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# Family Connections: The Impact of Self-disclosure, Solidarity, and Stereotyping on Relational Satisfaction in Grandparent-adult Grandchild Dyads

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FAMILY CONNECTIONS: THE IMPACT OF SELF-DISCLOSURE, SOLIDARITY,  
AND STEREOTYPING ON RELATIONAL SATISFACTION IN GRANDPARENT-  
ADULT GRANDCHILD DYADS

By

DeAnne Priddis

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## ABSTRACT

### FAMILY CONNECTIONS: THE IMPACT OF SELF-DISCLOSURE, SOLIDARITY, AND STEREOTYPING ON RELATIONAL SATISFACTION IN GRANDPARENT- ADULT GRANDCHILD DYADS

by

DeAnne Priddis

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2015  
Under the Supervision of Professor Nancy Burrell, Ph.D.

As life expectancy increases, the length of time in both the grandparent and adult grandchild role increase. The grandparent-adult grandchild relationship is integral to the health and preservation of the family system. The sample for this quantitative study included 62 grandparent-adult grandchild dyads, 124 individuals. Findings indicate that both the grandparents and the adult grandchildren experienced meaning and burden in the grandparent-adult grandchild relationship. The six different types of solidarity (affectual, consensual, structural, associational, functional, and normative) had varying associations with relational satisfaction for the grandparents and adult grandchildren. Although there are several self-disclosures in a close grandparent-adult grandchild relationship, there are still some conversational topics avoided, such as finances and sexual relations. Both the grandparent and adult grandchild reported that the lower amount of negative stereotypes experienced in the relationship, the more relational satisfaction experienced.

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## **Family Connections: The Impact of Self-Disclosure, Solidarity, and Stereotyping on Relational Satisfaction in Grandparent-Adult Grandchild Dyads**

### **Chapter 1**

This first chapter outlines the rationale for conducting this study, describes systems theory as the theoretical frame for this investigation, identifies relevant literature and key variables, and forwards research questions and hypotheses. Key variables in this study are solidarity, self-disclosure, stereotyping, and relational satisfaction between the grandparent and adult grandchild dyad. The central argument for this study is that grandparents serve an integral role in the family system, with the grandparent and adult grandchild having mutual impact on each other. The following section explains the rationale for this study.

#### **Rationale**

Family connections provide meaningful and satisfying relationships. The grandparent-grandchild relationship often represents the second closest relationship that a person will encounter with unconditional acceptance, following the parent-child relationship (Brussoni & Boon, 1998). Reasons for the grandparent-grandchild relationship being so important are increased longevity and decreased fertility from past generations. The National Institute on Aging (NIA) and National Institute of Health (NIH, 2011) predict that by 2016 will be the first time in history that the number of people over the age of 65 outnumber children under the age of 5. The NIA and NIH also predict that the number of adults over the age of 65 will also increase from the existing 524 million in 2010 to nearly 1.5 billion in 2050 worldwide. The average number of years as an adult has increased, which has also increased years as a grandparent (Geurts,



Poortman, van Tilburg, & Dykstra, 2009; Hagestad, 1988). It would seem that the role of the grandparent has increased within the family system. The grandparent has the ability to make a lasting impression on the grandchild, offer support and companionship, and yet often does not take the authoritarian role as the parent (Brussoni & Boom, 1998). The purpose of this investigation is to examine family relationships between grandparents and their adult grandchildren.

The role of the grandparent can change to a mentor or historian as the grandchild becomes an adult. The relationships between grandparents and adult grandchildren are often meaningful for the grandparent, and sometimes challenging for the adult grandchild as relationships can be ongoing with dependent children, grandchildren, aging parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents. Birthrates have decreased to at or below the replacement level of two children in developed and many less developed countries, which has caused many families to have a “beanpole family” with larger numbers of smaller generations (NIA & NIH, 2011). The family members that offer unconditional support have therefore shifted from being within the same generation to intergenerational family relationships. Clearly, the opportunity for a long and satisfying relationship between the grandparent and the grandchild exists.

The relationship between grandchildren and grandparents are renegotiated as the grandchild becomes an adult, leaves the family household, becomes a parent, and perhaps a grandparent (Hagestad, 1988; Monserud, 2008). The adult grandchild can reach out to the grandparent for guidance, stories, connection, and support while experiencing these new roles. The grandparent can also benefit from the relationship with grandchildren through social interactions by experiencing family pride and the exchange of services and

advice (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1985; Harwood, 2000a; Harwood, 2000b; Harwood & Linn, 2000). This study extends past family and intergenerational research by examining the variables of solidarity, self-disclosure, and stereotyping on relational satisfaction in the grandparent-adult grandchild dyad. The following section develops the theoretical framework of the grandparent-adult grandchild relationship beginning with the characteristics of a family system.

### **Systems Theory**

According to Broderick (1993) a system has several parts, and each of the parts relate to one another and the environment. Systems theory can be applied to the family to understand the whole organized system and the interdependent subsystems within the family (Cox & Paley, 1997; Minuchin, 1985). Papero (1990) refers to a system, specifically a family system, using the metaphor of a football team. Each player of the team conducts interdependent functions that performed together creates a successful team. Papero suggests that each member is not only dependent on the other, but also must continuously remain flexible and fluid, in an attempt to respond to each other within the system (1990). For example, if a quarterback has a shoulder injury, then others must compensate for shorter passes. As changes in relationships and individuals within the family occur, there is a ripple effect on the remaining family members and subsystems, even without their consent (e.g., becoming a great-grandparent).

Individuals within a family system can be members of several subsystems. For example, a grandchild is in a subsystem with parent, sibling, and grandparent. Each of these subsystems consists of rules, patterns, and boundaries (Minuchin, 1985). The rules within the family govern the moving parts within the system, and can bond, buffer, or

even break members of the system apart (Broderick, 1993). Rules are often related to interpersonal relationships within the family, as in the grandparent-grandchild relationship. Moreover, how these rules and roles transition when the grandchild becomes an adult are important to consider. The role of the grandparent may change from being an authority figure to being a friend. The friendship encountered in the grandparent-adult grandchild relationship cannot be viewed strictly as a voluntary relationship due to the biological ties within the family (Mansson, Myers, & Turner, 2010). The biological ties connect relationships within the family system. To summarize, when individuals come together, they create a family system through their interaction patterns. The systems perspective provides a framework to examine the relationships of family members and their communication patterns. The grandparent-adult grandchild relationship is important because of its emergent, adaptive and long lasting characteristics. The following section further examines the grandparenting role.

### **Grandparents' Roles in the Family System**

The role of the grandparent cannot be viewed independently within a family. The history of the other family relationships is often required to evaluate how one relationship impacts others, as in how a grandparent interacts with the parents, the grandchild interacts with the parents, and the grandparent interacted with his/her grandparents (Dunifon & Bajacharya, 2012; Findler, Taubman-Ben-Ari, Nuttman-Schwartz, & Lazar, 2013; Mansson & Booth-Butterfield, 2011). For example, an elderly person that does not have a strong connection with his/her child may not have the connection to form relationships with the child's offspring. In specific, the family consists of interrelated

subsystems within a family system, as in the relationship that the grandparent and the grandchild have with the middle generation.

The interconnection of the family system can also react to a change to others in the system, as in a birth of a new child. Not only is there a new family member, the adult grandchild has just become a parent. The interconnection occurs in the system as the grandchild's parent also just becomes a grandparent and the grandparent becomes a great-grandparent. These transitions occur in many subsystems throughout the family system, even if one does not plan for the event. Hagestad and Burton (1986) consider transitions to have a ripple effect in what occurs throughout the family system. Similar to births, retirement, loss of a spouse, and a divorce can also cause a ripple effect within a family system (Cox & Paley, 1997; Prest & Protinski, 1993; Rosenblatt, 1994). Transitions in the family system create stresses with the grandparent-adult grandchild relationship, even if it was not intended to impact either the adult grandchild or the grandparent. For example, the grandchild's parents may divorce, which will cause hardship on the grandchild and the grandparent during the holidays. Similarly, grandparents do not have control over their geographical distance from grandchildren, number of grandchildren, or type of relationship with future grandchildren.

Grandparents may desire to build and maintain a strong connection with their grandchildren. Kivnick (1983) suggests that the grandparent will have memories of experiences encountered with his/her grandparent, and may model that same relationship with his/her grandchildren. The history of the grandparent-grandchild relationship will generate a feeling of immortality of clan, with the desire for memories of oneself shared with present and future generations (Kivnick, 1983). For example, the grandmother may

teach her granddaughter to knit as the grandmother once taught her, with a desire for the granddaughter to repeat this same tradition. The grandparent often takes the historian role within the family to make sure rituals and practices from the past are forwarded to existing and even future generations (Taylor, Roila, & Lee, 2005). The grandparent can share traditional holiday recipes with an adult grandchild, or pass down the role of preparing Thanksgiving dinner. In sum, the grandparent is an integral component of the family's system functioning as historian, storyteller, and fun seeker.

Another family pattern is the type of support that occurs within the system and subsystems. The members of the family system rely on each other for emotional support and assistance throughout their lifespan (Prest & Protinski, 1993). The grandparent may have received past social support from a grandparent when a parent of young children, and will then reciprocate the social support to an adult grandchild that becomes a new parent. The support can also be financial, as in helping the grandchild make a down payment on his/her first home, as the grandmother's grandfather did for her.

Overall, the grandparent-adult grandchild is usually a cherished relationship, as it has lasted throughout the grandchild's life, thus far. Wood and Liossis (2007) state items shared in the grandparent-grandchild relationship are often emotional closeness and possibly a life event. In addition, Wood and Liossis suggest that the childhood relationship that adult children had with their grandparents is a strong predictor of the overall intergenerational relationship that can occur in adult years (2007). The mentoring that the grandparent can offer the grandchild can be an invaluable asset for years to come. According to Griffin (2009), close family members have a history together that allows them to experience comfort based on trust, sharing of confidences, and overall

satisfaction in the relationship. Griffin suggests that intimate communication within families can begin with phrases as in, “‘remember when’... rather than ‘let me tell you about...’” (p. 110). The past knowledge shared between grandparents and grandchildren can make this relationship rewarding during times when friends are not available. This growing trust and past history strengthen that relational investment because it keeps the relationship attractive to both the grandparent and grandchild. An understandable conclusion is that the grandparent and the grandchild were there for each other in the earlier years of the relationship.

Individual transitions impact the grandparent-adult grandchild relationship quality. Grandfathers can view the grandparenting role as a positive transition from fatherhood, referring to grandfatherhood as “pleasure without responsibility” (Neugarten & Weinstein, 1964, p. 200). Findler et al. (2013) indicated that grandparenthood could be more rewarding and satisfying than parenthood, and refer to it as “compensation for parenthood.” Relational satisfaction can be linked to the decreased responsibilities felt by grandparents. The grandfather may have experienced guilt for not spending time with family as a father, and may in place mentor adult grandsons (Mann, 2007; Neugarten & Weinstein, 1964). Mann (2007) states that grandfathers are more advisors to young men in instrumental matters, such as education, work, finances, and responsibilities. Clearly, the role of mentor, or teacher, can provide role and relational satisfaction for the grandparent.

Spitze and Ward (1998) suggest that being a grandmother is the only valued role for older women. According to Mann (2007), grandmothers are often concerned with the kinskeeper and caregiver role in the family. The grandmother’s success can be measured

by the amount of closeness, intimacy and level of care family members experience. Interestingly, grandmothers will often find more satisfaction in their grandparent role than do grandfathers (Thiele & Whelan, 2008).

However, contrary to the positive identity that grandparenting has on the older generation, grandchildren report lower levels of intergenerational solidarity (Harwood, 2001). Harwood found that the perception of closeness is different for grandchildren and grandparents in the relationship, with possible variation in relationship expectations (2001). Cherlin and Furstenberg (1985) indicated that fun seeker grandparents are usually under the age of 65, and physically able to participate in fun activities with grandchildren. Furthermore, the age of grandchildren impacts the desired grandparenting style. Adult grandchildren are often not as interested in running around the backyard with the grandparents, as building a connection over coffee and conversation (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1985; Wiscott Kopera-Frye, 2000). The disconnection that occurs during transitions by one generation in the grandparent-adult grandchild relationship can cause a feeling of burden or struggle. For example, grandparents may still feel that they need to run around with the grandchildren, even though it is physically difficult to impossible.

The continued view of being there for each other can change as the grandparent and adult grandchild transition to later stages of life. The role each takes in the other's life can change, as the grandparent is facing retirement and the grandchild is facing parenthood. The variety of roles that the grandparent and adult grandchild encounter may cause evaluation of the relationship. Findler et al. (2013) state that the grandparent found the relationship both rewarding and challenging, and the positive significance that the grandparent experiences can make the role more rewarding. Consequently, the

grandparent can view the role of grandparent as more rewarding and satisfying than being a parent (Findler et al., 2013). Grandfathers often feel the emotional self-fulfillment and connection with grandchildren previously missed with their own children due to past career advancement and other stressors (Neugarten & Weinstein, 1964). The grandparent may reach out to the connection with the adult grandchild as a continuation in the family system, by sharing history and links together. Although, there are times when the relationships can also be viewed as burdensome and difficult to maintain by both the grandparent and adult-grandchild. The grandparent or grandchild may feel that the cost of the relationship outweighs the rewards received from maintaining the relationship.

The meaning that both family members place on the relationship, the compensation for parenthood, the continuity that connects the past to the future, and the burden felt in the relationship are all factors that contribute to the perceptions the grandparent and adult grandchild have on their relationship. Thus, the following research question is forwarded:

*RQ1: What is the relationship between grandparent and adult grandchild scores on (a) meaning of the relationship, (b) compensation for parenthood, (c) continuity, and (d) burden?*

The following section examines the connections that grandparents and adult-grandchildren experience within the family system.

### **Connections**

The parent often manages the grandparent-grandchild relationship while the grandchild is still a child. The parent may continue the role of kinkeeper for the child once he/she becomes an adult. The role of kinkeeper, or family gatekeeper, is responsible



for the solidarity, continuity, and maintenance of the family ties within the family by providing support and communication between family members (Leach & Braithwaite, 1996; Monserud, 2008). The kinkeeper role is often held by an average of 65% females between the ages of 40 and 59 within the family (Bengtson, 1985), and is often passed down from mother to daughter (Leach & Braithwaite, 1996; Monserud, 2008; Rosenthal, 1985). An exception is the role of kinkeeper in farming families, which is often held by the paternal grandfather with the grandsons (Semon Dubas, 2001). The transfer of the kinkeeper role can occur to someone in geographical proximity, or due to a life transition that created hardship for the existing kinkeeper, as in illness or widowhood (Bengtson, 1985). Also, the role of kinkeeper is responsible for the maintenance of relationships in the family and the initiation and enactment of family rituals (Leach & Braithwaite, 1996; Rosenthal, 1985). Additionally, the kinkeeper can often take responsibility for her children having the closest relationship with the grandparents (Hagestad, 1985).

Parents often assume the role of modeling strong family bonds for their children. Children tend to adopt the behaviors and attitudes that their parents have with other family members (Mills, 1999; Monserud, 2008). The middle generation can also be the cause of weakened connections between the grandparent and grandchild. The middle generation may have encountered a life transition that impacts intergenerational family relationships, as in divorce, illness, relocation, or death causing the weakened connection (Drew & Silverstein, 2007; Hagestad, 1988). Parental divorce can create conflict in the grandparent-grandchild relationship. The grandparent's role can become blurred if the parent becomes less active in the child's life, and cause a weakened connection with the parents of that parent (Johnson, 1998). Other times, the grandparents may

overcompensate for the parent and devote most of their attention to the grandchild that they feel is suffering from the consequences of parents' divorce or other hardships, creating an even closer grandparent-grandchild relationship (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1985). Another cause of a weakened grandparent-adult grandchild connection is a family feud with the middle generation that carried over to the grandchild. Drew and Silverstein (2007) state that the distress in the relationship could have even occurred before the grandchild was born.

Interdependence in the family system can cause conflict in the role of grandparent. Breheny, Stephens, and Spilsbury (2013) found the role of grandparent to have a balance between being there for the grandchild without interfering. The grandparent can be there for the adult grandchild by offering emotional or financial support. The grandparent can provide resources to the grandchild in times that warmth, comfort, and support is desired, as in childcare for a sick child of the adult grandchild (Ruiz & Silverstein, 2007). Grandparents can take the role of "volunteer firefighters," by anticipating when additional support is needed, without compromising boundaries by the parent and the grandchild (Breheny et al., 2013; Creasy, 1993). The grandparent that provides support when the grandchild desires independence can compromise boundaries. For example, the grandparent may offer to talk about a recent relationship breakup the adult grandchild had, when the grandchild does not wish to share the reason for the breakup.

Young adult grandchildren may also have difficulty during this time period with balancing roles. Fuligni and Pedersen (2002) stated that adults 18 to 25 years of age are expressing independence and discovering a life-path of their own. Transitions can occur

during early adulthood requiring independence and decision-making, as in full-time employment or school, marriage, parenthood, or moving away from the family home. Geurts et al. (2009) state that often times the grandchild experiences lower contact with parents and grandparents during these times of early adulthood transitions.

Parents can serve as the bridge in the relationship between grandparents and adult grandchildren (Gershenson Hodgson, 1998). Parents may put extra stress on young adults for family obligations and rituals. Parents that take on the kinkeeper role can encourage the grandparent-adult grandchild connection. Geurts et al. (2009) stated that grandchildren who have moved out of the parental home see grandparent's 1.5 times less per year than those that still live in their parents' home. The next section examines relational satisfaction in the grandparent-adult grandchild relationship.

### **Relational Satisfaction**

Relational maintenance is a challenge for both the grandparent and the adult grandchild. Role changes and transitions experienced by relationship participants can have an impact on the relational satisfaction, or perceived closeness (Mills, 1999). For example, a new parent may not have the time to call or visit his/her grandparents, which could reduce the solidarity and satisfaction in the relationship. On the other hand, the new baby may increase solidarity as the grandparent is experiencing the new role of great-grandparent.

The satisfaction experienced in an interpersonal relationship can be self-reported to assess feelings, thoughts, or behaviors (Hendrick, 1988). Renshaw, McKnight, Caska, and Blais (2011) capture the individual's perceptions of the relationship through evaluating how the relationship is meeting the needs, overall satisfaction with the

relationship, how the relationship compares to other relationships, and the amount of problems in the relationship. As in other relationships, the grandparent-adult grandchild perceived satisfaction might indicate the success of the overall relationship.

Moreover, the grandparent and adult grandchild can evaluate how their needs are being met in the relationship by determining the rewards and costs. Findler et al. (2013) found that grandparents often find the overall grandparent-grandchild relationship even more rewarding and satisfying than parenthood. Findler et al. also determined the costs involved with grandparenthood are often time and financial responsibilities. The grandparent may feel satisfaction by giving a struggling adult grandchild a gift, as in money towards purchasing college textbooks. Kemp (2005) states that as both generations age, the relationship becomes more meaningful and support is exchanged between the grandchild and grandparent. For example, the grandparent may still offer financial support for the grandchild, but the adult grandchild may also provide assistance to the grandparent with errands and household chores.

The extra help by the grandparent and adult grandchild can improve the overall satisfaction with the relationship. The grandparent may feel appreciated after helping the adult grandchild in need. The adult grandchild may also feel that the grandparent is being supportive and wants to reciprocate the favor when needed. The grandparent's purchase of the college textbooks can also cause the grandparent a feeling of involvement in the grandchild's education. On the other hand, the grandchild can also have accountability to the grandparent, and may feel obligated to be academically successful.

A feeling of closeness and connection can transpire from a supportive gesture from the grandparent. The relationship between the grandparent and the adult grandchild

often has reduced parental controls, and can be maintained based on personal inclination with decreased family obligation (Breheny, Stephens, & Spilsbury, 2013). The grandparent-adult grandchild relationship becomes more voluntary, and the feelings experienced about the relationship can dictate the interactions. If the grandparent feels the grandchild is taking advantage of the relationship, the grandparent can decrease the quantity and type of interactions (Brussoni & Boon, 1998). The grandparent may choose to spend more time with other more satisfying relationships, as in other grandchildren.

Reduced relationship satisfaction can occur from other types of problems within the grandparent-adult grandchild relationship. For example topic avoidance can have an impact in the amount of trust encountered by the grandparent and adult grandchild. The grandparent may desire to protect the adult grandchild from information, as in family alcoholism. The reasons for topic avoidance can either foster satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Caughlin & Affifi, 2004). The adult grandchild can get upset when finding out the grandmother never discussed the grandfather's alcoholism with him/her. The grandmother may have avoided the topic to protect the image that the grandchild had of the grandparent, or because the grandchild wasn't able to handle the news.

Relational satisfaction in the grandparent-adult grandchild can impact the amount of time and type of relationship experienced. The three areas that will be evaluated to determine the impact on relational satisfaction are solidarity, self-disclosure, and generational stereotypes. Their potential impact is discussed below.

Wheless (1976) has indicated that interpersonal solidarity is higher for relationships with perceptions of trust, disclosure, and connection through liking or loving. The two types of closeness encountered in relationships are emotional and

physical. Being in close proximity to your grandparent/adult grandchild can increase contact. The perceived emotional closeness in the relationship can also have an impact on the quantity and quality of contact each desires in the grandparent-adult grandchild relationship. Brussoni and Boon (1998) suggest that adult grandchildren have the ability to negotiate terms of the relationship they desire with their grandparents, as in the frequency and type of contact.

Self-disclosure in a grandparent-grandchild relationship may also have an impact on relational satisfaction. An impactful disclosure can be more common in the grandparent-adult grandchild relationship during life transitions. Grandparents may experience role changes, as in widowhood or retirement, that cause for a smaller social network (Harwood & Linn, 2000). The grandparent may find value in the family pride and social interaction with the adult grandchild. Furthermore, the grandparent-adult grandchild relationship may be helpful for an adult grandchild that enjoys stories and connecting to the grandparent (Harwood, 2000a).

Stereotypes in the grandparent-adult grandchild relationship can also have an impact on relational satisfaction. Anderson, Harwood, and Hummert (2005) view a positive stereotype for older adults to be the fun-loving “perfect” grandparent. The grandparent may have encountered depression and exhaustion for not being able to accomplish this unrealistic goal with all grandchildren. Anderson and colleagues also suggest that negative stereotypes can occur when the grandparent experiences loss of physical or mental abilities, as in the ability to hear others. The reduced independence of the grandparent can impact the role that the adult grandchild is expected to take, as in speaking louder or making phone calls for the grandparent. The perception of the

grandparent and relational satisfaction may change for the adult grandchild, although it may be socially unacceptable to complain or negatively stereotype a loved one (2005).

The following sections describe in more detail the solidarity, self-disclosure, and stereotyping that occurs in the grandparent-adult grandchild relationship. Family solidarity has been characterized as six types of connections.

### **Family Solidarity**

Past research refers to the perception of closeness and connection felt in intergenerational family relationships as family solidarity (Cryer Downs, 1988; Mills, 1999; Wheelless, 1976). Intergenerational solidarity is often a reflection of the overall relationship patterns of interactions, along with the interrelatedness and interdependence across the cross-generational family ties (Monserud, 2008). Mills (1999) has divided family solidarity into six different types of solidarity: affectual, consensual, structural, associational, functional, and normative solidarity. Each type of solidarity is defined below, along with its importance to the grandparent-adult grandchild relationship.

Affectual solidarity is the perceived feeling of emotional closeness between the grandparent and the adult grandchild. Waites (2009) stated that affectual solidarity consists of the expressed closeness, warmth, and trust within a family relationship. A grandparent calling to check in with a granddaughter that just moved away to college or through loaning money to a grandchild to reserve a location for his wedding reception can demonstrate affectual solidarity. Although most grandparents and adult grandchildren desire an affectionate relationship, not all relationships can be this way. Harwood and Linn (2000) found that a majority of grandparents blamed external attributes for poor

relationships with their adult grandchild, as in geographical proximity, instead of internal attributes, as in negative traits in the other.

Consensual solidarity is the perception of similar ideas and values between the grandparent and adult grandchild. The grandparent can share the commonalities with the adult grandchild by taking a mentor or role model position with the adult grandchild (Taylor et al., 2005). Grandfathers usually mentor the grandsons by sharing knowledge on instrumental matters, as in career and family responsibilities. A mentoring role can take place across gender roles as well, as grandfathers can provide career advice to granddaughters in professional careers (Mills, 1999).

Furthermore, consensual solidarity can be achieved by sharing fun activities together or by sharing religious beliefs when worshipping together (Silverstein and Marengo, 2001). Waites (2009) states that consensual solidarity can also be the respect and discussion of another generation's views and beliefs, with an emphasis on cultural beliefs. Waites studied specifically the Afro-centric values, beliefs, and customs and pointed out that consensual solidarity is the intergenerational communication of family and cultural history and traditions (2009). For example, grandparents and adult grandchildren may have the same Christmas traditions.

The third type of solidarity is structural solidarity, which are the factors that enhance or hinder opportunities for social interaction between the grandparent and adult grandchild. The two major indices for structural solidarity are geographical proximity and the amount of contact. Life transitions of the adult grandchild can have an impact on the amount of time that is spent with grandparents. Monserud (2010) found that grandchildren that move away from the parental home often reduce the amount of contact



with their grandparents. Harwood and Linn (2000) found that although the grandparents felt emotional closeness to their grandchildren, the geographical distance was often regretted or considered a barrier in the relationship. Dunifon and Bajracharya (2012) found that grandparents and grandchildren that live 100 miles or farther have an average of 36% lower relationship quality than those living closer together.

Associational solidarity is the fourth type of solidarity with emphasis on the frequency and media selected for interactions in the grandparent-adult grandchild relationship. An example of associational solidarity is a monthly call to your adult grandchild to check in. Types of media and frequency of contact are examples of associational solidarity, along with who initiated the contact. Harwood (2000a) states that the choice of media selected by the grandparent is usually face-to-face, phone, or letter writing with the adult grandchild. Newer forms of media may also offer more avenues of connection between adult grandchildren and their grandparents, including Internet and cell phones. In short, because we are living longer, the intergenerational connections between grandparents and their adult grandchildren provide an increasingly important family relationship to explore. New technologies are providing additional avenues for grandparents and adult grandchildren to interact with each other.

Not only is communication between intergenerational members an indicator of associational solidarity, but also the communication ritual activities within the relationship. Mangen and Miller (1998) connect associational solidarity to family rituals, as degree of associational solidarity can define family member's responsibilities to each other. For example, the family ritual for a grandparent's birthday may be to send a card, call the grandparent, share a birthday meal, buy a present for the grandparent, or not

acknowledging the birthday. This family ritual can be defined by the parent and family tradition when the child is young, and may be continued or changed when the child becomes an adult.

Functional solidarity is defined by the exchanges that occur between the grandparent and the adult grandchild. The exchanges can be either financial or through favors, as in providing rides or babysitting. According to Harwood and Linn (2000), grandparents enjoy sharing information with the grandchildren, as in advice in making decisions. Harwood and Linn found that in exchange for the information, the grandchildren provided patience and interest in the conversation, and provided the grandparent with a “youthful feeling” through the interaction (2000). Lee and Ellithorpe (1982) also support that families who are closely linked are more likely to give and receive assistance to each other. Furthermore, the healthier, higher educated, married, and younger sample of adults over 60 years old provided more aid to family members and requested less aid in return (1982). Harwood and Linn (2000) suggest that grandparents are more willing to invest in the grandparent-adult grandchild relationship, and feel gratitude when the grandchild reciprocates their investment. The investment by the grandparent is most often in the form of social support, rather than financial assistance of \$500 and gifts of equal value (Sheehan & Petrovic, 2008). The gift of social support was found of higher value as the adult child and grandparent make life transitions, for example the grandchild with parenthood and the grandparent with widowhood. Ruiz and Silverstein (2007) found that young adult grandchildren that received social support from grandparents for difficult life transitions had reduced depressive symptoms. Kemp (2005) found that grandparents with greater resources are able to provide financial assistance to

adult grandchildren (e.g. assistance with tuition, home purchases, and weddings), while grandparents with lower socio-economical resources are more likely to provide instrumental assistance (e.g. babysitting, cooking). In exchange, adult grandchildren often assisted aging grandparents with declining health with transportation (e.g. driving to medical appointments) and household chores (e.g. trimming bushes and moving furniture; Kemp, 2005). Grandparents were viewed as “valued elders” that are passing on traditions, longevity of family through stories, and the importance of having a relationship with all grandchildren (Kemp, 2005; Kivnick, 1983). Obviously, the grandparent’s esteem is impacted by the relationship satisfaction felt by sharing familial stories and traditions.

Lastly, normative solidary is the solidarity that is measured by perception of obligations and expectations that the grandparent and adult grandchild experience because of the family connection. Monseud (2010) states that grandchildren that have been married for several years have an increased contact with their maternal grandparents over time. This is often related to the commitment to family roles and obligations that are increased for the adult grandchild. However, Monserud also found that grandchildren in college felt more guilt for failure to fulfill the obligation towards grandparents than grandchildren still living with parents (2010). Soliz and Harwood (2006) determined that age has a role in the relationship, as the age and health of the grandparent can cause stereotypes that hinder the relationship. Soliz and Harwood also found that the parents may put pressure on the grandchildren to continue contact with the grandparents, and the obligation may interfere with other responsibilities and interests. Finally, Kemp (2005)

found that adult grandchildren viewed obligation as the motivator, providing more pleasure and satisfaction with the relationship.

Clearly, the six types of solidarity each measure different ways in which grandparents and adult grandchildren have a perception of closeness and connection, therefore the following hypotheses are warranted.

*H1: Solidarity (affectual, consensual, structural, associational, functional, and normative) predicts increased relational satisfaction for grandparents.*

*H2: Solidarity (affectual, consensual, structural, associational, functional, and normative) predicts increased relational satisfaction for adult grandchildren.*

The grandparent-adult grandchild relationship may change as each member ages and makes transitions in their personal lives. Also, the satisfaction in the relationship may change as the grandparent and adult grandchild make life transitions. The decisions made by either the grandparent or adult grandchild to disclose information to the other and the impact of life transitions may also affect the overall relationship. The next section examines the importance of maintaining relationships between grandparents and their adult-grandchildren.

### **Maintenance of the Grandparent-Grandchild Relationship**

Life transitions can be celebrated and mourned together in the grandparent-grandchild relationship. Sheehan and Petrovic (2008) state that although both parties can view the grandparent-adult grandchild relationship as unconditional support, not all grandparent-adult grandchildren share the same type of relationship. The grandparents and adult grandchildren may be cautious in interactions to preserve a strong image in the

other's eyes through selective disclosing, avoiding topics, and screening out information that may tarnish the image one has in this family relationship (Kemp, 2005).

Transitions in life can cause hardship in relationships. As the choice to disclose to others is made, the overall impact of the self-disclosure has the power to either form, maintain, or dissolve the relationship (Hendrick, 1981). The ability to disclose to others has been linked to the interpersonal trust felt within the relationship (Wheless, 1978). However, openness of a topic is not always good, as the decision of topic avoidance can help to save face or maintain relationships (Goldsmith, Miller, & Caughlin, 2008; Jung & Hecht, 2009). The choice to disclose in a grandparent-adult grandchild relationship can either save face for the discloser or the recipient of that disclosure.

### **Self-Disclosure**

Wheless (1976) states that individuals in a high solidarity relationship experience a feeling of closeness and connection to others. The amount of trust encountered in the relationship over time can also lead to self-disclosure (1976). Self-disclosure is defined as revealing information about self to another (Wheless, 1978). Furthermore, Wheless found that self-disclosure and solidarity were positively related to each other, with high levels of self-disclosure occurring in relationships with high solidarity, and low self-disclosure levels occurring in relationships with low solidarity (1978). For example, a close grandmother and adult granddaughter relationship will share more personal information about themselves with each other. Cryer Downs (1988) found that grandparent and grandchildren each felt that disclosure had a different impact on the dyad. While the grandchildren felt that that frequent and lengthy disclosures contributed more to the relationship, the grandparents felt that intent, reflecting accuracy and

awareness in self-disclosure contributed more to the solidarity in the relationship. The granddaughter then is disclosing more often for longer periods, while the grandmother is sharing more meaningful and impactful items to the granddaughter.

The disclosure of personal information can create strength to the overall grandparent-adult grandchild relationship through an intra-family secret. Vangelisti (1994) defined intra-family secrets as secrets that are kept from some family members, but not everyone. Vangelisti continued by stating that the secret maintained between these family members can create closeness and trust in the relationship as it develops intimacy in the relationship. For an example, a grandfather may find a connection with a grandchild that has revealed a secret to him before his parents. Furthermore, the grandparent-grandchild will form connectedness and cohesion by protecting the secret from those outside of the relationship (Vangelisti, 1994). The secret that remains within the relationship will give a sense of insider information from those that are not aware of the secret (Affifi, Olson, & Armstrong, 2005). The trust and bond the secret forms will serve a function within the relationship.

Transitions in life often involve role and identity shifts (Hagestad, 1988). Others can initiate the changes, as in the loss of a spouse, parent, or child. Widowhood has higher probability for grandmothers, as women often marry older men and outlive their husbands by eight years (Hagestad, 1985; Hagestad, 1988). This painful identity shift can cause increased need for support and assistance from the adult grandchild, which may create some burden on other relationships. Additionally, what grandparents and adult grandchildren intend to disclose, the amount of self-disclosure, and the positive or

negative self-disclosures may impact their relational satisfaction. Thus, the following hypotheses are warranted:

*H3: As self-disclosure (a) intent, (b) amount, and (c) valence increases so does relational satisfaction for grandparents.*

*H4: As self-disclosure (a) intent, (b) amount, and (c) valence increases so does relational satisfaction for adult grandchildren*

While the above section looked at the impact of self-disclosure, the following section considers the role of topic avoidance in the grandparent-adult grandchild relationship. The section will address topic avoidance as a tool of protection, along with the three types of topic avoidance in a relationship.

### **Topic Avoidance**

The grandparent-adult grandchild relationship must sometimes make the decision to have open communication or avoidance of communication within the relationship. Baxter and Wilmot (1985) consider information control to be the opposite of self-disclosure, as the conscious choice is made to withhold the information within a close relationship for protection from embarrassment or hurt. According to Goldsmith et al. (2008), topic avoidance can occur for face-saving of self or for protecting others. Self-disclosure can also be very costly and threatening to both the discloser and the listener in a relationship (Hendrick, 1981). Afifi et al. (2005) stated that fear of negative disclosure is the fear for self, the other person, and the relationship. The discloser may want to protect self from ridicule or judgment, protect the listener from pain, or protect the overall relationship (Afifi et al., 2005). Kam and Hecht (2009) state that adult grandchildren may find gaps in how they are presented to their grandparents and how

they perceive themselves. Grandchildren may avoid certain topics of dissatisfaction with their grandparents to maintain a positive relationship. For example, the grandchild may not disclose to the grandparent about being recently turned down for a promotion at work.

The avoided topics in a relationship fall into three categories: taboo topics, rule violation, and conventional secrets (Afifi et al., 2005; Vangelisti, 1994; Vangelisti, Caughlin, and Timmerman, 2001). Baxter and Wilmot (1985) define a taboo topic as one that is “off limits” to either the grandchild or grandparent. The topic can also be considered taboo to society or within a family (Vangelisti et al., 2001). An example of a taboo topic in a grandparent-adult grandchild relationship is an extramarital affair. One relationship partner may avoid this topic to protect the other relationship partner, or as it may cause conflict in the relationship (Caughlin & Afifi, 2004). The granddaughter may disapprove of the grandmother’s affair, and revealing the secret can have a “chilling effect” on the relationship long-term (2004). Guerrero and Afifi (1995) state that the partner may be unresponsive to the information that is disclosed, or listener may lack the knowledge to handle the problem. Guerrero and Afifi also identified that the conversation may be socially inappropriate, as it may not be socially acceptable to discuss infidelity with a grandparent or grandchild (1995).

Rule violation is the second type of topic of secrets. Rule violations are secrets that break norms of conduct common in families, as in cohabitation (Vangelisti et al., 2001). The adult granddaughter may not reveal to her grandfather that she has moved in with her boyfriend, as she may fear that he will judge her and disapprove of her living with her boyfriend.



The third topic of secrets is conventional secrets. Conventional secrets are items that are not discussed within the family, as in personality conflicts (Vangelisti et al., 2001). The adult grandson may not reveal to his grandmother that he is not currently getting along with his sister. He may fear that she may disapprove and be hurt that the family is not getting along.

The overall decision to withhold taboo topics, rule violations, or conventional secrets in the grandparent-adult grandchild relationship can cause relational conflict. Thus, the following research questions are warranted.

*RQ 2: What information have grandparents and adult grandchildren not shared with one another?*

*RQ 3: Do grandparents and grandchildren differ about which topics they do not share with one another?*

The following section addresses the perception that the grandparent and the adult grandchild have of their relationship. There are times when both the grandparent and the adult grandchild will have satisfaction and the relationship will prosper, but there are other times in which the perception of the relationship is not balanced. The imbalance may occur due to the inability to adjust to either their own or the other's life transitions.

### **Perception of Relationship**

The overall perception of the closeness in the relationship, or affectual solidarity, can be different for the grandparent and the adult grandchild. Harwood (2001) found that the grandparents view the overall relationship with grandchildren to be much closer than the grandchild perceives the relationship. Harwood also states that the grandchildren perceive the overall relationship to be more active than grandparents. In other words, the

grandchild is more apt to count every occurrence that the activity occurs, while the grandparent expects the behavior to be more regular and ongoing (2001). The expectation of the overall relationship can cause different perceptions.

Cherlin and Furstenberg (1985) considered the less active relationships with grandparents as either detached or passive grandparents. The detached grandparent has low levels of contact with the adult grandchild, often due to geographical proximity. Cherlin and Furstenberg provided an example of a grandmother that wished she was closer to her grandchildren, but entrusted her children to instill the family values and beliefs into the grandchildren. The passive grandparent spends time monthly with the grandchild, but has a hands-off approach to grandparenting (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1985).

Categories of active grandparents are authoritative, influential, and supportive types (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1985). Cherlin and Furstenberg (1985) found that active grandparents were often younger and more involved in the lives of the grandchildren. The influential grandmother might provide daily childcare for the adult grandchild's children, while the influential grandfather may provide career advice.

The grandchild experiences many transitions in life since becoming an adult. The adult grandchild is faced with a number of major adult roles that will overshadow the role of grandchild (Mills, 1999). The adult grandchild will now split time and effort in roles, as in a partner or employee. Monserud (2010) states that the grandparent-adult grandchild relationship can actually strengthen, as additional life experiences related to adult roles are encountered. Specifically, the meaning of the relationship can change over time, but

the frequency of interactions can have an impact on strengthening the changing relationship. Thus, the following hypotheses become forwarded:

*H5: Frequency of contact increases relational satisfaction for grandparents.*

*H6: Frequency of contact increases relational satisfaction for adult grandchildren.*

Sometimes one relationship partner may not be aware that the other has made transitions and growth over the years, and may view the other as they once were. An example of this would be the grandparent views the adult grandchild as still a young grandchild, while the adult grandchild is seeking social support because of a recent job loss. The grandparent may not understand that the grandchild has a family and a mortgage that rely on the paycheck, and the overall impact of the job loss. The struggle for role definition may cause relational conflict in the grandparent-adult grandchild relationship.

The grandparent may show signs of aging that hinder the relationship, as in a decline in physical abilities, as in difficulty with balance or walking, or mental abilities, as in remembering or slow thinking (Anderson et al., 2005). On the other hand, possible stereotypes of elderly individuals are grandmother, elder statesman, and senior citizen. Hummert (1990) stated positive elder stereotypes of the grandmother, a nurturing woman that cares for the family, and the elder statesman as the grandfather is distinguished and offers wisdom to grandchildren. A more negative elder stereotype is the senior citizen that is inactive with failing senses. The adult grandchild may withdraw from the relationship due to activation of negative stereotypes of the grandparent as now frail and not able to provide the social support as in the past. Anderson et al. (2005) state that the

relational factors as in closeness and past self-disclosure and the health of the grandparent have an impact on stereotypes.

Negative elder stereotypes may cause the younger adult to use patronizing communication with the elder (Anderson et al., 2005). For example, an adult grandchild can begin to speak louder, using short sentences, and a child-like vocabulary with the elder. The elder person may sense the patronizing characteristics within the message and find the overall relationship less satisfying with the younger person (Hummert, Shaner, Garstka, & Henry, 1998). Therefore the following research question is warranted.

*RQ4: How does stereotyping by the grandparent or adult grandchild of the relationship relate to (a) relational satisfaction, (b) self-disclosure intent, (c) self-disclosure amount, and (d) self-disclosure valence?*

In conclusion, the review of literature above provides a summary of the rationale for conducting this study, describes systems theory as the theoretical frame for this investigation, identifies relevant literature and key variables, and forwards research questions and hypotheses. Key variables in this study are solidarity, self-disclosure, stereotyping, and relational satisfaction between the grandparent and adult grandchild dyad. The next chapter reviews the methodological choices used in this study.

## **Chapter 2: Methods**

Chapter Two reviews the methods used to examine grandparent and adult grandchild relational satisfaction based on self-disclosure, solidarity, and stereotyping. The chapter addresses participant requirements, survey construction, and measurement reliability. To answer the research questions and hypotheses, sixty-two dyads were recruited to complete a survey addressing their grandparent-adult grandchild relationships.

### **Participants**

The sample for this study included 62 grandparent-adult grandchild dyads, 124 individuals. The requirements for participation were that the dyad had a current relationship with each other. In addition, adult grandchildren were required to be 18 years or older.

Following university IRB approval, recruitment of the dyads was conducted through the undergraduate classes at a large, urban university in the Midwest. Extra credit was earned when both the adult grandchild and grandparent completed the survey. Ineligible students could recruit another eligible dyad to complete the survey on their behalf, or complete a non-research related activity. Recruitment occurred over a three-month span.

### **Instrumentation**

To address the six hypotheses and four research questions regarding grandparent-adult grandchild relationships, two mirrored surveys were constructed to ask both adult grandchildren and their grandparents' questions regarding relational satisfaction, self-disclosure, solidarity, and stereotyping experienced in their relationship. Survey

participants were asked to focus on the participating grandparent/adult grandchild when answering the survey questions. The two-mirrored surveys compared each dyad's views on family and grandparent-grandchild connections (e.g., intergenerational stereotyping and relational satisfaction), relationship maintenance (e.g., self-disclosure scale), and family solidarity (e.g., affectual, consensual, structural, associational, functional, and normative). See Appendix L for the Grandparent Survey and Appendix M for the Adult Grandchild Survey.

The grandchildren were recruited primarily from undergraduate communication courses at a large urban Midwestern university. See Appendix O for the solicitation email and announcement used for students. The adult grandchildren received extra credit for participating in an online Qualtrics survey about their grandparent-adult grandchild relationship, after contacting the researcher with the unique randomized dyad code provided by Qualtrics and their grandparent's contact information. Instructors had the option to provide extra credit to participating students or to give partial credit for completion of the adult grandchild survey. Additional adult grandchildren and their grandparents were recruited from the researcher's personal network and through Facebook.

With the help of two recruiters, grandparents were contacted through email, mail, or phone and advised of their grandchild's participation in the research study requesting their participation. See Appendix P for script and note through email and mail used to solicit grandparents.

Finally, grandparents received two options to complete the survey: online or through paper copies of the Qualtrics survey, of which both included informed consent.

The online survey completed by the adult grandchild was assigned a unique randomized number that the researcher provided to the grandparent to enter into the code blank on the electronic survey. This code was written on the grandparent's mailed surveys to reduce opportunity for mismatched surveys and ultimately unusable data. Paper surveys were mailed to the grandparents with a return stamped-addressed envelope for mailing the completed survey to the researcher.

### **Measures**

Participants completed surveys that addressed the following areas on the grandparent-adult grandchild relationship: (a) demographics of self and other party, (b) self-disclosure (intent, amount, and valence), (c) topic avoidance list, (d) solidarity (affectual, consensual, structural, associational, functional, and normative), (e) intergenerational stereotyping, and (f) relational satisfaction. Table 1 provides a reliability breakdown by area for the grandparents and the adult grandchildren in this study.

**Demographics.** Participants were asked to describe the background of the other and self (e.g., age, sex, marital status, and family connection). This information provided a description of the sample. All participants provided their age, gender, and the maternal or paternal relationship with each other. See Appendix A for a complete listing.

Grandparents ranged in age from 57 to 93, with the average age of 74.93 ( $SD = 8.13$ ). There were 18 males (29%) and 44 females (71%). Of the 62 participants, 18 (29%) identified themselves as a paternal grandparent, while 44 (71%) were maternal grandparents.

The adult grandchild participants ranged in age from 18 to 39, with the average age of 22.42 ( $SD = 4.30$ ). There were 22 males (36%) and 39 females (63%). Of the 62 participants, 19 (31%) identified the dyadic relationship with a paternal grandparent, while 43 (69%) with a maternal grandparent.

**Self-disclosure scale.** A portion of the Wheelless (1978) self-disclosure scale was used to determine the intent, amount, and valence of self-disclosure using a five point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The self-disclosure scale is separated into dimensions: (a) conscious intent to disclose, (b) amount of self-disclosure, and (c) valence of self-disclosure. The consciously intended disclosure in the grandparent-adult grandchild relationship was measured for both the grandparent ( $\alpha = .82$ ) and the adult grandchild ( $\alpha = .87$ ). The first item in the scale failed to correlate with the other three items and was deleted from the scale. Reliabilities for the amount of disclosure perceived in the relationship by the grandparent ( $\alpha = .74$ ) and the adult grandchild ( $\alpha = .77$ ) indicate a moderately reliable scale. Additionally, the valence of self-disclosure was determined for the grandparent ( $\alpha = .74$ ) and the adult grandchild ( $\alpha = .79$ ), indicating a reliable scale. See appendix B for self-disclosure scale with items by dimension.

**Topic avoidance scale.** The survey lists twenty-three possible topics that participants did not disclose in the relationship. Potential choices included: medical health issues, alcohol abuse, and finances. The topics fell into three categories: taboo topics, rule violation, and conventional secrets (Afifi et al., 2005; Vangelisti, 1994; Vangelisti et al., 2001). Space was provided for additional reasons for topic avoidance. The topic avoidance scale had three dimensions (e.g., self protection, relationship



protection, partner unresponsiveness) determining why disclosure was avoided in the grandparent-adult relationship. Reliabilities for these dimensions indicated fairly reliable indices, (1) self-protection ( $\alpha = .86$  grandparent;  $\alpha = .61$  adult grandchild), (2) relationship protection ( $\alpha = .88$  grandparent;  $\alpha = .89$  adult grandchild), (3) partner unresponsiveness ( $\alpha = .79$  grandparent;  $\alpha = .77$  adult grandchild; Guerrero & Afifi, 1995). See Appendix C for listing of items not disclosed and reasons for topic avoidance.

**Solidarity scales.** Family solidarity was defined as the perceived level of closeness experienced within this intergenerational relationship with similar beliefs, values, and opinions (Mills, 1999). The six types of solidarity (affectual, consensual, structural, associational, functional, and normative) were based on Mills (1999) research on family solidarity in grandparent-grandchild relationships.

***Affectual solidarity.*** Six items comprise this scale. Affectual solidarity measures the perceived emotional closeness between grandparent and grandchild. A five point Likert scale was used to measure the perceived closeness in the relationship ranging from 1(not very much) to five (extremely). Examples of items from Mills, Wakeman, and Fea's affectual solidarity scale are, "How well do you feel the communication is between you and your grandparent/adult grandchild?" and, "How well do you feel your grandparent/adult grandchild understands you (2001)?" Reliabilities for perceived closeness for grandparents ( $\alpha = .91$ ) and adult grandchildren ( $\alpha = .90$ ) were computed, indicating a reliable scale. See Appendix D for the affectual scale.

***Consensual solidarity.*** Four items measured the perceived level of similarity in views and values shared in the grandparent-adult grandchild relationship using a five point Likert scale of 1 (not at all like me) to five (just like me). The four items were: (a)

views on life (e.g., values, beliefs), (b) measures of life success (e.g., career, family, and accomplishments), (c) value of life (e.g., maintenance of self, safety), and (d) views on family (e.g., importance of family ties). This scale had reliability of .84 for both grandparents and adult grandchildren. See Appendix E for the consensual solidarity scale.

***Structural solidarity.*** The structural solidarity scale measured distance and amount of contact between the grandparent and grandchild. Structural solidarity is measured with two items: geographical proximity and amount of contact. First, an open-ended question was asked on distance of miles between the grandparent and grandchild. Respondents placed a zero in the blank if living together. The second item measured frequency of contact using a five point Likert scale 1 (rarely) to five (very frequent) asking, three questions, such as, “How often do you have contact with this grandparent/adult grandchild?” The perceived amount of contact in the grandparent-adult grandchild relationship was measured for both the grandparent ( $\alpha = .88$ ) and the adult grandchild ( $\alpha = .89$ ), indicating a reliable scale. Appendix F contains the structural solidarity scale.

***Associational solidarity.*** Types of media and frequency of contact were used to measure associational solidarity, along with who initiated the contact. The first dimension listed eight different media to identify how the dyad connects/communicates with each other, including face-to-face visits and video chat (e.g., Skype). Space was provided for additional media. The second dimension included four items and measured frequency of connection using a five point Likert scale (1 = never, 5 = daily). Examples of items from the associational solidarity scale were, “Approximately how many times in the past year have you seen this grandparent /grandchild?” and, “How often have you shared family

rituals (e.g., dinner, parties)?” The reliability of this dimension was computed for the grandparent ( $\alpha = .92$ ) and the adult grandchild ( $\alpha = .85$ ). Associational solidarity is also measured by what percentage of contact was initiated by the grandparent, adult grandchild, the parent, or another party. See Appendix G for the associational solidarity scale.

**Functional solidarity.** Relational exchanges, investments, and costs were used to measure functional solidarity. The first set of six items measured the frequency of exchanges that occurred annually in the relationship (e.g., frequency of gift exchange, social support, favors) using a five point Likert scale (1) never, (2) once or twice a year, (3) every month or two, (4) once every week or two, and (5) daily. The amount of functional solidarity produced a Cronbach’s alpha of .75 for grandparents and .88 for adult grandchildren. The second and third dimensions addressed the perceived (2) personal investment and (3) personal costs experienced in the relationship using a five point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree, 5 = strongly disagree). Seven items measured the perceived personal investment in the relationship with questions such as, “It is important to me to invest in my relationship with my grandchild/grandparent, even if it means I have to give up other things in my life.” The current study yielded a Cronbach’s alpha of .91 for grandparents and .95 for adult grandchildren indicating a highly reliable scale. The final seven items of the functional solidarity personal cost scale measured the cost of the relationship. For example, “Being a grandparent/grandchild sometimes means giving up other social and leisure activities” is an item from this scale. Reliabilities indicate a moderately reliable scale (Cronbach’s alpha = .74 for grandparents and .79 for grandchildren). See Appendix H for the functional solidarity scale.

***Normative solidarity.*** Normative solidarity is conceptualized as the perception of obligations and expectations perceived within the relationship because of the family connection. Nineteen items comprised this four-dimension scale of (a) meaning, (b) compensation for parenthood, (c) continuity, and (d) burden (Findler et al., 2013). Using a five-point Likert scale 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), the grandparent and adult grandchild rated their roles in the relationship. See Appendix I for all four-dimensions of this scale.

The meaning dimension of the normative reliability scale measured the perceived significance of the relationship by the individual. An example of the eight items used to measure meaning includes, “Being a grandparent/grandchild enriches my world.” Reliabilities indicate a moderately reliable scale for both grandparents and grandchildren ( $\alpha = .84$ ).

The second dimension of normative solidarity was compensation for parenthood. This scale measured the grandparent-grandchild relationship in comparison to the relationship history each has with the middle generation, the grandchild’s parent. The history of the three generations’ interdependence impacts the success of grandparent-adult grandchild relationship (Findler et al., 2013). An example of the four-item compensation for parenthood scale includes, “I sometimes feel inadequate as a parent, but my role as a grandparent makes up for that.” Additionally, adult grandchildren may have tarnished the grandparent-child relationship with their parents and used the grandparent-adult grandchild relationship to make amends. Reliabilities indicate a moderately reliable scale for both grandparents and grandchildren ( $\alpha = .82$ ).

The third dimension, continuity, examines the perceived importance of the relationship in the family connection. The grandparent-adult grandchild subsystem of the family system can be mutually beneficial to both adults in the relationship (Anderson et al., 2005). Both the grandparent and the adult grandchild can provide each other social support through life transitions encountered. An example of the four-item scale included, “My grandparent/grandchild is a link between the past and the future.” Cronbach’s alpha was .90 for grandparents and .89 for adult grandchildren, indicating a reliable scale.

The final normative solidarity dimension, burden, was defined as the perceived level of stress that the relationship has on the individual. The grandparent-grandchild relationship may have been perceived as having a high cost to maintain by either the grandparent or the grandchild. Grandparents may have felt burdened in a grandparent-adult grandchildren relationship for various reasons, as differences in lifestyles, child rearing beliefs, or ideologies (Mills, 1999). Additionally, adult grandchildren may feel the burden in the grandparent-adult grandchild relationship for various reasons as in physical or mental deterioration, and negative attitude (Anderson et al., 2005). An example in the three-item scale was, “Being a grandparent/grandchild tires me out.” Cronbach’s alpha was .84 for grandparents and .97 for adult grandchildren, indicating a reliable scale.

**Intergenerational stereotyping/perceptions.** Intergenerational stereotypes impact the grandparent-adult grandchild relationship. The word “stereotype” can create negative emotion. Anderson et al. (2005) stated that the stereotype of grandparents represents both positive (e.g., loving grandmother baking cookies) and negative (e.g., crabby hard of hearing grandfather) elements. Past experience created positive and

negative perceptions of each other. For example, the younger adult created stereotypes on aging from past interactions with older adults (Pecchioni & Croghan, 2002).

Grandparents may generate intergenerational stereotypes from negative past experiences with young adults that either treated them with disrespect or belittled them (Anderson et al., 2005; Pecchioni & Croghan, 2002).

On the survey instrument, the word “stereotype” was replaced with the word “perception” to reduce the negative connotation associated with rating stereotypes for either generation. Participants assessed four items regarding the intergenerational perceptions in the relationship using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The four items included: “I feel that my grandparent/grandchild has a negative perception of me based on my generation,” “I feel that my grandparent/grandchild has a positive perception of me based on my generation,” “I have a negative perception of my grandparent/grandchild based on his/her generation,” “I have a positive perception of my grandparent/grandchild based on his/her generation.” The impact of intergenerational perceptions for grandparents was ( $\alpha = .77$ ) and for adult grandchildren was ( $\alpha = .97$ ), indicating a reliable scale. See Appendix J.

**Relational satisfaction.** Renshaw, McKnight, Caska, and Blais (2011) used a Relationship Assessment Scale to measure the perceived quality of the relationship by either the grandparent or the adult grandchild. Renshaw et al. found that higher scores indicated increased relationship fulfillment. A higher satisfaction score with the grandparent-adult grandchild relationship should indicate a feeling of closeness, frequent interactions, and reciprocal self-disclosure in this intergenerational relationship. Each seven-item relational satisfaction measure had a different five-point Likert scale (e.g., not

very well, not very satisfied) that measured perceptions of the overall relationship (Renshaw et al., 2011). One example item in the Renshaw scale is, “In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship with your grandparent/grandchild?” The scale was considered reliable for grandparents ( $\alpha = .79$ ) and adult grandchildren ( $\alpha = .89$ ). See Appendix K.

### **Data Analysis**

The first research question determines the relationship between grandparent and adult grandchild scores on the normative solidarity measure. The scores were correlated separately for the grandparent and the adult grandchild for (a) meaning, (b) compensation for parenthood, (c) continuity, and (d) burden.

The first two hypotheses address the impact of the six different types of solidarity (affectual, consensual, structural, associational, functional, and normative) on relational satisfaction for the grandparent and adult grandchild. Bivariate correlation and multiple regression tested each type of solidarity (six types) with the relational satisfaction scale.

Hypotheses three and four predicted that as self-disclosure increased so would relational satisfaction in the grandparent-adult grandchild relationship. Bivariate correlation was used for the three self-disclosure variables (intent, amount, and valence) with the relational satisfaction scale for both the grandparent and the grandchild.

The second and third research questions, “What information have grandparents and grandchildren not shared with each other” and, “Do grandparents and grandchildren differ about which topics they do not share with one another” address the types of items that the grandparent and the adult grandchild have not disclosed with each other and the reasoning behind it. Vangelisti’s (1994) family secret topics were used. Modifications

were made to finances, physical health problems, and grades items (Afifi et al., 2005). Furthermore, the researcher added job loss as a topic, modified sexual preferences to sexual orientation, and separated physical and psychological abuse into two categories, and separated substance abuse into the two topics of alcohol abuse and drug abuse. Analysis included the frequency of type of incidents not disclosed in a table with grandparent and adult grandchildren in separate columns.

Both questions provided the option of “other,” along with a line to fill in a response. The analysis of the items entered in “other” may be used for a possible future content analysis. Additionally, the questions, “who have you shared this secret with”(Vangelisti et al., 2001) and “what is the likelihood that you will eventually share the secret with this grandchild/grandparent” will be used for future analysis.

The fifth and sixth hypotheses were used to determine if the frequency of contact between the grandparent and adult grandchild increases the relational satisfaction in the dyad. A correlation was conducted between the frequency of contact scale (part of structural solidarity scale) and the relational satisfaction scale.

The fourth research question addressed intergenerational perceptions of the grandparent and grandchild. The correlation was estimated separately for the grandparent and the adult grandchild between intergenerational perceptions, relational satisfaction, self-disclosure intent, self-disclosure amount, and self-disclosure valence.

To summarize, Chapter Two outlined the procedure used to conduct this investigation. Sixty-two grandparent and adult grandchildren dyads completed a mirrored survey examining their relational satisfaction based on self-disclosure, solidarity, and intergenerational perceptions. Reliabilities of the various measures were reported.



### Chapter 3: Results

Chapter Three reports the findings when addressing the research questions and hypotheses between grandparents and their adult grandchildren. Results center on four research questions and six hypotheses on grandparent and adult grandchild relational satisfaction based on their self-disclosure, solidarity, and intergenerational perceptions.

#### **Perception of Grandparent-Adult Grandchild Relationship**

The first research question examined perceptions that the grandparent and the adult grandchild have regarding their relationship using the normative solidarity scale. The grandparent and adult grandchild scores were correlated using the four dimensions of the normative solidarity scale for (a) meaning that both place on the relationship, (b) compensation for parenthood, meaning the grandparent adult grandchild relationship is more rewarding or satisfying than parental relationship (Finder et al., 2013), (c) continuity that connects the past to the future, and (d) burden felt in the relationship. There exists a significant correlation between grandparent and adult grandchild scores for meaning,  $r(59) = .32, p < .05$ , and burden,  $r(60) = .46, p < .05$ . Nonsignificant normative solidarity correlations existed between the grandparent's and adult grandchild's perceptions of compensation for parenthood,  $r(60) = .12, p > .05$ , and continuity,  $r(59) = .02, p > .05$ .

#### **Family Solidarity**

The first two hypotheses predicted the six different types of solidarity (affectual, consensual, structural, associational, functional, and normative) would be associated with increased relational satisfaction for the grandparent and adult grandchild. Bivariate

correlation and multiple regression were used to test each of the six types of solidarity with the relational satisfaction scale separately for both the grandparent and the adult grandchild. See Table 2 for a summary of the correlations for each solidarity type with relational satisfaction for both the adult grandchildren and grandparents.

Affectual solidarity is the perceived emotional closeness between the grandparent and adult grandchild. There was a significant correlation between affectual solidarity and relational satisfaction for both the adult grandchildren,  $r(49) = .75, p < .05$ , and the grandparents,  $r(52) = .66, p < .05$ .

Consensual solidarity is the perception of similar ideas and values between the grandparent and adult grandchild. A significant correlation exists between consensual solidarity and relational satisfaction for both the adult grandchildren,  $r(49) = .74, p < .05$ , and the grandparents,  $r(52) = .47, p < .05$ .

Structural solidarity measures the factors that enhance or hinder social interactions within the grandparent-adult grandchild relationship. Two main factors that are addressed are the geographical proximity and amount of contact. The distance of miles between the grandparent and adult grandchild were reported by the grandchildren ( $M = 222.86$  miles) with the range of living together (5) to 1,753 miles. Twelve reported living less than five miles apart, while six reported living more than 1,000 miles apart. The second part of structural solidarity correlated the perceived amount of contact within the relationship and relational satisfaction. A positive correlation exists for adult grandchildren,  $r(49) = .47, p < .05$ , and a nonsignificant correlation for grandparents,  $r(52) = .12, p > .05$ .

Associational solidarity measures the frequency and media selected for interactions. The main types of contact initiated from the grandparent to the grandchild ( $N = 62$ ) were face-to-face visits (54), telephone (53), text message (20), email (19), letter (10), Facebook public wall post (10), video chat (7), and Facebook private message (5). There was a positive correlation in the relationship for frequency of contact and relational satisfaction for both the adult grandchildren,  $r(49) = .43, p < .05$ , and the grandparents,  $r(52) = .26, p < .05$ .

The fifth type of solidarity involves functional solidarity, which measures the exchanges that occur in the relationship. The three different types of functional solidarity that correlated with relational satisfaction in the grandparents-adult grandchildren relationship were amount, relationship investment, and relationship cost. The functional solidarity amount was significant for the grandchildren,  $r(49) = .26, p < .05$ , but was nonsignificant for grandparents,  $r(52) = -.08, p > .05$ . The functional solidarity relationship investment was significant for both the adult grandchildren,  $r(49) = .64, p < .05$ , and the grandparents,  $r(52) = .32, p < .05$ . However, the functional solidarity relationship cost was nonsignificant for both the adult grandchildren,  $r(49) = -.08, p > .05$ , and the grandparents,  $r(52) = -.09, p > .05$ .

Finally, normative solidarity is the perception of obligations and expectations perceived in the relationship. Relational satisfaction was correlated with the four different types of normative solidarity: meaning, compensation for parenthood, continuity, and burden. The correlation for normative solidarity meaning and relational satisfaction was significant for both the adult grandchildren,  $r(49) = .65, p < .05$ , and the grandparents,  $r(52) = .32, p < .05$ . Normative solidarity compensation for parenthood was significantly

correlated with relational satisfaction for adult grandchildren,  $r(49) = .23, p < .05$ , but it was nonsignificant for the grandparents,  $r(52) = -.07, p > .05$ . Likewise, normative solidarity continuity and relational satisfaction had a significant correlation for adult grandchildren,  $r(49) = .49, p < .05$ , but was nonsignificant for the grandparents,  $r(52) = -.01, p > .05$ . However, the correlation for normative solidarity burden and relational satisfaction was significant for both the adult grandchildren,  $r(49) = -.46, p < .05$ , and the grandparents,  $r(52) = -.45, p < .05$ .

**Multiple regression for adult grandchildren.** The equation provided significant prediction of relational satisfaction,  $R = .83, F(3,47) = 33.56, p < .05$ . The significant contributing predictors in this equation were affectual,  $\beta = .33, t = 2.47, p < .05$ , consensual,  $\beta = .35, t = 2.77, p < .05$ , and normative meaning,  $\beta = .27, t = 2.61, p < .05$ .

**Multiple regression for grandparents.** The equation provided significant prediction of relational satisfaction,  $R = .75, F(3,50) = 20.87, p < .05$ . The significant contributing predictors to this equation were affectual,  $\beta = .65, t = 6.28, p < .05$ , normative burden,  $\beta = -.24, t = -2.34, p < .05$ , and functional cost,  $\beta = -.21, t = -2.13, p < .05$ .

### **Self-Disclosure**

Hypotheses three and four predict that as self-disclosure increases in the grandparent-adult grandchild relationship, so will relational satisfaction. Bivariate correlation was used for the three self-disclosure variables (intent, amount, and valence) with the relational satisfaction scale for both the grandparent and the adult grandchild. The significant correlation was self-disclosure intent and relational satisfaction for the adult grandchildren,  $r(56) = .36, p < .05$ . However, the correlations between self-

disclosure amount and relational satisfaction for adult grandchildren,  $r(54) = .20, p > .05$ , and self-disclosure valence and relational satisfaction,  $r(55) = .07, p > .05$  were nonsignificant. The correlations involving grandparents for relational satisfaction and the three dimensions of self-disclosure were all nonsignificant: self-disclosure intent,  $r(58) = .06, p > .05$ , self-disclosure amount,  $r(57) = .11, p > .05$ , and self-disclosure valence,  $r(57) = -.20, p > .05$ .

### **Topic Avoidance**

The second and third research questions, “What information have grandparents and grandchildren not shared with each other” and, “Do grandparents and grandchildren differ about which topics they do not share with one another” identify the types of items that the grandparent and the adult grandchild have not disclosed with each other. The most frequent topics avoided by adult grandchildren were sexual relations (45), drinking/partying (30), breaking rules (21), dating partners (17), and finances (16). However, grandparents reported finances (26), marital problems/divorce (18), sexual relations and (18), religion/ideology (12) as the most frequent topics avoided in discussion with their adult grandchildren. See Table 3 for a complete list of avoided topics by both the grandparents and the adult grandchildren. Both groups rated finances and sexual relations very high in topics not discussed with the other.

### **Intergenerational Perception of the Relationship**

The fifth and sixth hypotheses were used to determine if the frequency of contact between the grandparent and adult grandchild increases the relational satisfaction in the dyad. A correlation assessed the relationship between the perceived frequency of contact scale and the relational satisfaction scale. The frequency of contact correlated with

relational satisfaction for adult grandchildren was significant,  $r(55) = .55, p < .05$ ; however, the correlation for grandparents was nonsignificant,  $r(58) = .13, p > .05$ .

The fourth research question addressed intergenerational perceptions by the grandparent and grandchild in the relationship. The correlation was computed separately for the grandparent and the adult grandchild between intergenerational perceptions, relational satisfaction, self-disclosure intent, self-disclosure amount, and self-disclosure valence. Adult grandchildren had a significant correlation for stereotypes/perceptions and relational satisfaction,  $r(58) = -.45, p < .05$ . However, there were nonsignificant correlations for adult grandchildren between stereotypes/ perceptions and self-disclosure intent,  $r(60) = -.03, p > .05$ , self-disclosure amount,  $r(59) = -.01, p > .05$ , and self-disclosure valence,  $r(59) = .11, p > .05$ .

The reported correlation that was also significant for grandparents was stereotypes/perceptions and relational satisfaction,  $r(56) = -.46, p < .05$ . Although the grandparent correlations for stereotypes/perceptions with self-disclosure intent,  $r(60) = -.23, p > .05$ , self-disclosure amount,  $r(57) = -.02, p > .05$  and self-disclosure valence,  $r(58) = -.04, p > .05$  were nonsignificant.

To summarize, while results for this investigation were mixed, the grandparent adult grandchild relationship provides an important subsystem of the family system to conduct research. Chapter Four highlights results of this investigation, discusses the theoretical and applied implications, describes the limitations, and offers future research recommendations.

## **Chapter 4: Discussion**

The purpose of Chapter Four is to highlight the results of this investigation, discuss the theoretical and applied implications, describe the limitations of this investigation, and offer directions for future research. In other words, this chapter highlights the results of the four research questions and six hypotheses on grandparent and adult grandchild relational satisfaction based on perceptions of the relationship, family solidarity, self-disclosure, topic avoidance, and intergenerational perceptions.

### **Perception of Grandparent-Adult Grandchild Relationship**

Results of the first research question indicated a significant correlation between the grandparents and the adult grandchildren for their relationship's meaning and burden. Both the grandparents and the adult grandchildren experienced meaning in their relationship that can be both enriching and challenging (Findler et al., 2013). Although the relationship is important, getting together may be inconvenient because of schedules, time, and space. Both the grandparent and the adult grandchild may find that the role and responsibilities experienced in this relationship add additional stress to existing life stresses, as in career, other relationships, health, travel, and other family obligations. To summarize, relational satisfaction (perceived closeness) can vary in the adult grandchild and grandparent relationships (Mills, 1999).

### **Family Solidarity**

The six different types of solidarity (affectual, consensual, structural, associational, functional, and normative) had varying impact on relational satisfaction for grandparents and their adult grandchildren. H1 and H2 predicted that the six types of

solidarity increased relational satisfaction for both the grandparent and the adult grandchild. Although the hypotheses were supported, findings regarding the six types of solidarity had a differing impact on relational satisfaction. The most significant predictors of relational satisfaction for grandparents were affectual (feeling of connection), with normative (burden) and functional (cost) solidarity following in order of importance. The most significant predictors of relational satisfaction for adult grandchildren in order of importance were affectual, consensual (similar views and values), and normative meaning (significance of the relationship). Although both the grandparents and adult grandchildren have affectual solidarity as the first predictor, the other two predictors vary. Affectual solidarity associated with relational satisfaction, as both grandparents and grandchildren experienced connection in the relationship by feeling understood and close to the other (Mills, 2001).

Consensual solidarity, the perception of similar ideas and values, increases relational satisfaction for both the grandparent and the adult grandchild. Both shared similar views with the other about life and how success is measured within the family system (Silverstein, Giarrusso, & Bengtson, 1998). However, the role and status of transitional changes that take place for the grandparent and adult grandchild throughout the relationship can impact the perception of values and ideas (Mills et al., 2001). In other words, there is a mutual influence and overlap regarding family life and values.

While geographical proximity (i.e., a form of structural solidarity) varies in relationships, adult grandchildren reported that the amount of contact enhances relational satisfaction. Associational solidarity, perceived frequency of relationship interactions, had an impact on relational satisfaction for both the grandparents and adult



grandchildren. Functional solidarity, the exchanges that occur in the relationship, evaluated both costs and rewards. This study found that functional costs were nonsignificant for both grandparents and adult grandchildren, which may explain why Findler et al. (2013) noted little literature available on grandparent cost.

Finally, normative solidarity, the perception of obligations and expectations, had varying impact on relational satisfaction for the grandparent and adult grandchild in this study. Grandparents reported that the less burdensome the grandparent-adult grandchild relationship, the higher level of relational satisfaction. This is consistent with Findler's research, as the feeling of connectedness and joy fuel the relationship, and is part of the grandparent's identity. On the other hand, adult grandchildren reported the perceived meaning of the relationship had a positive impact on relational satisfaction. The relationship is thus viewed as being enriching and meaningful in the grandchild's life (Findler et al., 2013). The following section discusses self-disclosure in the grandparent-adult grandchild relationship.

### **Self-Disclosure**

Hypotheses three and four predicted that as self-disclosure (intent, amount, and valence) increases, so does the relational satisfaction for the grandparent (H3) and adult grandchildren (H4). Hypothesis 3 was not supported for grandparents, and most of H4 was not supported for adult grandchildren. Findings only supported one part of H4 with self-disclosure intent associated with increased relational satisfaction for adult grandchildren. Adult grandchildren reported that they consciously intended to disclose what they had reported earlier to their grandparents. This finding is similar to an earlier study (Wheless, 1978). Additionally, this finding remains consistent with the perception

that the relationship with the person disclosed to is often linked to the feeling of psychological closeness to that person (Vangelisti & Caughlin, 1997).

### **Topic Avoidance**

Although there are several secrets revealed in a close relationship, there are still some topics that are avoided. RQ2 centered on the topics that grandparents and adult grandchildren did not share with each other. The most common topics that grandparents did not discuss with their adult grandchildren were finances, marital problems/divorce, sexual relations, and religion/ideology, whereas adult grandchildren did not discuss sexual relations, drinking/partying, breaking rules, dating partners, and finances with their grandparents. RQ3 focused on whether the topics avoided differed for grandparents and adult grandchildren. Although some variation exists, both groups rated finances and sexual relations very high in conversational topics avoided.

### **Intergenerational Perception of the Relationship**

The fifth and sixth hypotheses centered on the frequency of contact between the grandparent (H5) and adult grandchild (H6) and increased relational satisfaction. As previously reported for structural solidarity, there was a positive correlation between the amount of contact and relational satisfaction for adult grandchildren. The results were supported for adult grandchildren (H6) and suggest that adult grandchildren are more likely to measure the relationship by the quantity of interactions that occur. In contrast, H5 was not supported for the grandparent. Scholars suggest that grandparents possess a relaxed and appreciative attitude regarding interactions with grandchildren rather than keeping an actual count (Harwood & Lim, 2000). In short, it may be that adult

grandchildren quantify the relational satisfaction based on the number of times interacting with grandparents.

The fourth research question centered on intergenerational perceptions (stereotyping) in relation to (a) relational satisfaction, (b) intent, (c) self-disclosure amount, and (d) self-disclosure valence. Results were mixed in that only one of the findings was statistically significant. Findings indicated that both the grandparents and the adult grandchildren reported that the lower amount of negative stereotypes/perceptions experienced in the relationship, the more relational satisfaction experienced. Past research states that past intergenerational experience creates positive and negative stereotypes of each other (Anderson et al., 2005; Pecchioni & Croghan, 2002). Perhaps the grandparents and the adult grandchildren have based their perception of the other generation on the positive relationship experienced with each other. Both grandparents and the adult grandchildren may view the other as individuals rather than as “young wiper-snappers” or “senile oldsters.”

### **Theoretical and Practical Implications**

The beanpole appearance to the family causes fewer grandchildren to be spread between many branches of the family tree. Members of the family system remain grandchildren well into adulthood, and may have an active role in caregiving for children, parents, and grandparents. Similarly, the grandparents may provide some caregiving roles for other family members. However, parents and children may also share the role of caring for grandparents. Increased longevity creates more time that family members experience with one another and underscores membership interdependence. In other

words, grandparents and their adult grandchildren have more time to interact and appreciate each other.

The grandparent-grandchild relationship is important because of its emergent, adaptive, and long-lasting impact. The roles in the relationship transition when the grandchild becomes an adult, and each experience life transitions. There are fewer family members available, so the grandchild may end up acquiring additional roles, as in caregiver, driver, or personal shopper. The roles of grandparent and adult grandchild are continuously renegotiated as life transitions occur. Additionally, the relational communication fluctuates, as in the decision to disclose information or avoid specific topics. The investment that the grandparent and adult grandchild make into the relationship will also reflect relational satisfaction and connectedness. The relationship can progress into a mixture of friend-family relationships, with exchanges of social support, financial support, and favors. However, the relationship can also be neglected and not maintained. Likewise, the grandparent and grandchild may choose to invest in select relationships within the family system, causing other relationships to change.

The relationship changes as other family members interact in the grandparent-adult grandchild dyad, as in the grandchild's parent. The parent may function as the kinkeeper managing the relationship, the cause of disconnection in the relationship, or remain independent of this relationship.

The beanpole appearance of the family system (a taller, leaner family tree with fewer branches) also impacts members' interdependence. For example, the grandparent's healthcare in later life may fall on the adult grandchild, as the parent may be an only child. Therefore, the grandchildren may have to assist the parent, as the parent may be

unable to solely handle the load of financial and psychological pressures associated with elder care. The adult grandchild may select to contribute to caregiving responsibilities due to positive grandparent-adult grandchild relational investment, geographical proximity, physical ability, and availability. Sometimes family members determine an inability to fulfill the needs of the elderly grandparent, and have to reach outside of the family system utilizing community resources.

The connections in the family can be strong, causing the grandchildren to feel a greater responsibility and need to be involved in the grandparent-adult grandchild relationship. The importance of the grandparent's role throughout the grandchild's life fluctuates based on the family's needs. These role transitions vary from offering support and companionship, to family mentor and historian, to relying on others for elder care (Brussoni & Boom, 1998). The relational roles that the grandchild holds may need to be renegotiated throughout each transition. This study found that the adult grandchild views the relationship as meaningful and desires to invest in the relationship. Both the grandparents and adult grandchildren have the perception of connectedness and emotional closeness, family solidarity, which is unique to this family relationship.

The overall family solidarity in this study has addressed all six of the measures presented in Mills (1999). More recent studies have used varying combinations of these six indices to measure perceived solidarity in the grandparent-adult grandchild relationship. Using all six types of family solidarity is unique to this study, and give a further understanding of what is creating the perception of closeness and connection within this relationship.

An implication for grandparents and grandchildren from this study is the reduction of negative intergenerational stereotypes. If grandparents and adult grandchildren generate intergenerational stereotypes from past experiences, than a satisfying grandparent-adult grandchild relationship would create a more positive perception of the other generation (Anderson et al., 2005; Pecchioni & Croghan, 2002). For example, the grandparent that values mentoring an adult grandchild may seek additional mentoring relationships within the family system. Additionally, the adult grandchild that experiences grandparent-adult grandchild relational satisfaction may want to replicate the relationship with his/her own future adult grandchildren. Therefore the desire to reproduce the satisfaction in this relationship can benefit the overall family system. No study is without limitations as the following section identifies.

### **Limitations**

The current study examines specific aspects of grandparent-adult grandchildren relationships. However, the study uses a convenience sample (i.e., traditional college students aged 18-22 years) as the primary source of participants rather than having a wider range of ages. The sample of adult grandchildren was young ( $M = 22.42$ ), and as a result, participating grandchildren may have been experiencing fewer responsibilities (e.g., children, mortgage, career) than adult grandchildren that are over 30. An older sample in the future could consider whether the relational satisfaction and solidarity remains consistent with findings of this study. Another limitation of this study is that participants relied on self-reported perceptions rather using actual behavior. Participants focused on their holistic impressions about the relationship rather than specific details and situations. A possible implication to focusing on specific details and situations may

find occasional negative stereotypes of the other, as in “driving like a little old lady” when shopping for family reunion supplies together yesterday. A more holistic impression may be that the two of them enjoy planning and preparing for the family reunion together.

### **Future Research**

Although dyads were used to collect data for this study, the research questions and hypotheses did not require dyadic analysis. Data for this investigation centered on self-perceptions of the adult grandchild and grandparent. Future dyadic analysis can include the self-disclosure by one party of the grandparent-adult grandchild relationship associated with the other person’s relational satisfaction. Furthermore, future research recommendations are that the survey not only asks what topics the individual has avoided in the relationship, but also the grandparent or grandchild may know that the other is avoiding a topic.

Also, future research could investigate generational self-disclosure differences and reasons for grandparent-adult grandchild disclosure in comparison to disclosure with the middle generation. The research may determine differences and similarities of painful and joyous disclosures that take place for the grandparent or grandchild with the middle generation in comparison to the grandparent-adult grandchild dyad. For example, a grandchild may feel more comfortable sharing a speeding ticket with a grandparent, than with the parent that advised him/her not to speed when learning to drive. On the other hand, a grandfather may disclose the hardship of supporting a family to a grandson expecting his second child, but his daughter remains unaware of this felt hardship. Furthermore, additional research can be conducted to determine the kinkeeper’s role in

the relationship. The kinkeeper may still be managing the relationship, or may have a less active role in the interactions that occur between the grandparent and adult grandchild. If the parent is the kinkeeper and is responsible for all interactions between the grandparent and the grandchild, the family system becomes reliant and the connection will be lost when the kinkeeper no longer is maintaining this relationship. Kinkeepers with less involved roles in the grandparent-grandchild relationship create a stronger need for the grandparent and grandchild to maintain and strengthen their own relationship. Therefore grandparent-adult grandchild relationship can become a stronger subsystem in the family system. For example, the grandparent may wish to be a role model to the adult grandchildren regarding how family ethics and values are passed down to younger generations.

Gender may potentially play a role with self-disclosure as well. For example, a veteran grandfather may not discuss war stories with his daughter, but will have this discussion with his grandson. This may have an impact on gender roles within the family, due to stronger separation of gender perceptions in the grandfather's generation. Mills et al. (2001) reported that both gender and lineage have an effect on intergenerational solidarity. Although the results for this study were not separated by gender, the literature supports varying relationships by the gender of both the grandparent and adult grandchild (Mann, 2007; Mills et al., 2001; Neugarten & Weinstein, 1965; Spitze & Ward, 1998; Thiele & Whelan, 2008). In short, researchers might look at topic variability based on gender or age of both the grandparent and adult grandchild in the relationship.

Future research may include open-ended questions to describe the perception of the grandparents and adult grandchildren, along with the impact of positive and negative



stereotypes/perceptions on this relationship. This would be important to find out the root of the stereotype, the strength of the stereotype, and the impact that the grandparent or grandchild has had on the positive or negative stereotype/perception.

In addition to open-ended questions, future research could also consider using face-to-face interviews. Interviews can be conducted with both the grandparent and grandchild, and then separately to compare results. Individuals may be less apt to focus on just the positive aspects of the relationship individually than with the other one present. Focus groups could also be used to add more depth to areas that are covered in this study. The groups may spark ideas and conversation between members on experiences that they have encountered as grandparents or adult grandchildren.

### **Conclusion**

Observing variations of grandparent-adult grandchild relationships within my family system motivated this research. The current investigation addressed several of the communication dynamics within the grandparent-adult grandchild relationship. The “beanpole” family tree is becoming increasingly more common today, as life expectancy increases the number of grandparents, and low birth rates decrease the number of grandchildren. Therefore, the importance and longevity of the grandparent-adult grandchild relationship increases within the family system.

In conclusion, the grandparent-adult grandchild relationship experiences several transitions in which the relationship and members have to adjust and renegotiate their roles. The transitions can be both positive and negative, and will cause both parties to adjust in a way that strengthens or weakens this family connection and system. As life expectancy increases, the length of time in both roles also increases. This relationship

serves as an integral role in the family system, with the grandparent and adult grandchild having mutual impact on each other. Undoubtedly, research on this family dynamic proves to be promising. A close bond can have benefit to both the grandparent and the adult grandchild. The long-term relationship can allow the adult grandchildren the opportunity to have a mentor and seek support from someone, other than a parent, to have a stronger level of independence and personal development. Furthermore, the grandparent may have the opportunity to gain support and friendship that can assist maintenance of independence longer. The grandparent can leave a legacy through sharing family history and being a mentor for the adult grandchild. The adult grandchild may in turn continue this tradition and practice with future adult grandchildren. Clearly, the bond between grandparents and their adult grandchildren are important for the health and preservation of the family system.

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**Table 1***Grandparent and Adult Grandchild Scale Reliability*

Measure	<i>Adult Grandchild</i>	<i>Grandparent</i>
Self-Disclosure		
Intent	.87	.82
Amount	.77	.74
Valence	.79	.74
Topic Avoidance		
Self-Protection	.61	.86
Relationship Protection	.89	.88
Partner Unresponsiveness	.77	.79
Affectual Solidarity	.90	.91
Consensual Solidarity	.84	.84
Structural Solidarity	.89	.88
Associational Solidarity	.85	.92
Functional Solidarity		
Amount	.88	.75
Personal Investment	.95	.91
Personal Cost	.79	.74
Normative Solidarity		
Meaning	.84	.84
Comprehension for Parenthood	.82	.82
Continuity	.89	.90
Burden	.97	.84
Intergenerational Stereotyping	.97	.77
Relational Satisfaction	.89	.79

**Table 2***Correlations With Relational Satisfaction By Solidarity Type*

Solidarity Type		Adult Grandchildren	Grandparents
Affectual		.75*	.66*
Consensual		.74*	.47*
Structural		.47*	.12
Associational		.43*	.26*
Functional			
	Amount	.26*	-.09
	Investment	.64*	.32*
	Cost	-.08	-.09
Normative			
	Meaning	.65*	.32*
	Compensation for Parenthood	.23*	-.07
	Continuity	.49*	-.01
	Burden	-.46*	-.45*

\*  $p < .05$ .

**Table 3***Topics Avoided in Grandparent-Adult Grandchild Relationship*

Topic	Quantity of Grandparents	Quantity of Adult Grandchildren
Marital problems/divorce	18	5
Alcohol abuse	8	9
Drug abuse	3	10
Finances	26	16
Job loss	6	2
Sexual orientation	3	4
Illegalities (illegal activities)	4	14
Mental health issues	9	10
Extramarital affairs	5	1
Physical abuse	5	4
Psychological abuse	2	4
Premarital pregnancy	3	3
Cohabitation	4	3
Drinking/partying	8	30
Sexual relations	18	45
Breaking rules	7	21
Physical health problems, activities that threaten physical health	13	6
Death (e.g., cause of death of others)	7	2
Religion/ideology	12	9
Personality conflicts	4	10
Traditions/stories	2	3
Dating partners	7	17
Grades/achievements in school/performance at work	4	11

## Appendix A: Demographics from Grandparent Survey

Choose one of your adult grandchildren that you have a current relationship with. Please note that you will both need to complete mirrored surveys.

Please tell us about him or her:

1 Adult Grandchild's Age. \_\_\_\_\_

2 Adult Grandchild's Biological Sex

1. Male
2. Female

3 Adult Grandchild's Marital Status

1. Single
2. Engaged
3. Living With Partner
4. Married
5. Separated
6. Divorced
7. Widow
8. Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

4 Are you the paternal or maternal grandparent to this grandchild?

1. Paternal (this is my son's child)
2. Maternal (this is my daughter's child)

Please answer these questions about your background.

5 Your age \_\_\_\_\_

6 Your biological sex

1. Male
2. Female

7 Your marital status

1. Single
2. Engaged
3. Living With Partner
4. Married
5. Separated
6. Divorced
7. Widow
8. Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

8 Your highest level of education

1. Less than high school

2. Some high school
3. High school graduate
4. Some college
5. College degree
6. Advanced degree

9 Check which best describes the household you grew up in

1. Mom and Dad.
2. Mom only.
3. Mom and stepparent/partner
4. Dad only
5. Dad and stepparent/partner
6. Grandparents only
7. Grandparents and one parent
8. Grandparents and two parents
9. Other \_\_\_\_\_

10 How many grandchildren do you have (count only current living grandchildren): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix B: Self-Disclosure from Grandparent Survey

11 Please mark the following statements to reflect how you communicate with your grandchild by marking your first impression of the statement from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)

### Intent

1. I wish that my self-disclosures are always accurate reflections of who I really am\*
2. When I express my personal feelings, I am always aware of what I am doing and saying
3. When I reveal my feelings about myself, I consciously intend to do so
4. When I am self-disclosing, I am consciously aware of what I am revealing

### Amount

5. I do not often talk about myself
6. My statement of my feelings are usually brief
7. I usually talk about myself for fairly long periods of time
8. My conversation is shortest when I am discussing myself
9. I often talk about myself
10. I often discuss my feelings about myself
11. Only infrequently do I express my personal beliefs and opinions

### Valence

12. I usually disclose negative things about me
13. On the whole, my disclosures about myself are more positive than negative
14. I normally reveal "bad" feelings I have about myself
15. I normally express "good feelings I have about myself
16. I often reveal more undesirable things about myself than desirable things
17. I usually disclose negative things about me
18. On a whole, my disclosures about myself are more positive than negative

*\*Did not correlate with remaining items*

### Appendix C: Topic Avoidance List from Grandparent Survey

12 From the list below, what topics have you avoided telling your adult grandchild? Select all items that apply.

#### Topics

1. Marital problems/divorce
2. Alcohol abuse
3. Drug abuse
4. Finances
5. Job loss
6. Sexual orientation
7. Illegalities (illegal activities)
8. Mental health issues
9. Extramarital affairs
10. Physical abuse
11. Psychological abuse
12. Premarital pregnancy
13. Cohabitation
14. Drinking/partying
15. Sexual relations
16. Breaking rules
17. Physical health problems, activities that threaten physical health
18. Death (e.g., cause of death of others)
19. Religion/ideology
20. Personality conflicts
21. Traditions/stories
22. Dating partners
23. Grades/achievements in school/performance at work
24. Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

13 With this grandchild in mind, why do you feel you are avoiding the topics that are marked above? Use the scale 1 strongly disagree -5 strongly agree) for each item below.

#### Self protection

1. It would leave me too vulnerable
2. I would be embarrassed to disclose
3. This grandchild may judge me
4. I prefer not to replay negative experiences

#### Relationship protection

1. Disclosure could lead to conflict
2. It might ruin our relationship

3. It might make this grandchild angry

Partner Unresponsiveness

1. This grandchild will probably be unresponsive
2. This grandchild lacks knowledge relevant to my problems
3. This grandchild would view this issue as trivial
4. It would be futile to talk about it with this grandchild

Social Inappropriateness

1. It would be socially inappropriate to discuss the topic

14 Who have you shared the above topic(s) with?

1. No one knows the above topic(s)
2. Someone knows the above topic(s), but not a family member
3. Some family members are aware of the above topic(s)
4. Most family members are aware of the above topic(s)

15 What is the likelihood that you will eventually share the secret with this grandchild?  
(1 very unlikely-5 very likely)

**Appendix D: Affectual Solidarity from Grandparent Survey**

Please use this same adult grandchild for the remaining questions.

14 Please rate the following questions on your perception of emotional closeness with the adult grandchild from 1 (not very much) to 5 (extremely)

1. How close do you feel the relationship is between you and your grandchild?
2. How well do you feel the communication is between you and your grandchild?
3. How well can you exchange ideas or talk about things that really concern you?
4. How well do you feel your grandchild understands you?
5. How well do you feel you understand your grandchild?
6. Generally, how well do you and your grandchild get along?

### **Appendix E: Consensual Solidarity from Grandparent Survey**

15 In general, how similar are your adult grandchild's views to yours?

Rate (1) not at all like me to (5) just like me

1. Views about life (e.g., values, beliefs)
2. Measure of life success (e.g., career, family, and accomplishments)
3. Value of life (e.g., maintenance of self, safety)
4. Views on family (e.g., importance of family ties)

**Appendix F: Structural Solidarity from Grandparent Survey**

16 How far do you live from your grandchild (State zero if you live together)? \_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_Miles

17 In general, how is your contact with your grandchild?

Use the five-point Likert scale (1) not at all to (5) very frequent.

1. How often do you have contact with this grandchild?
2. How often does this grandchild reach out to you?
3. How often do you reach out to this grandchild?

**Appendix G: Associational Solidarity from Grandparent Survey**

17 How does this grandchild contact you? (Select all that apply)

1. Face-to-face visits
2. Telephone
3. Text Message
4. Email
5. Letter
6. Facebook Private Message
7. Facebook Public Message (wall post)
8. Video chat (e.g., Skype)
9. Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

18 Who initiates the contact that you have with this grandchild? Select a percentage for each selection below. Your total should equal 100%.

1. You the Grandparent
2. The grandchild's parent
3. The Grandchild
4. Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

19 Please rate the following questions on your perception of contact with the adult grandchild within the past year from 1 (rarely) to 5 (very frequently)

1. How often do you do things together with this grandchild?
2. Approximately how many times in the past year have you seen this grandchild?
3. How often do you socially reach out to this grandchild (e.g., call, email, text)?
4. How often do you have shared family rituals (e.g., dinner, parties)?

### Appendix H: Functional Solidarity from Grandparent Survey

19 How many times within the past year has the following occurred from (1) Never to (5)

Daily:

1. Have you provided the grandchild with a gift or financial assistance worth at least \$500?
2. Has your grandchild talked to you about personal concerns?
3. Have you provided a service to your grandchild (e.g., babysitting, rides, errands)?
4. Has your grandchild provided you with a gift or financial assistance worth at least \$500?
5. Have you talked to your grandchild about personal concerns?
6. Has your grandchild provided you a service (e.g., chores, rides, errands)?

20 Please mark the following statements to reflect your relationship with your grandchild by marking your first impression of the statement from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)

Personal Investment

1. I am highly motivated to fulfill my role as grandparent
2. It is important to me to invest in my relationship with my grandchild, even if it means I have to give up other things in my life
3. I make an effort to promote my relationship with my grandchild
4. It is important to me to devote time to my grandchild
5. I have a strong sense of commitment to my role as grandparent
6. I try to ensure my grandchild's future

Personal Cost

1. Being a grandparent requires an emotional, as well as practical investment\*
2. Being a grandparent sometimes means giving up other social or leisure activities
3. Being a grandparent means giving up some of my privacy
4. The role of grandparent requires a change in my priorities
5. Being a grandparent sometimes interferes with my friend and spousal relationships
6. Being a grandparent sometimes means giving up my free time
7. Being a grandparent sometimes means compromising my values and principles
8. Being a grandparent sometimes involves financial sacrifices

*\*Did not correlate with remaining items*



## Appendix I: Normative Solidarity from Grandparent Survey

21 Please mark the following statements according to how strongly you disagree (1) to how strongly you agree (5).

### Meaning

1. Being a grandparent gives more purpose to my life
2. Being a grandparent makes my life seem more vital
3. My relationship with my grandchild is one of the most significant relationships in my life
4. Being a grandparent enriches my world
5. Being a grandparent is one of the greatest challenges in my life
6. My grandchild does not add a lot of meaning to my life
7. Being a grandparent strengthens my relationship with my children
8. At this stage of my life, other things are more important to me than being a grandparent

### Compensation for Parenthood

1. I feel I am a better grandparent than I was a parent
2. Being a grandparent gives me the chance to correct the mistakes I made as a parent
3. I sometimes feel inadequate as a parent, but my role as a grandparent makes up for that
4. I find being grandparent more rewarding than being a parent

### Continuity

1. My grandchild represents the continuity in my family
2. Being a grandparent gives me the opportunity to connect with my family history
3. My grandchild is a link between the past and the future
4. Grandparenthood extends the connection between the generations in my family

### Burden

1. Being a grandparent is another inconvenience in my life
2. For me, being a grandparent is a real burden
3. Being a grandparent tires me out

### **Appendix J: Intergenerational Stereotyping from Grandparent Survey**

22 Please mark the following statements to reflect your view by marking your first impression of the statement from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree.

1. I feel that my grandchild has a negative perception of me based on my generation
2. I feel that my grandchild has a positive perception of me based on my generation
3. I have a negative perception of my grandchild based on his/her generation
4. I have a positive perception of my grandchild based on his/her generation

### Appendix K: Relational Satisfaction from Grandparent Survey

Please answer the next seven questions for the Relational Satisfaction scale (Renshaw et al., 2011).

23 How well does your grandchild meet your needs?

1. Not Very Well 1
2. 2
3. 3
4. 4
5. Very Well 5

24 In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship with your grandchild?

1. Not Very Satisfied 1
2. 2
3. 3
4. 4
5. Very Satisfied 5

25 How good is your relationship with your grandchild compared to most?

1. Not Good 1
2. 2
3. 3
4. 4
5. Very Good 5

26 How often do you wish you weren't in this relationship with your grandchild?

1. Never 1
2. 2
3. 3
4. 4
5. Always 5

27 To what extent has your relationship with this grandchild met your expectations?

1. Not At All 1
2. 2
3. 3
4. 4
5. Very Much 5

28 How much do you love this grandchild?

1. Not Very Much 1
2. 2

3. 3
  4. 4
  5. A Great Deal 5
- 29 How many problems are there in your relationship with this grandchild?
6. Not Many 1
  7. 2
  8. 3
  9. 4
  10. Very Many 5

### Appendix L: Grandparent Survey

Please complete this survey on your relationship with the grandchild that provided you the survey. Please note that you will both need to complete mirrored surveys.

Please tell us about him or her:

1 Adult Grandchild's Age. \_\_\_\_\_

2 Adult Grandchild's Biological Sex

1. Male
2. Female

3 Adult Grandchild's Marital Status

1. Single
2. Engaged
3. Living With Partner
4. Married
5. Separated
6. Divorced
7. Widow
8. Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

4 Are you the paternal or maternal grandparent to this grandchild?

1. Paternal (this is my son's child)
2. Maternal (this is my daughter's child)

5 How would you rate your relationship with the parents of this grandchild?

Rate from (1) very bad to 5 (very good)

1. Mother
2. Father

6 Do the grandchild's parents play an important role in your relationship with this adult grandchild?

1. Not at all Important
2. Very Unimportant
3. Neither Important nor Unimportant
4. Very Important
5. Extremely Important

7 Who initiates the contact that you have with this grandchild? Select a percentage for each selection below. Your total should equal 100%.

- You, the grandparent
- The grandchild's parent
- The grandchild
- Other, please specify

8 How far do you live from your grandchild (State zero if you live together)? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Miles

9 How well does your grandchild meet your needs?

1. Not Very Well 1
2. 2
3. 3
4. 4
5. Very Well 5

10 In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship with your grandchild?

1. Not Very Satisfied 1
2. 2
3. 3
4. 4
5. Very Satisfied 5

11 How good is your relationship with your grandchild compared to most?

1. Not Good 1
2. 2
3. 3
4. 4
5. Very Good 5

12 How often do you wish you weren't in this relationship with your grandchild?

1. Never 1
2. 2
3. 3
4. 4
5. Always 5

13 To what extent has your relationship with this grandchild met your expectations?

1. Not At All 1
2. 2
3. 3

4. 4
5. Very Much 5

14 How much do you love this grandchild?

1. Not Very Much 1
2. 2
3. 3
4. 4
5. A Great Deal 5

15 How many problems are there in your relationship with this grandchild?

1. Not Many 1
2. 2
3. 3
4. 4
5. Very Many 5

Please use this same adult grandchild for the remaining questions.

16 Please rate the following questions on your perception of emotional closeness with the adult grandchild from 1 (not very much) to 5 (extremely)

1. How close do you feel the relationship is between you and your grandchild?
2. How well do you feel the communication is between you and your grandchild?
3. How well can you exchange ideas or talk about things that really concern you?
4. How well do you feel your grandchild understands you?
5. How well do you feel you understand your grandchild?
6. Generally, how well do you and your grandchild get along?

17 In general, how similar are your grandparent's views to yours?

Rate (1) not at all like me to (5) just like me.

1. Views about life (e.g., values, beliefs)
2. Measure of life success (e.g., career, family, and accomplishments)
3. Value of life (e.g., maintenance of self, safety)
4. Views on family (e.g., importance of family ties)

18 How does this grandchild contact you? (Select all that apply)

1. Face-to-face visits
2. Telephone
3. Text Message
4. Email
5. Letter
6. Facebook Private Message
7. Facebook Public Message (wall post)

8. Video chat (e.g., Skype)
9. Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

19 In general, how is your contact with your grandchild?

Use the five-point scale from (1) not at all to (5) very frequently.

1. How often do you have contact with this grandchild?
2. How often does this grandchild reach out to you?
3. How often do you reach out to this grandchild?

20 Please rate the following questions on your perception of contact with the adult grandchild within the past year from 1 (never) to 5 (Daily)

1. How often do you do things together with this grandchild?
2. Approximately how many times in the past year have you seen this grandchild?
3. How often do you socially reach out to this grandchild (e.g., call, email, text)?
4. How often do you have shared family rituals (e.g., dinner, parties)?

21 Please mark the following statements to reflect how you communicate with your grandchild by marking your first impression of the statement from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)

1. I wish that my self-disclosures are always accurate reflections of who I really am
2. When I express my personal feelings, I am always aware of what I am doing and saying
3. When I reveal my feelings about myself, I consciously intend to do so
4. When I am self-disclosing, I am consciously aware of what I am revealing
5. I do not often talk about myself
6. My statement of my feelings are usually brief
7. I usually talk about myself for fairly long periods of time
8. My conversation is shortest when I am discussing myself
9. I often talk about myself
10. I often discuss my feelings about myself
11. Only infrequently do I express my personal beliefs and opinions
12. I usually disclose negative things about me
13. On the whole, my disclosures about myself are more positive than negative
14. I normally reveal "bad" feelings I have about myself
15. I normally express "good feelings I have about myself
16. I often reveal more undesirable things about myself than desirable things
17. I usually disclose negative things about me
18. On a whole, my disclosures about myself are more positive than negative

22 From the list below, what topics have you avoided telling your adult grandchild? Select all items that apply.

Topics



1. Marital problems/divorce
2. Alcohol abuse
3. Drug abuse
4. Finances
5. Job loss
6. Sexual orientation
7. Illegalities (illegal activities)
8. Mental health issues
9. Extramarital affairs
10. Physical abuse
11. Psychological abuse
12. Premarital pregnancy
13. Cohabitation
14. Drinking/partying
15. Sexual relations
16. Breaking rules
17. Physical health problems, activities that threaten physical health
18. Death (e.g., cause of death of others)
19. Religion/ideology
20. Personality conflicts
21. Traditions/stories
22. Dating partners
23. Grades/achievements in school/performance at work
24. Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

23 With this grandchild in mind, why do you feel you are avoiding the topics that are marked above? Use the scale 1 strongly disagree -5 strongly agree) for each item below.

#### Self protection

1. It would leave me too vulnerable
2. I would be embarrassed to disclose
3. This grandchild may judge me
4. I prefer not to replay negative experiences

#### Relationship protection

1. Disclosure could lead to conflict
2. It might ruin our relationship
3. It might make this grandchild angry

#### Partner Unresponsiveness

1. This grandchild will probably be unresponsive
2. This grandchild lacks knowledge relevant to my problems
3. This grandchild would view this issue as trivial

4. It would be futile to talk about it with this grandchild

Social Inappropriateness

1. It would be socially inappropriate to discuss the topic

24 Who have you shared the above topic(s) with?

1. No one knows the above topic(s)
2. Someone knows the above topic(s), but not a family member
3. Some family members are aware of the above topic(s)
4. Most family members are aware of the above topic(s)

25 What is the likelihood that you will eventually share the above topic(s) with this grandchild? (1 very unlikely-5 very likely)

26 How many times within the past year has the following occurred:

Rate from (1) never to (5) daily

1. Have you provided the grandchild with a gift or financial assistance worth at least \$500?
2. Has your grandchild talked to you about personal concerns?
3. Have you provided a service to your grandchild (e.g., babysitting, rides, errands)?
4. Has your grandchild provided you with a gift or financial assistance worth at least \$500?
5. Have you talked to your grandchild about personal concerns?
6. Has your grandchild provided you a service. (e.g., chores, rides, errands)?

27 Please mark the following statements to reflect your relationship with your grandchild by marking your first impression of the statement from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)

1. I am highly motivated to fulfill my role as grandparent
2. It is important to me to invest in my relationship with my grandchild, even if it means I have to give up other things in my life
3. I make an effort to promote my relationship with my grandchild
4. It is important to me to devote time to my grandchild
5. I have a strong sense of commitment to my role as grandparent
6. I try to ensure my grandchild's future
7. Being a grandparent requires an emotional, as well as practical investment
8. Being a grandparent sometimes means giving up other social or leisure activities
9. Being a grandparent means giving up some of my privacy
10. The role of grandparent requires a change in my priorities
11. Being a grandparent sometimes interferes with my friend and spousal relationships
12. Being a grandparent sometimes means giving up my free time
13. Being a grandparent sometimes means compromising my values and principles
14. Being a grandparent sometimes involves financial sacrifices

28 Please mark the following statements to reflect your view by marking your first impression of the statement.

Rate from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree

1. I feel that my grandchild has a negative perception of me based on my generation
2. I feel that my grandchild has a positive perception of me based on my generation
3. I have a negative perception of my grandchild based on his/her generation
4. I have a positive perception of my grandchild based on his/her generation

29 Please mark the following statements according to how strongly you disagree (1) to how strongly you agree (5).

1. Being a grandparent gives more purpose to my life
2. Being a grandparent makes my life seem more vital
3. My relationship with my grandchild is one of the most significant relationships in my life
4. Being a grandparent enriches my world
5. Being a grandparent is one of the greatest challenges in my life
6. My grandchild does not add a lot of meaning to my life
7. Being a grandparent strengthens my relationship with my children
8. At this stage of my life, other things are more important to me than being a grandparent
9. I feel I am a better grandparent than I was a parent
10. Being a grandparent gives me the chance to correct the mistakes I made as a parent
11. I sometimes feel inadequate as a parent, but my role as a grandparent makes up for that
12. I find being grandparent more rewarding than being a parent
13. My grandchild represents the continuity in my family
14. Being a grandparent gives me the opportunity to connect with my family history
15. My grandchild is a link between the past and the future
16. Grandparenthood extends the connection between the generations in my family
17. Being a grandparent is another inconvenience in my life
18. For me, being a grandparent is a real burden
19. Being a grandparent tires me out

Please answer this section of questions for **ANY** grandchild you are no longer in contact with, **for reason other than death**.

30 Does this apply to your relationship with **ANY** of your grandchildren?

1. Yes
2. No

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Block (to question 33)

31 Who broke the tie between you and that grandchild?

1. You
2. The grandchild's parent

## 3. Your grandchild

32 How and When was it broken?.

Please answer these questions about your background.

33 Your age. \_\_\_\_\_

34 Your biological sex

1. Male
2. Female

35 Your marital status

1. Single
2. Engaged
3. Living With Partner
4. Married
5. Separated
6. Divorced
7. Widow
8. Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

36 Your highest level of education

1. Less than high school
2. Some high school
3. High school graduate
4. Some college
5. College degree
6. Advanced degree

37 Check which best describes the household you grew up in

1. Mom and Dad
2. Mom only
3. Mom and stepparent/partner
4. Dad only
5. Dad and stepparent/partner
6. Grandparents only
7. Grandparents and one parent
8. Grandparents and two parents
9. Other \_\_\_\_\_

38 How many grandchildren do you have (count only current living grandchildren): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

39 Please enter the number code that was provided to you by your adult grandchild, so the surveys can be matched \_\_\_\_\_

40 Please enter your adult grandchild's name that is also completing this survey

\_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix M: Adult Grandchild Survey**

Choose one of your grandparents that you have a current relationship with. Please note that you will both need to complete mirrored surveys.

Please tell us about him or her:

1 Grandparent's Age. \_\_\_\_\_

2 Grandparent's Biological Sex

1. Male
2. Female

3 Grandparent's Marital Status

1. Single
2. Engaged
3. Living with Partner
4. Married
5. Separated
6. Divorced
7. Widow
8. Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

4 Are you the paternal or maternal grandchild to this grandparent?

1. Paternal (this is my dad's parent)
2. Maternal (this is my mom's parent)

5 How would you rate your relationship with your parents?

Rate (1) very bad to (5) very good

1. Mother
2. Father

6 Do your parents play an important role in your relationship with this grandparent?

1. Not at all Important
2. Very Unimportant
3. Neither Important nor Unimportant
4. Very Important
5. Extremely Important

7 Who initiates the contact that you have with this grandparent? Select a percentage for each selection below. Your total should equal 100%.

1. You, the Grandchild
2. Your parent
3. The Grandparent
4. Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

8 How far do you live from your grandparent (State zero if you live together)? \_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_ Miles.

9 How well does your grandparent meet your needs?

1. Not Very Well 1
2. 2
3. 3
4. 4
5. Very Well. 5

10 In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship with your grandparent?

1. Not Very Satisfied 1
2. 2
3. 3
4. 4
5. Very Satisfied 5

11 How good is your relationship with your grandparent compared to most?

1. Not Good 1
6. 2
7. 3
8. 4
9. Very Good 5

12 How often do you wish you weren't in this relationship with your grandparent?

1. Never 1
2. 2
3. 3
4. 4
5. Always 5

13 To what extent has your relationship with this grandparent met your expectations?

1. Not At All 1
2. 2
3. 3
4. 4
5. Very Much. 5

14 How much do you love this grandparent?

1. Not Very Much 1
2. 2

3. 3
4. 4
5. A Great Deal. 5

15 How many problems are there in your relationship with this grandparent?

1. Not Many 1
2. 2
3. 3
4. 4
5. Very Many 5

Please use this same adult grandparent for the remaining questions.

16 Please rate the following questions on your perception of emotional closeness with the grandparent from 1 (not very much) to 5 (extremely)

1. How close do you feel the relationship is between you and your grandparent?
2. How well do you feel the communication is between you and your grandparent?
3. How well can you exchange ideas or talk about things that really concern you?
4. How well do you feel your grandparent understands you?
5. How well do you feel you understand your grandparent?
6. Generally, how well do you and your grandparent get along?

17 In general, how similar are your grandparent's views to yours?

Rate (1) not at all like me to (5) just like me

1. Views about life (e.g., values, beliefs)
2. Measure of life success (e.g., career, family, and accomplishments)
3. Value of life (e.g., maintenance of self, safety)
4. Views on family (e.g., importance of family ties)

18 How does this grandparent contact you? (Select all that apply)

1. Face-to-face visits
2. Telephone
3. Text Message
4. Email
5. Letter
6. Facebook Private Message
7. Facebook Public Message (wall post)
8. Video chat (e.g., Skype)
9. Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

19 In general, how is your contact with your grandparent?

Use the five-point scale from (1) not at all to (5) very frequently.

1. How often do you have contact with this grandparent?



2. How often does this grandparent reach out to you?
3. How often do you reach out to this grandparent?

20 Please rate the following questions on your perception of contact with the grandparent within the past year from 1 (never) to 5 (daily)

1. How often do you do things together with this grandparent?
2. Approximately how many times in the past year have you seen this grandparent?
3. How often do you socially reach out to this grandparent (e.g., call, email, text)?
4. How often do you have shared family rituals (e.g., dinner, parties)?

21 Please mark the following statements to reflect how you communicate with your grandparent by marking your first impression of the statement from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)

1. I wish that my self-disclosures are always accurate reflections of who I really am
2. When I express my personal feelings, I am always aware of what I am doing and saying
3. When I reveal my feelings about myself, I consciously intend to do so
4. When I am self-disclosing, I am consciously aware of what I am revealing
5. I do not often talk about myself
6. My statement of my feelings are usually brief
7. I usually talk about myself for fairly long periods of time
8. My conversation is shortest when I am discussing myself
9. I often talk about myself
10. I often discuss my feelings about myself
11. Only infrequently do I express my personal beliefs and opinions
12. I usually disclose negative things about me
13. On the whole, my disclosures about myself are more positive than negative
14. I normally reveal "bad" feelings I have about myself
15. I normally express "good feelings I have about myself
16. I often reveal more undesirable things about myself than desirable things
17. I usually disclose negative things about me
18. On a whole, my disclosures about myself are more positive than negative

22 From the list below, what topics have you avoided telling your grandparent? Select all items that apply.

Topics

1. Marital problems/divorce
2. Alcohol abuse
3. Drug abuse
4. Finances
5. Job loss
6. Sexual orientation
7. Illegalities (illegal activities)

8. Mental health issues
9. Extramarital affairs
10. Physical abuse
11. Psychological abuse
12. Premarital pregnancy
13. Cohabitation
14. Drinking/partying
15. Sexual relations
16. Breaking rules
17. Physical health problems, activities that threaten physical health
18. Death (e.g., cause of death of others)
19. Religion/ideology
20. Personality conflicts
21. Traditions/stories
22. Dating partners
23. Grades/achievements in school/performance at work
24. Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

23 With this grandparent in mind, why do you feel you are avoiding the topics that are marked above? Use the scale 1 strongly disagree -5 strongly agree) for each item below.

Self protection

1. It would leave me too vulnerable
2. I would be embarrassed to disclose
3. This grandparent may judge me
4. I prefer not to replay negative experiences

Relationship protection

1. Disclosure could lead to conflict
2. It might ruin our relationship
3. It might make this grandparent angry

Partner Unresponsiveness

1. This grandparent will probably be unresponsive
2. This grandparent lacks knowledge relevant to my problems
3. This grandparent would view this issue as trivial
4. It would be futile to talk about it with this grandparent

Social Inappropriateness

1. It would be socially inappropriate to discuss the topic

24 Who have you shared the above topic(s) with?

1. No one knows the above topic(s)
2. Someone knows the above topic(s), but not a family member
3. Some family members are aware of the above topic(s)

4. Most family members are aware of the above topic(s)

25 What is the likelihood that you will eventually share the above topic(s) with this grandparent? (1 very unlikely-5 very likely)

26 How many times within the past year has the following occurred:

(1) never to. (5) daily

1. Have you provided the grandparent with a gift or financial assistance worth at least \$500?
2. Has your grandparent talked to you about personal concerns?
3. Have you provided a service to your grandparent (e.g., chores, errands)?
4. Has your grandparent provided you with a gift or financial assistance worth at least \$500?
5. Have you talked to your grandparent about personal concerns?
6. Has your grandchild provided you a service. (e.g., babysitting, rides, errands)?

27 Please mark the following statements to reflect your relationship with your grandparent by marking your first impression of the statement from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)

1. I am highly motivated to fulfill my role as grandchild
2. It is important to me to invest in my relationship with my grandparent, even if it means I have to give up other things in my life
3. I make an effort to promote my relationship with my grandparent
4. It is important to me to devote time to my grandparent
5. I have a strong sense of commitment to my role as grandchild
6. I try to ensure my grandparent's future
7. Being an adult grandchild requires an emotional, as well as practical investment
8. Being a grandchild sometimes means giving up other social or leisure activities
9. Being a grandchild means giving up some of my privacy
10. The role of adult grandchild requires a change in my priorities
11. Being an adult grandchild sometimes interferes with my friend and spousal relationships
12. Being an adult grandchild sometimes means giving up my free time
13. Being an adult grandchild sometimes means compromising my values and principles
14. Being an adult grandchild sometimes involves financial sacrifices

28 Please mark the following statements to reflect your view by marking your first impression of the statement from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree

1. I feel that my grandparent has a negative perception of me based on my generation
2. I feel that my grandparent has a positive perception of me based on my generation
3. I have a negative perception of my grandparent based on his/her generation

4. I have a positive perception of my grandparent based on his/her generation

29 Please mark the following statements based on how strongly you disagree (1) to how strongly you agree (5).

1. Being an adult grandchild gives more purpose to my life
2. Being an adult grandchild makes my life seem more vital
3. My relationship with my grandparent is one of the most significant relationships in my life
4. Being a grandchild enriches my world
5. Being an adult grandchild is one of the greatest challenges in my life
6. My grandparent does not add a lot of meaning to my life
7. Being an adult grandchild strengthens my relationship with my parents
8. At this stage of my life, other things are more important to me than being an adult grandchild
9. I feel I am a better grandchild than I was a child to my parents
10. Being an adult grandchild gives me the chance to correct the mistakes I made as a young child
11. I sometimes feel inadequate as a young child, but my role as an adult grandchild makes up for that
12. I find being an adult grandchild more rewarding than being a young child
13. My grandparent represents the continuity in my family
14. Being an adult grandchild gives me the opportunity to connect with my family history
15. My grandparent is a link between the past and the future
16. Being an adult grandchild extends the connection between the generations in my family
17. Being an adult grandchild is another inconvenience in my life
18. For me, being an adult grandchild is a real burden
19. Being an adult grandchild tires me out

Please answer this section of questions for **ANY** grandparent you are no longer in contact with, **for reason other than death.**

30 Does this apply to your relationship with **ANY** of your grandparents?

1. Yes
2. No

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Block (to Question 33)

31 Who broke the tie between you and that grandparent?

1. You
2. Your parent
3. Your grandparent

32 How and When was it broken?

Please answer these questions about your background.

33 Your age \_\_\_\_\_

34 Your biological sex

1. Male
2. Female

35 Your marital status

1. Single
2. Engaged
3. Living With Partner
4. Married
5. Separated
6. Divorced
7. Widow
8. Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

36 Your highest level of education

1. Less than high school
2. Some high school
3. High school graduate
4. Some college
5. College degree
6. Advanced degree

37 Check which best describes the household you grew up in

1. Mom and Dad
2. Mom only
3. Mom and stepparent/partner
4. Dad only
5. Dad and stepparent/partner
6. Grandparents only
7. Grandparents and one parent
8. Grandparents and two parents
9. Other \_\_\_\_\_

38 How many grandparents do you have (count only current living grandparents): \_\_\_\_\_

39. You will now need to copy this code, and email it to your grandparent to also complete the survey: `{e://Field/ChildCode}`.

Please re-enter this code \_\_\_\_\_

40 Please share your name, so that your survey can be matched with your grandparent's survey \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix O: Adult Grandchild Solicitation Email

You are invited to participate in a survey about grandparent-adult grandchild relationships.

The purpose of this research study is to learn about relationship dynamics in the grandparent-adult grandchild relationship as both sides of the relationship are independently asked questions regarding perception of how relationship satisfaction is impacted by self-disclosure, solidarity, and perceptions of the relationship. If you agree to participate, you and your grandparent will be asked to independently complete mirrored surveys that will take approximately 30 minutes each.

If you are over the age of 18 and have a grandparent that is willing and able to complete the survey, you qualify to take this survey! You may recruit an adult grandchild and their grandparent to complete it on your behalf.

Extra credit may be offered by your instructor for participating in this study, but is not guaranteed. Please contact your instructor for an alternate non-research activity to earn the same extra credit as participating in this study. Both surveys must be received by **November 2<sup>nd</sup>** to receive extra credit points. ***Please allow at least 7 extra days for your grandparent to be contacted and for him/her to complete the survey.***

**Step 1:** Complete the Adult Grandchild:. Please click or copy and paste the link below to begin the survey: [https://milwaukee.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_6R116ySjyhJTrT](https://milwaukee.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_6R116ySjyhJTrT)

**Step 2:** Upon completion of the survey, please email DeAnne Priddis at [dpriddis@uwm.edu](mailto:dpriddis@uwm.edu) with the random unique code that was provided on your survey, your name, the extra credit information (your name, instructor's name and course name that you would like to receive extra credit), and your grandparent's name and contact information (phone and/or email) for the research team to contact your grandparent to complete the other half of the study. *Please give your grandparent a heads-up that we will be contacting him/her about this study.*

Thank you very much for your time and support!

DeAnne Priddis

[dpriddis@uwm.edu](mailto:dpriddis@uwm.edu)

## Appendix P: Script to Contact Grandparents

### Script for call to grandparent:

Hello, My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I am calling from the Communication department at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Your grandchild - \_\_\_\_\_ has recently participated in a study of grandparent-adult grandchild relationships with us by completing a survey, and we would like to also ask you to participate by completing a survey either through email or the mail for us. The survey takes about 30 minutes to complete, and will ask you questions about your perception of the relationship with your grandchild, the solidarity and disclosure that occurs in the relationship, and your perception of being a grandparent. Are you interested in participating?

Do you have an email address? Can I email you a link to the survey?

Can you provide me a mailing address so that I can mail you the survey?

**IF MAILED:** I really appreciate your willingness to assist with our research. Please watch for the survey to within the next day or two. It will come with a return self-addressed stamped envelope that can be returned to us once you have finished filling it out.

**IF EMAILED:** I really appreciate your willingness to assist with our research. Please watch for the survey to arrive shortly. After you have answered the questions, the results will be sent to us electronically.

Thank you!

### Email script to grandparent:

Dear Mr./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_,

Hello, My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I am contacting you from the Communication department at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Your grandchild \_\_\_\_\_ has recently participated in a study of grandparent-adult grandchild relationships with us by completing a survey, and we would like to also ask you to participate by completing a survey either through email or the mail for us. The survey takes about 30 minutes to complete, and will ask you questions about your perception of the relationship with your grandchild, the solidarity and disclosure that occurs in the relationship, and your perception of being a grandparent. Are you interested in participating?

Please click or copy and paste the link below to begin the survey:

[https://milwaukee.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_ezEijKiwJsCHsFf](https://milwaukee.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_ezEijKiwJsCHsFf)

The last two survey answers will help us match your relationship with \_\_\_\_\_ . Please use the code \_\_\_\_\_ for your answer to questions 39, and \_\_\_\_\_ for your answer for question 40 on the survey.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at this email address.

Thank you very much for your time and support!

DeAnne Priddis

[dpriddis@uwm.edu](mailto:dpriddis@uwm.edu)

**Mailed Survey Cover Letter to grandparent:**

Hello,

My name is DeAnne Priddis, and I am contacting you from the Communication department at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Your grandchild **XX** has recently participated in a study of grandparent-adult grandchild relationships with us by completing a survey, and we would like to also ask you to participate by completing the included survey for us. The survey takes about 30 minutes to complete, and will ask you questions about your perception of the relationship with your grandchild, the solidarity and disclosure that occurs in the relationship, and your perception of being a grandparent.

Please complete the enclosed survey and consent form, and return them in the self-addressed stamped envelope.

Thank you very much for your time and support!

*DeAnne Priddis*

Ph.D. Student at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee



## CURRICULUM VITAE

**DeAnne Priddis**

Department of Communication  
University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee  
2522 E. Hartford Avenue  
Milwaukee, WI 53201  
dpriddis@uwm.edu  
priddis@ameritech.net

### EDUCATION

<p>University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee Ph.D. in Communication Interpersonal Communication/Intergenerational Relationships Dissertation: Family Connections: The Impact of Self-Disclosure, Solidarity, and Stereotyping on Relational Satisfaction in Grandparent-Adult Grandchild Dyads 2010-present Doctoral Advisor: Nancy Burrell, PhD Committee Members: Mike Allen, PhD, Sang-Yeon Kim, PhD, Lindsay Timmerman, PhD, Erin Ruppel, PhD</p>	<p>April 2015</p>
<p>University of Wisconsin – Stout M.S. in Human Resources Training &amp; Development Master’s Thesis: “Finding Balance at SECURA”–work/life balance study</p>	<p>2006</p>
<p>University of Wisconsin - Oshkosh B.L.S. in Organizational Administration Associate’s in Arts &amp; Sciences from UW Fox Valley</p>	<p>2004 2003</p>
<p>Gateway Technical College Associate’s in Supervisory Management Area of Concentration: Human Resources</p>	<p>1991</p>

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee/Milwaukee, WI  
 Teaching Assistant - **Business and Professional Communication (online)** 2011-present, and  
**Communication in Human Conflict (face-to-face)** 2013-2014 2011-present  
 Independently taught, administered grades and corresponded with students. Also taught summer 2012-2014, winterim 2013-2015. Redesigned course with colleague summer 2012, trained and mentored new TAs in 2013-2014.

Lakeland College – Fox Cities Center  
 Adjunct Instructor– **Persuasion and Advocacy (online), Interpersonal Communication (BlendEd), and Communication in Human Conflict (BlendEd)** 2014  
 Develop syllabus, course structure, lesson plans, facilitate on-line classes and face-to-face in blended format, assist students, and administer grades.

Fox Valley Technical College – Waupaca/Appleton/Wautoma/Clintonville, WI  
 Adjunct Instructor – **Oral/Interpersonal Communications and Psychology of Human Relations**  
 Non-credited **Intro to PC, Microsoft Word, Excel, and iPad classes** 2009-2013  
 Adjunct Instructor – **Business Technology Center Instructor**  
 Developed syllabus, course structure, lesson plans, facilitated class, assisted students with on-line assignments in lab, and graded MS Office software assignments.

Rasmussen College - Green Bay, WI  
 Adjunct Instructor – **Residential classes: Foundations of English I and II, Professional Communication, Keyboarding I, Principles of Management, and Business Ethics**  
**Blended class and On-line class: Foundations of English II** 2008-2011  
 Developed course structure, lesson plans, facilitated class, and administered all grades.

ITT Technical Institute – Green Bay, WI  
 Adjunct Instructor – **English Composition I and II, Contemporary World Cultures, Human Resource Management, and Group Dynamics** 2006-2009  
 Developed syllabus, course structure, lesson plans, facilitated class, and graded assignments.

Goodwill Industries NCW  
**Growth & Development Specialist** 2007 – 2008  
 Project lead to develop and deliver Goodwill's orientation program to all North Central Wisconsin locations. Developed and facilitated training programs that focus on safety and security of organizational assets. Redeveloped and facilitated diversity and harassment training program. Coordinated class and class participant needs.

SECURA Insurance

**Learning & Development**

2004 –2006

Assessed, developed and facilitated various training programs, including Effective Communications, Customer Service, Team Building, and Microsoft Word, Excel, and Outlook. Managed two-day new employee quarterly training, and monthly Lunch ‘n Learn programs.

**RESEARCH EFFORTS**

**Publications**

Becker, K.A., Cramer, E.M., & **Priddis, D.** (in press). Managing end-of-life uncertainty: Applying problematic integration theory to spousal communication about death and dying. *American Journal of Hospice and Palliative Medicine*.

Becker, K.A., Cramer, E.M., **Priddis, D.**, & Allen, M. (in press). Talking about end-of-life preferences in marriage: Applying the theory of motivated information management. *Health Communication*

**Conference Presentations**

**Priddis, D.** (2015, April). Social exchange theory versus investment model: An application in grandparent and college grandchild relationships. Paper presented at the Central States Communication Association (CSCA) Conference, Madison, WI. **Top Student Paper – Communication Theory Interest Group.**

Omachinski, K., **Priddis, D.**, Nicolini, K., Weismann, K., & Myerchoin, A. (2015, April). Converging student groups: Integrating non-traditional students in the classroom and in the campus community. Panel presented at the Central States Communication Association (CSCA) Conference, Madison, WI.

Nicolini, K., **Priddis, D.**, Myerchoin, A., Phelps, R., Johnson, M., & Liu, E. (2015, April). Forging connections: The power of intergenerational mentoring. Panel presented at the Central States Communication Association (CSCA) Conference, Madison, WI.

Cole, A. W., Kim, S., **Priddis, D.**, & Lambertz, M. (2014). Student attrition in online courses and instructor's base of power. Poster presented at to the 100th annual convention of the National Communication Association, Instructional Development Division, Chicago, IL.

- Becker, K. A., Cramer, E. M., & **Priddis, D.** (2014, April). Problematic integration and dying wishes: Examining spousal information-seeking about end-of-life care preferences. Paper presented at the 2014 Kentucky Conference on Health Communication (KCHC) in Lexington, KY.
- Priddis, D.** (2014, April). The balancing act of working moms and dads in today's popular press. Paper presented at the Central States Communication Association (CSCA) Conference, Minneapolis, MN.
- Priddis, D.** (2014, April). Family resilience to an alcoholic family member. Paper presented at the Central States Communication Association (CSCA) Conference, Minneapolis, MN.
- Priddis, D.** (2014, April). Work-life balance and the toxic effects of inconsistent messages. Paper presented at the Central States Communication Association (CSCA) Conference, Minneapolis, MN.
- Priddis, D.**, Omachinski, K. (2014, April). The toxic workplace of the newly promoted supervisor. Paper presented at the Central States Communication Association (CSCA) Conference, Minneapolis, MN.
- Stache, L., Davidson, R., **Priddis, D.**, & Nicolini, K. (2013, October). *Understanding Gender Studies in the Context of Parenthood*. Panel participant at Women's Studies LGBTQ Conference, Madison, WI.
- Becker, K. A., Cramer, E. M., & **Priddis, D.** (2013, October). In sickness and in health: Seeking information about spousal end-of-life preferences. Poster presentation at International Conference in Communication in Healthcare (ICCH) Conference in Montreal, Canada.
- Burrell, N., Maier, M., **Priddis, D.**, Victor, A., Jackl, J., & Gross, C. (2013, June). *Emotional Intelligence: A Framework for Examining Bullying in Schools*. Paper was presented at International Communication Association (ICA) Conference, London, England.
- Priddis, D.** (2013, April). Helping but supporting alcoholism: Persuading family members for resources. Paper presented at the Central States Communication Association (CSCA) Conference, Kansas City, MO.
- Priddis, D.** (2013, April). Adding personality to the college online classroom: A comparative study between students and educators regarding the use of emoticons. Paper presented at the Central States Communication Association (CSCA) Conference, Kansas City, MO. **Top Paper Panel – Instructional Resources Interest Group.**

- Brucher Moore, J., Aldridge Sandford, A., Cherjovsky, N., Copeland, K., Daggs, J., Johnson, M., Nesemeier, H., & **Priddis, D.** (2013, April). You don't have to own a prius to teach hybrid courses. Panel participant at the Central States Communication Association (CSCA) Conference, Kansas City, MO.
- Victor, A., **Priddis, D.**, Dilbeck, K. & Burrell, N. (2012, November). Examining educators' reflections on bullying: A shift in Ideology. Paper was presented at the National Communication Association (NCA) Conference, Orlando, FL.
- Priddis, D.**, Willes, K. L., & Allen M. (2012, July). Does this app make my butt look big? Male-to-male smartphone application users. Paper was presented at the International Association of Relationship Research (IARR) Conference, Chicago, IL.

## WORKSHOPS CONDUCTED

### **The Addicted Family System: Roles, Rules, and Enabling**

4.5-hour mini-workshop created and will be facilitated at 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference of the National Rural Institute on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, Menomonie, WI. 2015

### **Enabling: Helping or Harming?**

4.5-hour mini-workshop created and facilitated with Patrick Pichette, Outpatient Treatment AODA Counselor at 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the National Rural Institute on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, Menomonie, WI. 2014

### **De-Stress Your Tests**

Created and delivered workshop on overcoming test anxiety for students – test taking and study techniques. 45-minute session 2010

## PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

CSCA Instructional Resources Interest Group Secretary	2015-present
CSCA Undergraduate Division Panel Chair	2015
CSCA Panel Reviewer – Instructional Resources	2012-present
CSCA Panel Chair – Tough Love –Interpersonal/Group Division	2012
CSCA student member	2011-present
IARR student member	2012-present
NCA student member	2012 - present

### **Communication Graduate Study Council (CGSC)**

CGSC formation and by-law committee member  
 CGSC (Grad Student Council) Treasurer/Fundraising  
 CGSC Grad Student Representative - Faculty Meetings

Mentor to two PhD students at UWM 2012-present

**Youth Leadership Fox Cities**

Steering Committee Member/Program Volunteer/Facilitator 2011-2014  
 Planned, facilitated, and coordinated speakers for Law/Government Day  
 Project Team Facilitator with another leader with youth team. Project with  
 Community Gardens  
 Steering committee member since 2011

**Northeast Wisconsin Chapter of American Society of Training & Development  
 (ASTD)**

Board of Directors – Membership Director, Treasurer 2006-2011

**Leadership Fox Cities**

Project: Performing Art Center and Children program 2002-2003

**PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS**

Central States Communication Association (CSCA) – student member  
 National Communication Association (NCA) – student member  
 International Association of Relationship Research (IARR) – student member  
 National Rural Alcohol and Drug Abuse Network (NRADAN)  
 Northeast Wisconsin chapter of Association for Talent Development (N.E.W. ATD)

**COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER**

Project RUSH – Volunteer interviewer for community homelessness research 2015  
 Salvation Army – lunch preparation/serving volunteer 2003-present  
 Walk for Autism Route Volunteer 2013 & 2014  
 NAMI Fox Valley (National Alliance on Mental Illness) Volunteer 2012 – present  
 Fox Valley Heritage Parkway – survey data analysis 2012  
 Fox Cities Women’s Soccer League Commissioner 2010 – present  
 Fox Cities Women’s Soccer League Team Captain 2005- 2011