

**An exploration of the intergenerational relational experiences between grandmothers
and their grandchildren in an African context**

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**Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement of the degree
Magister of Arts in Research Psychology at the
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My son, Derrick, for making me bottomless cups of tea and sharing his mother with books and articles. You are the best.

Pat Finley. Thank you for your willingness to work through the night.

*Do you see a man diligent and skillful in his business? He will stand before kings;
he will not stand before
obscure men.*

Proverbs 22:28-29.

Preface

The candidate opted to write an article, with the support of her supervisor.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vera Roos', is positioned above a horizontal line.

Prof. Vera Roos

Summary

The composition of society is rapidly changing as the elderly population is increasing dramatically. In South Africa, black grandmothers play an important role in intergenerational relationships as they take on the responsibility of caring for their young grandchildren because of HIV/Aids, migration of the parents or other economic difficulties. As the grandmothers and the children are raised in different time-periods, it can be difficult for them to understand one another. Since healthy relationships with older persons in the early years lead to secure attachments, the relationship between grandmother and grandchild holds serious implications for the development and view of the world of the child. Research of this nature can help to develop healthy connections with a younger generation which again can help older adults to feel a greater sense of fulfilment. In fact, linking older adults with youth can provide advantages for both generations to thrive as people. Understanding the developmental life tasks and cognitive development of the generations can also assist to effectively deal with different perspectives of the interactions and communication processes between grandmothers and their grandchildren, thus helping both generations to thrive as people.

Healthy interaction between grandmothers and grandchildren are guided by clear structure, which means that grandmothers can provide a trustworthy and predictable interpersonal environment to assist their grandchildren to define and clarify their experiences, whilst nurturance implies that grandmothers are warm, tender, soothing, calming, and comforting. When engaging with the grandchildren, one can say that grandmothers provide excitement, surprise and stimulation and simultaneously challenge the children which means that grandmothers encourage grandchildren to expand their behavioural repertoire and become more independent.

Grandmother – grandchildren interactions are informed by specific parenting styles which are referred to as a group of attitudes toward children that create an emotional climate in which the intergenerational relationships between the two generations are expressed. The manner, therefore in which grandmothers and grandchildren communicate with each other, as well as the content of the conversations, help to shed light on the nature of the relationship between the two generations.

This research aims to gain a better understanding as well as different perspectives of the interactions and communication processes between grandmothers and their grandchildren.

A convenience sample was employed to obtain 17 grandparents between 71 and 96 years and older, and their grandchildren in their care, boys and girls between ages 4 and 13 years old. The criterion was the availability of participants on the specific day of data gathering. The intergenerational reflective listening technique (IGRT) was used for data gathering while both generations are present. In terms of the IGRT, the researcher requested the children to sit in an inner circle and answer questions about the important places that their grandmothers tell them about. The researcher also explored the manner in which this information was communicated to the children.

As the study involved older persons and very young children, special attention was paid to ethical considerations. Ethical approval was granted by the Ethics Committee of the North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus, as part of a larger project, being: “An exploration of enabling contexts (05K14).”

The main finding of the study is that type of information which is transferred from the grandmother to the younger generation is educational in nature with instrumental support as a sign of love and care. The grandmothers teach the children norms, values and life principles. During the younger age, children conform to the teachings of the grandmothers, which evoke feelings of pride and appreciation from the grandmothers. This confirms solidarity in the relationship. On the other hand, the same relational definition does not apply to the young adults and the grandmothers explained their strained relationship with the young adults as out of their control. It is also clear that the way the two generations display love and affection are instrumental in nature.

Although the IGRT is considered as an effective method of collecting data of this nature, the limited time available for this study resulted in the collecting of only one data set. One of the recommendations is further study with more than one group of participants. This includes grandmothers with young grandchildren as well as grandmothers with younger adults.

Keywords: grandmothers, grandchildren, developmental life task, instrumental support, parenting styles

Opsomming

Wêreldwyd is die samestelling van gemeenskappe besig om dramaties te verander. Daar is 'n skerp toename in die aantal ouer persone en in Suid Afrika is die ouer persone besig om proporsioneel 'n groter gedeelte van die totale bevolking uit te maak. As gevolg van die HIV/VIGS pandemie, migrasie van die ouers en ander ekonomiese uitdagings, sien ons dat oumas daaglik 'n groter verantwoordelikheid op hul neem vir hul kleinkinders se versorging. Hierdie twee generasies het egter in twee verskillende historiese tydperke groot geword en vir daardie rede kan daar 'n leemte wees in die intergenerasionele verhouding, kommunikasie proses en begrip tussen die oumas en hul kleinkinders.

Gesonde, gebalanseerde verhoudinge tussen kinders en ouer persone lei tot sekure emosionele bindinge en daarom hou die verhouding dus belangrike implikasies in vir die emosionele ontwikkeling van die kind. Navorsing van hierdie aard kan help om positiewe konneksies te bou tussen ouma en kleinkind en ter selfder tyd lei tot 'n gevoel van genoegdoening by ouer mense. Positiewe verhoudinge tussen hierdie tweek generasies kan dus gevolge hê dat beide oumas en kinders maksimaal kan funksioneer.

Gesonde interaksie tussen oumas en kleinkinders word gelei deur duidelike struktuur wat tot gevolg het dat oumas 'n voorspelbare en betroubare omgewing help skep vir die kind. Hierdie struktuur help dan die kleinkind om sy omgewing en ervarings te definieer. Wanneer oumas kinders koester in 'n warm, gemaklike omgewing, is dit ook maklik om betrokke te wees in die kind se wêreld waar die kind uitgedaag word om nuwe dinge te ontdek en dan te beweeg na outonomieit.

Ouerskapstyle speel 'n belangrike rol in die ontwikkeling van 'n emosionele klimaat tussen die ouma en kleinkind wat beskryf hoe die intergenerasionele verhoudings tussen ouma en kleinkind uitgedruk word. Die wyse waarop hierdie kommunikasie plaasvind, asook die inhoud van die gesprekke, kan help om lig te werp op die intergenerasionele verhouding tussen ouma en kleinkind. Hierdie navorsing poog om beter begrip te ontwikkel oor die intergenerasionele verhouding tussen ouma en kleinkind.

'n Gerieflikheidssteekproef is gemaak van 17 oumas tussen die ouderdomme van 71 en 96 jaar oud en hulle kleinkinders in hul sorg, tussen 4 en 13 jaar oud.

Die Intergerasioneel Reflektiewe Luister Tegniek is gebruik om hierdie data te versamel terwyl beide generasies teenwoordig was. In terme van hierdie tegniek, sit die kinders in 'n klein sirkel terwyl die oumas in 'n groot sirkel rondom hulle sit. Die kinders

moes vertel van belangrike plekke waarvan hul oumas hul vertel terwyl die oumas luister. Die navorser het ook die wyse waarop die inligting oorgedra word, geëksplorieer.

Aangesien die studie ouerpersone en kinders ingesluit het, is spesiale aandag geskenk aan etiese oorwegings. As deel van 'n omvattende projek, genaamd: "An exploration of enabling contexts (05K14)", is etiese goedkeuring hiervoor gegee deur die Etiekkomitee van die Noordwes-Universiteit, Potchefstroomkampus.

Die belangrikste bevinding van die studie was dat die verhoudingskonteks tussen oumas en hul kleinkinders opvoedkundig is van aard. Die oumas volg 'n outoritêre en direkte benadering en wanneer daar gekyk word na die ontwikkelingsfases van die kleinkinders, sien ons dat die kinders konformeer tot die instruksies van die oumas. Hierdie konformerende gedrag ontlok gevoelens van waardering en trots by die oumas en dit lei tot solidariteit in die verhouding. Wanneer die oumas hierdie outoritêre direkte ouerskapstyl oordra na die ouer generasie, sien ons dat daar konflik ontstaan. Liefde word betoon op 'n instrumentele wyse en dit laat die vraag of dit genoeg is vir die kinders.

Alhoewel die IGRT 'n effektiewe metode van data insameling is, het die beperkte tyd vir die studie tot gevolg gehad dat slegs een datastel verkry is. 'n Aanbeveling vir verdere studie is om meer as een groep deelnemers te betrek wat oumas en hul kleinkinders kan insluit, sowel as oumas en jong volwassenes as 'n groep deelnemers.

Sleuteltermes: ouer persone, kleinkinders, ontwikkelingsfase, instrumentele vlak, ouerskapstyle

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MANUSCRIPT FOR EXAMINATION

**An exploration of the intergenerational relational experiences between grandmothers
and their grandchildren in an African context**

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An exploration of the intergenerational relational experiences between grandmothers
and their grandchildren in an African context

Abstract

Grandmothers play an increasing role in the care giving of younger children because of economical difficulty, migration and HIV/AIDS related factors. The intention of this research is to explore the relational experiences of grandmothers and grandchildren in an African context. A qualitative research method was employed to conduct this study. One data set was collected from members attending the community centre as well as community members. A convenience sampling method was used whereby a Setswana-speaking sample of older persons from Ikageng, Potchefstroom, South Africa was selected. Eleven grandmothers between the ages of 71 and 96 years and 14 grandchildren in their care, boys and girls between the ages of 4 and 13 years participated in the project. The Intergenerational Reflective Listening Technique (IGRT) was used to gather the information. Thematic analysis was conducted to analyse the data. The findings showed the intergenerational relationship between grandmothers and their grandchildren as an educational relationship with instrumental support as a sign of love and care. By exploring the intergenerational relational experiences between grandmothers and their grandchildren in an African context, the findings can contribute to building healthy intergenerational relationships between grandmothers and their grandchildren. The implications of this study can also serve as recommendation for further study pertaining to the emotional needs of these two generations.

Keywords: grandmothers, grandchildren, developmental life task, instrumental support, parenting styles

In South Africa, black grandmothers play an important role in intergenerational relationships (Bohman, 2010). Because of migration, HIV/AIDS, economic restructuring, shifting social norms and other factors, many black grandmothers took on the responsibility of caring for their grandchildren (Makoni, 1996). Since relationships in the early years lead to secure attachment (VanderVen, 2004), research on the nature of the relationships between grandmothers and grandchildren can provide a framework for understanding the past, exploring the current environment and to thrive as people (Larkin, 2010; Waites, 2009). This study therefore aims to explore the relational experiences between younger children and grandmothers in an African context while both generations participate in the research event. The life span theory of Erikson and the cognitive developmental theory of Piaget will be used to contextualize the relationship between children and grandmothers.

According to Erikson, children between the ages of six to twelve are expected to learn about their culture and to participate in creative processes (Erikson, 1963). Children of these ages need opportunities for learning and support from adults. The children initiate projects, see them through to completion and develop feelings of accomplishment about what they have achieved. In contrast, those children who experience failure due to their attempts to engage in the opportunities with the outside environment develop feelings of inferiority. During this time of children's development, adults, and in this instance grandmothers play an important role in supporting the development of children and to encouraging them to explore, dare and to receive confirming feedback. Children develop feelings of being industrious and self-confident, and feel positive about their abilities to achieve goals. However, if grandmothers restrict or criticise the attempts made by children of this age, they can experience feelings of inferiority or doubt their own abilities (Erikson, 1963; Meyer, Moore & Viljoen, 2008; Pervin & John, 2001).

Grandmothers also have to deal with their own developmental tasks. This includes investing time and energy in the younger generation as a positive developmental outcome or being threatened by a feeling of meaninglessness and despair (Erikson, 1963; Pervin & John, 2001; VanderVen, 2004).

Even though psycho-social development is important to consider in order to understand intergenerational relationships, the cognitive developmental phase of both the children and grandmothers must be considered in order to understand the abilities and needs of the two generations. According to Piaget, the cognitive development of children occurs through specific stages (Sigelman & Rider, 2009; Plug, Louw, Gouws & Meyer, 1997). Children between the ages of six and twelve develop their cognitive abilities as they build, process, choose and construe information using their current understanding of the world (Feldman, 2005; Newman & Newman, 2003; Spence & Radunovich, 2007). Intergenerational relationships are beneficial to the cognitive development of younger children in that it help them to make sense of and modify their world (Spence & Radunovich, 2007). Spence and Radunovich (2007) even suggest that the earlier children become familiar with grandmothers, the better their perceptions of them. The cognitive potential of older people diminishes and older people are challenged to deal with memory loss and to solve problems in an effective and flexible manner. Also, the diminishing cognitive abilities of older people can contribute to rigidity in terms of how they view the world and relationships (Meyer et al., 2008).

The development of a positive relationship between grandchildren and their grandmothers can be understood when considering the needs of children, as described by Axline (1974). Grandmothers need to develop a warm, friendly relationship with their grandchildren and accept them unconditionally (Axline, 1974). Grandchildren also need to be respected for their ability to solve problems, and therefore needs to be able to exercise the

ability to make their own choices. By listening reflectively and displaying accurate empathy, grandmothers can help grandchildren to recognise their feelings and gain insight into their behaviour (Axline, 1974; Egan, 1994; Vorster, 2011).

Healthy grandmother-grandchildren interactions are guided by clear structure which means that grandmothers can provide a trustworthy and predictable interpersonal environment in which to assist their grandchildren to define and clarify their experiences; nurturance, which means that grandmothers are warm, tender, soothing, calming and comforting; engaging, which means that grandmothers provide excitement, surprise and stimulation; and challenging, which means that grandmothers encourage grandchildren to expand their behavioural repertoire and become more independent (Jernberg & Booth, 2001). Healthy grandmother-grandchildren interactions are informed by specific parenting styles, referred to as a group of attitudes toward children which creates an emotional climate in which the intergenerational relationships between the two generations are expressed (Zakeri, Kowkar & Razmhoe, 2010).

Parenting styles play an important role in intergenerational relations (Zakeri et al., 2010). The four parenting styles applicable in intergenerational relationships are authoritative, permissive, authoritarian, and uninvolved (Rinaldi & Howe, 2011; Zakeri et al., 2010). These parenting styles consist of a combination of interpersonal qualities such as acceptance and responsiveness as well as being demanding and controlling.

Theories to explain intergenerational relationships are those of solidarity, conflict and ambivalence. Solidarity refers to a social cohesion between generations (Bengtson & Oyama, 2010). It also refers to a dependable support or the willingness of the generations to offer each other services without reward (Lueschner, 2002). The intergenerational solidarity theory is conceptualised as a multi-dimensional theory with six components expressing the

behavioural, emotional, cognitive and structural aspects of intergenerational relations (Lowenstein, 2005). Therefore, rather than being a singular and positive view of family relationships, aspects of solidarity may be arrayed in a variety of constellations, some reflecting relative harmony, many in which some dimensions are positive whereas others are negative, and some in which too much of one type of solidarity is harmful (Bengtson, Giarrusso, Mabry & Silverstein, 2002). By applying the intergenerational solidarity theory to an African context, it is evident that members of the younger generation show respect for members of the older generation, because the older generation are regarded as people who possess wisdom and give advice to the younger members, while the younger generation accept a submissive position of being learners (Hoff, 2007; Makoni, 1996; Opong, 2006). Healthy grandmother–grandchildren interactions are informed by specific parenting styles, referred to as a group of attitudes toward children which create an emotional climate in which the intergenerational relationships between the two generations are expressed. According to Luescher and Pillemer (1998) intergenerational relations generate ambivalence. Ambivalence in intergenerational relationships emerges when grandmothers and grandchildren experience both positive and negative perceptions in relation to each other, which can contribute to short term or even a permanently conflicting structure of the relationship (Luescher & Pillemer, 1998; Luescher, 2002; Monserud, 2008).

However, to understand interpersonal relationships from an interpersonal perspective, the theory of complex responsive processes of relating is proposed as a more appropriate theory in the study of the intergenerational interactions between grandmothers and their grandchildren. Relationships are reciprocal, nonlinear and self-organising (Stacey, 2003; Suchman, 2006; VanderVen, 2004). The nature of the relationships between grandmothers and their grandchildren are regarded as the daily conversations between grandmothers and

their grandchildren (Stacey, 2003). Therefore, the manner in which grandmothers and grandchildren communicate with each other, as well as the content of the conversations, could shed light on the nature of the relationship between the two generations. One can therefore ask the questions: What information is transferred by grandmothers to their grandchildren, and how do grandmothers communicate important information to their grandchildren? How do the grandmothers react to the content of information and the manner in which the grandchildren receive the information? Knowledge of the content and the manner in which grandmothers communicate with their grandchildren will provide some understanding of how the interaction patterns between grandmothers and their grandchildren emerge. The findings will shed some light on the dynamics of the grandmother-grandchild relationship in an African context. It can also contribute to building an intergenerational relational theory and to inform intervention programmes aimed at supporting effective relationships during all the developmental life tasks of both generations.

Research Methodology

The study was based on an inductive exploratory method and therefore no prior hypotheses were made. A qualitative research approach was used in the study to obtain a deeper understanding of the socially constructed meanings of people in their own unique environment and of how they choose to express themselves in such an environment (Creswell, 2007; Ritchie, 2006). A collective case study design was employed as only a limited number of grandmothers and grandchildren were available to participate in the research (Stake, 2003). The researcher aimed to gain a better understanding as well as different perspectives of the interactions and communication processes between grandmothers and their grandchildren.

Research Context and Participants

The research was conducted at a Community Centre the Ikageng Community Centre for the Aged in Potchefstroom in the North West Province. Ikageng is a semiurban, historically challenged community just outside Potchefstroom. The data was collected in the afternoon in order to accommodate the school-going children. For the purpose of this study, a convenience sample was used to obtain 17 grandparents between 71 and 96 years , and their grandchildren in their care, boys and girls between ages 4 and 13 years old. The criterion was the availability of participants on the specific day of data gathering.

Procedure

Data were collected by means of an Intergenerational Group Reflecting Listening Technique (IGRT), since it allows for data gathering while both generations are present (Roos, 2011). In terms of the IGRT, the researcher requested the children to sit in an inner circle and answer the following questions.

1. What are the important places your grandmothers tell you about?
2. How do your grandmothers tell you about the important places?

The above-mentioned questions were asked to facilitate conversation. The researcher was interested in the relational experience between grand-parent and grand-child. To explore this, the researcher was interested in 1) what grand-parents see as important information, and 2) how the information was transferred as well as received by the two generations.

The questions were translated to the children in their own language by a student from the North West University, while another student from the University translated the conversations into a recorder. The whole procedure was also videotaped.

During the discussion the researcher closely explored the answers given by the children in order to gain a deeper understanding of the manner in which grandmothers

interact with their grandchildren (see Figure 1). The grandmothers were then requested to sit in the inner circle and reflect on the answers given by the children (Roos, 2011).

The recorded data were transcribed verbatim by the Honours Students of the Department of Psychology from the North-West University.

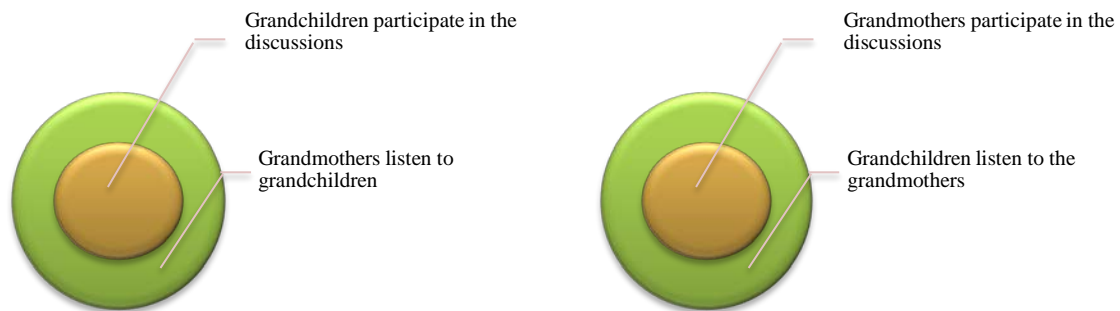


Figure 1: A visual presentation of the IGRT

Data Collection

The data was obtained by using the Intergenerational Reflective Listening Technique. The discussions were videotaped as well as recorded.

Intergenerational reflective listening technique (IGRT). This technique is a process where one can obtain information and gain insight into generational dynamics and on how information is transferred between generations (Roos, 2011). The IGRT facilitates active listening positions among members of different generations. The members of the two generations form two circles, one circle on the inside and one circle on the outside. As the members of one generation share their subjective experiences of how knowledge on important issues is transferred between generations, the members of the other generation actively listens (Roos, 2011) (see figure 1 & 2).

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was conducted in order to analyse the data.

Thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is used to identify, analyse and report patterns (themes) in data. This form of analysis minimally organises and describes a data set in detail. A rich description of the data is ideal for investigating an under-researched area (Braun & Clark, 2006). The data was transcribed to an appropriate level of detail, and the transcripts were checked against the tapes for accuracy. Inductive analysis was used during the coding. Inductive analysis is a process of coding data without trying to fit the data into a pre-existing coding frame or the researcher's analytic preconceptions. Each data item was given equal attention in the coding process. Themes were not generated from a few examples (an anecdotal approach), but, instead, the coding process was inclusive and comprehensive. Themes were checked against each other and back to the original data set. A latent approach was followed for analysing the data. This implies that the analysis went beyond the semantic content of the data and started to identify underlying ideas, assumptions and conceptualisations that are theorised as shaping or informing the semantic content.

Trustworthiness of the Study

The principles for ensuring the trustworthiness of data, as proposed by Ellingson (2009), were applied (see Table 1). On the basis of direct quotes, the researcher drew conclusions from the contextual description.

Table 1

Principles and strategies for enhancing the rigour of the data through crystallisation

| Principles | Strategies | Application in the research |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|--|
| Deepened complex interpretations | Data collection | IGRT to obtain information from both generations through open questions, checking the understanding of the participants and explaining questions where this was requested. |
| | Member checking | During the data collection, the participants were asked to reflect and comment on the data. Their inputs were included in the creation of themes. |
| Analyses | Dense descriptions | A dense description of the analysis and findings was furnished. This description will allow readers to create a holistic picture of the findings in a multiple-integrated manner thus sketching the realities of the participants. |
| | Paradigms | Various paradigms were used to discuss the findings. This demonstrated multiple ways of knowing about the phenomenon. |
| Researcher reflections | Reflexivity | The researcher kept field notes in which she recorded her experiences of the research process, her observations and her assumptions. |

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus. Project title: An exploration of enabling contexts (05K14). Permission to conduct the study was also obtained from the individual participants who were informed that their participation is voluntary, that the data was treated with confidentiality and that they could withdraw at any stage of the research. The privacy of the participants were protected by keeping their names and personal details anonymous and confidential.

As the study was conducted by Afrikaans speaking students from the Potchefstroom University, an interpreter was needed. The following principles provided by the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) and the Psychological Society of South Africa (PsySSA) applied: 1) the interpreter must be fluent in the language of the researcher and conversant in the language of the participant; 2) the interpreter must not give meaning to the interview but only interpret the verbal language as directly as possible; and 3) the interpreter must not have a personal relationship with the participant as or he or she could then lose his or her objectivity during the interpretation process.

Results

The researcher constructed two main themes from the analysis of the data. Summarised in the table below are the two main themes as well as the sub-themes supporting these.

Table 2

Themes and subthemes of the participants' intergenerational experiences

| Main Themes | Sub-Themes |
|--|--|
| Intergenerational relationships between grandmothers and young grandchildren | Definition of the relationship Educational nature of relationship Autocratic communication Instrumental support as expression of love |
| Intergenerational relationships between grandmothers and young adults | Transference of the parenting style to young adults |

Intergenerational Relationships between Grandmothers and Young Grandchildren

Definition of the relationship. The relational definition of the grandmothers and their grandchildren seems to be age appropriate. Grandmothers lead their grandchildren and the grandchildren accept the submissive position of learners. The following quotes from some of the grandmothers illustrate this aspect:

The one grandmother said she is very proud and other said they are very satisfied it shows that they have grasped the knowledge that they give them growing up.

The one grandmother said she is happy about the fact that their children are aware of the messages that the community taught them, and that she's very happy that when they are hurt they go to the police station.

The grandmothers experienced feelings of pride and appreciation whenever they witnessed that the younger children conform to their teachings. The grandmothers feel that they can contribute meaningfully to the advancement of humankind when they observe the conforming behaviour of the younger children to their teaching (Meyer et al., 2008; Pervin &

John, 2001). The one grandmother explained: *They're going to choose the path they want to take and choose the right choice or path.*

The grandmothers' authoritative parenting styles contribute to solidarity between the children and their grandmothers. The grandmothers view solidarity as the conforming of behaviour to their teachings. This is consistent with the explanation of solidarity within an African context, where the children accept a submissive position as learners (Hoff, 2007; Makoni, 1996; Opong, 2006). When considering the developmental life tasks and cognitive development of the young children, this parenting style can be effective in the sense that children need direction and structure. This relational context enables the children and teaches them behaviour and norms on a functional level. Even though this parenting style confirms certain aspects of the intergenerational solidarity theory, there is no evidence of emotional interaction between the two generations in the data (Bengtson et al., 2002).

Educational nature of the relationship. Both the children and the grandmothers described the nature of their relational experience as educationally orientated. The children identified the places where their grandmothers taught them, such as the church. *Because the grandmother taught him it's a place to worship God and also a place where they teach you not to swear at other people.* Grandmothers also emphasised that the police station and the community health clinic are important places for specific reasons. *The police station is a very important place...when you see people fighting, you should call the police, and the clinic is very important because they help people.* The one participant was taught by his parents and grandparents that *the school is an important place because you get an education.*

Apart from being taught what places are important and why, children are also taught socially appropriate norms in order to regulate behaviour. The following quotes are examples of the social norms that the children were taught by their grandmothers:

If you see people fighting, you should go into the house then you should call the police for them to stop fighting.

Not to smoke.

Not to be very close to girls and that something will happen.

Respect everyone, including her parents.

Stay away from boys.

The children stated that it is important to respect elders by saying: *If you don't have a mother and a father you can be raised by grandparents, but also by the community members around.* Respect is shown as a sign of love.

The children also confirmed that if they are grown up, they would still adhere to these principles of life. The one participant said: *Yes, because if you don't grow up with these values and principles then you will get into trouble later on in life.*

The grandmothers saw it as their responsibility to teach the children appropriate behaviour, values and norms. The one grandmother said that she is her granddaughter's role model, while another grandmother commented that she is glad that the children are aware of the messages that they were taught. They believe that they should teach their grandchildren principles and values. One grandmother replied that: *she educates her grandchild about these values and principles because she thinks it is very important to teach them very young in life while their still at home.* The grandmothers were all pleased to see that the children remembered their teachings, that they were obedient, and conformed to these teachings.

When considering the developmental life tasks of the young children, one can see that the educational interaction with the grandmothers is applicable and age-appropriate according to the psycho-social theory of Erikson (1963). Erikson states that children want to learn new things and will create opportunities for learning and support. According to the cognitive

developmental theory of Piaget, children use these learning experiences to help them understand their world. According to Piaget's cognitive developmental theory, children are very concrete in thinking, thus what you see is what you know (Newman & Newman, 2003). This way of thinking guides them to seek structure and direction. The young children in this study had no problem with learning from the grandparents. It is evident that the children duplicated and conformed to the behaviour being modelled by the grandmothers. This is appropriate behaviour in terms of the children's developmental life task as well as how human behaviour is learned, according to Erikson and Piaget (Meyer et al., 2008; Pervin & John, 2001).

Communication. The nature of communication between the grandmothers and their grandchildren seems to be authoritative. Grandmothers explained how they communicate with their grandchildren: *When you're at home and while you sitting. And then you just call them and say let's talk and communicate and give reasons for certain aspects.* Grandmothers used to communicate at specific times with their grandchildren. For example, at specific week days *Sundays after church*, or during family events: *"kopano ya le sika" which is a family gathering you can use it anytime of the year to call everyone and then you have sort of a lunch where you just and talk*".

The manner in which the grandmothers talk to the children is very directive with clear instructions. For example one grandmother said:

You let them sit down and communicate with them as well so that they know all this knowledge and not for them to play around outside.

Take different kids and bring them to one place and teach them about traditions and culture...

You just call them and say let's talk and communicate and give reasons for certain aspects.

When asked to explain what they teach the children, one grandmother replied: *They got to wake up and get fresh air, not just sit and lay in bed all day because tomorrows trouble overweigh you during the next day.* The one grandparent says: *They sometimes ask advice regarding guys and she will tell them exactly the truth.* This again underline the educational nature of the relationship between the grand mothers to their grand children.

Instrumental Support as Expressions of Love and Care

Both children and grandmothers provide instrumental support as expressions of their love and care. The children showed love and respect to their grandmothers by assisting them with chores. One of the girls replied: *If your grandmother ask you to make tea, you make tea and if she asks you to help around the house you do what the grandmother ask.* (All the children agreed). The children experience the love of the grandmothers because they are residing with their grandparents, and they see their grandmothers doing things for them, which demonstrates their love. One participant explained it as follows: *He sees his grandmother doing everything for him, for example when there is no electricity she buys electricity, when there is no food in the house she buys food. He says that he see things with his eyes that are being done by the grandparent.* The children also experienced that they are protected by their grandmothers. The one participant said that *she sees this love through love and protection by the grandparent.* When asked how she saw this protection, she replied that *if someone confronts you in the street the grandmother will say just leave that person lets go home.*

In response, the children also demonstrate their love by doing favours for their grandmothers. Some of the responses of the children illustrate this: *Whenever they ask to*

make tea you make it and also when the grandparents are tired and they ask you to rub their feet you do it; or when she is been sent to the shop to buy milk, she goes and buys the milk to show that she loves her grandmother. The children experience that when they ask their grandmothers to comply with their requests, they perceive that their grandmothers are willing to accommodate them: *If there is a school trip and she asked her grandmother to go and the grandmother agreed.* Solidarity refers to a dependable support or willingness of the generations to offer each other services without reward (Luescher, 2002).

Intergenerational Relationships between Grandmothers and Young Adults

Transference of the parenting style to young adults. The grandmothers use the same authoritative parenting style with the young adults as with the younger ones, but with different outcomes.

The one grandmother says that she tries by talking to them even in front of the 18 year old and above for them to hear what they're teaching the much younger ones and hopefully for them to realise that the path they have taken is the wrong one.

The grandmothers are discontented and saddened by the fact that the older children will not listen to them or conform to their teachings. *This hurts her very much and she is very dissatisfied about this.*

The older children are more abstract in their thinking, thus they need to understand experiences, interpret information and be able to negotiate information in order to explore and develop their identity (Feldman, 2005; Newman & Newman, 2003). According to Erikson (1963), the developmental phase of young adults (18 and older) is characterised by the development crisis Identity versus Role Confusion. The quest for identity often causes young adult to clash with rules of society and with persons who are close to them (Meyer et al., 2008).

The authoritative parenting style of the grandmothers leaves no room for the older child to express his or her feelings and needs. This leads to ambivalence and conflict between the grandparents and the young adults and the grandmothers then withdraw from the older children. Ambivalence therefore becomes the state of the relational dynamics between the grandparents and the older children.

Grandmothers' experiences of their relationships with young adults are explained in relation to the new political dispensation in South Africa. Post 1994, the human rights of people as well as the rights of children received recognition in policies.

Grandmothers experienced that these rights jeopardised their relationships with the young adults because they do not have the same control over them as they had before the democratic society. The grandmothers expressed concern about their relationship with young adults by saying: *This democracy has ruined our kids especially the children ranging from 18 and older. It has ruined them because they now swear at us, and they have no respect for the elders.*

The grandmothers explained the tension in the relationships with the young adults as the manner in which they were socialised. *The way that the grandparents grew up is not the same way that they are growing up and that they live in a more democratic country so they don't listen to them.* After the first democratic election in 1994, the concepts of freedom of choice and children's rights were included in the policies of South Africa.

According to the grandmothers, the children's rights that they receive as understood by the new political dispensation contribute to their disobedience and the lack of control over them: *These much younger ones are below the law and the ones 18 and upwards feel that they are above the law and they don't listen to what their grandmother say.* The

grandmothers experience the older children as disobedient and blamed the law for giving the young adults rights, because: *they lean back on these rights.*

Implications of the Findings

The life span approach to study the relationships between grandmother and their grandchildren is useful because it include the developmental needs of both generations (VanderVen, 2004). The developmental needs of children in the pre-puberty age are to function in a structured relational environment and the needs of grandmothers are to invest time and energy and to transmit knowledge to the younger generation (Erikson, 1963). Children in this age group are developing their agency to participate in interpersonal relationships and grandmothers are creating interpersonal spaces to develop this agency.

The nature of the relationships between grandmothers and grandchildren serves the function of transmitting socially and cultural relevant content in an age-appropriate manner to children. An authoritative parenting style is used by the grandmothers to determine the nature of the relationship with their grandchildren. In this relationship, grandmothers are in control of the content of what the children should learn and how they should interact with people and the world. They educate children in a directive manner, with clear instructions about the norms that guide appropriate behaviour.

From the grandmothers' reflections on the relationships with young adults, they seemingly apply the same directive, authoritative way of relating and interacting to the young adults, although the developmental needs of the young adults are different and the manner in which the grandmothers engage in conversations with them are inappropriate. An inflexible interpersonal style is therefore applied by the grandmothers and young adults' need for flexibility and negotiation in interpersonal relationships are frustrated. Further research is

however needed on the nature of these relationships and the relational experiences by both generations.

The reciprocal nature of the intergenerational relationships between grandmothers and their grandchildren is particularly eminent in the instrumental support that both generations provide to each other. Both grandchildren and grandmothers demonstrate their affinity for each other by doing things for each other. They give and receive when they are asked to do so. However, providing instrumental support fulfils only part of the relational needs of people (Axline, 1974; Jernberg & Booth, 2001). The relational qualities such as empathy and warmth are not expressed in relation to one another, and it is critical to ask: If the current parenting style is only partially effective when considering the developmental needs of children, what are the implications if the children develop into young adults? Seemingly, grandmothers experience these relationships as strained and the relational environment as disabling. The grandmothers however, ascribed the disabling interpersonal relational environment with the young adults as something beyond their control and as a consequence of external historical processes. It is therefore important to explore the reasons why the grandmothers do not change their interpersonal style in relation to young adults.

Limitations of the study and Recommendations for future research

For this study, only one group of participants was used. There was also only one method of data collection, which could limit the application of the findings. It would also have been helpful to have more than one group of participants in order to have a deeper understanding of the intergenerational relationship between the grandmothers and their grandchildren.

A follow-up interview with the participant is recommended in order to explore the concept of emotional content further. To further encourage the development of healthy

intergenerational relationships, further studies are recommended between older people and the younger generations, both young children as well as young adults. The findings can contribute to building an intergenerational relational theory and to inform intervention programmes aimed at supporting effective relationships during all the developmental phases of all generations.

Conclusion

The type of information that is transferred from the grandmother to the younger generation is educational in nature. The grandmothers teach the children about important places and provide reasons for this. They also teach the children norms, values and life principles. During the younger age, children conform to the teachings of the grandmothers, which evoke feelings of pride and appreciation from the grandmothers. This confirms solidarity in the relationship. On the other hand, the same relational definition does not apply to the young adults and the grandmothers explained their strained relationship with the young adults as being out of their control.

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