

**"RAISING A DAD": PARENTING SUPPORT AND PSYCHOLOGICAL STRESS
AMONG AFRICAN AMERICAN GRANDMOTHERS
WHOSE SONS ARE TEENAGE FATHERS**

by

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to God, the redeemer of my soul.

You have truly been good to me.

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CHAPTER I

Parenting support and psychological stress among African American paternal grandmothers whose sons are teenage fathers: An adaptation of the caregiving stress model

Introduction

Very little research has examined parenting social support among African American mothers whose sons are teenage fathers [herein referred to as 'paternal grandmothers'] and their role in improved outcomes for African American teenage fathers. I have identified only two studies that focused on African American paternal grandmothers, either in isolation or in tandem with African American maternal grandmothers (mothers of teenage mothers) in the literature (Dallas, 2004; Dallas & Chen, 1999). Furthermore, there is scant research on the pathways through which parenting support may influence psychological stress among any grandmother population, including those whose sons are teenage fathers. The purpose of this dissertation is to address this lacuna in the literature by examining the association between African American paternal grandmothers' parenting social support and psychological stress through critical examination of related literature and empirical investigation.

In this review, I utilize and critique studies with related populations, such as teen fathers, teen mothers and maternal grandmothers, to gain a richer understanding of these grandmothers' contexts, parenting support and psychological stress. Updated

research on lower-income African American paternal grandmothers is sorely needed. The most recent research on this population dates back almost ten years. The past ten years have seen multiple cultural, social, and economic changes, including periods of great recession, which have affected African American families profoundly (Weller, 2013). In light of these changing contexts, a more contemporary portrait of African American paternal grandmothers and their parenting support is warranted; paternal grandmothers are likely operating under more constrained contexts than they were at the time past studies were conducted.

Parenting social support includes informational, appraisal, instrumental, and emotional support for teen parents and children (Hunter, 1997; Heaney & Israel, 2008). Informational and appraisal support include providing young parents with instruction and assistance about childrearing tasks both to train them in parenting and to help them engage in self-evaluation about their parenting practices (Roye & Balk, 1996; Wakschlag, Chase-Lansdale, & Brooks-Gunn, 1996). Instrumental support includes providing financial assistance to the father and his child, vis-à-vis the maternal family (Miller, 1994). Emotional support includes helping fathers negotiate developmental transitions through adolescence and into parenthood (Cohler & Musick, 1996). Parenting support also encompasses parenting the son in regards to non-parenting behaviors closely associated with the father role, such as supporting the son in educational and employment realms, protecting fathers from engagement in risk behavior, and guiding the son in developing a sense of masculinity (Bush, 2004; Marsiglio, 1993; Miller, 1997).

Much of African American paternal grandmothers' parenting support is performed for, and benefits, teen fathers, and to a lesser extent, their grandchildren. While there is evidence that a small minority of paternal grandmothers support the mothers of their grandchildren (Dallas & Chen, 1999; Leadbeater & Way, 2001; Voran & Phillips, 1993), issues pertaining to that relationship are outside the scope of this dissertation. In a study of 29 African American teenage fathers, 69% reported that their mothers played a major part in supporting their fathering practices (Miller, 1994). Similarly, Hendricks, Howard and Caesar (1981) found in a sample of 95 African American teenage fathers that 88% turned to paternal grandmothers for assistance with raising children.

Research is needed in this area for two reasons. First, African American paternal grandmothers strengthen teenage-parent centered families. While teenage birth rates are at historic lows, African American teens still have teen births at a higher than average rate (Hamilton & Ventura, 2012). African American adolescent males aged 15-19 become fathers at the rate of 34 males per 1000, more than twice the rate of White adolescent males (15 males per 1000) (Martinez, Chandra, Abma, Jones, & Mosher, 2006). In a recent Child Trends brief using data from the 1997 cohort of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, Scott, Steward-Streng, Manlove and Moore (2012) reported that 9% of teenage males became fathers before their twentieth birthday. Of that 9%, 29% were African American/Black. Another, earlier report found that 25% of African American men with at least one child had their first child prior to the age of 20, compared to the national estimate of 15% (Martinez, Chandra, Abma, Jones & Mosher, 2006). Given that there are approximately 11 million males between the ages of 15-19 in the US (U.S. Census, 2013), these statistics show that there are a

substantial number of African American males who are teenage fathers. Paternal grandmothers' instrumental, emotional, instructional and appraisal support have been found to be associated with increased father involvement (Bunting and McAuley, 2004; Christmon, 1990; Fagen, Bernd & Whiteman, 2007; Hunter, 1997), which has been associated with fathers' improved health and social outcomes (Black, Dubowitz & Starr, 1999; Paschal, Lewis-Moss, & Hsiao, 2011; Tuffin, Rouch & Frewin, 2010; Wiemann, Agurcia, Rickert, Berenson & Volk, 2006). Therefore, it is important to understand how paternal grandmothers engage in parenting support.

Second, providing parenting support may increase paternal grandmothers' vulnerability to psychological stress. African American women identify ongoing events such as parenting, more so than changing events, when describing salient stressors in their lives (Watts-Jones, 1990). Chronic stress, the effect of everyday persistent stressors, has been linked to greater likelihood of depression, heart disease, hypertension and early mortality (Cohen, Janicki-Deverts & Miller, 2007; Grason, Minkovitz, Misra & Strobino, 2001; Israel, Farquhar, Schulz, James & Parker, 2002). One way this functions is through allostatic load, or the cumulative strain or "wear and tear" on the body due to chronic activation of the physiological stress response (Geronimus, Hicken, Keene & Bound, 2006). Compared to White women, African American women exhibit higher probabilities of high and earlier allostatic load that are not explained by differences in socioeconomic status (Geronimus, Hicken, Keene & Bound, 2006). Correspondingly, researchers have drawn multiple linkages between psychological stress and physical health problems among African American female populations (Budescu, Taylor & McGill, 2011; Troxel, Matthews, Bromberger & Sutton-

Tyrrell, 2003). Identifying the antecedents to these physical health problems is vital, as African American females suffer a high burden of chronic diseases. For example, 44% of African American women live with hypertension (National Center for Health Statistics, 2012), 10% of African American women have been diagnosed with a form of heart disease (CDC, 2013), and approximately 15% of African American women have been diagnosed with diabetes (CDC, 2013). Therefore, it is critical to be attuned to potential stressors in the lives of African American women associated with stress, such as parenting support. In regards to paternal grandmothers, there is evidence that these women provide parenting support to their sons until their grandchildren reach adulthood (Hunter, 1997; Roy, 2004).

The purpose of this chapter is to review research on the provision of parenting support by African American grandmothers to their sons who are fathers and grandmothers' psychological stress, highlighting contextual antecedents to parenting support and mechanisms by which parenting support may be associated with grandmothers' psychological stress. I argue that paternal grandmothers experience parenting support as a stressor uniquely because of their experiences as African American women and mothers. These roles intersect in their parenting of African American teenage fathers, requiring them to parent differently from maternal grandmothers (e.g. mothers whose daughters are teenage mothers). Furthermore, I argue that understanding how parenting support manifests in this population will shed more insight into how cultural, political, economic and family contexts intertwine to influence parenting support, and how such support may be associated with psychological stress for these grandmothers. Finally, I identify a need for more

research on African American paternal grandmothers that responds to their unique needs and multiple contexts in raising African American teenage fathers.

African American Paternal Grandmothers: An Intersectional Perspective

African American paternal grandmothers' parenting support can be contextualized using an Intersectionality framework, which provides a means for articulating how the intersection of multiple social categories, as they are socially interpreted, influence different lived experiences for people within broader macrosystemic categories (Crenshaw, 1991). For example, race, ethnicity, gender or social class represent different social categories that apply to paternal grandmothers that are socially interpreted (Crenshaw, 1991). Collins (1989) explains that the intersection of social categories in individuals' lives create for them particular experiences and standpoints (e.g. perspectives on their and others' social position and status). In terms of family research, such an approach emphasizes that the structural contexts of African American family organization are analytical constructs rather than descriptive variables (Collins, 1998; MacDonald & Richards, 2008). The use of an Intersectional framework focuses on how structural contexts, such as gender norms, economic conditions and community environments, shape why African American paternal grandmothers become grandmothers and how they engage with this role.

In a discussion on Intersectionality research, McCall (2005) identified three major approaches adapted in scholarly efforts to explore the meaningfulness of the intersection of social categories: *anticategorical complexity*, *intercategorical complexity*, and *intracategorical complexity*. *Anticategorical complexity* aims to dismantle social

inequalities by using theoretical research to deconstruct social categories that have little power other than what social meanings and values have placed on them (McCall, 2005). In contrast, *intercategorical complexity* examines relationships of inequality empirically with the goal of recording changing relationships between social groups (McCall, 2005). In a middle ground between these two approaches, *intracategorical complexity* exposes the heterogeneity inherent in the intersecting of multiple social categories and explores the processes through which these intersections, and resulting inequalities, are experienced, reproduced, and resisted in everyday life (McCall, 2005).

This latter approach is what I use to contextualize the experiences of African American paternal grandmothers. I will examine a neglected intersection of categories, specifically African American race, female gender, and parent to African American male children, with a goal of exposing some of the potential diversity among African American grandmothers whose children are teenage parents. While there are likely differences between paternal and maternal grandmothers, much of the work on teenage parent support systems have focused on the latter. Such disparities are partly rooted in hegemonic social constructions of African American femininity, masculinity and fatherhood that place the impetus of childrearing and associated empirical research onto the maternal side of the extended teenage-parent family. While these constructions may have little power in themselves, they have significance for African American paternal grandmothers' experiences and implications for their health and wellbeing. I explore these differences not only to empirically record how maternal and paternal grandmothers differ, but also to assert that these differences will be critical in

understanding and interpreting the relationship between parenting support and psychological stress among African American paternal grandmothers.

As Cole (2009) articulates in her discussion of Intersectionality and psychology, attention to social roles and inequality not only exposes researchers to the role of social life on mental health, but also draws attention to more “upstream” intervention to improve outcomes for diverse populations. Use of this framework highlights the unique needs of African American paternal grandmothers, allowing for more tailored research and practice. An intersectional approach has been used previously to examine the experiences of caregiving grandmothers. In a national study of African American grandparents, Minkler and Fuller-Thomson (2005) found that the burden of grandchild caregiving among African American grandparents was disproportionately placed onto poorer grandmothers. Similarly, I use Intersectionality in this dissertation to reveal how the intersection of social roles influences a unique burden of parenting support among African American paternal grandmothers.

African American Paternal Grandmothers and Parenting Support

Throughout this section, I provide descriptions of cultural, political, community and family contexts that integrate a discussion of race, gender, motherhood and parenthood to demonstrate how they intersect to create particular parenting support conditions for African American paternal grandmothers. What I highlight is that a significant number of paternal grandmothers are unique in that in supporting their sons, they navigate the cultural, political, community and family contexts of both African American motherhood and fatherhood. Many African American teenage fathers often

have good intentions towards teenage mothers and their children, but confront multiple systemic and interpersonal barriers in fulfilling the fathering ideal (Lemay, Cashman, Elfenbein & Felice, 2010). In turn, an inability to fulfill this ideal may contribute to tension throughout the extended teenage-parent centered family and discourages many teenage fathers from engaging in fathering (Bunting & McAuley, 2004; Carlson, 2004). Many paternal grandmothers providing parenting support often have to assist their sons through these myriad barriers in order to reduce their sons' distress, increase engagement, and protect their future life opportunities (Fagen, Bernd & Whiteman, 2007; Paschal, 2006). These barriers may be more salient in lower-income communities in which families may have more dependence on each other and/or social service agencies (Stack & Burton, 1993; Stack & Semmel, 1974). By contextualizing African American paternal grandmothers' parenting support in this way, I will illustrate that the gender of the teenage parent also matters when exploring the experience of parenting support among African American grandmothers whose children are teenage parents, and, subsequently, how parenting support may contribute to grandmothers' psychological stress.

Cultural Contexts of African American Paternal Grandmothers

In terms of cultural context, *race and gender norms regarding parenthood* shape paternal grandmothers' parenting support and their family networks' expectations for the parenting support role. One cultural discourse in reference to African American mothering dictates women should provide caregiving even in the midst of oppressive contexts, such as pervasive unemployment, discrimination and community instability,

and while managing other responsibilities to home, the community, and the workplace (Collins, 2000; Trotman, 2002; Wells-Wilbon & Simpson, 2009). This discourse links mothering both with the survival of African American families and communities, and African American women's strength, or ability to cope with difficult circumstances and burdens (Settles, Pratt-Hyatt, & Buchanan, 2008; Trotman, 2002; Woods-Giscombe, 2010). Studies have suggested that women engage these cultural discourses to varying degrees to shape their sense of themselves as women and mothers, and guide their mothering practices (Collins, 1987; Collins, 2000). For example, Woods-Giscombe (2010) found in a sample of demographically diverse African American women that most felt an obligation to appear strong and to help take care of others. Women may succumb to the pressure to adapt multiple roles and burdens, even at the expense of their health (Collins, 1987; Lekan, 2009; Woods-Giscombe, 2010). While these discourses can be harmful to women of any class background, women from lower-income backgrounds may be especially vulnerable to the effects of bearing multiple burdens, as they have less access to economic-related protective barriers such as financial resources and flexibility in the workplace.

One can observe these dynamics among women whose children are teenage parents. Much of the childcare work in extended teenage-parent centered families is placed onto women, mainly mothers and maternal grandmothers, but also paternal grandmothers (Savio Beers & Hollo, 2009; Stack & Semmel, 1974). For all intents and purposes, while teenage fathers' support, either financially or emotionally, may be desired and/or encouraged, it is often not planned for or considered necessary (Leadbeater & Way, 2001; Paschal, 2006). Some paternal grandmothers may

compensate for childrearing responsibilities not performed by the maternal family and/or teenage father (Dallas, 2004). Grandmothers in Dallas' (1999) study stated a belief that compensating for fathering behavior was a part of raising their sons.

Political Contexts of African American Paternal Grandmothers

While maternal grandmothers likely experience a higher burden of instrumental support as a result of such social policies, paternal grandmothers experience burdens that are qualitatively different from that of maternal grandmothers. Various social policies, including PRWORA (the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996), have increased institutionally-mandated parenting support on the part of maternal grandmothers, who are often required to house teenage mothers for them to receive formal social support (Benson, 2004; Uhlenberg, 2009). However, fathers receive substantially less formal social support than teenage mothers (Allen-Meares, 1984; Brown, Callahan, Strega, Walmsley & Dominelli, 2009; Bunting & McAuley, 2004). In the past, social services for African American teenage fathers tended to emphasize childcare and father involvement (Weinman, Buzi & Smith, 2005; Weinman, Smith & Buzi, 2002). However, social service agencies and community organizations have begun designing programs to address fathers' needs more holistically, including components such as school completion and job training (Bronte-Tinkew, Burkhauser & Metz, 2008). However, these programs are still scarce compared to programs for teenage mothers.

As a result, African American paternal grandmothers still bear a major burden in supporting sons as they adjust to fatherhood. Rozie-Battle (2003) noted the myriad

legal issues teenage fathers faced once their children were born, including those related to establishing paternity and child support. Government entities, for example, may look to teenage fathers and the paternal family by extension, to “replace” or supplement state welfare payments to the teenage mother (Rozie-Battle, 2003). For lower-income households, especially those already involved with government welfare systems this can be especially problematic because it places more burden on tight resources. Combined with the lack of formal social support for teenage fathers, paternal grandmothers may find themselves navigating fathers through these processes virtually alone.

Community Contexts of African American Paternal Grandmothers

Community context may influence parenting support for paternal grandmothers in a variety of ways. Many paternal grandmothers, particularly low-income grandmothers, live in communities that often have a dearth of resources related to basic needs, such as transportation, grocery stores, employment and adequate housing (MacDonald & Richards, 2008; McNeil & Murphy, 2010; Paschal, 2006). This dearth of community resources can increase grandmothers’ difficulties in providing parenting support to their sons (McNeil & Murphy, 2010). In this section, I focus on impoverished communities that may also have high rates of crime. Living in these types of communities may motivate grandmothers to protect sons from potential risks, and contribute to grandmothers’ experience of stress. Both maternal and paternal grandmothers may support teenage parents who are involved with high-risk social engagement, such as maintaining friendships with peers engaged in illegal violent and/or criminal behavior

(Bunting & McAuley, 2004; Clemmens, 2003; Marsiglio, 1993). However, mothers' and fathers' motivations may be different. The transition to motherhood often motivates teenage girls to reduce or eliminate social interactions with high-risk peers in order to fulfill expectations of "good mothering" by removing themselves from dangerous situations (Clemmens, 2003). For teenage fathers, however, the intersection of poverty and a desire to be "good fathers" and providers can motivate their decisions to begin or sustain involvement in criminal behavior. In one study with teenage mothers living in an impoverished urban community, Cramer and McDonald (1996) voiced teenage mothers' concerns that the fathers of their children were involved in dangerous street activities, such as drug dealing, petty theft and hustling, in order to provide financially. Hernandez (2002) and Lodgson, Gagne, Hughes, Patterson and Rakestraw (2005) reported similar findings that directly tie high-risk behavior to attempts to fulfill the father-as-provider role in impoverished communities. This is not to say that all teenage fathers engage in criminal behavior. However, among those who are at risk for engagement in illegal activity, their mothers may be aware of these risks, and may choose to provide financial support in order to offset sons' financial burdens and lessen or eliminate sons' engagement in high-risk behavior.

Family Context of African American Paternal Grandmothers

Family context also influences paternal grandmothers' parenting support. African American kinship networks have typically been matrifocal, in that the woman is central to the creation of resources and decision-making within the family (Collins, 1987; George and Dickerson, 1995; Pruchno, 1999; Silverstein & Marenco, 2001; Tanner,

1974). Correspondingly, many African American children are close to and rely on their mothers as their primary source of guidance and support (Hill, 2002; Johnson & Staples, 2004). This is no less true for teenage fathers. Hendricks, Howard, and Caesar (1981) found that African American teenage fathers were more likely to turn to paternal grandmothers for emotional and instrumental assistance than other sources. Hunter (1997) found that young adult African American fathers turned to their mothers for childcare, particularly when they were employed. Both Christmon (1990) and Dallas and Kavanagh (2010) found that African American teenage fathers turned to paternal grandmothers primarily even when paternal grandfathers were present in the home.

Paternal grandmothers' involvement in parenting support may also be motivated by family dynamics and kinwork. Stack and Burton (1993) offer a kinscripts framework, which describing patterns of interaction between African American kin networks, such as the network surrounding teenage parents. Some members of the network are recruited into doing work, what Stack and Burton call kin-scription. One purpose of these networks is to offer a protective barrier to the effects of pervasive poverty, such as that found in lower-income teenage-parent families. In a qualitative study of 25 kinship systems including African American teenage fathers, Dallas and Kavanagh (2010) found all participating families lived below or near the poverty line—household incomes ranged from \$0 to \$28,000, with the average being approximately \$14,600. In the case of paternal grandmothers, some grandmothers may be recruited to perform work that others cannot or will not do (Stack & Semmel, 1974).

Psychological Context of African American Paternal Grandmothers

What may be most critical in considering the uniqueness of parenting support among African American paternal grandmothers are its psychological aspects. Specifically, parenting support for paternal grandmothers may be associated with a psychological dissonance that occurs when women fail to relate to either the “grandmother” role or are uncomfortable with their experiences with their fathers. In reference to the grandmother role, this may relate to the timing of grandmotherhood, or, the age at which a given woman becomes a grandmother. In this respect, paternal grandmothers are likely to have similar experiences as maternal grandmothers. Paternal grandmothers’ ages range from early 30s to 70s, similar to maternal grandmothers (Dallas, 2004; Dallas & Chen, 1999). Furthermore, estimates of mothers of teenage parents who were also teenage parents range from 33% to 62% (Culp, Culp, Noland & Anderson, 2006; Klein, 2005). Dallas (2004) found, in a qualitative study of 20 African American mothers of teenage parents, that on average, paternal grandmothers were 16 when having their first child, younger than the average age of 18 for maternal grandmothers.

Grandmothers of any age may experience a sense of loss of self when the transition to grandmotherhood does not seem relevant to how grandmothers see themselves; however, younger grandmothers are more likely to be in a mid-life period, bringing with it unique issues related to development (Ladner & Gourdine, 1984; Lee See, Bowles & Darlington, 1998; McNeil & Murphy, 2010; Sadler & Clemmens, 2004). For some grandmothers, the grandmother role implies certain characteristics that may not match with grandmothers’ vision of themselves. For example, Dallas (2004)

reported that grandmothers were displeased when people expected them to dress or act like older women now that they were grandmothers. Such tension can be exacerbated if the grandmother was a teenage parent herself. For some teenage parents, early entrance into parenthood means missing out on normative “young adult” experiences like romantic relationships, schooling or career development during young adulthood (Ladner & Gourdine, 1984; Lee See, Bowles & Darlington, 1998; McNeil & Murphy, 2010). Parents who missed out in adolescence may capitalize on such opportunities in mid-life, when their children are older. A desire to pursue these opportunities may preclude some grandmothers from embracing the grandmother role and associated responsibilities.

Some paternal grandmothers may also carry negative attitudes about fatherhood. Demographically speaking, most low-income paternal grandmothers are also single mothers. For example, a study with African American teenage fathers found that four-fifths resided in single-parent homes, with only one home being father-only (Paschal, Lewis-Moss & Hsiao, 2011). Furthermore, as some African American single mothers, generally speaking, grew up in single-parent households themselves (Johnson & Staples, 2004), some paternal grandmothers are likely to have spent childhoods without fathers. Even in households in which fathers were physically present, some of these men may not have been emotionally available. In Dallas and Chen’s (1999) qualitative study with African American paternal grandmothers, one grandmother recounts the following experience with her father:

"I asked my father, 'Could you help me with...?' 'Ask your mother!' It was always, 'Go ask your mother!' So when he left, she was already strong-willed anyway. A lot of things I went to my mother for. I didn't go to my father for a lot of advice, a lot of

answers, I looked to my mother and she was both mother and father."

Not all women have this experience. Some women have had positive experiences with fathers and other men in their lives, even within lower-income communities. Still others may have maintained positive attitudes about fatherhood despite their circumstances. But others may grapple with unfamiliarity, discomfort or even hostility with the "father" role. At the same time, their desires to be "good mothers", sacrificing their own health and wellbeing, often means they remain engaged with supporting their sons.

Depending on grandmothers' past and current experiences with their own fathers, the tension between caring for their sons and confronting their own disappointments with their own experiences with fathers and partners may contribute to psychological stress.

Paternal grandmothers may also struggle with raising sons who fail to engage with fatherhood, further triggering frustration and other emotions. While some teenage parents embrace their new role, others disengage with their parenting role, which has been associated with tension between grandmothers and parents (Apfel & Seitz, 1991; Dallas, 2004; Paschal, Lewis-Moss & Hsiao, 2011). Fathers' disengagement, however, may be influenced by the gendering of childcare as a woman's responsibility. Past scholars have noted that both African American paternal grandmothers (Dallas & Chen, 1999) and teenage fathers (Paschal, 2006) expect women to serve as both "mothers and fathers" to children born to teenage parents, in that women were expected to perform both normative fathering (e.g. providing financially) and mothering (e.g. nurturing, caring for the child's basic needs) behavior. However, teenage fathers and paternal grandmothers may respond differently to this construction of motherhood. In Paschal's (2006) study, young fathers described admiration for their mothers *because*

they managed and provided financially for households despite their own father's absence or involvement. In turn, the young fathers believed that the mothers of their children should be prepared to do the same as their mothers did. To some of these fathers, the *choice* to disengage was a reasonable option. Paternal grandmothers in Dallas and Chen's (1999) study also expected the mothers of their sons' baby to take on the primary responsibility for childrearing and providing, as well as facilitate relationships between the teenage father and his child. However, unlike fathers, paternal grandmothers responded to this expectation differently, in that they believed willful disengagement was problematic. In response, paternal grandmothers may experience increased stress due to sons' attitudes as well as the added burdens to existing parenting support (Dallas & Chen, 1999).

In summary, while African American paternal grandmothers share commonalities with other grandmother populations, such as maternal grandmothers, they have unique experiences in providing parenting support to teenage fathers. While some paternal grandmothers transition relatively smoothly, others struggle with problems related to contextual and interpersonal issues. Some may embrace while others resist cultural expectations that women should serve as primary caregivers. Some may not relate personally to the "grandmother" role, and/or may have transitioned into grandmotherhood earlier than planned. Because they care for teenage fathers, paternal grandmothers often grapple with the cultural, political, community and family-level contexts of teenage fatherhood in order to navigate their sons successfully through the transition to parenthood. Lower-income paternal grandmothers may have more difficulties through which to navigate. Finally, while helping sons, some paternal

grandmothers may also struggle with negative experiences and interactions with fathers and/or partners. Understanding how this intersection of multiple social roles (i.e. race, gender, motherhood, parenthood with male children) comes together to shape the experience of paternal grandmothers' parenting support is worthy of further exploration. Such work highlights the diversity within African American extended teenage parent families, illustrates the nestedness of parenting support within multiple contexts, and serves as a transition into understanding how different forms of mothering work influence psychological stress and other health outcomes.

African American Paternal Grandmothers and Psychological Stress

In the previous section, I highlighted how African American paternal grandmothers experience parenting support uniquely due to the intersection of their experiences as African American women, mothers and parents of African American teenage fathers. Similarly, in this section, I will use an intersectional perspective to unpack the experience of stress among African American women. Furthermore, I will use an intersectional perspective to shed insight into the usefulness of specific theoretical models in exploring psychological stress among African American paternal grandmothers.

Stress, as a concept, refers to a disruption of one's sense of balance and equilibrium (Glanz & Schwartz, 2008). Most are familiar with physiological responses to stimuli that one assesses as risky or dangerous (e.g. "flight or fight" responses). However, individuals also experience psychological responses due to stimuli. Lazarus (2000), in a commentary on the state of stress research, notes:

...psychological stress can be thought of as part of a complex, organized biosocial-psychological entity or whole, which psychologists refer to as an emotion, such as anger, fear, shame, joy, or love (pp. 668).

This conceptualization of stress is useful in that it highlights stress as a both a biological and psychological response, as well as part of an overarching emotional process.

Stress, in itself, is not inherently positive or negative, in that the outcomes from stress may be positive and/or negative. For example, some grandmothers may find that the stress associated with parenting support is a catalyst for positive action, whereas others may react negatively to or perceive ongoing parenting support as a chronic problem.

However, for the sake of discussion, I refer to distressed emotional responses to stressors as *stress*. I also define stressors as the “conditions, experiences, and activities that are problematic for people” (Pearlin et al., 1990, p. 586).

A more recent line of research is devoted to outlining the connections between structure, culture, stress and health among African American women. Earlier versions of psychological stress models conceptualized how external, micro-level stressors acted upon individuals, with little consideration of the transaction of individuals with their environments, which limited the utility of stress models in research and practice (Krohne, 2001; Smith & Lazarus, 1990). Later conceptualizations focus on the transaction of individuals and their environments, including macro-level constraints (i.e. culture, policy, institutions). Other researchers took the concept of transactions further by placing race, gender, and other social roles front and center in terms of understanding stress as a response to and a contributor to the pervasiveness of structural oppression.

Mullings (2002), for example, conceptualized a framework called “Sojourner Syndrome”. With this model, she articulated that African American women experience chronic stress that is rooted in structural oppression (e.g. inadequate housing due to class discrimination, employment discrimination due to racial discrimination, interpersonal violence due to sexist oppression). Furthermore, their experience of chronic stress was distinct from that experienced by other race/gender groups (i.e. White women, African American males) due to their membership in multiple, oppressed social categories. While she used this framework to describe the experiences of impoverished urban African American women, the framework is applicable to diverse groups of women of color.

Woods-Giscombe (2010) complemented this work with her development of the Superwoman Schema framework, which connected structural oppression to cultural attitudes about African American womanhood that were epitomized by sacrifice, silence and resistance to vulnerability. A demographically diverse sample of 48 African American women, 60% of them mothers, participated in focus groups on African American women and stress (Woods-Giscombe, 2010). Woods-Giscombe (2010) found women relied on ‘strength’—a culturally rooted construction of sacrifice, obligation to help others, and perseverance to succeed despite oppression--as a way of defining themselves. They received benefits from such definition, including the preservation of their families. However, they suffered stress embodiment (physical and mental illness women attributed to stress) and stress-related health behaviors (i.e. smoking, emotional eating, not sleeping).

Caregiving for those unable to care for themselves, such as children and disabled family members, profoundly affects African American women's health. The "mother" or "caregiver" role is a central part of many African American women's lives (Collins, 2000; Settles, Pratt-Hyatt & Buchanan, 2008; Trotman, 2002). According to Chadiha, Adams, Biegel, Auslander, and Gutierrez (2004), this is one major reason African American women are apt to deemphasize the burden caregiving brings. However, such deemphasizing does not alleviate health consequences of this work. In a comparison of African American and non-African American caregivers, Knight, Silverstein, McCallum and Fox (2000) found that, while African American caregivers perceived less burden in caregiving, they experienced equal levels of depression and anxiety. African American caregivers were also more likely to utilize emotion-based coping strategies such as distancing, accepting sole responsibility for outcomes, and escape; this neutralized any positive effect of perceiving less of a burden in caregiving. In this sample, the African American caregivers were younger than the White caregivers, which may complicate associations between caregiving and health further. Other studies with African American and White maternal grandmothers find African American grandmothers were more at risk for depression or to report higher depressive symptomatology (Caldwell, Antonucci & Jackson, 1998; McKinley, Brown & Caldwell, 2012; Schweingruber & Kalit, 2000).

It is likely that parenting support places pressure on most paternal grandmothers and their families. In some ways, paternal grandmothers' experience of providing parenting support should resemble that of maternal grandmothers. Like maternal grandmothers, both confront issues related to balancing the "grandmother" role with

other roles, such as “mother” or “worker” (Lee See, Bowles & Darlington, 1998). Both may also support their children under constrained circumstances, such as unemployment or underemployment (Culp, Culp, Noland, & Anderson, 2006; McNeil & Murphy, 2010). They may also face challenges dealing with contentious relationships between the paternal and maternal families (Dallas, 2004).

Literature on parenting support and mental health among grandmothers is scarce, but what exists typically focuses on how the work the grandmother does on behalf of the mother affects her health. Culp and colleagues (2006) found, in a sample of rural, mostly White, mid-life maternal grandmothers, the number of stressors women experienced in a year and childcare were strongly and positively correlated. In a study including mothers from multiple races and ethnicities, East (1999) reported mothers of teenage mothers spent approximately 30 hours a week on grandchild care, and that raising a teenage mother resulted in greater difficulties as time went on. Voran and Phillips (1993) found among twenty African American maternal grandmothers that satisfaction in performing childcare support was positively correlated with having a partner or receiving welfare, and suggested both served as forms of support for role overload. These studies illustrate that the work maternal grandmothers perform in caring for the grandchild and managing the mothers’ parenting may be stressful. They also illustrate that there are a number of external factors governing variations in grandmothers’ experience of parenting support and exposure to stress.

Previous studies on grandmothers whose children are teenage parents, however, fail to examine the role of more internally situated factors in driving psychological stress among this population. I argue that paternal grandmothers’ experience of stress when

parenting teenage fathers warrants further examination in part because they engage in less childcare and other instrumental stressors. By examining the experiences of paternal grandmothers, I will illustrate how their sons' transition to parenthood can create disruption to grandmothers' lives that are above and beyond the provision of instrumental care to include to the timing of role transitions and the effect of parenting support on relationships.

Examining Parenting Support and Psychological Stress: The Caregiving Stress Model

Paternal grandmothers' standpoints (e.g. perspectives on theirs and others' social position and status) as African American women, mothers to teenage parents, and mothers to sons may leave them vulnerable to psychological stress. Like maternal grandmothers, paternal grandmothers may be young grandmothers who were teenage mothers, experiencing the same developmental issues transitioning to grandmotherhood. Supporting their sons may also come with isolation. As previously discussed, teenage fathers can be invisible to formal social support entities, or even dismissed by community members and maternal families (Connor & White, 2007). Grandmothers are left with the challenge of supporting sons through difficult circumstances, as well as attempts to maintain connections with their grandchildren (Dallas & Chen, 1999). Since there are fewer African American teenage fathers than mothers (Guttmacher Institute, 2012), paternal grandmothers are left with fewer peers to relate to. Paternal grandmothers may themselves have negative associations with fatherhood stemming from negative experiences with their own fathers, troubles with intimate partners, or internalized negative cultural messages about African American

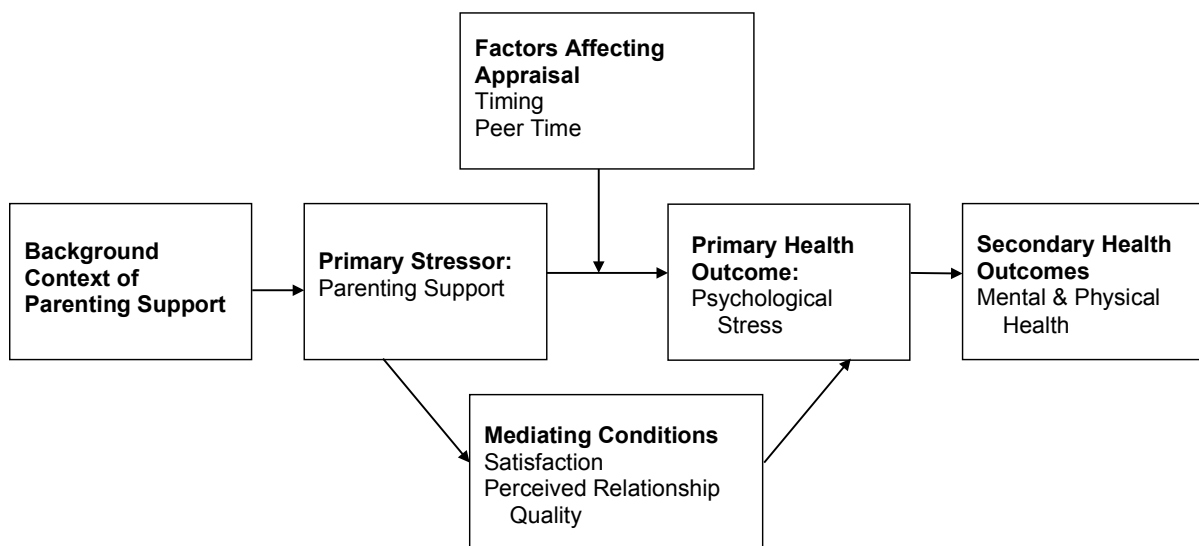
fathers, which may influence their assessments of their sons' ability to care for their children (Dallas & Chen, 1999). This may influence their satisfaction and relationships with sons, and subsequently, stress. Being in a position of frustration about these pressures can contribute to a sense of powerlessness and anger, which has been found to contribute to psychological stress (Thomas & Gonzalez-Prendes, 2009). It may be that the more grandmothers engage in parenting support, the more they confront these issues.

In this dissertation, I adapt the Caregiving Stress Model (Pearlin, et al, 1990) in order to explicate pathways between parenting support and psychological stress among African American paternal grandmothers whose sons are teenage fathers. Pearlin, et al (1990) noted that caregiving is, not strictly a role, but behavioral actions emanating from established relationships with others, such as parent-child or grandparent-child, lending credence to the appropriateness of this model in exploring parenting support and stress. In exploring caregiving, stress and health, researchers have used a variety of conceptual models emanating from broader stress process models that were designed specifically to describe family relationships, such as Caregiving Stress Model and Family Stress (McCubbin & McCubbin, 1989). Thus, they share constructs related to contextual sources of stress, stressors, appraisal, mediators, and health outcomes. However, the Caregiving Stress Model is often implemented in studies where the *caregiver's* health is the subject of empirical investigation, again, making it more appropriate for this sort of adaptation. The Caregiver Stress Model aims to illustrate that when changes occur in a family member's caregiving needs, those new burdens

create psychological imbalance in the caregiver’s life, which affects his or her life in multiple areas.

The Caregiver Stress Model is composed of four domains: background and context of caregiving, sources of stress, outcomes of stress and mediators of stress. However, I add factors affecting appraisal as a moderating influence. In summary (see Figure 1.1), *background context* influences the onset of the primary stressor, *parenting support*. In turn, *timing into grandmotherhood* and *peer time* moderate how grandmothers’ appraise parenting support as stressful. Additionally, mediating conditions, specifically *satisfaction with sons’ fathering practices* and *perceived relationship quality* between grandmother and teenage father, describe how *parenting support* influences *psychological stress* by mediating the relationship between these two constructs. Subsequently, grandmothers may experience *psychological stress* as a primary health outcome. Secondary health outcomes include compromises to *mental and physical health*.

Figure 1.1: Conceptual Model of African American Paternal Grandmothers’ Parenting Support and Psychological Stress



Background Context of Parenting Support

The background context of parenting support is the settings and situations that influence the onset and experience of parenting support. I have discussed previously some of these settings and situations, such as cultural norms regarding parenthood, social policies and programs, mother-child relationships, and timing into grandmotherhood. This context sheds light into how women become grandmothers, how they choose to enact the parenting support role, and how that experience differs from woman to woman. I also articulate how context shapes the experience of stress as a result of parenting support.

Factors Affecting Appraisal of Parenting Support

Multiple factors affect how paternal grandmothers appraise parenting support as stressful. Appraisal is a process by which a person evaluates how a potentially significant stressor should be treated and assesses whether the resources needed to resolve the stressor are available (Cohen & McKay, 1984). Cohen, Kamarck, and Mermelstein (1983), in particular, focused on how individuals appraise life events as unpredictable, uncontrollable and/or overbearing. These factors can exacerbate or buffer the experience of psychological stress in that they can aid or hinder adjustment to the parenting support role. The importance of temporal context, or the role of time in influencing social roles and interactions, has emerged from the literature on maternal and paternal grandmothers, as well as grandmothers who raise their grandchildren (Burton, Dilworth-Anderson & Merriwether-deVries, 1995; Lee See, Bowles & Darlington, 1998; McNeil & Murphy, 2010). It is unclear whether temporal factors reflect

the uniqueness of paternal grandmothers' experiences in how they affect appraisal. In reference to paternal grandmothers, I highlight two factors: timing into grandmotherhood and peer time.

Stratified by age, younger grandmothers are those entering grandmotherhood at age 40 and below (George & Dickerson, 1995; Silverstein & Marengo, 2001; Szinovacz, 1998). Younger grandmothers are apt to resent the transition to grandmotherhood more so than older grandmothers because the grandmother is not ready for the teen to become a parent, and/or the grandmother is not ready to accept the grandmother role. Younger grandmothers may take issue with a child becoming a parent at a young age, especially if they were also teenage parents (Dallas, 2004; Kaplan, 1996; Lee See, Bowles & Darlington, 1998; Wilson & Huntington, 2006). Younger grandmothers are more likely to accept caregiving responsibilities than older grandmothers (Silverstein & Marengo, 2001), but may be more resentful in doing so (Burton, 1996; Sadler & Clemmens, 2004). While the literature on maternal grandmothers and young grandmothers suggests that timing is associated with stress, one gap in knowledge is whether this is true for paternal grandmothers. As previously mentioned, paternal grandmothers typically have little childcare and other instrumental responsibilities. Since they have relative freedom to engage in developmentally situated activities previously discussed, it may be that timing does not affect their appraisal of parenting support.

Another factor affecting appraisal is peer time, defined as “the temporal spacing of role acquisitions among age-mates, friends and colleagues” (Burton, Dilworth-Anderson & Merriwether-deVries, 1995, p. 353). In other words, “peer time” refers to

the transition into social roles (i.e. marriage, parenthood, grandparenthood) at the same age and time as one's peer group. Burton, Dilworth-Anderson and Merriwether-deVries (1995) hypothesize that when a group of peers become grandparents at the same age and time, they are more likely to view the grandparent role more positively than those who do not have peers who become grandparents. Mechanisms by which this occurs include peer support and peer homogeneity. Paternal grandmothers may receive peer support from friends and other age-mates who are sharing the same experience of parenting a teenage parent. The support of peers who are parenting teenage parents can bring camaraderie and knowledge that they are experiencing similar struggles and benefits from raising a teenage parent (Burton & Sorenson, 1993). Paternal grandmothers may also draw from peer homogeneity, or the extent to which one resembles age-mates in selected characteristics. While resembling peers can bring support, being dissimilar can contribute to a sense of shame and psychological stress. In discussing temporal context and caregiving, Burton and Sorenson (1993) found adults who did not have peers serving as caregivers felt isolated and out of sync. It is possible that peer time interacts with parenting support in terms of their appraisal of this work as stressful. However, there is no research that examines peer time as a moderator of the association between parenting support and psychological stress.

Mediating Conditions in Associations Between Parenting Support and Stress

The pathways by which paternal grandmothers' parenting support is associated with psychological stress are called *mediating conditions*. In this model, *satisfaction* and *perceived relationship quality* are proposed to be mediating conditions.

I define satisfaction as a cognitive assessment of contentment (Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin, 1985), and focus on grandmothers' satisfaction with sons' fathering practices (the behaviors fathers perform under the guise of parenting their children). Paternal grandmothers assess their sons' fathering practices in the context of providing parenting support (Dallas & Chen, 1999), and may use these assessments to inform their level of satisfaction with sons' fathering practices. However, African American paternal grandmothers may be also aware of the contextual and developmental barriers their sons face in transitioning to the father role (Dallas, 2004; Dallas & Chen, 1999; Sullivan, 1993); such awareness may also inform their assessments of sons' satisfactory fathering practice. However, no studies to date have explored linkages between grandmothers' assessments of their sons' practices, their sons' barriers and their satisfaction. Satisfaction may mediate how African American paternal grandmothers' parenting support influences psychological stress. Previous research on parenting has shown that mothers are invested in their children's outcomes and that their perceptions of children's failure to succeed can be a source of distress (Bush, 2004; Schmutte & Ryff, 1994). In a qualitative study of twenty-seven African American mothers of boys, Bush (2000) noted the pressures mothers put on themselves to raise successful men. The more grandmothers provide parenting support, the more they are exposed to sons' fathering practices, and make cognitive judgments about sons' performance. In this way, satisfaction emerges from parenting support, and it, in turn, may explain how parenting support may affect psychological stress. However, this relationship has not been examined in the literature.

I also propose that grandmothers' perceived relationship quality mediates associations between parenting support and psychological stress. Relationship quality is a specific marker of the critical intimate relationships in a person's life, such as the relationship between a parent and child, and includes aspects of closeness and conflict within a given relationship (Holt-Lunstad, Jones & Birmingham, 2009). Positive family relationships are associated with lower levels of parenting stress and decreased cortisol reactivity, which are both associated with decreased biological wear and tear on the body (Berry & Worthington, 2001; Murry, Brown, Brody, Cutrona & Simons, 2001; Nitz, Ketterlinus & Brandt, 1995). In terms of a mediating influence, perceived relationship quality might either decrease or increase stress among African American paternal grandmothers, depending on grandmothers' attitudes about parenting support, and how parenting support changes the relationship between the grandmother and the father. From one perspective, parenting support may create problems in the grandmother-father relationship, which in turn, increases stress (Dallas, 2004; Paschal, 2006). However, it may be parenting support improves relationships, which, in turn, decreases psychological stress. The transition to fatherhood, with its struggles, may draw paternal grandmothers and teenage fathers closer together (Hendricks, Howard & Caesar, 1981; Johnson & Staples, 2004). The mediating role of perceived relationship quality is another area worthy of further examination among African American paternal grandmothers.

Conclusion

While research on teen fathers has increased, there still remains a dearth of research on paternal grandmothers. However, what does exist suggests that they play an important role within the larger extended teen parent-centered family, which includes the teen parents, their child(ren) and the paternal and maternal families. This chapter reviews some of the issues facing African American paternal grandmothers whose sons are teen fathers. Namely, this chapter highlighted that paternal grandmothers' experience in parenting support is unique, in that it is influenced by their experiences African American women, mothers and parents of teenage fathers.

Throughout this chapter, I argued that African American paternal grandmothers are at a unique intersection of race, gender, motherhood and parenthood. Furthermore, I illustrated that, at this intersection, cultural, political, community and family factors work in tandem with individual factors to increase paternal grandmothers' vulnerability to stress as they provide parenting support to their sons who are fathers. Finally, I identified areas in which more research was needed. These include an examination of: 1) the influence of timing into grandmotherhood and peer time in moderating how paternal grandmothers appraisal parenting support as a stressful event, 2) the role of satisfaction with sons' fathering practices as a mechanism by which parenting support becomes stressful, and 3) the role of grandmothers' perceptions of mother-son relationship quality as a mechanism by which parenting support becomes stressful.

The purpose of this mixed-method dissertation is to respond to lacunae in the literature on the subject of parenting support and psychological stress among paternal grandmothers in the extended teen parent-centered family. Specifically, this

dissertation has three major aims: 1) review the determinants of, and potential sources of stress and support in African American paternal grandmothers' caregiving of teen fathers at the individual, family and contextual levels; 2) utilize both quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques to explore how parenting support may be associated with African American paternal grandmothers' level of psychological stress via appraisal and mediating conditions; 3) interpret the results of analyses in order to understand how to reduce African American paternal grandmothers' risk of heightened stress and vulnerability to associated health outcomes.

I utilize a mixed-method approach in this dissertation in order to capitalize on the benefits of both types of data analysis. Rather than being epistemologically incompatible, qualitative and quantitative methods, when used together, complement one another, producing knowledge that may be more insightful than that produced from each method used in isolation (Creswell & Clark, 2007; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The strength of quantitative data analysis is that, through statistical analyses, I am able to identify sample-wide relationships between multiple constructs, as well as account for the effect of other constructs acting on those relationships. In contrast, the strength of qualitative data analysis is that I am able to examine women's accounts of parenting support and associated constructs from their viewpoint, including their use of language and their perspectives on the embeddedness of constructs within their lived experiences. By using both in tandem I am able to triangulate results, or confirm conclusions at the intersection of multiple points of reference (Corbin & Strauss, 1998). In this dissertation, I utilize a mixed-method approach by examining a mediating

condition—satisfaction—qualitatively for related themes, then transposing those themes into quantitative variables in order to test a statistical model.

For this dissertation, I use data from the Paternity in Early Childbearing Pilot Study, a study including 275 participants representing 100 multi-generation families. Family members included: teen fathers 19 years old or younger, the mothers of the fathers' children, and paternal grandmothers. Eligibility criteria for grandmothers included being the mother or legal guardian to an African American male between the ages of 14-19 who was also a first time father. This study took place in a small, urban, Midwestern metro area with an approximately 21% African American population at the time of the study; in the central city, approximately 56% of residents were African American (US Census Bureau, 2012a). The median household income level for families with children under 18 was \$47, 655 and 20% of families lived under the poverty level (US Census, 2012b). Within city limits, the median household income was 27, 560 and the percent below poverty level was 40%. The overall unemployment¹ rate was 10.3%; however, unemployment for those 16-19 was 33% (US Census Bureau, 2012c). In 2007, the teenage pregnancy rate for the county was approximately 75 births per 1000 persons, higher than the state's rate of 55 births per 1000; the majority of these births were to African American women ("Local" Health Department, 2008). Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected from women participating in this study. The background context of women in this sample resemble that of African American paternal grandmothers as a whole, making this sample appropriate for examination into parenting support and psychological stress.

¹ Unemployment statistics include only those persons who are actively engaged in the labor force (e.g. reported looking for work, having obtained work, etc.) (US Census, 2013).

This dissertation includes five chapters, beginning with this introduction. The next three chapters describe three empirical studies examining different aspects of the dissertation model. Finally, the fifth chapter serves as the conclusion.

Chapter 2, “Temporal context, parenting support and psychological stress among African American paternal grandmothers” will report the results of quantitative analyses examining the role of temporal context in psychological stress due to parenting support. The first aim of this study is to identify differences in psychological stress based on parenting support, timing into grandmotherhood and peer time. The second aim of this study is to identify whether timing and peer time exacerbate or buffer the association between parenting support and psychological stress.

Chapter 3, “African American paternal grandmothers’ satisfaction with the fathering practices of their teenage sons and psychological stress” will report the results of qualitative and quantitative analyses focused on satisfaction as a mediating condition in associations between parenting support and psychological stress. The first aim of this mixed-methods study is to characterize what grandmothers consider satisfactory practices and compare those with their expectations. The second aim of this study is to explicitly explore how grandmothers interpret inconsistencies between expectations, the practices they observe and satisfaction. The third aim of this study is to identify whether there are differences in grandmothers’ stress level based on their satisfaction with sons’ fathering practices. The fourth aim of this study is to determine whether satisfaction with sons’ mediates the association between parenting support and psychological stress.

Chapter 4, “The mediating influence of relationship quality on parenting support and stress among African American paternal grandmothers” will report the results of quantitative analyses examining perceived relationship quality with teen fathers as a mediating condition in associations between parenting support and psychological stress. The first aim of this study is to determine whether there is an association between perceived relationship quality and psychological stress among African American paternal grandmothers. The second aim of this study to examine whether perceived relationship quality mediates the association between parenting support and psychological stress.

Chapter 5, “Parenting support and psychological stress: Implications for research, practice and policy” will synthesize the results of the preceding chapters and provide implications for public health and social science research, practice and policy.

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CHAPTER II

Temporal context, parenting support and psychological stress among African American paternal grandmothers

Introduction

Parenting social support and its association with psychological stress among African American mothers whose sons are teenage fathers (i.e. paternal grandmothers) are important health issues. African American paternal grandmothers provide parenting social support—instructional, instrumental, appraisal and emotional assistance—for teenage fathers as well as their children (Bunting & McAuley, 2004). This assistance ranges from providing the father with occasional parenting support to assuming primary responsibility for their grandchildren (Dallas & Chen, 1999; Miller, 1997). It is estimated that anywhere from 69% to 88% of African American teenage fathers turn to paternal grandmothers for assistance with raising children (Hendricks, Howard & Caesar, 1981; Miller, 1994).

Parenting support may result in psychological stress, the sense of disruption to one's psychological balance or equilibrium (Cohen, Janicki-Deverts & Miller, 2007; Glanz & Schwartz, 2008). Chronic stress, such as continual parenting support for teenage fathers, has physical and mental health consequences (Grason, Minkovitz, Misra & Strobino, 2001; Israel, Farquhar, Schulz, James & Parker, 2002). Compared to women from other racial and ethnic groups, African American women experience the highest rates of various chronic diseases such as heart disease and hypertension

(Lekan, 2009; Williams, 2009), and a critical determinant of these is chronic stress; thus, attention to chronic stressors such as parenting support is critical.

Few studies focus on African American paternal grandmothers and the potential health outcomes arising from parenting support, a fact noted by researchers conducting research on extended teen-parent families (Allen-Meares, 1984; Bunting & McAuley, 2004; Dallas & Chen, 1999). While associations between parenting support and psychological stress among women whose children are teenage parents have been established, no research to date has explored diversity within this population in regards to parenting support and psychological stress nor the factors that affect the relationship between parenting support and stress.

One factor that may affect this relationship is temporal context, which includes the timing of a woman's entrance into grandmotherhood and the extent to which women have access to or time with peers who are also grandmothers (Burton, Dilworth-Anderson, & Merriwether-deVries, 1995). The purpose of this study is to examine 1) differences in psychological stress based on providing parenting support, timing into grandmotherhood and peer time, and 2) whether timing and peer groups exacerbate or buffer the association between parenting support and psychological stress.

Theoretical Approach

This study's model combines Intersectionality (Collins, 2000) and the Caregiving Stress Model (Pearlin, Mullan, Semple & Skaff, 1990), itself a modification of the Stress and Coping Model (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The integrated model guiding this study highlights associations between parenting support, factors affecting stress appraisal and

psychological stress. Like caregiving (i.e. activities related to providing assistance to loved ones that they are unable to provide for themselves), parenting social support is intricately linked to one's social roles (e.g. grandmother, mother) and intimate relationships (Miller, 1997; Pearlin, et al, 1990). While research in this area suggests positive benefits for paternal grandmothers' sense of self (Chadiha, Adams, Biegel, Auslander & Gutierrez, 2004; Trotman, 2002), parenting support can also be a chronic stressor, or a condition, experience or activity that can be problematic for people (Pearlin, et al, 1990, pp. 586).

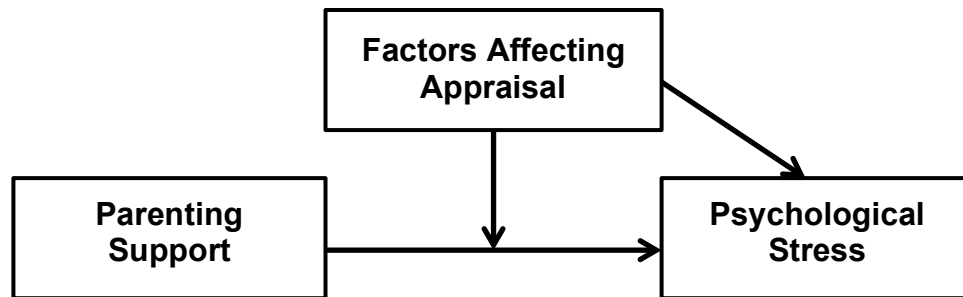
This study also incorporates an Intersectional framework to understand: 1) the background context of parenting support, or the factors that influence how a given woman becomes a grandmother and fulfills that role, and, 2) how that subsequently affects the experience of psychological stress (Collins, 2000; Sommerfield, 1997). Such an approach emphasizes the structural influences on African American family organization as analytical constructs rather than descriptive variables (Collins, 1998; MacDonald & Richards, 2008). The benefit of this approach is that it contributes to a more nuanced analysis of psychological stress in this population by placing race, gender, and other social categories front and center in terms of understanding stress as a response to and a contributor to the pervasiveness of structural oppression (Lekan, 2009; Woods-Giscombe, 2010). It also contributes to a more thorough understanding of how family structures such as grandmother engagement in parenting work and kin support are, in part, responses to structural constraints (Burton, 1995; MacDonald & Armstrong, 2001; Roy, Tubbs & Burton, 2004). More specifically, this study will explore how paternal grandmothers' appraisal of parenting support is influenced by their

standpoint (e.g. perspectives on their and others' social position and status) as African American mothers of teenage fathers.

Appraisal is the process by which a person evaluates the significance of a stressor and the resources available to resolve those stressors (Cohen & McKay, 1984). This appraisal, in turn, is informed by a multiplicity of individual, interpersonal and macro-level factors. These factors influence the evaluation of stressors as disruptive, but also affect one's perception of potential ways of coping. For example, when African American women appraise caregiving as stressful, they rely more on their attitudes about the caregiving role to make that assessment, rather than other factors such as the toll caregiving may take on their physical health (Chadiha, et al, 2004). Subsequently, some women are apt to adopt ways of coping that allow them to maintain their sense of selves as caregivers. A better understanding of the complexity of appraisal in regards to parenting support among African American paternal grandmothers is critical to addressing psychological stress in this population. In the case of appraisal among African American paternal grandmothers, I focus on the grandmothers' perceptions of parenting support and grandmotherhood as disruptive to their lives, and their ability to mitigate this disruption.

The modified version of this model includes three main constructs (see Figure 2.1): primary stressor, factors affecting appraisal, and primary outcome. In summary, paternal grandmothers' parenting support for teen fathers contributes to paternal grandmothers' psychological stress. Factors affecting appraisal, here noted as temporal factors, both directly influence and moderate the association between parenting support and psychological stress. I will expand on these pathways below.

Figure 2.1 Conceptual Model of African American Paternal Grandmothers' Stress Appraisal of Parenting Support and Psychological Stress



Parenting Support among African American Paternal Grandmothers

Parenting support is a form of social support that grandmothers provide to sons to help them adapt to the father role. Like social support, parenting support is comprised of informational, instrumental, appraisal and emotional support (Bunting & McAuley, 2004; Christmon, 1990; Heaney & Israel, 2008; Hunter, 1997; Roy, 2004; Roye & Balk, 1996; Wakschlag, Chase-Lansdale, & Brooks-Gunn, 1996). Additionally, grandmothers living in impoverished communities may be challenged with responding to fathers' engagement in high-risk behaviors associated with teenage fatherhood, such as drug use and dealing, disengagement from school, unemployment, and involvement in violent activities (Bunting & McAuley, 2004; Burton, 1992; Burton, Dilworth-Anderson & Merriwether-deVries, 1995; Marsiglio, 1994).

Paternal grandmothers' experiences as African American women, mothers to teenage parents, and mothers to sons may leave them vulnerable to psychological stress. In some ways, paternal grandmothers experience parenting support similar to maternal grandmothers, such as balancing multiple roles with grandmotherhood or managing contentious relationships within the extended teenage-parent centered family. However, paternal grandmothers also have experiences that are qualitatively different

than maternal grandmothers. Much of the research on grandmothering in teenage parent families has focused on the associations between grandmothers' childcare and increased stress, finding that grandmothers who offered more childcare also experienced greater stress (Culp, Culp, Noland, & Anderson, 2006; East, 1999; Voran & Phillips, 1993). This model of parenting support and stress is not as applicable to paternal grandmothers, who are not as intensely involved in grandchild rearing (Dallas & Chen, 1999; Dallas, 2004). However, African American paternal grandmothers may experience unique discomfort with the parenting support role. Teenage fathers receive less formal and informal social supports than teenage mothers (Allen-Meares, 1984; Bunting & McAuley, 2004; Brown, Callahan, Strega, Walmsley & Dominelli, 2009), placing the onus on paternal grandmothers to provide most of the support to teenage fathers. Paternal grandmothers may also need to support sons in navigating 'gatekeeping', the practice of maternal families blocking teenage fathers' access to their children (Paschal, 2006; Roy, 2004). It may be that grandmothers who provide more of this type of work experience more stress based on the pressures of navigating complicated social systems and/or access to their grandchildren. However, it is unclear whether more parenting support is associated with increased psychological stress, or whether paternal grandmothers' unique experience of parenting support has implications for how they appraise this work as stressful.

Parenting Support and Factors Affecting Appraisal of Stress

Existing research highlights the difficulties that can arise as a paternal family adapts to having a teenage father in the home. However, various factors affect

appraisal of parenting support as an adverse, stressful event. These factors can exacerbate or buffer the experience of psychological stress in that they can aid or hinder adjustment to the parenting support role. In their work on surrogate parenting among African American grandmothers, Burton, Dilworth-Anderson and Merriwether-deVries (1995) stress the significance of temporal context as an influence on parenting. Temporal context pertains to “the impact of time in social roles and interactions” (Burton, Dilworth-Anderson & Merriwether-deVries, 1995, p. 352). This is most often adapted in life course perspectives on human development and behavior, which are distinguished by their emphasis on socially-marked sequences of transitions into social roles, such as grandmotherhood. Burton, Dilworth-Anderson and Merriwether-deVries (1995) highlighted timing and peer time as two contextual factors that are associated with surrogate parenting. Research has shown that these are also important in understanding parenting support among women whose children are teen parents; subsequently, they may be as important in understanding the experience of stress.

Timing

Timing refers specifically to “the sequencing and synchronization of major life transitions” such as becoming a grandmother (Burton, Dilworth-Anderson and Merriwether-deVries, 1995, p. 352). From a life course perspective, major life events occur at socially expected ages and in socially expected orders. Deviations from these social timetables may result in negative consequences for individuals and others in their close networks. In reference to grandmotherhood, Burton and Bengtson (1985) distinguished between “off-time” entry into grandmotherhood—those who become

grandmothers at a younger age than socially normative—and “on-time” entry—those who become grandmothers at ages that are normative. Timing into grandmotherhood, or the age at which a woman became a grandmother, has important implications for African American paternal grandmothers’ parenting support.

Grandmothers whose children are teenage parents typically become grandmothers anywhere from their early 30s to 60s (Dallas, 2004, Dallas & Chen, 1999; Timberlake & Chipingu, 1992). Most work in this area suggests that the age at which a woman becomes a grandmother governs her level of resistance in accepting and adapting the grandmother role, and the responsibilities they anticipate in tandem (Burton, Dilworth-Anderson & Merriwether-deVries, 1995). Women who are forty and below when first becoming grandmothers are typically classified as off-time grandmothers (George & Dickerson, 1995; Silverstein & Marengo, 2001; Szinovacz, 1998). Based on these age classifications, younger grandmothers may be more at risk for stress (McNeil & Murphy, 2010; Sands & Goldberg-Glen, 2000).

There are multiple reasons why a given woman might become a young grandmother. Many grandmothers whose children are teenage parents may have been teen parents themselves (Bunting & McAuley, 2004; Dallas, 2004; Klein, 2005), thus truncating the time in between generations and increasing their children’s risk for teenage pregnancy (Bunting & McAuley, 2004; Klein, 2005). Many grandmothers live in constrained structural contexts that are also associated with teenagers’ increased risk for teenage parenthood, including living in poverty; being a teenage mother increases grandmothers’ risk for experiencing these constraints. Cultural attitudes about truncated life expectancy and early childbearing may also contribute to women’s

propensity to becoming a young grandmother. Geronimus (1996) found, in an interview study of impoverished African American teenage mothers, that a pervasive sense of health uncertainty permeated their rural community. Mothers expected their reproductive years, and sometimes mortality, to be cut short in their late twenties and early thirties; as a result, they had children “early” in order to take advantage of optimal health. Not all teenage mothers live in rural communities or are impoverished, and so this study was not representative of the experiences of all young African American grandmothers. However, it illustrates that the structural constraints in which women live can influence behaviors.

Differences in off-time grandmothers’ responses to grandmotherhood and parenting support have been observed in the literature among maternal grandmothers. In an ethnographic study within a low-income, African American community, Burton (1990) found that some young grandmothers embraced their daughters’ early childbearing, and the opportunity to raise their grandchildren. In contrast, other younger grandmothers’ have resisted these potential aspects of parenting support. For example, in a qualitative interview-based study, Sadler and Clemmens (2004) found that some young maternal grandmothers were ambivalent about their daughters’ childbearing, as they viewed it as interfering with their own life plans. They assumed they were finished raising children, and they did not welcome the burden of caring for more children. These women also resisted the grandmother role because of its connotations with aging. Other researchers have found similar sentiments expressed by younger grandmothers (George & Dickerson, 1995; Silverstein & Marengo, 2001). Burton’s (1990) findings may be unique to her sample, in that they were found among a group of

women who had not been actively involved in the raising of their own children. But for women who have raised their children, the prospect of parenting grandchildren may be less than appealing.

Although much of the research in this area has been conducted with maternal families, previous research has found similar patterns within the limited studies involving paternal grandmothers. Studies have suggested that some paternal grandmothers welcome opportunities to see and care for their grandchildren, and support their sons' fathering (Dallas & Chen, 1999; Stack & Semmel, 1974). However, other studies show that paternal grandmothers were no less ambivalent adapting the grandmother role than maternal grandmothers; such ambivalence may be associated with timing. Dallas (2004) reported both paternal and maternal grandmothers resisted the grandmother role, which they associated with old age. They perceived people expected them to give up a youthful lifestyle and to appear and act more like old women. However, it is unknown whether younger, "off-time" paternal grandmothers experience more stress as compared to older, "on-time" grandmothers. Additionally, it is unclear whether the potential effects of timing moderate the association between parenting support and psychological stress.

Peer Time

Burton, Dilworth-Anderson and Merriwether-deVries (1995) also highlighted the role of what they call peer time in affecting grandmothers' experiences with stress in the parenting role. Peer time refers to "the temporal spacing of role acquisitions among age-mates, friends and colleagues" (Burton, Dilworth-Anderson & Merriwether-deVries,

1995, p. 353). The authors hypothesized that when a group of peers become grandparents at the same age and time, they are more likely to view the grandparent role more positively than those who do not have peers who become grandparents. Mechanisms by which this occurs include peer support and peer homogeneity.

Having peer support or social support from members of one's peer group when negotiating parenting support may buffer the experience on psychological stress. Cohen, Gottlieb and Underwood (2000) noted that social relationships may buffer stress in that individuals can offer each other specific, tailored resources needed for coping with specific stressors. Having peers who are also grandmothers whose teenage children offer paternal grandmothers the social support these women need and desire (Balaji, Claussen, Smith, Visser, Morales, et al, 2007; Burton, Dilworth-Anderson & Merriwether-deVries, 1995; Cochran & Niego, 2002). Burton and Sorensen (1993), for example, found caregiving African American grandmothers perceived more social support when they had peers who were also caring for grandchildren.

Peer homogeneity is another important aspect of peer time that may be associated with African American paternal grandmothers experience of stress in the parenting support role. Grandmothers who are "out of sync" and isolated in their experience of becoming a grandmother may feel that they are missing out on social opportunities that take place while they are engaged in caring for teenage fathers and their children (Burton, Dilworth-Anderson & Merriwether-deVries, 1995; Dallas, 2004). Isolation is especially important to consider with this population, as there are still powerful cultural and social stigmas against teenage pregnancy (Whitehead, 2001; Wilson & Huntington, 2006). For example, in a population of urban African American

grandmothers whose daughters were teenage mothers, Kaplan (1996) found that grandmothers felt highly stigmatized in their communities because of their daughters' pregnancies.

How this all may affect paternal grandmothers is unclear. To date, no study has examined whether differences in peer time correspond with differences in African American paternal grandmothers' levels of psychological stress. Paternal grandmothers may benefit from the peer support received from other grandmothers, in which case grandmothers who have relationships with other grandmothers would have lower stress. Peer time may also operate in tandem with the experience of parenting support to affect paternal grandmothers' appraisal of parenting support. Existing research suggests paternal grandmothers experience stigma and isolation in being alone in parenting a teenage father (Dallas & Chen, 1999). Paternal grandmothers who resemble other grandmothers in terms of performing parenting support may appraise parenting support as less stressful. However, no study has examined whether peer time works in tandem with or independently from parenting support to influence stress level.

Research Aims and Hypotheses

A review of the literature suggests that parenting support is a potential source of African American paternal grandmothers' psychological stress. However, no studies to date have explored the complexity of parenting support and psychological stress within this population, especially in terms of potential factors affecting stress appraisal such as timing of grandmotherhood and peer time. Therefore, one aim of this study is to identify differences in psychological stress based on level of parenting support, timing into

grandmotherhood and peer time. Another aim of this study is to identify whether timing and peer time exacerbate or buffer the association between parenting support and psychological stress.

I hypothesize that:

1) grandmothers who provide more parenting support will experience more stress than those who perform less;

2) younger or “off-time” grandmothers will report more stress than older or “on-time” grandmothers;

3) grandmothers with peers who are not grandmothers will report more stress than grandmothers who have peers who are grandmothers;

4) timing of grandmotherhood will moderate the association between parenting support and psychological stress in that younger grandmothers who provide parenting support will experience more psychological stress than older grandmothers;

5) peer time will moderate the association between parenting support and psychological stress in that grandmothers who provide more support and have peers will experience less stress those without peers.

Methods

As part of the Paternity in Early Childbearing Pilot Study, data were collected from 275 participants representing 100 multi-generation families with teen fathers, 19 years old or younger, the mothers of the fathers' children and the teen fathers' mothers (paternal grandmothers). The sample was restricted to first-time teen fathers whose partner was in the 3rd trimester of pregnancy. Family members were interviewed four

times beginning with the first interview during the 3rd trimester of pregnancy, the second interview 6-weeks after birth, the 3rd interview 6-months after birth and the final interview 12-months after birth. Interviewers were race and gender matched to participants. Eligibility criteria for grandmothers included being the mother or legal guardian to an African American male between the ages of 14-19 who was also a first time father. The current study is based on data collected at baseline and during Wave 2, six weeks after the birth of the child. Participants that had data for both Wave 1 and 2 were included in this analysis. A total of 58 participants were included in the final analysis.

Data were collected in a small, urban, Midwestern metro area with an approximately 21% African American population at the time of the study; in the central city, approximately 56% of residents were African American (US Census Bureau, 2012a). The median household income level for families with children under 18 was \$47,655 and 20% of families lived under the poverty level (US Census, 2012b). Within city limits, the median household income was 27,560 and the percent below poverty level was 40%. The overall unemployment² rate was 10.3%; however, unemployment for those 16-19 actively seeking paid employment was 33% (US Census Bureau, 2012c). In 2007, the teenage pregnancy rate for the county was approximately 75 births per 1000 persons, higher than the state's rate of 55 births per 1000; the majority of these births were to African American women ("Local" Health Department, 2008). The sample was primarily recruited from one community-based health clinic located within city limits.

² Unemployment statistics include only those persons who are actively engaged in the labor force (e.g. reported looking for work, having obtained work, etc.) (US Census, 2013).

Measures

Independent Variables

Parenting Support. Parenting support was measured using utilizing questions from an adapted version of the Social Networks in Adult Attachment Questionnaire (Antonucci, 1986). Three items composed this subscale: “I help my son to understand what kinds of things a father should do”, “I support my son in meeting his responsibilities as a father” and “I help my son be a good father”. The three items are scored on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Agree) to 5 (Strongly Disagree). The Cronbach’s alpha for this subscale was 0.888. Items were summed across all questions then divided by three to calculate a mean response. Low scores represent more parenting support, while high scores represent less parenting support. In order to test the study hypotheses, a dichotomous variable was created from these mean responses. Participants with a mean response of 1 (all strongly agree responses) were assigned to the “more support” group (1). Participants with a mean response of higher than 1 (any combination of strongly agree or agree responses) were assigned to the “less support” group (0).

Timing to Grandmotherhood. Timing to grandmotherhood was determined by age at birth of first grandchild. Those 40 and below were classified into an off-time grandmother group; those above 40 were classified into an on-time grandmother group. These age distinctions were based on similar classification of grandmothers (George & Dickerson, 1995; Silverstein & Marengo, 2001; Szinovacz, 1998). Grandmothers were asked if their son’s baby was their first grandchild, as well as number of grandchildren. For those who said yes, they were automatically assigned to the appropriate group. For

those who said no, questions related to the number of grandchildren and ages of residential grandchildren were used to assign grandmothers to appropriate groups. On-time grandmothers were classified as 0 and off-time grandmothers were classified as 1.

Peer Time. In order to measure grandmothers' peer time, participants responded to a dichotomous question as to whether any of their close friends were grandmothers. Grandmothers who identified having close friends who were grandmothers were assigned to the "peer time" group. Grandmothers who identified not having close friends who were grandmothers were assigned to the "no peer time" group. Grandmothers in the peer time group were classified as 1 and those in the no peer time group were classified as 5.

Dependent Variables

Psychological Stress. Levels of psychological stress were measured using Cohen's Perceived Stress Scale, which asks a series of questions about individuals' appraisal of stress over the past month (Cohen, Kamarck & Mermelstein, 1983). The fourteen items are scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Agree) to 5 (Strongly Disagree). Example questions include: "In the last month, how often have you dealt successfully with daily hassles?", "In the last month, how often have you felt able to handle your personal problems?", "In the last month, how often have you felt you were on top of things?". The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.747. Items were summed across all questions. Reverse coding was performed where applicable. Additionally, these summed responses were divided by the total number of questions to

calculate a mean response. Higher scores represent higher psychological stress, while lower scores represent lower psychological stress.

Analysis

For this study, I conducted a factorial ANOVA. This approach is preferred in order to reduce the potential for Type I errors that can arise with the use of multiple t-tests or one-way univariate ANOVAs. For the analysis, I used SPSS version 19. No ANOVA assumptions were violated. I entered parenting support, timing and peer time, all dichotomous variables, as independent variables and used psychological stress as the continuous dependent variable. These were treated as a three-way fixed-effects model. Since all independent variables contained only two levels, and only one comparison was made per variable, no post hoc tests were performed. No control variables were included in this analysis. Throughout the results section, I will note significant results to the 0.1 level, in order to explore trends within the data. I chose this more liberal significance level to accommodate the small sample size, which would only allow large effect sizes to emerge in analyses. The higher significance level captures the presence of more effects. The results of significant interaction effects will be graphed in SPSS for ease in interpretation.

Results

Demographic Profile

The mean age of the grandmothers was 42 (SD=6.1, range 34-61). The majority of the sample (58%) was considered on-time grandmothers (41 and over). Sixty

percent of grandmothers reported having close friends who were grandmothers. Over a third of the grandmothers had never been married (38%). Another third (32%) were widowed, divorced, or separated. The remaining were married or living with a partner (21% and 8% respectively). Over a third were college educated (36%), 43% had a GED or diploma, and 19% had some high school education. Grandmothers completed an average of 12.42 years of education (SD=1.5, range 10-17). Grandmothers had an average of 3.92 children (SD=1.7, range 1-9). 67% of the sample lived at or below the poverty level. Average household income was \$12,500 (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1: Demographic Characteristics of Sample (n=58)			
Characteristic	N or Range	M or %	SD
<i>Personal Characteristics</i>			
Age	34-61	41.8	6.1
<i>Marital Status</i>			
Married	12	21%	--
Living with Partner	4	7%	--
Widowed	1	2%	--
Divorced	15	26%	--
Separated	6	10%	--
Never Married/Dating	20	34%	--
<i>Education Level</i>			
Some High School	11	19%	--
High School Diploma or GED	25	43%	--
+College Educated	21	36%	--
<i>Household Characteristics</i>			
<i>Household Income</i>			
Less than 15K	35	60%	--
15K-29,999K	12	21%	--
30K-49,000K	7	12%	--
50K and Above	4	7%	--
<i>Family Characteristics</i>			
Number of Children	Range: 1-9	3.92	1.7

Parenting Support, Timing, Peer Time and Psychological Stress Descriptives

All grandmothers either strongly agreed or agreed that they provided parenting support for their sons. The mean in the sample was 1.45 (SD=0.52), meaning that, on average, grandmothers provided a high amount of support (see Table 2.2). Fifty-three percent of grandmothers were classified as providing 'more parenting support', which meant that they strongly agreed they provided support to all three survey questions. I performed independent sample t-tests to compare support groups on level of education completed, age, number of children, household income and a household income-to-needs ratio (household income by the number of residents in the house). I also performed Chi-square analyses to determine whether there was a statistical relationship between level of support and either partner status (living with a partner/spouse versus not) or employment status (having employment versus not). Support groups did not differ statistically in regards to education, age, number of children, household income, income-to-needs ratio, partner status, or employment status.

The majority of grandmothers were classified as on-time (58%). I performed independent sample t-tests to compare timing groups in regards to education, age, number of children, household income and income-to-needs ratio. I also performed Chi-square analyses to determine whether there was a statistical relationship between timing and either partner status or employment status. Timing groups did not differ statistically in regards to education, number of children, partner status, or employment status. I did find differences in regards to age, household income, and income-to-needs ratio. In running these three t-tests, I found that the Levene's tests were significant,

which then required running Mann-Whitney tests, nonparametric equivalents of the t-tests.

In regards to age, the median rank of the off-time group was lower than the on-time group, suggesting that the off-time group was younger (17.65 vs. 45.14, $U=21.500$, $p=0.000$). The difference in distributions was statistically significant. In regards to household income, the median rank of the off-time group was lower than the on-time group, suggesting the off-time group had lower household incomes (25.67 vs. 34.56). The difference in distributions was statistically significant ($U=286.000$, $p=0.044$). The same was true for the household income-to-needs ratio (25.41 vs. 34.90, $U=277.500$, $p=0.034$), suggesting that the off-time group had lower household income-to-needs ratios.

The majority of grandmothers had peers who were grandmothers (60%) (see Table 2.2). I performed independent sample t-tests to compare peer time groups in regards to education, age, number of children, household income and income-to-needs ratio. I also performed Chi-square analyses to determine whether there was a statistical relationship between peer time groups and either partner status or employment status. Peer time groups did not differ in terms of education, number of children, household income and income-to-needs ratio. However, peer time groups did differ in terms of age ($t=-3.146$, $p=0.003$). Grandmothers with peers who were grandmothers were older ($m=43.8$) than grandmothers without peers who were grandmothers ($m=39.1$).

On average, grandmothers reported experiencing moderate psychological stress (mean=2.47, SD=0.50) (see Table 2.2).

Table 2.2: Descriptives for Key Study Variables		
	Percentage	Mean (SD)
<i>Parenting Support</i>		
More Support	53%	--
Less Support	47%	--
<i>Timing</i>		
Off-Time	42%	--
On-Time	58%	--
<i>Peer Time</i>		
Close Peers Grandparents	60%	--
No Close Peers Grandparents	40%	--
<i>Psychological Stress</i>		2.47 (0.50)

Psychological Stress by Parenting Support, Timing and Peer Time

To answer the first through third hypotheses I examined the main effects results (see Table 2.3). I first hypothesized that grandmothers who engaged in more parenting support would experience greater stress. In contrast to my hypothesis, I found grandmothers who performed *less* parenting support experienced more psychological stress than those who performed more support ($F=2.999$, $p=0.090$). Secondly, I hypothesized that off-time grandmothers would experience more stress than on-time grandmothers. In line with that hypothesis, off-time grandmothers reported more stress than on-time grandmothers ($F=6.174$, $p=0.016$). Third, I hypothesized that grandmothers without peers who were grandmothers would experience greater stress. No support was found for the third hypothesis.

To answer the fourth and fifth hypotheses, I examined the results of the interaction analyses. For the fourth hypothesis I hypothesized that timing would moderate the association between parenting support and stress. The interaction between parenting support and timing was not significant, not supporting my hypothesis ($F=0.021$, $p=0.886$). Lastly I hypothesized that grandmothers who performed more

support and had peers who were grandmothers would experience less stress. The interaction between parenting support and peer time was significant ($F=5.887$, $p=0.019$); however, the effect was different than the expected hypothesized effect. For those grandmothers who provided *less* support, having grandmothers with close friends who were grandmothers exacerbated stress (see Table 2.3 and Figure 2.2). The final significant coefficients are included in Figure 2.3.

Table 2.3: Analysis of Variance for Parenting Support, Temporal Context and Stress				
Source	Mean	df	F	P
<i>Parenting Support (PS)</i>	--	1	2.999+	.090
More Support	2.330	--	--	--
Less Support	2.619	--	--	--
<i>Timing (TM)</i>	--	1	6.174*	.016
Off-Time	2.578	--	--	--
On-Time	2.314	--	--	--
<i>Peer Time (PT)</i>		1	1.836	.181
Peers Who Are Grandmothers	2.508	--	--	--
No Peers Who Are Grandmothers	2.398	--	--	--
<i>PS x TM</i>	--	1	0.021	.886
<i>PS x PT</i>	--	1	5.887*	.019
Within-group error	--	50	(.213)	--

Note: Values enclosed in parentheses represent mean squared errors.
 + $p < .10$ * $p < .05$.

Figure 2.2: Interaction between Peer Time and Parenting Support on Psychological Stress

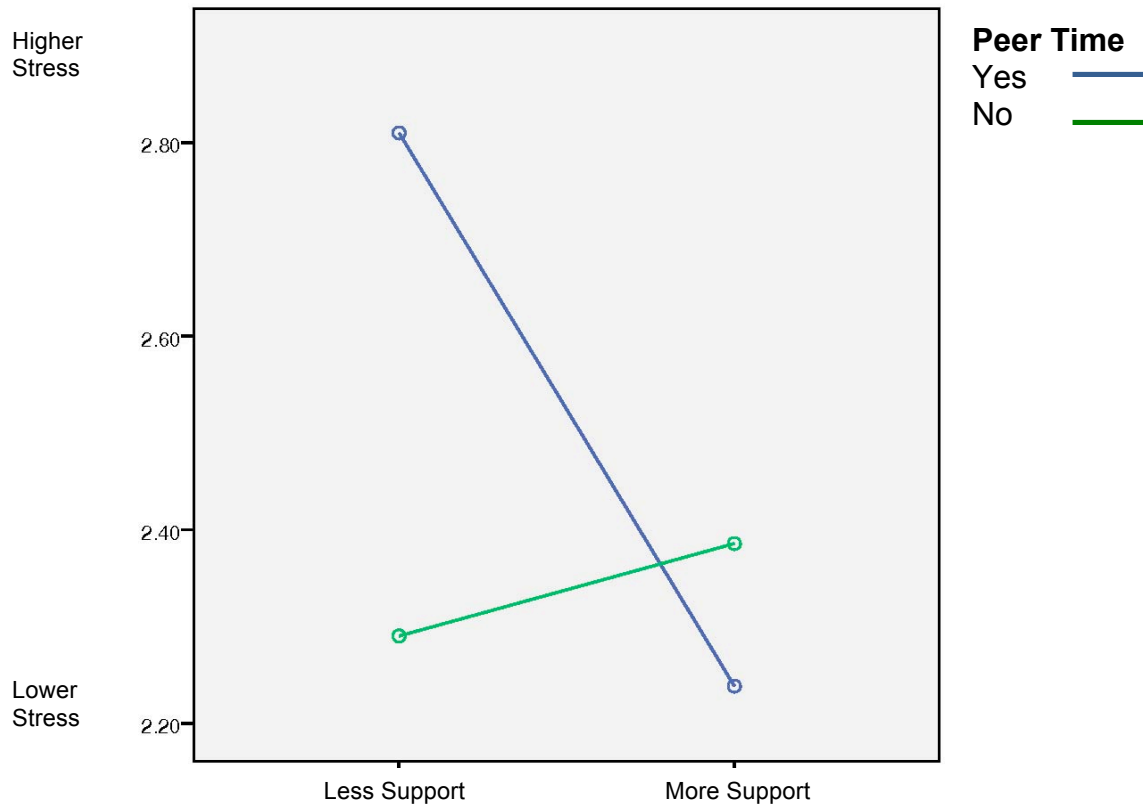
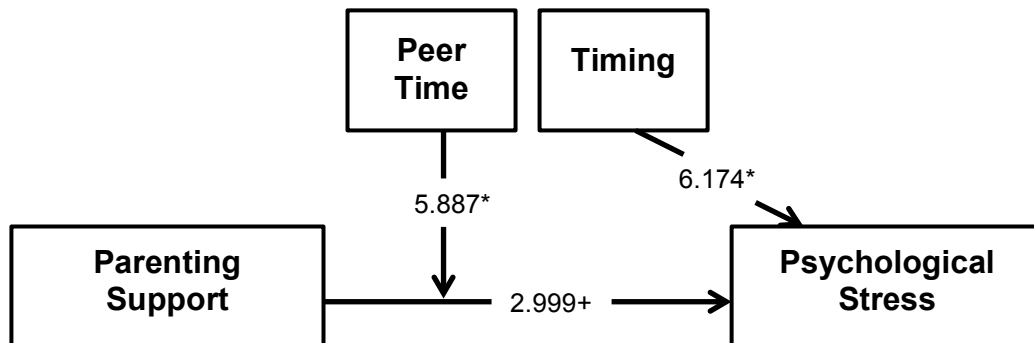


Figure 2.3: Final Model of African American Paternal Grandmothers' Stress Appraisal of Parenting Support and Psychological Stress



Only significant values are displayed.

+Significant at the 0.10 level. *Significant at the 0.05 level.

Note: Higher scores of parenting support represent less parenting support.

Discussion

Overall, this study suggests that African American paternal grandmothers whose sons are teenage fathers may not appraise parenting support the same. I examined appraisal through quantitative analysis to identify interactions between parenting support and temporal factors. Using such an approach, I found that: 1) grandmothers who provided less support experienced more stress, 2) younger off-time grandmothers experienced more stress than older on-time grandmothers, 3) peer time, but not timing into grandmotherhood, moderated the association between parenting support and psychological stress. In terms of implications for my model, I found that peer time affected the appraisal of parenting support, but timing had an effect independent from parenting support in governing paternal grandmothers' appraisal of stress.

In reference to parenting support, I hypothesized that grandmothers who provided more parenting support would be more stressed than those who provided less. However, I found the opposite was true—grandmothers who provided less support were more stressed. One potential explanation for this finding is that of the effect of pre-existing psychological stress. It could be that some grandmothers were already experiencing psychological stress prior to the birth of a grandchild and thus, do not provide as much parenting support as those who were not experiencing psychological stress. Research has found that contextual sources of stress affect the parent, which in turn influences his or her ability to care for children (Cooper, McLanahan, Meadows & Brooks-Gunn, 2009; Jackson, 2000; McCubbin & McCubbin, 1989; Murry, Harrell, Brody, Chen, Simons, et al, 2008). Such an interpretation fits considering the myriad challenges African American paternal grandmothers face in raising their children due to

structural constraints. However, in this sample, parenting support did not differ on measures of structural constraints, such as household income or level of education, which could be attributed to the high percentage of sample who live at or below the poverty line.

Another potential explanation for these findings pertain to associations between self-assessments of parenting and mental health, which suggests that women who assess their parenting negatively are more stressed and depressed (Jackson, 2000; Jones & Prinz, 2005; Raikes & Thompson, 2005; Zayas, Jankowski & McKee, 2005). Other research of African American caregivers centered on the importance of the caregiving role, and how the sense of compromise to that role can be more stressful than the physical work and effort of caregiving (Chadiha et al, 2004). It may be that African American paternal grandmothers may place more emphasis on the parenting support role than the burdens of behavior when appraising stress. In this case, the use of Intersectionality in this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the potential associations between parenting support and psychological stress as modeled by the Caregiver Stress Model. While Pearlin and colleagues (1990) model overload and hardships as stressors in their model, conceiving of these as reflections of cultural norms about caregiving would extend the utility of this model to African American female populations. In this sample, I did not examine grandmothers' evaluations of their parenting support. Further research could examine these potential associations in-depth.

I hypothesized that younger or off-time grandmothers would be more stressed than older or on-time grandmothers. I also hypothesized that timing would moderate

the association between parenting support and stress. I found support for the first hypothesis, but not the moderation. One potential explanation is that grandmothers' transition to grandmotherhood comes with associated developmental concerns. This explanation complements the work of Sadler and Clemmens (2004) and others who highlighted how transitioning to grandmotherhood at younger ages may contribute to grandmothers appraising the role as more stressful (Dallas, 2004; Lee See, Bowles & Darlington, 1998; McNeil & Murphy, 2010). Contributions suggested by literature in this area have included associating grandmotherhood with old age, as well as perceiving a sense of threat to their opportunity to engage in "young adult" activities such as dating, higher education and social time with peers. As paternal grandmothers are less likely to provide instrumental care for their grandchildren, it may be that their identification with the grandmother role and changes in their lives or sense of self may be a more salient concern than parenting support work. In that respect, these results complement work on middle adulthood and development, which suggested that middle-aged adults undergo developmental transitions (Helson & Soto, 2005; McAdams & Olson, 2010). Being overburdened with additional roles, such as adding grandmotherhood to mid-life concerns of raising children and working outside of the home, may influence the appraisal of psychological strain (McNeil & Murphy, 2010).

Another potential explanation is that transitioning to grandmotherhood at an earlier age may be associated with other contextual issues, such as financial strain. In this sample, younger grandmothers had lower household incomes than older grandmothers. Because I did not control for household income in the analysis, I cannot draw conclusions about the influence of financial resources on timing. However, McNeil

and Murphy (2010) noted that younger grandmothers are more likely than older grandmothers to have financial strains, such as underemployment and more limitations on job security. The stress of grandmotherhood may be more intense for younger grandmothers because they have strained financial resources. Further research should examine associations between timing, household resources, and stress in this population.

I also hypothesized that stress would differ based on the presence of peers who were grandmothers. This hypothesis was not supported. However, and more importantly, I identified an interaction between peer time and parenting support that was in contrast to the hypothesis. For grandmothers who provided less parenting support, having peers who were grandmothers actually exacerbated stress. While peer relationships can provide social support for paternal grandmothers, they may also serve as sources of conflict and stress (Cochran & Niego, 2002). Specifically, related research has noted how close members in a social network may question one's parenting practices or heighten stress in other ways (Cramer & McDonald, 1996; Paskiewicz, 2001). This interpretation is particularly interesting also in light of work about the social construction of African American motherhood and grandmotherhood. The cultural notion of the "strong Black woman" that tackles and manages any family crisis is held up as a standard for African American women (Collins, 2000). Peers may ostracize women who do not engage in this "sacrificial parenting"; that isolation, in turn, may be associated with stress appraisal in providing parenting support. If grandmothers are less engaged in supporting their sons, for example, by "failing" at encouraging their sons' involvement and providing financial assistance, they may experience conflict with

other grandmothers who struggle but “succeed” at supporting their children. Such conflict may be stressful in itself, but it also takes a toll on grandmothers’ sense of confidence or mastery in regards to parenting support (McKinley, Brown & Caldwell, 2012). More research is needed to elucidate some of these issues.

There were limitations to this study. This study’s small sample size affects results, such that only large effect sizes are identified in the dataset. Testing these hypotheses on larger sample may result in further associations with psychological stress. Additionally, this analysis was cross-sectional, limiting the capacity for interpreting causation. Longitudinal analyses would provide more insight into causal relationships between parenting support, temporal context and psychological stress. Another limitation was that no control variables were included in the ANOVA analysis. There may be other confounding variables that influence the results of the ANOVA analysis. Differences in household income between timing groups, for example, may signal the effect of financial resources in this model. Another limitation was that participants in this study were primarily recruited through a health clinic. Paternal grandmothers less engaged with formal social services may be less represented in this sample, which would compromise the applicability of these findings to disengaged grandmothers who may be more vulnerable to stress. Finally, this study did not take into account children she had or other young people for whom the grandmother had caregiving responsibilities (e.g. nieces, nephews, etc.) within the analyses. A sizable proportion of grandmothers had underage grandchildren and/or nieces and nephews residing in the home. Further research in this area should account for the caregiving

responsibilities for other young relatives when attempting to understand the relationship between parenting support and stress.

Neither temporal factors nor appraisal were an original part of the Caregiving Stress Model. However, the use of Intersectionality in this study illuminated the need to consider temporal context when determining how African American paternal grandmothers appraise stress. Both timing and peer time are important contributions to our understanding of how African American paternal grandmothers appraise parenting support as stressful. The use of Intersectionality to consider socioeconomic status vis-à-vis household resources sheds light on how timing and financial resources might intertwine in influencing stress appraisal among younger African American grandmothers. Furthermore, in including the cultural meanings of motherhood and social support among African Americans, this study also suggests that others in one's social network can influence stress appraisal.

This study also suggests that parenting support can negatively influence African American paternal grandmothers' physical and mental health. Everyday stressors associated with parenting are associated with adverse mental health outcomes (Coyle, 2011; Watts-Jones, 1990; Wells-Wilbon & Simpson, 2009). Parenting is not isolated from context, but directly tied to broader ecological contexts African American women face in raising children in constrained environments, creating excess burdens of stress (Collins, 2000; Collins, 1998; Lekan, 2009; Roberts, 1993; Trotman, 2002). For African American paternal grandmothers, this may affect their ability to guide sons through the transition to fatherhood successfully. In contrast to teenage mothers, teenage fathers have an increased propensity to engage in criminal behavior to provide for their children

(Cramer & MacDonald, 1996; Hernandez, 2002; Lodgson, Gagne, Hughes, Patterson & Rakestraw, 2005). They also receive less formal social support than teenage mothers (Allen-Meares, 1984; Bunting & McAuley, 2004; Brown, Callahan, Strega, Walmsley & Dominelli, 2009). Further research on grandmothers whose children are teenage parents should delve more deeply into the role of context on parenting support and psychological stress.

This has important practice implications for public health and social service programming. For nearly three decades, researchers have called for increased services for grandmothers whose children are teenage parents (Coletta, 1981; Culp et al, 2006; McNeil & Murphy, 2010). Previous research has shown the effectiveness of such targeted programming for African American grandmothers in reducing stress. For example, in a population of African American grandmothers who were raising their grandchildren, women who used professional counseling experienced less stress than those who did not (Ross & Aday, 2006). In a 2009 evaluation of a Canadian community-based, groupwork intervention for teenage mothers and their families, McDonald and colleagues (2009) found that grandmothers who completed the program reported less parenting stress and family conflict. This intervention engaged grandmothers in support groups with other grandmothers, as well as in other activities, such as educational sessions and workgroups where participants learned life skills. These studies illustrate that directed intervention for grandmothers raising teenage parents can reduce stress. Increased attention to the unique needs and responsibilities of African American paternal grandmothers is beneficial for them and for the extended teenage parent-centered family.

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CHAPTER III

African American paternal grandmothers' parenting support, satisfaction with the fathering practices of their teenage sons, and psychological stress

Introduction

While some research has explored the maternal grandmother's role in the teenage mother's life, less examination has occurred about how paternal grandmothers (mothers of teenage fathers) provide support for their sons who are adjusting to teenage fatherhood. Paternal grandmothers provide social support to teenage fathers in order to encourage their emotional and financial investment in their children (Bunting & McAuley, 2004; Christmon, 1996). Such support has been associated with increased psychological stress among grandmothers whose children are teenage parents (Culp, Culp, Noland & Anderson, 2006; McNeil & Murphy, 2010). Increased stress contributes to African American women's heightened risk of mental and physical health problems, such as depression and hypertension (Grason, Minkovitz, Misra & Strobino, 2001; Israel, Farquhar, Schulz, James & Parker, 2002). There is a need for more research about this support and how it affects paternal grandmothers' health.

One less explored aspect of parenting support is the relationship between paternal grandmothers' satisfaction with sons' fathering practices and grandmothers' psychological stress. To date, there are no studies that explicitly examine the relationship between grandmothers' satisfaction with their children's parenting and

psychological stress. However, there is evidence that when mothers are less satisfied with their own parenting or their children's behaviors, they experience increased distress (Anderson, 2008; Bush, 2004; Johnson, Schwartz & Bower, 2000; Putnick, Bornstein, Hendricks, Painter, Suwalsky, et al, 2010; Schmutte & Ryff, 1994). Further inquiry will help clarify whether satisfaction with sons' fathering practices affects grandmothers' stress in the same way, and whether satisfaction is one mechanism by which parenting support may be associated with increased stress.

The current study contributes to these areas of research by 1) comparing paternal grandmothers' satisfaction with their teenage sons' fathering practices with their expectations for ideal fathering, 2) examining how grandmothers interpret inconsistencies between their expectations, sons' practices and their satisfaction, 3) determining whether satisfaction is associated with grandmothers' psychological stress, and 4) testing whether satisfaction mediates the association between parenting support and psychological stress.

Theoretical Approach

The conceptual framework that guides this study relies on a modified version of the Caregiving Stress Model (Pearlin, Mullan, Semple & Skaff, 1990), itself an extension of the Stress and Coping Model (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984), and Intersectionality (Collins, 2000). The Caregiving Stress Model is particularly appropriate for conceptualizing how parenting support is associated with stress, because supporting teenage children through the transition to parenthood is an extension of the caregiving parents already provide (Miller, 1994). This model has been used to examine

caregiving stress among diverse racial and ethnic groups (Aranda & Knight, 1997). Intersectionality is an analytic framework stating that membership in multiple roles, as they are socially interpreted, intersect, creating particular experiences and perspectives on their and others' social position and status (Collins, 1998; Crenshaw, 1991). This framework is used to highlight African American paternal grandmothers' experience at the intersection of various roles: African American, female, mother, and mother to an African American teenage father. This intersection has implications for their satisfaction with their sons' fathering and their own stress. This study's conceptual model delineates how parenting support is associated with stress among African American paternal grandmothers.

As illustrated in Figure 3.1, the model conceptualizes satisfaction with sons' fathering practices as a mediator. Pearlin, et al (1990) identified mediating conditions that help explain the mechanisms by which caregiving increases stress, which includes coping, or behaviors and practices that individuals enact on their own behalf (Pearlin, et al, 1990, p. 590). One function that coping serves is to manage the meaning of the stressor such that it becomes less problematic from a psychological perspective. I argue that grandmothers' assessments of satisfaction with sons' fathering practices are helpful in coping with parenting support, and thus, are useful in explaining how parenting support influences psychological stress. Three main constructs are included in this study's model: primary stressor (parenting support), mediating condition (satisfaction), and primary health outcome (psychological stress). In summary, the parenting support paternal grandmothers provide for teenage fathers contributes to their psychological stress. Grandmothers' satisfaction with their sons' fathering practices

may mediate the association between parenting support and psychological stress. I expand on this model below.

Figure 3.1: Conceptual Model of African American Paternal Grandmothers' Satisfaction with Sons' Fathering Practices, Parenting Support and Psychological Stress



Paternal Grandmothers' Parenting Support and Psychological Stress

According to Merriwether-deVries, Burton & Eggeleton (1996), an African American teenage male's transition to the father role typically results in a transition for his mother into the parenting support role, due to strong intergenerational patterns of childrearing entrenched in African American communities. Parenting support—a form of social support—includes informational, instrumental, appraisal and emotional support. Just as maternal grandmothers influence the parenting behaviors of their daughters, paternal grandmothers communicate messages about father role expectations, provide instruction in childcare and emphasize the importance of child rearing to their sons (Bunting & McAuley, 2004; Roye & Balk, 1996; Wakschlag, Chase-Lansdale, & Brooks-Gunn, 1996). Paternal grandmothers also assist fathers with child-rearing activities in an effort to teach them how to care for children (Miller, 1994). Such messages and instruction have been shown to influence teenage males' fathering practices (Christmon, 1990; Roy, 2004).

African American teenage fathers are most likely to turn to their mothers for help in parenting (Bunting & McAuley, 2004; Hendricks, Howards & Caesar, 1981; Hunter, 1997). Furthermore, extended family and the maternal family often look to the paternal grandmother to compensate for any unfulfilled obligations by the teenage father (Dallas, 2004). Paternal grandmothers help teenage fathers adapt to the new father role and ease their psychological distress and difficulties in transitioning between adolescence and the parent role (Cohler & Musick, 1996; Dallas & Chen, 1999; Miller, 1994).

African American paternal grandmothers' parenting support influences their psychological stress. In the previous chapter, I found that as parenting support decreases, psychological stress increases. What this suggested is that, unlike maternal grandmothers who perform substantially more childcare work, it may not be the physical labor associated with parenting support that is stressful for paternal grandmothers. Rather, compromises in grandmothers' sense of self and worth as a caregiver may be linked to increases in stress. There is evidence that women who assess their parenting negatively are more stressed and depressed (Jackson, 2000; Jones & Prinz, 2005; Raikes & Thompson, 2005; Zayas, Jankowski & McKee, 2005). For grandmothers, one indication of how they are coping with parenting support may be their satisfaction with their sons' fathering practices.

Parenting Support and Satisfaction

Satisfaction is generally defined as the cognitive assessment of subjective wellbeing (Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin, 1985). In reference to parenting support and satisfaction with sons' fathering practices, I refer specifically to the extent to which

grandmothers are pleased with their sons' fathering practices. Based on available research on paternal grandmothers, we do know what grandmothers expect from both 'good fathers' generally, and from their sons. Parental guidance of children in adapting social roles like 'father' is based, in part, on expectations for an ideal performance of a role (Parke & Buriel, 1998). Findings from previous studies suggest that paternal grandmothers expect good fathers to be involved with their children, provide financially for their children, and show affection and love for their children (Dallas, 2004; Dallas & Chen, 1999). One would assume, then, that grandmothers' expectations for the ideal 'father' role performance would inform their assessment of and satisfaction with their sons' fathering practices.

These global expectations, however, may not map directly onto paternal grandmothers' assessments of their sons. In a qualitative study with paternal grandmothers whose sons were teenage fathers, Dallas (2004) found that grandmothers believed their sons were not ready to fully take on the responsibilities of the father role. They encouraged sons to perform fathering tasks, but did not believe they were developmentally ready to be full-fledged fathers. Considering this, it may be that grandmothers' assessment of and satisfaction with their sons' fathering may not completely overlap with their expectations for ideal fathering. In fact, grandmothers seem to expect to take on some fathering duties as part of raising their sons (Dallas & Chen, 1999). However, no study to date has been conducted directly with paternal grandmothers comparing father role expectations and satisfaction with their sons' fathering practices.

Other research on teenage fathers and paternal grandmothers further supports the possibility of disconnect between grandmothers' expectations, fathers' practices and grandmothers' satisfaction, particularly within impoverished communities. Previous research noted how factors outside of the grandmother-father dyad, such as relationships with the maternal family, shape fathering practices. For example, some maternal grandmothers serve as gatekeepers for their daughters and grandchildren when they are not satisfied with fathers' financial support and/or involvement (Belsky & Miller, 1986; Dallas & Chen, 1998; Johnson, 2001; Krishnakumar & Black, 2003; Nelson, Clampet-Lindquist, & Edin, 2002; Rhein, Ginsburg, Schwarz, Pinto-Martin, Zhao, et al, 1997; Sullivan, 1993). A study of African American paternal grandmothers by Dallas and Chen (1999) found that grandmothers felt their sons may suffer the consequences of the maternal grandmothers' emotional stress in caring for multiple generations in the home, often in the absence of support from intimate partners. Other studies have noted broader ecological factors influencing father involvement, such as limited employment opportunities and educational barriers (Roy, 2004).

What these previous studies suggest is that paternal grandmothers may consider barriers to sons' fathering practices in making decisions about parenting support; such considerations may extend to grandmothers' satisfaction with sons' fathering practices. Specifically, paternal grandmothers may consider ecological, interpersonal and developmental factors in tandem with expectations when assessing satisfaction with sons' fathering practices. However, no studies to date have explicitly explored how grandmothers' explain or interpret satisfactory practices, particularly when

inconsistencies are present between grandmothers' expectations, sons' practices and grandmothers' satisfaction.

Parental Satisfaction and Psychological Stress

Satisfaction may also be associated with African American paternal grandmothers' psychological stress. Grandmothers may consider their expectations for ideal fathering practice, but also expectations for their sons' practices given their additional perceptions of sons' barriers to involvement. They may also consider sons' engagement in problem behaviors, such as delinquency, when evaluating satisfaction with sons' performance. Previous research on parenting has shown that mothers are invested in their children's outcomes and that their perceptions of children's failure to succeed can be a source of distress (Bush, 2004; Schmutte & Ryff, 1994). Additionally, researchers have also found parents' higher stress levels are associated with adolescents' problem behaviors and negative adolescent-parent interactions (Anderson, 2008; Putnick, Bornstein, Hendricks, Painter, Suwalsky, et al, 2010). Many African American women invest much energy and sense of self into their mothering (Trotman, 2002; Wells-Wilbon & Simpson, 2009). For paternal grandmothers, the perceived "failure" or problematic fathering practices of their sons may influence self-assessments of their parenting and contribute to increased stress. In contrast, assessments of sons' fathering practice as satisfactory may contribute to decreased stress.

Satisfaction as a Mediator

It is possible that satisfaction serves as a mechanism by which less parenting support influences higher psychological stress. For paternal grandmothers, how this may play out is uniquely situated due to their experiences as African American women, and as mothers to their sons. Teenage fathers experience pressures in the form of norms that suggest fathers should be financial providers above all, but stereotypes that depict African American fathers, especially young ones, as uninvolved or inessential in their children's upbringing (Connor & White, 2007). Dallas and Chen's (1999) work with African American paternal grandmothers illustrated how this tension emerges from mothering sons. From one perspective, as African American women, they are not immune to these norms; some question the necessity of fathers in children's lives, based on their experience of growing up without fathers. However, as mothers, many still encourage their sons' involvement, seeing this as the ideal. In observing their sons' struggles at adjusting to fatherhood, grandmothers may juggle a malcontentment with sons' fathering practices, conflict regarding experiences with their own fathers, and an understanding of the barriers their sons face as teenage fathers and the expectation that teenage fathers are simply not ready to parent. They may make meaning of these struggles by assessing its results, sons' fathering practices, as satisfactory.

Dissatisfaction may also serve as a proxy for conflict between grandmothers and teen fathers about childrearing. While there has not been research between African American paternal grandmothers and teenage fathers in this area, among African American grandmothers and teenage mothers, conflict is often associated with disagreement between grandmothers and mothers about the mothers' parenting

practices (Caldwell, Antonucci & Jackson, 1998; Kaplan, 1996; SmithBattle, 1996). As far as the potential for conflict arising between African American paternal grandmothers and their sons, the literature suggests that teenage fathers are open only to certain types of support. Research conducted with African American teenage fathers reflects a tendency to turn to grandmothers for help with parenting (Bunting & McAuley, 2004; Hendricks, 1981). However, Hunter (1997) found that young adult African American fathers accepted childcare assistance, but not parenting advice, from their mothers. Research including fathers from multiple racial and ethnic groups suggests teenage fathers are likely to resist their mothers' guidance in efforts to become more independent (Cohler & Musick, 1996; Tuffin & Rouch, 2008). It may be that sons may seek out assistance from their mothers, but may resist support that infringes on their sense of manhood or independence.

What is clear is that grandmothers' satisfaction is multifaceted, and is determined by multiple factors; how those facets affect psychological stress is complex. The studies I have reviewed revealed multiple concerns that could emerge as aspects of grandmothers' satisfaction with sons' fathering practices, from their satisfaction with sons' fathering practices, their satisfaction with their subsequent levels of support for fathers and grandchildren, and tension between their expectations for fathering practice, observed fathering practice, and awareness of the barriers sons face. All these concerns can contribute to grandmothers' overall satisfaction with sons' fathering practices. Subsequently, these may also influence how grandmothers experience psychological stress. However, no studies have examined whether satisfaction is associated with psychological stress among paternal grandmothers. Furthermore, while

theoretically, satisfaction may help explain why parenting support may increase psychological stress, no research has examined whether, statistically, aspects of satisfaction may mediate the association between parenting support and psychological stress.

Research Aims and Questions

The first aim of this mixed-methods study is to characterize what grandmothers consider satisfactory practices and compare those with their expectations. Considering the first research aim, I address the following questions:

- *How do paternal grandmothers characterize satisfactory fathering practices for their African American teenage sons transitioning into fatherhood?*
- *How do these characterizations compare to their expectations for ideal fathering?*

The second aim of this study is to explicitly explore how grandmothers interpret inconsistencies between expectations, the practices they observe and satisfaction.

Considering the second research aim, I address the following question:

- *How do paternal grandmothers interpret inconsistencies between their father role expectations, sons' actual fathering practices, and their satisfaction with sons' practices?*

The third aim of this study is to identify whether there are differences in grandmothers' stress level based on their satisfaction with sons' fathering practices.

Considering the third research aim, I address the following question:

- *Which characterizations of satisfaction (i.e. satisfaction with their involvement, satisfaction with sons' involvement and financial contributions, and conflict) are predictive of variations in paternal grandmothers' psychological stress?*

The fourth aim of this study is to determine whether satisfaction with sons mediates the association between parenting support and psychological stress. Considering the fourth research aim, I address the following question:

- *In turn, which characterizations of satisfaction that are predictive of variations in psychological stress also mediate the association between parenting support and psychological stress?*

Methods

As part of the Paternity in Early Childbearing Pilot Study, data were collected from 275 participants representing 100 multi-generation families with teenage fathers 19 years old or younger, the mothers of the fathers' children and the teenage fathers' mothers (paternal grandmothers). The recruitment targeted first-time African American teenage fathers whose partner was in the third trimester of pregnancy. Family members were interviewed four times beginning with the first interview occurring during the third trimester of pregnancy, the second interview 6-weeks after birth, the third 6-months after birth and the final interview 12-months after birth. Interviewers were race and gender matched for each wave of the study.

The data for the current study are from Wave 2 interviews, after the birth of the baby. We believed grandmothers would be most cognizant about the messages they communicated to and about their sons' fathering practices after the birth of his infant.

For this study, we selected participants who responded both qualitatively and quantitatively to relevant open-ended survey questions. Interviewers recorded participants' responses to open-ended questions. Out of 63 respondents in Wave 2, 53 women were included in the final analyses.

Data were collected in a small, urban, Midwestern metro area with an approximately 21% African American population at the time of the study; in the central city, approximately 56% of residents were African American (US Census Bureau, 2012a). The median household income level for families with children under 18 was \$47, 655 and 20% of families lived under the poverty level (US Census, 2012b). Within city limits, the median household income was \$27, 560 and the percent below poverty level was 40%. The overall unemployment rate was 10.3%; however, unemployment for those 16-19 was 33% (US Census Bureau, 2012c). In 2007, the teenage pregnancy rate for the county was approximately 75 births per 1000 persons, higher than the state's rate of 55 births per 1000; the majority of these births were to African American women ("Local" Health Department, 2008). The sample was primarily recruited from one community-based health clinic located within city limits.

Measures

Open-ended Questions

We analyzed qualitative responses to the following questions: *What are some of the most important things you have told your son about being a father? How involved is your son in raising your grandchild? Why do you say that? How satisfied are you with your son's involvement in raising your grandchild? Why do you say that? How satisfied*

are you with the amount of financial help your son currently gives for your grandchild's care? Why do you say that?

Independent Variables

Satisfaction Variables. Aspects of satisfaction with sons fathering practices were measured with one-item questions drawn from the survey instrument.

The following variables were measured on a 5-point Likert scale: "My son and I often disagree about raising the baby". This item ranged from 1 (Strongly Agree) to 5 (Strongly Disagree). Lower scores represent stronger endorsement of the statement.

The following variables were measured on a 7-point Likert scale: "How satisfied are you with your son's involvement in raising your grandchild (such as caring for the baby, babysitting or spending time with the baby)?"; "How satisfied are you with the amount of financial help your son currently gives for your grandchild's care?"; "How satisfied are you with your involvement in raising your grandchild?". The items range from 1 (Strongly Agree) to 7 (Strongly Disagree). Lower scores represent stronger endorsement of the statement.

Parenting Support. Parenting support was measured using utilizing questions from an adapted version of the Social Networks in Adult Attachment Questionnaire (Antonucci, 1986). Three items composed this subscale: "I help my son to understand what kinds of things a father should do", "I support my son in meeting his responsibilities as a father" and "I help my son be a good father". The three items are scored on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Agree) to 5 (Strongly Disagree). The Cronbach's alpha for this subscale was 0.888. Items were summed across all questions then

divided by three to calculate a mean response. Low scores represent more parenting support, while high scores represent less parenting support.

Dependent Variables

Psychological Stress. Levels of psychological stress were measured using Cohen's Perceived Stress Scale, which asks a series of questions about individuals' appraisal of stress over the past month (Cohen, Kamarck & Mermelstein, 1983). The fourteen items are scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Agree) to 5 (Strongly Disagree). Example questions include: "In the last month, how often have you dealt successfully with daily hassles?", "In the last month, how often have you felt able to handle your personal problems?", "In the last month, how often have you felt you were on top of things?". The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.747. Items were summed across all questions. Reverse coding was performed where applicable. Additionally, these summed responses were divided by the total number of questions to calculate a mean response. Higher scores represent higher psychological stress, while lower scores represent lower psychological stress.

Control Variables³

Timing into Grandmotherhood. Timing to grandmotherhood was determined by age at birth of first grandchild. Those 40 and below were classified into an off-time grandmother group; those above 40 were classified into an on-time grandmother group. These age distinctions were based on similar classification of grandmothers (George &

³ Other control variables (number of children, education, partner status, employment status) were included in previous analyses, but were not significant and eliminated from the final analysis.

Dickerson, 1995; Silverstein & Marengo, 2001; Szinovacz, 1998). Grandmothers were asked if their son's baby was their first grandchild, as well as number of grandchildren. For those who said yes, they were automatically assigned to the appropriate group. For those who said no, I used questions within the instrument related to grandchildren (i.e. number of grandchildren and ages of residential grandchildren) to assign grandmothers to appropriate groups. On-time grandmothers were classified as 0 and off-time grandmothers were classified as 1.

Household Income. Grandmothers were read a series of household income ranges and asked to choose which accurately captured their household income for the year. Options ranged from 1 (0-\$5,000) to 17 (\$100,000+). Higher scores represented higher income.

Years of Education. Grandmothers were asked how many years of education they had completed. Options ranged from 0 to 17. Higher scores corresponded to more years of education.

Analysis

Qualitative Analysis

I first performed a thematic analysis of the data. Thematic analysis is an approach to synthesizing data in which salient patterns are identified and contextualized (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach is useful in examining qualitative data from primarily quantitative survey interviews because it allows for a semantic level of analysis in which description of identified themes can be interpreted in light of scientific literature. Additionally, it is useful in developing formative knowledge in areas in which little is

known. Theoretically, this analysis adapts a realist perspective in which participants' experiences—in this case, parenting support—are described and reported (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Similar analysis was conducted on open-ended questions within a quantitative survey interview on maternal grandmothers with teenage daughters with a child (Sadler & Clemmens, 2004). For this analysis, I used NVivo 8 and completed all coding.

I adapted an inductive approach for the qualitative coding process. First, I conducted a preliminary open coding analysis on a small subset of cases. Words were selected as potential codes, or labels in the text, if they seemed to have relevance for the sample population (e.g. appeared in multiple interviews, succinctly described concepts described by multiple respondents). I developed a preliminary coding scheme, which was then used to analyze another subset of cases. I created a comprehensive codebook, which included inclusion and exclusion criteria; this was used to analyze the remainder of the data. I organized code families of main codes and related sub-codes where relevant.

Upon completion of the coding, I organized the text to facilitate vertical and horizontal analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 1998) and within-case and cross-case analyses (Miles & Huberman, 1999). In the vertical analysis, I examined text passages associated with individual codes in order to identify descriptive ranges of each code. Horizontal analysis allowed for identification of crosscutting themes when multiple instances of overlapping codes on identical text passages occurred. I conducted within-case and cross-case analyses using case matrices, which facilitated the examination of

a segment of text within the context of the case from which it was coded. I also took and analyzed memos for each case that facilitated cross-case analysis.

I organized the coded text to identify themes, broader classifications of theoretical concepts, which answered research questions (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). In order to answer the first question, I identified cross-case textual patterns associated with paternal grandmothers' satisfaction with teenage fathers' general and financial involvement, which allowed me to reduce the data to themes summarizing characterizations of both satisfactory and unsatisfactory practices. In order to answer the second question, I identified cross-case textual patterns associated with questions pertaining to expectations, which allowed me to reduce this data to themes summarizing grandmothers' expectations for ideal fathering. I then compared these themes to the characterization themes, identifying similarities and differences between the two sets. In order to answer the third question, I assigned each participant to a category based on agreement between expectations, observed practices and satisfaction. Participants who reported being satisfied and described observing practices that were consistent with their expectations were placed into a 'satisfied' category. In turn, participants who reported being dissatisfied and described observing practices in opposition to their expectations were placed into a 'dissatisfied' category. Participants whose reports, descriptions and expectations showed discordance were placed into an 'inconsistent' category. These cases were further analyzed to identify themes related to interpretation of sons' practices.

Quantitative Analysis

After I completed the qualitative analysis, I performed a Pearson correlation analysis and an OLS regression analysis in order to build a model from theoretical and qualitative analyses. For this analysis, I use SPSS 19.

For the correlation analysis, I performed Pearson correlations as all the variables were normally distributed continuous variables aside from timing, which was a dummy variable. Satisfaction variables that were significantly correlated with psychological stress carried over into the regression analysis.

For the linear regression analysis, I entered independent variables into two groups: two control variables (timing and household income) then the satisfaction variables carried over from the correlation analysis.

Finally, I performed a mediation analysis to examine the role of satisfaction between parenting support and stress. I utilized a bootstrapping technique at 1000 resamples. A multiple mediation test was performed on a bootstrapped sample in order to calculate the indirect effect of parenting support on stress through relationship quality. This method, introduced by Preacher and Hayes (2008) is more effective than Baron and Kenny's causal steps strategy (1986) approach. Their approach estimates individual pathways between independent variables (x), potential mediators (m) and dependent variables (y) and assesses whether the effect of x on y decreases when m is taken into account. However, Preacher and Hayes' (2008) method allows for testing of indirect effects that also controls for covariates in the model. Additionally, it can test for mediation even when statistical relationships within the x , y , and m pathways are not present. Throughout the results section, I will note significant results to the 0.1 level, in

order to explore trends within the data. I chose this more liberal significance level to accommodate the small sample size, which would only allow large effect sizes to emerge in analyses. The higher significance levels capture more effects.

Results

Description of Paternal Grandmothers and Fathers

The majority of women in this study were low-income and/or single parents. Their ages ranged from 34 to 78 (mean=42) (see Table 3.1). Over a third of the grandmothers had never been married (34%). Another 38% were widowed, divorced, or separated. The remaining were married or living with a partner (21% and 8% respectively). Over a third were college educated (37%), 44% had a GED or diploma, and 19% had some high school education. Grandmothers had an average of 4 children (SD=1.7, range 1-9). 67% of the sample lived at or below the poverty level.

Sons' ages ranged from 14-19 (mean=17.5). All grandmothers reported being the primary caregiver for their sons. Ninety-six percent of fathers saw their children at least once a week. Eighty percent of sons were satisfied with the support they received from grandmothers; this included financial, other instrumental and emotional support. Additionally, 60% of grandmothers were satisfied with their current relationship with their sons; in contrast, 80% of sons were satisfied with their current relationships with grandmothers.

Table 3.1: Demographic Characteristics of the Sample (n=53)			
Characteristic	N or Range	M or %	SD
<i>Personal Characteristics</i>			
Age	34-78	42.38	7.91
<i>Marital Status</i>			
Married	11	20.8	--
Living with Partner	4	7.5	--
Widowed	2	3.8	--
Divorced	12	22.6	--
Separated	6	11.3	--
Never Married/Dating	18	34.0	--
<i>*Education Level</i>			
Some High School	10	19.2	--
High School Diploma or GED	23	44.2	--
College Educated	19	36.5	--
<i>Household Characteristics</i>			
<i>Household Income</i>			
Less than 15K	32	60.4	--
15K-29,999K	11	20.8	--
30K-49,000K	6	11.4	--
50K and Above	4	7.6	--
<i>Child Characteristics</i>			
Number of Children	1-9	3.88	1.73

Summary of Qualitative Themes

Three themes related to paternal grandmothers' characterization of satisfactory fathering practices were identified: *financial support*, *attentiveness* and *instrumental support*. One theme pertaining to expectations was identified: *the responsible father*, which was further characterized into two subthemes: *good providing* and *taking care*. Similarities with the abovementioned characterizations were identified. Finally, three themes related to interpretation of inconsistencies between expectations, observed practices and satisfaction were identified: *justification*, *effort*, and *compensations*. All themes and subthemes emerging from the qualitative data will be elaborated below.

Paternal Grandmothers' Characterizations of Satisfactory Practices

I first asked how paternal grandmothers characterized satisfactory practices. Paternal grandmothers were asked to assess and offer reasons for satisfaction with sons' involvement in fathering practices. Fifty-one out of fifty-three grandmothers believed their sons were involved in fathering. Forty grandmothers were satisfied with their sons' involvement in fathering. Another five were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Eight were dissatisfied. In contrast, only thirty grandmothers were satisfied with sons' financial involvement. Another eight were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Fourteen were dissatisfied. I identified three themes summarizing satisfactory practices: *financial support*, *attentiveness*, and *instrumental support*.

Financial Support. *Financial support* was the most common theme present in the data. Financial support is defined as any current or future contribution of monetary or resource assistance. Mentions of financial support were present in all grandmothers' interviews.

One way in which grandmothers discussed *financial support* as a satisfactory practice was in purchasing resources for the child. In these cases, paternal grandmothers explained their sons bought the things that the child needed. One paternal grandmother recounted, "When [the baby] needs Pampers, he gets them. Baby does not run out of nothing". Paternal grandmothers also discussed *financial support* in reference to planning for long-term support, most often in reference to sons who were going to school. When asked about their satisfaction with sons' financial support, attending school was a common explanation for their satisfaction. Obtaining an education was described as a means for teenage fathers to build a stable economic

foundation for consistent monetary support for their children. One paternal grandmother, somewhat satisfied with her son's involvement, stated, "He's doing good so far. When he gets a better job, or finish college, they'll do better".

When discussing dissatisfaction with *financial support*, paternal grandmothers most commonly mentioned sons' failure to seek employment. For example, a paternal grandmother who was extremely dissatisfied with her son's financial assistance expressed, "He is not trying to get a job". This paternal grandmother was generally satisfied with the care her son provided for his child. However, the perceived failure of her son to step up to get a job cast a negative light on her evaluation of her son's fathering practices. Similarly, other paternal grandmothers most often expressed dissatisfaction when they perceived their sons failed to seek employment.

Attentiveness. *Attentiveness* was another characterization theme present in most, but not all, paternal grandmothers' interviews. Attentiveness can be summarized as having physical contact with the child; this did not extend into instrumental day-to-day support. This practice was most often described as "spending time" or "being there" by paternal grandmothers. Typically, *attentiveness* was described in relation to physical visits. For example, some grandmothers were satisfied when sons kept babies daily or weekly. However, one grandmother whose grandchild lived in another state credited her son for calling to check on the child regularly.

According to paternal grandmothers who described this theme, *attentiveness* was important as it encouraged a father-child relationship. Paternal grandmothers noted sons' efforts at nurturing and bonding. One paternal grandmother said that her son "always wants to have [the child] around to see his little face". In general, paternal

grandmothers' perceptions of attentiveness on their sons' part contributed to their satisfaction with their sons' fathering practices. In contrast, grandmothers were dissatisfied with their sons when they failed to spend time with their sons. One grandmother, for example, spoke against her son's preference for spending time with peers instead of being with his child.

Instrumental Support. Finally, *instrumental support* was the last theme present in relation to the first research question. This is defined here as any contribution to the daily duties of childrearing. Grandmothers described a wide range of behaviors, including feeding, diapering, transporting and late-night care. Engaging in the day-to-day care seemed to be perceived as a sign of sons' maturity. "He shows responsibility by taking care of his baby. He takes his baby to the doctors without any hesitation", one grandmother expressed. Among these paternal grandmothers, *instrumental support* was seen as another important aspect of being a father. It is also important to note that no grandmothers expressed any dissatisfaction in reference to instrumental support. What this might suggest is that paternal grandmothers may celebrate any attempt on the sons' part to perform instrumental support.

Comparisons of Paternal Grandmothers Father Role Expectations and Satisfaction

I then asked how paternal grandmothers' characterizations compared to their expectations for fathering practice. I compared paternal grandmothers' characterization of satisfactory practices with their expectations for ideal practices. Paternal grandmothers' messages about what fathers should do generally centered on the broad

theme of *the responsible father*. This was comprised of two sub-concepts: *good providing* and *taking care*.

Good Providing. *Good providing* as an expectation overlapped with financial support as a satisfactory practice. Paternal grandmothers used much of the same language to discuss satisfaction as with their expectations of *good providing*, such as “get a job”. According to paternal grandmothers, fathers should be good providers in order to ensure their children have the things they need. They offered specific behaviors that fathers should perform. This was often communicated by paternal grandmothers to their sons in terms of employment, such as a grandmother who expected a father to “get a good job, it’s your responsibility”. However, some also described *good providing* in reference to monetary payments. For example, one paternal grandmother told her son that he should “send [his child] half of his haircut money to help him”. Underlining this comment is a common sentiment among grandmothers that responsible fathering meant making sacrifices for the children’s sake and, as noted earlier, making sure “baby does not run out of nothing”. Some paternal grandmothers put a specific gender perspective on *good providing*, stating, for example, that “being a good male provider” was one of the most important things a man could do as a father.

Taking Care. *Taking care* is another subtheme that paralleled discourse on instrumental support and attentiveness as satisfactory practices. However, unlike with *good providing*, paternal grandmothers rarely communicated specific practices to their sons that *the responsible father* should do while *taking care* of his child or children. Most often, they discussed “being there” and “raising [the child] right”. Only a small

subset stated their sons should engage in specific behaviors, such as “teaching her right from wrong” or “encourag[ing] him to talk and sing to the baby”. This fits within the context of the previously discussed results on the characterization of instrumental support; no mentions of specific instrumental support were made in relation to dissatisfaction. While grandmothers may have images about ideal fathering that include taking care of children, they may be pleased with any effort sons make in this area.

Paternal Grandmothers Interpretations of Inconsistencies

Third, I explored how grandmothers interpret inconsistencies between their father role expectations, sons’ actual fathering practices, and their satisfaction with sons’ practices. Fourteen paternal grandmothers observed practices and offered characterizations of satisfaction that were aligned with their expectations. Nine grandmothers were consistently dissatisfied with their sons and described practices that conflicted with their expectations. Thirty grandmothers had inconsistency between their expectations, observations and characterizations. That is to say some grandmothers reported satisfaction with their sons even when they noted sons were not performing to their expectations of ideal fathering. I identified common themes in these grandmothers’ interviews that suggested they consider context and developmental needs when assessing fathering practices. Paternal grandmothers interpreted satisfaction in terms of *justification* of their sons practices, *effort* the sons expended in engaging in practices and *compensations* the sons enacted in balancing multiple fathering practices. I placed grandmothers into one of three groups, which I will

describe below; however, I observed that a small number of grandmothers overlapped into multiple categories.

Eight paternal grandmothers mainly interpreted their satisfaction of sons' fathering practices through *justification*, whereby they offered reasons as to why they believed sons could not perform to the ideal standard. This was most present in relation to grandmothers' explanations of how age or other developmental issues affected sons' involvement. For example, a grandmother stated, "He is only 16 and cannot afford much more". Among grandmothers in this group, a common attitude was that such hindrances were temporary. As one grandmother expressed, "He is not financially able to do for his child yet". Paternal grandmothers may be cognizant of the barriers teenage fathers face in being involved in raising their children, which they may use to justify providing additional support. For example, as one grandmother stated, some grandmothers "will make sure the baby gets what [he or she] needs".

Another nine paternal grandmothers mainly interpreted inconsistencies by noting the amount of *effort*, or attempts at success, teenage fathers put into their fathering practices. Grandmothers acknowledged the *effort* teenage fathers put into performing father roles, such as provider, even when they were not objectively successful. One grandmother, for instance, stated that her son "is giving his best". Another grandmother described her satisfaction with her son being motivated by her observations of him "trying to work, find car for work, work odd end jobs for more support". Grandmothers also acknowledged the effort teenage fathers put into encouraging positive intimate and non-intimate relationships with the mothers of their children. "He trying hard to be supportive", one grandmother said. "Because mothers [maternal family] are not, but he's

there”. This again reflects the notion of sacrifice and trying one’s best that grandmothers stressed as part of their expectations of responsible fathering.

Finally, thirteen paternal grandmothers mainly explained inconsistencies by noting the *compensations* sons made in balancing fathering practices. This can be summarized as a grandmother’s emphasis of one better-performed practice over another lesser-performed practice. This emerged often with paternal grandmothers who were not completely satisfied with their sons’ current financial support of the baby, but appreciated levels of attentiveness and instrumental support. For example, a paternal grandmother stated, “he is not working, but he helps with bathing, clothing and feeding his baby”. *Compensation* also often applied in situations in which paternal grandmothers perceived teenage fathers were preparing to provide later financial support, like in the case of one grandmother who said of her son, “He doesn’t have a job but he is going to school” and again, “He goes to school, but he doesn’t have a lot of money”. There were few instances in which paternal grandmothers described sons who compensated lack of day-to-day care with financial support, such as a grandmother who stated, “He buys for her. But he doesn’t want to care for her all day long”. Even in the dissatisfied group, few grandmothers noted dissatisfaction with attentiveness, but stressed financial concerns.

Summary of Quantitative Analyses

I used the results of the qualitative analysis and the literature review to inform correlation analysis, regression tests and mediation tests. The results are described below.

Results of Regression Model Test

Fourth, I asked which aspects of satisfaction (i.e. satisfaction with their involvement, satisfaction with sons' involvement, satisfaction with financial contributions, and conflict) were predictive of variations in paternal grandmothers' psychological stress. In order to examine the role of satisfaction on psychological stress, I first matched the themes identified in the literature review and qualitative analysis with quantitative variables from the survey instrument. I included these variables with the following control variables in a correlation analysis: timing into grandmotherhood, number of children, household income, education, and life satisfaction. The following independent variables were included in the analysis: satisfaction with sons' involvement, satisfaction with sons' financial contribution, satisfaction with their own involvement, and disagreements with sons about raising the baby. The following dependent variable was included in the analysis: psychological stress.

Out of the ten variables included in the analysis, only one independent variable (disagreements about raising the baby) was significantly correlated with psychological stress at the 0.1 level (see Table 3.2). As disagreements increased, stress increased.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. <i>Timing</i>	1	-0.035	-0.317*	-0.121	0.153	-0.149	0.168	0.090	-0.132	0.245+
2. <i>No. of Children</i>	-	1	0.094	-0.175	-0.006	0.108	-0.095	-0.038	-0.184	0.186
3. <i>Household Income</i>	-	-	1	0.343	-0.240+	0.101	-0.258+	0.243+	-0.021	-0.346*
4. <i>Education</i>	-	-	-	1	-0.273+	0.249+	-0.201	-0.072	0.206	-0.192
5. <i>Life Satisfaction</i>	-	-	-	-	1	0.020	0.268+	0.096	0.016	0.124
6. <i>Satis. w/ PG Involv.</i>	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.318*	0.118	-0.037	-0.110
7. <i>Satis. w/ Involvement</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.264+	-0.127	0.103
8. <i>Satis. w/ Financial</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-0.061	-0.130
9. <i>Disagreements</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-0.317*
10. <i>Stress</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1

+Significant at the 0.1 level. *Significant at the 0.05 level. **Significant at the 0.01 level.

To determine whether disagreements about raising the baby were predictive of psychological stress, I then included this variable, as well as control variables, in a regression analysis, using psychological stress as the dependent variable. When disagreements about raising the baby was added to the regression analysis, disagreements significantly predicted psychological stress, even when controlling for household income and timing. The more strongly grandmothers endorsed disagreeing with sons about raising the baby (lower value on scale), the more psychological stress they reported ($\beta=-0.162$, $p=0.019$) (see Table 3.3).

Table 3.3: Main Effects Model of Satisfaction on Psychological Stress				
Variable	B	Std Error	t	Sig
Step 1				
<i>Timing</i>	0.155	0.145	1.067	0.291
<i>Household Income</i>	-0.043*	0.021	-2.107	0.040
Step 2				
<i>Timing</i>	0.107	0.139	0.764	0.449
<i>Household Income</i>	-0.046*	0.020	-2.339	0.024
<i>Disagreements</i>	-0.162*	0.067	-2.421	0.019
F=4.811, sig=0.005, R2=0.235				
** Significant at the 0.01 level				
* Significant at the 0.05 level				
+ Significant at the 0.1 level				
n=50 due to missing data				

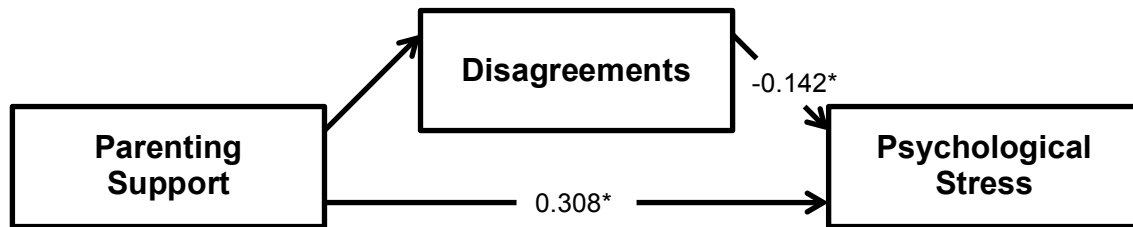
Results of Mediation Model Analysis

Finally, I tested whether disagreements with raising the baby, which represents satisfaction, mediated the association between parenting support and psychological stress (see Figure 3.2). I ran a multiple mediation test using disagreements with raising the baby, controlling for household income (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The full main effects model was significant ($F=7.681$, $p=0.000$). The total and direct effects of

parenting support on psychological stress were significant ($\beta = 0.349$, $p = 0.005$ and $\beta = 0.308$, $p = 0.011$ respectively). The direct effect of disagreements on psychological stress was also significant ($\beta = -0.142$, $p = 0.026$). However, the effect of parenting support on disagreements on raising the baby was not significant ($\beta = -0.283$, $p = 0.290$). The bias-corrected confidence interval was (-0.021, 0.151), suggesting the indirect effect of satisfaction was not significant. A summary of the model can be found in Figure 3.2.

Table 3.4: Mediation Model for Parenting Support, Satisfaction and Stress				
	B	Std Error	t	Sig
<i>Parenting Support on Stress: Total Effect</i>	0.348**	0.119	2.916	0.005
<i>Parenting Support on Disagreements</i>	-0.283	0.264	-1.071	0.290
<i>Disagreements on Stress</i>	-0.142*	0.062	-2.300	0.026
<i>Parenting Support on Stress (account for Disagreements)</i>	0.308*	0.116	2.658	0.011
<i>Partial Effect of Household Income</i>	-0.050**	0.017	-2.898	0.006
	Value	Std Error		
<i>Indirect Effect</i>	0.040	0.040		
<i>95% Confidence Interval: (LL) -0.021 (UL) 0.151</i>				
F=7.681, sig=0.000, R2=0.324				
** Significant at the 0.01 level				
* Significant at the 0.05 level				
+ Significant at the 0.1 level				

Figure 3.2: Final Model of African American Paternal Grandmothers' Satisfaction with Sons' Fathering Practices, Parenting Support and Psychological Stress



Only significant values are displayed.

**Significant at 0.01 level. *Significant at 0.05 level. +Significant at 0.10 level.

Note: Higher scores of parenting support represent less parenting support.

Discussion

This mixed methods study aimed to explore the role of satisfaction in associations between parenting support and psychological stress. The results of this study show how complex satisfaction and stress are in the lives of African American women raising teenage fathers. Using a qualitative approach, I aimed to explore how African American paternal grandmothers characterize satisfaction with their sons' fathering practices and expectations for ideal practice, as well as how they articulate inconsistencies between their satisfaction and expectations. Using a quantitative approach, I then aimed to explore which characterizations of satisfaction were associated with psychological stress, and which, if any, mediated the association between parenting support and psychological stress.

First, I sought to identify, through qualitative analysis, the ways in which African American paternal grandmothers characterize satisfactory teenage fathering practices, as well as the ways in which satisfaction can be inconsistent with expectations. Grandmothers' characterizations centered on three types of practices: financial support,

attentiveness and instrumental support, which mostly overlapped with their expectations of ideal fathering performances. Paternal grandmothers most emphasized financial support in their descriptions of expectations and characterizations of satisfaction. These findings further suggest that paternal grandmothers may be influenced by the father-as-provider discourse when evaluating their sons' practices (Dallas & Chen, 1999). Furthermore, I found that grandmothers gendered providing, for instance, by invoking a "good male provider" discourse. Dallas and Kavanagh (2010) also observed this emphasis on financial support as one definitive aspect of fathering in another study with African American teenage fathers.

I found that, according to paternal grandmothers' characterizations, their sons participated in fathering their children. These characterizations challenge what Gadsden and Smith (1994) noted as popular and scholarly depictions of the 'uninvolved African American father', in that paternal grandmothers observed sons who actively sought closeness with children. The concept of "being there" as an important fathering practice was also reported in a study with African American teenage fathers by Paschal, Lewis-Moss and Hsiao (2011), suggesting a parallel between both fathers' and grandmothers' beliefs about attentiveness towards the child.

The use of Intersectionality in this study undergirds the contextualization of assessments of sons' practices, specifically how they accommodate the ecological, interpersonal and developmental challenges sons faced in trying to be 'good fathers'. This was observed in grandmothers' interpretations of inconsistencies via justification of sons' practices, effort sons put into their practices and the compensations sons made in balancing practices. In mothering their sons, paternal grandmothers are in a position to

experience the issues their sons face in transitioning to fatherhood (Belsky & Miller, 1986; Dallas & Chen, 1998; Johnson, 2001; Krishnakumar & Black, 2003; Nelson, Clampet-Lindquist, & Edin, 2002; Rhein, Ginsburg, Schwarz, Pinto-Martin, Zhao, et al, 1997; Roy, 2004; Sullivan, 1993). In these results, I observed that grandmothers experienced dissatisfaction only when their sons failed to engage with the father role, suggesting the only problem they could not excuse was failing to try. Paternal grandmothers in Dallas's (2004) study similarly reported concerns with sons who did not engage with their children. According to an intersectional framework, individuals who are members of marginalized social groups are distinctly aware of the function of cultural stereotypes in governing social experiences. Paternal grandmothers may be cognizant of how their sons will be perceived and treated should they behave in stereotypically negative ways. More research is needed that examines grandmothers' perceptions of sons' motivation to father.

I also found that grandmothers' assessments of satisfaction with sons' fathering practice had no significant power in predicting increases in psychological stress. From an analytical perspective, the results suggest that satisfaction level does not affect psychological stress. This conclusion is not surprising given the substantial percentage of grandmothers who reported satisfaction with sons' practices despite sons' violation of grandmothers' ideals for fathering practice. Many of these grandmothers seemed to accept underperforming fathers due to their cognizance of the barriers sons faced. For paternal grandmothers, less than satisfactory fathering does not seem to be considered a "problem behavior" that would increase burden, and subsequently, psychological stress (Anderson, 2008; Putnick, Bornstein, Hendricks, Painter, Suwalsky, et al, 2010).

In Dallas and Chen's (1999) work, paternal grandmothers' discourse about fathering practice suggested this was true to an extent—some women in this sample expected fathers to make mistakes, and that they would need to complement their sons less-than-ideal practices. More focused research can clarify whether grandmothers' psychological stress is affected by their assessments via these three themes.

Finally in the quantitative results, I did find that conflict about fathering practices significantly predicted psychological stress, such that stronger endorsement of conflict was associated with greater stress. However, I found no support for the hypothesis that conflict mediated the association between parenting support and stress, likely because grandmothers' levels of parenting support were not predictive of conflict. In regards to the Caregiving Stress Model, these results suggest that grandmothers' satisfaction with sons' fathering practices are not a mediating condition, as defined by Pearlin and colleagues (1990). While paternal grandmothers seem to make meaning out of their sons' fathering practices in a way that would suggest its utility in coping with the stresses of raising a teenage father, in this sample, it did not appear to serve that function.

While satisfaction may not directly contribute to or protect against psychological stress, it may affect other aspects of grandmother-father interactions, such as grandmother-father disagreement about fathering practice. Such disagreements about childrearing likely arise when grandmothers are not satisfied with sons' efforts (Dallas & Chen, 1999). Additionally, teenage fathers often distance themselves from their mothers and assert opposition to mothers' interference in an effort to develop a stronger sense of manhood and masculinity (Dallas & Chen, 1999; Tuffin & Rouch, 2008).

Taken together, such evidence signals that relationships between African American paternal grandmothers and teenage sons may be strained when sons become fathers, which may increase grandmothers' stress. Research that examines the role of positive relationships among paternal grandmothers and teenage fathers may shed further insight into differences in psychological stress.

There are a number of limitations that must be considered in relation to study findings. The data used for this analysis were written notes made by an interviewer. While every effort was made to record responses to questions verbatim, problems may have occurred in recording participants' words accurately. Additionally, since this is a secondary analysis, there was an inability of this analyst to ask questions to clarify participants' responses to certain questions, resulting in a small amount of responses that were ambiguous. Such data was classified under all possible applicable codes. Also, the format of the interview (e.g. survey interview) did not encourage long responses. Data collection methods utilizing more open-ended questioning, such as semi-structured interviews, would alleviate some of these issues. From a statistical perspective, the small sample size reduced the power, such that small effect sizes could not be observed in the data. This is the reasoning for using the more liberal significance level; however, this increases the chances of Type I error. Researchers need to conduct further examination clarifying relationships between these constructs. Additionally, I performed a cross-sectional analysis, limiting the study's interpretative power in determining causation. Use of longitudinal analyses would address this limitation.

Despite these limitations, this study offers results that have important implications for research on this issue. As shown in literature, various factors govern paternal grandmothers' satisfaction with sons who are also teenage fathers. However, these factors may not overlap with mothers and maternal grandmothers' ideas of involvement. More research needs to examine the similarities and differences between paternal and maternal sides of the teenage parent family. The results also suggested a complementary effect in that grandmothers' satisfaction often reflected their expectations. However, it is not clear whether these effects would hold in statistical analysis. It is also not clear whether grandmothers were cognizant only of practices that fit within their schema of ideal fathering practice (e.g. father-as-provider role). More research with grandmothers and fathers can elucidate some of these relationships.

This study offers multiple contributions to our understanding of African American paternal grandmothers, parenting support, and psychological stress. First, even among paternal grandmothers, financial support is still considered the most important fathering practice, and thus it is critical to reflect on its place in the literature. A lack of financial resources is often a barrier to father involvement (Bunting & McAuley, 2004; Danziger & Radin, 1990), necessitating alternative means of fulfilling this role (Gadsden & Smith, 1994). However, it is clear from the findings that paternal grandmothers do acknowledge and encourage their sons when they engage in other aspects of fathering practice, such as instrumental and emotional caregiving.

Another contribution this study makes is that it highlights paternal grandmothers' awareness of and accommodation of challenges, as well as how those manifest as inconsistencies between expectations, observed practices and satisfaction. However,

while paternal grandmothers may support sons even when they ‘fall short’, the maternal family may be less likely to consider such issues when evaluating teenage fathers’ involvement in their children’s lives (Cervera, 1991). Since teenage fathers are most likely to take their cues on fathering practice from paternal grandmothers (Christmon, 1990), the resulting behavior may exacerbate conflict between the teenage father and the maternal family, affecting father involvement (Gavin, Black, Minor, Abel, Papas, et al, 2002), and, potentially, grandmothers’ stress levels.

Finally, this study highlights that conflict about childrearing can contribute to increased psychological stress. Previous research illustrates that African American grandmothers expect to be involved in guiding their children’s transition to parenthood, and rearing their grandchildren (Apfel & Seitz, 1996; Schweingruber & Kalil, 2000). Relationships between African American parents and children are often close; compromises to the grandmother-father relationship may leave grandmothers vulnerable to psychological stress. It is prudent to invest resources into the development of interventions that increase communication and strengthen relationships between paternal grandmothers and teenage fathers to improve health and social outcomes for grandmothers, fathers, and their children.

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CHAPTER IV

The mediating influence of relationship quality on parenting support and stress among African American paternal grandmothers

Introduction

African American mothers whose sons are teenage fathers, herein referred to as paternal grandmothers, provide parenting support to their sons as they adjust to fatherhood (Bunting & McAuley, 2004). Approximately 25% of African American fathers are or were fathers prior to the age of 20, compared to the national average of 15% (Martinez, Chandra, Abma, Jones & Mosher, 2006). Research suggests that, for many of these young men, involvement in their children's lives wanes after the first year of life (Carlson, 2004), but African American paternal grandmothers' parenting social support can be the deciding factor in whether sons remain involved in their children's lives and/or avoid situations that threaten their life opportunities (Fagen, Bernd & Whiteman, 2007). Anywhere from 69% to 88% of African American teenage fathers turn to paternal grandmothers for assistance with raising children (Hendricks, Howard & Caesar, 1981a; Miller, 1994).

Paternal grandmothers provide parenting support to teenage fathers in many ways, including instructing their sons in childcare, providing financial support, offering feedback to sons about fathering practices and encouraging sons to maintain relationships with their children and the maternal family (Bunting & McAuley, 2004; Christmon, 1990; Roy, 2004; Roye & Balk, 1996; Wakschlag, Chase-Lansdale, &

Brooks-Gunn, 1996). They also help sons negotiate often tenuous relationships with the mother of the baby and her family (Bunting & McAuley, 2004; Dallas & Chen, 1998; Johnson, 2001; Roy, 2004).

Such support benefits teenage fathers and their fathers, but it has consequences for African American paternal grandmothers' health. Psychological stress, or disruption to one's psychological balance or equilibrium (Glanz & Schwartz, 2008; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), is one area of concern. Chronic psychological stress, such as that emerging from everyday persistent stressors, has been linked to increased rates of depression, heart disease, hypertension and early mortality (Cohen, Janicki-Deverts & Miller, 2007). Such chronic diseases disproportionately affect African American women (Grason, Minkovitz, Misra & Strobino, 2001; Israel, Farquhar, Schulz, James & Parker, 2002). Thus, it is important to be attuned to the factors that may be associated with stress in this population. Few studies focus on African American paternal grandmothers and the potential health outcomes resulting from parenting support, with fewer conducted recently (Allen-Meares, 1984; Bunting & McAuley, 2004; Dallas & Chen, 1999).

Grandmothers' perceptions of relationship quality between themselves and their sons may mediate the experience of stress based on their ability to provide parenting support to their sons. Relationship quality is a marker of one's evaluation of critical intimate relationships in one's life. For African American paternal grandmothers, the quality of relationship with sons may be important in regulating stress due to providing parenting support in response to their child's need for help (Ladner & Gourdine, 1984; Sroufe, 1997); however, no studies to date have explored these potential relationships.

Thus, the purpose of this study is to 1) establish whether associations between grandmothers' perceptions of relationship quality and psychological stress exist among African American paternal grandmothers who provide parenting support to their teenage sons who are fathers, and 2) determine if paternal grandmothers' relationship quality with sons mediates the association between parenting support and psychological stress.

Theoretical Approach

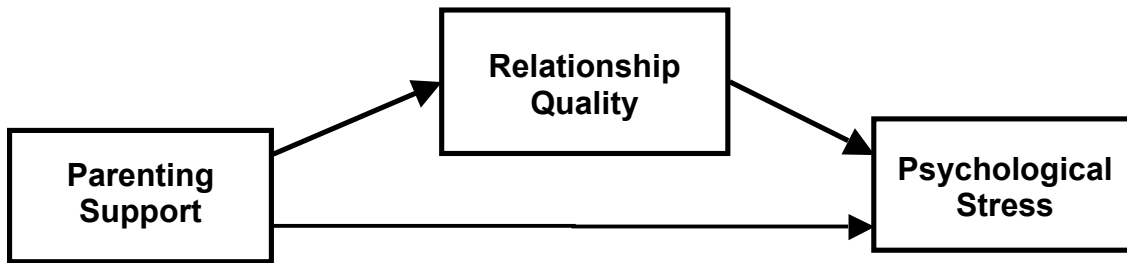
This study's conceptual framework is a modified version of the Caregiving Stress Model (Pearlin, Mullan, Semple & Skaff, 1990), itself an extension of the Stress and Coping Model (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984), and Intersectionality. The Caregiving Stress Model is particularly appropriate for conceptualizing how parenting support influences stress, as supporting teenage children through the transition to parenthood is an extension of the caregiving parents already provide (Miller, 1997). This model has also been used to examine caregiving stress among diverse racial and ethnic groups (Aranda & Knight, 1997). Intersectionality is a framework outlining how membership in different social categories (i.e. race, gender) can "intersect" to create unique standpoints and social experiences (Collins, 2000). I utilize Intersectionality to understand the distinctness of the African American mother-son relationship as it relates to parenting support and psychological stress.

This conceptual model for the study illustrates perceived relationship quality between paternal grandmother and teenage father as a mediator because it is hypothesized to serve as a mechanism by which parenting support would be stressful

for a given paternal grandmother. The Caregiving Stress Model identifies secondary stressors related to caregiving, and, more specifically, family conflict as a secondary role strain. Secondary role strains are strains occurring on roles outside of the caregiving relationship (i.e. strained relationships with other family members, strains on the relationship with the caregiving recipient outside the scope of caregiving). While Pearlin et al (1990) highlighted the ways in which family conflict with those outside of the caregiving relationship may be associated with strain, I argue that family conflict with caregiving recipients, such as children, may also be associated with secondary role strain. For this study, I focus on perceived relationship quality as the representative construct. I propose that the extent to which a given paternal grandmother provides parenting support influences her perception of the mother-son relationship, which, in turn, influences her level of psychological stress.

Three main constructs are included in this study's model (see Figure 4.1): primary stressor (parenting support), primary health outcome (psychological stress) and secondary role strain (perceived relationship quality). In summary, the parenting support paternal grandmothers provide for teenage fathers is viewed as a stressor and, therefore, contributes to paternal grandmothers' psychological stress. However, grandmothers' perceptions of perceived relationship quality between themselves and their sons may mediate the association between the burden of parenting support and their psychological stress. I expand on this model below.

Figure 4.1: Conceptual Model of African American Paternal Grandmothers' Relationship Quality, Parenting Support, and Psychological Stress



African American Paternal Grandmothers' Parenting Support

Paternal grandmothers provide parenting support to sons in an effort to allow sons to connect to fatherhood while reducing its risks and struggles. African American teenage fathers, particularly those living in poverty, often confront structural barriers in fulfilling the fathering role (Lemay, Cashman, Efenbein & Felice, 2010). In turn, an inability to fulfill the father-as-provider ideal causes tension throughout the extended teenage-parent centered family, which may discourage some teenage fathers from engaging in fathering (Bunting & McAuley, 2004; Carlson, 2004). These impoverished communities place sons at risk for engagement in criminal behavior as well as educational and vocational struggles (Burrell & Roosa, 2009; Elo, King, Furstenberg, 1999; Lerman, 1993; Marsiglio, 1994; Martinez, Chandra, Abma, Jones & Mosher, 2006). In response, paternal grandmothers may provide support to reduce fathers' distress, increase engagement, and protect the fathers' future life opportunities (Fagen, Bernd & Whiteman, 2007; Paschal, 2006).

Paternal grandmothers' provision of parenting support may contribute to increased psychological stress. According to Wells-Wilbon and Simpson (2009),

African American caregivers are more concerned about providing caregiving than the consequences that work takes on their health. In Chapter 2, I found that grandmothers who provided less support were more stressed than those who provided more. Additionally, many paternal grandmothers may be raising teenage fathers under constrained circumstances, which may increase their vulnerability to stress. One such circumstance is poverty. A study by the South Carolina Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy [the Campaign] (2012) found in a sample of 84,000 15-18 year old males that 70% of South Carolina African American males had lived in poverty at least seven years of their life. Among teenage fathers, in a qualitative study of 25 kinship systems including African American teenage fathers, Dallas and Kavanagh (2010) found virtually all participating families lived below or at the poverty line—household incomes ranged from \$0 to \$28,000, with the average being approximately \$14,600. In Chapter 3, I found that household income was associated with psychological stress, such that lower household income predicted increases in psychological stress. Another constrained circumstance is the age at which women become grandmothers. Younger grandmothers report more stress than older grandmothers. From Chapters 2 and 3, I found that poverty and timing may be linked in terms of their association with increased stress.

Paternal Grandmothers' Perceived Relationship Quality and Psychological Stress

How African American paternal grandmothers perceive relationship quality between themselves and their sons is important to understand when examining psychological stress among grandmothers. Relationship quality is comprised of both

closeness and conflict (Collins & Laursen, 2004). Closeness refers to a sense of cohesion, togetherness and willingness to help one another. In contrast, conflict refers to overtly or covertly expressed anger and aggression that is observable to the parties involved. These aspects of relationship quality are not mutually exclusive. Specific to relationship quality between grandmothers and teen parents, for example, as these dyads adjust to new roles and functions, their relationships can often be both close and conflictual (Obeidallah & Burton, 1999). Family relationships within many African American communities are highly valued, although the extent to which this exists is in debate (Kane, 2000; McDonald & Armstrong, 2001; Mosley-Howard & Burgan Evans, 2000). From a cultural perspective, many African Americans embrace the notion that families are interdependent, with members supporting each other through difficult times.

Literature on African American mother-son relationships suggests that African American paternal grandmothers are likely to have invested time and energy into raising their sons and value the relationships between them. Many African American family members value enmeshed parent-child relationships and may turn to these relationships for emotional support (Hill, 2001; Johnson & Staples, 2004). Compromises to these relationships may be associated with increased stress. Any compromises in high closeness or low conflict can cause relationship quality to suffer between grandmothers and teenage parents (Caldwell, Antonucci & Jackson, 1998; Kaplan, 1996; Paskiewicz, 2001). Generally, perceptions of unhappy relationships have been associated with higher cortisol reactivity (Berry & Worthington, 2001). Specific to grandmothers, in a recent study, McKinley, Brown and Caldwell (2012) found that conflictual relationships between young grandmothers and teen mothers were

associated with grandmothers' higher depressive symptoms. However, it is unclear as to whether perceived relationship quality influences psychological stress among grandmothers whose children are teenage fathers.

Mediating Influence of Perceived Relationship Quality

In Chapter 2, I found that African American paternal grandmothers who performed less support experienced greater stress. It may be that providing less support is associated with how a given paternal grandmother perceives the relationship between herself and her son. When paternal grandmothers are less involved with their sons, they may be responding to changes in how sons interact with them. For example, culturally and psychologically, parenthood has been considered a symbolic transition to adulthood that may be associated with teens' distancing from parents and changes in the relationship between parents and children (Cohler & Musick, 1996; SmithBattle, 1996). In one example, Dallas (2004) reported that paternal grandmothers perceived more distance in the mother-son relationship once the son became a teen father. This distancing may increase African American paternal grandmothers' stress levels. In a quantitative study of African American maternal grandmothers and teenage mothers, Ladner and Gourdine (1984) found maternal grandmothers relied on the relationships with their daughters for emotional support, and experienced distress when those relationships became more distant due to teenage parenthood. In this distancing, grandmothers may also perceive that they are removed from their children's circle of influence. In relation to this, gender differences have been observed in the literature. In a sample of 18-34 year old African American parents, Hunter (1997) found that fathers

were likely to rely on their mothers only for childcare assistance, in contrast to mothers who sought assistance in both parenting advice and childcare assistance. African American mothers may experience insecurity and resentment when children fail to follow their guidance and fall into problem behaviors, such as not taking responsibility for their actions (King & Mitchell, 1990; Schweingruber & Kalil, 2000). In the case of paternal grandmothers, less parenting support (i.e. input into the son's fathering practices) may be associated with more discord between grandmother and father (Dallas & Chen, 1999); in the last chapter, I found that grandmothers' perceptions of conflict about fathers' childrearing was associated with increased stress. Further examination is needed to ascertain relationships between parenting support, perceived relationship quality and psychological stress.

Research Aims and Hypotheses

The preceding literature review on parenting support, relationship quality, and psychological stress among African American paternal grandmothers suggests that perceived relationship quality may influence stress within this population directly. However, no studies to date have identified whether these paternal grandmothers experience stress associated with perceiving poorer relationship quality. The first aim of this study is to determine whether there is an association between perceived relationship quality and psychological stress among African American paternal grandmothers. The second aim of this study to examine whether perceived relationship quality mediates the association between parenting support and psychological stress. In response, I hypothesize that:

1) Paternal grandmothers' perceptions of less positive relationship quality with sons will be associated with more psychological stress;

2) As grandmothers' parenting support decreases, and as perceptions of positive relationship quality decreases, psychological stress will increase.

Methods

As part of the Paternity in Early Childbearing Pilot Study, data were collected from 275 participants representing 100 multi-generation families with teen fathers, 19 years old or younger, the mothers of the fathers' children and the teen fathers' mothers (paternal grandmothers). The sample was restricted to first-time teen fathers whose partner was in the 3rd trimester of pregnancy. Family members were interviewed four times beginning with the first interview during the 3rd trimester of pregnancy, the second interview 6-weeks after birth, the 3rd interview 6-months after birth and the final interview 12-months after birth. Interviewers were race and gender matched to participants. Eligibility criteria for grandmothers included being the mother or legal guardian to an African American male between the ages of 14-19 who was also a first time father. The current study is based on data collected at baseline and during Wave 2, six weeks after the birth of the child. Participants that had data for both Wave 1 and 2 were included in this analysis. A total of 59 participants were included in the final analysis.

Data were collected in a small, urban, Midwestern metro area with an approximately 21% African American population at the time of the study; in the central city, approximately 56% of residents were African American (US Census Bureau, 2012a). The median household income level for families with children under 18 was

\$47, 655 and 20% of families lived under the poverty level (US Census, 2012b). Within city limits, the median household income was \$27, 560 and the percent below poverty level was 40%. The overall unemployment rate was 10.3%; however, unemployment for those 16-19 was 33% (US Census Bureau, 2012c). In 2007, the teenage pregnancy rate for the county was approximately 75 births per 1000 persons, higher than the state's rate of 55 births per 1000; the majority of these births were to African American women ("Local" Health Department, 2008). The sample was primarily recruited from one community-based health clinic located within city limits.

Measures

Independent Variables

Parenting Support. Parenting support was measured using utilizing questions from an adapted version of the Social Networks in Adult Attachment Questionnaire (Antonucci, 1986). Three items composed this subscale: "I help my son to understand what kinds of things a father should do", "I support my son in meeting his responsibilities as a father" and "I help my son be a good father". The three items are scored on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Agree) to 5 (Strongly Disagree). Items were summed across all questions then divided by three to calculate a mean response. Higher scores represent lower levels of parenting support, while lower scores represent higher levels of parenting support. The Cronbach's alpha for this subscale was 0.89.

Relationship Quality. Relationship quality was measured using questions from an adapted version of the Social Networks in Adult Attachment Questionnaire (Antonucci, 1986). Four items were included in this subscale: "My son and I are much

closer than most mothers and sons”, “I have a lot of respect for my son”, “My son and I have a good relationship”, and “My relationship with my son sometimes makes me feel tense”. The four items were scored on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Agree) to 5 (Strongly Disagree). The last question on conflict was reverse coded. Items were summed across all questions then divided by four to calculate a mean response. Lower scores represent stronger endorsement of positive relationship quality whereas higher scores represent stronger endorsement of negative relationship quality. The Cronbach’s alpha for this subscale was 0.72.

Dependent Variables

Psychological Stress. Levels of psychological stress were measured using Cohen’s Perceived Stress Scale, which asks a series of questions about individuals’ appraisal of stress over the past month (Cohen, Kamarck & Mermelstein, 1983). The fourteen items are scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Agree) to 5 (Strongly Disagree). Example questions include: “In the last month, how often have you dealt successfully with daily hassles?”, “In the last month, how often have you felt able to handle your personal problems?”, “In the last month, how often have you felt you were on top of things?”. The Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was 0.75. Items were summed across all questions. Reverse coding was performed where applicable. Additionally, I divided these summed responses by the total number of questions to calculate a mean response. Higher scores represent greater psychological stress, while lower scores represent lesser psychological stress.

Control Variables⁴

Control variables included number of children the grandmother had (either living within or living outside the home), education level, and timing into grandmotherhood, or the age at which the participant became a grandmother.

Timing into Grandmotherhood. Timing to grandmotherhood was determined by age at birth of first grandchild. Those 40 and below were classified into an off-time grandmother group; those above 40 were classified into an on-time grandmother group. These age distinctions were based on similar classification of grandmothers (George & Dickerson, 1995; Silverstein & Marengo, 2001; Szinovacz, 1998). Grandmothers were asked if their son's baby was their first grandchild, as well as number of grandchildren. For those who said yes, they were automatically assigned to the appropriate group. For those who said no, questions related to the number of grandchildren and ages of residential grandchildren were used to assign grandmothers to appropriate groups. On-time grandmothers were classified as 0 and off-time grandmothers were classified as 1.

Number of Children. Grandmothers were asked how many children they had. Higher numbers represented more children.

Years of Education. Grandmothers were asked how many years of education they had completed. Options ranged from 0 to 17. Higher scores corresponded to more years of education.

⁴ Other control variables (partner status, employment status) were included in previous analysis, but were not significantly associated with stress. Therefore, they were excluded from the final analysis.

Analysis

For this study, I performed a correlation analysis and linear regression to test the first hypothesis. Additionally, I performed a multiple mediation test in conjunction with bootstrapping to test the second hypothesis.

For the correlation analysis, I performed Pearson correlations as all the variables were normally distributed continuous variables aside from timing, which was a dummy variable.

For the linear regression analysis, I entered the independent variables into three groups: control variables (number of children, education and timing), main predictor variable (parenting support) and secondary predictor variable (relationship quality).

Finally, I performed a mediation analysis to examine the role of relationship quality as a mediator between parenting support and stress. I utilized a bootstrapping technique at 1000 resamples. A multiple mediation test was performed on a bootstrapped sample in order to calculate the indirect effect of parenting support on stress through relationship quality. This method, introduced by Preacher and Hayes (2008) is more effective than Baron and Kenny's causal steps strategy (1986) approach. Their approach estimates individual pathways between independent variables (x), potential mediators (m) and dependent variables (y) and assesses whether the effect of x on y decreases when m is taken into account. However, Preacher and Hayes' (2008) method allows for testing of indirect effects that also controls for covariates in the model. Throughout the results section, I will note significant results to the 0.1 level, in order to explore trends within the data. I chose this more liberal significance level to accommodate the small sample size, which would only allow large effect sizes to

emerge in analyses. The higher significance level captures the presence of more effects.

Results

Demographic Profile

The mean age of the grandmothers was 43 (SD=6.7, range 34-65). A third of the grandmothers had never been married or had a live-in partner (34%). Another third (37%) were widowed, divorced, or separated. The remaining were married or living with a partner (22% and 7% respectively). 38% were college educated, another 38% had a high school diploma or GED, and 24% had some high school education. Grandmothers completed an average of 12.33 years of education (SD=1.71, range 7-17).

Grandmothers had an average of 3.79 children (SD=1.73, range 1-9). 66% of grandmothers lived at or below the federal poverty line. Median household income was \$12,500. The size of the households in this sample ranged from one (grandmother lived alone) to nine people (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Demographic Characteristics of Sample (N=59)			
Characteristic	N or Range	M or %	SD
<i>Personal Characteristics</i>			
Age	34-65	43	6.7
<i>Marital Status</i>			
Married	13	22%	--
Living with Partner	4	7%	--
Widowed	1	2%	--
Divorced	15	25%	--
Separated	6	10%	--
Never Married/Dating	20	34%	--
<i>Educational Characteristics</i>			
<i>Education Attainment</i>		12.33	1.71
Some High School	14	24%	--
High School Diploma or GED	22	38%	--
+College Educated	22	38%	--
<i>Household Characteristics</i>			
<i>Household Income</i>		12,500*	
Less than 15K	36	61%	--
15K-29,999K	12	20%	--
30K-49,000K	7	12%	--
50K and Above	4	7%	--
Household Composition	1-9	4.10	1.79
<i>Family Characteristics</i>			
<i>Number of Children</i>	1-9	3.79	1.73

*median household income shown

Parenting Support, Relationship Quality and Stress Descriptives

All grandmothers either strongly agreed or agreed that they provided parenting support for their sons. The mean in this sample was 1.44 (SD=0.52). On average, grandmothers agreed they had a moderately positive relationship with their sons (mean=2.06, SD=0.73). Finally, on average, grandmothers reported experiencing a moderate level of stress (mean=2.45, SD=0.52) (see Table 4.2).

Variable	Mean (SD)
<i>Parenting Support</i>	1.44 (0.52)
<i>Relationship Quality</i>	2.06 (0.73)
<i>Psychological Stress</i>	2.45 (0.52)

Correlations

A summary of correlations can be found in Table 4.3. In summary, both parenting support and relationship quality and one control variable, timing, were positively correlated with psychological stress (parenting support: $r=0.370$, $p=0.004$) (relationship quality: $r=0.368$, $p=0.004$) (timing: $r=0.277$, $p=0.033$). Additionally, parenting support and relationship quality was moderately and positively correlated ($r=0.437$, $p=0.001$), such that increases in parenting support were correlated with increases in grandmothers' perception of positive relationship quality. While a strong correlation ($r=0.70$ and above) between independent variables can signal multicollinearity, a moderate correlation between parenting support and relationship quality should have minimal effect on regression and mediation analyses (see Table 4.3).

	1	2	3	4	5	6
<i>1.Children</i>	1	-.200	-.044	-.024	-.026	.187
<i>2.Education</i>	---	1	-.140	.118	-.176	-.242
<i>3.Timing</i>	---	---	1	-.002	.056	.277*
<i>4.Parenting Support</i>	---	---	---	1	.437**	.370**
<i>5.Relationship Quality</i>	---	---	---	---	1	.368**
<i>6. Stress</i>	---	---	---	---	---	1

**** significant at the 0.01 level *significant at the 0.05 level**

Main Effects of Relationship Quality

I first hypothesized that grandmothers' perceptions of a more negative relationship would be associated with increased stress. To test the first hypothesis, I ran a linear regression analysis. Overall, the full model was significant ($F=4.264$, $p=0.003$) and explained approximately 30% of the variance in psychological stress ($R^2=0.295$). Parenting support was significant, such that less parenting support was related to more stress ($\beta =0.418$, $p=0.001$), even when controlling for number of children, timing and education. Finally, I entered relationship quality. When relationship quality was added to Model 3, parenting support remained significant; however, the beta dropped ($\beta =0.335$, $p=0.014$) (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4: Main Effects Model of Relationship Quality on Stress				
Variable	B	Std Error	t	Sig
Step 1				
<i>Education</i>	-0.048*	0.041	-1.178	0.244
<i>No. of Children</i>	0.053	0.039	1.342	0.185
<i>Timing</i>	0.295*	0.136	2.168	0.035
Step 2				
<i>Education</i>	-0.067+	0.037	-1.807	0.077
<i>No. of Children</i>	0.053	0.036	1.477	0.146
<i>Timing</i>	0.282*	0.123	2.285	0.026
<i>Parenting Support</i>	0.418**	0.118	3.534	0.001
Step 3				
<i>Education</i>	-0.057	0.038	-1.498	0.140
<i>No. of Children</i>	0.055	0.035	1.552	0.127
<i>Timing</i>	0.267*	0.123	2.178	0.034
<i>Parenting Support</i>	0.335*	0.132	2.543	0.014
<i>Relationship Quality</i>	0.131	0.095	1.374	0.175
F=4.264, sig=.003, R2=.295 ** Significant at the 0.01 level * Significant at the 0.05 level + Significant at the 0.1 level n=57 due to missing data				

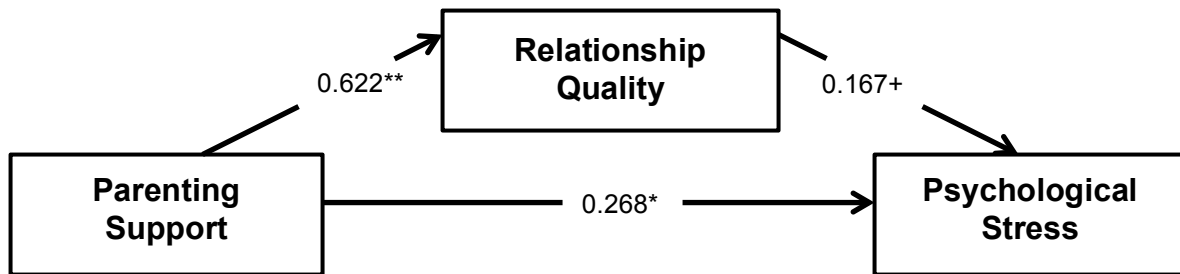
Parenting Support, Relationship Quality and Stress Mediation

I also hypothesized that, as support decreased, perceptions of relationship quality would be more negative, and stress would increase. In order to answer the second hypothesis, I ran a mediation analysis with a bootstrapped sample, generating a bias-corrected confidence interval. The full mediation model was significant ($F=6.416$, $p=0.001$). The total effect of parenting support on stress was significant ($\beta =0.372$, $p=0.003$). Additionally, an association between parenting support and relationship quality was significant, such that as parenting support decreased, grandmothers' reports

of a more negative relationship with sons increased ($\beta = 0.622$, $p=0.000$). An association between relationship quality and stress was also significant at the 0.1 level, such that grandmothers' perception of a less positive relationship predicted higher levels of stress ($\beta = 0.167$, $p=0.073$). When accounting for relationship quality, parenting support remained significantly associated with stress, although the beta decreased ($\beta = 0.268$, $p=0.043$). The bias-corrected confidence interval for the indirect effect of relationship quality was (0.006, 0.263), suggesting that this value was statistically significant (see Table 4.5).

Table 4.5: Mediation Model for Parenting Support, Relationship Quality, and Stress				
	B	Std Error	t	Sig
<i>Parenting Support on Stress: Total Effect</i>	0.372**	0.119	3.127	0.003
<i>Parenting Support on Relationship Quality</i>	0.622**	0.171	3.644	0.000
<i>Relationship Quality on Stress</i>	0.167+	0.091	1.829	0.073
<i>Parenting Support on Stress (account for RQ)</i>	0.268*	0.130	2.069	0.043
<i>Partial Effect of Control Variables</i>	0.274*	0.120	2.277	0.027
	Value	Std Error	Z	Sig
<i>Indirect Effect</i>	0.104	0.064		
<i>95% Confidence Interval: (LL) 0.006, (UL) 0.263</i>				
F=6.416, sig=0.001, R2=0.259				
** Significant at the 0.01 level				
* Significant at the 0.05 level				
+ Significant at the 0.1 level				

Figure 4.2: Final Model of African American Paternal Grandmothers' Relationship Quality, Parenting Support and Psychological Stress



Only significant values are displayed.

+Significant at the 0.10 level. *Significant at the 0.05 level. ** Significant at the 0.01 level.

Note: Higher scores of parenting support represent less parenting support.

Note: Higher scores of relationship quality represent more negative relationship quality.

Discussion

While evidence has shown that the mother-son bond is important for teenage fathers' wellbeing (Bunting & McAuley, 2004; Fagen, Bernd & Whiteman, 2007), this study suggests that it is beneficial for paternal grandmothers as well. Specifically, I found support for an indirect effect of parenting support on stress via perceived relationship quality. When grandmothers reported less parenting support, their relationships with sons were less positive. Grandmothers who reported less positive ratings of relationship quality had higher stress.

While I observed that grandmothers' perceptions of relationship quality and stress were positively correlated, this association did not hold in a regression model. While previous research found connections between relationship quality and psychological states, these studies focused on depressive symptomatology or psychological distress as an outcome (Caldwell, Antonucci & Jackson, 1998; Kaplan, 1996; Paskiewicz, 2001). It may be that perceived relationship quality does not operate on stress level in the same way. However, it may also be that the lack of statistical

significance occurred due to the inclusion of parenting support in the model. Both the correlation and mediation analyses illustrate some statistical association between parenting support and perceived relationship quality, which would affect the results.

I did find that perceived relationship quality mediated the association between parenting support and psychological stress, in that less parenting support was associated with perceptions of less positive relationship quality, which, in turn, was associated with increased psychological stress. Extensions to the Caregiving Stress Model might consider the role of caregiver-caregiving recipient relationships in predicting psychological stress. Such relationships might function both as a secondary role strain, and also a source for social support.

In adapting an intersectional perspective, I sought not only to explore the role of perceived relationship quality in parenting support and psychological stress, but also to interpret them in light of paternal grandmothers' unique experiences. One way to interpret the mediation effect from an intersectional perspective is to consider potential gender differences in African American socialization. In general, African American parents are apt to adopt an authoritative approach to parenting, which is a response to the dangers children face living in environments where they may experience racism or structural disadvantage (Hill, 2001; Johnson & Staples, 2004). Hill (2001), in a literature review on class and gender differences in racial socialization, suggested some African American mothers may be protective of and are less likely to support competence and self-reliance in sons in an effort to gird them up emotionally in the face of expected racism and rejection. In contrast, mothers may push their daughters to be more independent in order to prepare them to confront sexism in their interpersonal and

professional lives, which may or may not be also racialized. If this is true, then when situations and circumstances that threaten a son's life opportunities arise, a mother is likely to act to "protect" her son.

In the context of parenting support, African American paternal grandmothers witness their sons struggle with multiple issues and problems that are not only directly tied to racism or structural disadvantage. They are also gendered in a way that either marginalizes fatherhood (i.e. confronting challenges with the legal system or maternal family) or is related to expressions of masculinity and fathering (i.e. increasing engagement in criminal behavior to provide financially). If grandmothers aim to "protect" sons, they may be likely to take over for their sons when sons face struggles. Paschal (2006) noted that some African American teenage fathers, in fact, placed the responsibility of childrearing and financial provision squarely on the women in their lives. Dallas and Chen (1999) also found that paternal grandmothers expected to and do take on some of the fathers' responsibilities in regards to their children in an effort to protect them. To them, taking on some of their sons' fathering practices was part of their job as mothers.

From this vantage point, then, it is not surprising that one mechanism describing the less parenting support-more psychological stress association is perceived relationship quality. It may be that grandmothers' contributions to their sons' fathering practice are reflections of these dynamics as well as opportunities for increased closeness. This interpretation is in line with evidence that, among African American women, one dominant discourse of mothering centers on the "sacrificial mother" (Collins, 2000; Woods-Giscombe, 2010). For example, Black, Murry, Cutrona and Chen

(2009) found, among 747 rural African American mothers, that fulfilling role responsibilities to their children actually buffered the effects of financial strain on psychological stress. The results from my study contribute to our understanding of how “protecting” their sons through parenting support may strengthen grandmothers’ perception of these relationships as positive, and decrease stress.

However, further research should examine whether teenage fathers value “protection” as paternal grandmothers might. While this interpretation is in line with evidence that fathers are most likely to turn to paternal grandmothers with help-seeking behavior (Hendricks, Howard & Caesar, 1981), it is not necessarily in line with the “distancing” in which some teenage fathers engage (Cohler & Musick, 1996). Another area for further research should adapt an intersectional approach to determine whether this effect truly reflects a gender difference in parenting, and whether the same “protection” hypothesis is true for maternal grandmothers and their daughters.

There are some limitations to this study. The small sample size compromises the power of statistical tests, constraining observed effect sizes to large effects. This decreased power affected the results, especially in reference to tests for mediation. While I found support for mediation, it was marginally significant. Larger sample sizes may result in strong evidence for mediation. Additionally, I performed this analysis on one wave of the data only. Use of cross-sectional analysis limited my ability to determine causation. I am also unable to evaluate whether the relationship quality measured in Wave 2 was static throughout the paternal grandmothers’ and sons’ relationship, or a brief change in response to the birth of the baby 6 weeks prior to data collection. It may be that as grandmothers and sons adapted to the baby, their

relationships changed. Use of longitudinal analysis techniques would address these limitations. Finally, this analysis did not control for other potential confounding variables in the model, such as household income and income-to-needs ratio. These variables might influence relationship quality, in that poorer parent-child relationships are associated with financial strain (Murry, Harrell, Brody, Chen, Simons, et al, 2008).

Despite these limitations, this study provides important insight into the experiences of African American paternal grandmothers and their sons who are teenage fathers. African American families are, in many ways, interdependent, in that they rely on family relationships, particularly in the face of constrained contexts (Jarrett, Jefferson, Kelly, 2010). Paternal grandmothers and teenage fathers confront a number of barriers in the transition to fatherhood, including working with formal social support agencies and managing relationships with the maternal family (Dallas, 2004; Rozie-Battle, 2003; Savio Beers & Hollo, 2009). In providing support to teenage fathers, paternal grandmothers may grow closer to their sons, and experience reduced stress.

However, as some researchers have noted, the idea of the 'extended, close-knit African American family' has been romanticized to some extent, resulting in too much emphasis placed on grandparents within extended teenage-parent centered families without supporting their efforts (McDonald & Armstrong, 2001). Thus, expanded examination of the family influence on African American mothers' health outcomes is warranted in both empirical and practice contexts in order to make lasting impact on health outcomes for African American grandmothers, teenage fathers and their children.

The implications for applied practice with extended teenage parent families are clear. Continuing to nurture family-based approaches to intervention work is essential

for African American extended families. While these approaches are burgeoning among social service organizations and community-level interventionists, more work is needed to strengthen existing interventions and scale up effective programs that capitalize on existing family relationships (Benson, 2004; McNeil & Murphy, 2010). Such interventions have the potential to not only assist teenage parents, but also improve health outcomes, such as stress levels, for grandmothers (McDonald, Conrad, Fairlough, Fletcher, Green, et al, 2009).

In conclusion, this study suggests that African American paternal grandmothers place a high value on mother-son relationships, and on parenting support. These relationships have an influence on reducing their stress levels. In the face of shared struggle, paternal grandmothers, like other mothers, may find strength in supporting their sons through the transition to fatherhood. However, it is a delicate balance, in that these results should not imply that there is little need to support African American paternal grandmothers. Many African American women are apt to place caregiving and relationships above their own health and wellbeing, contributing to their accelerated health decline (Lekan, 2009; Wells-Wilbon & Simpson, 2009). What this does mean, however, is that more nuanced approaches in intervention and research development that seek to capitalize on African American women's sources of strength would go far in reducing psychological stress and its subsequent health outcomes.

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CHAPTER V:

Parenting support and psychological stress: Implications for research, practice and policy

Introduction

The purpose of this dissertation was to develop and test a conceptual model of the associations between parenting social support and psychological stress among African American mothers whose sons are teenage fathers, or paternal grandmothers. Specifically, I sought to answer questions aimed at understanding the diversity within this group in reference to parenting support. In one respect, that diversity pertained to these women's unique social position as African American women who were also responsible for rearing African American fathers. That diversity also extended to the mechanisms between providing parenting support and their psychological stress. In other words, what helps to explain variations in their experience of stress in providing parenting support?

Chapter One

The first chapter reviewed the literature and conceptual framework guiding the dissertation research. I aimed to 1) illustrate that paternal grandmothers experience parenting support as a stressor uniquely due to their experiences as African Americans, women, mothers and parents to teenage fathers, 2) explore how cultural, political,

economic and family contexts intertwine to influence parenting support, and how such support may be linked to psychological stress, and 3) call for more research on African American paternal grandmothers. Using an adaptation of the Caregiving Stress Model, supplemented with an Intersectional framework, I examined the lived experiences of African American paternal grandmothers. I highlighted how a multiplicity of factors intertwine in their lives, creating conditions in which stress may manifest and subsequently affect their health in the short and long term (Collins, 2000; Pearlin, Mullan, Semple, & Skaff, 1990). I noted how structural (i.e. cultural and political) factors filter through community-level and family-level factors to predispose them to parenting support. In turn, how parenting support results in psychological stress is itself governed by the appraisal of parenting support as stressful and mediating conditions that offer mechanisms by which support becomes a burden.

One main point that arose is that African American paternal grandmothers must grapple with challenges their sons face due to the cultural, political and community contexts in which they father. While more attentiveness has been turned to the struggles of African American mothers, less has been turned to the role of African American fathers. Cultural beliefs of the inferiority of African American fathering still persist, hindering the efforts of men, both young and old, who do desire to be involved in parenting their children. This is compounded when also including discrimination based on age. Teenage fathers of all races and ethnicities face challenges in fathering (Bunting & McAuley, 2004). Policy decisions pertaining to child custody and access to children often hinder their involvement (Rozie-Battle, 2003). Economic instability in African American communities creates barriers to fathers gaining sufficient employment

to support a child; some turn or return to illegal activities to provide financially (Wilkinson, Magora, Garcia & Khurana, 2009). Scholars have noted African American teenage fathers' cognizance of such invisibility and hostility, and its role in discouraging their involvement (Marsiglio, 1994; Paschal, Lewis-Moss, & Hsiao, 2011). African American paternal grandmothers sit at this intersection, balancing myriad concerns and needs of their child. These include the grandmothers' desires to mother effectively but also navigate their sons through cultural, social and family systems that too often reject their sons' role and place in their children's lives because they are young fathers.

Another main point that emerged in this dissertation research is that the very cultural and political qualities that are maintained as positive and beneficial to African American communities may have unintended side effects for paternal grandmothers. For many African Americans, the interdependent nature of family is touted as a strength; the seeming disintegration of family connections pointed to as a reason the African American population faces struggles today (Hill, 1998; Johnson & Staples, 2004). Even more to the point, African American mothers have been lifted up, both by themselves and their families, as saviors to the race. However, that same strength can increase caregiving burdens for many African American women.

Cultural beliefs about African American mothering have influenced policy decisions that place a higher burden of care on African American mothers, under the unspoken cultural assumption that mothers embrace and have adequate resources for caregiving unequivocally. For example, grandmothers are sought to perform kinship care for grandchildren who are part of the foster care system, often without the same financial support that non-biological caregivers receive (Simpson & Lawrence-Webb,

2009). This is not to say that African American paternal grandmothers, particularly lower-income grandmothers, can not receive benefits from parenting support, but rather that the benefits can be outweighed by the lack of resources these women have to care for their children and grandchildren. Scholars have noted the psychological and spiritual benefits that come with mothering, such as a more positive sense of self, empowerment, greater awareness of their life purpose and life satisfaction (Trotman, 2002). However, these same women often have a dearth of financial and emotional resources that would ease their work in helping their sons navigate through fatherhood, such as access to adequate employment, economic security, and partner support (Murry, Bynum, Brody, Wilert & Stephens, 2001; Wells-Wilbon & Simpson, 2009).

The last main point that emerged from the literature is that parenting support, in itself, and as a stressor, may be qualitatively different for paternal grandmothers than for maternal grandmothers. Because paternal grandmothers, when compared with maternal grandmothers, engage in less instrumental support, such as childcare, the ways in which the emotional aspects of parenting support (i.e. developmental factors, effect on the mother-son relationship) are more readily apparent. Doing so may be difficult when they themselves question the value of the father in families and childrearing (Dallas & Chen, 1999). Throughout the rest of the dissertation, I sought to explore these more internally situated explanations for the associations between parenting support and psychological stress among paternal grandmothers, in light of the multiple contextual factors that surround them.

Chapter Two

For the second chapter, I sought to examine the role of temporal context in African American paternal grandmothers' appraisal of parenting support as stressful. Two factors, timing into grandmotherhood and peer time, were the focus of analysis in this chapter. Timing into grandmotherhood referred to the age at which a given mother became a grandmother. Peer time referred to existing intimate relationships with other women who were also grandmothers. I predicted that 1) grandmothers who performed more parenting support would be more stressed, 2) "off-time" grandmothers would report more stress, 3) grandmothers with peers who are not grandmothers would report more stress, 4) timing would operate independently from parenting support in influencing psychological stress, and 5) peer time would operate in tandem with parenting support to influence psychological stress.

I first identified that grandmothers who performed less parenting support were prone to more psychological stress. This conflicted with my expectations stemming from the Chapter 1 review. Because this was a cross-sectional study, I cannot determine causation. Therefore, it may be that grandmothers who are stressed do not provide parenting support as well as those grandmothers who are less stressed. Such an interpretation is line with research linking stress and other mental health issues with parenting outcomes, although this relationship is more complex than once thought (Turney, 2011). It may also be that stress may emerge from self-assessments of performance. From considering research on parenting and stress generally, one would suspect that more work would be associated with more stress. However, research specifically with African American mothers has highlighted the complex nature of

mothering work as an expression of love and concern (Collins, 1987). This mothering work comes with a spiritual and emotional benefit (Collins, 2000). It also may be that both parenting support (or lack of) and psychosocial stress may arise from a third, unmeasured variable such as the quality of the relationship with their sons or the mothers of their grandchildren.

I then found that off-time grandmothers reported more stress than on-time grandmothers, and that timing operated independently from parenting support, such that grandmothers 40 or younger reported more stress despite their levels of parenting support. Sadler and Clemmens (2004) noted how transitioning to grandmotherhood at younger ages may interfere with their desires to engage in more “young adult” tasks, such as dating, completing schooling and pursuing careers. Additionally, women experience personality changes and role changes during midlife (Helson & Soto, 2005; McAdams & Olson, 2010). The addition of a new role may overburden women. This may also reflect the level of resources younger grandmothers have at hand to manage the additional responsibilities that come with raising a teenage father. Off-time grandmothers in this sample reported less financial resources than on-time grandmothers. They also had a lower income-to-needs ratio, meaning they had less money for each person living in the home. Paternal grandmothers, particularly those in lower-income communities, may be called upon to provide financial resources to their sons and the maternal family when there is lack (Dallas, 2004; Dallas & Chen, 1999). This particular responsibility may be perceived as more burdensome for off-time grandmothers who have less financial resources from which to draw.

Finally, I found that, while there were no differences in stress based on peer time, grandmothers who had close friends who were grandmothers and performed less support were more stressed than grandmothers who had no friends and performed less support, which, again, conflicted with the Chapter 1 review. Grandmothers seem to appraise less support as more stressful in the face of existing peer relationships. From one perspective, it may be that those grandmothers that perform more parenting support receive the positive benefits from social relationships such as peer support, thus buffering stress. In contrast, grandmothers who perform less support may receive criticism and backlash from disapproving peers, thus exacerbating stress. In the second chapter, I also discussed how this may signal a social comparison effect, in that grandmothers may assess their parenting in light of others in their social networks, with more negative assessments contributing to increased stress (Cochran & Niego, 2002).

Chapter Three

In the third chapter, I explored the role of satisfaction as a mediating variable in the association between parenting support and psychological stress. Namely, I focused on grandmothers' satisfaction with their sons' fathering practices. As research on satisfaction among African American paternal grandmothers is limited, I first examined how grandmothers characterized satisfactory practices, seeking to also identify inconsistencies between expectations, characterizations and sons' actual practices. I then translated those characterizations into variables in order to test a direct model of satisfaction and stress and a mediation model of parenting support, satisfaction and stress.

First, I found that paternal grandmothers' characterizations of satisfactory practices included financial support, instrumental support, and attentiveness. These closely mirrored their characterizations of ideal practice—the 'responsible father', which included 'good providing' and 'taking care'. However, I found that inconsistencies between their expectations, observations and satisfaction with fathering practices revealed that grandmothers were often satisfied with sons underperforming based on their own criteria. This is not surprising. Grandmothers are undoubtedly affected by social expectations for fathering practice in American society, which stresses financial provision, and, to a lesser extent, attentiveness towards children (Doherty, Kouneski & Erickson, 1998; Gadsden & Smith, 1994; Pleck, 2007). However, where a disconnect lies is in how they use that cultural information. It may be that these characterizations are only one of many criteria they use to evaluate practice. Other research in this area would support such conclusions. Paternal grandmothers have noted their perceptions of teenage sons' ill-preparedness in becoming a father, for instance (Dallas & Chen, 1999).

I also used the empirical results from the qualitative analysis to build a regression model of satisfaction and stress. However, only grandmothers' endorsement of disagreements about raising the baby was associated with increased psychological stress. While this construct was significantly associated with stress, it did not mediate the association between parenting support and psychological stress. In examining the results, I attributed the lack of mediation to the non-significant relationship between parenting support and disagreements. In other words, there was no consistent pattern apparent in the data linking parenting support and disagreements, which directs back to

the inconsistencies noted in the qualitative results. To a certain extent, grandmothers' disagreements with sons may not be about the amount of support they provide as grandmothers, but more so whether they see their sons engaging with the father role, despite sons' competency in performing fathering practice. This further illustrates that the reasons why paternal grandmothers experience stress in parenting support are complex.

Chapter Four

In the fourth chapter, I explored grandmothers' perception of relationship quality as a mediating condition in the association between parenting support and psychological stress. I predicted that perceptions of less positive relationships would be directly associated with more psychological stress. Additionally, I predicted that, as parenting support and endorsements of positive relationships decreased, psychological stress would increase.

I found that, while perceived relationship quality and psychological stress were inversely correlated, this association did not hold in a regression model in which parenting support was included. This was not surprising, given that parenting support and relationship quality were moderately correlated. Despite the lack of significance, the direction of the beta value suggested that less positive relationships predict more stress. That outcome was consistent with other research focused on the role of relationships on grandmothers' mental health outcomes that suggests negative relationship quality is associated with increased depressive symptomatology and psychological distress (Caldwell, Antonucci & Jackson, 1998; Kaplan, 1996; Paskiewicz,

2001). Due to this data being cross-sectional, one potential explanation for these findings was that more stressed grandmothers subsequently have less positive relationships with their sons. From that perspective, this finding complemented similar studies illustrating how African American mothers' parenting stress can compromise relationships with their children (Murry, Harrell, Brody, Chen, Simons, et al, 2008). From another perspective, this result also illustrated that compromises to mother-child relationships may increase stress. Such an interpretation is supported by research noting the value African American mothers place on the "mother" role, and on relationships with their children (Collins, 1987; Hill, 2001).

I also found that perceived relationship quality mediated the association between parenting support, such that perceived relationship quality is one of the mechanisms by which parenting support was associated with psychological stress. More specifically, as parenting support decreased, grandmothers perceived more negative relationships, which, in turn, predicted higher stress. In Chapter 4, I approached conceptualizing this mechanism through the concept of distancing, in which fathers may resist parenting guidance in an effort to adjust to fatherhood and feel more masculine by separating from their mothers (Tuffin & Rouch, 2008). More specifically, I believed grandmothers would find that more support would be associated with more negative relationships because of a distancing effect, subsequently increasing stress. In support of this, I relied on Dallas' (2004) finding that some African American paternal grandmothers did perceive distancing with their sons once they became fathers. However, this pattern conflicted with the finding in Chapter 2 that less support was associated with more psychological stress.

The modified hypothesis suggested that, in fact, less support was associated with their perceptions of less positive relationships, which, in turn, increased stress. As I was unable to ascertain from Dallas's (2004) study how much parenting support grandmothers were providing, it may be that grandmothers who perceived distancing were also grandmothers who provided little support, which I proposed in the literature review for Chapter 4. It may also be that the mother-son relationship in this case is much more complex than even the intertwining of these results can illustrate. For example, relationships can be both close and conflictual (Obeidallah & Burton, 1999). It may be that instances of distancing may be fleeting for grandmothers, having little influence on their overall sense of relationship quality. More in-depth work with African American paternal grandmothers and teenage fathers would explicate how parenting support, grandmothers' perceptions of relationships, sons' perceptions of relationships and grandmothers' psychological stress coexist.

Integrative Findings

There are a number of findings that emerge from examining the results across chapters. One major finding is the robust association between timing into grandmotherhood and psychological stress. In this sample, off-time grandmothers were consistently more stressed, even when variables such as parenting support and relationship quality were included in models with timing. However, analyses in Chapter 2 and 3 suggest an association between timing and financial resources. In Chapter 2, I found that off-time grandmothers reported less household income and had a lower income-to-needs ratio. In Chapter 3, the satisfaction model controlled for both timing

and household income. Those variables were moderately and negatively correlated, such that off-time grandmothers had lower household incomes than on-time grandmothers. Both were also correlated with psychological stress. Correspondingly, timing did not significantly predict psychological stress when household income was included.

This provides insight into one mechanism by which being an off-time grandmother makes one vulnerable to increased psychological stress. More often than not, younger grandmothers were themselves teenage parents (McNeil & Murphy, 2010). As discussed earlier in this dissertation, literature on teenage parenting establishes that younger childbearing can compromise earnings potential (Klein, 2005). In turn, constraints on household income can increase psychological stress, particularly among low-income women, who comprised the majority of women in these studies (Murry, et al, 2001; Murry, Harrell, Brody, Chen, Simons, et al, 2008). Household income disparities are only one of the unique challenges faced by off-time, younger grandmothers. In their literature review on young grandmothers, McNeil and Murphy (2010) argue that younger grandmothers confront myriad structural, interpersonal and developmental challenges, many which have been highlighted throughout these chapters. Scholars and practitioners need to turn more attention to the particular needs of younger grandmothers. An intersectional perspective is particularly useful in exploring this area of study. The use of Intersectionality, with its focus on understanding how different aspects of oppressive contexts intertwine in lived experience, supports scholars in unpacking women's vulnerability to poverty and early

childbearing and how these issues are embedded within a structurally oppressive context, such as in the work of Geronimus (1996) and Burton (1990).

One seemingly inconsistent finding across the chapters pertains to the roles of disagreements and perceived relationship quality in directly and indirectly affecting psychological stress. Some scholars have suggested that disagreements, or conflict, is a symptom of poor relationship quality, and have highlighted how conflict increases psychological stress. Given that disagreements did not mediate the association between parenting support and psychological stress, one might assume similar patterns would exist with perceived relationship quality. But in fact, I observed the opposite pattern—perceived relationship quality did mediate the association between parenting support and psychological stress. The discrepancy occurred because parenting support significantly predicted perceived relationship quality, but it did not predict disagreement. In fact, these two associations (parenting support/relationship quality and parenting support/disagreements) exhibited different directionality. While it was not significant, the pattern suggested by the disagreement mediation was that as parenting support increased, disagreements decreased. In contrast, as parenting support increased, the perceived relationship quality was more positive. When juxtaposed with findings from Chapter 2 in which less parenting support predicted more psychological stress, these findings support other research finding grandmothers may experience distress in parenting support and relationships with their sons when they have less input into and involvement in their grandchild's rearing.

Such an interpretation heightens back to the discussion in Chapter 1 about the gendering of parenting roles and their juxtaposition against the African American

mother-son relationship. African American parent-child relationships have been found to be more authoritative in nature; this type of parenting style has been associated with children's improved social and academic outcomes (Johnson & Staples, 2004). Furthermore, African American children, especially those growing up in single parent homes, have come to rely on the seemingly capability of their mothers to manage all household and family crises, despite the contributions of involved or uninvolved fathers. When teenage sons become fathers, these gendered roles may "come home to roost". Paschal (2006) argued that sons might bring these dynamics into fatherhood, expecting their mothers and the mothers of their babies to compensate for their inability to provide financial and instrumental care. Studies by Dallas (2004), and Dallas and Chen (1999) suggest that paternal grandmothers also internalize these expectations about the grandmothers' and mothers' roles in compensating for fathers. What these studies suggest is that not doing so may be more of a stressor than the effort put into providing parenting support for their sons.

What does this say about how African American motherhood is constructed and the impact of those constructions for African American paternal grandmothers? In Chapter 2, we see that paternal grandmothers who provide less support and have peers who are grandmothers experience the most distress. In Chapter 3 and 4, we see that healthy, positive relationships between grandmothers and teenage fathers and grandmother involvement predict less stress. These findings illustrate how cultural ideals of mothering may filter down to actual performance, and then to health. Krieger and colleagues (1993) noted that African American women have been socialized to see their caregiving not simply as a function of one's position in the family, but as a

necessary component of the survival and thriving of African American communities. We also know that some African American women value the caregiving role, and that compromises to that role can be a more powerful indicator of distress than the actual work output they provide (Chadiha, Adams, Biegel, Auslander & Gutierrez, 2004; Collins, 2000). Collins (2000) suggests that African American women, to the extent that they view themselves as oppressed, may accept the hardships of the caregiving role in exchange for the sense of legitimacy and recognition being a caregiver provides in their families, communities, and culture. In light of this, it is not difficult to understand why African American paternal grandmothers might experience more distress both at not serving a support function in their families and/or being perceived as such by their family members and peers.

Theoretical Implications

In terms of theory, the results of this dissertation inform a number of recommendations for extensions and alternative uses of the Caregiving Stress Model. Along with contextualizing parenting support from an intersectional perspective, modifying the Caregiving Stress Model contributed to a more thorough understanding of the myriad ways by which parenting support may influence increased stress among African American paternal grandmothers.

One area in which to extend the Caregiving Stress Model is the inclusion of *factors affecting appraisal* as a construct. Pearlin, et al (1990) considered intrapsychic strains, which are secondary psychological strains emerging from caregiving, as a potential source of stress. To an extent, this construct shares similarities to factors affecting appraisal in that they both address psychological responses to the context of

parenting support or caregiving. However, as modeled by Pearlin, et al (1990), intrapsychic strains are a secondary response to caregiving practices and role strains. In contrast, factors affecting appraisal are not necessarily those emerging from the work of parenting support, but may share association or identification with parenting support role. For example, the contribution of timing into grandmotherhood to appraisal may be more so about grandmothers' perceptions of the grandmother role. Further use of the Caregiving Stress Model should similarly consider how transitioning to a caregiving role influences how individuals perceive themselves in relationship to the new role.

Expansions of the Caregiver Stress Model could also include constructs focused on relationships with caregiving recipients. While intense levels of instrumental care are a reality for many caregivers, not all caregivers need to expend copious amounts of physical effort. As Pearlin and colleagues (1990) stated, caregiving stems from relationship. From incorporating an intersectional perspective, I illustrated that grandmothers' relationship with their sons were just as critical in contributing to stress. On a related note, future adaptations of the Caregiver Stress Model should be more inclusive of the complexity of relationship quality, rather than focusing on conflict. This is particularly important when conducting research with racial/ethnic groups whose cultures make meaning of conflict in ways that do not profoundly impact relationships or contribute to relationship strain. This dissertation study illustrated that conflict between paternal grandmothers and teenage fathers did not hinder the mediating role of relationship quality btw parenting support and psychological stress.

Broader Implications

What do these findings mean for programs and policies that aim to improve health outcomes among African Americans? Throughout Chapter 1, I argued that paternal grandmothers' needs for formal social support were ignored, yet they were still expected to participate in supporting the teenage parents and grandchildren by their communities and extended family and social networks. My reasoning was that since grandmothers providing this assistance under the same structural constraints but without the social supports maternal grandmothers and teenage mothers receive, parenting support would be associated with more psychological stress. In turn, appraisal and mediating conditions would unpack which paternal grandmothers were more vulnerable to psychological stress. But in fact, I found that, despite their invisibility within more formal social support networks, providing more parenting support was not associated with increased psychological stress--providing less parenting support was.

Oftentimes, teenage fathers and their families are invisible to formal social support entities, such as human services, hospital systems, and the court system, in that their parenting needs and rights to parent go unacknowledged or unsupported (Bunting & McAuley, 2004, Rozie-Battle, 2003). But while this means fathers may receive less support, what may be more critical in this invisibility is that fathers may lose access, partially or completely, to their children (Connor & White, 2007; Roy, 2006; Saleh & Hilton, 2011). Fathers often have trouble finding means of recourse when maternal families limit access by gatekeeping and other efforts. This not only compromises teenage fathers' involvement in their children's lives, it may leave paternal

grandmothers more stressed. Without access, grandmothers lose the opportunity to help care for grandchildren and guide their sons in fatherhood.

One practice implication suggested by these dissertation findings is that there is a need for more relationship building between paternal grandmothers and their sons in order to capitalize on the association between positive relationships and decreases in grandmothers' stress. Despite evidence of the role grandmothers play in their sons' lives, however, no interventions for teenage fathers covered in the literature include their mothers. In regards to family functioning within the extended teenage-parent centered family, one promising intervention incorporated a groupwork approach (McDonald, Conrad, Fairlough, Fletcher, Green, et al, 2009). Teenage mothers and their families participated in small discussion circles, building trust and reciprocity. Maternal grandmothers participating in the intervention reported a significant decrease in parenting stress. While this intervention was implemented with a mostly White sample of teenage mothers and their families, its focus of nurturing family interdependence is complementary to African American family life. For African American paternal grandmothers who perform less support, participation in interventions like those focused on relationship building may decrease the stress they experience by addressing their perceptions of their relationships with sons. Additionally, such relationship building may spread throughout the entire extended teenage-parent centered family, particularly in light of the interdependent nature of African American family life (Hill, 1998).

However, interventions must also consider the fact that paternal grandmothers experience multiple stressors outside of the grandmother role, which have a powerful

influence on health. Chadiha, Collins and other scholars are right to argue, however, that the spiritual and emotional benefits of mothering do not cancel out its effects on health, which is substantial. Woods-Giscombe (2010) argues that African American women experience higher rates of health issues as a direct result of their “strength”, such as engaging in extraordinary levels of caregiving and self-care postponement. In light of this, there is a need for more support for paternal grandmothers that does not eliminate their caregiving functions but supplement them. Younger grandmothers particularly need more support. As data from this dissertation research suggest, these women are likely to have lesser financial resources than women who are older, on-time grandmothers. Many were also teenage parents themselves, their entrance into parenthood a symptom of contextual constraints, such as poverty.

In terms of African American paternal grandmothers’ stress reduction, promising interventions and frameworks focus on teaching women to embrace and redefine “strength”, utilizing culture as a mechanism for healing, asking for support and assistance, and promoting self-care without undermining the value of caregiving among participants (Townsend, Hawkins & Batts, 2007; Wells-Wilbon & Simpson, 2009; Woods-Giscombe & Black, 2010). Townsend and colleagues (2007) compared an Afrocentric and standard stress intervention in a sample of African American women. The majority of these women were highly educated and had either low or moderate incomes. Both interventions reduced women’s engagement in negative affective coping (e.g. cursing, worrying, taking feelings out on family). However, the Afrocentric intervention reduced engagement in these coping strategies more so than the standard

stress intervention. More applied, culturally responsive interventions focused on African American women's stress are needed.

Finally, these findings illustrate the importance of policies that 1) focus in on seeking out teenage fathers and addressing their unique needs, and 2) increase women's access to comprehensive health care support, including mental health services and chronic disease management. President Obama has made one of his policy priorities the promotion of responsible fatherhood (National Fatherhood Clearinghouse, 2013). In light of that, it is important to improve teenage fathers' access to their children, as well as provide services that meet their unique needs. Research has illustrated the positive impact of providing services that address teenage fathers' needs, such as employment, parenting training, and education (Bronte-Tinkew, Burkhauser & Metz, 2008). One unmet need most effectively addressed through policy change is institutional change in formal social and health service agencies. Such changes include training for workers who interact with teenage fathers and more father-friendly approaches to childcare and custody among judicial systems. Time and time again, teenage fathers report distant and/or hostile treatment within these spheres, which harms teenage fathers, and, by extension, paternal grandmothers (Deslauriers, Devault, Groulx, & Sevigny, 2012).

The data in these studies suggest a high percentage of African American paternal grandmothers live under constrained economic circumstances; African American women in general, particularly those impacted by structural constraints such as economic insecurity, need more access to health care services. In 2010, the U.S. Office of Minority Health (2011) hosted a national dialogue on African American health

disparities. Along with other outcomes, leaders in African American communities called for increased diversity in the health workforce, and more holistic approaches to health care. Both these recommendations acknowledge the relevance and importance of approaches to health interventions that address African American paternal grandmothers' health concerns, such as parenting's influence on psychological stress, within culturally relevant frameworks. Furthermore, the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services (2011) also acknowledged the critical role of access to health care and health insurance in reducing health disparities among people of color. Such policy changes can have a powerful impact on African American women's health outcomes.

Conclusion

Socially and culturally, parenting is considered “women's work”, which has rendered the intense physical, emotional and spiritual effort it entails invisible (Minkler, 1999). This combined with the cultural importance of mothering leaves African American women in the position of masking the real struggles that they face in raising their children. African American women embrace the image of a “strong Black woman” who can conquer and cope with any challenge (Kreiger, Rowley, Herman, Avery & Phillips, 1993). However, the ability of a woman to “rise” above external struggles may hide her very real internal, psychological and physiological struggles. Such struggles may relate specifically to mothering (e.g. pressures to “properly” mother) or to proximal issues (e.g. income/employment and intimate relationships) (Brodsky, 1999; Collins, 2000; Lekan, 2009; Wells-Wilbon & Simpson, 2009), and compromise a given woman's ability to manage stress.

The need to alleviate stress among African American grandmothers is urgent. The efforts African American grandmothers put into parenting support may have profound, long-term consequences. Chronic stressors, such as that associated with intergenerational caregiving, can have negative effects on physical and mental health (Israel, Farquhar, Schulz, James & Parker, 2002). Responsibility for caregiving at younger ages, such as grandmothers caring for children of teen parents, is associated with higher risk of poor economic and social outcomes, even if they are not serving as a caregiver currently (Lee, Ensminger & LaVeist, 2005). These outcomes leave African American grandmothers at higher risk for adverse, long-term health outcomes, such as hypertension, and diabetes (Grason, Minkovitz, Misra & Strobino, 2001).

However, the findings in this dissertation illustrate that the solutions to these chronic and pervasive health disparities are not cut and dried. One cannot treat African American women, or even African American grandmothers whose children are teenage parents, as a monolithic group, only examining race and gender and class. In taking an Intersectional approach to examining stress in this population, I sought to unpack how even the addition of another social role, parent to a teenage father, to the oft explored intersection of race, gender, and motherhood could make a difference in interpreting parenting support and psychological stress. However, I myself was surprised at some of the findings emerging from these studies. Ultimately, this dissertation supports the need to continually be attuned to the seemingly subtle differences among African American women, and how those differences can spell success or failure for program and policy efforts to reduce health disparities.

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