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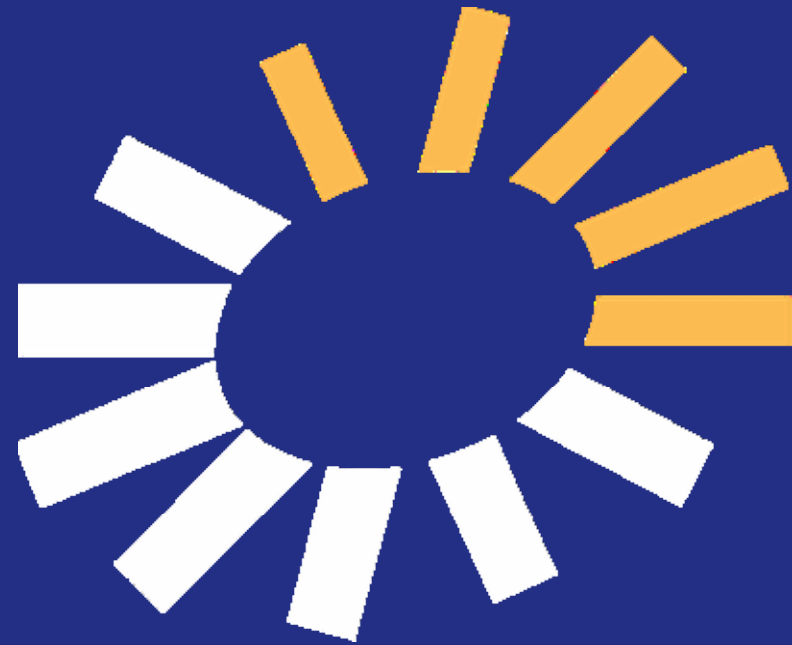
Research for the Advancement of Social Science

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

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

Race/Ethnicity by Formal Kinship Care, 2003

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

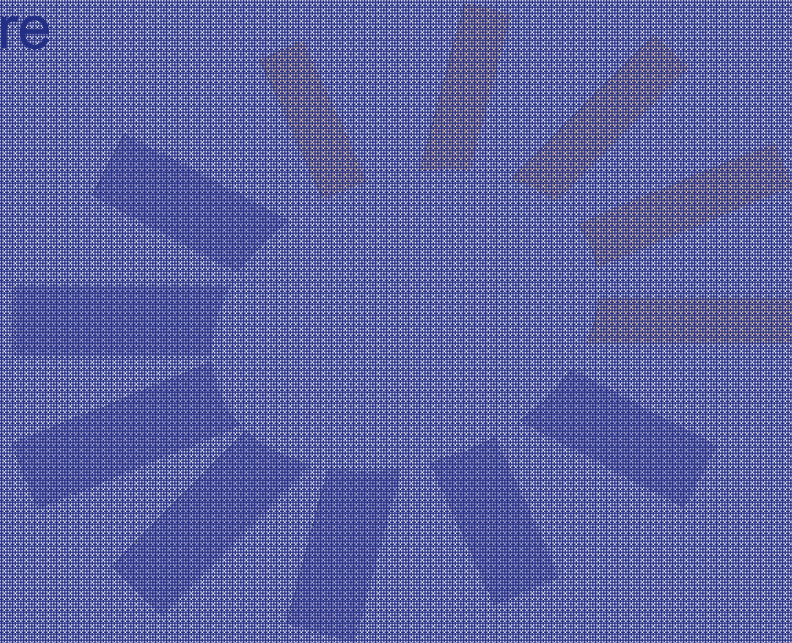
Cultural Insensitivity: Myths About Kin Caregivers

- 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.



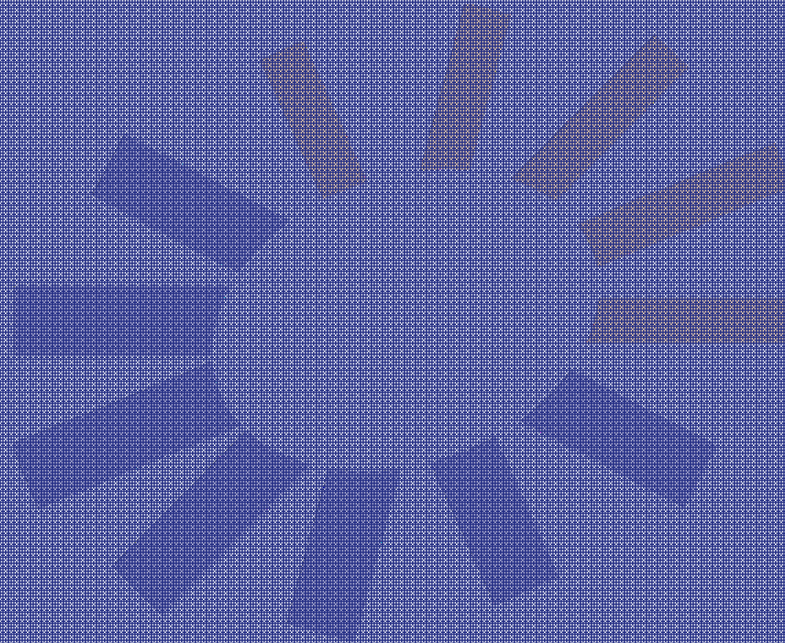
Advantages of Kinship Care Over Nonkin Foster Care

- 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?

