



Wilma L. West Library Resource Notes

Grandparents Parenting Their Grandchildren

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Here is the third topic in our discussion on the interrelationship between generations. In preparing this Resource Note, I read in several sources that the U.S. Census Bureau estimates there are more than four million U.S. children living in homes in which a grandparent is the primary caregiver. On the web site of the US Bureau of the Census, Population Division, you can read or download this 1998 paper.

Lynne M. Casper and Kenneth R. Bryson. Co-resident Grandparents and Their Grandchildren: Grandparent Maintained Families

Abstract: Throughout the 1990s there has been increasing policy interest in the role grandparents play in raising and providing care for their grandchildren. In this paper, we use the newly released 1997 March Current Population Survey data in conjunction with data from past years to estimate how many grandparents maintain households for their grandchildren and how these numbers have changed since 1990. We focus on describing five types of grandparent-maintained families -- both grandparents, some parents present; both grandparents, no parents present; grandmother only, some parents present; grandmother only, no parents present; and grandfather only present -- and examine who these grandparents are, where they live, and how they fare economically. We also look at the characteristics of the grandchildren in these homes and use multivariate techniques to ascertain whether family structure affects grandchildren's economic well-being, health insurance coverage, and receipt of public assistance. We find that family structure does affect a grandchild's well-being. Grandchildren in grandmother only, no parents present families are the most likely to be poor and to have received public assistance, while those in both grandparents, no parents present families are the most likely to be uninsured.

Like intergenerational caregivers, grandparents' participating in parenting grandchildren is not a phenomenon of the twentieth or the twenty-first centuries. Remember *Heidi*? What is unique, perhaps, is the growing number of households in which no parent resides and the reasons why grandparents are taking up the primary parenting role. This paper, "Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: Rights and Responsibilities," by Pamela B. Teaster, Assistant Professor, Department of Human Development, and Extension Specialist, Gerontology, Virginia Tech and Tammy L. Henderson, Assistant Professor, Department of Human Development, Faculty Affiliate, Center for Gerontology, Virginia Tech., lists the following reasons:

Reasons Grandparents Raise Grandchildren

- To provide a home-like experience.

- To influence grandchildren's personal and cultural identity.
- To prevent placement in a foster home.
- To buffer effects of divorce or single-parenthood.
- To care for children with parents who are incarcerated or have contracted HIV or other illnesses.
- To reduce contact with substance-abusing parents.
- To reduce financial and emotional overloads of their own children or to help in transitional situations such as a parent sent overseas to work.
- To serve as a buffer for children at risk of family crises, including physical, psychological, and sexual abuse or neglect.

Select sources for Grandparents

BOOKS:

Crumbley, J. & Little, R.L. (Eds.). (1997). *Relatives raising children: An overview of kinship care*. Washington, DC: CWLA Press.

De Toledo, S., et al. (1995). *Grandparents as parents: A survival guide for raising a second family*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Doucette-Dudman, D. & Lacure, J. R. (1996). *Raising our children's children*. Minneapolis, MN: Fairview Press.

Hayslip, B. & Goldberg-Glen, R., (Eds.) (2000). *Grandparents raising grandchildren: Theoretical, empirical, and clinical perspectives*. New York, NY: Springer Pub.

Houtman, S. & Rowland, B. (Eds.). (1999). *To Grandma's House, We...Stay: When You Have to Stop Spoiling Your Grandchildren and Start Raising Them*. Northridge, CA: Studio 4 Productions.

Truly, T. (2001). *Grandparents' rights: with forms*. Naperville, IL: Sphinx Pub.

Web Sites:

[For Kids Living with Grandparents](#)

[The Foundation for Grandparenting](#)

[Generations United \(GU\)](#)

[The Grandparenting Organization](#)

I learned a new phrase in pursuing this topic, "Kinship care." It probably is not new to many individuals who are reading this Resource Note. I briefly explored kinship care by skimming this June 2000 report "Report to the Congress on kinship foster care," from the [U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, and Children's Bureau](#).

Following are a few articles gleaned from MEDLINE/PUBMED.

1: Ahmann, E. & Shepherd-Vernon, B. (1997). Kinship care: an emerging issue.

Pediatric Nursing, 23(6), 598-600.

ABSTRACT: The issue of kinship care is explored through an interview with a clinical social worker who runs a support group for grandparents caring for their grandchildren. Starting in the 1980s, the kinship care phenomena spread across economic and racial lines. Nationwide, an estimated 3.2 million children live in grandparent-headed households. Issues faced by grandparents in this role include: the emotional impact of raising children, when past that typical stage of life; how to deal with the feelings of anger and resentment toward their own children; how to say no and be comfortable with it; how to reclaim parts of their own lives; taking care of themselves; special child raising challenges, including HIV, abuse, and neglect; and financial concerns. A kinship care support group is described, and lists of resources are provided.

2: Kelley, S.J., Yorker, B.C. & Whitley, D. (1997). To grandmother's house we go ... and stay. Children raised in intergenerational families. *Journal of Gerontological Nursing*, 23(9), 12-20.

ABSTRACT: An increased incidence in child abuse and neglect has resulted in a dramatic rise in the number of grandparents raising grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Grandchildren raised by grandparents often suffer from emotional and behavioral problems due to prior abuse, neglect, and abandonment. Grandparent caregivers experience increased health problems, psychological distress, and social isolation related to their roles as primary caregivers of children. Grandparents who become caregivers of grandchildren face increased financial responsibilities at a time in their lives, close to or at retirement, when income is dramatically decreased.

3: Brown, E.J., Jemmott, L.S., Outlaw, F.H., Wilson, G., Howard, M. & Curtis, S. (2000). African American grandmothers' perceptions of caregiver concerns associated with rearing adolescent grandchildren. *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing*, 14(2), 73-80.

ABSTRACT: In 1996, grandparents were the sole providers of care for 269,000 grandchildren. Research findings indicate that grandmothers are usually the primary caretakers of grandchildren. Previous issues associated with raising grandchildren vary, but usually relate to the grandparents' health, financial concerns, or lack of social support. This qualitative descriptive study was designed to describe African American grandmothers' perceptions about the burdens of raising adolescent grandchildren. Using this approach, the researchers were able to study the richness and diversity of the grandmothers' perceptions. Data were collected from 35 grandmothers through a focus group (n = 7) and during a 4-day intervention research study (n = 28) entitled "Grandmother-Grandchild Health Promotion Program." Numerous concerns were voiced by both groups, but those stated most frequently were associated with the well being of grandchildren (grandchildren's sexual behavior, potential drug use, and potential risk of encountering violence) and relational conflicts with adult children. Unexpected findings were the absence of stated concerns associated with the grandmothers' financial situation or health. Recommendations for intervention, clinical practice, and research are discussed.

4: Davidhizar, R., Bechtel, G.A. & Woodring, B.C. (2000). The changing role of grandparenthood. *Journal of Gerontological Nursing*, 26(1), 24-9.

ABSTRACT: For many grandparents in America, caring for grandchildren has become a full-time responsibility that has led to multiple stresses. Raising grandchildren may cause financial stress, cramped living quarters, role restriction, and social isolation among this group. However, advantages to this role among grandparents can include greater life satisfaction and a positive influence on the other generations within the family. Nurses and other health providers can play an essential role in assisting grandparents caring for grandchildren by strategically building family strengths and cohesiveness.

5: Thomas, J.L., Sperry, L. & Yarbrough, M.S. (2000). Grandparents as parents: research findings and policy recommendations. *Child Psychiatry and Human Development*, 31(1), 3-22.

ABSTRACT: This article presents an overview of research on grandparenthood in the latter decades of the twentieth century. Theories contributing to understanding of the grandparenting role are discussed, and significant factors affecting the grandparenting experience--including sex, age, retirement status, race, and ethnicity--are reviewed. The special case of grandparents raising grandchildren is explored through a review of demographics, outcomes for children in grandparent foster care, and the impact of raising grandchildren on grandparents. Interventions supporting custodial grandparents and the grandchildren in their care are examined. Drawing on the findings and implications of this overview, recommendations for policy, clinical practice, professional education, and future research are offered.

6: Minkler, M., Fuller-Thomson, E., Miller, D. & Driver, D. (1997). Depression in grandparents raising grandchildren: results of a national longitudinal study.

Archives of Family Medicine, 6(5), 445-52.

ABSTRACT: OBJECTIVES: To assess the effect of undertaking custodial care of a grandchild on grandparents' depression levels and to determine what characteristics are associated with higher depression levels among caregiving grandparents. **DESIGN:** A longitudinal national probability panel study: the National Survey of Families and Households. The first wave of data (n= 13 008) was collected in 1987 and 1988, and the second wave of data (n=10008) was collected from 1992 through 1994. **SETTING:** The survey was conducted in respondents' households in the coterminous United States. **PARTICIPANTS:** The subsample for this study was composed of 3111 respondents who reported being grandparents during the 1992-1994 interviews and for whom complete depression information was available. Of these grandparents, 158 were the primary caregivers for their grandchildren in the 1990s. **MAIN OUTCOME MEASURES:** Depression was measured using a modified version of the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale. **RESULTS:** Those who provide primary care for a grandchild are almost twice as likely to have levels of depressive symptoms above the traditional Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale cut point of 16 (25.1% Vs 14.5%). Even when controlling for baseline depression and demographic variables known to affect depressive symptoms, undertaking the care of a grandchild was associated significantly with higher depression levels in a multivariate prospective analysis (P<. 01). Among caregiving grandparents, those who recently assumed caregiving responsibilities (P<. 05) and women (P<. 10) were more depressed and older respondents (P<. 10) and those in good health (P<. 001) were less depressed. **CONCLUSIONS:** Undertaking the primary care of a grandchild is associated with an increase in levels of depression. Particularly in light of the recent dramatic increase in the prevalence of grandparent caregiving in the United States, physicians need to explore familial role changes with midlife and older patients who have symptoms of depression.

Special attention should be paid to the most at-risk subsets of grandparent caregivers: those who are new caregivers, those in poor health, those who are younger, and women.

7: Fuller-Thomson E., Minkler M. & Driver D. (1997). A profile of grandparents raising grandchildren in the United States. *Gerontologist*, 37(3), 406-11.

ABSTRACT: This article examines the prevalence of grandparent caregiving in the U.S. and presents a national profile of grandparent caregivers based on current data from the national Survey of Families and Households. More than one in ten grandparents are found to have cared for a grandchild for at least 6 months, with most of these having engaged in a far longer-term commitment. Although custodial grandparenting cuts across gender, class, and ethnic lines, single women, African Americans, and low income persons are disproportionately represented. Multivariate logistic analysis indicates that three groups--women, recently bereaved parents, and African Americans--have approximately twice the odds of becoming caregiving grandparents. Implications for further research, policy, and practice are discussed.

8: Lewis I.D. & Williams C. (1994). Grandparents parenting the second time around. *The ABNF Journal: official journal of the Association of Black Nursing Faculty in Higher Education, Inc.*, 5(4), 110-1.

ABSTRACT: This study focused upon African American grandparents who assumed full-time parenting responsibilities of their grandchildren--parenting the second time around. The sample, who derived the support group Grandparents Who Care (GWC), were raising children whose parents were drug addicted, incarcerated or deceased or otherwise unable to parent their children. The purpose of the study was to determine the issues that shape the experiences of this group of caregivers. Findings suggest a more in-depth exploration of social policy including that which gives more financial support to foster parents than to grandparents and which labels drug-exposed children as Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) sufferers.

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