I really try hard, but I am not a father anymore. (...) Sometimes I get so mad at my child that I cannot describe it. It’s like the world doesn’t

mean anything to me. But on the other hand, I like him because he is my child. (...) I know he [Nader's son] has troubles, because there is nobody to guide him. If I say something to him, he leaves, because he has social support. If I want him around, I need to not say anything and stay quiet, even though I know he is not on the right path. (...) In a foreign country, where there are no relatives or friends, the father cannot be a father, also because there is an institution called Kela [an institution that provides social benefits for residents of Finland], which helps children. (...) Here, we do not have the position of supporters for our children.

Nader's statement shows how the parents experience contradictory emotions towards their children when they witness their children's failure. Nader feels that his possibilities to influence his son's choices as a father have become limited because his child can use social welfare support for living. Thus, he has less power to influence his child's choices and also difficulty in defining his role as a father. In addition, Nader addresses that his extended social and family networks are not available in Finland (also see Phinney, Ong & Madden 2000). These networks could have enabled his son with more resources such as advice given by his community of friends and family. Nader views the unavailability of his social resources as a barrier to being able to contribute to his son's future. The fathers often face this challenge more significantly than the mothers in this study. This is because the social construction of fathering roles among the Iranian community enables the fathers to use their social resources (such as friends and relatives) as mediators to guide their children (Karimi forthcoming). When their social network is not accessible, they face difficulties to fulfil their role expectations and consequently develop ambivalent feelings towards their children and their fathering role.

Navigating between parents' expectation of success and autonomy

In my both field notes and interviews, adult children expressed their strong sympathy towards their parents and the ways that the parents have had to handle difficulties throughout their lives. The financial difficulties, the stressful waiting process of being accepted as a refugee and arriving to an unknown society with limited social networks were addressed by the adult children. One daughter, Mahsa, said to me, "Now that I am older, I understand how difficult the situation was for my father". However, the conflict between autonomy and fulfilling the parents' expectations leads the children to develop ambivalent feelings towards their parents. One daughter describes how her autonomy is discussed in her family:

Rana: My parents expect me to accept whatever they are saying, anything, without questioning them. I don't accept this in our culture. Why should we accept whatever our parents say? Of course, parents should have their respect and position. Of course they

work hard for us but when they say something illogical, I don't want to listen. Never! For example, my father says that I should be a physician. (...) I feel there is something in my relationship with my parents. They want to put me in a golden bubble so that nothing happens to me, to their beautiful daughter. "Oh no, nothing should happen to her." But then how can I handle the situations, people around and society in the future? With everything that exists in this world, how can I react? Now, they put me in a bubble and don't let me have my own experiences. Of course, I may fail. People should have experiences that are not harmful. My parents don't understand what Finnish parents understand. It means they [Finns] say the child should be absolutely free. However, I do not accept the absolute freedom. I try to be balanced.

Karimi: Then what do you do in this kind of situation?

Rana: Well, I always try to explain, but sometimes it doesn't work. It's like a copy machine that the paper doesn't fit inside. You should either change the machine or the paper. What I do is distance myself and let time to show them.

In Rana's account, the parenting role is associated with a sense of respect and appreciation. She also connects her parents' expectations to "cultural" practices as she makes a distinction between "Finnish" and "Iranian" ways of parenting. The ambivalent feelings in Rana and many other children are more connected to the parental expectation on children's success. According to Rana, her parents demand obedience from her to guarantee that she will not fail in any aspect of her life. However, Rana wants to make her own decisions even if they cause bad experiences for her. Rana feels ambivalence as a result of the contradictory demands of being a loyal child and her need for independent choice. Her example shows that between total acceptance and rebelling against her parents' wishes is a way to balance these two desires. However, when she is not able to navigate between expectations in a balanced way, she keeps a distance until time changes the situation in her favour. In the following, one of the participant sons reflects on his ambivalent feelings:

Karimi: What kind of child do you think you are for your parents?

Ehsan: You should ask them [he laughs]. I'm guessing they are not satisfied with my current path in life and my behaviour, a path that doesn't involve them. Some would perhaps call it betrayal, or disloyalty or coldness; be that as it may, I have contributed much more than my share of duties, while not receiving much. It would be irrational for me to contribute more at this point. However, sometimes I try to be close to them, respect them, and help them out with different things, but then I feel trapped in their unlimited expectations.

Ehsan's statement shows his ambivalent relationship with his parents as a coexistence of solidarity and conflict (see Lüscher & Hoff 2013). Despite distancing himself from his parents, he still tries "to be close to them". Ehsan struggles with the paradox of a distanced and a

close relationship with his parents where he continually has difficulties choosing between his autonomy and fulfilling his parents' expectations. Despite dilemmas, the adult children have the possibility to keep distance, if they cannot find a way to resolve their ambivalent relationships with their parents. However, keeping distance and limiting interaction with children seem to be more difficult for the parents.

Sometimes, the children may realize that their parents' perception of success does not necessarily fit with their definition of success or social structure in the new society (Shimoni, Este & Clark 2003). The disparity between parents' and children's understandings of success was observed in some of the families in this study. For instance, Farhad insisted on opening a business rather than pursuing higher education, which he had been encouraged to do by his parents. According to his parents, missing out the opportunity of having an academic degree would limit Farhad's possibility for class mobility in the future. Lina was another case saying, "My father expected me to become someone whom I did not want to be; a doctor or a lawyer, all highly skilled occupations. But, I never found education as something which would make me happy". This disagreement may sometimes create a contradictory demand on the children's roles, especially when the outcome of their choice has an effect on their parents. The parents invest in their children's conduct to build a sense of worth for their family. Having successful children provides value to the family as a whole, as well as builds a picture of a respectable family in the eyes of the Iranian community.

Discussion

Ambivalence is an integral part of intergenerational relationships throughout the family's life course and may not be completely resolved (Connidis & McMullin 2002). However, this article connects the Iranian families' accessibility to different forms of capital in Finland and the ways that intergenerational ambivalence is experienced to reveal the structural factors that make the experience of ambivalence strong and pronounced among the participants in this study. I explain how structural arrangements constrain the parents' and adult children's ability to fulfil their role expectations (Connidis & McMullin 2002) when they have limited access to different forms of capital in the Finnish society.

Drawing from Bourdieu's understanding of different forms of capital and its possession and accumulation in a field (Bourdieu 1986), I found two sources of intergenerational ambivalence among the participant families. Firstly, the parents struggle with the loss of their social capital, such as relatives, friends and other social networks. In addition, their cultural capital loses its relevance when encountering language barriers, and having difficulties in validating an educational degree or previous work experience. Their economic capital is also restricted when they have fewer economic assets, or are dependent on low paying jobs or welfare state support. The limited capitals held by the parents in Finland create positions (see Bourdieu 1987) where they are dependent on their children as their translators or their only strong social bond. The parents also experience less agency in

presenting themselves as good examples of successful individuals. This contributes to the ambivalent feelings experienced by the parents and their adult children.

Secondly, the parents believe that they were not able to maintain their resources in Finland similarly as in Iran prior to migration. However, by raising successful children, parents attempt to construct their family and their parenting as valuable and worthy in their Finnish surroundings and the Finnish–Iranian community. The success of children is mainly defined with children’s choice of partnership and friendship, education and career preferences and their behaviour. Each of these aspects was given value in the Finnish and Iranian contexts. If the children fail to achieve in these specific areas, the parents experience ambivalent feelings towards their children and their own parenting role. They constantly compare their situation with that prior to migration and see that having more resources could have enabled them to guide their children to attain better performances. Thus, as a result, they question if their parenting role is valuable at all. Adult children also experience a contradiction in their role expectation as they have a difficult time in navigating between their individual desire and their parents’ expectations and description of success.

It is essential to emphasize that the existence of intergenerational ambivalence does not exclude the existence of intergenerational solidarity and strong family ties among the Iranian families in this study. However, this research reflects on the ambivalent aspect of relationships to show how accessing to opportunities and resources (e.g. Anthias 2009) affects the intergenerational relationships in these families.

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