“My Bibi” A Conversation: Grandmothers Raising Teen Granddaughters

Dr. Willa Doswell, RN, PhD, FAAN
Claudia Kregg-Byers, BSN, BA, RN
Dr. Betty Barter, PhD, RN, CNM
“Grandparents sprinkle stardust over the lives of their grandchildren.”

Alex Haley
Introduction

- Under 18 year olds are being raised by grandmothers (GM) in Kinship Care for the following reasons: 1) Abandonment and neglect, 2) Parental illness (mental and/or physical), 3) Substance abuse

- 24% of all foster children live in kinship care in 2005
Introduction

- Non-Hispanic black children account for 32% of children in foster care

- Grandchildren (GC) are more likely to live in poverty w/GM caregiver w/out parent present

- GM are reported to have less education, be in poor health, have high levels of housing & food insecurity problems
Introduction

Problem: Behavior of today's adolescents which is influenced by sexually explicit films, videogames, hip hop music, recreational drugs, permissive sexual behavior, often conflicts with the values of GM.
Introduction
As we focus on the reality of **Kinship Care** we consider:

- Situation of GM
- Living arrangements of GM
- Other/alternate responsibilities of GM
- Stages of life development of GM
- Physical and Social condition of GM
Purpose

To obtain community input into the development of an intervention to assist grandmothers who serve as parent with strategies to raise preteen and teen granddaughters successfully.
Background

- African American (AA) grandmothers have historically played a pivotal role in providing care to their GC. The shared caring for children by GM within the AA community originated in West African culture, thus “Bibi” is used for this project.

- Characteristics: of GM: younger and older than expected, less educated, often live in poverty, multiple health risks and problems
Background

- 4.5 million children are living in a household headed by either or both grandparents.
- 10% of all grandparents are raising their grandchild (GC).
- Characteristics of GC: attachment disorders, depression, school problems, weakened immune systems, poor eating, sleep disorders, physical disabilities, and hyperactivity.
Background

- 2.4 million children live in homes headed by grandparents with parent(s) present

- The percentage of teenagers living with their GM has increased
Significance

GM experience one or more conditions associated with significant morbidity and accelerated mortality in older persons:

- Coronary Heart
- Hypertension
- COPD
- Diabetes
- Obesity
- Breast CA
- Depression
- Pneumonia
- Heart Failure
- Renal Failure
- Prostate CA
- Colon CA
### Significance
Leading Causes of Death for Older Persons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disease</th>
<th>Percent of Deaths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heart Disease</td>
<td>32.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cancer</td>
<td>22.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cerebrovascular Disease</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COPD</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Significance

- Older adults, even African Americans, have increasingly longer life expectancies.
- GP have longer relationships (30 yrs+) attachments to GC.
- Intergenerational relationships are more complex and significant roles in contemporary everyday life.

There is need for investigation of competency of roles and relationships of Grandparents (GM) with GC (GD).

(Waites, 2007)
Purpose

As a prelude to conducting a pilot study about intergenerational GM care giving of teen girls, discussion groups were held to obtain community and grass root input into the feasibility of an intervention to assist Bibi serving as parents to raise GD successfully.
Project Design and Method

**Design:** Discussion groups as sources for qualitative content analysis

**Method:**
1) Facilitated discussion and observations with note taking and recording of events

2) Prepared list of questions to guide discussion

3) Discussion length 1-hour
Sample

- 40 Self identified African American grandmothers, ages 45-80 who are part of a Pittsburgh grandparent support group and a local after church discussion group.
Goals of the Discussion Group

1) Examine if GM, serving as parent of adolescents girls, would participate in a study

2) Determine GMs perceptions of needs when faced with the responsibilities of raising their granddaughters

3) Identify what elements should be included in a study that would be most helpful to participants to be successful parents of their granddaughters
Process of the Discussion (Data Collection)

- Information was collected through informal note taking by a non-participating facilitator, during lunch as part of the regular meeting routine
- IRB University of Pittsburgh approval was obtained
- Scripted list of questions
- Discussion length: one hour
Process of the Discussion

- Facilitator lead the group to discuss the challenges and rewards for taking care of GD, and areas where they needed support and information to enhance their parenting skills.

- Participants were informed that the notes would be converted to topics to consider as part of the proposed intervention in the pilot study to follow.
So What Did We Discover?
Key Challenges Grandmothers Face While Raising Teen Girls:

1) Financial: Inadequate finances based on Social Security or Retirement benefits, denied benefits (TANF, Medicaid and subsidized child care), difficulty finding housing

2) Physical Health Issues: For the GM, Physical exhaustion, multiple co-morbidities, increasing age appropriate impairments
Key Challenges Grandmothers Face While Raising Teen Girls:

3) Psychological:
- GM expressed anxiety about talking about pubertal changes, healthy sexual behaviors, negative peer influences, heterosexual relationships, and understanding the language and slang used by GDs without having to speak that language and vice versa.
- Parenting again when they thought parenting was over.
Key Personal Challenges Grandmothers Face While Raising Teen Girls:

- Legal Custody issues/options
- Respite care, recreational ideas and services
GM Perceptions in their own words

- “I have no social life for me at all most times from now on”
- “I have problems dealing with my grandchild’s mother or father and the problems they have get in the way of taking care of my granddaughter.”
- “I always worry if there will be enough food and other stuff to feed and take care of us all.”
Grandmothers Report of Rewards

- Providing safe secure environment
- Preventing the girls from winding up “on the streets”
- Keeping the family together, and avoiding foster care placement
- Keeping the grandchild in the school
Preferred Content of Intervention Sessions

- Pubertal Development
- Other Support Groups
- Complicated family make-up/family dynamics
- Relationships with their own children
- Boy/Girl Relationships
Preferred Content of Intervention Sessions

- Spirituality
- Respect
- Discipline
- Language: altering the patterns of cussing/swearing/inappropriate language
- Setting Rules
Preferred **Content** of Intervention Sessions

- Sessions held morning, monthly, over a meal for no more than 2 hours per month
- Gift cards for participation
- Peer-leadership in the discussions
Preferred Content of Sessions

- Confidentiality of what is shared
- Clarity re who is considered “Grandma”
- Babysitting service for younger children
The Next Step: “My Bibi”: An Intervention for Grandmothers Raising Granddaughters

- **Purpose:** A pilot study of 3 session, culturally based intervention to enhance grandmother ability to rear their adolescent teen granddaughters, ages 11-15.

- **Specific Aims:** Focusing on feasibility and perceived benefit for GMs, the study’s specific aims 1) to explore if grandmothers serving as a parents of adolescent girls, would participate in the “My Bibi” study
The Next Step: “My Bibi”

Specific Aims cont:

• 1a) greater knowledge of adolescent growth and development; 1b) greater knowledge of older adult growth and development

• 2) greater GM knowledge of GM–GD communication and parenting skills regarding teen sexual behavior

• 3) greater knowledge of the management of specific chronic illnesses that affect GM.
The Next Step: “My Bibi”

Intervention:

- 6-8 sessions on topics discussed in previous slide
- Some sessions will have GM/GD dyad activities
- An intervention homework book (binder)
- Celebratory/Summation/Feedback gathering
- 6 month, 12 month, 18 month follow-up
The Next Step: “My Bibi”

- A fourth aim will evaluate the psychometric assessment of modified and established instruments measuring GM-GD closeness and GM-GD communication.
Analysis

- Groups will be stratified by age:
  - 45-65 yrs (Middle Age)
  - 66-80 yrs (Older Adults)
  - 80+ years (Old Older Adults)

- Statistical methods to be used: Descriptive statistics, Multiple Regression, Factor analysis
References


“In every conceivable manner, the family is link to our past, bridge to our future.”

Alex Haley

Thank You.

Questions/Comments/
Suggestions