

Adolescents' Relationship with Maternal Grandmothers in Four Cultures: the Role of the Middle Generation

Mihaela Friedlmeier, *Grand Valley State University, USA*

Isabelle Albert, *University of Luxembourg, Luxembourg*

Gisela Trommsdorff, *University of Konstanz, Germany*

Cigdem Kagitçibasi, *Koc University, Turkey*

Workshop

VALUE OF CHILDREN AND INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONS

March 29th – 30th, 2012, Venue: Senate Hall V1001, University of Konstanz

Research Questions

- Are relations - support, relationship quality - between the middle generation and the grandmothers linked to the quality of grandchild–grandmother relationship?
- Are the patterns different in the four cultural contexts studies here (USA, Germany, Turkey, and China)?

Grandchildren-Grandmothers Relationship

- Why is it relevant to study the relationship between grandchildren (G3) and grandparents (G1)?
 - Increased longevity and lower fertility rates lead to increased potential for sustained and intense grandchild-grandparent relations
 - Well-being, adjustment difficulties (Attar-Schwartz et al., 2009)
- Matrilineal advantage in the quality of grandchild-grandparent bonds as a result of differentials in “kinkeeping” activities of women (Chan & Elder, 2000; Connidis, 2001; Rossi & Rossi, 1990)

The Generation in the Middle

- Mediate grandchild-grandparent relations: by organizing meetings and determining contact frequencies, and by serving as role models (Spitze & Ward, 1998; Rossi & Rossi, 1990).
- The middle generation – mothers – serves as generational bridges, “gatekeepers” of intergenerational exchange, especially in the case of children who still live at home (Montserud, 2008).
- **Social support** provided by adult children: involves parents and grandparents in a system of exchange, creates opportunities for close ties to develop (Hogan, Eggebeen, & Clogg, 1993)

The Generation in the Middle (cont'd)

- Social support (material and emotional) provided by G2 to G1 increases the quality of the tie between the G3 and G1
 - Link mediated by closeness between G2 and G1 (Chan & Elder, 2000)
- Hagestad (1985): to understand G3-G1 we need to consider two sets of relationships , G3-G2 and G2-G1
 - Which relationship is most central??
 - more support for G2G1 relationship (King & Elder, 1995; Whitbeck et al., 1993); not much known about the relevance of G3-G2 relationship (exceptions, King & Elder, 1995; Rossi & Rossi, 1990; Thomson & Walker, 1987)

Cultural Embeddedness of Intergenerational Family Relations

- We compare four cultures that differ with respect to cultural values, family norms and obligations as well as traditional kinship systems (Nauck & Suckow, 2006)
 - Germany & USA: individualistic cultures with bilineal kinship systems
 - China & Turkey: collectivist cultures with traditional patrilineal organization of kinship systems
- In **individualistic societies**: “norm of noninterference” proscribes grandparents from intervening in the parent-child relationship (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1991); in **collectivistic societies**: involvement regulated by specific cultural norms and obligations.

Cultural Aspects

- **Germany and US:** Bilineal kinship patterns, mutual obligations are less normatively prescribed and reciprocity seems to be favored (Schwarz et al., 2005).
- **China:** Confucianism promotes children's obligations towards their parents to support and respect them (Schwarz et al., 2010); due to rapid social change, grandparents' role is becoming more significant (Cong & Silverstein, 2011)
- **Turkey:** Patrilineal descent kinship systems more typical for rural compared to urban population where an affinal kinship system is more prevalent (Klaus, Suckow, & Nauck, 2007); still, high intergenerational exchange between adult daughters and their mothers (Nauck & Suckow (2006)

Hypotheses

- H1: Adult daughters who provide support to their mothers have children with closer relationships to the grandmothers.
- H2a: Closer relations (high intimacy, high admiration, low conflict) between adult daughters and their mothers are linked to closer relations between G3-G1
 - H2b: Relationship quality **mediates** the relationship between support provided and G3G1 relationship
- H3: Relationship variables are expected to be more relevant in the US and Germany compared to China and Turkey
- Research Question: is the RQ between G3-G2 of any relevance to G3-G1 RQ?

Sample Characteristics

● USA: 265 dyads

- adolescents: $M = 15.87$ ($SD=1.43$)
- mothers: $M = 44.66$ ($SD=5.61$)

● Germany: 236 dyads

- adolescents: $M = 15.67$ ($SD=1.07$)
- mothers: $M = 43.50$ ($SD=4.89$)

● China: 252 dyads

- adolescents: $M = 13.82$ ($SD=1.14$)
- mothers: $M = 39.60$ ($SD=4.00$)

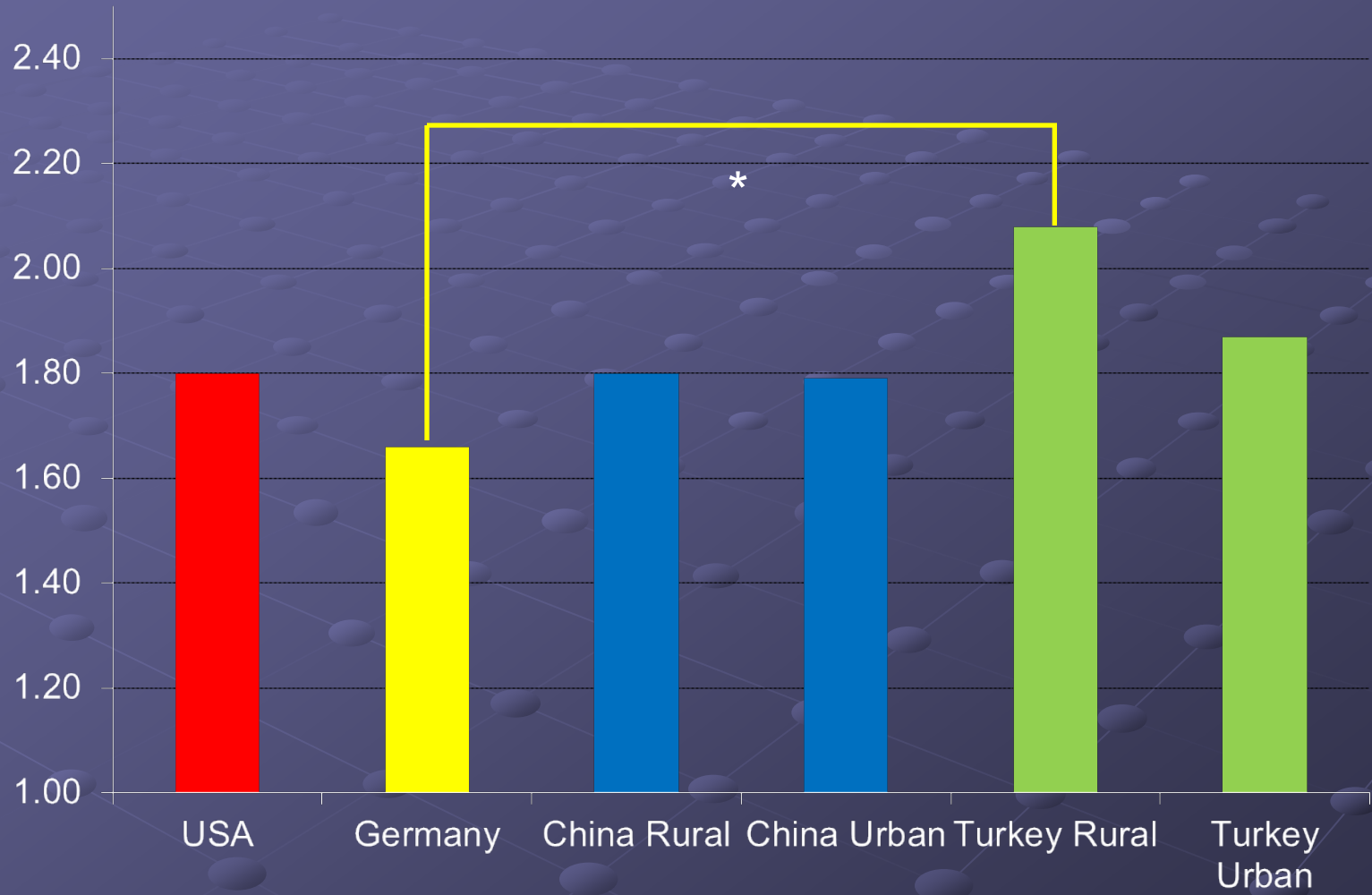
● Turkey: 222 dyads

- adolescents: $M = 14.73$ ($SD=1.11$)
- mothers: $M = 39.80$ ($SD=5.59$)

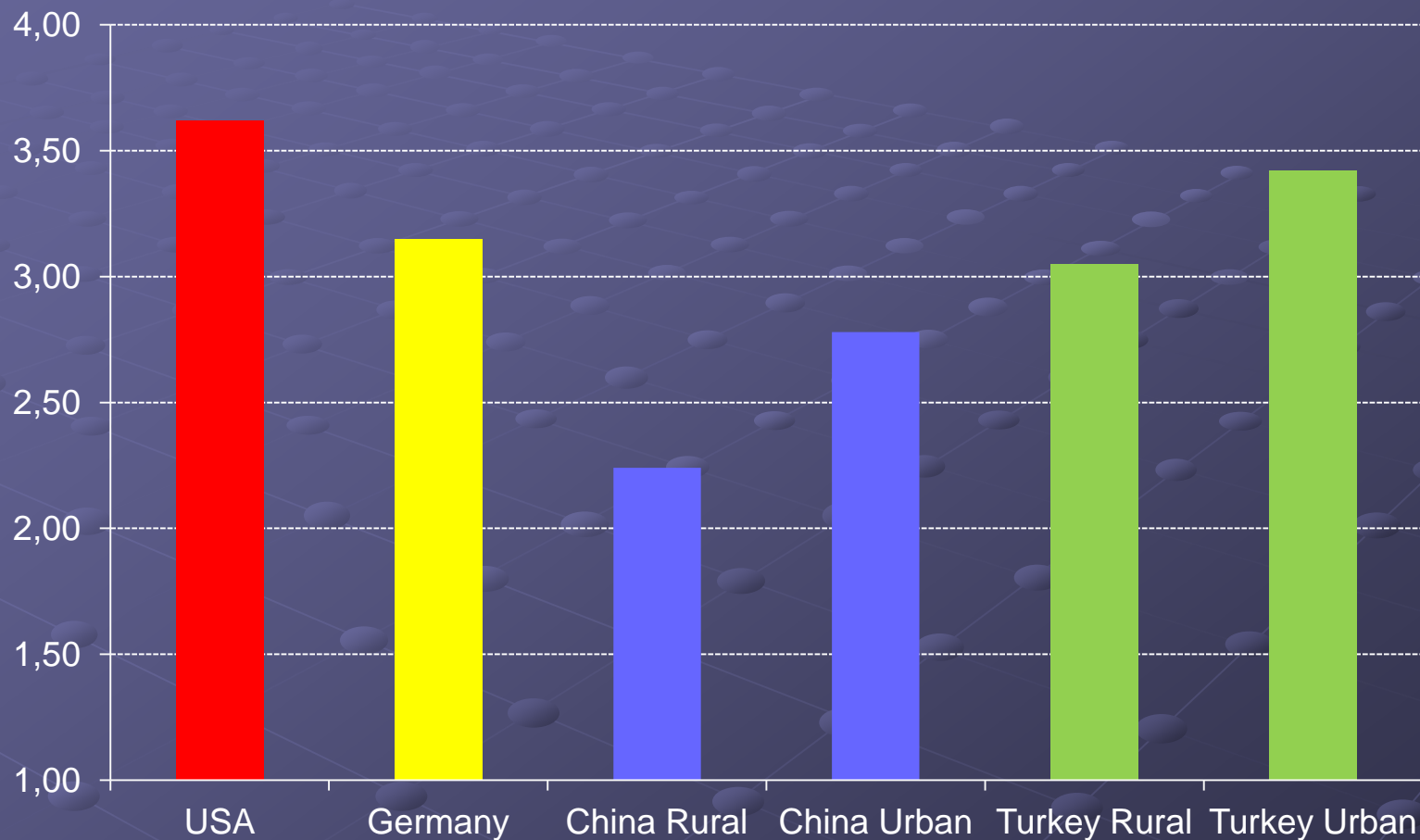
Measures

- **Quality of Relationship** (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985)
 - Intimacy
 - Admiration
 - Conflict
- **Actual Support** (in the last 12 months)
 - Emotional
 - Instrumental
 - Financial

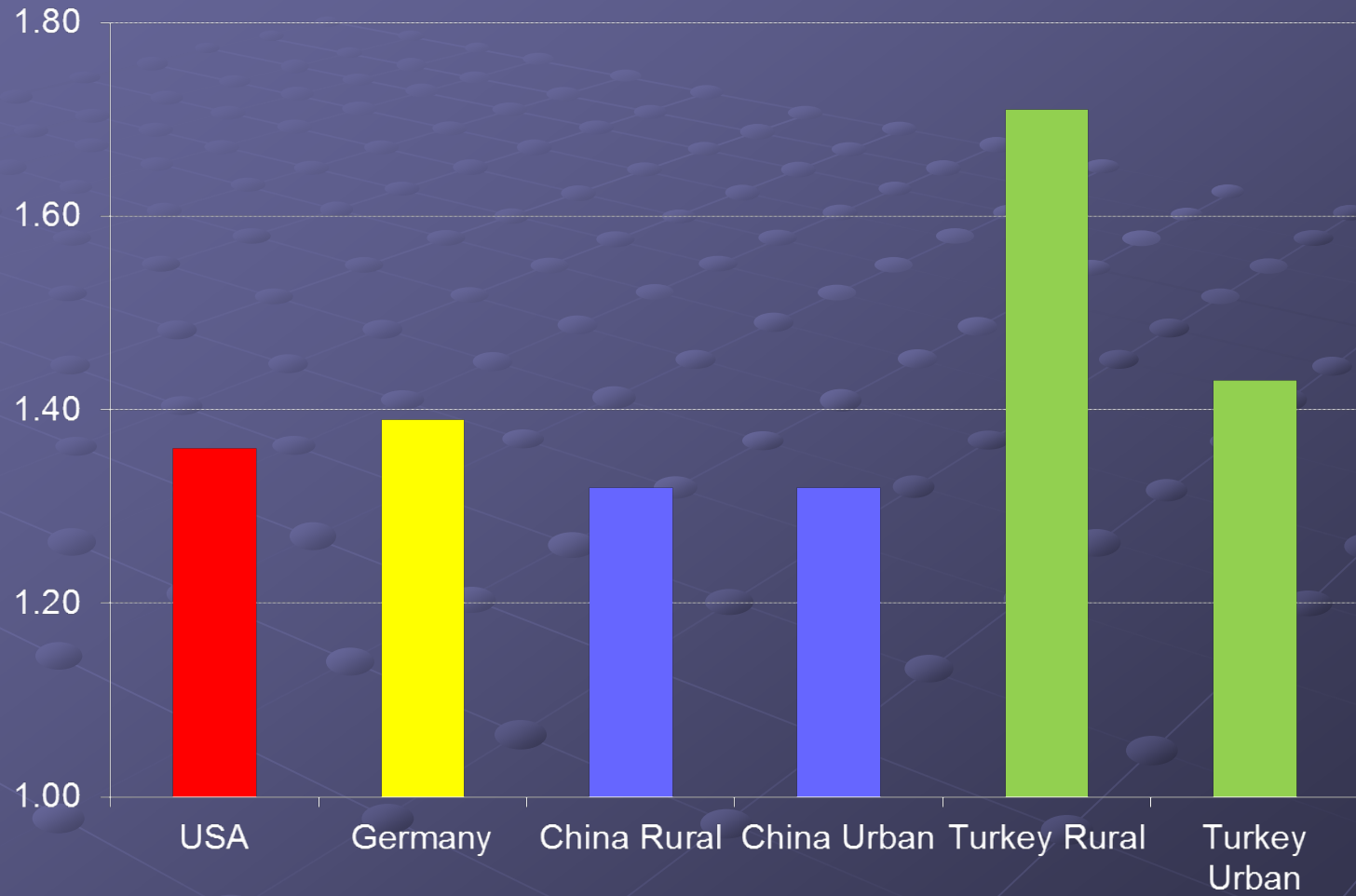
Intimacy Adolescent-Grandmother



Admiration Adolescent-Grandmother



Conflict Adolescent-Grandmother



Analyses

Hierarchical regression analyses (separate by country)

Step 2:

- contact frequency, proximity

Step 3: Intergenerational support (G2 perspective)

- Emotional (provided by G2 to G1)
- Instrumental (provided by G2 to G1)
- Financial (provided by G2 to G1)

Step 4: Relationship Quality G2G1 (G2 perspective)

- Intimacy, Admiration, Conflict

Step 5: Relationship Quality G3-G2 (G3 perspective)

- Intimacy, Admiration, Conflict

Intimacy Grandchildren-Grandmothers

	USA (265)	GER (236)	CN Urban (128)	CN rural (124)	TK urban (152)	TK rural (70)
Step2/ΔR^2	.14	.19	.02	.04	.14	.00
Contact	.39***	.52***	---	---	.39***	---
Proximity	---	-.16*	---	---	---	---
Step3/ΔR^2	.02	.01	.00	.07	.08	.11
EmotSup	---	---	---	---	.22*/.17*	.36*/.26
InstruSup	---	---	---	---	---	---
FinSup	-.12*	---	---	-.25** /- .23*	.16*	---

Intimacy Grandchildren-Grandmothers

	USA (265)	GER (236)	CN Urban (128)	CN rural (124)	TK urban (152)	TK rural (70)
Step4/ΔR^2	.07	.03	.05	.02	.03	.04
IntimacyMG	.21**	.18*	.20+	---	.16+	---
AdmirationMG	---	---	---	---	---	---
ConflictMG	.21**	---	---	---	---	---
Step5/ΔR^2	.11	.08	.30	.23	.08	.31
IntimacyAM	.29***	.31***	.38***	.52***	.35***	.58***
AdmirationAM	---	---	.27**	---	---	---
ConflictAM	----	.12*	---	---	---	.31***

Admiration Grandchildren-Grandmothers

	USA (265)	GER (236)	CN Urban (128)	CN rural (124)	TK urban (152)	TK rural (70)
Step2/ΔR^2	.04	.14	.02	.02	.09	.01
Contact	.22**	.38***	---	---	.30***	---
Proximity	---	---	---	---	---	---
Step3/ΔR^2	.04	.01	.00	.04	.06	.14
EmotSup	.13+	---	---	.19+	---	.45***/ .32*
InstruSup	---	---	---	---	---	---
FinSup	-.17** /- .14*	---	---	---	.15+	---

Admiration Grandchildren-Grandmothers

	USA (265)	GER (236)	CN Urban (128)	CN rural (124)	TK urban (152)	TK rural (70)
Step4/ΔR^2	.07	.06	.07	.11	.01	.06
IntimacyMG	---	---	.18+	.31***	---	---
AdmirationMG	.29***	.27***	---	-.18+	---	---
ConflictMG	---	---	---	---	---	---
Step5/ΔR^2	.11	.22	.36	.41	.16	.20
IntimacyAM	-.16**	-.11+	---	---	.25**	---
AdmirationAM	.63***	.54***	.65***	.65***	.25**	.46***
ConflictAM	----	.13*	---	.17**	---	---

Conflict Grandchildren-Grandmothers

	USA (265)	GER (236)	CN Urban (128)	CN rural (124)	TK urban (152)	TK rural (70)
Step2/ΔR^2	.05	.02	.13	.01	.16	.13
Contact	.20**	---	---	---	---	---
Proximity	---	---	.29**	---	.32***	.37*
Step3/ΔR^2	.01	.01	.04	.02	.04	.03
EmotSup	.14+/.11	---	---	---	.18*	
InstruSup	---	---	---	---	---	---
FinSup	---	---	.18*	---		---

Conflict Grandchildren-Grandmothers

	USA (265)	GER (236)	CN Urban (128)	CN rural (124)	TK urban (152)	TK rural (70)
Step4/ΔR^2	.05	.02	.01	.01	.01	.05
IntimacyMG	---	---	---	---	---	---
AdmirationMG	---	---	---	---	---	---
ConflictMG	.25***	.15*	---	---	---	.23+
Step5/ΔR^2	.08	.06	.06	.27	.02	.20
IntimacyAM	---	.30***	---	---	---	---
AdmirationAM	.20**	---	---	---	---	---
ConflictAM	.24***	---	.26**	.53***	---	.42***

Discussion

- The middle generation: important role as a mediator between non-adjacent generations (intergenerational transmission of relationship quality)
- More similarities across cultures than differences
- Interesting and (perhaps) unexpected: the quality of G3-G2 relationship is strongly linked to G3-G1 relationship, more than G2-G1 relationship.
 - WHY? Cognitive representation of both (all kin?) relationships, attachment-like patterns

Discussion

- It is important to study grandmother-grandchildren relationship – relevant for well-being, self-esteem, increases potential to receive support when needed (Ruiz & Silverstein, 2007);
- Good relationship of grandmothers with their grandchildren: more help given in the future to grandmothers, higher life-satisfaction of the grandmothers

More questions to ask:

- Possible interactions? E.g., G2-G1 relationship (especially support) is more important when parents live close by
- The work status and marital status of the grandmothers
- Nr of grandchildren (Mueller & Elder, 2003)
- Patrilineal advantage in China
- Only European Americans in the US sample (greater filial expectations, more intense exchange among African Americans)