

Sarah Costa

costasar92@gmail.com
MSW - Factor-Inwentash
Faculty of Social Work
University of Toronto

Jessica Hsieh

jessicahsieh629@gmail.com
MSW - Factor-Inwentash
Faculty of Social Work
University of Toronto

Kristen Mercer

kristenjmercer@gmail.com
MSW - Factor-Inwentash
Faculty of Social Work
University of Toronto

Abstract

Background: Only recently has research attention been focused upon Indigenous grandparents raising grandchildren. In order to minimize the burdens that Indigenous grandparents encounter when assuming this role, a greater understanding of this population is crucial. This scoping review was undertaken in an attempt to gain insight into and generate awareness of this population, specifically concerning their needs and experiences.

Methods: Sixteen databases were searched, including two medical databases (i.e., Medline, Embase) and fourteen social science databases (e.g. PsycINFO, Social Service Abstracts). A total of 92 titles and abstracts were identified and independently reviewed. Of these, 31 articles met the inclusion criteria.

Findings: Aboriginal grandparent caregiving has been a topic of growing attention in the past 15 years. First Nations Canadians, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Maori and Aboriginal children are much more likely to be in the care of their grandparents than are non-Indigenous children. Four major themes emerged in the literature: (1) The historical context of Indigenous peoples and how this has affected families; (2) The context of caregiving and government policies as they relate to Indigenous grandparents raising their grandchildren; (3) The physical and mental health of the grandparents; and (4) Informal social support. The theme of historical context relates to Indigenous cultural beliefs of the role of grandparents, and to past trauma that has been inflicted on Indigenous people. The second theme explores poverty, housing and relevant programs, barriers to seeking formal social support, child welfare, and recommended policies and services. The physical and mental health theme examines coping, resilience, stress and level of burden, mental health, and physical health issues. Finally, the informal social support theme looks at types of support being provided and the lack of support that this population receives.

Gaps in the literature, recommendations for future research, and implications for policy and practice are identified.

Methods



- A total of 16 databases searched
- 31 full-text articles met inclusion criteria and were reviewed

Inclusion	Exclusion
At least 5% of sample participants were IGRG or had raised at least one grandchild	No specific focus on Indigenous grandparents
Contained information on IGRG	Did not distinguish data pertaining exclusively to IGRG
Focus on skipped generation households	Focus on child rearing information passed down to mothers by other family members (e.g. grandparents)

Background

- Grandparent headed households: one of the fastest growing family structures (Hadfield, 2014).
- Grandparent caregiving is particularly prevalent in racialized and socioeconomically disadvantaged communities (Ellis & Simmons, 2014).
- Prevalence of grandparents raising grandchildren is disproportionately higher among Indigenous peoples (Chen, Weng, Hsu, & Lin, 2000; Fuller-Thomson, 2005; Simmons & Dye, 2003).

Findings



The Historical Context of Indigenous People
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural/Traditional Roles and Beliefs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Importance of culture among this community ○ Grandparents pass on traditional values and they are also seen as a source of knowledge • Past Trauma <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ May impact the level of care provided by grandparents
The Context of Caregiving and Government Policies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty and Relevant Programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This group was generally found to be low income • Housing and Relevant Programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There was a general lack of housing assistance • Barriers to Seeking Formal Social Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lack of transport, lack of childcare, lack of information about services, lack of cultural support, feelings of distrust due to traumatic history • Child Welfare <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Generally negative views of this system • Recommended Policies and Services Needed
The Physical and Mental Health of Grandparents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coping • Resilience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Grandparents adjusted caregiving methods, and experienced personal satisfaction ○ Stress and Level of Burden • Mental Health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Depression was related to caregiver stress and household income; Indigenous grandparents were found to have higher levels of depressive symptoms • Physical Health Issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Health vulnerability of grandparents is a crucial aspect of parenting
Informal Social Support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Wide range; child care and social support from those in their community ○ Those living on reservations reported receiving less support than those off ○ There was a general lack of support



Gaps in the Literature

- Studies from 2002 + only
- Lack of focus on child health outcomes and the effects of child welfare involvement
- Causality of poor health
- Lack of focus on strengths/resilience

\$ Implications for Policy



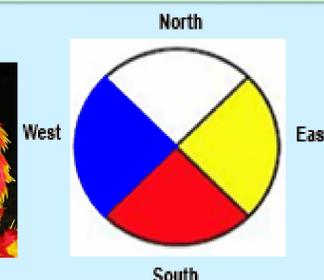
- Mandate that practitioners must have education on the population
- IGRG be included in policy making process
- More funding allocated to tribes to use as they see fit, but with lower eligibility requirements
- Benefits for related caregivers should be the same as for foster caregivers

Implications for Practice

- Increased awareness on the part of practitioners
- Increased cultural sensitivity and competency
- Advocacy
- Workshops and training sessions



Ino



Conclusion & Acknowledgements

As this review only considered peer-reviewed studies and dissertations that were conducted in English, studies conducted in languages other than English were not included. Furthermore, the Grey Literature databases were not searched in the undertaking of this review. Despite these limitations, this is the first scoping review that has been performed to help obtain a better understanding of surrogate grandparent caregiving within Indigenous communities.

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