A communicative approach to understanding intergenerational conflict over child rearing

Lauren Marie Upton
DePaul University, lupton1@depaul.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://via.library.depaul.edu/etd

A Communicative Approach to Understanding Intergenerational Conflict over Child Rearing

A Thesis

Presented in

Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of Master of Art in Liberal Studies

By

LAUREN MARIE UPTON

June 2010

Department of Liberal Studies

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

DePaul University

Chicago, Illinois

Grateful acknowledgement is given to the participants

and members of the thesis committee:

Dr. Leah Bryant

Dr. Ralph Erber

Dr. Julie Artis

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my wonderful family.

Without their daily support and encouragement this work would not exist.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1: Purpose, Rationale, Literature Review

Purpose

Family systems theory is a theory of human behavior that views the family as an emotional unit and uses systems thinking to describe the complex interactions of the entire family.[1] Each family member is affected in some way by the thoughts and actions of other members, and thus when changes happen, all members are impacted in some way. Intergenerational conflict over child rearing from a communicative perspective is a perfect situation whereby the thoughts and actions of one family member, changes the feelings of another. This research presents a variety of current parenting issues and focuses on the communicative directives parents manage with grandparents regarding parenting.

Bowen (1978) emphasized the concept of emotional triangle, whereby a person who is experiencing stress in a dyadic relationship positions a third family member in some fashion. Watching my thirty-four year old sister and her husband raise two children in such a technologically advanced society where three of the four biological grandparents are in healthy condition, creates an interesting dynamic. Receiving calls of frustration and listening to my sister vent while still living under the roof of our parents, positions me in a situation I find both intriguing and multifaceted. While my parents critique and discuss the ways in which my sister rears her children, they simultaneously, and perhaps unknowingly, emit directives and expectations for how I should parent my own children. Through their disagreements, head-shakes, eye-rolls, and silence in certain situations, I become witness to both the grandparents' and parents' perspectives of child-rearing. The compassion I share and the stance I hold with both parties also contributes to either supporting my sister, or trusting my parents' judgment.

---

[1] http://www.thebowencenter.org/pages/theory.html

This complex relationship dynamic of intergenerational tension over child rearing is of the focus of my research.

For the purpose of this study, intergenerational tension is defined as a type of interaction that occurs between parents and grandparents when child rearing is discussed or the grandparent is in the presence of the parent and grandchild. Intergenerational tension and conflict can be both positive and negative because tensions are a result of the conflicting emotional needs felt by the participants of any relationship, causing relationships to be in a constant state of flux (Baxter, 1988). The topics of intergenerational are conceptualized using dialectal theory. In this research, relational dialectics is the communication theory used as a foundation to allow for a rich description of how parents and grandparents manage tension in their relationships.

Dialectics operates from an open-ended, ongoing viewpoint (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996) therefore the conflict and tension is discussed around how the interactants construct meaning. The relational dialectics used in this research were chosen because they best fit the topics and experiences of parents. The specific frameworks of relational dialectics do not predict conflict or tension for every parent; however the experiences of participants in this study were best defined using the categories of old and new, openness and closedness, and involvement and indifference.

Parents serve as the gatekeepers for the intergenerational relationship between grandparents and grandchildren (Mueller, Wilhelm & Elder, 2002). Because these relationships are maintained by the parents, it is vital to understand their reasoning behind their parental decisions. With the increase in age of longevity, grandparenthood is a role that has taken on new meaning. The number of individuals who will live part of their lives as members of three and four generation families is increasing, as is the proportion of grandparents (Harper & Levin,

2

2005). In addition, with growing numbers of dual-worker households and higher rates of

parental separation and divorce, grandparents are now playing an increasing role in their

grandchildren's lives as full-time and part-time caregivers, playmates, advisers, financial

supporters, and other roles (Attar-Schwartz, Tan, Buchanan, Flouri, & Griggs, 2009).

Grandparents often feel they are in a double bind, expected to offer help to their children with

information about how to parent their children, all without interfering.

Communication scholars have not yet studied the complexity of the intergenerational

relationship between their children, and their children's children within the context of parenting,

specifically child-rearing. While extant literature exists that has addressed intergenerational

communication and child rearing from multiple perspectives such as religious beliefs (Copen &

Silverstein, 2007), the roles of grandparents in divorced families (Douglas & Ferguson, 2003)

and gender differences in the transmission of parenting styles (Simons, Whitbeck, Conger, &

Chyi-In, 1991), none of the research has examined the communication, specifically how tensions

are managed, within these relationships, as it relates to child-rearing practices. Therefore, the

aim of this thesis is to research the communicative tensions that exist about child-rearing issues

between grandparents and parents from a communicative perspective.

Many challenges arise as one becomes a parent. Some parents are faced with questions

such as whether or not someone will stay at home and raise the child, whether a nanny or day

care service will tend to the child, how child care is managed on a tight budget where two

parents must continue to work full-time, or how to handle raising a child alone.   These types of

decisions are only one among a lifetime of tough choices parents will face. Child-rearing issues

are often decided among the parents of the child and may sometimes conflict with the

grandparents' ideas of how to best raise a child. Therefore, researching intergenerational conflict from a communicative perspective is essential to understanding the tensions that may exist and how to maintain healthy relationships between parents and grandparents.

Rationale

The extant literature about intergenerational conflict over child-rearing is voluminous (Aldous, 1995; Campbell, 2007; Drew, Richard, & Smith, 1998; Easterlin, 1982; Julian, McKenry, & McKelvey, 1994; Neugarten, 1964; Thomas, 1990), yet the scarcity of theoretical frameworks in existing literature demonstrates the need for understanding intergenerational tensions. Additionally, there is a lack of research on parent dyads that sufficiently addresses the full extent of the current issues parents and grandparents face regarding child-rearing. Every adult may remember overhearing an argument between mom and grandma about mother's decisions about how to parent. While raising a child in today's society appears even more challenging than before due to the increase in available technology that young people use both for educational opportunities and risk-taking situations, disagreements continue to persist and encompass more areas of conflict. Prime time television depicts this intriguing topic with the recent March 2010 premier of "Parenthood," a show that addresses modern challenges of child rearing while illustrating issues that affect grandparents, parents, and children.

The complexity of parenting is demonstrated by the many parenting books in circulation beginning with *Parenting for Dummies*. Pregnancy books such as *Getting Pregnant: What Couples Need to Know Right Now* and *What to Expect When You're Expecting* set the tone for the daunting task of pregnancy, childbirth, and parenting. Many times parents refer to a book such as *Practical Parenting for the 21st Century: The Manual You Wish Had Come With Your Child* in order to find solutions for an uneasy baby. Even classes are offered to parents, such as

4

"Raising a Thinking Child." Grandparents, who did not have access to such an overwhelming array of information, may scoff at the mass-market appeal of these guides. The significance of this work lies in the fact that while the act of child-rearing remains a stable occurrence, the society and world that these children are born into is ever changing.

This thesis highlights current child-rearing issues that parents face today. New parents not only have involved parents in their children's lives, but also are the target audience for parenting books with instructions and advice about how to raise their child(ren). By taking a communicative approach to understanding intergenerational conflict, this thesis addresses the struggle to make their own parents proud while raising successful children utilizing their own techniques. My thesis contends that in the United States, parents' child-rearing decisions often contradict the grandparents' ideas thus creating intergenerational tension. The research enhances this information and presents an innovative assessment of the current issues surrounding child rearing. Consistently re-examining the material is necessary to keep both scholars and parents informed on "what to expect when expecting."

Literature Review

Becoming a parent is a life changing experience. The challenges, happiness, and entire child-rearing process bestow great responsibility on the parents. Researchers from various disciplines have examined issues surrounding child rearing for many years. Areas such as Marriage and Family, Psychology, Family Studies, Family Relations, Sociology, Law, Communication Studies, Humanities, Gerontology and Human Development, just to name a few, have all contributed to this body of literature. Within these disciplines, topics such as responsibilities of grandparents, views, beliefs, continuities and discontinuities in parenting

styles, transmission of parenting styles, religious beliefs, parenting from prime time television, influence of grandparents, relationships between grandchildren and grandparents, modeling compensation, involvement of grandparents, children with behavioral problems, cultural variations in parenting, and socialization goals are some, of the many, topics that scholars have addressed.

While there are many topics that are relevant to understanding parenting practices, this thesis reviews the topics that are most relevant to better understanding inter-generational conflict between parents and grandparents regarding child rearing practices. This research concentrated on communication directives of parenting and illuminated parenting topics such as: utilizing daycare, expectations for children, diet, and discipline. There is ample literature on these similar topics, yet none focus solely on current communicative parenting directives. At some point throughout a child's life, all parents serve as a model of how to parent, whether good or bad.

Parents as Role Models

As children age, they become more consciously aware of how their parents choose to rear them, thus serving as models for their children. Today's parents realize the importance of having role models and may choose to use sources such as books, classes, and videos on parenting to further educate themselves in order to provide the best care possible for their children. While parents often model the parenting style of their parents, they also strive to compensate for things that were lacking in their childhood as shown in their interactions with their own children. The combination of modeling and compensation theory was demonstrated by Floyd and Morman (2000). In their research, these authors found that fathers often adjusted their affection for their own sons based on the model they associated with as children. Therefore, if the fathers felt that they did not receive enough affection as children, the fathers in this study

went above and beyond helping their own child with school in order to provide ample support. Grandparents and parents alike continually demonstrate this concept by always trying to make life better for the next generation. Sometimes one party may view the parents' desire to give their children the best opportunities as spoiling them too much. This is simply one area that potentially may create conflict with the grandparent and parent.

Griggs (2010) found in her research that grandparent involvement significantly impacts child well-being. With diversifying families, increased life expectancy, growing numbers of dual-worker households and higher rates of family breakdown, grandparents play an increased role in their grandchildren's lives (Griggs, 2010). Although family structure may vary, the communication between a parent and grandparent is consistent yet understudied. Many factors such as the amount of involvement or self-disclosure parents share, and life experiences, influence the communication between generations. Healthy communication fosters are positive relationship between a parent and grandparent may also result in a better well-being for the child(ren).

Research has also found that children model negative reinforcement traits. Simon, Whitbeck, Conger, and Chyi-In (1991) found that harsh parenting such as yelling, spanking, slapping, and shoving also influences children's view on how to parent. They reported that grandparents who engaged in aggressive parenting produced present-day parents who were likely to use similar practices (Whitbeck, Conger & Chyi-In, 1991). A number of baby-boomers can attest to the spanking they received as children. Today some parents turn to other forms of disciplining such as time-outs and taking away toys as a form of punishment. The change of disciplinary style offers another area where grandparents and parents may disagree.

Campbell and Gilmore (2007) argue that intergenerational transmission of parenting characteristics are moderated by socio-cultural shifts. Although some grandparents feel that spanking produces well-behaved children, not all present day parents feel that spanking is appropriate. For many people, changes in norms and standards are difficult to accept. Grandparents often reflect on their child rearing decisions as they observe how their grandchildren are being raised. Because grandparents' view is in hindsight, they often try to do things differently with their grandchildren. Harrison, Richman, and Vittimberga (2000) attest to this belief with their findings that grandparents, who take care of problematic children, find it less stressful than both single and married mothers. Experience helps one acquire perspective and patience, and grandparents understand life in a broader picture simply because of their familiarity with child rearing. Though parents ultimately rely on their own judgment to make parenting decisions, grandparents serve as strong role models in a number of different ways.

Providing styles of parenting through interpersonal relations, social participation and role specific modeling, parents contribute to the continuity of constructive parenting (Chen & Kaplan, 2001). In this study, researchers found that the experience of good parenting in early adolescence has a direct positive effect on an individual's own constructive parenting. Interestingly, Riggs, Paikoff, and Bryant (2004) found that parents who support and help their teenage daughters who are mothers, increase the chances that these teenage mothers will be responsive and engaging as parents and thus have offspring with positive outcomes. Parents who are actively involved in their children's lives with unconditional support serve as the most positive role models.

There are times when a parent hears their child repeat a word or phrase and laugh because they forget that children are like sponges, always absorbing. Instances such as this

remind parents of the impact they have on children. Parents' influence may be indirect, as parenting beliefs about disciplinary styles are transmitted indirectly through their own practices (Simons, Beaman, Conger & Chao, 1992). Findings also revealed that the influence of parenting depends on the gender of the child, as boys and girls cue to different dimensions of the parent role. Whereas boys may cue to harsh parenting from both the mother and the father, girls may focus on the fathers emotional traits. However, both genders rely on their parents for constructive parenting values.

Given the known influence of the parental generation in moderating the grandparent-grandchild relationship, perceptions about early family relationships offer a blueprint for later family relations (Whitebeck, Hoyt, & Huck, 1993). Although the existing literature focuses on different variables such as mothers as mediators (Thompson & Walker, 1987), changes after divorce (Johnson, 1988, Matthews & Sprey, 1984), and the health of the grandparent (Kivnick, 1982), researchers agree that family experiences do influence an individual's parenting style later in life. Furthermore, Kitamura (2009) researched the relationship between parenting styles and personality traits over generations and found that parenting styles were slightly mediated by the father's cooperativeness. This study demonstrates that parenting styles are transmitted and have an impact on current parenting practices. It is no surprise that parenting styles may be transmitted intergenerationallly.

Parents usually expect their children to child rear in similar ways to them, but new parents modify these blueprints as society changes. When parents child rear in a way different than what the grandparent remembers, grandparents may disagree or suggest another idea. Unwelcome advice from grandparents may cause tension in the relationship whether it is a fleeting moment, or a constant feeling. The communicative relationship between grandparents

and parents and understanding how parents react to intergenerational conflict is an important aspect of this thesis. Understanding perspectives from both parties is important to help better understand the communicative dynamic between the parent and the grandparent.

Parents' View of Grandparenting

Not only is important to understand why and how grandparents provide strong parental role models for their children, but also to understand how parents view the grandparenting role. The choices parents make and the methods of child rearing they choose differ from previous generations (Easterlin, 1982). When a parent chooses decisions that differ from their own upbringing, it does not necessarily mean they value their parent's choices any less. In fact, some parents may unconsciously compare or think about how they were handled as a child before making decisions with their own children. Developing one's own model of parenting based on the knowledge, experience, and circumstances of the family offer room for variation from grandparent ideals. To better understand the intergenerational issues and tensions of child rearing, individuals must strive for awareness of the others' perspectives and experiences.

Many times, grandparents and parents both assume they know the others opinions and beliefs about parenting. Hanessian's (2004) article, "What I Learned About Motherhood From my Mom" highlights the fact that a daughter turned mother in the face of a mother turned grandmother is not a smooth transition for either party. Wanting support and guidance without lectures and advice can be difficult for a grandparent who wants parenthood to be easy. While raising a child, parents want to convey all their life experience and knowledge upon the child so that the same mistakes are not repeated. This need to protect exposes itself again when the adult-child becomes a parent. Grandparents feel they know best, after all they did manage to raise at least one child. The cycle of life repeats itself in that the same teenager, who wanted to learn

from one's own mistakes, again wants to work through parenthood, without being lectured. Ultimately her argument rests on the idea that how parents rear their children validates to grandparents whether or not they were successful as parents. This is an extremely interesting point that most parents would probably neglect to realize. It could be one possible explanation for the tension involved within the generations over child rearing.

Decisions about child rearing practices solely rest on the parents, yet grandparent involvement and guidance is often sought (Londhe, 2006). This is especially true with a first born child within the first couple of years. Parents are extremely cautious and sometimes will second guess their choices. With the first grandchild, there is much excitement as the grandparents proudly watch their offspring continue the familial lineage. Intergenerational parenting creates a bond that helps parents and grandparents connect in a whole new way while simultaneously introducing potential tension over child rearing.

Marwell and Schmitt (1969) found the experience of child rearing produces significant changes in attitudes toward parental influence. When someone becomes a parent, the individual becomes aware of the other side of parenting and thus has a better understanding of the practices that were used when they were children. This new perspective generates either an appreciation or questioning for the practices parents implemented. Managing this perspective as a new parent can cause disagreement with the grandparents. When these issues unveil themselves in different situations, grandparents are expected to allow the parents to take care of the grandchildren without interfering (Albrecht, 1954). Because parents want what is best for their children, it is often difficult to simply sit back and not offer suggestions. Hints, innuendos, and harmless remarks can be interpreted by any parent the wrong way. The sensitive line in communicative exchanges makes the intergenerational conflict over child rearing a fragile topic. Being able to

genuinely appreciate each others' perspective is what helps lessen the chances of continual disagreement. To help ease potential tension, parents need to realize that grandparents are also working through a new stage in their life.

Grandparent Perspectives

While 60% of grandparents provide regular care to grandchildren, with grandmothers having more involvement and responsibility (Thiele & Whelan, 2006), they hold a retroactive view on parenting. Today's grandparents lived through economic hardships, wars, and many other strenuous life circumstances that afford them wisdom and confidence to share their knowledge. While some grandparents hold negative feelings toward their new role due to disagreements over child rearing issues (Peterson, 1999), other grandparents welcome the new role with a ferocious passion to want to help. Still other grandparents are hesitant to criticize their adult children's decisions about child rearing (Douglas & Ferguson, 2003). The reactions that grandparents feel toward their new role highlight the many various styles of grandparenting. Different grandparenting styles mixed with various personalities affects intergenerational communication over child rearing.

Because grandparents often feel they know best, they simultaneously grandparent and parent (Mason, May, & Clarke, 2007). Transitioning to a new role bears difficulty in learning how to handle the new expectations and letting go of the old. This shift between roles for grandparents has frequently been referred to as the double bind (Thomas 1990). The expectation of support without interfering (Drew, Richard, & Smith, 1998) is a situation all too common for grandparents. Grandparents, who are aware that their suggestions may inflict stress on the parent, find it difficult to withhold advice. Concealing the difference of opinion over time builds up and can erupt into a major argument. Parents, too, may unconsciously feel the constant

tension and try to avoid a confrontation. Grandparents and parents who address the problematic issue, sooner rather than later, are more likely to improve the communicative relationship.

Based on kinship and gender, it was also found that grandparents possess a hierarchy in their feelings for their children (Fingerman, 2004). In this study, none of the grandparents held primary care responsibilities, so there was contact with the parent generation. Conflict varied according to whether it was a son or daughter-in-law that coordinated the family events and planning. Fathers seemed to favor their daughter's decision over their son-in-laws, while women appeared to have more conflict with their mother-in-law. It is very common to hear the dreaded phrase "my in-laws are in town" and this sentence signals to others a possibly tension filled visit. This demonstrates yet again another variable that affects the communication tension between the generations.

While some grandmothers feel less responsible for grandchildren because the children's lives rest in the hands of the parents (Gattai & Musatti, 1999), other grandparents find it very challenging to remain on the sidelines and not put forth their advice. These grandparents may withhold immediate advice, but later drop comments about how the parent handled an earlier situation. This method of communication can signal to the parent that there was another way to solve the situation or it can imply that the grandparent disagrees with the parenting decisions. Either way, it sends a message to the parent to be more observant of their child rearing decisions while the grandparent is present.

There are various circumstances that weigh on the potential for grandparents to support or disagree with child rearing patterns. Both grandparents and parents are working through this new stage of life. Because multiple dimensions of grandparents' involvement with their grandchildren are associated with whether or not they knew their own grandparents (Muller &

13

Elder, 2003), the risk of intergenerational conflict occurring varies among families. Like the blueprint idea, here again it demonstrates that how grandparents experienced their childhood affects their expectations of grandparenting. Researching the different types of conflict from a communicative approach allows people to better understand these common family tensions.

Defining Intergenerational Conflict

There is a myriad of research that addresses specific types of intergenerational conflict, such as new views of grandparents (Aldous, 1995), continuities and discontinuities in parenting (Campbell, 2007), religious beliefs (Copen & Silverstein, 2007), grandmothers' involvement in grandchildren's care (Gattai & Musatti, 1999), and parental stress in grandparents related to children with behavioral problems (Harrison, Richman, & Vittimberga, 2000). This thesis aims to take a communicative approach to understanding if these tensions exist and how they are managed communicatively. Previous literature findings span across various forms of family structure from single parent to blended families to traditional two parent households (Douglas & Ferguson, 2003; Fingerman, 2004; Li, 2002; Riggs, Holmbeck, Paikoff, & Bryant, 2004). The structure of the family, values, and beliefs play a vital role in how grandparents interact with their grandchildren. Parents who have remarried spouses with children may find their experience with grandparents very differently than a single parent or a newly wedded couple. The complexity of family dynamics challenges this research because it constantly changes how people define their relationships. This research demonstrates that studying intergenerational conflict over parenting is a very complex subject that needs continued research to better learn its many nuances.

Defining conflict is another communicative aspect that alters perception of intergenerational tensions. Neugarten and Weinstein (1964) defined a formal grandparenting

14

style as one where the grandparent withholds advice despite disagreement. While this study was conducted in an earlier era, today's generation continues to challenge norms and redefine society. This obviously affects the impact of communication between grandparents and their adult children. Many adults feel they know their parents well enough to know their beliefs. When a situation arises when the parent instinctively knows that the grandparent would disagree, and the grandparent simply remains silent, the parents may feel the tension. Although nothing is said at the moment of impact, the parent is often aware that tension exits. Some grandparents stay completely out of their adult child's parenting decisions, while other grandparents impulsively interject. In addition to these two extremes, there are grandparents who fall somewhere in between. Parent-child relationships always seem to be "love-hate" (Luescher & Pillemer, 1998), and this remains true later in life when intergenerational conflict over child rearing occurs. In this research, the critical component in defining intergenerational conflict is that conflict is not necessarily negative, but rather implies a task of structuring relationships that is created by structural, situational, and personal conditions (Luescher, 2002). This study exemplifies how people must live with ambivalence and parents can cope with it in competent, productive ways (Luescher, 2002). To maintain an effective communication with grandparents, parents must acknowledge the struggles that grandparents experience.

Challenges that Grandparents Face

Many grandparents feel trapped in the "double bind" where they want to give as much support as possible without interfering (Thomas, 1990). When asked, grandparents try to give advice in a way that does not sound directive or as if they are lecturing. Grandparenthood can be viewed as a social role that involves a myriad expectations, behaviors, and role-related meanings

15

(Szinovacz 1998). The many variables that affect intergenerational conflict help explain why grandparents and parents diverge on child rearing issues.

In addition to the family dynamics, the proximity of the grandparents to the family adds another layer to this complex relationship. Furthermore, the frequency of involvement, visitation, and the health of the grandparent also affects family interaction. The timing of becoming a grandparent, the number of children, and the ages of grandchildren in conjunction with the grandparents' age are other factors to take into consideration. The influence on grandchildren may be affected too by the sex of both the grandparent and the grandchildren. Grandmothers reported more responsibility than grandfathers (Thiele & Whelan, 2006) although it is difficult to say if this responsibility is self-induced or an actual expectation. Some literature also reports that women tend to have more contact with the grandparents and this may cause variation in how mothers and fathers view the intergenerational conflict (Reitzes & Mutran, 2004). As discussed earlier, grandparenthood and parenthood are new phases of life where both parties are learning expectations while watching the other work through complex issues (Hanessian, 2004). The complexity of the situation makes this research so intriguing and contemporary.

Variations in Intergenerational Conflict

Several variables discussed thus far highlight the way intergenerational conflict is played out. Many grandparents feel responsible for supporting their new grandchildren while others like to simply observe the next generations' parenting styles. For some, they simply do not know how to support and withhold advice. Yet other grandparents consciously make an effort to not be so overbearing. The norms of noninterference and obligation create a fragile line that if crossed, can change a relationship between the grandparent and parent (Aldous, 1995).

This communicative approach to understanding that line offers one perspective of how intergenerational conflict is negotiated. In addition to the multifaceted aspects of grandparents and parents, each new era is associated with potentially different child rearing expectations.

While some parents are likely to follow their own cultural norms regardless of how others parent (Keller, et al., 2006), other parents look to the published parenting books for advice. This is true in Taiwan where mothers learn child rearing strategies from such books that endorse of western values (Li, 2002). This can cause intergenerational tension along with confusion for mothers because the parenting book provides a different answer than the grandparent. With a constantly changing society, and parents who develop their own style of child rearing based on culture and surrounding society (Julian, McKenry, McKelvey, 1994) it is no wonder why intergenerational conflict seems to never dissipate. The growing number of women in the workplace and the increase in age of longevity creates more parenting complexities within in society. In addition, the role grandparents take on when parents work full time, divorce, remarry, or experience death impacts grandparent involvement (Wasoff & Dey, 2006). These situations have the potential to strain any relationship. Researching intergenerational conflict from a communicative approach also depends on the pre-existing relationship and circumstances before children.

Factors that Influence Intergenerational Conflict

The factors that encompass an intergenerational relationship are seemingly endless. Keller and her colleagues (2006) found significant differences that exist in the conceptions of parenting among cultural communities. Parenting styles do vary among families, but researchers have clustered similarities together in order to group cultures for comparison. Although the work presented here focuses on parents living in the United States, the intergenerational tensions

17

that exist do so at varying levels and degrees depending on an individual's cultural beliefs and the society one lives.

The once upon a time fairytales suggest that women dream about the perfect wedding and family. People do not think about the challenges of child rearing in terms of intergenerational tensions because there are far more important concerns that need addressing such as providing the child with basic needs, education, and love. Starrels and Holm (2000) found that daughters' expectations regarding timing of parenthood are shaped by factors other than the family, while sons follow a more ordered sequenced idea of balancing career and family. Because timing seems to be everything, a new baby undoubtedly brings stress into a family. How parents negotiate this stress with the new infant and balance their feelings with the grandparents' new feelings is an extremely important concept not mentioned in parenting books. Studying this one aspect of child rearing proposes a fresh look at an old issue. The use of relational dialectics, as a theoretical framework for this thesis is aimed at better understanding intergenerational conflict over child rearing.

Theoretical Perspective

Contradictions are inherent in social life and tension is ongoing and ever changing (Baxter & Montgomery, 1998) within intergenerational relationships. Utilizing dialectical perspective to research the topic of intergenerational conflict over child rearing allows scholars to better understand the forces at work between parents and grandparents about the issue of child-rearing. There are complex issues that arise when becoming a grandparent and parent. These concerns are characterized by the parental challenges and the felt tensions with grandparents. The convolution of these life transitions merits the use of dialectical perspective in this research. Because the relationship between grandparents and parents is so intricate and

18

complex, using a communicative approach towards intergenerational conflict over child rearing is best understood through the lens of relational dialectic theory.

Relational dialectics are characterized by the dynamic interplay of opposing forces that each person within a relationship must manage (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). In relational dialectics, there are three main contradictions that researchers often utilize to categorize results; autonomy-connection, openness-closedness, and predictability-novelty (Baxter & Simon, 1993). Autonomy and connection relates to the independence versus interdependence of a relationship, while openness and closedness refers to the amount of self-disclosure individuals share with one another. The third contradiction characterizes the stability or change that occurs. While these oppositions may represent the main three that Baxter and Montgomery (1996) used, contradictions have multiple strands of meaning that are constituted differently depending on the particular kind of relating under study (Baxter, 2004).

The existing literature addressed many issues that grandparents and parents work through to provide the parenting model for the children. Using relational dialectics also allows an individual to focus on communication, specifically the negotiation of conflict between grandparents and parents. Furthermore, using this theory as a foundation allows for rich description of how interactants manage tension in their relationships. Relational dialectics theory emphasizes that meaning is locally situated and that abstract contradictions are often etched differently depending on the particular relationship type (Baxter, 2004). This means that how a parent experiences and manages a dialectical tension depends on the type of relationship he or she has with the grandparent. The foci of this thesis is regarding communication about current child-rearing issues and the felt tension and recurring conflicts in intergenerational relationships today.

This literature review focused on important issues about child rearing that have already been identified. There is a great deal of information presented in this literature that cover a vast variety of topics and demonstrates the many perspectives other scholars utilized to approach this ever changing relationship dynamic. Analysis of the research stimulated three common themes: communicative directives about child rearing, tension, and conflict management. The studies provide a context and solid foundation, yet also highlight the need for a communicative approach to understanding intergenerational conflict over child rearing. Gathering insight into these questions supports why dialectical theory is ideal for taking a communicative approach to understanding intergenerational conflict over child rearing.

The research gathered to support the thesis that child-rearing patterns create intergenerational conflict covers all of the above aspects. Due to the complexity and extensive issues surrounding child rearing, this research focuses on the communication between parents and grandparents. After reviewing the existing literature, the main research question that frames this current study is:

RQ: From a communicative perspective, how do relational dialectics impact intergenerational conflict regarding child rearing practices between grandparents and parents?

Chapter Two: Methodology

The specific aim of this thesis focused on understanding communicatively how parents manage conflict or tension between grandparents over child rearing. The study used an interpretive centered qualitative approach, following the precedent of other scholars pursuing dialectically based communication phenomena (e.g., Baxter, Braithwaite, Bryant & Wagner, 2004; Braithwaite, Toller, Daas, Durham, & Jones, 2008). Questions of meaning from the parent point of view were sought (Baxter, 2004; Baxter & Babbie, 2004) by asking open ended questions. Interpretive communication research focuses on seeking patterns of meaning (Braithwaite et al., 2008). The foundation of interpretive research is that knowledge is acquired through social constructions such as language and shared meanings (Klein & Myers, 1999). Using this foundation, the methodology does not offer predefined dependent or independent variables; instead it aims to produce an understanding of the communicative directives of parenting and the extent of grandparent influence. In the present study, interviews with parents of young children provide multiple perspectives on the felt tensions over child rearing; and these discussions provided rich insight about intergenerational conflict.

Study Design and Participants

The use of qualitative research, from an interpretivistic framework, is to provide a rich description of a communicative phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1990); and it is particularly suited for this study. The purpose of this research is to take a communicative approach to understanding intergenerational communication about child rearing practices. By using this method, the research elicited broad themes and patterns (Patton & Patton, 2002). Through 13 semi-structured interviews with parents of children under the age of 12, the format allowed parents to freely share feelings and examples of intergenerational tension about child rearing

while also insuring that uniformity of topics were address across participants. Using qualitative methodology was best suited to understand the full range of the parental experiences as it relates to child rearing issues that are potential areas of conflict with grandparents.

In order to participate in this study, five criteria must have been met. First, the participant was at least 18 years old per IRB regulations. Secondly, the participant was a parent. Thirdly, the child or children needed to be under the age of 12. Fourthly, the parent(s) had to be in contact with at least one grandparent and the fifth criteria was that contact between the grandparent and grandchild was also necessary. Participation was sought through snowball referrals from the early interviewees.

There were a total of 13 participants (male = 4, female = 9). Participants ranged in age from 25-37 (mean = 33). And 71% of the participants were Caucasian, 15% were Puerto Rican, while Asian American and African American parents each represented 7% respectively. All of the interviewees lived in the surrounding areas of Chicago (x=13). Of the 13 parents, 10 were married to the children's other parent, two parents represented stepfamilies, and one was a single mother. All of the parents worked either full or part-time. The snowball method was used to generate other potential participants who fit the criteria. Before the interviews began, all participants were given a written statement of the purpose and obtained informed consent, per IRB standards. This project was approved by the Institutional Review Board at DePaul University in Chicago, Illinois.

Interview Procedure
All interviews were conducted by the primary researcher. The interviews took place either in person, or by telephone. The amount of time per interview varied between 30 minutes to one hour and ten minutes (average = 42 minutes). A semi-structured format was used for the

interviews and included open ended questions. The questions asked participants to describe how they parent, whether or not disagreements from grandparents stemmed from these practices, and how feelings were communicated between grandparents and parents when tension occurred. Responses to the following questions were the primary focus of analysis: "Tell me about how your raise your children," "Describe the kinds of disagreements that you have, if any, with your parents about the decisions you make as a parent?" If so, "How often do these disagreements occur, and are there any precipitating factors?" All participants completed a brief questionnaire to gather demographic information, such as their age, sex, occupation, age, and sexes of the children. At the close of the interview, all participants were asked for any additional questions or comments on the subject. With the permission of the participant, these interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed verbatim.

Data Analysis

The goal of data analysis is to describe recurring patterns and meanings of the participants' experience (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Therefore the transcribed data were read through holistically to gain a sense of the parents' perspective. Next, a qualitative content analysis was performed using the constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This interpretive process generated the ability to create categories in order to group common themes. Because the many variables of intergenerational conflict interact in very complex ways, each variable acted as a unit and together these variables created a whole collection of possible precipitating factors that caused tensions or conflict (Smith & Osborn, 2003). As each question stimulated more responses and every interview generated discussions, different types of intergenerational conflict and communication management of the conflict formed from the data.

After repeatedly looking at each participant's responses, categories were formed and certain responses grouped together. Relational dialectics was used as a theoretical lens to organize the findings and categories that emerged from these data. By using relational dialectics, I was able to identify themes and describe recurring examples of how parents and grandparents manage intergenerational conflict. A semantic relationship defines dialectical contradiction and through constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), dialectical contradictions were identified. Semantic relationships exist "when X is an attribute or characteristic of Y" (Spradley, 1979). Therefore, the semantic relationship in this data is the communicative experience of parents with the grandparents about child rearing issues. By searching for commonalities among these relationships, experiences were grouped into general themes to make the analysis lucid.

Following the dialectical contradictions of Baxter & Simon (1993), data were organized into three main categories: (1) autonomy and connection, (2) stability and change and (3) involvement and indifference. As the process of analyzing these data continued a general dialectical perspective of old and new emerged from stability and change as the best fit for the results. While old and new proved to be the main dialectical tension of these results, the other two categories of autonomy and connection and involvement and indifference became subcategories. In addition, I found that the experiences within these subcategories revolved around specific topics. Supracategories of diet, discipline, explicit parenting directives, and unwanted feedback were created to organize the data.

Many of the parents' stories of conflict discussed new parenting styles versus past methods. Framing the results as old and new, allowed the subcategories to better frame the tensions and highlighted stories from parents that pieced together a telling experience of intergenerational conflict over child rearing.

Results

This thesis research aimed to take a communicative approach to understanding intergenerational conflict regarding child rearing practices using the theoretical lens of relational dialectics to capture the opposing forces that exist between grandparents and parents about child rearing. Relational dialectic theory is centered on the idea that contradictions influence the role in relationship development and maintenance (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). The open formatted interview questions attempted to find these communication tensions and how parents and grandparents managed differing beliefs and ideas about parenting.

The results of this research demonstrated one predominant and recurring theme, the contradiction tension between old and new styles of parenting. Many parents admitted they practiced new parenting methods while still valuing the important family practices that their parents used in the past. Because this permeated all the interview data, the results are framed with the dialectical perspective of old and new to understand the conflict many parents experienced. Two other oppositions emerged; openness-closedness and involvement-indifference. For the openness and closedness data, the results are organized into two subcategories; desired parenting directives for those participants who actively searched for advice from grandparents, and unwanted feedback. Within the results of involvement-indifference, the data fit into three subcategories; diet, discipline, and explicit parenting directives. The two main subcategories of openness-closedness and involvement-indifference represented possible causes of tension yet still illustrated the dialectic contradiction of old parenting practices vis-à-vis new ways of parenting. The tensions parents communicatively managed with grandparents are revealed in these results.

The old-new dialectic permeated the data set as parents discussed current parenting issues that they faced and the difference between the grandparents' situation and their own. To explain, a mother of three, age 37 highlights the main dialectical tension of old and new when she shared:

There are significant differences between my parent's financial situation and my own…my parents were very good at teaching me the value of a dollar, because they were literally very few and far between. I am not as cautious about spending partly because I have the urge to provide them [my kids] with things I never had as a child. (1, 206-214)[2]

She further shares that her mother was a single parent for many years working several jobs and outside school activities were difficult to participate in both financially and logistically. When asked how this participant's parenting differed from her own upbringing, her response demonstrates a difference in old and new.   Her parents believed in teaching children the value of a dollar due to their financial standing, whereas she willing spent money to spoil her children.

Throughout the interviews, it became clear that the like the above parent, a central theme of old versus new parenting played out in all relationships. The parenting styles enacted with the children were an important factor in whether or not parents felt tension. Most parents admitted being influenced by old parenting practices, yet also incorporated their own new ideas. Therefore all of the results display a central dialectic focus of old and new. In the analysis, old and new permeates all discussion and illustrated the other dialectical tensions. The first dialectical contradiction focused on how both revealing and concealing information about the children impacted the relationship between the parent and grandparent.

---

[2] The coding system implemented is labeled as participant number followed by the lines of transcript where quote can be found (e.g. 1, 1-10 is Participant One, transcript lines 1 through 10.)

Openness and Closedness

The openness and closedness of communication about parenting between a parent and grandparent influenced the amount of felt tension in the relationship. Some parents demonstrated confidence in their own ability to parent, whereas others looked to the grandparents for advice or reassurance. When parents are navigating their way through the complexities of parenthood in the first couple years, they absorb all the directives and comments others make, especially the grandparents, because they want to be the best parent possible. How reliant the parent was on the grandparent for parenting advice and how open the parent was in communication about parenting practices, related to the level of felt tension or conflict. Tension occurred less for parents who rarely sought advice and expressed closedness in communication with the grandparents. Parents who constantly kept the grandparents updated on the children's lives, which most parents did in this study, experienced more felt tension from the grandparents than those parents who communicated less with the grandparents.

Desired parenting directives. Some parents preferred and welcomed the directives that grandparents voluntarily gave about child rearing, while others actively sought parental advice to ensure they were acting as the best parent possible. One 36 year old father who relied on grandparents for parenting directives felt confidence in raising his two children because he followed the parenting he experienced as a child. This father believed that being open with his parents made it easier to ask for advice. He shared:

> Everything I know about parenting I learned from my parents, and today I still actively
>
> seek their advice. They were my number one inspiration and the only people I ever
>
> trusted growing up. I learned the difference between right and wrong, proper manners,
>
> respect, discipline, educational development, cultural experiences, exercise, and letting

kids learn from mistakes. I am trying to raise my own children to be responsible adults in the same way I came to be here, and knowing I have my parents to help is a huge relief. (3, 410-416)

This participant utilized an open communication style with the grandparents. The father shared in the interview there was occasionally tension about how he parented in the presence of one set of grandparents. The tension was never so overt to make him doubt his decision to openly communicate with the grandparents. He explained that being open with his parents made it easier to ask for advice because they were up-to-date on what was going on with his children. In this interview, it was clear that the participant admired the old parenting styles that his own parents used and he implemented them into how he parented, and also by being open with them about how he parented his child. The father followed these old styles, and thus expressed that there were not too many tensions with the grandparents. The dialectic of old and new is even more pronounced in the next participant who felt sharing open communication was more beneficial than having a closed communication relationship.

A mother of two, 32, who had communicated her new disciplining methods of time-outs to her mother, admitted that "the first time my mother told me about disciplining my child it made me uncomfortable. I have to say her methods worked, so I do feel influence [on how to parent] because I see that it worked" (7, 800-802). This mother communicated to the grandparent about a new parenting style and received unwanted parenting directives and feedback about her new technique. The end result was positive for this mother and therefore she felt the openness of their relationship about the grandchildren proved to be useful. This participant was able to work through the discomfort of the tension and parent the best way for her child. In this situation, the old parenting style of disciplining the grandmother utilized

created an unsettling feeling with the mother's new use of alternative techniques such as time outs. The mother witnessed the results of old parenting styles and decided to alter her own methods.

Most parents agreed that when they employed an open communication with the grandparents, they felt some influence on how to raise the children. As one 37 year old mother explained, "I feel influence and sometimes get directions on how to parent, but not overwhelmingly, and in all honestly, I sometimes search for it" (1, 189-190). For this mother, the open communication allowed her to turn to the grandparent for advice when needed. Not all parents found openness as tension free. The openness between parents and grandparents can sometimes cause disagreement as demonstrated in the next section.

Unwanted feedback. While some parents actively seek advice from grandparents, there are other parents who prefer to not hear the opinions of the grandparents. This tension is highlighted by a father of two, age 36. A common source of disagreement for this father and his parents were "the expectations I have for my oldest daughter who is three" (3, 448). This father shared how he expected his daughter to practice writing her name and the alphabet everyday, whereas the grandmother felt this expectation was too demanding on a three year old. The grandmother felt the child should have more time to play. Another mother of two, age 34 experienced similar directives from the grandmother about how hard she was on her oldest child. After disciplining the daughter, the mother argued "she is only four years old, she doesn't know any better" (2, 359). In both scenarios the parents openly shared the details of how they were parenting and both felt setting expectations while the children were young was their responsibility as a parent. The grandparents were constantly in communication with the parents and what was happening in the children's lives, and subsequently the grandparents voluntarily

offered their opinion. The grandparents in these two examples communicated to the parents that kids will be kids and can do no wrong and openly disagreed with the parents about setting expectations for young children. This tension stemmed from both open communication because the grandparents knew the situation so well, and the idea that their old parenting style worked because they did not hold high expectations for their young children. Placing more responsibility on the children seemed to be a newer style of parenting whereas the grandparent's old way of parenting was less demanding on the child.

Open communication about child rearing with grandparents can cause disagreement in any situation. This is illustrated by the mother of two, age 35 who commentated on tensions over utilizing daycare services. In regard to how often the mother felt tensions about whether or not to put the children in daycare, the mother shared:

> This disagreement started when my first child was born and continuously came up even more when we had our second. Now that my oldest is in school full time and my daughter is in preschool, the occurrence of this argument has faded. (5, 619-621)

Being freely open with the grandparents was related to the felt tension, but the conflict largely depended on what details the parents shared, how often, and the specific situation that was in question. When the conflict was present, the argument arose because of the old and new parenting techniques of child care. The main issue revolved around how women would stay home and raise the children, an old parenting practice, whereas now women are more likely to return to work and utilize day care services. With this participant, the tension over using childcare became less of an issue because the children eventually attended school full time.

A 40 year old mother of two from the pilot study provided another situation with open communication and a disagreement about a parenting decision. The mother stated:

Today's parents have way too much information and thus hover way more than my

parents did. My coworkers and friends with kids are involved in Facebook and MySpace

websites mainly to keep up with their own children. I try to help keep my parents in the

loop, especially about new technology, but my parents have lectured me numerous times

about the negative aspects of these websites and they nonverbally express annoyance that

my husband and I are part of social networking sites. As a parent I feel I can never be too

safe. (15, 120-126)

This participant felt her decision to use social networking sites to keep ahead of her children and

to provide safety was more important than not joining to please the grandparents. The parents

openly communicated about one practice they used as a safety measure for their children's

future. The open communication caused a disagreement with the grandparents because they

disliked that the parents were utilizing social networking sites. Because sites like youtube.com

and facebook were created in the last few years and grandparents are unlikely to spend as much

time on these sites, it is understandable that tension might arise when using these sites. This

technological example also illustrates an old and new dialectic because internet safety is a new

parenting worry that these grandparents did not have to manage when they raised young

children.

Old parenting styles were not always the answer for the participants in this study. There

were other parents who shared an open communication with the grandparents, but felt more

comfortable with their own style of parenting, especially because of the intergenerational

differences that parents face today. A couple participants proved that openness did not always

cause tension as shown with this 34 year old mother who explained:

People learn how to parent just like anything else, through experience. You can listen to

everything your parents tell you and still not be the parent you want. There is no telling

how your child will turn out…the world presents too many extraneous variables that

cannot predict or control how parenting impacts your kids. (5, 590-592).

While this parent had an open communication with the grandparents and tried to listen to the

advice of the grandparents, she realized that even with direction from her parents, she made

decisions without the grandparent's advice on specific situations. This participant highlighted

that whether or not there was open or closed communication, parents try to raise their children to

the best of their ability. Whether they use old fashioned techniques learned from their parents, or

new parenting styles they have developed, parents make conscious decisions with their parenting

choices.

A 35 year old mother echoed this belief when she stated, "Life really doesn't have an

easy button for parenting. My parents raised me to be responsible, make my own decisions, and

they respect the way I parent the same way I respect their beliefs" (6, 698-701). These two

mothers had open communication and actively shared stories about their children but did not

seek advice from the grandparents. Both participants shared that there was little tension about

their parenting decisions whether they used old or new techniques and that the grandparents

respected their decisions. In these interviews, the open communication did not result in more felt

tension because the grandparents were respectful of the decisions of the parent.

While the majority of parents seemed annoyed and stressed by the constant tensions and

judgment, two of the participants did not experience any tension with the grandparents. One

mother of two, age 32 said "the grandparents usually stay out of our way and they seem to

respect how we parent" (13, 1319-1320). One of the 35 year old fathers, also did not feel tension

32

with grandparents because the "parents respect how we parent and do not say anything about the decisions we make" (4, 442-443). Interestingly, both participants who did not feel tension related the grandparents' non-disclosure to respecting their choices as parents. Directly communicating one's beliefs about the parenting styles is complex because parents often do not want to challenge the grandparents' beliefs or make them feel inadequate as parents.

Another 34 year old mother of two limited her amount of communication about the children with the grandparents and this proved to reduce tensions. When asked about how her parents communicate directives about parenting, she replied "they don't, they respect my choices" (14, 15-16). The participant's parents were only aware of the children's daily activities and updates when they were visiting or around for the holidays. This limited communication about her children's lives made it easy for her to not feel tension when the grandparents were present because they did not give parenting directives. Instead, they simply enjoyed the visit they had with the parents and grandchildren.

Tension rarely occurred for a 36 year old father of two who also practiced closed communication with the grandparents. When asked on the subject of feeling tension with the grandparents about child rearing, this father shared "My parents stay out of my decisions and do not interfere when I am parenting. I parent similar to my parent's style so they really don't say much about it" (3, 422, 429). Later in the interview the father disclosed that the grandparents checked in occasionally with the family, but did not know every little detail that occurred with the children. When asked whether or not the lack of tension over child rearing was because the grandparents did not constantly have updates about the kids, or if it was because he parented in the style his parents did, the father suggested that both contributed to his ideal relationship, but it was probably more due to the limited communication. This participant highlighted that closed

33

communication can reduce the amount of felt tension between the parent and grandparent and that using old parenting techniques that the grandparents used can also reduce conflict over child rearing.

Ultimately, most parents demonstrated openness in their communication about child rearing with the grandparents. While some followed the directives communicated to them, other parents like the 35 year old father of three, tested his own practices as a parent and only communicated stories about the children with his parents around holidays and at family gatherings. Another 31 year old mother repeated this belief when she said, "I think that both my husband and myself try to take the best of our mutual experiences and apply them to raising our children and are largely successful" (11, 1110-1112). Having an understanding of one another's beliefs about parenting relied on the amount of openness or closedness one shared with the grandparent(s). The interdependence of grandparents also affected the level of self-disclosure one shared, or degree of openness. The dialectical contradictions of old and new between parents and grandparents stemmed largely from the differences in parenting styles. As many parents suggested, grandparents are usually set in their old parenting style beliefs and the new style of parenting is not one that the older generation utilized. As the 30 year old mother of 2 from the pilot study suggested, "Parents will have different ideas and thoughts on how to handle certain situation with children" (16,105-106). Trying to keep this idea in perspective when the parents openly communicated with the grandparent was often a challenge.

The parents who frequently shared stories and communicated their parental experiences with the grandparents were more likely to experience tension, whereas those grandparents who lacked constant knowledge of their grandchildren's lives were less likely to suggest alternative parenting advice. The amount of disclosure a parent shared with the grandparent rested on the

type of relationship he or she built. Families who had open communication found it helpful when searching for answers, but they knew it also allowed the possibility of unwanted feedback; thus creating the felt tension between openness-closedness.

To summarize the results of openness and closedness dialectical contradiction, the parents who openly shared their parenting practices, whether old or new, with the grandparents, more likely to experienced tension. When the grandparents actively witnessed child-rearing practices and shared a connectedness with the parents, they more likely shared their beliefs and opinions about parenting. On the other hand, parents who were more autonomous with their decisions were less likely to experience felt tension or conflict with the grandparents. Similarly tied to this contradiction of openness and closedness is the second contradiction of involvement and indifference. Listening to the stories of these parents, it became clear that grandparents who had more open communication were also more likely to be actively involved in the children's lives. On the other hand, closed communication led parents to feel an indifference to the grandparents.

Involvement and Indifference

In this analysis, the dialectical contradiction of involvement-indifference impacted the relationship between parent and grandparents. There were two common areas where this contradiction of involvement and indifference played out: diet and discipline. The next section of the thesis illustrates the tension experienced over how parents monitored the children's diet.

Diet. When asked whether or not the participants experienced any felt tension with the grandparents, the issue of the children's diet arose with a number of participants. Examples of these differences are highlighted in different stories surrounding the diet of the children. One 37 year old mother of three admitted that her and her husband were not extremely strict about their childrens' diet, but still believed they ate healthier than she did as a child (1, 274-275). The grandmother communicated to her daughter on multiple occasions that the children needed more vegetables, fruits, and healthier food accessible to them. This grandmother was the primary baby-sitter for the children so she did spend more time with her grandchildren than most grandparents, as she was actively involved in their daily lives. A 32 year old mother of two echoed this story when during a disagreement she shared, "My mother proceeded to tell me that I do not feed my kids healthy enough" (7, 827). This mother later shares her take on the children's diet:

> My mom cooked dinner almost every night, they were good dinners, but they weren't necessarily lean cuts of meat and normally had gravy. That was just the way people ate then, it wasn't all fat-free or focused on whole grains vs. white rice the way it is now. (5, 837-840)

This participant's experience highlighted that old parenting styles of cooking dinner every night were not necessarily better than how she chose to feed her children. The grandmother was

involved in the children's lives enough to know what kinds of food they were eating throughout the week and because of her involvement, and pointed out to the mother that she should alter her grocery list to ensure the children ate healthier. The old parenting style of home cook meals was not present in this household and the grandmother did not approve the new style of cooking and as a result the diet of the children. This old way of thinking about cooking caused conflict between the mother and grandmother of the children because the grandmother was being hypocritical of the how the children were fed.

A male father of three, age 35 also felt "he had to defend how he fed his children every time he talked to his parents" (9, 1022). Whether parents agreed or not with the diet of the grandchildren, in the two instances mentioned above, the grandparents were clearly involved in the children's lives and communicated their thoughts, and created another area of tension in the relationship.

Not all involved grandparents were promoting a healthy lifestyle. As one 35 year-old mother shared, "my husband and I have given up on the idea that our kids will eat healthy when they are alone with their grandparents…I understand grandparents can spoil the kids, but I also think it's important for them to teach them about limits" (5, 604, 608-610). With the United States obesity rates and rising number of people considered overweight (Hedley, Ogden, Johnson, Carroll, Curtin & Flegal, 2004), it is not surprising that parents monitor their children's diet more closely. People are more conscience of their diet in today's era, and especially with teaching children good eating habits.

Participants indicated that the diet of the children was not the only source of tension when the grandparents were actively involved. In the following results, another parenting topic

of old versus new is analyzed through the involvement and indifference of the grandparents. The new parenting techniques of disciplining children caused tension with multiple participants.

Discipline. A mother of three, age 37 was quick to point out that discipline is different in this generation. "I spent many days grounded and I was spanked when misbehaving or disrespectful. We use time-outs…we also take away privileges, for example their computer, or limit their TV" (1, 177-179). Because the parents of this participant were involved in the loves of the children and there were drastic differences in disciplining techniques, she experienced conflict in the presence of the grandparents. The old parenting style of disciplining often restored to spanking and grounding. New parenting styles rely first on alternatives such as time outs or taking away toys. The differences in old and new parenting styles specifically related to disciplining became even clearer with the next participants' experience.

A mother of two, age 35, commented, "I don't think my parents even know what time-out is. When I grew up we did things because we were told to and didn't question. Discipline was more my dad's area, 'wait until your father gets home.' I also don't remember either of my parents counting to 1, 2, or 3" (6, 694-697). Another mother of two, age 32, insisted "Getting a good whooping was no big thing, and in my circle of friends it is rare to hear of such disciplining techniques" (7, 789-780). These participants all had grandparents who were actively involved in the children's lives whether as a baby sitter, attending after school activities and extracurricular sports, or simply living close enough where the grandparents frequently visited the children. From the disagreements, it became clear that these grandparents disciplined differently than the parents' new styles. Parents who utilized different techniques in the presence of the grandparents often encountered communicative direction or experienced an uneasy feeling.

38

For one participant, in particular, having a live-in grandparent generated a different experience because the grandparent was witness to every detail of the child's life. As the 25 year old mother of one pointed out, "[My mother] thinks because she was able to raise all of us on her own that she has the answer to everything" (12, 1239-1240). Furthermore, she shares "it is stressful to have a mother over you telling you how you should be doing it" (1247-1248). While this participant's circumstance differed in that the grandmother lived with her, the same feelings arose in participants who did not have live-in grandparents. A mother of three, age 35, stated:

> My parents disagree with how I punish my boys and often tell me I let them run wild...I feel quite tense when my parents are around, so now I try to keep my sons calmer and am stricter with them in the presence of my parents. [My mother] strongly disagrees that I use time-out as a form of punishment or that I take away toys. She firmly believes that the only way he would learn a real lesson is to get a good spanking. I tried to explain to her that what is right for one is not right for another. (15, 1500-1503, 1512-1514)

This participant's experience of the grandmother involved in the children's lives and the communicative directives that were expressed to her about the new parenting technique for disciplining, demonstrated again that the dialectical tension of involvement and old parenting techniques versus new styles can cause tension. Though how parents chose to discipline their children conflicted with the grandparents' ideas and often caused tension, this was only one of the situations where communicative directives were explicitly presented to the parents. The participants expressed different ways of how they handled the parenting directives. The following section addresses the issue of explicit parenting directives.

Explicit parenting directives and how they are received: A mother of two from the pilot study explained that "when they [grandparents] think there is a better solution to a problem, my mom will comment or make an insinuation…my father does not hold back and speaks his mind immediately…and my mother in law also has no problem letting me know her thoughts" (15, 110-114). The grandparents of this participant seemed to be involved in the children's lives and freely spoke their minds and opinions when they disliked the new parenting styles that were being used. This mother felt comfortable enough defending her new parenting style and standing up to the communication directives.

While some parents have no problem letting the grandparents know they have crossed the line, others such as the 31 year old mother of one abstained from directly confronting the issue. In reference to the grandparents, she says,

> I know they try really hard to stay out of our lives and not to be pushy, nosy, or critical,
> but sometimes these actions cross over to apparent indifference…we have never
> confronted them about how we feel when they do this because we just have come to
> accept that is the way they are. (11, 1155-1158)

This participant did not feel confident in confronting the felt tension she experienced within her relationship with the grandparents because she felt that the grandparent's lack of involvement in the children's lives demonstrated indifference toward them.

Referring to the indifference felt from grandparents, another 35 mother of two shared "I am sure they have their opinions, but they keep to themselves. If I ask, they will offer suggestions" (6, 720-721). The issue of whether or not to confront the grandparents was difficult because the parents found they were not challenging the grandparent's old parenting style beliefs; rather they often defended their new parenting style decisions. When they defended their

parenting styles, this already created tension. The participants felt it was unnecessary to challenge the old way of parenting styles because it would simply add to the perceived conflict. Many of the participants agreed that the grandparents are usually set in their way of thinking and can be stubborn. This complexity of when to communicate feelings or withhold thoughts was a constant struggle with parents.

The felt tension parents experienced was more prevalent when the grandparents were involved and physically present. As a father of three, age 35 stated,

> I have the type of parents who don't hold back their thoughts…when they disagree with something I do as a parent they call me out on it in front of my kids, which I cannot stand. They express their feelings to me regardless of the situation and because I know they are always like this, I am more tense when they are visiting. (9, 1025-1028)

Again this participant had grandparents who were involved in the grandchildren's lives and explicitly communicated child-rearing directives to the parents, based on their old style of parenting. Whether grandparents verbally offered their advice or quietly sent nonverbal cues, the majority of parents felt more conscious of their parenting decisions, yet did not want to confront the grandparents in front of the children. For a 37 year old mother of three, this tension started when her mother gave input that was not solicited (1, 242-243), or as another 35 year old father of three suggested, "we think more about the decisions we make because we feel as if they are judging us" (4, 506-507). For these parents that used new parenting styles, or made decisions that were not similar to the old parenting ways, the grandparents voiced an opinion that created an uncomfortable feeling for these parents.

To summarize, the amount of open communication and involvement a parent shared with the grandparent related to the tension the parents experienced in the relationship. The tensions

and conflict felt between parents and grandparents existed in part because of excess openness or involvement and the differing views of old and new parenting styles. Even without verbal communication, parents still interpreted the body language of the grandparents as an expression of their beliefs. Disagreements can be frustrating, especially when the other withholds direct comments. As one of the participants in the pilot interview stated, "Both my mom and dad have different ways of expressing their thoughts to me, but I definitely know when they do not agree with something I am doing" (15, 106-107). The dialectical tension of old and new parenting styles was a recurring theme throughout each discussion. Overwhelming, the participants felt relieved to discuss intergenerational communication and conflict over child rearing.

This research demonstrated the communicative relationship between parents and grandparents in regard to conflict regarding child rearing practices. Using the theoretical lens of relational dialectics, the results captured the felt tensions in the child rearing experience of parents. How parents managed communicative tension is important in understanding why intergenerational conflict existed. Ultimately, the goal is to help parents realize that intergenerational conflict over current parenting practices is an issue that few people are prepared to deal with when having a child. These results highlighted that parents are not alone in their frustrations and managing the communicative relationships with grandparents is an integral part of parenting.

Discussion

In the present study, a dialectical perspective was used to answer the research question about how parents experience and communicatively manage intergenerational conflict over child rearing. As other research identified types of intergenerational conflict (Aldous, 1995; Chen & Kaplan, 2001; Drew, Richard, & Smith, 1998; Julian, McKenry, & McKelvey, 1994; Neugarten, 1964; Whitbeck, Hoyt & Huck, 1993), the management of these conflicts was articulated in discussions with the parents currently raising young children. While the main objective sought to understand how parents communicatively manage the tension between parents and grandparents, the results revealed current child rearing conflicts that parents experience with grandparents. The unique contribution of the present study has been to examine these communication tensions through a dialectical lens. The results reveal three main dialectics with intergenerational conflict over child rearing; openness and closedness, involvement and indifference and a dominating existence of old and new. The implications of these findings for scholars and parents are discussed in the following paragraphs.

While there were multiple tensions that existed between grandparents and parents, all of the data were framed from the main dialectic tension of old and new. The participants in this research deal with similar issues such as disciplining and diet that the grandparents also faced, yet the main difference is the new parenting styles that are employed, that are different from their parents' older style of parenting. New parents construct their own ideas of how to parent with the help of books, parenting classes, and multimedia such as the internet, yet they reflect on their up bringing and the old parenting styles. The old parenting styles, which often times the grandparents prefer, is often in opposition to a new or alternative parenting technique. If parents begin to use newer alternative methods of parenting, then the grandparents are likely to

43

communicate parenting directives to express an alternative opinion and thus create a communicative tension.

Parents who try to incorporate their own parenting practices while dealing with resistance from the grandparents illustrate the dialectic tension of old and new. The stories and perspectives of these parents are important for grandparents and future parents as the possible tension over child rearing is something few people are prepared for before the birth of a child. Part of this stems from the complexity of understanding how to manage the conflict, but also because each child and family circumstance is unique. Contradictions have multiple strands of meaning that are constituted differently depending on the particular kind of relating under study (Baxter, 2004). If and what conflict arises is completely relational to the grandparent and parent relationship, the child, and the issue.

Many of the parents found that balancing the old and new tension proved to be difficult in the presence of the grandparents. When the grandparents witnessed first hand a new parenting technique they were more likely to suggest alternative or old parenting styles. Given the stress of trying to have their children behave well in the presence of others, it is not surprising that the participants felt tension with the grandparents. Most of the parents in the study also lived in close proximity to the grandparents, therefore these tensions happened on a regularly basis. Managing the openness-closedness dialectic was an important predictor for parents in the level of felt tension.

The second dialectal tension of openness-closedness overlapped with old and new parenting styles. The more communication that was shared led to more discussion of grandparents reinterring the old parenting styles for issues such as disciplining, day care, and expectations for young children. Parents who shared less information and details about the

everyday lives of the children experienced less tension because the grandparents were more respectful of the new parenting styles. In the present study, the level of openness-closedness was a personal choice based on whether or not the parent actively sought advice. For those parents who implored a closedness relationship with the grandparents, little tension occurred because the grandparents withheld parenting directives.

In the analysis of the openness-closedness dialectic, it seems that parents who experience something for the first time, like a baby teething or a child's first flu, often turn to a person who already dealt with a similar situation, like his or her parent, and this helps relieve worry for the parent. While some parents feel that checking in with the grandparents for advice is a safety net, it is apparent that others are comfortable making their own parenting decisions despite what the grandparents think. From talking with these parents, mothers tend to openly look for advice more so when it is the first child. As the child ages and if more children come along, parents develop their own styles.

The third dialectical tension identified was involvement and indifference in which the experiences fell into three subcategories of diet, discipline, and explicit parenting directives. Old and new was closely related to the involvement indifferent tension because those grandparents who were more involved in the children's lives freely voiced their opinions about the new parenting styles used. A couple participants shared unique experiences in regard to diet because either the grandmother was the primary babysitter, or the grandparent lived in the same house. Even those grandparents who were not consistently with the grandchildren yet still were involved, felt comfortable sharing their ideas about how to discipline the children.

Grandparents who were actively involved by visiting on a weekly basis, attending the children's school activities and extracurricular games, explicitly provided parenting directives to

the parents. A few parents disagreed with the unwanted parenting directives they received, yet

chose to abstain from communicating their frustration. For these parents, they viewed the

grandparents as stubborn and set in their way of thinking about how child rearing should be

done. On the one hand, not verbally rejecting the old parenting style suggestions prevents more

tension, but at the same time gives grandparents the false impression that is okay to explicitly

share parenting directives. Participants withheld their own thoughts as a solution to prevent

further tension. This complexity of when to communicate feelings or withhold thoughts is a

constant struggle with parents that demonstrates dealing with ambivalence is an interactional task

that often confronts parents in their daily lives (Luscher, 2002).

Parents felt indifference from the grandparents who were less involved in the children's

lives. There were some grandparents who did not verbally communicate parenting directives to

the parents, and this made parents feel as if the grandparents were unconcerned with how they

parented. One participant felt that because he utilized the old parenting techniques that his

parents used, this contributed to an indifference approach to his children. Without verbal

communication, parents still interpret the body language of the grandparents as an expression of

their beliefs. For example, when a grandparent rolls their eyes or exhales loudly when the parent

places a child in time-out, the parent assumes the grandparent does not agree with the new

parenting technique used for disciplining. Knowing that another disagrees with you even though

they are withholding direct comments can still be frustrating.

Parents try to raise their children to the best of their ability. Whether they use old

fashioned techniques learned from their parents, or styles they have developed, parents reflect on

their parenting choices especially in the presence of the grandparents. While the level of tension

between parents and grandparents varied, these parents demonstrated the need for more

communication research between generations over child rearing. The intergenerational conflict over child-rearing is something these parents learned to work through to ensure maintaining amicable relationships. As Luscher (2002) suggested, people must live with ambivalence and they can cope with it in competent, productive ways. Whether coping by using these solutions came from the idea that family cannot be changed, or there was a mutual understanding between the grandparent and parent is still unknown.

One parent stated it best with a quote from Maya Angelou, "I did the best I knew how at the time, and when I knew better, I did better" (15, 1480-1482). Child-rearing is so complex in itself and mixed with the dyadic communicative tensions, defining characteristics of what is best and better can vary. While parents often reflect on their own upbringing, many explore their own techniques and attempt to find better strategies. The participants in this study responded to communicative tensions with the grandparents by actively addressing issues. The parents feel torn in the relationship with grandparents, but do not view this negatively (Luscher, 2002). Rather, they address the issues that arise and work to sustain amicable relationships.

While this research highlighted parents' perspective on conflict between grandparents over child rearing, there are several limitations to this study. First, only one researcher conducted the interviews and analyzed the data. Having minimally one other researcher could provide a broader perspective on the data and help seek more participants. Secondly, only one perspective of the intergenerational conflict is studied in this research. Broadening the research to include grandparent perspectives, specifically within the same family, would produce a more robust study. Through triangulation of the data, a study that includes both sides of the conflict would provide a more multifaceted description of how the conflict is managed.

Third, the study sample is relatively homogenous. The participants were mostly Caucasian (71%), more mothers than fathers were interviewed, the majority were two parent households, most participants were geographically proximal, and all participants worked either part time or full time.   Interviewing a more diverse population would provide more perspective across cultures and family types.

Additional communication research that accounts for varying demographic representation would provide a more holistic perspective of this interesting phenomenon. Many of the discussions about conflict hinted at a decrease in conflict as the children got older. Therefore, a longitudinal study may provide information on the amount of time the conflict exists or if it continues throughout the grandchildren's life.

Despite these limitations, the communicative approach this work takes is imperative to understanding the complex dynamic of such tensions. Instead of simply limiting the thesis to one issue as so many studies have in the past, this research is valuable because it focuses on the role of communication between generations as it relates to a variety of child-rearing topics. The discussions with parents evoked parenting aspects from disciplining and rewarding children to whether or not parents should put their social lives on hold to raise their children. The interviews raised questions regarding how parents manage conflict with grandparents around such issues as if and how much television, internet, video games were used, and how their decisions about sleeping patterns, diet, daycare versus staying home, religious practices, and public or private schooling created intergenerational tension . These are basic concerns that every parent must deal with while bringing up a child this fast-paced, ever-changing society. The communication between grandparents and parents about such issues can add a tension to the family structure.

This study adds value to the existing literature intergenerational conflict over child rearing because it was a qualitative study in which parents shared their patterns of communication between the grandparents. The 13 parents who were interviewed represent real communicative tensions or issues they must face with the grandparents. The information that was provided in their responses to the interview questions gives insight into managing the communication relationship with grandparents. The data from this study provide more context for understanding the extensive literature that exists on child rearing issues. In addition, none of the previous studies examined intergenerational communicative tensions with a dialectical lens.

Many parents are unaware of the conflict that can arise between grandparents because it is a complex topic that arises once children are born and decisions must be made about the child. One explanation for why grandparents are so involved and provide communicative directives to parents may be because some grandparents feel the success of their grandchildren validates their own success as a parent. This study illustrates how parents and grandparents communicatively manage tensions or conflict over child rearing issues. From a dialectal perspective, it is important to realize that understanding these tensions can help parents and grandparents better communicate and maintain healthy relationships.

References

Albrecht, R. (1954, August). The parental responsibilities of grandparents. *Marriage and Family Living, 16(3),* 201-204.

Aldous, J. (1995, January). New views of grandparents in intergenerational context. *Journal of Family Issues, 16(1),* 104-122.

Attar-Schwartz, S., Tan, J. P., Buchanan, A., Flouri, E., & Griggs, J. (2009). Grandparenting and adolescent adjustment in two-parent biological, lone-parent, and stepfamilies. *Journal of Family Psychology, 23*, 67−75.

Baxter, L. A. (1988). A dialectical perspective of communication strategies in relationship development. In S. Duck. (Ed.), *Handbook of personal relationships* (pp. 257-273). New York: Wiley.

Baxter, L.A. (2004). A tale of two voices: Relational dialectics theory. *The Journal of Family Communication, 4(3&4),* 181-192.

Baxter, L.A., & Babbie, E.R. (2004). *The basics of communication research.* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Baxter, L. A. & Montgomery, B. M. (1996). *Relating: Dialogues and dialectics.* New York: Guilford Press.

Baxter, L.A. & Simon, E. (1993). Relationship maintenance strategies and dialectical contradictions in personal relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *10*, 225-242.

Bowen, M. (1978). *Family therapy in clinical practice*. New York: Jason Aronson.

Braithwaite, D.O., Baxter, L.A., & Harper, A. (1998). The role of rituals in the management of dialectical tension of "old" and "new" in blended families. *Communication Studies, 48*, 101-120.

Braithwaite, D.O., Toller, P.W., Daas, K.L., Durham, W.T., & Jones, A.C. (2008). Centered but not caught in the middle: Stepchildren's perceptions of dialectical contradictions in the communication of co-parents. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, *36(1)*, 33-55.

Campbell, J, & Gilmore, L. (2007, December). Intergenerational continuities and discontinuities in parenting styles. *Australian Journal of Psychology, 59(3),* 140-150.

Chen, Z.Y., & Kaplan, H. (2001, February). Intergenerational transmission of constructive parenting. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 63,* 17-31.

Copen, C., & Silverstein, M. (2007, Autumn). Transmission of religious beliefs across generations: Do grandparents matter? *Journal of Comparative Family Studies, 38(4),* 497-510.

Dail, P., & Way, W. (1985, October). What do parents observe about parenting from prime time television. *Family Relations, 34(4),* 491-499.

Denham, T., & Smith, C. (1989, July). The influence of grandparents on grandchildren: A review of the literature and resources. *Family Relations, 38(3),* 345-350.

Douglas, G., & Ferguson, N. (2003). The role of grandparents in divorced families. *International Journal of Law, Policy, and the Family, 17,* 41-67.

Drew, L., Richard, M., & Smith, P. (1998). Grandparenting and its relationship to parenting. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 3(3),* 465-480.

Easterlin, R. A. (1982). The changing circumstances of child-rearing. *Journal of Communication, 32(3),* 86-98.

Fingerman, K. L. (2004, November). The role of offspring and in-laws in grandparents' ties to their grandchildren. *Journal of Family Issues, 25(8),* 1026-1049.

Floyd, K., & Morman, M. (2000, December). Affection received from fathers as a predictor of men's affection with their own sons: Tests of the modeling and compensation hypotheses. *Communication Monographs, 67(4),* 347-361.

Gattai, F.B., & Musatti, T. (1999). Grandmothers' involvement in grandchildren's care: Attitudes, feelings, and emotions. *Family Relations, 48(1),* 35-42.

Glaser, B.G., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory*: *Strategies for qualitative research.* New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

Griggs, J. (2010). They've always been there for me: Grandparental involvement and child well -being. *Children & Society, 24 (3),* 200.

Hanessian, L. (2004, May). What I learned about motherhood from my mom. *Redbook, 202(5),* 114-117.

Harper, S., & Levin, S. (2005). Family care, independent living and ethnicity. *Social Policy and Society, 4*, 157‒169.

Harrison, K., Richman, G., & Vittimberga, G. (2000, March). Parental stress in grandparents versus parents raising children with behavior problems. *Journal of Family Issues, 21(2),* 262-270.

Hedley A., Ogden C., Johnson C., Carroll M., Curtin L., & Flegal K.M. (2004). Prevalence of overweight and obesity among U.S. children, adolescents, and adults, 1999-2002. *Journal of American Medical Association, (291),* 2847-2850.

Julian, T., McKenry, P.C., & McKelvey, M.W. (1994, January). Cultural variations in

parenting: Perceptions of Caucasian, African American, Hispanic, and Asian

-American parents. *Family Relations, 43(1),* 30-37.

Kitamura, T. (2009). Intergenerational transmission of parenting style and personality: Direct

influence or mediation? *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 18(5),* 541.

Keller, H., Lamm, B., Abels, M., Yovsi, R., Borke, J., & Jensen, H., …Chaudhary, N. (2006,

March). Cultural models, socialization goals, and parenting ethnotheories: A

multicultural analysis. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 37(2),* 155-172.

Klein, H., & Myers, M. (1999). A set of principals for conducting and evaluating interpretive

field studies in information systems. *MIS Quarterly*, *23(1)*, 67-94.

Li, T.W. (2002, August). *A comparison of maternal parenting style attitudes of grandmothers*

and mothers of young children in Taiwan: Development of a new measure of parenting

style. Symposium conducted at the annual meeting of the American Educational

Research Association, New Orleans, LA.

Londhe, R. (2006, November). Decisions about child rearing practices: A study of Asian

Indian parents in the United States. *Dissertations Abstracts International. A,*

Humanities and Social Sciences, 67(5), 1932-2048.

Luescher, K. (2002) Intergenerational ambivalence: further steps in theory and research. *Journal*

of Marriage and Family, 64(3), 585-593.

Luescher, K., & Pillemer, K. (1998, May). Intergenerational ambivalence: A new

approach to the study of parent-child relations in later life. *Journal of Marriage and the*

Family, 60, 413-425.

Marwell, G., & Schmitt, D.R. (1969, November). Child rearing experience and attitudes toward

    the use of influence techniques. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 31(4),* 779-782.

Mason, J., May, V., & Clarke, L. (2007). Ambivalence and the paradoxes of grandparenting. *The*

    Sociological Review, 55(4), 687-706.

Montgomery, B.M. & Baxter, L.A. (1998). *Dialectical approaches to studying personal*

    relationships. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Mueller, M.M., & Elder, Jr., G.H. (2003, May). Family contingencies across the

    generations: Grandparent-grandchild relationships in holistic perspective. *Journal of*

    Marriage and the Family, 65(2), 404-417.

Mueller, M.M., Wilhelm, B., & Elder, Jr., G.H. (2002, May). Variations in grandparenting.

    Research on Aging, 24(3), 360-388.

Neugarten, B.L. & Weinstein, K. (1964, May). The changing American grandparent.

    Journal of Marriage and the Family, 26(2), 199-204.

Patton, M.Q. & Patton, M.Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods.* (3rd ed.).

    Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Ralston, J. (2005, March). 8 things grandparents wish you knew. *Parenting, 19(2), 150-154.*

Riggs, L., Holmbeck, G., Paikoff, R., & Bryant, F.B. (2004, August). Teen mothers

    parenting their own teen offspring: The moderating role of parenting support.

    Journal of Early Adolescence, 24(3), 200-230.

Simons, R., Beaman, J., Conger, R.D., & Chao, W. (1992, November). Gender differences in the

    intergenerational transmission of parenting beliefs. *Journal of Marriage and the Family,*

    54(4), 823-836.

Simons, R.L., Whitbeck, L.B., Conger, R.D., & Chyi-In, W. (1991). Intergenerational transmission of harsh parenting. *Developmental Psychology, 27(1),* 159-171.

Smith J.A., & Osborn, M. (2003). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Qualitative Psychology: A Practical Guide to Research Methods.* In Smith J.A. (Ed.), London: Sage.

Spradley, J. P. (1979). *The ethnographic interview*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Starrels, M., & Holm, K.E. (2000, May). Adolescents' plans for family formation: Is parental socialization important? *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 62,* 416-429.

Strauss, A.C. and Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications, Inc.

Szinovacz, M. E. (1998b). Grandparent research; Past, present, and future. In M.E. Szinovacz (Ed). *Handbook on grandparenthood* (pp. 1-20). Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Thiele, D., & Whelan, T. (2006). The nature and dimensions of the grandparent role. *Marriage & Family Review, 40(1),* 93-108.

Thomas, J.L. (1990). The grandparent role: A double bind. *International Journal of Aging and Human Development, 31(3),* 169-177.

Wasoff, F., & Dey, I. (2006, August). Mixed messages: Parental responsibilities, public opinion and the reforms of family law. *International Journal of Law, Policy, and the Family, 20(2),* 225-248.

Whitbeck, L.B., Hoyt, D.R., & Huck, S.M. (1993, November). Family relationship history, contemporary parent-grandparent relationship quality, and the grandparent-grandchild relationship. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 55,*1025-1035.

Appendix

Interview Guide for Parents: A Communicative Approach to Understanding Intergenerational Tensions over Child-Rearing

Age of Parent: _____
Sex of Parent: _____
Ethnicity: _____
Occupation: _____
# of children: _____
Ages of child/ren: _____
Sex of child/ren: _____

The interviews focused on the following questions:

1. Tell me about how your raise your children.
    -How do you think your parenting style was shaped by your parents?

2. Describe the kinds of disagreements that you have, if any, with your parents about the decisions you make as a parent?
    - How often do these disagreements occur, and are there any precipitating factors?

3. Do you feel tension rearing your children when your parents are physically present?

4. Do you alter child-rearing patterns when your parents are physically present? How?

5. How does the presence of these tensions affect your relationship with your parents? Or would you say things remain the same?