

# The Role Grandparents Play in Fostering Children's Social Competencies

Samar Shaikh

AP/HUMA 3695 -York University

## OBJECTIVE

This research explored the effect grandparents can have on children's social behaviour

## ABSTRACT

In a society and in a time where the value of grandparents is decreasing due to ageism, research on grandparents is essential to sustaining the significance of their role in the lives of children. With this in mind, this study examined the relationship children have with their grandparents. It investigated the correlation between children who have daily access to their grandparents and the level of social competencies they display in their everyday lives.

## DEFINING SOCIAL COMPETENCE

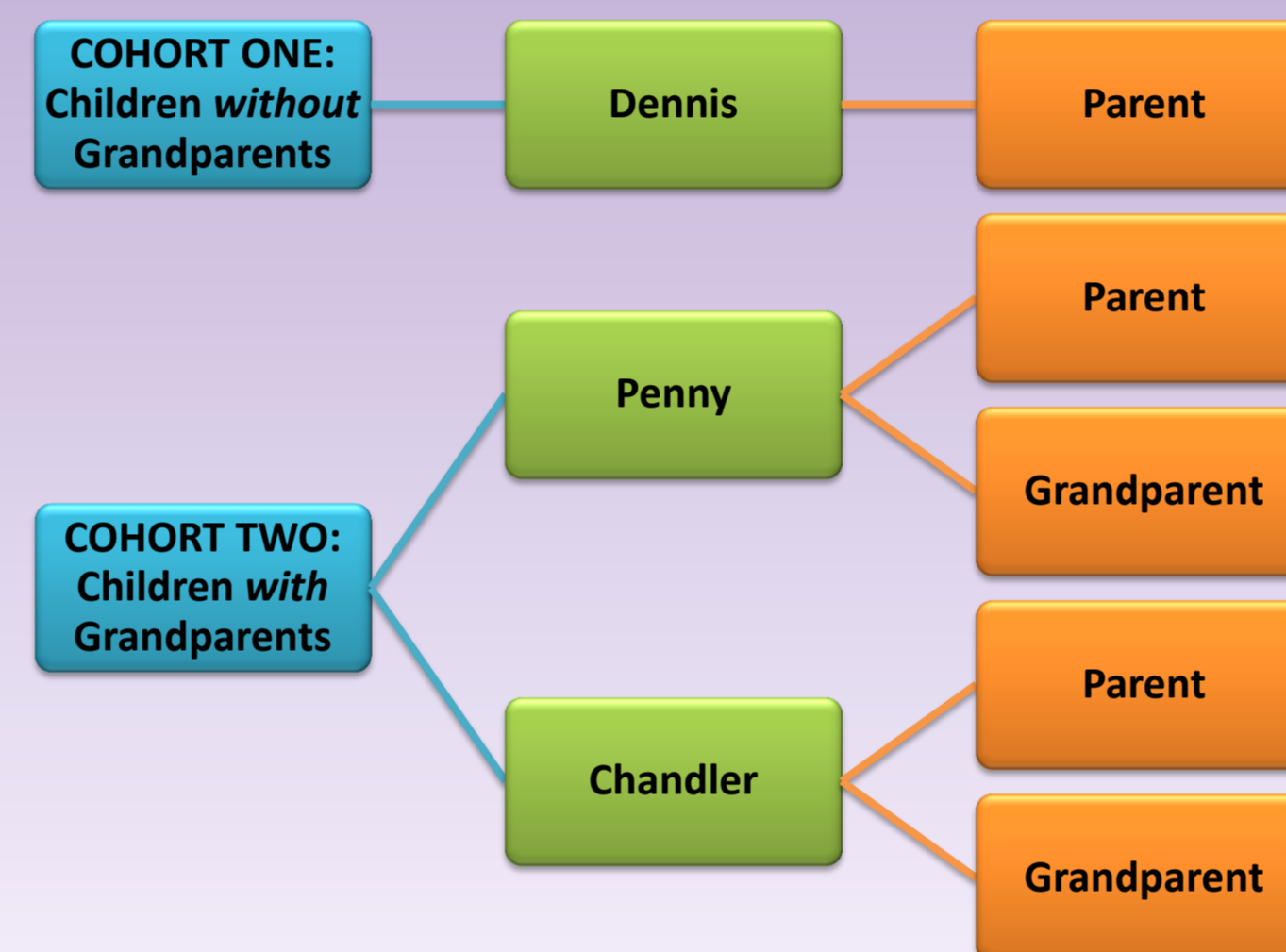
- **Social competencies:** used by researchers to define observable behaviours in children: how they positively and actively interact with others, as well as maintain positive relationships.
- **Measured:** ability to maintain conversation, their demonstration of empathy, an understanding of peer relationships, and the skill of negotiation and persuasion.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mosaic approach to collect data:

- Surveys
- Interviews (structured and unstructured)
- Observations
- Drawings
- Role-playing exercises

## SAMPLE



## FINDINGS

Although conclusive evidence of grandparents heightening children's social competencies could not be verified in this study due to insignificant sample size, the following findings presented themselves in the research process:

- Six out of the eight participants were European: they each shared similar relationships with their grandparents and appeared to hold them to high value
- Commonalities between the participants who had daily access to their grandparents include grandparents relaying cultural and religious teachings to children
- Children who had daily access to their grandparents viewed their grandparents as additional parents

*"Nonno is like daddy because he takes me to school and packs my lunch."*

(Penny; Field notes 2014)

## EXAMPLES OF DRAWINGS

Used to determine the level of connection children feel towards their grandparents

Measured by:

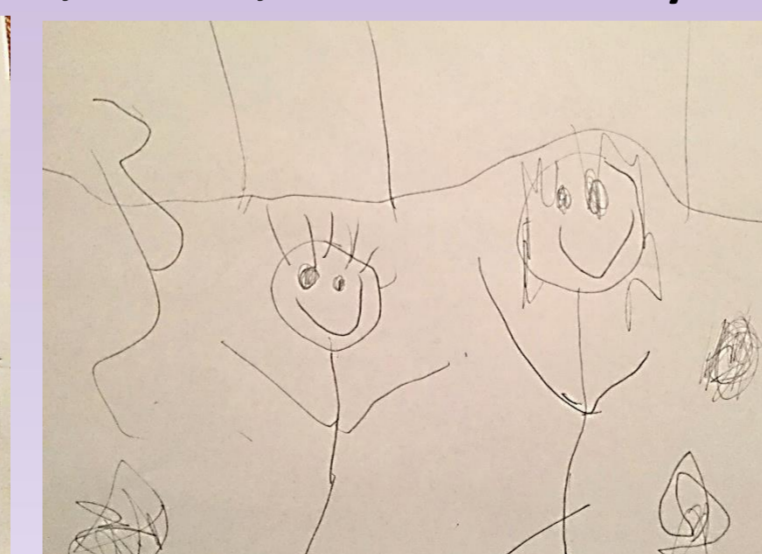
The size, placement, view, and activity



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Penny, Age 7

Figure 1. Notice the size of Penny's grandfather in this drawing. He is drawn as larger than Penny in the picture, and is dead center in the page, whereas Penny placed herself off to the side. The full-frontal view should be noted here as well, along with the activity they are partaking in - cooking.



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Chandler, Age 5

Figure 2. Once again, the size of the grandparent is drawn larger in this picture. Both characters are placed in the center of the page, depicting a full-frontal view and engaging in an activity - playing in the park.

## CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE STUDY

### Addressing Flaws in the Data:

- Sample was too small and unbalanced to be considered an accurate representation of an entire population
- Cultural and ethnic variations should be taken into consideration to avoid sweeping generalizations

### Future Study:

- The role grandparents play in fostering cultural and religious understandings in children
- Longitudinal study to see how these social competencies manifest themselves in the future