



**Rockville Institute**

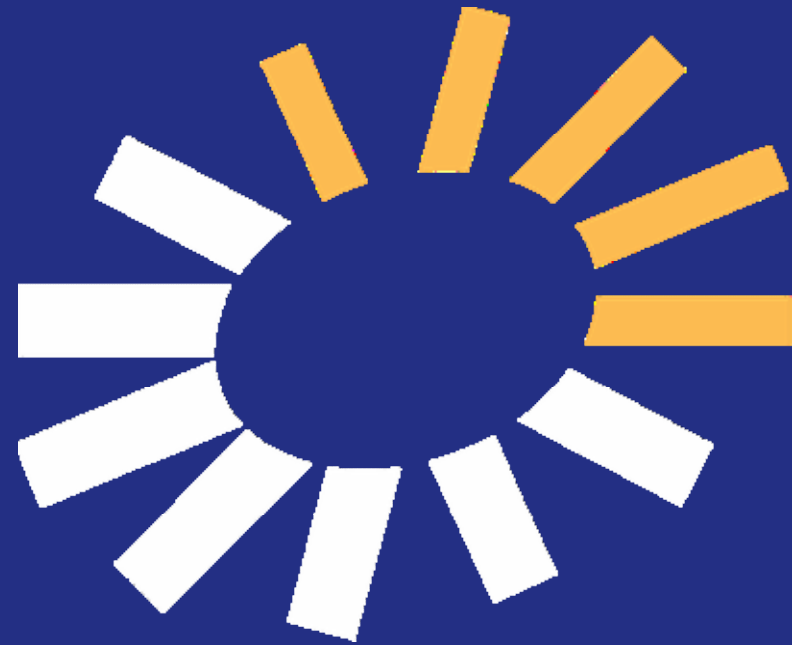
*Research for the Advancement of Social Science*

# Kinship Care: Strengths and Challenges

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# Origins of Kinship Care

- Informal adoption—extended families rearing kin outside the child welfare system
- Most agencies targeted nonrelatives as foster parents and screened out kin
- Fewer nonrelatives as foster parents
- 1979 Supreme Court decree
- Advent of HIV/AIDS in 1980s
- Advent of crack cocaine in 1980s



# Kinship Care

- The term “kinship care” was coined in the 1980s.
- “Kinship care” refers to children who are raised by kin caregivers in and outside of foster care.
- One million Black children are in kinship care.



# Kinship Care: Informal vs. Formal

## Informal: Kin children not in foster care

- 85% of all Black children reared by kin
- Older children (6 years and older)
- Caregivers are less educated

## Formal: Kin children in foster care

- 15% of all Black children reared by kin
- Younger children (under 6 years old)
- Caregivers are more educated



# Trends in Formal Kinship Care

<b>Selected States</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>2003</b>
Florida	51%	48%
Hawaii	34%	35%
Maryland	29%	33%
California	40%	29%
Illinois	39%	26%
Connecticut	22%	16%
New York	22%	14%
<b>Total U.S.</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>22%</b>

# Race/Ethnicity by Formal Kinship Care, 2003

<b>Child Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b>% in Kinship Care</b>
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	33%
Black	25%
Hispanic/Latino	24%
Native American	24%
Asian	21%
White, Non-Hispanic	19%
<b>Total Children</b>	<b>22%</b>

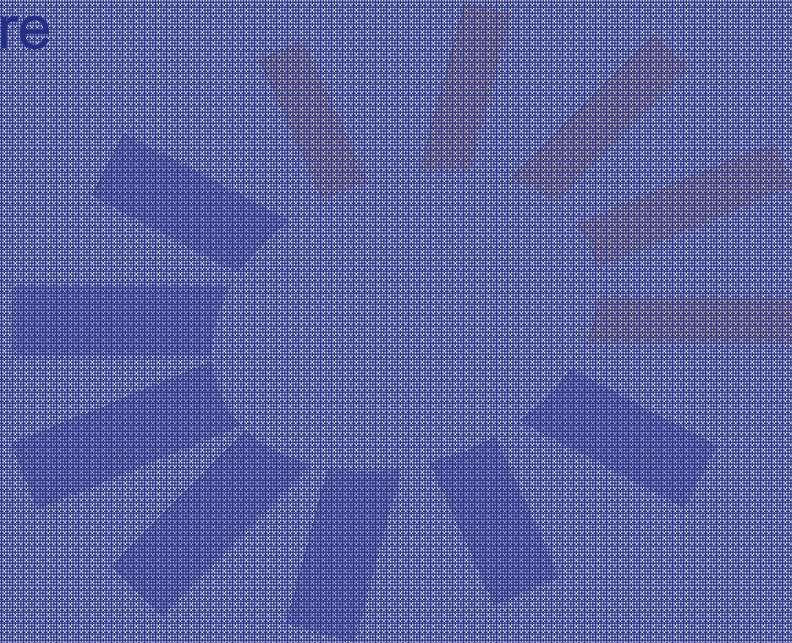
# Cultural Insensitivity: Myths About Kin Caregivers

- The apple does not fall far from the tree.
- Kin caregivers only do it for the money.
- Kin are too old/poor to care for children.
- Kin care is not as permanent as adoption.
- Kin placements are not as safe for children as adoption.



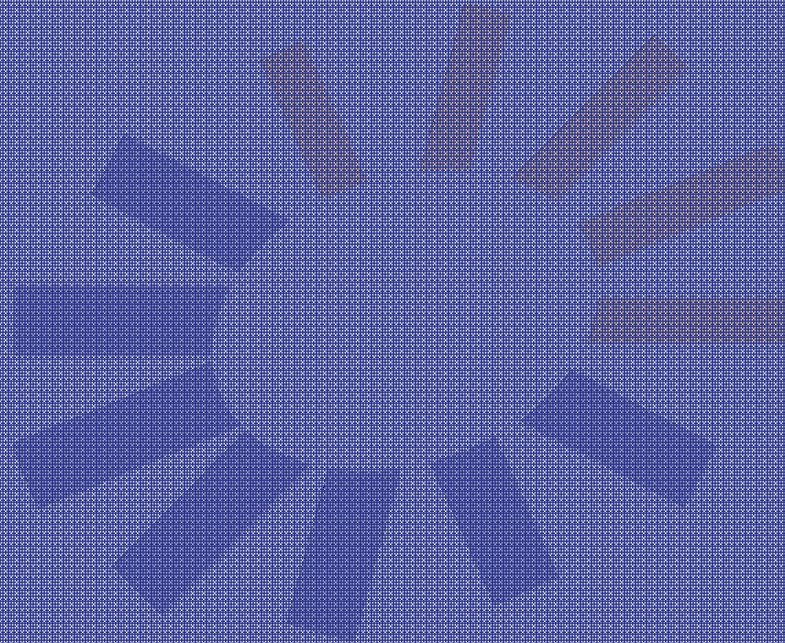
# Advantages of Kinship Care Over Nonkin Foster Care

- Less child trauma
- More contact with birth parents
- More contact with siblings
- Maintain family history and culture
- Greater placement stability
- Fewer children with disabilities
- Lower re-abuse rates with kin



# Advantages of Nonkin Foster Care Over Kinship Care

- Younger caregivers
- Higher educated
- Higher income
- More services
- Less time in care



# Deficient Comparisons

- A caveat of caution should be added when comparing kin families of lower SES and fewer services with nonkin families of higher SES and more services.
- Poorer outcomes are expected of lower income than of higher income families.
- Kin and nonkin families of same income and services might lead to similar outcomes (e.g., lengths of stay in care).



# Various Roles of Kin Families

- Maintaining family preservation
- Prevention and diversion from foster care
- Facilitating parental reunification
- Emergency/temporary child care
- Initial child placement setting
- Subsequent child placement setting
- Resource on discharge of child/youth
- Support from paternal extended families



# Future Research Questions

## What are child outcomes...

- ...when kin and nonkin families have similar income and services?
- ...when kin are used as first placements?
- ...when vital services and support are also provided to informal kin caregivers outside the child welfare system?
- ...when more equitable licensing standards are provided for kinship care families?

