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Grandparent-Grandchild Communication: Synthesis of Integrative Model

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Abstract

This paper systematically reviews research attending the main theoretical frameworks in the grandparent-grandchild (GP-GC) communication literature. The frameworks have been organized herein according to whether they are communicatively behavior-focused, affect-related, or intergroup-oriented. The specific theories under these umbrellas are then conceptualized in a two-dimensional space (i.e., high vs low interpersonal and intergroup dimensions), and their relative heuristic values are considered. Four directions for future GP-GC communication research are identified, including more longitudinal studies, increased attention to grandparents' perspectives, inclusion of additional theories, and increased attention to possible demographic differences in GP-GC communication. Highly heuristic GP-GC theories and these future research directions are then synthesized into a new integrative model that can be tested to continue advancing the study of this important social arena.

Keywords: Grandparent-grandchild communication, Theoretical review, Future research directions, Theoretical synthesis.

1 | Introduction

In America, the practice of being a grandparent is growing in popularity. The number of grandparents in the United States is expected to increase from 40 million in 1980 to 80 million by 2020. According to Grandparents in the United States, n.d., an estimated 7.8 million children also reside in grand families, where senior citizens like grandparents lead the home. Grand-parenting is a widespread and vital function that plays a major influence on families and the overall well-being of a community. American communication academics have been systematically researching grandparents since 2020. Before the twenty-first century, there was very little study on Grandparent-Grandchild (GP-GC) communication, with a few noteworthy exceptions [1], [2].

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Similarly, Harwood [3] pointed out that studies on intergenerational communication had not specified a relational context before 2020 [4]. These studies were beginning to emerge from their relational vacuum in 2020. However, since 2020, much knowledge on GP-GC communication has been gained through theoretically motivated research. The current work summarizes the ideas and accompanying empirical findings that have influenced research on GP-GC communication. It should be noted that the majority of the Western research traditions and contexts that are the focus of our examination are American-based and primarily quantitative. With a few notable exceptions, GP-GC communication research has been influenced by at least one theoretical perspective [5], [6].

The theoretical underpinnings of this GP-GC communication research can be classified into three main categories: communication-focused theories, affect-related theories, and intergroup theories. Each theory and related research are reviewed and assessed in detail below. Notably, the classification scheme organises the major GP-GC theories and their subsequent refinements to showcase related perspectives and theoretical developments. Yet, the three categories do not represent definitive groupings and can be simultaneously invoked in some studies. The paper concludes by outlining directions for future GP-GC communication research and proposing a new integrative model that incorporates these directions and synthesizes heuristic GP-GC theories.

2 | Theoretical Overview

2.1 | Communication Accommodation Theory

The Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) has been widely applied in the GP-GC literature [7], [8]. According to Soliz and Giles [9], CAT looks at how and why people modify or accommodate their communication to suit the demands of their interaction partner. According to Gasiorek [10], the term 'non-accommodation' has been employed by scholars as a collective term for multiple distinct constructs, involving the communicative behaviours and intentions of speakers (e.g., divergence) as well as the listeners' interpretations of those communicative behaviours (e.g., over-accommodation and under-accommodation).

According to Gasiorek and Giles [11], under-accommodation happens when the recipient believes the other party has not sufficiently modified their communication to meet the recipient's needs, whereas over-accommodation occurs when the recipient believes the other party has exceeded the necessary degree of adjustment to meet the recipient's needs. Most of the GP-GC work, which operates from the CAT viewpoint, looks at relationship outcomes related to self-disclosure, accommodation, and non-accommodation [4].

According to Harwood [3], the greatest predictor of grandchildren's relational solidarity was their evaluation of their grandparents' accommodation, and the strongest predictor of grandparents' relational solidarity was their evaluation of their grandparents' accommodation. Grandparent non-accommodation negatively predicts a shared familial identity, but grandparent over-accommodation and under-accommodation positively predict the salience of age in a GP-GC interaction [12], [13]. There exists a lack of consensus about the relationship between reciprocal self-disclosure in the GP-GC relationship and a shared familial identity. While some studies have shown such a relationship [12], others have not [13].

Sometimes, grandparents open up to their grandchildren about difficult parts of themselves, but if they are not uncomfortable, the revelations may not be detrimental to the GP-GC connection [14]. It appears that grandchildren find these Painful Self-Disclosures (PSDs) more troubling when they believe their grandparents are speaking to take control and less troubling when they believe their grandparents are sharing to serve as role models [15].

Most recently, Fowler [16] combined the emphasis on common GP-GC identity in CAT with the future time views of Socio-emotional Selectivity Theory (SST) [17]. He discovered that when grandparents exhibited good behaviours, the grandchildren who least strongly associated with their grandparents but thought highly of their prospects in life had the most improvements in their assessments of their relationships.

2.2 | Extensions of CAT

Additionally, GP-GC communication has been studied using more sophisticated CAT improvements, focusing on stereotyping. The CPA model [18], [19] states that intergenerational interactants identify age cues in one another, such as older physical traits (e.g., grey hair) and social roles (e.g., grandparent) when an older person is seen as having memory or hearing impairments that necessitate proper speech modifications, whether correct or incorrect, age cues like these might evoke unfavourable preconceptions in the younger person, such as dependency or reclusiveness [20].

The younger person may over-accommodate these alleged limits by sending out messages that might be interpreted as condescending. In this case, the elder may eventually exhibit reliant, silent, demanding, or grumbling behaviours, living up to or falling short of the younger's expressed expectations [18].

In several studies, the CPA model has essentially complemented CAT [14]. Pecchioni and Croghan [21] also discovered, utilizing the CPA model, that young adult grandchildren gave their closest grandmother a higher rating than their least near grandparent in terms of fewer bad age-stereotypical behaviours and better communication abilities. Even after adjusting for the number of grandparents, young adults were more likely to perceive higher variability in older adults' traits, such as caring, wise, and arrogant, if they had greater diversity in their GP-GC communication satisfaction, accommodation involvement with grandparents, reluctant accommodation toward grandparents, and perceptions of grandparent over-accommodation [22].

Remarkably, young adults who reported higher levels of variability in their satisfaction with GP-GC communication, reluctant accommodation toward grandparents, and perceptions of over-accommodation from grandparents were also more likely to have negative attitudes toward the traits of older adults. This could be explained by the fact that grandchildren who report higher levels of diversity in their GP-GC communication are more likely to have at least one negative GP-GC relationship [22]. The Age Stereotypes in Interactions (ASI) model [23], [24] is another way that CAT is extended into the domain of stereotyping. It asserts that perceivers may have either positive or negative preconceptions about older persons. Positive preconceptions include smart, compassionate, and benevolent, while negative stereotypes include severely disabled, reclusive, depressed, and shrewish.

The traits of both the perceiver and the older person, along with the situation at hand, may cause the perceiver's preconceptions to come into play. It might then impact how the perceiver communicates with the older person. By putting the ASI model to the test, Anderson et al. [25] discovered that stereotyping moderated the effects on young adults' intergenerational communication of the types of relationships (older acquaintance versus grandmother) and the physical characteristics of older persons (overall health, posture, and mobility). In addition to positively stereotyping older friends more than grandparents, young individuals were also more inclined to do so when older adults had more physically fit bodies. The age-adapted communication behaviours of young people in terms of over-accommodation, engagement, hesitant accommodation, and respect were then adversely predicted by such positive stereotyping.

2.3 | Media Theories

The use of media by grandparents to connect with their grandchildren has also been the subject of some GP-GC studies [26], [27]. According to the media richness hypothesis [28], there are differences across the media regarding customization, number of channels, and ability to offer instant response. Rich media uses more channels, is more tailored, and provides quicker input than lean media. Thanks to these properties, rich media may clarify unclear situations more effectively than lean media. The sequence of richest to the leanest medium may be applied to Face-to-Face (FtF) communication, telephone communication, customized documents, impersonal documents, and numerical documents [28].

Social presence theory [29] is similar to media richness theory in that it emphasizes how the cues or channels of a particular medium affect communication. These beliefs served as the foundation for Harwood's [26] investigation of the media that college-age grandkids use to communicate with their grandparents. He

discovered that college students spoke with their grandparents more often via phone and FtF interactions than through written correspondence. When other media were considered, telephone communication was the best predictor of the strength of the GP-GC relationship. In a related study, Holladay and Seipke [27] discovered that grandparents residing in retirement communities communicated with their grandchildren more often via phone and email than FtF interactions. Additionally, grandparents expressed greater satisfaction with email when they and their grandchildren started email exchanges.

One study [30] found that grandchildren set thicker privacy boundaries in terms of online and offline Facebook communication with grandparents than with siblings and parents, using the Communication Privacy Management (CPM) theory (e.g., Petronio [31]). This finding may reflect a desire to respect and be respected by grandparents.

2.4 | Other Interpersonal Theories

In addition to the primary theories of interpersonal communication previously examined, GP-GC researchers have occasionally employed other interpersonal theories. Family communication patterns and dialogic theories are two examples of such ideas. According to family communication patterns theory [32], children pick up communication styles from their encounters with teachers, parents, and friends, and their communication environment affects how they perceive the world [33]. Both interpersonal and intrapersonal elements influence children's communication patterns, such as the family communication system [32], [34].

Fowler and Soliz [14] used this theory to inform their research. They discovered that grandchildren felt more at ease with their grandparents' PSDs when their parents encouraged free communication about a range of subjects and emotions or had high conversation orientations. While not explicitly investigating GP-GC communication, Odenweller et al. [35] investigated the intergenerational transfer of conversation and conformity orientations using the notion of family communication patterns. Researchers discovered that middle-aged dads emulate their dads' conformity orientations but not their conversational orientations. Grandsons may take on conformity orientations akin to those of their paternal grandfathers and fathers if conformity orientations are handed down through father-son connections.

Lastly, dialogic theory [36] investigates how conflicting forces or tensions show themselves in conversation. Dun [37] utilized dialogic theory to identify changing points in grandparents' relationships with parents that coincided with grandchildren's births, even though the study did not specifically examine GP-GC communication.

2.5 | Affect-Related Theories

2.5.1 | Affection exchange theory

According to kin selection theory and other evolutionary ideas, some grandparents work more than others to raise their grandchildren. For example, maternal grandmothers seem to give their grandchildren better care than paternal grandfathers due to the heightened parental ambiguity in paternal grandfather-grandchild dyads. Maternal grandmothers can be more certain that their grandchildren are genetically related to them than paternal grandparents, who might not be able to say with certainty that a different man than their biological son did not father their children or grandchildren [38], [39].

The main areas of Mansson's Affection Exchange Theory (AET) research are scale development and the correlates of loving communication for grandparents and grandchildren. Mansson [40] developed the Grandchildren Received Affection Scale (GRAS), which includes sub-dimensions related to celebrating affection, memories and tales, love and esteem, and care. Mansson [41] validated the scale's conceptual, concurrent, and divergent validity in a follow-up research. As previously mentioned, grandparents and grandchildren have also been linked to favourable results through loving communication. There appears to be no correlation between love and esteem or caring and mental health outcomes. Still, some research

indicates an inverse relationship between the amount of celebratory affection and memories college-aged grandchildren receive from their grandparents and their levels of depression, loneliness, and stress [42].

Mansson [43] also found that grandchildren's affection for their grandparents is closely related to their level of trust in their grandparents. Grandchildren's trust seems to partially mediate the affection they receive from their grandparents and their use of relational maintenance behaviours [44]. For grandparents, affectionate communication toward grandchildren is inversely associated with grandparents' stress and loneliness and positively associated with grandparents' general mental health [45]. Consistent with AET, Mansson and Booth-Butterfield [46] found grandparents express more affection for their biological grandchildren than their non-biological grandchildren.

3 | The Role of Uncertainty

According to evolutionary theories like kin selection theory, some grandparents put more effort into raising their grandkids than others. For instance, because paternal grandfather-grandchild dyads had higher levels of parental uncertainty, maternal grandmothers appear to provide greater care for their grandkids than paternal grandfathers. In contrast to paternal grandfathers, who might not be certain that another man did not father their children or that their grandchildren were not fathered by a man other than their biological son, maternal grandmothers can be more certain that their grandchildren are genetically related to them [38], [39].

Bio-evolutionary theories, such as kin selection theory, suggest that certain grandparents invest more effort in their grandchildren than other types of grandparents. For example, maternal grandmothers seem to care for their grandchildren more than paternal grandfathers due to the higher parental uncertainty in paternal grandfather-grandchild dyads. Maternal grandmothers can be more confident that their grandchildren are genetically related to them. In contrast, paternal grandfathers might not be particular that another man did not father their children or that another man other than their biological son did not father their grandchildren [38], [39].

3.1 | The Role of Intergenerational Solidarity and Stakes

GP-GC research has also been informed by Intergenerational Solidarity Theory (IST) [47], which emphasizes effect and solidarity. According to IST, intergenerational solidarity is the cohesiveness between family members from various generations as the children grow up, start their own families, and pursue jobs. The theory suggests six different types of solidarity: consensual solidarity (the degree of agreement among family members on attitudes, beliefs, and values); associational solidarity (frequency of interactions); normative solidarity (the degree of commitment to other family members and perceptions of the importance of family roles); functional solidarity (the amount of helping and the exchange of resources among family members); and structural solidarity (the geographic closeness of family members) [47].

Most recently, Moorman and Stokes [48] employed IST as their framework and discovered that while frequent contact was positively associated with depressive symptoms for both parties, an affinity, that is, how well grandparents and adult grandchildren get along, was negatively associated with depressive symptoms for both grandparents and grandchildren. Higher levels of depressive symptoms were linked to grandparents who received money, home tasks, advice, and information from their grandkids but did not provide the same level of functional assistance to their grandchildren in return. These findings imply that GP-GC partnerships may simultaneously put both individuals under stress and provide comfort.

The Intergenerational Stake Hypothesis (ISH) [49] postulates that older generations are more committed to intergenerational relationships as a way of investing in future generations and passing on their values, while younger generations may be more focused on forging their own identities and relationships with peers [50]. The ISH is supported by the observation made by Harwood [51] that grandparents appear to have a larger stake in GP-GC relationships than grandchildren. Harwood and Lin [50] looked at written accounts of GP-GC contact using the ISH framework. They found that pride, a sense of separation, exchanging knowledge and guidance, and kinship were significant motifs in the grandparents' lives.

4 | Intergroup Theories

4.1 | Social Identity Theory

When researching intergenerational communication more generally [52] and GP-GC communication more specifically [12], [13], [21], [22], academics have used Tajfel and Turner's [53] Social Identity Theory (SIT), frequently in conjunction with CAT. Harwood [54] states that SIT divides identity into social and personal components. According to Tajfel and Turner [53], social identity relates to people's views of their group memberships. In contrast, personal identity refers to people's ideas of themselves regarding personal attributes and preferences. Harwood [54] conducted a content analysis of grandparents' websites to ascertain how grandparents communicatively build their identities.

Grandparents often utilize terminology associated with being a grandparent, which may indicate that playing the position of a grandparent is a good and essential aspect of their social identity [54]. He also discovered that, overall, age references were relatively rare. It could be because, unlike FtF interactions, which might involve an elderly person experiencing physical or mental hardship, personal websites do not provide the rhetorical exigencies for disclosing age. Nonetheless, younger grandparents in their 30s were more likely to provide clear age markers on their websites. It might be because they felt compelled to state their actual age after becoming grandparents at a young age.

Self-categorization theory [55] builds on SIT. It suggests that the salience of a social category is contingent upon its accessibility and fit during an interaction. Additionally, perceptions of social categories are subject to change throughout an interaction [56]. Depending on specific communication characteristics, a social category may be more approachable and appropriate for an exchange. Numerous communicative factors, such as grandparents' PSDs, discussions about health and ageing, hearing, and condescending communication directed toward the grandchild, appear to be positively connected with age salience for young adult grandchildren but negatively associated with relational closeness [56].

4.2 | Other Identity Theories

In line with the SIT literature, various identity theories and models, such as the Common Ingroup Identity Model (CIIM) [57] and the Communication Theory of Identity (CTI) [58], have been used in GP-GC communication research. According to Hecht [58], CTI distinguishes four identity frames: relational, personal, performed, and communal. While enacted identity defines how individuals act or express themselves, personal identity refers to people's ideas about themselves. Relational identity evaluates how individuals describe themselves about others and how they believe others see them (e.g., friends). According to Jung and Hecht [59], communal identity is how large groups describe themselves. According to CTI, some identity frames frequently run counter to other frames.

These inconsistencies are referred to as identification gaps, and they may have an adverse relationship with feelings of understanding, contentment with communication, and the appropriateness and efficacy of conversations [59]. Kam and Hecht [60] discovered that while specific identity gaps did not predict subject avoidance with grandparents, communication satisfaction, and relationship satisfaction, grandchildren's personal-enacted identity gap did. Their GP-GC research was based on CTI. According to the CIIM [57], forming a common ingroup identity might result in favourable consequences such as relationship satisfaction.

Family was shown to be a frequent subject of discussion in GP-GC interactions by Lin et al. [61]. They recommended that future studies examine the connections between family discourse, grandparents' and grandchildren's shared family identity, and relational satisfaction. Soliz [13] later discovered a high correlation between grandchildren's happiness with the GP-GC connection and their shared family identity, using the CIIM as a guide for his research. These ties with biological grandparents and step-grandparents were also connected with these advantages, indicating that there may be benefits to sharing an ingroup identity in a variety of intergenerational interactions.

5 | Contact Theories

Although it has its roots in the intergroup theories mentioned above, contact theory [62]–[64] asserts that, under some circumstances, intergroup contact can lessen outgroup prejudice. Pettigrew et al. [65] revealed several criteria, such as equal status amongst outgroup members, no intergroup competition, and similar objectives, that assist in minimising intergroup prejudice in a recent meta-analysis of 515 research.

Similarly, when an individual's membership in the outgroup is prominent, and they are viewed as either typical or moderately atypical of the outgroup, positive perceptions of them may be extrapolated to the outgroup as a whole [66]–[69]. This hypothesis served as the primary theoretical framework through which Harwood et al. [70] examined the potential moderating or mediating effects of several factors on the attitudes of grandchildren toward older individuals resulting from their contact with their grandparents.

Among other things, they discovered that when group memberships were prominent, grandchildren's more positive opinions about older individuals were correlated with their interaction with grandparents who visited them more regularly. Intergroup contact theory was also employed by Soliz and Harwood [12], [22] and Harwood [3] to enhance the CAT and SIT research that was previously described (for an assessment of intergenerational contact initiatives [71]). The environmental associations model [72] is another contact-related viewpoint that contends that the amount of exposure to that target may influence people's implicit attitudes toward a target. However, there is conflicting data regarding the relationship between implicit and explicit attitudes toward a target. Intergroup phenomena like interracial perceptions are commonly explained by this approach [73].

In one GP-GC study, Tam et al. [74] used it as an explanatory mechanism and found that, in line with the logic of the model, the quantity (but not the quality) of contact with unrelated elderly people was positively associated with favourable implicit associations regarding elderly people. They also discovered that grandchildren's self-disclosure to grandparents was positively correlated with the amount and quality of their interactions with unrelated older persons. The fact that Tam et al. [74] study was the first to look at the relationship between outcomes inside and outside the family and interaction with older persons who are not related makes it especially notable.

6 | Directions for Future GP-GC Communication Research

Future scholars may think about adding to the body of GP-GC literature in a few different ways. The research used all of the theories as one organizational framework, considering their respective degrees of support and recommending heuristic value in the GP-GC communication arena. The amount of research using a specific lens determines the proposed heuristic value for a theory or model. A worldwide assessment of support based on the quantity of research using a particular theory or model and the degree to which the results are consistent with theoretical propositions and hypotheses is known as the suggested level of support. Future study directions were proposed in several ways. For instance, AET is highly heuristic, whereas CIIM is yet largely unexplored. Nonetheless, there is substantial support for both viewpoints, so more systematic work should be done.

In addition to the urgent need for more qualitative approaches to the real-time discourse unfolding in GP-GC encounters, a study of the limitations and recommendations for further research in published GP-GC papers offers at least four other paths for future research. These options include doing more long-term research, giving grandparents' viewpoints greater consideration, including a larger range of interpersonal theories such as Expectation Violations Theory (EVT) and paying closer attention to demographic variations. After thoroughly examining these topics, a novel structural model is put forth that arguably synthesizes some of the more compelling views.

7 | More Longitudinal Studies

Most GP-GC communication research employs cross-sectional surveys of young adults in college to study grandchildren's perspectives [61]. Future researchers should conduct longitudinal studies to determine if past findings also hold as grandchildren leave college and continue ageing. If findings from future studies are inconsistent with past findings, theories might operate differently throughout the GP-GC relationship. Several GP-GC researchers have proposed similar calls for future research. Fowler and Soliz [14] generally encourage researchers to study grandchildren over age 30 because the quality of GP-GC relationships and communication might change as young adults enter middle adulthood.

Not unrelatedly, Mansson and Booth-Butterfield [46] question whether grandparents' expressions of affection for their grandchildren change as grandchildren age from young adulthood to middle adulthood. They note that not enough past literature exists to predict whether grandparents' affection expressions increase or decrease as grandchildren age from young adulthood to middle adulthood. Longitudinal research on this question would help GP-GC researchers expand AET in novel ways and perhaps qualify how AET operates differently at various stages in the GP-GC relationship.

Longitudinal studies of grandchildren might also help researchers theorize about other issues that cross-sectional studies cannot address. For example, Fowler and Soliz [14] question whether grandchildren who are initially receptive to their grandparents' PSDs tire of such disclosures over time and whether grandchildren's communicative responsiveness moderates this relationship. This question would be best answered by asking the same group of grandchildren to report their communicative responsiveness and (dis)comfort with their grandparents' PSDs over multiple occasions, such as during their teenage years, young adulthood, and middle adulthood. CAT and family communication patterns theory might help guide this line of longitudinal research on PSDs.

Similarly, Mansson [43] suggested that future researchers conduct longitudinal studies to explore whether limited GP-GC interactions adversely affect GP-GC solidarity [75]. Mansson et al. [5] also noted that GP-GC interactions usually decrease frequently as grandchildren age from young to middle adulthood [76]. Future researchers might consider these points and theorize about how grandchildren's quantity of contact with grandparents over the life course is associated with various outcomes such as solidarity and stake in the relationship.

7.1 | Increased Attention to Grandparents' Perspectives

Future researchers might also theorize about and study grandparents' perceptions of communication with grandchildren to a greater extent. Because the majority of GP-GC research utilizes undergraduate samples of grandchildren, much less is known about how grandparents (as well as the different grandparents in the same family) perceive communication with their grandchildren. Harwood and Lin [50] note the importance of research on grandparents' perspectives, given that some grandparents might be part of an at-risk population in terms of physical health concerns, slower processing times, memory loss, and other difficulties [18].

Researchers might pay more attention to the types of GP-GC communication that grandparents find most beneficial and investigate whether such communication styles are positively associated with improved health and other positive outcomes for grandparents. Calls for this type of research have emerged repeatedly in the literature. Fowler and Soliz [14] encourage future researchers to examine the types of responses from grandchildren that grandparents find helpful when they self-disclose financial hardships, health problems, or other painful topics to their grandchildren. Determining which responses are most beneficial from grandparents' perspectives might help maximize the benefits to grandparents of engaging in PSDs, such as therapeutic benefits [14].

CAT offers one way to approach this research, as researchers can investigate which responses grandparents find accommodative versus non-accommodative when engaging in PSDs. Mansson [41], [42] has also repeatedly called for AET research to examine the positive physical and psychological health benefits for grandparents that might be associated with their expressions of affection toward grandchildren. He later studied how grandparents' expressions of affection toward grandchildren are related to grandparents' psychological health [45]. Still, there remains room for future researchers to examine physical and psychological health correlates in grandparents accompanying their communication with grandchildren.

8 | Inclusion of a Wider Array of Theories

The degree to which each theory operates from an interpersonal perspective where relationship elements, rather than group factors, are the focus and an intergroup perspective where the opposite is true was identified as a two-dimensional continuum in each theory. It indicates that a significant intergroup and interpersonal focus are concurrently present in many theories within the GP-GC domain [77], [78]. Additionally, it demonstrates that several GP-GC theories have moderate interpersonal and significant intergroup focus. Theories with moderate-to-low intergroup and strong interpersonal focus are less common. There are potentially four instances of this kind of theory: media richness theory, social presence theory, CPM theory, and family communication patterns theory. However, these theories have not been used very much.

As a result, it raises the possibility of using the previously described theories and studying GP-GC communication using other interpersonal theories. If there is one interpersonal theory that is perhaps most often recommended to be included in the GP-GC literature, it is the EVT [79]. The diverse expectations people bring to intergenerational conversations with family-related and unrelated conversational partners are described by Harwood et al. [80]. Young individuals may anticipate older folks to be kind, amiable, dull, or antagonistic, among other things. Older individuals may think young adults are interesting, kind, conceited, or impolite [80]. Harwood and Lin [50] assessed the themes of GP-GC interactions from the grandparents' point of view; however, they did not use them precisely.

Grandparents identified four primary aspects of their GP-GC connections: emotions of separation from their grandchildren, pride, advice and information exchanges, and attachment. Future studies may examine how expectations being violated may impact grandparents' interactions with their grandkids and relationship outcomes like satisfaction. These topics offer frameworks to interpret grandparents' expectations [54]. Expectancies should also be taken into account, according to some studies. According to Fowler and Soliz [14], future studies should look at how grandparent PSDs compare to what grandkids anticipate from their grandparents' communication and how grandkids respond when these disclosure standards are broken. Future studies are urged by Holladay and Seipke [27] to examine how grandparents' expectations for communication vary depending on how far away their grandkids reside from them.

Future scholars may also use constructivism as a guiding philosophy [81]. According to Hummert et al. [24], cognitive complexity is one of the factors that might affect stereotyping in Hummert's ASI model. Younger people who are more cognitively complex are less likely to stereotype negatively and more likely to stereotype favourably about older adults. Anderson et al. [25] tested the ASI model and discovered that younger persons with higher cognitive complexity are more prone to positively stereotype their elder friends and grandparents than their less cognitively complex peers. Further research on this focus on cognitive complexity is warranted [22], as cognitive complexity may mitigate several previous findings.

Harwood et al. [56] discovered, for instance, that, from the grandchildren's point of view, relationship closeness was adversely correlated with grandparents' PSDs, conversations about health and age, and condescending communication. However, these factors were favourably connected with age salience. Some of these associations may be moderated by cognitive complexity, making them stronger for grandchildren with lower cognitive complexity and weaker for those with higher cognitive complexity. Higher cognitively complex grandchildren may find it easier to ignore and forgive some of these communication habits without allowing them to impact their attachment to their grandparents negatively.

9 | Increased Attention to Demographic Differences in GP-GC Communication

Researchers studying GP-GC may also consider how various theories function according to demographic variations, such as the sex, race, and culture of grandparents and grandchildren. Researchers studying GP-GC connections have primarily not systematically investigated variations in GP-GC relationships based on whether the grandparent is a paternal grandfather, maternal grandmother, maternal grandfather, or paternal grandmother. In one of the few research comparing the perceptions of maternal grandparents' PSDs to those of granddaughters, Barker [15] examined variations in GP-GC communication between the sexes. She conceded that several of the measurements and analyses confused the impressions of the grandchildren about the communication of one grandparent with the grandparents' perspectives as a dyad.

A more common limitation of GP-GC research is an over-representation of maternal grandparents (especially maternal grandmothers) and an underrepresentation of paternal grandparents (especially paternal grandfathers [14], [60]). Mansson et al. [5] also acknowledge that their research is limited in that it did not consider differences according to GP-GC sex compositions and according to maternal and paternal GP-GC relationships, even though these demographic variables have been shown to make a difference. For example, dyadic research suggests grandchildren are closer to their maternal grandmothers than other types of grandparents [82].

Kam and Hecht [60] also document the research on whether grandsons and granddaughters have different experiences in their GP-GC relationships, with some research suggesting similar experiences and others suggesting different ones. Fowler and Soliz [14] argue that grandsons and granddaughters might have different affective and communicative responses to grandparents' PSDs, and they encourage future researchers to examine this question. In short, then, much room exists for future GP-GC researchers to consider how the sex characteristics of the GP-GC dyad influence GP-GC communication.

Even less frequently considered are how race, ethnicity, and culture might influence GP-GC communication and relationships. Again, this current review focuses on Western research programs, especially those from the United States. Other work has taken a more global perspective. For example, some work has compared Taiwanese and Euro-American grandmothers' beliefs about what it means to be a grandmother [83], [84].

Whereas Euro-American grandparents seem to consider themselves more companions than disciplinarians, Taiwanese grandmothers seem to see themselves as caretakers tasked with providing guidance and correcting grandchildren [84]. In addition to following the advice of previous researchers regarding quantitative studies on how their findings might vary based on race, ethnicity, or culture [41], [46], [13], [12], future researchers may carry out these qualitative comparisons. Evaluating relationship expectations is strongly related to the recommendation for further research that focuses on individual cultures. Examining how cultural expectations of the GP-GC relationship vary might be one innovative study project [46].

Mansson [41] points out that grandchildren anticipate their grandparents to show affection. However, researchers haven't yet looked into the consequences of going against this assumption. Such research would probably have applications as abusive (and/or seen as abusive) grandparents may be part of a wider abuse or neglect cycle within the family. Researching distant grandparents may be particularly crucial if, in some cultures, they serve as the primary carers or head of the home. Kam and Hecht [60] provide EVT as an additional avenue for future study to investigate if identity gaps are linked to favourable or unfavourable results.

10 | Conclusion

In summary, this study addressed three primary theoretical frameworks—communicatively behavior-focused theories, affect-related theories, and intergroup-oriented theories as well as the empirical data that supported them. These frameworks have influenced the GP-GC communication literature in the United States. For

every idea, a heuristic value and degree of support are suggested, along with four avenues for future research based on patterns found in previous studies. A novel model awaiting empirical testing synthesizes several GP-GC ideas and future research areas.

Since fifteen years ago, intergenerational communication research has emerged from its relational vacuum, and the field of GP-GC communication research has expanded significantly. Testing this new model could contribute to the advancement of GP-GC theorizing, which could have practical benefits for the parties involved as well as families more broadly. Additionally, more qualitative approaches in naturalistic settings will likely help clarify the discursive processes that unfold within it.

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