

Kinship Caregivers and Social Workers: The Challenge of Collaboration

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Increases in Grandparent Caregiving

- ⌘ Census 2000 says 4.5 million children (6.3% of all children) are raised in grandparent-headed families. The increase is over 100% since 1970.
- ⌘ There were 1.5 million children in 1997 (1.8% of all children) living with grandparents with no parent at home, an increase of about 37% since 1970.
- ⌘ There were 5.6 million grandparents living with grandchildren in 2000, and 42% say they are “responsible” for their grandchildren (2.4 million grandparents).

(Bryson, 2001)

Who Are Grandmother Caregivers Nationally?

- ⌘ The average age of grandmothers is 57-59.
- ⌘ Over half of grandmothers are married (55%).
- ⌘ Employment rate varies: 50% for married grandmothers; 33% for unmarried grandmothers.
- ⌘ Over half have at least a high school education (59% for married grandmothers; 54% for unmarried grandmothers).
- ⌘ The poverty rate for married grandmothers is 14%; for unmarried grandmothers, it is 57%.

(Casper & Bryson, 1998)

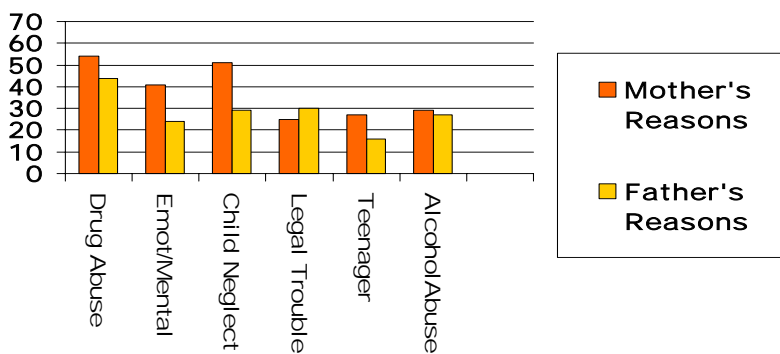
Ethnic Differences in Grandparent-Headed Families

⌘ Custodial or Skipped Generation Families

- ⊞ 5.6% of African American children,
- ⊞ 1.7% of Latino children,
- ⊞ 1.2% of White children.

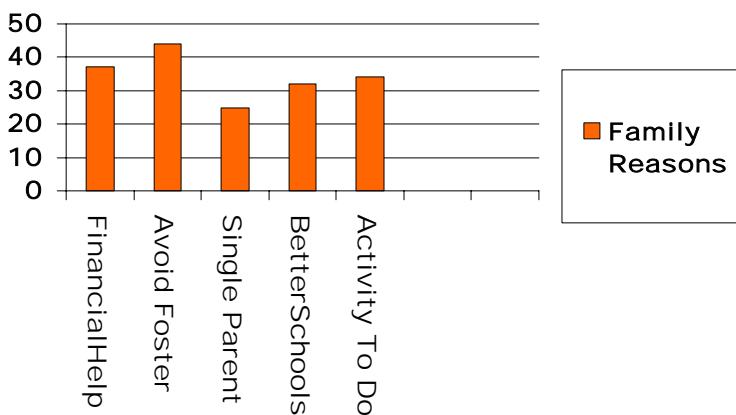
• Based on 1994 census data.

Reasons to Assume Care: Custodial Grandmothers



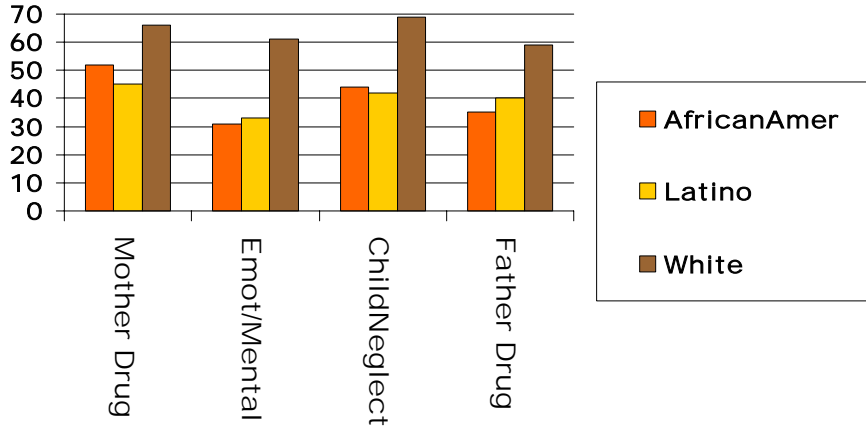
⌘ The Major Reasons in Percents

Reasons to Assume Care: Custodial Grandmothers (cont'd)



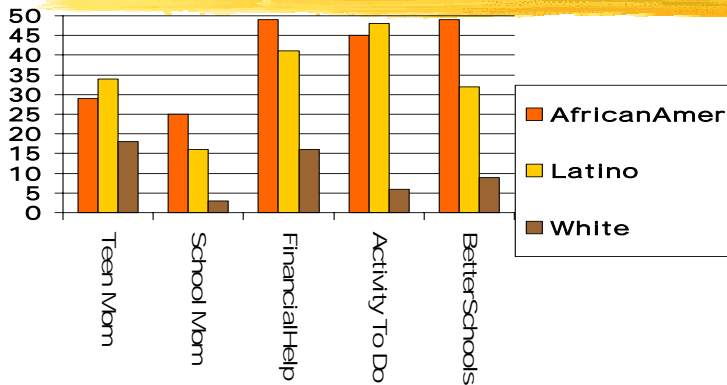
⌘ The Major Reasons in Percents

Reasons to Assume Care: Custodial Grandmothers (cont'd)



⌘ The Major Reasons in Percents

Reasons to Assume Care: Custodial Grandmothers (cont'd)



⌘ Reasons in Percents

(Goodman, 1997)

Benefits of Grandparent Caregivers

- ☒ More committed to the children than unrelated foster parents.
- ☒ More stable as a placement than unrelated foster care.
- ☒ Continuity of family and ethnic tradition.
- ☒ More frequent contact with parents.

(Berrick, Needell, Barth, & Jonson-Reid, 1998)

The Caller Asked *by Duane J. Kriesel*

- ⌘ "The caller asked, 'Will you provide a home for two twelve-year old girls?'...We both knew that the answer must be 'YES,' but that didn't stop the floodgate of doubt from opening...So many reasons to say 'NO.'
- ⌘ I didn't ask 'How long?' Did she mean forever?
- ⌘ I'm too old to raise a family.
- ⌘ My life is settled: why does it have to be uprooted now?
- ⌘ What about all the trips we have planned?
- ⌘ Our house is always so clean; will it ever be clean again?
- ⌘ I like my free time.
- ⌘ Will their mother make life unbearable?

(Kriesel, 2001)

The Caller Asked *by Duane J. Kriesel* (cont'd)

- ⌘ I didn't know that God would send me two angels disguised as two little girls.
- ⌘ I didn't know that so many people were ready to help.
- ⌘ I didn't know that those girls would enjoy old-folks' things like live theater, walks in the park, drives in the mountains.
- ⌘ I didn't know that those girls would say 'thank you' for the littlest things.
- ⌘ I didn't know that those girls would give so many hugs and kisses.
- ⌘ I didn't know that those girls would add more to my life than I could ever add to theirs."

Well-Being of Caregiving Grandparents

- ⌘ Greater depression than non-custodial grandparents.
- ⌘ More activity limitations in Activities of Daily Living than non-custodial grandparents.
- ⌘ Lower satisfaction with health than non-custodial grandparents.
- ⌘ Greater distress among grandparents under financial stress.

(Kelley, Whitley, Sipe, & Yorker, 2000; Minkler & Fuller-Thomson, 1999; Minkler, Fuller-Thomson, Miller, & Driver, 1997; Solomon & Marx, 1998)

Quotes About Grandmother-Parent Relationships

- ⌘ “She had enough sense to hand over the kids.” **SUPPORTIVE**
- ⌘ “She has a good husband, a little baby and is working hard to provide a good family environment. And within a year she might be able to get the boys back.” **DOING WELL**
- ⌘ “She's immature-her lack of willingness to knuckle down and be a mother.” **DOESN'T PARENT**
- ⌘ “She likes to go all the time, hang out in the streets.” **DRUGS**
- ⌘ “I raised her and she hates me and she never says hello”
- ⌘ “We don't really have a relationship to talk about.” **NO RELATIONSHIP**

(Quotes developed from data through Goodman, 1997)

My Sweet Juliette, The Sea Brings You Closer to Me *by Lynn Evans*

- ⌘ “My beautiful daughter Juliette did not recover. She died in October of a drug overdose. She has lost her life, my sweet child, my Juliette, only twenty-nine years old...Hopes and dreams are gone, leaving me with responsibility for my granddaughter. I am Jordan's mother on earth and Juliette can be her mother only in heaven. It is so huge and overwhelming for me. Jordan is only six.”
- ⌘ “Summers at the beach with you are my most vivid memories...You in that cute little green checkered two-piece bathing suit, five years old. Suddenly in my memory you are a woman. We had collected sea glass and you and Jordan collected white stones...You are the sea to me now, Juliette...Now, no more pain for my baby.”

(Evans, 2001)

Quotes About Parent-Child Relationship

- ⌘ "He's just crazy about his mother." **ATTACHMENT**
- ⌘ "Makes good decisions with her mother about school and different activities." **INVOLVEMENT**
- ⌘ "Hard for her to understand why she's living with me and not with her parents." **LOSS**
- ⌘ "I think it must be hard for him to know that he has a father but that his father doesn't love or want him." **REJECTION**
- ⌘ "They can't see their little brother and mom won't move closer to us." **FRAGMENTED FAMILY**

Quotes developed from data through: Goodman, 1997)

Summary and Risk Factors: Custodial Grandmothers Raising Grandchildren

- ⌘ **Poverty:** Financial stress is a problem for a significant number.
- ⌘ **Disrupted Families:** Relationship with the parent continues to be important for grandmother and grandchild.
- ⌘ **Older and Ill Grandmothers:** Grandmothers are sometimes the only family available in spite of poor health.
- ⌘ **Depression:** Overload and social isolation are risk factors and grandmothers need someone to talk to and "respite."
- ⌘ **Children with Special Needs:** Abused and neglected children often have special mental health needs.

Conclusions

- ⌘ Multidisciplinary Family Service Center: Medical, psychological, legal, and financial issues impact three generations. Family members could benefit from holistic service programs.
 - ☒ Programs for the grandparent (support groups, parenting classes, respite care, legal consultation, medical care, financial assistance).
 - ☒ Programs for the parent (substance abuse, programs for incarcerated mothers, parenting classes, vocational and employment programs, financial assistance).
 - ☒ Programs for the children (counseling, tutoring, child care, after school activities, medical care).