



# The Grandmother Study Newsletter

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## *Spring update from The Grandmother Study Team*

Welcome to the second issue of our newsletter—Spring is in the air!

First, an update on the Grandmother Study. We have almost completed recruiting grandmothers from across the state of Ohio to

participate in the Grandmother Study. To date, 355 grandmothers have completed the Time 1 questionnaires! We thank you for your participation in this project, which will help us learn more about the important contributions of grandmothers in different types of families. Also, please note, we are still actively looking for grandmothers raising grandchildren to participate in the study.

Time 2 data collection began this past January. You will receive a telephone call about the Time 2 questionnaire roughly 12 months after you completed the first questionnaire. The Time 2 questionnaire has a new booklet format, is slightly shorter than the first questionnaire, and the compensation for your time has increased. **Please let us know if you have moved, or changed your phone number**, by writing to us or calling our toll free number, 1-866-636-0007.

## *Interviews with Grandmothers*

As you know, we are looking at the roles of grandmothers in families. Over the course of the study, some women will have changes in their household. For example, some women who had been living in a home with multiple generations (e.g., grandpar-



ent, parent, and grandchild) may now be living in a home without younger generations present; other women may have taken on the responsibility for raising a grandchild or have adult children now living in their home. When we contact you about the Time 2 questionnaire, we will check whether

there have been any changes in your family situation over the year; if there have been, Dr. Terry Standing (pictured above), a member of the Grandmother Study Team, may ask to arrange a time for a telephone interview to talk with you about those changes. If you have had changes in your family and household, you will receive more information about this part of the Grandmother Study.

## *Intergenerational caregiving*

This past fall, Dr. Carol Musil and Dr. Camille Warner, along with Dr. Eleanor Stoller of CWRU's Sociology Department, participated in a conference on intergenerational caregiving in Cleveland, Ohio. Topics included women as caregivers, grandmothers and their roles in families, and ways to strengthen intergenerational ties by celebrating ethnic heritage. Dr. Stoller highlighted specific activities that grandmothers might do with their grandchildren that center around ethnic identity and heritage. Whether one's heritage is European, African, Hispanic, Asian, American Indian or multi-ethnic, there are some effective ways of connecting the older and younger generations in families. For example, creating a recipe file of favorite recipes, passing on special crafts and skills, teaching special phrases or language from the country of origin, and sharing ethnic songs, dances and stories are all ways to improve the sense of family history. Outlining the family tree or writing a family history add to a family's sense of connection across the generations.

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**"Grandparents  
somehow sprinkle a  
sense of stardust over  
grandchildren"  
-Alex Haley**

## *The Grandmother Study goes international!—Dr. Musil's research trip to Uganda, Africa*



The importance of grandmothers to families is recognized across the globe. The past February, I traveled to Uganda and Tanzania with Dr. Joyce Fitzpatrick and Ms. Jennifer Okonsky. Along with nurse colleagues from Makerere University, Uganda, we talked with grandmothers there about their roles in families.

In Uganda, grandmothers are less likely to live in cities, and more often live in rural areas, while the adult children and families live and work in the city. Families return to the village for holidays, births, and vacations, and may return to the village if they are sick. Grandmothers are often responsible for maintaining the homestead, growing food, and making and selling crafts, in addition to

the daily care of children. In talking with the grandmothers, many expressed concerns about the health and education of their grandchildren, especially those who were taking care of children whose parents have



died or are sick with HIV/AIDS.

Although there may be vast differences in the way of life between Uganda and Ohio, the similarities between grandmothers with

their care and concern for their grandchildren are striking.

C.Musil, (far left), J. Okonsky, the village leader, Makerere University faculty, and J. Fitzpatrick (far right), after meeting with grandmothers in a village outside Kampala, Uganda.