

# Dimensions of Grandparent–Adult Grandchild Relationships: From Family Ties to Intergenerational Friendships\*

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## RÉSUMÉ

Cet article porte sur le phénomène démographique croissant des relations entre les grands-parents et leurs petits-enfants d'âge adulte, selon les perspectives des deux générations. À la lumière d'entrevues qualitatives portant sur les cycles biologiques ( $n=37$ ), cette recherche étudie les significations subjectives de ces relations, ainsi que les expériences vécues par les grands-parents et les petits-enfants d'âge adulte. Malgré l'énorme diversité des relations entre les grands-parents et leurs petits-enfants d'âge adulte, y compris les différences entre les générations et au sein d'une même génération, les deux groupes visés par cette étude ont une perspective positive de l'autre et ils voient leurs liens comme étant importants d'un point de vue personnel et existentiel. Ils décrivent leurs relations comme des liens familiaux particuliers axés sur un amour inconditionnel, du soutien mutuel, du respect et un sens du devoir. Un certain nombre de personnes décrivent également cette relation comme une relation d'amitié, fondée sur une confiance réciproque, un échange de confidences et un choix personnel. Dans l'ensemble, cette recherche semble indiquer que les liens entre les grands-parents et leurs petits-enfants d'âge adulte deviennent généralement plus profonds et plus importants au fur et à mesure que les grands-parents et les petits-enfants vieillissent, qu'ils parcourent leur cheminement de vie et qu'ils expérimentent les événements de la vie.

## ABSTRACT

This paper examines the growing demographic phenomenon of grandparent–adult grandchild relationships from the perspectives of both generations. Drawing on qualitative life-history interviews ( $n=37$ ), this research explores the subjective meanings of the relationship, as well as the experiences of being grandparents and adult grandchildren. Despite tremendous diversity in grandparent–adult grandchild relationships, including differences among and between generations, both groups in this study view one another positively and conceptualize their ties as personally and existentially meaningful. They classify their relationships as a distinct family tie centred on unconditional love, mutual support, respect, and obligation. A number of individuals also discuss their grandparent–adult grandchild relationships as friendships, involving mutual trust, shared confidences, and personal choice. Overall, this research suggests that grandparent–grandchild relationships often grow more profound and meaningful as grandparents and grandchildren age, move through the life course, and experience life events.

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## Introduction

Increasing longevity in Western countries has provided significant opportunities for the formation of new family relationships, including those between grandparents and adult grandchildren (Kemp, 2003b). This current demographic trend means that growing numbers of grandparents and grandchildren will spend a longer amount of time in these family roles than at any other point in history (Hagestad, 1988; Uhlenberg, 1993; Uhlenberg & Kirby, 1998). Despite this trend, very little research has specifically examined the growing phenomenon of grandparent and adult grandchild relationships (Rosenthal, 2000).

What little scholarly work that does exist suggests that many adult grandchildren consider relationships with their grandparents to be “significant and meaningful” as well as “close and enduring” (Hodgson, 1992, p. 209) and further, that adult grandchildren are likely to provide “an important source of emotional meaning to grandparents when they approach the last decades of life” (Silverstein & Long, 1998, p. 922). Insofar as this small body of literature has generated an overall positive impression of grandparent–adult grandchild relationships, it has relied mostly on survey data and taken the perspective of only one family member (Hodgson, 1998). As a result, the experiential and contextual dimensions of grandparent–adult grandchild relationships have been under-explored.

The purpose of this paper is to examine grandparent–adult grandchild relationships from the subjective perspectives of both generations in an attempt to understand the meanings of the tie, including the implications of increasing longevity for intergenerational family life. Drawing on qualitative data from interviews with grandparents and adult grandchildren who participated in a study conducted in an urban, industrial city in southern Ontario, this paper explores the ways in which both generations experience, conceptualize, and give meanings to their relationships. To begin, this paper offers a brief examination of grandparent–grandchild relationships, including the social contexts within which they are occurring, as well as the existing research context.

## The Social Context

Already understood as relationships guided by few explicit expectations, norms, or legal obligations (Aldous, 1995; Kemp, 2004a), grandparent–adult grandchild ties are potentially complicated as they unfold within the context of contemporary society. These demographically new relationships are being negotiated amid social, economic, and demographic

transformations that are altering family structures and family life. Changing patterns of marriage, divorce, and remarriage, shifting gender roles, challenges related to balancing work and family, as well as heightened demands of mobility, particularly for younger generations, set the context for the negotiation of interpersonal ties (Beck-Gernsheim, 2002) and relationships between grandparents and grandchildren (Gee, 1991).

Theorists such as Beck (1999, 2001) and Giddens (1992, 1994) suggest that in Western societies, family and interpersonal relationships are becoming largely “optional” and increasingly based on choice, negotiation, and personal freedom. Personal ties, including those between grandparents and grandchildren, have the potential to be founded on emotional communication, intimacy, warmth, and companionship (Baranowski, 1982; Gratton & Haber, 1996), as opposed to tradition or obligation, as they were in previous times. According to Beck-Gernsheim (2002, p. 78), in the traditional family – which she argues is increasingly an image of the past – familial support for those in later life “often comes with a sense of duty, instilled through moral pressure, social expectations and the pangs of conscience.” How, if at all, these theorized social changes enter into the meanings associated with “adult grand relationships”<sup>1</sup> remains relatively unexplored.

## The Research Context

Much of the research into the relationships between grandparents and grandchildren involves grandparents with young grandchildren and rarely considers the grandchild’s perspective. This body of work has documented various grandparenting styles and types (e.g., Neugarten & Weinstein, 1964; Robertson, 1976) and grandparenting within the context of changing family structures such as divorce or remarriage in the middle generation (e.g., Gladstone, 1988, 1989, 1991). Cumulatively, this research attests to the heterogeneity of grandparent–grandchild ties (Bengtson, 1985).

In an early effort to capture the multidimensional nature of grandparenthood, Kivnick (1982) developed a typology encompassing five levels of meanings associated with the role:

- *Centrality* refers to how central the grandparent role is to the individual and has implications for selfhood and identity.
- *Valued elder* represents the passing on of traditions to younger generations.
- *Immortality through clan* refers to a sense of immortality derived from grandchildren.

- *Re-involvement with the past* captures the idea that grandchildren can represent an opportunity for grandparents to relive early parts of their lives.
- *Indulgence* refers to the spoiling many grandparents associate with their family role.

Ultimately, though very little attention has been paid to examining if and how these dimensions of meaning continue or change as the relationship becomes one between adults, there has been considerably less given to how grandchildren conceptualize their relationships with their grandparents.

Regarding the grandparent–adult grandchild relationship, early work by Cherlin & Furstenberg (1986) described grandparenthood as career-like, beginning with the birth of a grandchild and ending in an all but symbolic way when the grandchild reaches adulthood. While not dismissing the important dynamic and temporal imagery evoked by the notion of career (see Hughes, 1997), more recent and convincing research suggests that within the relationship many grandparents and adult grandchildren share vital, significant, and enduring bonds (e.g., Hodgson, 1992; Kivett, 1996; Roberto & Stroes, 1992). Cumulatively, existing work, although largely quantitative, demonstrates that many grandparents and adult grandchildren describe their relationships as close, express warmth for one another (Hodgson; Kennedy, 1990; Roberto & Stroes), and maintain regular – often frequent – contact, whether in person, by telephone, or through correspondence (Harwood, 2000; Harwood & Lin, 2000). Relationships have also been found to involve love, the provision of emotional comfort and instrumental assistance (Langer, 1990), cultural transmission (Wiscott & Kopera-Frye, 2000), and sharing of family history (Kennedy).<sup>2</sup>

Hill, Foote, Aldous, Carlson, & MacDonald (1970) found the passage of time important. In their study, as grandchildren grew from teenagers to adults, they tended to renew and strengthen their relationships with their grandparents. This finding is consistent with one of Hodgson's adult-grandchild survey respondents who explained her increasing closeness with her grandmother in adulthood by stating, "I think I got old enough to see her as a real person, and I found out we had a lot in common" (1992, p. 221). From the grandparents' perspective, recent longitudinal data demonstrated a steady decline in affection towards grandchildren over the first 14 years, at which point the trend reversed and a curvilinear relationship between time and affection emerged (Silverstein & Long, 1998). Roberto, Allen & Blieszner's (1999, p. 79) qualitative study on the family relationships of older women revealed that grandmothers believed that as their grandchildren

grew older, contact declined and their relationships became "secondary," yet the bonds remained personally meaningful.

As interpersonal relationships, the boundaries, content, and quality of grandparent–adult grandchildren bonds are negotiated over time. The younger generation appears to have more control over the relationship. In one of the few qualitative studies in the area, Harwood & Lin (2000, p. 42) found that "the relationship is not perceived to be particularly negotiable from many grandparents' perspectives. It is a meaningful and valuable relationship, but one that grandparents 'take as it comes,' with few attempts to direct or change it." Further, Harwood and Lin suggest that grandparents are more invested in their relationships with their grandchildren, finding support for the "intergenerational stake" hypothesis, which suggests that parents and their offspring have different stakes or investments in their relationships (Bengtson & Kuypers, 1971; Giarruso, Stallings, & Bengtson, 1995). Ultimately, generational position shapes the subjective experiences of these particular familial relationships.

The current research attempts to contribute toward an understanding of the grandparent–adult grandchild relationship from the perspectives of both generations. It builds on previous qualitative analysis, which examined the behavioural expectations associated with the roles of grandparents and adult grandchildren (Kemp, 2004a). Previous analysis found that grandparents are guided by norms of non-interference, which led to intergenerational asymmetry: grandchildren had more power in defining the circumstances of the relationship. Within the framework of non-interference, grandparents are also expected to provide support and mentorship to their adult grandchildren. The adult grandchild role involved respecting grandparents and affirming grandparents' contributions to the family through personal and professional achievements. The role also included the provision of support; however, the younger generations' busy lives provided them with "legitimate excuses" (see Finch, 1989; Finch & Mason, 1993) for not always helping or visiting. Departing from the investigation of roles, the present research delves into the subjective meanings associated with adult grand relationships and the implications of increasing longevity for this intergenerational family tie.

### The Grandparent–Adult Grandchild Study

The study from which the data are drawn is theoretically and methodologically informed by tenets of interpretive thought (Marshall 1996, 1999)

and the life course perspective (e.g., Giele & Elder Jr., 1998). Seeking to emphasize negotiation, process, and fluidity as central features of social life, as well as the interplay between structural conditions and individual agency, the interconnectedness of family members' lives and the passage of time as key factors organizing social life and social relationships, the study relies on in-depth, semi-structured qualitative life-history interviews with grandparents and adult grandchildren. This approach is used in order to achieve "intimate familiarity" (Lofland, 1976) with the subjective experiences associated with adult grand relationships and to reveal any assumptions or contradictions and tensions, particularly as they emerged over the history of each tie.

### The Sample

The convenience, purposive sample consisted of grandparents with at least one adult grandchild (defined as age 21 or over<sup>3</sup>), and adult grandchildren with one or more living grandparents. Participants self-selected and volunteered after learning of the study through advertisements posted on the university's website and in local public libraries; community contacts; and other participants.<sup>4</sup> In total, 15 grandmothers, three grandfathers, 10 granddaughters, and nine grandsons participated in the study ( $n = 37$ ). Four same-family dyads participated in the study.<sup>5</sup>

Selected sample characteristics appear in Table 1. The grandparents involved in the study ranged

**Table 1: Selected demographic characteristics of sample**

<b>Grandparents</b>	<b>Women (n = 15)</b>	<b>Men (n = 3)</b>	<b>Total (n = 18)</b>
<b>Age Group</b>			
65–74	3	–	3
75–84	7	–	7
85+	5	3	8
<b>Marital Status</b>			
Married	6	2	8
Widowed	7	1	8
Divorced	2	–	2
<b>Number of Adult Grandchildren</b>			
1–2	7	2	9
3+	8	1	9
<b>Grandchildren</b>	<b>Women (n = 10)</b>	<b>Men (n = 9)</b>	<b>Total (n = 19)</b>
<b>Age Group</b>			
21–24	4	3	7
25–29	3	2	5
30+	3	4	7
<b>Married</b>	7	6	13
<b>Parent</b>	2	2	4
<b>Employment</b>			
Full-time	7	7	14
Student	3	2	5
<b>Number of Living Grandparents</b>			
1	1	5	6
2	2	3	5
3+	7	1	8

in age from 67 to 91 years. On average, grandparents had approximately six grandchildren each, including almost three adult grandchildren. Their accounts yielded information on 57 grandparent–adult grandchild relationships.

Adult grandchildren ranged in age from 21 to 36, with nearly two-thirds above the age of 24. The majority of grandchildren were married, including four grandchildren with children. Most were employed full-time, and a few were enrolled full-time in university. The majority of grandchildren had more than one living grandparent at the time of the interview. Accounts from the younger generation offer information about 42 grandparent–adult grandchild relationships.

Overall, the sample was primarily Euro-Canadian and middle-class, although two granddaughters were of Afro-Caribbean descent and two grandmothers were in low-income situations. Four grandmothers, one granddaughter, and three grandsons were Jewish. In terms of geographic proximity, most participants had a least one grandparent or grandchild who lived in the same city or within a one-hour drive. Given the minimal diversity, the study's sample is not representative; findings offer an exploratory look at the grandparent–adult grandchild tie.

#### *Qualitative Life History Interviews*

The interviews ranged in length from one to four hours, were tape-recorded, and were subsequently transcribed verbatim. Qualitative interviews with grandparents explored memories of their own grandparents, their parents' involvement in their children's lives, as well as their reflections on becoming grandparents. Both generations were asked to recount the history of each grandparent–adult grandchild relationship from earliest recollections to perceptions of the present-day relationship. Interviews probed the nature of each relationship and similarities and differences within families. The interview guide appears in Appendix A.

### **Data Analysis**

As the sole interviewer, I became very familiar with the data and engaged in preliminary analysis throughout the data collection. I made detailed notes, recording patterns and themes following each interview, and reflected on consistencies and inconsistencies as they emerged from the data. Analysis proceeded inductively and was guided by principles of grounded theory (Glazer & Strauss, 1967, see also Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Following transcription, the interviews were read

multiple times and examined comparatively for similarities and differences within and between biographical accounts and generations. Thematic coding categories were developed as they emerged from the data. Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorizing (NUD\*IST) – a qualitative analytic computer program – was used in the development and identification of key themes and coding categories. The program assisted in the storage, management, and retrieval of passages. The data employed in this article represent one coding category, "Conceptualizations of Grandparent–Adult Grandchild Relationships," which sheds light on the ways in which grandparents and adult grandchildren theorize and give meanings to their relationships. The analysis presented below discusses how grandparents and adult grandchildren viewed their relationships in the present.

### **Experiencing Grandparent–Adult Grandchild Relationships**

Before discussing conceptualizations of grandparent–adult grandchild relationships, it is necessary to make three observations about the ways in which participants experienced and recounted their ties. First of all, there is great variation in how participants *experienced* their relationships. There are differences between and within families in perceived closeness, the nature and circumstances of interactions, and frequency of contact. Variations are largely related to the history of each relationship and the individual, dyadic, and familial contexts enveloping a particular tie. For example, a granddaughter who was raised by her paternal grandparents reported considerably more extensive connections to these grandparents when compared to her maternal grandparents and to another grandchild in the study whose relationship with his paternal grandparents had become strained after his parents' divorce during his childhood. Second, despite these considerable experiential differences, striking similarities emerged in the meanings and personal significance associated with grand relationships. Given the self-selected nature of the sample and the fact that most individuals drew on their positive "adult grand" experiences in order to elucidate the personal meaning and significance of the tie, a rather uniform (and perhaps overly positive) conceptualization of the relationship emerged. Finally, although grandparents and adult grandchildren did not necessarily experience their relationships in the same way, both generations offered very similar accounts of meaning and significance.<sup>6</sup> This pattern was observed throughout the sample, particularly in the four same-family dyads, and is reflected in the presentation of the data. Where generational

differences arise, each perspective is discussed separately and compared.

Analyses of the experiential accounts suggest that despite the notable variations, each participant – regardless of generation, age, or gender – conceived of his or her “grand” relationships as distinct kinship ties associated with unique meanings and characteristics. Further, a considerable number of grandparents and grandchildren added to the kin conceptualization by also defining their relationships as unique intergenerational friendships. The balance of the discussion examines grandparent–adult grandchild relationships as distinct kin ties and friendships, both of which are discussed in the context of continuity and change – longevity and the passage of time have meaningful implications for family ties.

#### *Grandparent–Adult Grandchild Relationships as Distinct Kin Ties*

Regardless of the perceived closeness associated with individual grandparent–adult grandchild relationships, all generations described their relationships with one another as family relations with specific properties that are different from other family ties, especially the parent–child relationship. Grandparents and adult grandchildren, alike, conceptualized their relationships as “second-tier parent–child relationships,” viewed one another as linkages through time and keys to self-identity, and understood their ties as products of familial processes and obligation.

#### *Second-Tier Parent–Child Relationships*

According to both generations, the grandparent–grandchild relationship is literally once removed from parent–child relationships in responsibility and accountability for and judgment of one another. At the same time, it is also viewed as an extension of all that can be positive about the parent–child tie: love, support, nurturing, and companionship. As second-tier parent–child relationships, both generations perceived grandparent–adult grandchild ties as mutual latent reserves of unconditional support. In all accounts, this is a feature of the grandparent–adult grandchild relationship that is taken for granted. Stemming from the supportive dimensions of the roles of grandparent and adult grandchild found in earlier analysis (Kemp, 2004a), all grandparents and adult grandchildren indicated that if they ever needed anything, they “just knew” that they could rely on the other generation to help out. Likewise, they defined themselves as sources of unconditional support whom the other generation

could approach when needed. For this group, the relationship acted as a shared “safety net.”

[My grandparents] can *also* know that they’ve got a support system too. So if they need it, like if somebody needed to go to the doctor or somebody needs to get groceries, they can call me.

– Granddaughter, 32

I don’t really have that close of a relationship, but it’s a strong bond. My grandparents are still there for me and I’m there for them. We might not have the closest relationship, but that’s it.

– Grandson, 21

It’s mutual support but I just think you’re there for them when they need you, and that’s my main contention about [adult grandchildren]: to love and support.

– Grandmother, 78

While not discounting the emotional support and personal significance that relationships with young grandchildren can bring to grandparents (e.g., Kivnick, 1982; Neugarten & Weinstein, 1964), as alluded to above, the depth of reciprocal support – whether enacted or not – within grandparent–adult grandchild relationships sets them apart from young “grand” relationships. Consistent with younger relationships, support is still likely to flow largely downward from the older to younger generation, but, as both generations age, relationships become meaningful as potential sources of support for both young and old.

The passage of time and the experience of life-course transitions are central to understanding the types of support exchanged within relationships. For example, many grandparents ( $n=13$ ) provided or were willing to provide assistance to their adult grandchildren with school tuition, home purchases or renovations, wedding plans, and expenses and child care. Meanwhile, in the face of grandparents’ declining health, a number of grandchildren ( $n=11$ ) had assisted their grandparents with transportation, medical appointments, banking, and household chores.

Given the small sample and its composition, it is difficult to speak definitively of variations along the lines of structured social relations. However, general patterns are observed in the types of support given and grandparents’ socioeconomic status, grandchildren’s gender, and the circumstances of the middle generation. Grandparents with greater material resources are more likely to provide financial support to their grandchildren, compared to those in lower socioeconomic positions. The latter are more apt to provide instrumental support in the

form of their labour (e.g., providing child care, cooking, or doing laundry). In terms of gender, relative to granddaughters, grandsons reported helping grandparents more with activities deemed to be masculine such as cutting the lawn, pruning trees, and moving furniture. Granddaughters are more apt to describe checking up on grandparents or helping with shopping or household chores. However, with the exception of instances where the middle generation is absent or in need of help ( $n=3$ ), or the grandchild had been raised by the grandparents ( $n=1$ ), the amount of support exchanged in second-tier relationships rarely rivalled amounts reportedly exchanged in the first tier.

Distinct from parent–child relationships, both generations agreed that grandparents are neither responsible for how their grandchildren “turned out,” nor in legitimate family positions for disciplining them. Consequently, grandparent–young grandchild relationships are described as based on a “love ‘em and leave ‘em” approach associated with fun and spoiling. This view of grandparent–grandchild relationships extended into and provided a foundation from which participants explicated their current relationships. The following representative account illustrates the residual effects of the past on the present in grandparent–grandchild relationships:

The role of the grandparent is to love the child like the parent, without any of the negative responsibility. They don't have to punish them. They can just have fun ... the grandparents are there to spoil .... Even now they still say, “Well, if you really want to get this, then I can give you the money to buy it.” So that's what grandparents do. They're unconditional love, without any of the problems.

– Grandson, 23

The relationship is generally identified as a site and source of unconditional love and support. As explicated by both generations, the bond is unique because of the relatively lower levels of conflict or tension brought about by criticism and judgment frequently associated with parent–child relationships.<sup>7</sup>

There is an unconditional love [for my grandmother]. There is an unconditional love that is there for my mother, but it's a different type of unconditional love. It's a love of ... it's a reciprocal, unconditional love that, I mean, my grandmother might get angry with me, but she forgives me a lot sooner, you know, or she'll make more sacrifices.

– Granddaughter, 23

I think that you get parent-like feedback without parent-like scrutiny or judgment. It's like, so you could say, you'll get the kind of advice you would get from a parent, but it will be less biased in terms of judging you. That I know is true.

– Grandson, 24

For a number of participants, the centrality of unconditional love, paired with relatively low levels of conflict influenced their perceptions of grandparent–adult grandchild relationships as “more pure,” “less complicated,” and “more loving” relative to parent–child relations. There are variations to this view. Grandparents and grandchildren who reported very close, personal relationships offered the most positive images of the relationship, describing it as “safe,” “comfortable,” and “familiar.” This is particularly evident in instances of divorce in the middle generation and/or where the history of the relationship including spending extended periods of time together. Yet the granddaughter who was raised by her grandparents and grandson whose grandmother lived with his family during his youth did not describe their grand ties as less complicated or more loving than parent–child relations.

*Linkages Through Time: Keys to Self-Identity and Self-Affirmation.*

For both generations, the extended generational overlap brought about by grandparents' longevity is experienced as personally meaningful, particularly among those searching for clues to self-identity and existential meaning. For most grandparents, adult grandchildren symbolize the future, simultaneously representing and affirming the culmination of their lifelong efforts and contributions to family life. They also identify adult grandchildren as guarantors of personal and family continuity. According to a 69-year-old grandmother, “They mean continuity. It means that I was not here for nothing. I've done good and it's something of me that will continue.” Therefore, in what they defined as their last stages of life, grandparents indicated that the experiences of knowing grandchildren as adults (including seeing them as spouses, parents, employees) becomes an important resource for coming to terms with and recognizing the purposes and products of their existence.

Adult grandchildren and great-grandchildren are a form of *eternal life* ... it certainly gives me a feeling of continuity ... I think it's through the sense of your own part of history.

– Grandfather, 88

Moreover, involvement in adult grandchildren's lives also keeps grandparents focused on their grandchildren's present and future, distracting them from thoughts of their own futures.

They keep you young with their coming and telling what they've been doing . . . . It gives you an ongoing view of something, instead of "Oh well, I'm getting near the end of my life and what is there to show for it?"

– Grandmother, 78

Overall, for grandparents, relationships with adult grandchildren shed light on the meaning and purpose of their lives, while providing self-affirmation and an ongoing view of life and the future by securing continuity of the family, even through times of personal and familial change.

For adult grandchildren, grandparents represent the past and act as their keys to personal history and self-identity. Regardless of the degrees of closeness with grandparents, the majority of grandchildren defined their grandparents as exclusive proprietors of very personal and specific information relating to their childhood, as well as their parents' and grandparents' past and their family's place in history.

I've experienced stuff with her that she can actually tell me about, like when I was younger sort of thing. She can tell me about things over the course of the years that I wouldn't think about that type of thing. But now, certain things mean more to me.

– Grandson, 34

I would say that there is something special about the grandparent–adult grandchild relationship. It is very important for knowing your roots and for family history and for knowing where you came from. I think that's one of the most important things, because that's what I have found. It's like a key.

– Grandson, 29

You get a sense of history. It's who you are. You really do. And then, as you learn more about their parents, where they came from, you can appreciate maybe why they are stubborn about some of the things they are, or where they get some of their ideas from, that sort of thing.

– Granddaughter, 32

Ultimately, through the development of grandparent–adult grandchild relationships, grandparents have the opportunity to impart information that adult grandchildren can use as clues in exploring, examining, and making sense of themselves, their own lives, and their familial roots. And as the quote illustrates, adult grandchildren also use this information in order to interpret the lives and behaviours of other family members.

For many adult grandchildren, first-hand knowledge of grandparents' hardships, struggles, and survival, particularly through the Depression and World War II, symbolized the moral constitution, character, and resolve contained in their familial roots. Therefore, adult grandchildren not only held their grandparents in high esteem, appreciated their experiences, and viewed them as important role models, but they also interpreted their grandparents' survival stories as representative of their own personal potential resolve, resourcefulness, and strength. In the following passage, a granddaughter illustrates this point while discussing how she feels about her grandparents:

Lots of love and respect. Those are the two strongest feelings. And a desire to be able to be that strong. That if I ever needed to be, to know, that if I come from that kind of background, I have that strength. That I would like to think that it is in me and that if I needed to be that strong, that I would be able to be.

– Granddaughter, 32

From the perspective of most adult grandchildren, grandparents' ties to the past also render them important sources of historical information, making events seem "more real." Speaking of his grandmother, a 34-year-old grandson offered, "She can tell me about what happened . . . I can listen to the historical events and stuff like that. And through her, I can live some of these things." Most grandchildren agreed that accessing their grandparents' experiences and links to the past occurred over time and upon reaching adulthood. For example,

[My grandparents] really taught me more about what they went through. They felt more comfortable telling me [as an adult], I guess, feeling that I would have a better appreciation for it. I found my relationship changed. It became more adult.

– Grandson, 30

In grandchildren's youth, they did not always listen or appreciate the stories, and grandparents are not always willing or able to talk about their experiences.

#### *Products of Family Processes and Obligation*

Grandparents and grandchildren identified a number of taken-for-granted assumptions surrounding intergenerational family life, which in part produce, motivate, and maintain their relationships. These assumptions pertain to perceived normative family roles, processes, and expectations of familial obligation. For instance, grandparents and grandchildren



took for granted that the older generation wanted to have relationships with their grandchildren. Among grandparents, the word *obligation* (as a motivation for relationships) did not arise. The belief that grandparents should “just want to” was an unstated, yet accepted, part of intergenerational family life and the generational position.

From the perspective of adult grandchildren, familial obligation is a pervasive theme. Most grandchildren felt some degree of obligation towards their grandparents, identifying obligation and guilt (arising from not fulfilling their perceived obligations) as motivational. Specifically, as adult grandchildren they felt they should be obliged to maintain contact with grandparents and check in with them from time to time, particularly if it is viewed as important to the older generation.

Grandchildren reportedly received little pressure from their grandparents, suggesting that feelings of obligation towards grandparents are “felt” and emerge from their own perceptions of family life.

This is going to sound horrible, but it's more like an obligation. You know, it's not that I don't enjoy talking to them. I'm like, “Oh my gosh, I haven't talked to her in a month.” And then, I'm like, “It's my grandma. I have to go over there” . . . Just out of pure respect for family values . . . I *feel* obligated to, just because if it wasn't for them, I wouldn't be here and I'm thankful for my life . . . I feel bad for grandparents, because they've given so much to their family, and sometimes it seems, I don't feel like I'm giving enough back to them.

– Granddaughter, 22

As above, in most accounts, obligation towards grandparents is cast positively and associated with enjoyable activities and interactions. Adult grandchildren contextualized their feelings of obligation by drawing on notions of equitable family exchange, as well as appreciation and respect for the oldest generations, particularly their contributions to intergenerational family life. Ultimately, grandchildren expressed the view that they should participate in grandparents' lives because the older generation deserves love and attention.

Nearly one-third of the grandchildren held other views of grandfilial obligation, suggesting that they “chose” to be obliged. For these grandchildren, personal choice and enjoyment are important motivators. Consequently, they cannot adequately conceptualize their relationships exclusively using a kinship framework. They also discussed intergenerational family friendships.

### *Grandparent–Adult Grandchild Relationships as Friendships*

Although not all grandparents and adult grandchildren conceptualized their ties as friendships, roughly three-quarters of participants defined at least one of their grandparent–adult grandchild relationship(s) as a friendship or friendship-like, and there is little evidence of variation according to gender or lineage. Intuitively, given the friendships that develop between mothers and daughters (see Fingerman, 2001), it might be assumed that gender and lineage are likely to influence the formation of these friendships, with maternal grandmothers and granddaughters being the closest, yet the data do not support this view. Friendships are formed between grandsons and grandmothers, as well as grandfathers and granddaughters. Those who draw on notions of friendship described their relationship as having a history of closeness and personal connection. In most cases, this closeness is found in dyads where grandparent and grandchild had spent a great deal of time interacting in the grandchild's youth, with – and more importantly, without – the presence of the middle generation. For example, the following passages illustrate sharing time in grandchildren's childhood among those who grew even closer in adulthood:

From the time he was little we used to do “private time.” He would come in my bed and lay down beside me . . . he would tell me a lot of things he didn't tell his parents. Many sensible things, he had such a wonderful imagination . . . he's now an adult. He's even more interesting than he was.

– Grandmother, 69

We've always been close . . . once my mom got divorced, we were a lot closer to my grandparents . . . So I spent, my Mom spent more time with them. And, like I said, I lived with them over the summer.

– Granddaughter, 23

In instances where grandparents cared for grandchildren during holidays or took them on trips – particularly (but not necessarily) when the middle generation needed additional assistance, as in the case of divorce or single-parenthood – relationships are often closer than between those who did not share significant time together. These ties grow even closer in the grandchild's adulthood.

In this sense, continuity and change characterize the grandparent–adult grandchild relationship accounts. The past forms an important explanatory backdrop to explaining and understanding the adult friendship. According to a 24-year-old grandson, “We already

had a very strong relationship all through my childhood. In adulthood, I find it to be more a friendship.”

Both generations identified the passage of time – particularly the grandchild’s maturity and the influence of pivotal life events such as death or illness in the family – as catalytic to the development of deeply personal connections. An individual’s life-course transitions in addition to those of other family members (e.g., divorce, death) affect the development of ties. For example, the loss of a husband/grandfather brought this granddaughter and grandmother closer, marking the beginning of a family friendship between adults.

I was about 17 years old ... it was just after my grandfather died and I went to live with her to give her company. It was about nine o’clock at night and she just broke down crying .... She didn’t know what to do. And she had never cried in front of me ... that day when I held her when she just cried about losing my grandfather, I think that was a pivotal, a key thing that changed our relationship.

– Granddaughter, 23

From the perspective of adult grandchildren who are friends with their grandparents, their own adulthood and grandparents’ longevity created the opportunity to know their grandparents as people:

When you are a child, you know stories, you kind of know your grandparents, but you don’t know them as a person, you know them as a grandparent. Now that I am an adult, I have definitely been able to know her more as a person, as we’ve both matured. And I am glad for that. I am glad for that time.

– Granddaughter, 23

Understanding them as people as opposed to just a person, not to stereotype, but as a certain figure. It’s like breaking out of that role as grandma, and maybe it’s just a social perception, but everybody thinks that a grandma should be ... not should be, but grandmothers are all caring and giving you cookies. With my grandmother, she is a real person, and I think that it is rewarding to be able to talk to them openly and realize that you are knowing them as a person, as opposed to not getting the opportunity.

– Grandson, 24

Knowing each other as individuals, rather than occupants of specific family roles, is a consequential implication of increasing longevity for the grandparent–adult grandchild relationship as it provides

a foundation and opportunity for the development of an intergenerational friendship.

When the grandparent–grandchild relationship involves two adults, companionship, which might have characterized a younger relationship, can give way to an intergenerational friendship that was not possible in the child’s youth. Over time, the nature and complexity of the grand tie changes. In the words of one grandmother, interaction and communication become more of a “two-way street.” Relative to the grandchild’s youth there is greater give, take, and sharing in interactions, and consequently new levels of enjoyment and satisfaction for both generations.

When they’re more on your level, you become more friends instead of this grandmother–small grandchild relationship where they’re not ... that interesting for a long evening of conversation or anything. Whereas the older children, you have a lot more give and take and ideas and someone to talk to.

– Grandmother, 78

I know with my grandmother, she’s opened up and told me so much about herself and what’s she’s been through and horrible things I didn’t know and good things I didn’t know .... So in some ways our relationship can include an element of friendship as well. When you’re a kid, it’s not at a stage where you could have that kind of relationship.

– Granddaughter, 27

The above quotes, from a grandmother–granddaughter same-family dyad illustrate how their interactions and the nature of their relationship changed over time. Similar to these participants, other grandparents and adult grandchildren viewed their friendships or friend-like relationships as characterized by reciprocal and balanced exchanges.

#### *Sites of Interpersonal Trust and Shared Confidences*

Reciprocal trust and shared confidences are among the defining features of the grandparent–adult grandchild friendship. The grandparents and grandchildren viewed one another as confidantes whom they could always trust with deeply personal or sensitive information. Although grandfathers shared friendships with their grandchildren – perhaps a result of traditional gender roles within the family, including women’s positions as kin-keepers – discussions of interpersonal trust and shared confidences largely emerged in accounts of friendships with grandmothers. Within these relationships, participants from both generations reported having open dialogues and exchanges with little fear of

being judged, even in the case of dissenting or divergent opinions:

I feel my grandmother and I can be totally and completely honest. I can tell my grandmother more honestly about what I think ... I can engage her in challenging conversations and political conversations, because that kind of conversation is important to me: to be able to talk to her about these things as openly as I can and be willing to share exactly how I feel about things and not think that I'm offending her or hurting her feelings or offending people or something that she cares about. Even if I am, I know that she's not going to hold it against me.

– Grandson, 28

I'm older. She's younger, but she respects me. She loves me. She knows if she tells me something in confidence, it'll never go any further than that. And I know the same with her, like, I can tell her anything and say, "This is between you and me," and I know that it will never go any further.

– Grandmother, 69

Most participants indicated that the extension of their relationships into grandparents' later lives and grandchildren's adulthood facilitated opening up to one another and sharing personal thoughts.

Grandparents (mostly grandmothers) and adult grandchildren also said that they could trust one another with sensitive family information. Arising from the trust in their intergenerational friendships, many used their relationships as a refuge from the family, within the family. For example,

We just have open dialogue. I think that [my grandmother] *also* tells *me* things that she would like to get off her chest with the family, but doesn't because it might stir the pot or whatever.

– Grandson, 24

I find if I have a problem I'll phone [my granddaughter], and you know [my husband] has Alzheimer's, not badly, but you know, I feel sometimes I need help ... I don't ask people for much. But maybe more to say, you know, "I'm sort of fed up. What am I going to do?"

– Grandmother, 78

For participants who discussed having intergenerational friendships, adult "grand" relationships represented an environment where confidential discussions of family members, family politics, or problems safely take place. For some, these ties also helped them to deal with their families or cope with situations.

### *Products of Personal Choice and Freedom*

Many perceived their relationships as friendships motivated by personal choice, as opposed to family obligation. However, as these friendships are formed between younger and older generations within the family, choice and obligation become less straightforward and more complex. Despite previous findings on the asymmetrical nature of the grandparent–adult grandchild relationship – with choice residing more clearly with grandchildren (Kemp, 2004a) – personal choice and freedom are central to both generations' experiential accounts of their friendships.

Grandchildren's choice and freedom are key to grandparents' perceptions of their relationships and conceptualizations of intergenerational friendships. Because grandparents viewed grandchildren as relatively free from grandfilial obligation, grandchildren with whom they have close relationships are understood to do so out of personal choice and desire.

It's the attention that they give you that they don't have to. Your children give you attention, but your children also feel responsible to give it to you ... but with grandchildren it's a different thing.

– Grandmother, 79

Grandparents whose grandchildren are their friends indicated that because their grandchildren maintained relationships with them and are under no obligation to do so, this evidenced the strength of their relationships and formed the foundation of their friendships.

Meanwhile, for grandchildren who are friends with their grandparents, contact is defined as initiated and maintained out of enjoyment, fun, and choice. They viewed their grandparents as individuals with whom they wanted to spend time and share their lives. Moreover, as they found their interactions personally rewarding and chose to maintain close, personal ties with their grandparents, many avoided or resisted use of the term *obligation*. In the words of a 28-year-old grandson, "I don't really think of them [visits] so much as obligations and responsibilities because I enjoy doing them." In the following passages two grandchildren discuss choice, obligation, and friendship in relation to their grandparents:

So I feel like I *want* to just see how they're doing ... My grandfather on my father's side, he's just not a home person, he's like me. So somehow we just get together on the weekend and grab a bite to eat or something ... Like I said, it's more choice, the word shouldn't be *obligation*.

– Grandson, 30

They are my grandparents and they're like my best friends. It's so great, it's not like "Oh, I have to go to my grandma's for dinner." It's like, "Oh, I'm going to go and sit down with my grandparents and see you know, chat with them. And I like it.

– Granddaughter, 21

For grandchildren who viewed their grandparents as friends, adulthood gave them the ability and personal freedom to negotiate friendships with their grandparents.

#### *Family-Friends?*

The presentation of grandparent–adult grandchild relationships as places of open dialogue and products of personal choice was accompanied by somewhat contradictory behaviour. As friends, grandparents and adult grandchildren set boundaries for themselves in terms of what they viewed as acceptable and unacceptable for the grandparent and grandchild roles. For instance, most individuals, but particularly those reporting friendships, made efforts to produce and maintain “good” grand identities. Among grandparents, this is accomplished by not being meddlesome or placing demands on the relationship, as well as deliberately not interfering in grandchildren’s lives. Speaking of friendships with her adult grandchildren, a 78-year-old grandmother concluded, “So, you don’t push them, you just let them do their own thing.”

For adult grandchildren, being a “good” grandchild meant earning grandparents’ praise, being respectful, and not being a disappointment. This is accomplished by deliberate and regular contact and keeping grandparents personally informed about their lives, even when they do not feel like it or are busy. Also, many adult grandchildren carefully monitored their interactions with grandparents, selectively disclosing information about activities, avoiding topics, and screening out what they determined to be undesirable or bad as evaluated by their grandparents’ standards. For instance, a 35-year-old grandson confessed, “I tell little white lies” because “I don’t want to let [my grandfather] down.” And, when asked about her motivations for selectively disclosing information, a 21-year-old granddaughter replied, “I guess that sounds back to wanting them to be proud of me, right? I don’t want them to think, ‘Oh, bad judgment call.’” Thus, although conceived of as friendships, grandparent–adult grandchild relationships also remain heavily influenced by perceptions of normative intergenerational roles and associated behavioural patterns. Consequently, limits are imposed on the nature and degree of sharing and the exercise of choice within these family friendships.

## Discussion and Conclusion

Although exploratory and derived from a purposive sample, the findings of this research confirm and enhance existing knowledge, at the same time contributing additional insight into grandparent–adult grandchild relationships. Relational accounts confirm that both generations potentially view their relationships as important, personally meaningful, and socially significant. Despite variations in the properties of the tie, both generations offered a rather consistent account of their relationship as a unique family bond, separating it in meaning and significance from other familial relationships. For many, friendship is also a key dimension of the relationship. Overall, the nature of the grandparent–adult grandchild tie is conceived of in positive terms.

The data add insight into existing understandings of the relationship, including perceptions of the tie as unconditional, latent reserves of support. The adult relationship is understood to act as a “safety net” for both generations. As grandparents and adult grandchildren age, needs and abilities change, and, as Langer (1990) suggests, they become members of a “convoy of social support” – the ever-changing social networks that support individuals throughout the life course (Kahn & Antonucci, 1980). And although certain types of support may never be exchanged, potentiality and the unconditional nature of support remain important features of the relationship and represent a form of security for both generations. In this sense, longevity adds adult grandchildren and their grandparents to a “matrix of latent relationships” (Riley, 1983). Additionally, as some variations in type of support given according to gender, socioeconomic status, and circumstances of the middle generation (e.g., death, divorce, and remarriage) are observed, future research might wish to address the ways structured social relations influence exchanges of support between grandparents and adult grandchildren.

Findings confirm that spoiling or leniency (Kivnick, 1982) remains central to how certain grandparents and adult grandchildren reflect on and conceptualize their relationships. The near absence of moral judgments and criticism in the relational accounts is an important extension of the leniency associated with the young relationship, which extended into adult experiences. In fact, this dimension of the relationship illustrates Mead’s theory of temporality (1929, 1932, 1934). As Mead suggested, the past “structures and conditions experiences found in the present” (Maines, Sugrue, & Katovich, 1983, p. 163; see also Chappell & Orbach, 1986). Grandparents and adult grandchild drew on the past, using it as

a key resource in conceptualizing their present relationships.

Both grandparents and adult grandchildren confirmed that their relationships can be valuable keys to identity, self-hood, and self-discovery. Grandchildren cast their grandparents in the role of “valued elder” (Kivnick, 1982), supporting the conclusion that “grandchildren are interested and eager to have grandparents teach them about their own familial past” (Wiscott & Kopera-Frye, 2000, p. 210). For most grandchildren, this interest and appreciation is something they associated with their own maturity and an opportunity arising through their grandparents’ longevity and willingness to share their experiences.

For grandparents in the study, Kivnick’s (1982) notion of “reinvolverment in the past” is not noted as a key dimension of meaning; rather, relationships with adult grandchildren are more meaningful as engagements with the present and future. Relationships with adult grandchildren provide an ongoing view and a future perspective during the last stages of life. And although these accounts attest to grandparenthood as “immortality through clan” (Kivnick, 1982), grandparents feel that because they shared more life experiences and witnessed more growth and transition in their adult grandchildren’s lives, the relationships are self-affirming and guarantee continuity and immortality in ways not possible with younger grandchildren.

In the relational accounts, both personal choice and obligation enter into and are pervasive in the conceptualizations of grandparent–adult grandchild relationships. This potentiality confirms the contentions of Beck (1999, 2001) and Giddens (1992, 1994) about the nature of interpersonal relationships in contemporary society. There is evidence of warmth, communication, and negotiation of the relationship outside the boundaries of tradition and obligation. At the same time, obligation is an equally important dimension of grandparent and adult grandchild conceptualizations. For their part, grandparents do not use the word *obligation* to describe what motivates their interactions, but they are very clear and consistent in defining how grandparents should feel and behave towards their grandchildren. Grandparents’ hesitation to call this obligation is likely a result of its negative connotations, particularly those linked to family life.

Grandchildren are freer in defining the term *obligation* in ways that challenge common understandings. For example, by associating obligation towards grandparents with activities from which pleasure, enjoyment, and satisfaction are derived,

adult grandchildren recast the notion of obligation in positive ways. As a motivator for adult grandchildren to engage in relationships with their grandparents, obligation also assumed a productive rather than a constraining form. Some grandchildren suggested they *chose* to be obligated to their grandparents, thereby blurring traditional conceptualizations of obligation within the family, making it more negotiated and fluid (see Finch & Mason, 1993).

Conceptualizations of grandparent–adult grandchild relationships as friendships confirm yet enhance Gratton & Haber’s (1996) suggestion that grandparenthood is currently dominated by discourses of companionship, as the adult tie is more complex and profound. Moreover, in keeping with anthropological work (see Ikels, 1998) and other work on “fictive kin” (e.g., Burton & Dilworth-Anderson, 1991; MacRae, 1992), conceptualizations of grandparent–adult grandchild relationships as friendships challenge commonly held distinctions that tend to treat family and friends as mutually exclusive social groups. The interviews with grandparents and grandchildren in this study suggest that family life is much more complex and textured, and less clearly defined.

Use of the term *friend* subtly indicates that this bond cannot always be adequately described purely in terms of a family tie. Reluctance to explain the relationship exclusively in terms of familial ties signifies that, based on their subjective perspectives, *family* is not necessarily conceived of as a guaranteed site of trust or freedom, but rather as one where relationships tend to be complex, and interactions are often rooted in obligation. As some of these accounts suggest, family relationships can and do also involve sharing and confidences and, to a certain extent, choice. Yet at the same time, participants’ experiences confirm distinctions made between family and friends, as both generations reportedly place boundaries on their friendships. Ultimately, the friendship conceptualization attests to the fluidity of family ties.

Although presented as somewhat negotiable, particularly on the part of the grandchild, the fact that both generations discussed the ways in which they maintained “good” or desirable “grand” identities indicates that there may be influential underlying patterns and behavioural expectations associated with these roles, which are built up in families over time. In Finch & Mason’s (1993, p. 170) work on family responsibility they argue, “People’s identities as moral beings are bound up in ... exchanges of support, and the processes through which they get negotiated.” Thus, although not always exchanging

support per se, grandparents and adult grandchildren in interactions with and behaviour towards one another are, in a sense, “constructing, confirming, and reconstructing” their respective moral identities and familial reputations. And despite being demographic pioneers, these processes suggest the possibility that patterned social scripts emerge and guide both generations as they develop their relationships over the life course. Determining the extent of these patterns and identity processes is a matter for future research.

This study captured some of the positive dimensions of grandparent–adult grandchild relationships, but is unsuccessful in revealing negative experiences (see Kemp, 2003a). This important limitation may be attributable to the self-selected sample, particularly their positive views of the tie. Some participants identified a lack of contact between generations as a result of divorce and/or remarriage in the middle generation, but negative experiences are not at the fore of their accounts.

In general, research on grandparents and grandchildren tends to emphasize the positive (but see Kemp, 2004b; Kruk, 1995). Yet family life is rarely free of conflict. In fact, recent exploratory work on grandparent–grandchild ties over three generations indicates a range of negative experiences associated with grandparent–grandchild ties, including, for example, grandchildren suffering physical and emotional abuse at the hands of a grandparent, excessive favouritism toward one grandchild over others, and the spillover of conflicts between grandparents and adult children to grandparent–grandchild ties (Kemp, 2004a). Future research might wish to examine further the existence, nature, and outcomes of conflict between grandparents and grandchildren. How are negative experiences accounted for, and how do they arise and intersect with or influence family dynamics?

Overall, the present study confirms that grandparent–adult grandchild relationships can exert positive influences on the lives of each generation and the experiences of family life. For many, the ties are meaningful as unique familial relationships, distinct from parent–child ties and young grandchild ties, and can include elements of friendship. For others, this is not always the case. Therefore, further research is needed in order to understand the full range of experiences associated (i.e., both positive and negative) with the tie, including how it operates in the lives of family members and how variation and difference can be accounted for, particularly within and between families.

## Notes

- 1 The expression *adult grand relationships* refers to grandparent–adult grandchild relationships.
- 2 Additionally, factors such as geographic proximity (Kivett, 1996), gender and lineage (Block, 2000; Spitze & Ward, 1998; Thomas, 1995), race (Hunter & Taylor, 1998; Kennedy, 1990), education (Crosnoe & Elder Jr., 2002), economic status (Eggebeen & Hogan, 1990; Parrott & Bengtson, 1999), and health (Silverstein & Long, 1998) are all assumed to influence the formation of bonds between generations.
- 3 Largely out of convenience, a significant number of studies on adult grandchildren have used college student samples. Consequently, studies have relied heavily on younger adult grandchildren. For the purposes of this research, an adult grandchild was defined as 21 years of age or over. In selecting 21 years of age as the definition of adult, the intention was to tap into the experiences of older adult grandchildren, particularly those in their late twenties and thirties who are more likely to have varied life, family, and work experiences relative to those of younger adult grandchildren.
- 4 Four individuals responded to the Internet ad and four were obtained using the other publicly posted ads. A considerable number of participants were located and made aware of the study and volunteered to participate through the use of community contacts ( $n = 16$ ), and a number volunteered as a result of being recruited by study participants themselves ( $n = 13$ ).
- 5 For methodological reasons, no attempt was actively made to recruit same-family dyads. For instance, there was a desire for participants to participate in the study without being required to volunteer their family member. As well, for reasons of confidentiality, it was assumed that participants would feel freer in disclosing information about their relationships knowing that the interviewer would not be in contact with a family member. Pragmatically, geography and time were also important considerations in the decision to avoid the active recruitment of same-family dyads. Thus, the four same-family dyads were obtained through original study participants who recruited their own grandparents ( $n = 2$ ) and grandchildren ( $n = 2$ ) to volunteer.
- 6 Because there were more grandmothers in the study, and their responses tended to be more detailed and descriptive than the grandfathers', the data used in this paper to illustrate the grandparent perspective come primarily from grandmothers. Similar themes emerged in grandfathers' accounts and in grandchildren's accounts of their grandfathers. Where differences appear between grandmothers and grandfathers, they are noted.
- 7 For further elaboration on the behavioural expectations and roles of grandparents and adult grandchildren, see Kemp (2004a).

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## Appendix A: Sample questions from the study's interview guide

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### Describe each of your grandparents/adult grandchildren.

1. Please tell me about your relationship with each grandparent/adult grandchild, beginning with the earliest memory. Probes: frequency, type and initiation of contact, exchange and feelings of closeness, middle generation, most recent contact.
  2. Please tell me about anything that you think has prevented you from seeing one another or becoming close. Has anything facilitated your relationship?
  3. If you could change anything about the relationship you have with your grandparents/adult grandchildren, what would it be? Why?
  4. Please tell me about any events or moments in your life or that of your grandparent/children that you think changed your relationships.
  5. How do you think getting older has influenced your relationships?
  6. How is it different being an adult grandchild (or being the grandparent of an adult grandchild), as opposed to being (having) a young grandchild?
  7. What does being a grandparent involve? What does being a grandchild entail?
  8. How do your relationships with your grandparents/adult grandchildren differ from other relationships? How are they similar?
  9. What do you hope your grandparent/adult grandchild will get out of knowing you?
  10. What are your favourite/least favourite aspects of your relationships?
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