

An Exploratory Study of Grandparent-Grandchild Relationships from the Perspectives of
Adolescents

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Abstract

Despite the increasing role of grandparents in the lives of their grandchildren, no study has been conducted before on the nature of this relationship in South Africa. This study explored this relationship from the perspective of the adolescent grandchild across the different ethnic groups by looking at: a) the quality of the relationship b) the roles that grandparents play and their level of involvement and c) the factors that influence these relationships. 12 adolescents (2 Black, 3 White, 4 Coloured, and 3 Indian) between the ages of 13-16 were interviewed using semi-structured interviews and a thematic analysis was done to examine the nature of the grandparent-grandchild relationship in South Africa. Themes that emerged included the role of grandparents as a support system, caregiver and teacher amongst others. The primary factors influencing the grandparent-grandchild relationship were found to be parental encouragement and geographical proximity. Although the findings are in accordance with international findings to a certain degree, differences were found amongst the different ethnic groups regarding certain aspects of the relationship. However, as this study is only an exploratory study, further research into this area must be done.

Keywords: Grandparents, grandchildren, adolescents

Introduction

In modern western societies, the constantly shifting family constituencies and the rise of 'beanpole families- long thin groups of several small generations ' (Grundy, Murphy & Shelton, 1999 as cited in Fergusson, Maughan & Golding, 2008, p. 161)- single-parent households and families where both parents work, has increased the importance of the grandparental role. In South Africa, the HIV/AIDS epidemic has led to increased mortality rates amongst 25-49 years old¹ resulting in a significant number of parents dying. Consequentially, 1-3% of children in South Africa are orphaned, with their grandparents often becoming their primary caregivers. Approximately 60 % of orphans live in a grandparent-headed households and the grandparents are recognised as their key financial providers (Chazan, 2008; Richter, Panday, Swart & Norris, 2009).

Added to this, it has become increasingly important for South African youth to have good parental figures due to the number of challenges facing them. Adolescence is a period of transition between childhood and adulthood where young people are still grappling with issues of identity and are impressionable towards external negative influences (Pittman, 2007; Walper & Beckh, 2006). Alcohol and drug abuse is high amongst South African adolescents and approximately 1 in 3 South African girls will become pregnant before she is 20 (IRIN, 2007). However, support from parental figures may decrease the likelihood of children succumbing to negative influences (Attar-Schwartz, Tan & Buchanan, 2009; Pittman, 2007).

In light of the high rates of parent mortality and the increase of families where both parents work, parents are becoming less and less involved in their children's lives and the significance of grandparents in fulfilling these support roles has become increasingly important. Although research in this area has been conducted in other countries, no current studies exist in South Africa. The latter is rather disturbing and there has been a call for initiatives and interventions aimed at providing support for grandparent-headed households (Chazan, 2008).

Most of the research into the grandparent-grandchild relationships has been from the perspective of grandparents and is thus rather one-sided (Crosnoe & Elder, 2002). Furthermore, any research that has been undertaken from the perspective of the grandchild mainly involves adult-grandchildren (Crosnoe & Elder, 2002; Kemp, 2005; Mueller & Elder, 2003). Although limited research has been conducted on how adolescents view their grandparents, it is at this life stage that the role of the grandparent is arguably most important and the voices of adolescents need to be added to this growing field of literature.

Research from the perspective of the adolescent grandchild

In the United Kingdom, a study was undertaken on a nationally representative sample, examining the different dimensions of the grandparent-grandchild relationship from an adolescent's perspective (Attar-Schwartz et al., 2009; Griggs, Tan, Buchanan, Attar-Schwartz & Flouri, 2009; Tan, Buchanan, Flouri, Attar-Schwartz & Griggs, 2010). It was found that grandparents did play a significant role in the lives of their adolescent grandchildren. The majority of grandchildren felt a deep level of emotional closeness with their grandparents and regarded them as an important source of emotional support. Furthermore, the involvement of grandparents in their lives was associated with positive psychological adjustment and general well-being. However, researchers noted that although the sample group was predominantly white, differences may exist amongst the different racial groups (Tan et al., 2010). The demographical differences between the population of the United Kingdom and the population of South Africa where 79.3% of the population is black, 9.1% is white, 9% is coloured and 2.6% is Indian/Asian (Statistics South Africa, 2009) is so great that international findings cannot automatically be inferred to South Africa. Furthermore, the problems of high rates of teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS and other hardships facing teenagers, are a bigger problem in South Africa. Thus a study specific to South Africa had to be undertaken in order to assess the true nature of relationships between grandparents and grandchildren in South Africa.

The Nature of Grandparent-Grandchildren Relationships

In exploring the general literature on the nature of grandparent-grandchild relationships, three themes emerged that best describe its different facets: a) the quality of the relationship, b) the role of grandparents and the degree of practical involvement that they have in their grandchildren's lives, and c) the factors that influence the grandparent-grandchild relationship.

Quality of relationship between grandparents and grandchildren. Griggs et al. (2009) noted that grandparental involvement could be described as being on a continuum- on one hand there is no contact and on the other hand they may have full parental responsibilities and rights. Grandparents that are involved in their grandchildren's lives often provide emotional support to their grandchildren. Furthermore, since they are often not figures of authority, greater leniency may exist on the part of the grandparents (Ruiz & Silverstein, 2007; Tan et al., 2010). Grandparents also provide support structures for the grandchildren when their families are undergoing transitions such as parental separation and divorce

(Griggs et al., 2009). Emotional closeness with grandparents alleviates depressive symptoms for grandchildren (Ruiz & Silverstein, 2007) and with the rise of teenage pregnancy grandparents play a huge role in the upbringing of their grandchildren (Ferguson et al., 2008; Smith, 2005). These studies all reiterate that the different roles that the grandparents take as child carers, financial and social supports lead to emotional closeness with their grandchildren.

Grandparental roles and the degree of involvement in grandchildren's lives.

Denham and Smith (1989) found that the role of grandparents is constantly evolving in society to meet modern changes. Most of the literature to date focuses on grandparents who have taken on the role of parental figures (Heywood, 1999; Jendrek, 1993; Leder, Grinstead & Torres, 2007). Young adults have increasingly been unable to fulfil their parental responsibilities as a result of substance abuse and high rates of HIV/AIDs amongst others, leading to a rise in the number of custodial grandparents (Hayslip & Kaminski, 2005; Heywood, 1999; Orb & Davey, 2007). Although this parental role has often had an adverse effect on the physical, social and emotional well-being of grandparents, some grandparents viewed this opportunity as a second chance to correct any past mistakes with their own children (Jendrek, 1993). Furthermore, grandchildren and custodial grandparents often reported very close relationships (Leder et al., 2007; Orb & Davey, 2007).

Aside from custodial grandparents, those who do not live with their grandchildren still have a high frequency of contact and involvement in their grandchildren's lives. Griggs et al. (2009) found that the majority of children had at least one grandparent involved in their lives. Grandparents often took care of their grandchildren when parents were at work. Those grandparents who were not caregivers still took an active interest in the social activities and education of their grandchildren and took on the role of providing financial stability for their grandchildren if necessary.

Jessel (2009) emphasises the notion of 'intergenerational learning' and the positive impact that it could have on both children and grandparents. According to grandchildren, grandparents already fill the role of educator and teacher, especially in matters that the grandparents have expertise in (Crosnoe & Elder, 2002, Griggs et al., 2009). Grandparents also place positive pressure on their grandchildren in that grandchildren want to excel academically in order to make their grandparents proud of them (Griggs et al., 2009). When grandchildren make the decision to go to university, grandparents often take it upon themselves to be their mentors and are seen as sources of wisdom.

There is a parallel between literature predating 1989 and current literature, that grandparents fulfil the role of family historian and are responsible for teaching their grandchildren family values, traditions and about their ethnic heritage (Denham and Smith, 1989, Griggs et al, 2009; Tan et al., 2010). This reinforces the symbolic role of grandparents in that their influences are not physically recognisable but are often emotional and value-laden.

Grandparents exert indirect influence on their grandchildren's lives through their relationships with their own children. This includes providing a) emotional and financial assistance b) parenting skills and c) serving as role models to parents. If their children are new parents, grandparents are more likely to offer their help (Ferguson et al., 2008) and a parent's parenting style is often reflective of their own parent's parenting style (Smith, 2005; Kataoka-Yahiro, Ceria, & Caulfield, 2004).

Factors facilitating the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren.

One of the most important factors influencing the grandparent-grandchild relationship is the relationship between the parents and the grandparents (Denham & Smith, 1989). Grandparental contact, as with all contact with children, is mediated by parents (Denham & Smith, 1989; Ferguson et al. 2008; Mueller & Elder, 2003; Ruiz & Silverstein, 2007; Smith, 2005). If parents have a good relationship with their parents, they are more likely to foster a good grandparent-grandchild relationship. However, when parents get divorced, it is often the parents of the custodial parents that are more involved in the lives of their grandchildren (Ferguson et al., 2008; Griggs et al., 2009; Smith, 2005).

Geographical proximity has also been identified as an important factor in determining the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren. However, as families move away from suburban areas to be closer to places of work, the focus has shifted away from geographical proximity as an indicator of emotional closeness, to focus on the amount of contact (Mueller & Elder, 2003). Hence, grandparents who look after their grandchildren on a full-time basis were found to have stronger relationships and to be more involved with those grandchildren that they looked after. Geurt, Poortman, van Tilburg and Dykstra (2009) found that although frequency of face-to-face contact between grandparents and grandchildren decreased as the grandchildren got older, with the advent of technology, grandchildren contacted their grandparents through emails and the phone.

Some literature has examined whether personal characteristic factors of grandchildren, such as temperament, age and gender, play a role in the upbringing of their grandchildren (Geurts et al., 2009; Tan et al., 2010). However, there is no common ground to

be found in this regard. Furthermore, it has not been established as to whether the number of grandchildren that a grandparent may have affects their individual relationships with their grandchildren (Smith, 2005). Thus the most important factors identified were parental encouragement, geographical proximity and contact.

Research across ethnic groups

Although the gap in research regarding relationships between grandparents and grandchildren across ethnic groups has been identified, studies that examine the role of grandparents across ethnic groups are uncommon (Attar-Schwartz et al., 2009; Creasy & Koblewski, 1991). However, Kataoka-Yahiro et al. (2004) have reviewed literature examining the care-giving roles of grandparents in African-American, Hispanic and Asian communities in the United States of America. In the latter cultures, grandparents played a more highly involved role than their Caucasian counterparts did and were fundamental in instilling a sense of ethnic identity. In Hispanic families, grandparents filled more culturally specific roles and provided a strong financial and emotional support network. Asian-American grandparents were also caregivers as it has become more culturally appropriate for both parents in the Asian culture to work. Pittman (2007) also found that African-American children (and to a certain extent Hispanic-American children) were more likely to be living in grandparent-headed households than their Caucasian counterparts. Their overall conclusion was that the nature of the relationships across different ethnic groups differed. In a country as ethnically diverse as South Africa, the latter was considered when conducting this study.

Theoretical framework for studies looking at the grandparent-grandchild relationship.

In examining the nature of the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren, the above findings have shown that grandchildren look beyond their immediate families for support and influence. This essentially ties into the ecological perspective (Creasey, 1993). This approach looks at the broader family system to examine what facilitates the development of individuals and highlights the importance of grandparents in the development of grandchildren and the effect that parent-grandparent relationships has on the nature of grandparent-grandchildren relations (Bronfenbrenner, 1979 as cited in Attar-Schwartz et al., 2009). This essentially involves looking at the role of grandparents and the degree of affinity that grandchildren feel with them. It also purports looking at the effect of other ecological factors in which these relationships are situated, such as the socio-economic and ethnic groupings. It is against this theoretical framework that this study is set.

Aims of this study

As mentioned above, no study has been conducted in South Africa regarding the nature of the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren. Although grandparents having been adopting the parental role, there is a lack of research indicating whether they do so adequately. In light of the need for support from older figures for adolescents due to the problems that they are facing in South Africa today, it is important that their voices be heard regarding who plays an important role in their lives.

This study was the first step in a larger project looking at the effect of grandparents on the development of their grandchildren. In order for the larger project to come into effect, exploratory work had to be done to assess the current nature of relationships between grandparents and grandchildren. Furthermore, because South Africa has such an ethnically diverse population and because of latter findings suggesting that there is a difference across ethnic groups and the huge disparity in social economic statuses across the different ethnic groupings (Statistics South Africa, 2010), it was important for an exploratory study set against an ecological framework to consider this.

The broad research aim was to explore the nature of the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren from the perspective of grandchildren amongst the different ethnic groups of South Africa. This question was explored by asking the following sub-questions:

What is the quality of the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren: this looked at the level of emotional closeness participants felt towards their grandparents and the extent to which they felt they received support from them.

What kinds of roles do grandparents play and in what ways are they involved in their grandchildren's lives: this question investigated what kinds of activities grandparents and grandchildren did together. It also looked at the different roles that grandparents took on.

What factors influence the grandparent-grandchild relationship: Questions were framed around whether factors such as frequency of contact, type of contact, grandparent-parent relationships, geographical proximity and so forth influenced the relationships between grandparents and grandchildren.

Method

Research Design

This study was essentially of an exploratory nature. Exploratory work usually takes the form of in-depth interviews which aim to conceptualise the research topic and shed more light into the area (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006). Although variables facilitating

the grandparent-grandchild relationship were identified in the literature reviewed above, a more open-ended exploratory research technique was needed to explore whether they applied in the South African context (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006). Thus a qualitative research design was most appropriate as the very aim of qualitative research is to clarify issues around an unknown research area. The aim of qualitative research is to discover the “quality and texture of an experience” (Willig, 2008, p. 8), which is what the research questions above were aiming to do.

Although exploratory research does not fit into one specific qualitative research paradigm, the very essence of exploratory work is to provide in-depth descriptions of a topic. This correlates with an interpretive paradigm (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). The research questions were formulated around discovering what participants subjectively see as the most important part of their relationships with their grandparents, the levels of emotional attachment and the specific roles grandparents play in their lives. The research project aimed to examine the relationships in their specific contexts and provide rich, detailed description of these subjective experiences – all key principles of the interpretive paradigm (Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

Participants

In order to get the best possible insight into the grandparent-grandchild relationship, the sample was restricted to adolescents with at least one living grandparent. The sample size was 12: 2 black participants, 3 white participants, 4 coloured participants and 3 Indian participants.

Participants were categorised according to the four main ethnic groups in which South Africans are still today classified (Statistics South Africa, 2009). In light of the fact that previous studies have indicated that it would be useful to explore the grandparent-grandchild relationship across different ethnicities, the researcher chose to look at the South African context and its diverse population and classify participants accordingly.

There were 6 boys and 6 girls in the sample and the ages of participants ranged from 13-16 years of age. This age group was chosen as this period of adolescence has been identified as a time of transition where adolescents are most susceptible to negative influences and an older parental figure’s influence is most likely to have to have a positive impact (Attar-Schwartz et al., 2009; Brooks-Gunn & Chase-Lansdale, 1995).

Purposeful sampling whereby participants were recruited according to the sampling criteria mentioned above and snowball sampling, where the participants are found through referral by other participants, were used in this research project (Babbie & Mouton, 2006).

Added to this, there was also an element of convenience sampling used as the researcher interviewed those participants who were easily accessible (Marshall, 1996). The Grade Nine youth group co-ordinator of the non-profit organisation, Equal Education, was contacted and the black participants were recruited from this organisation. When recruiting white, coloured and Indian participants, the younger siblings of various friends and acquaintances who fit the sample criteria were contacted and informed about the study and asked if they would be willing to take part in it. Additional participants were accessed through the friends of these siblings.

Apparatus

Exploratory research is often undertaken through means of in-depth interviews (Babbie & Mouton, 2006). Thus, individual semi-structured interviews were conducted. They are seen as a conversation between the researcher and participant and produce rich data on a topic. The open-ended and descriptive nature of questions and their emphasis on the narrative and subjective experience of the interviewee encourages participants to open up about their own stories (Willig, 2008). Semi-structured interviews give the researcher an opportunity to steer the conversation to answer the research questions at hand, but also allow the participant to share their own insights and direct the interview in a way that shows subjectively the most important parts of their relationships with their grandparents. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews also involve establishing a rapport between the researcher and the participant (Willig, 2008). This was imperative in this study when interviewing adolescents who were too shy to open up initially.

Probes were also inserted into the interview schedule should the interviewee not respond fully to certain questions. For example, when asked about the social support provided by grandparents, interviewees were asked to expand on the ways in which grandparents do this (see Appendix B). The researcher also employed certain recommended techniques such as funnelling whereby she started off with broader questions surrounding a topic and then focused on more specific questions in order to gain a richer response from the participant (Smith, 2008). An example of this is where the researcher asks the participant what they think the ideal relationship between grandparents and grandchildren is and moves on to ask more specific questions about their own relationships with their grandparents (see Appendix B). Questions were also arranged under the sub-question headings in order to be able to identify certain themes arising from the questions easily.

The aim of the research project was to get a general overview of what relationships between grandparents and grandchild was like- thus questions were formulated by consulting

a variety of literature on the topic. The measures identified by Griggs et al. (2009) which were important in improving emotional well-being of grandchildren were used to formulate questions relating to level of involvement. To determine questions on social support and cohesion, the researcher used the three dimensions of social cohesion cited by Ruiz and Silverstein (2007). Questions on companionship and intimacy such as “Do you tell your grandparents any of your personal problems” were adapted from the Network of Relationship Inventory, a Likert scale questionnaire designed to measure adolescent’s relationships within specific dyads (Creasy & Koblewski, 1991)

The majority of the questions formulated were adapted from quantitative studies as they best informed the researcher about the different facets of the grandparent-grandchild relationship. However, the open-ended and descriptive ways in which the questions were formulated (see Appendix B) afforded the gathering of a wealth of data that quantitative questionnaires were unable to do.

Procedure

Ethical guidelines as prescribed by the University of Cape Town were followed and ethical approval for the study was gained from the University of Cape Town’s Psychology Department Research Ethics Committee. Interviews were conducted following the one-to-one technique with the participant alone so that they were not uncomfortable speaking about their grandparents and other family members in front of their parents (Smith, 2008). Although interviews were conducted in English, the researcher was always aware that there was “linguistic variability” (Willig, 2008, p.22) amongst participants and that their levels of English proficiency were not the same. Thus, when participants were unable to articulate their thoughts in English, they were encouraged to articulate it in their language of choice. Time was also taken to rephrase and simplify questions if participants did not understand them.

A tape-recorder was used to record each interview and field notes were taken sporadically by the researcher. Each participant verbally consented to the use of the tape-recorder and none of them requested a copy of the interview despite the fact that the option was available to them.

Each interview lasted for approximately one hour and the majority of them were conducted in the participants’ homes- one was conducted at the participant’s school and two at a youth group centre. They all followed a similar procedure. Participants were recruited and a meeting was set up telephonically with the participant and their parent/guardian. Where possible, assent forms (see Appendix A) were emailed to the participants prior to the meeting.

At the meeting, the researcher introduced herself to the participant and their parent/guardian. Any questions and concerns were dealt with and the signed assent form was obtained prior to the interview being conducted. Thereafter the parent/guardian was asked to leave the room and the participant was made aware that the interview would commence as soon as the tape-recorder was turned on. The participant was asked if they had any issues to clarify before the interview began. Once the tape-recorder was turned on the interview started.

The first sub-section of questions was designed around establishing the rapport between the researcher and participant that is essential to a successful interview. The topic of grandparents was also introduced by asking them to share with the researcher a bit about their grandparents (see Appendix B).

Once the topic had been introduced and participants started thinking about their relationship with their grandparents, the researcher directed the conversation to explore how close participants felt to their grandparents, how they rated the quality of their relationship and how much they relied on their grandparents for emotional support. Probing questions such as “Can you give me an example?” and “Why do you think this is so?” were used to encourage participants to open up.

The researcher then explored the types of activities that the participants enjoyed with their grandparents and the level of involvement that grandparents take in their lives, such as whether they are in charge of disciplining them or whether they are in any way responsible for their education. Questions were formulated around inviting them to tell the researcher about this by starting off with “Tell me...” and “Describe...” (See Appendix B).

The final sub-set of questions aimed at exploring the third research sub-question by asking about the key factors that influenced how involved their grandparents are in their lives. In making a transition from the previous sub-section of questions regarding grandparental role and involvement, the participant was first asked, “what do you think influences how often you see your grandparents”, thus giving them the power to steer that part of the interview. However, questions informed by previous literature were used to prompt the participant into providing information when they did not readily do so.

Overall, the participants were responsible for steering the interviews and the questions only served as prompts in order for the researcher to collect sufficient data (Willig, 2008). Once all questions were asked, the participant was debriefed and asked about their thoughts on the interview and whether they were comfortable throughout it. The participant was then invited to contact the researcher in future should they have any questions.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. This involved classifying and analysing certain recurring themes or patterns within the data that gave meaning to the research question and reflected the true reality of the relationships between grandparents and grandchildren. This method involved six stages (described below) and is a recursive process whereby the researcher is required to move backwards and forwards between each stage to ensure an accurate analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thus the themes identified were appropriate to the research questions as they were continuously checked against it.

Firstly, the data was transcribed and the researcher familiarised herself with it by reading it a few times and making detailed notes for possible themes and codes each time. Transcriptions were checked against the audiotapes for accuracy.

Next, certain features of the data that related to the research questions in any way were identified. Codes were generated that the researcher felt would relate to the broader themes that recur across the data. Prior to the interviews, three sub-areas of interest had already been identified and the research question had been divided accordingly.

Thirdly, the codes were reviewed and initial themes identified from this. All coded data was categorised in some way into themes and sub-themes.

The fourth stage involved reviewing the data collated into themes and checking to see if they followed a coherent pattern and fit together within that theme. Thereafter, the researcher reviewed and refined the themes to see if they reflected the data and tied into the research topic.

The final stage involved further defining and refining the themes by identifying the main ones. The data within each theme was then analysed and arranged in such a way as to reflect the account given by the participant. When the analysis was written up, the final themes tied into the research topic at hand and provided a true reflection of the accounts of the participants.

Reflexivity

Qualitative researchers are advised to continuously be aware of the effect of their own identities on the participants and on the research process (Willig, 2008). Participants were confronted with a 21-year old, female Muslim researcher from a comfortable middle-class background and because of differing demographics, participants may have had certain preconceptions about her and her identities that affected the way they may interact with her.

The researcher was aware of the fact that throughout the interviews, her position of interviewer placed her in the position of power. Thus, by asking the participants questions about themselves and finding a way to share a laugh, the researcher aimed to establish a

rapport and make the participant comfortable enough to open up. The researcher also aimed to put the participants at ease by encouraging them to use their own language if need be and conducting the interview in a convenient and comfortable setting. Furthermore, because the researcher had previously been involved in youth groups and had worked with adolescents of this age group, she was able to relate to participants easily as she had experience in this area.

The researcher was also continuously aware of her own agenda throughout the course of the interviews and was sure not to let her knowledge of the field affect the way questions were asked. She made a concerted effort not to direct the interviews to generate data that she was expecting, but rather remembered that the nature of exploratory research was to understand what is happening in reality.

Furthermore, the researcher was conscious of the fact that she has had minimal interaction with her own grandparents and may have had a romanticised view of the grandparent-grandchild relationship. However, she tried not to portray this to the participants, as they may have felt obligated not to share any negative aspects of their relationships with their grandparents and thus the data would not be an accurate reflection of the nature of the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren.

Results

The interviews were analysed according to the three sub-research topics: 1) quality of relationship 2) role of grandparents and their level of involvement in their grandchildren's lives and 3) the factors influencing the grandparent-grandchild relationship. The relevant themes that emerged will be discussed under each topic. In this section, each participant is referred to by a pseudonym and their racial group is indicated by C (Coloured), W (White), B (Black) and I (Indian) followed by their age.

Quality of relationship

Support system. All the participants identified their grandparents as being a support system if need be. Participants were secure in the fact that their grandparents would always be there to support and guide them.

They'll always be there to uhm to help us with something like that or they'll just be there to help and guide you with anything you do and they'll support you and they'll just be there and for you to , for you to count on and you know they gonna be there if you do something you know they'll support you (Shahana, I, 16)

However, most of the participants acknowledged that despite the fact that their grandparents were there for them, they did not rely on them. As one participant said, “I think I can depend on her well but I just don’t depend on her” (Fairooza, C, 16). There was a vast difference across racial groups in that the Black adolescents in the sample relied on their grandparents for emotional support above their parents, whereas the other subsets of participants relied more on their parents and their friends. This is clear in the contrasting statements by a Black participant who described her grandparent as someone who, “is giving [sic] me advice when I need some advice. She’s like everything, ja” (Amandla, B, 16) and the Coloured participant’s statement above.

Love shown in actions. Participants continuously described the fact that they knew that their grandparents loved them by the things that they did for them, despite often not saying, “I love you” out loud. According to one participant, ‘They showing me but they don’t tell me, “I love you” (Sipho, B, 14). This theme arose across racial groups, for example, Deepa, an Indian participant also acknowledged this: “they show it. They don’t have to tell me. The things that they do. They will do things that will obviously show it” (Deepa, I, 15).

Participants described their grandparents love as being manifested in ways such as making whatever foods they liked, helping them and generally taking an interest in their lives. Across all the interviews there ran a discourse of being ‘spoilt’ by their grandparents in that they received gifts or gestures that were often in excess of what they were used to. This ranged from being bought clothes whenever they wanted, receiving money whenever they asked for some, or having an expensive hobby which their grandparents agreed to pay for. Participants did not find it a deficiency that their grandparents did not verbally express their love and were secure in the fact that their grandparents expressed their feelings in their actions.

Grandparents are another set of parents. The participants all related the way they saw their grandparents by comparing them to their parents. The Black participants, who were both raised by their grandparents, reported being closer to their grandparents than their parents and often held their grandparents in higher esteem than their parents. “He is like my mother... she used to help my mother when she was in the school, raising me up and then I can say my mummy didn’t play his role” (Sipho, B, 14).

The Coloured, White and Indian participants also spoke about their grandparents in relation to their parents but saw them more as a second set of parents who did not surpass their real parents in importance.

Some people are more close with their grandparents than with their parents. I think that ... I find that very weird though because of how I am. I'm very close with my .. more with my mother and then I am close with my granny (Anya, C, 16)

Another interesting thing to note was that three of the participants also made reference to the fact that grandparents saw their grandchildren as an extension of their (the grandchildren's) parents and treated them accordingly. "They do...they will do everything...anything for us. They see us as not grandkids but as kids. So they will treat us the way they treat my mother and my dad" (Michael, W, 13). Thus, they treated their grandchildren the same way they treated their children.

Generation gap. Six out of the 12 participants reported not being able to speak to their grandparents on account having nothing to say and belonging to different generations. These participants also felt less emotionally close to their grandparents. They all said that they were too busy to see their grandparents and when faced with the choice between seeing their grandparents or doing something else, they preferred to do something else.

When my father says oh we must go then I kind of dread it because we could have been doing something else but we go sit there... All you do is just greet them and that's the end of it...So I get bored if I go there (Fairooza, C, 16).

Despite this, three out of the above participants expressed guilt at not being close to their grandparents and acknowledged that should they wish to rectify this, they should do it now as their grandparents may not be around for much longer.

Three participants who shared certain hobbies with their grandparents, found that this brought them closer to each other. These hobbies ranged from photography to going shopping with their grandparent. An example of this is expressed by Lucy (W, 15): "My gran used to do embroidery ummm because she used to sell baby clothes and everything and I used to help her with the machines. I really liked that... We shared that kind of a thing". These participants spoke about spending quality time with their grandparents whilst engaging in their mutual interests.

Grandparental roles and level of involvement

Grandparent as caregiver. 11 out of the 12 participants identified their grandparents' chief role in their family as being the caregiver. This role of caregiver was seen on a spectrum, ranging from primary caregiver in the case of the Black participants who were

raised by their grandparents, to being secondary caregivers when their parents were not around.

If the parents weren't there for the children then they would be there for them. So like if they died or if they had a job that wouldn't let them open up to the parents then they would open up to the grandparents. So they would be kind of there just in case the parents aren't there (Roger, C, 14)

The role of caregiver was described often as being someone who performed duties that participants saw were synonymous with parents, such as giving them food or picking them up and fetching them from school. Furthermore, grandparents were seen as being caregivers to the entire family.

Source of motivation and encouragement. The majority of the participants saw their grandparents as being a source of motivation and encouragement especially when it came to their academic lives. Participants described sharing their achievements with their grandparents and the inspiration they drew from the fact that their grandparents were proud of them .

They just congratulate you, they're good for your ego (both laugh) they congratulate you whenever you do the smallest thing right you know, they make you feel good. When you sad they can also make you feel good (Michael, W, 13).

Furthermore, those participants who excelled at extra-curricular activities were also supported by their grandparents. This included grandparents coming to watch their grandchildren in shows if they showed a talent in drama or encouraging them to play a musical piece that their grandchild was particularly good at. Five of the participants also saw this motivation and encouragement extend to career advice in that their grandparents supported them in their intended career choice and even played a role in encouraging them to take their interests in certain areas further into a career.

Grandparent as teacher. The theme of the grandparent as a teacher extended to three areas: 1) teacher of morals and values, 2) teacher of family history and ethnic heritage and 3) teacher of academic work.

Teacher of morals and values. Eight out of the 12 participants described their grandparents as teaching them about morals and values. Three of these participants spoke about their grandparents as being "role models" to the entire family, especially to their

grandchildren. However, the predominant area in which grandchildren are taught by their grandparents is to appreciate and respect their parents.

Yes, cos she always says uhm, the relationship I have with my mommy is like very close, so she's like I must always treasure that because some children don't have parents and that they don't have good relationships with them and I should like...I shouldn't take advantage of it and stuff like that (Anya, C, 16)

Thus it is clear from this that grandparents often serve as a mediator between parents and children.

Teacher of family history and ethnic heritage. 10 out of the 12 participants spoke about hearing about their family history from their grandparents, especially when it came to learning about lessons from the past. Their grandparents often related to them stories about their own youth and the happenings of their times. It is interesting to note that with the Indian participants, storytelling about the past was often the biggest feature of their relationship: “[He] tells me stories sometimes... sometimes...many times the same stories over and over again” (Rayhaan, I, 15).

Furthermore, amongst the Indian participants in the sample, there was discourse surrounding the role of the grandparent in teaching their grandchildren about their culture and ethnic heritage. The entire family relied on the grandparents as a source of wisdom in this regard.

I mean she has done so many weddings and ummm she has witnessed many weddings and she is old and they say the old people always have the most experience and they have more advice. So she's always in the forefront so if anyone is struggling or something they will always go to my grandmother because she is the eldest in the family. So she they will always go to her and will ask her “do you think we should do it like this?” and she will obviously tell them yes or no (Deepa, I, 16).

It is interesting to note that of the six Indian grandparents discussed by the Indian participants, five of them were immigrants to South Africa. Whether this has an effect or not on their role in the family will be discussed further at a later stage.

Teacher of academic work. Six out of the 12 participants went to their grandparents for help with their academic work. However, only the black participants who lived with their grandparents had their grandparents help them with their homework in general. The other

four participants went to their grandparents for help in their academic work in their grandparents' areas of expertise, for example, "My (grand)dad helps me with like EMS stuff like that. Economics and stuff like that because he's a...he was a politician" (Michael, W, 13).

One must note that only Black, White and Coloured participants asked their grandparents for help with their academic work. Indian participants did not ask their grandparents for help.

Activities done with grandparents. When examining the time the participants spent with their grandparents, it emerged that a lot of it was spent doing certain activities. Seven out of the 12 participants spent their time with their grandparents watching TV or movies. Three of the female participants spoke about sharing an interest in movies with their grandmothers. Of the six boys interviewed, sport was the common thing which they watched with their grandparents, regardless of the gender of the grandparent.

Four out of the 12 participants also had certain activities that they and their grandparents shared alone together. This ranged from taking photos, shopping and embroidering, to always reading the newspaper together. Two other participants shared the same interest in literature with their grandparents and some of their time spent with their grandparent was spent reading together alone.

Seven participants found that they spent a large portion of their time with their grandparents visiting different places with their grandparents, whether it is for lunch or just to spend the afternoon out at the beach or going for a walk. It is interesting to note that of these seven participants, four participants had grandparents who lived or had lived in another city to theirs, and the only time they saw their grandparents was often when one part of the family was on vacation. Thus their time together was often spent exploring a new place or showing their visiting family new places. John (W, 13) describes a visit to his grandparents in Johannesburg: "We would go to interesting places like those towers in Joburg...the towers or just to places they liked going that they want to show us".

It is interesting to note that all these participants described these times as family events and it did not involve them spending time alone with their grandparents. In fact, apart from the participants mentioned above who shared certain hobbies and interests with their grandparents, none of the participants spent time alone with their grandparents- it was always spent in the company of their parents or their extended family. In fact, one participant vehemently stated, "I never spend time alone with them" (Shawn, C, 14).

Factors influencing the grandparent-grandchild relationship

Two factors emerged as being the most important in influencing participants' relationships with their grandparents: parental encouragement and geographical proximity.

Parental encouragement. It is interesting to note that amongst the Coloured, White and Indian participants, their parents' relationship with their grandparents was cited as the most important determinant of how often they interacted with their grandparents.

Interviewer: So what do you think influences how much you see your grandparents?

Fairooza: My father. He'd be the one to say "Let's go to our grandparents... let's go to my mother. You guys don't care about them" or "you need to see her more often because she misses you"... I think he's the one that pushes us to say... to be closer to her...ja.

(Fairooza, C, 16)

Furthermore, one participant had a particularly bad relationship with her grandparent which was a result of her mother being at odds with her grandmother. "She because she doesn't like my mother so she takes it out on me" (Anya, C, 16). However, one must note that parental encouragement is not an influence on Black participants' relationships with their grandparents. As their grandparents brought them up, they regard them as the chief parental figures in their lives.

Geographical proximity. Seven out of the 12 participants stated that they would be closer to their grandparents if they lived closer to them as they would be able to see them more often and would have more contact time with them. Interestingly however, one participant who had a bad relationship with her grandparent lived right next door to her grandparent which contradicted strongly the claims made by the rest of the participants that living closer to their grandparents would make them closer to them.

No it's actually quite the opposite cos my gran...my dad's mother is like so...like right there by us but I'm not not close with her at all. My other grandmother lives a little bit further but I'm so much closer with her (Anya, C, 16).

Despite the above, those participants who lived with their grandparents reported an especially close relationship with their grandparents that they lived with- more so than their grandparents other grandchildren by their own account.

Added to this, a participant whose one set of grandparents lived in another city to him, reported being closer to those grandparents as opposed to the ones living in his own city as a result of living with them for extended periods of time when they were on vacation and when his grandparents visited his city.

Discussion

In general, all participants had at least one grandparent involved in their lives and enjoyed some level of emotional closeness with them. All grandchildren could remember in some way the roles that grandparents played in their lives and the complexities of their relationships. Having separated the research into three sub-areas and analysed it according to: 1) quality of relationship, 2) roles and level of involvement of grandparents and 3) factors facilitating the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren, the findings will now be discussed in relation to international findings.

Quality of relationship

In looking at the quality of the relationship between grandparents and their grandchildren, four themes emerged. Firstly, all participants saw their grandparents as being a source of support. This was in accordance with the study done by Griggs et al. (2009) where grandparents were found to be support structures in times of trouble. However, this study found that grandchildren saw their grandparents as a support structure in general. However, only Black participants relied on their grandparents fully. All other grandchildren only considered going to their grandparents if their parents and friends were unavailable.

This can be seen in relation to a further theme where grandparents were regarded as another set of parents; hence they fulfilled the role of a support system as well. Although other studies have found that grandparents did take on the role of a “second set of parents” (Ferguson et al., 2008; Smith, 2005), in this study it was found that despite grandchildren’s perceptions of grandparents to be support structures, majority of them did not rely on their grandparents in this way.

However, there was a difference across racial groups in that Black participants perceived their grandparents as being their real parents. One can argue that this is due to the fact that both Black participants were raised by their grandparents and thus viewed them as chief parental figures, whereas the other subgroups were raised by their biological parents. This finding supports the proposal by Pittman (2007) that African- American grandchildren are more likely to live in grandparent-headed households than their Caucasian counterparts. The notion that emotional closeness is linked to being raised by one’s grandparent is also

supported by the fact that an Indian participant whose grandmother was partly responsible for raising her, often felt closer and more comfortable with her grandparent than her parents due to the fact that her grandmother was around more.

The theme of love in action emerged, highlighting the fact that grandparents preferred to show their grandchildren how much they cared about them, as opposed to saying it. Grandchildren reported to being showered with gifts by their grandparents and this in turn improved the quality of their relationship. Grandchildren attributed this inability of grandparents to verbalise their love to the fact that grandparents were from a generation that did not express their feelings. There has been no mention of this theme in previous literature—rather, it has been found to be the opposite whereby grandparents provided the affirmation of love that parents were sometimes unable to (Ruiz & Silverstein, 2007).

This links with the final theme that emerged of there being a generation gap between grandparents and grandchildren. Half of the participants felt that they did not have much to say to their grandparents and only those that shared common interests and hobbies with their grandparents felt that they had a good quality of relationship which transcended the generational gap. Although no reasoning was given for this, this does draw a parallel with the finding by Griggs et al. (2009) that grandparents' willingness to share certain activities with their grandchildren was a sign of their emotional support. This could explain why those grandchildren in this study who did share certain interests with their grandparents were also more willing to rely on the available grandparental support structures.

Grandparental roles and level of involvement in grandchildren's lives

The role of grandparents in the family structure was found to encompass three areas: they were seen as caregivers, sources of motivation and encouragement, and teachers. The role of caregiver was found to be on a spectrum where grandparental care was nonexistent on the one end and on the other they were found to be primary caregivers. This supported findings from international studies which found that grandparents often fulfilled the role of custodians of their grandchildren (Hayslip & Kaminski; Heywood, 1999; Orb & Davey, 2007) or were secondary caregivers when parents were working.

There was a difference amongst the racial groups with regards to the role of caregiver. As Black participants were raised by their grandparents, the latter were described as being the primary caregivers and surpassed the care giving roles of biological parents. One participant was raised by his grandparent as his mother had become pregnant as a teenager and could not raise him on her own. This echoes previous literature which cites teenage pregnancy as one of the reasons as to why grandparents become custodial parents. Kataoka- Yahiro et al. (2004)

and Pittman (2007) also found the roles of African-American grandparents to be primary caregivers, and although the sample size of this study is too small to generalise towards a larger population, it is suggested that black grandparents may play more of a parental figure in their grandchildren's lives.

Grandchildren saw their grandparents as teachers in the following realms: teachers of morals and values, family history and ethnic heritage, and academic work. The findings that grandparents were seen as teachers of morals and values and family history reiterates the fact that grandparents do not always play active roles in their grandchildren's lives, but can often play roles that indirectly assist in the moral and social development of their grandchildren (Attar-Schwartz et al., 2009; Denham, 1989, Griggs et al., 2009; Tan et al., 2010).

Participants also found that when relating stories of the past, grandparents often did so in order to teach grandchildren moral lessons from the past. Jendrek (1993) found that custodial grandparents often regarded their opportunities to raise their grandchildren as a second chance to rectify any past mistakes that they had made with their own children. One can extend this to say that the present study found that grandparents may find general interactions with their grandchildren as an opportunity to rectify past mistakes and teach their grandchildren lessons there from.

It is interesting to note that only Indian grandparents taught their grandchildren about their ethnic heritage and culture. Of the six Indian grandparents discussed by the Indian participants, five of them were not born in South Africa. This contrasts sharply with the fact that with the exception of one White grandparent, all the grandparents of the other participants were all born in South Africa. One can argue that the reason Indian grandparents play an important role in this regard is because they may feel more compelled to preserve their family heritage and history on account of most of them being immigrants. This further reiterates the findings of Kataoka-Yahira et al. (2004) which found that grandparents of Asian origin played more of a role in teaching their grandchildren about their ethnic heritage than other grandparents.

Griggs et al. (2009) found that grandparents played an important role in the education of their grandchildren. However, one must note that only Black, White and Coloured participants asked their grandparents for help with their academic work. Indian participants did not ask their grandparents for help. This may be because Indian grandparents were not educated in South Africa or did not feel confident in helping their grandchildren. The latter inference is taken from the fact that one Indian participant described how her grandparents

had found tutors for her sister when she had been struggling with her academic work, but were unable to help her themselves.

Grandparents' interest in their grandchildren's success was reified by their role as a source of motivation and encouragement. This encouragement was primarily regarding their academic work- although this did extend to other areas- which echo previous findings by Griggs et al. (2009) that grandparents place positive pressure upon their grandchildren in order for them to succeed.

This study found that a lot of the interactions between grandparents and grandchildren were marked by them engaging in various activities together, for example, watching TV. Apart from the study by Griggs et al. (2009) which described the various activities that grandparents and grandchildren did together, international literature has not explored this area sufficiently. Grandchildren often felt closer to their grandparents as a result of them spending time together doing activities that they both enjoyed. Thus, it would be useful to the studies of quality of relationship across the generations to explore this aspect as it may give further insight into what contributes to the quality of a relationship.

Furthermore, it was interesting to note that with the male participants in this study, their grandparents, both male and female alike, took the time to foster their interest in sport. A large proportion of their time spent together was engaging in sports-related activities. One can argue that their grandparents took it upon themselves to bond with their grandsons over the activity that they were most interested in.

Factors influencing the grandparent-grandchild relationship

The most important factors influencing the grandparent-grandchild relationship were found to be geographical proximity and parental encouragement. As found by many authors in this field, parents were seen as the mediators between grandchildren and grandparents (Denham & Smith, 1989; Ferguson et al. 2008; Mueller & Elder, 2003; Ruiz & Silverstein, 2007; Smith, 2005). Negative relationships between parents and grandparents were found to have a negative impact on the relationship between grandchildren and grandparents. One participant felt no emotional tie to her grandparent as result of her mother's negative relationship with her grandmother.

Furthermore, geographical proximity was considered to be important in fostering a good relationship with their grandparents (Mueller & Elder, 2002). It is interesting to note that geographical distance was also used as a justification as to why they did not have a good relationship with their grandparent. One can argue that this may be a way for some participants to soothe their conscience about not having a good relationship with their

grandparents. However, the truth of the influence of this factor is reiterated by the fact that those grandchildren who had lived with their grandparents, even for a limited amount of time, were closer to them than they were to their grandparents that they did not live with.

Ethnic differences in the nature of the grandparent-grandchild relationship

A large majority of the differences found amongst racial groups related to the fact that Black participants were raised by their grandparents and thus felt more of an emotional connection with them. One cannot be sure as to whether these differences are because of racial differences or because Black grandparents discussed in the sample played more of a parental role. Added to this, one can only speculate as to the reasons why Indian grandparents played more of a role in teaching their grandchildren about their ethnic heritage or less of a role in helping them directly with their academic work. Further research must be done into this.

Limitations of this study

The biggest limitation of this study was that the racial groups were not equally represented. Although this was a qualitative study and thus sample representation is not as important as it would be in a quantitative study, as ethnic differences were being taken into account, one must have a fair representation of the ethnic groups.

Furthermore, because this study was of an exploratory nature, one must note that a larger sample size should have been used in order to get a better idea of the nature of the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren. However, due to the limited time frame of this study, a larger sample size may not have been a realistic undertaking.

The participants within the sample, with the exception of the black participants, all came from a middle- class background. In light of the fact that from an ecological perspective, relationships within an adolescent's development may be affected by economic statuses, it is important that there be a wider representation of participants.

Future areas for research

Further suggestions for study in this area would be to run it on a much larger scale and perhaps to include a quantitative means of doing so, in the form of a questionnaire. Added to this, future studies should include sample sizes that are more representative of the population and if possible be tailored to include grandparents too. Studies have shown that there is a difference in the perceptions of the grandparent-grandchild relationship across the different generations and it would be useful to explore this.

Conclusion

This study has shown that grandparents do contribute to the support network of their grandchildren. South African adolescents see grandparents as a reliable entity, and although they may not actively rely on them, grandchildren are aware that they are there for them should the need arise. It has also been found that the nature of the relationships between grandchildren and grandparents in South Africa is generally similar to the nature of the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren in other countries. The quality of the relationship is very similar in that grandparents in South Africa also take on the roles of caregiver, providers of love, motivation and encouragement, and sources of wisdom. Furthermore, parental encouragement and geographical proximity, the most factors that influence the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren in this study were also found to be the main factors influencing the latter relationship in international studies.

However, this study did suggest that differences in the nature of the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren may exist across the different racial groups. In this sample, Black grandparents took on more active roles in the raising and care giving of their grandchildren. Due to the fact that the Black population forms the majority of South Africa, it would be useful to explore in greater details the implications hereof. Differences were also found in the teaching roles of grandparents in that Indian grandparents were more active in teaching their grandchildren about their heritage. This finding leaves room to explore whether the Indian culture stresses this role more, or whether this is found across all families where grandparents are immigrants to South Africa. In general, these findings suggest that further research must be done into ethnic differences across intergenerational relationships.

In light of the various problems facing adolescents in South Africa today and the increasing inability of parents to be adequate role models, grandparents have been looked to, to fulfil this role. This study was the first stepping-stone towards a larger research project examining the nature of the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren and shows that grandparents do in fact take up this role as a support structure. However, as grandparents may no longer have the mental, physical and emotional capacity to do this on their own, policy decisions need to be made at a higher level to ensure that provisions be made to support grandparents. It is hoped that this field of research in South Africa be developed by the larger research project, especially in light of the fact that the presence of grandparents has been shown to make a difference in the lives of their grandchildren.

Footnotes

1. 41% of deaths in 2006 amongst people in this category were attributed to HIV/AIDS as opposed to only 29% in 1997 (Avert, 2010).

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Appendix A: Consent Form for Participant partaking in Study Examining the Relationships between Grandparents and Grandchildren

What is this study about?

My name is Nabeelah Mia and I am a student at the University of Cape Town. It is part of my research project to look at the relationships between grandparents and grandchildren from the perspective of a South African teenager. Many of us encounter our grandparents at some stage in our lives but often have never thought about the role that they play or the effects that they have on us and this is what this study is trying to explore. A study like this has never been done in South Africa before so you have a wonderful opportunity to be a part of something entirely new.

What is expected of me if I agree to participate?

I would like to interview you alone and ask you some questions about your relationship with your grandparents. The interview will take an hour at most and take place at a venue of your choice. I would appreciate it if you answered the questions openly and honestly, so that we get a true idea of what your relationship with your grandparents are like.

If you agree, I would also like to tape-record the interview. However, you are a perfectly within your rights to ask me to put my tape-recorder away. If you agree to let me record the interview, you are also perfectly within your rights to ask me for a copy of the recording.

Are there any risks in participating in the study?

There are no risks involved by participating in the study. If you find any of the questions to be too personal or difficult to answer and you do not feel comfortable doing so, you do not have to.

Some of these questions may talk about things that some people find quite personal, or may be difficult to answer. If any of the questions make you feel uncomfortable or you do not want to answer them, you do not have to. If anything comes up in the interview that upsets you and you would like to talk about it, I would gladly be willing to do so.

Are there any benefits to participating in the study?

If you decide to participate in the study, there will be no outright benefit to you but you will be able to share your thoughts about your own relationships with your grandparent/s and examine it in a way that you have never looked at it before.

What if I don't want to take part in the study?

If you do not wish to take part in the study, you are allowed to say no. I would also appreciate it if you told me about anyone that you know that would be willing to take part in the study.

Will this interview be confidential?

If you agree to let me interview you, anything you tell me will be private between you and me. I will however be using the information to compile a research report on the relationships between grandparents and grandchildren and how young people in South Africa view them. If this makes you uncomfortable and you do not want your name to be used, you are allowed to choose another name, which I can call you by and your identity will remain a secret between you and me.

If you do tell me anything that shows that you are in danger and are being hurt in anyway by anyone, I must tell you that it is my duty to let a trustworthy adult know so that arrangements can be made to keep you safe.

What if I have any questions?

If you have any questions about the study and would like to know more information, you are welcome to contact me (Nabeelah) on 0736370048 or email me at nabeelah.mia@gmail.com.

What do I do if I would like to participate in this study?

If you would like to participate in the study, please indicate below by signing that you have read this consent form and agree to all the conditions described above.

Date: _____

Child's Name and Signature: _____

Parent's/Guardian's Signature: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____

Appendix B: Interview Schedule

Before Interview

- Interview makes participant aware of the following:
 - o Confidentiality
 - o Can choose pseudonym if they so wish to do so
 - o The Tape-recorder is about to be turned on

Interview

Getting to know the participant.

- Tell me a little bit about yourself. Probes: name, age, gender
 - o Probes: who do they live with? What does it consist of?
 - o Tell me a bit about your grandparents
 - What is your first memory of them?

Quality of grandparent-grandchild relationship.

- What do you think is the ideal grandparent-grandchild relationship?
- What is your relationship with your grandparent like?
 - o Are they important in your life?
 - o To what extent do you feel loved/cared for by your grandparents?
- Tell me about the time you spend with them.
 - o Probe: Is it often; is it out of your free will?
- How much in general do you think you can depend on your grandparents?
- Imagine you are having a problem in your life and you need a second opinion. Who would be the first person you would ask? Probes:
 - o Would you consider going to your grandparents?
- Do you tell your grandparents any of your personal problems? Do they help you in any way with them?
 - If yes, can you give me an example of when this has happened? How much did your grandparents help?
 - If not, why do you think not?
- Do you and your grandparents fight about anything?
- Is there anything about your relationship that you wish you could change?

Types of roles grandparent play and level of involvement

- What is the role of the grandparent in a family in general?
- What role do you think your grandparents play in your family and your life specifically?
 - o Probes: family historian, teaching of cultural practices
- Describe the types of things that you do with your grandparents. What types of activities do you partake in together?
- Are there any interests that you and your grandparents share? Probes: sport, music, hobbies
 - o Do they take an interest in your social interests?
 - o How well do your friends and social circles know your grandparents?

- How are you doing at school? Do you often need help with schoolwork from members in your family? If yes, do your grandparents help you in anyway? How?
 - o Probes: do your grandparents have an impact on your education in any way?
- Tell me about your relationship with your parents.
 - o Probe: Do your grandparents play a part in facilitating this?
- Picture a situation where you have done something wrong and are caught out for it. Who is responsible for disciplining you?
 - o If parents: do your grandparents ever step in and discipline you? If yes, how is this different from the way your parents discipline you?
- Do your grandparents provide financial support to you and your family in any way?
 - o Probes: do they pay your school fees, provide your family with any financial support, give you spending money
- You are in high school right? What would you like to do after high school?
 - o If can identify: how did you choose this career?
 - o If can't identify: how are you going to choose? Who will you ask for advice? (probe if grandparents played any role at all in making this decision)

Factors that influence grandparent- grandchild relationship.

- What do you think influences how much you see your grandparents?
- Do you and your grandparents live close together? Does this affect how close you are to them?
- How much contact do you have with them? How often do you see them?
 - o Would you like to see them more/less often?
 - If yes/no: tell me about that.
- Are you one of many grandchildren? Tell me how this affects your relationship with your grandparents.
- What is your parents' relationship like with your grandparents? Does this influence how often you see your grandparents?
- Do you think that there is anything that has prevented you from becoming close or seeing one another as much as you would like to? Has anything facilitated your relationship?

End of interview

- Debriefing of participant: what did they think about the study?
- Any further questions