



Kinship Care in the United States: What the Research Tells Us

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Defining Kinship Care



Kinship Care in the U.S.

- According to 2010 United States Census:
 - 5.8 million children under the age of 18, live in a household headed by their grandparent (Lofquist, Lugaila, O'Connell, & Feliz, 2012).
 - 1.5 million children live in households headed by aunts, uncles, cousins, older siblings or other relatives.
 - The majority of these families are multigenerational, with the parents of the children also living in the home.
- “Kinship care”
 - Refers to the 2.7 million children whose relatives function as their primary caregiver
 - Over the past decade the number of children in kinship care grew 6 times faster than the number of children in the general population (Annie E. Casey (2012). *Stepping Up for Kids*)

Children in Households with Neither Parent Present

- Nearly 3.1 million (4.2%) children in the U.S. live in a household that does not include either parent or a stepparent.
- More than 1.8 million of these children (2.5% of all U.S. children) live in a home that is headed by a grandparent
- 632,000 (.9%) lived in a household headed by other relatives.

Source: Kreider, R. M., & Ellis, R. (2011). Living arrangements of children: 2009. *Current population reports* (pp. 70 - 126). Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.

Children in Households with Neither Parent Present by Race/Ethnicity

- African American children (8.7%)
- Hispanic children (4%)
- Asian children (4.7%)
- Non-Hispanic White children (3%)

Source: Kreider, R. M., & Ellis, R. (2011). Living arrangements of children: 2009. *Current population reports* (pp. 70 - 126). Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.

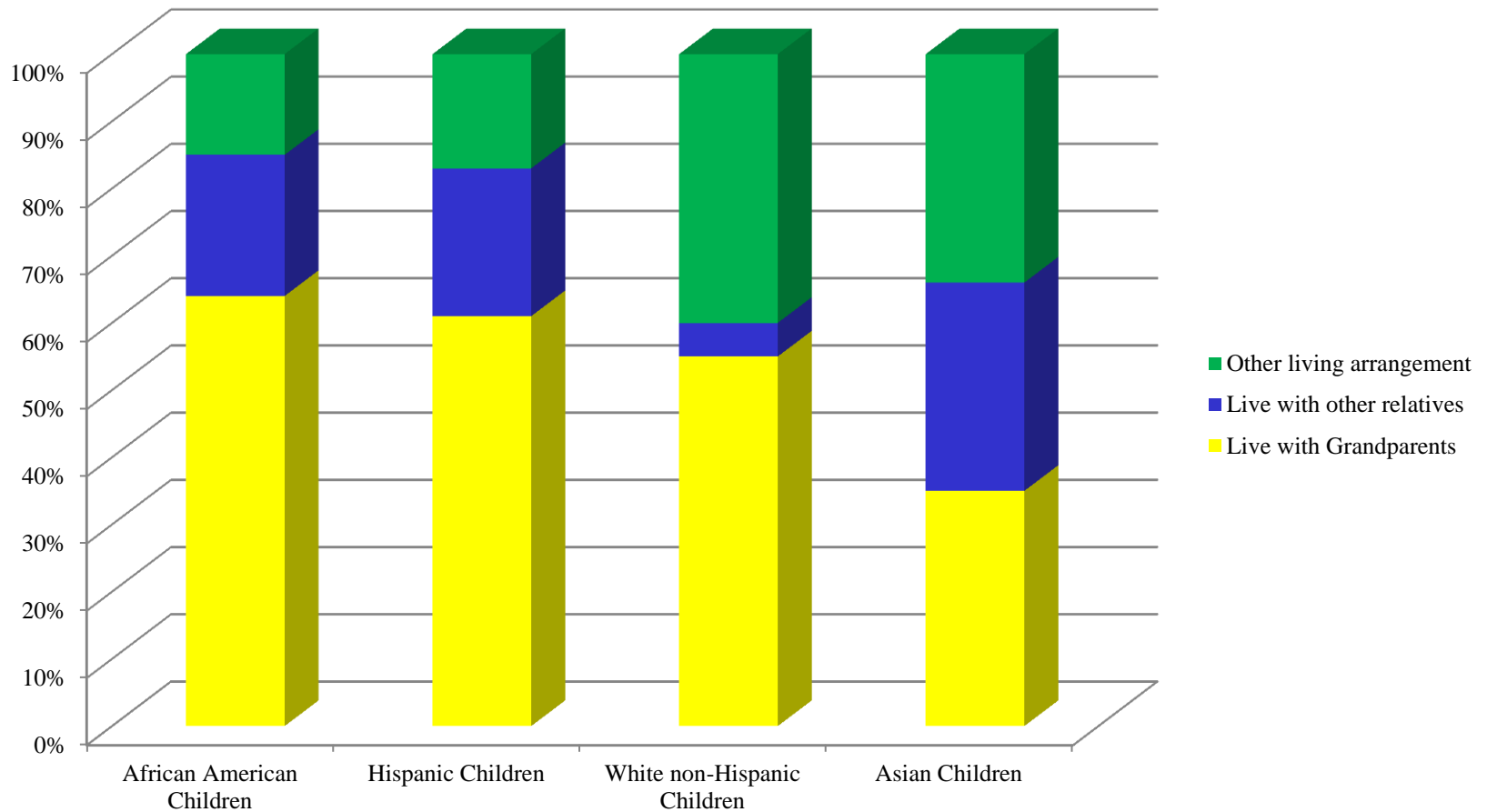
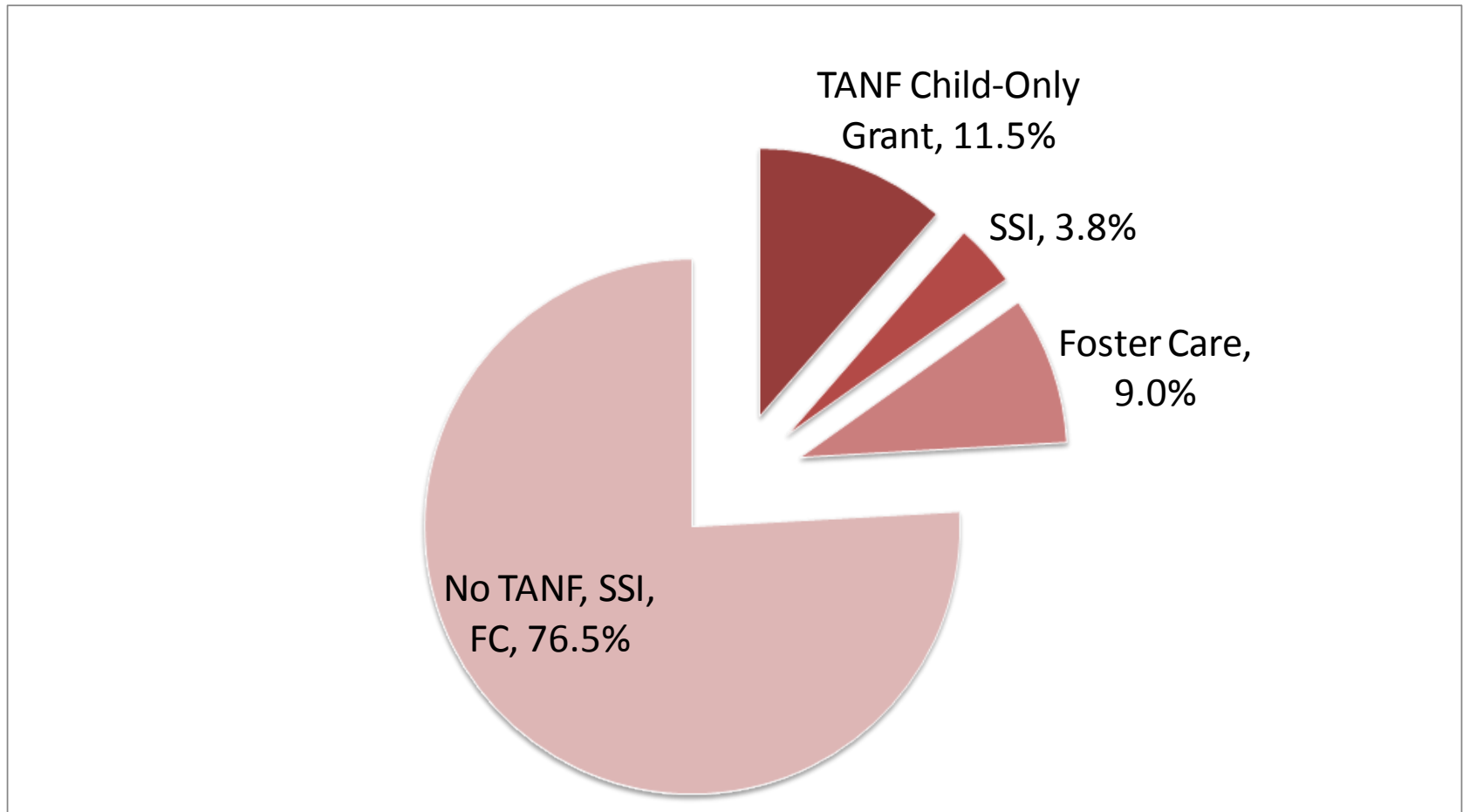


Figure 1: Percentage of Children in U.S. Not Living with Biological Parent Who Live With Grandparents or Other Relatives by Race/Ethnicity

Source: Kreider, R. M., & Ellis, R. (2011). Living arrangements of children: 2009. *Current population reports* (pp. 70 - 126). Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.

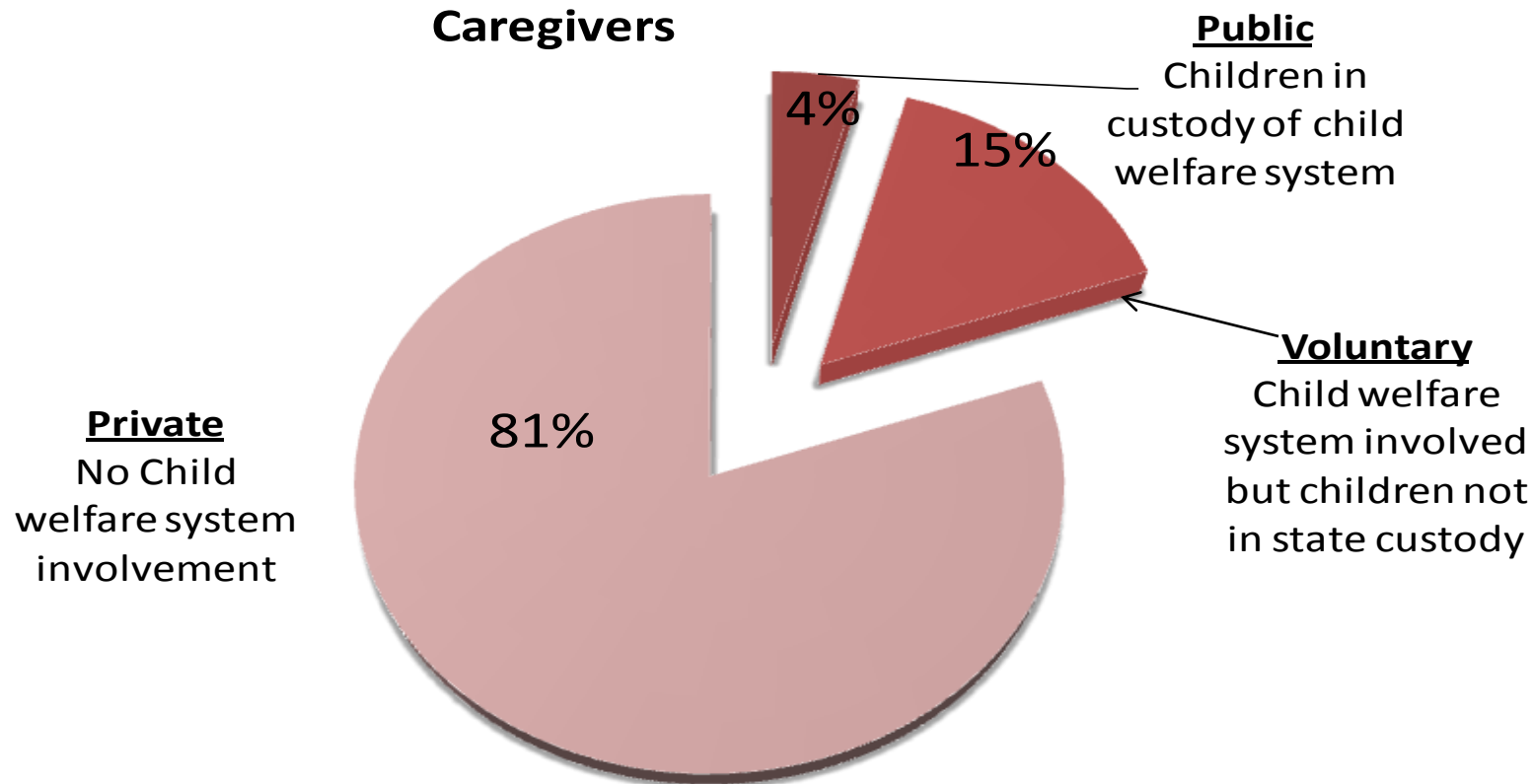
Figure 2: Type of Public Support for Children in Households with No Parent Present



Source: Bavier (2011).

Figure 3: Degree of Formal State Involvement*

Types of Kinship Care – When Relatives are Primary Caregivers



*Estimate derived from NSAF & Census data presented in Murray, Macomber & Geen, (2004) & Annie E. Casey (2012). *Stepping Up For Kids*.

“Public” & “Private” Kinship Care

- Many similarities, but
 - Public kinship care occurs more often as a result of child abuse and neglect;
 - Private more often associated with other issues such as parental incarceration, military deployment, parent death or illness, adolescent parents (Gibbs, et al., 2005; Goodman, Potts, Pasztor & Scorzo, 2004)
- Complexity of kinship care arrangements
 - mix of public and private in many families,
 - as well as care of adult family members in some families (Gleeson, O'Donnell, & Bonecutter, 1997)

Table 1: Kinship Care and Socioeconomic Challenges

	Children Living With at Least One Parent	Children in Public & Private Kinship Care
Below poverty line	22%	38%
Below 200%/poverty	43%	63%
Caregiver Employed	71%	50%
Employed full time	53%	36%
Caregiver retired	<1%	16%
Caregiver disabled	5%	19%
Single parent	31%	55%
Caregiver Age 50+	10%	60%
No high school diploma	14%	27%

Source: Summary of 2011 Current Population Survey data in Annie E. Casey (2012) *Stepping Up For Kids*

Does the child welfare system serve the neediest families?

- **YES –**
 - Children with behavior problems and infants are more likely to be in “**public**” vs. “private” kinship care.
- **NO –**
 - **Private** kinship caregiving families are more likely to live **below the federal poverty level** and suffer food insecurity than public (formal) kinship care families
 - **Public** kinship caregiving families more likely to be between **150% and 200%** of the federal poverty level.

Source: Swann & Sylvester (2006).

Belonging



Stability

Continuity

Permanence



Placement Stability

- Research has consistently shown that, on average, children in the custody of the child welfare system who are placed with relatives experience greater stability and fewer placement disruptions than children placed with non-related foster parents (James, 2004; Koh, 2010; Koh & Testa, 2008; Terling-Watt, 2001; Testa, 2001; 2002; Winokur, Crawford, Longobardi, & Valentine, 2008; Wulczyn, Hislop, & Goerge, 2000; Zinn, DeCoursey, Goerge, & Courtney, 2006).
- Initial placement with relatives predicts
 - greater stability/fewer disruptions, compared to placement with non-related foster parents or placement with kin following placement with non-related foster parents (Zinn et al, 2006; Rubin et al, 2008)
 - Early feelings of belonging and being part of the family (Hegar & Rosenthal, 2009)

Reunification and Kinship Care

- Children are generally reunified with biological parents at slower rates from kinship care than non-related foster care, but are less likely to reenter the custody of the child welfare system (Barth, Guo, Weigensberg, Christ, Bruhn, & Green, 2010; Berrick et al., 1998; Courtney & Needell, 1997; Grogan-Kaylor, 2001; Koh, 2010; Koh & Testa, 2008; 2011; Winokur, et al., 2009)
- Financial support is important -- Family poverty increases the likelihood of disruption of reunification after public kinship care, leading to the child's reentry into the custody of the child welfare system for children (Grogan-Kaylor, 2001; Koh & Testa, 2011).

Adoption & Kinship Care

- Early research suggested kin were less likely than foster parents to adopt the children in their care (Winokur et al. 2009)
- More recent studies show some mixed results with some states reporting increased rates of adoption by kin compared to non-kin foster parents (Koh, 2010; Koh & Testa, 2008; 2011; Rolock et al, 2011; Testa, 2005; Winokur, et al., 2008; Zinn, 2009)
- Kinship adoptions appear to be as stable as adoptions by non-kin foster parents (Koh & Testa, 2011; Ryan, Hinterlong, Hegar, & Johnson, 2010)

Guardianship & Kinship Care

- Children in public kinship care are more likely than children in foster care nonrelatives to realize legal permanency through guardianship (Winokur et al, 2009).
- An analysis of Illinois AFCARS data found lower disruption/reentry rates for children who exited state custody to guardianship from kinship care compared to other children (Koh & Testa, 2011)
- An evaluation of post-adoption and post-guardianship services in Illinois found guardianships were no more likely to dissolve than adoptions (Howard, Smith, Zosky, & Woodman, 2006)
- Various forms of private guardianship supports legal permanence for children in private kinship care arrangements as well

Subsidized Guardianship

- Federal waivers for several states have tested the effectiveness of allowing federal reimbursement for subsidies to support guardianship, similar to special needs adoption subsidies, when it is not possible for children to return to live safely with their parents or be adopted (Testa, 2010).
 - Rigorous evaluations of Illinois, Wisconsin & Tennessee waivers, all using random assignment
 - Children in families given the option of subsidized guardianship were more likely to achieve legal permanence
 - No difference in the rate of disruptions in the demonstration and comparison groups in Illinois and Tennessee
 - Cost Effectiveness: Demonstrated significant cost savings in all 3 states → reduced administrative costs

Safety

- The available evidence suggests that children in public kinship care are at least as safe as children in foster care with non-relatives (Winokur et al., 2008; 2009; Testa Bruhn & Helton, 2010)
- Some concerns of somewhat higher rates of subsequent reports of abuse or neglect
 - in public kinship homes that are not licensed as foster homes (Nieto, Fuller, & Testa, 2009)
 - In lower income families (Testa, Bruhn, & Helton, 2010)
- Recurrence of maltreatment following reunification from kinship care – Conflicting findings
 - Jonson-Reid (2003) found lower rates after 4^{1/2} years & lowest rates following longer time in care
 - Fuller's (2005) found higher rates of indicated reports of maltreatment 60 days after reunification, but small sample, sample selection and matching criteria limit generalizability.

Overall kids do well living with kin

The weight of the evidence suggests that children in formal kinship care have lower rates of mental health and behavioral problems than their peers in foster care, but higher than children in informal kinship care and the general population.*

Children's problems are primarily attributable to exposure to trauma prior to placement with kin

And, functioning improves (on average) over time, controlling for functioning at initial "placement"

*Barth et al., 2007; Gibbs et al., 2006; Goodman et al, 2004; Keller et al., 2001; Landsverk et al., 1996; Rubin et al, 2008; Shore et al., 2002; Swann & Sylvester, 2006; Winokur, et al., 2008; Winokur, et al., 2009)

Need to Support Kinship Caregivers Raising Children through Adolescence

- Some studies have raised concerns about rates of delinquency among specific subgroups of adolescents in kinship care (Day & Bazemore, 2011; Frederick, 2010; Ryan et al., 2010) while others report lower rates for all children in kinship care compared to foster care (Winokur et al, 2008)
- On study reported increased rates of substance use and pregnancy among adolescents in kinship care (Sakai, Lin & Flores, 2011)
- These risks are largely associated with challenges faced by all families in economically disadvantaged, high crime neighborhoods

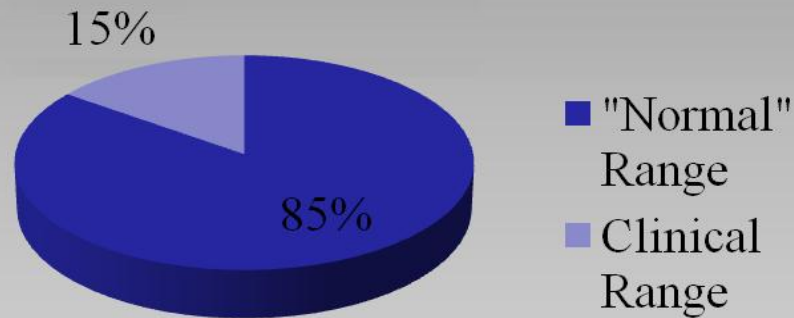
The Impact of Kinship Care on Kinship Caregivers & Extended Families

- Burden
- Psychological Distress
- Physical Health Challenges
- Satisfaction with Caregiving

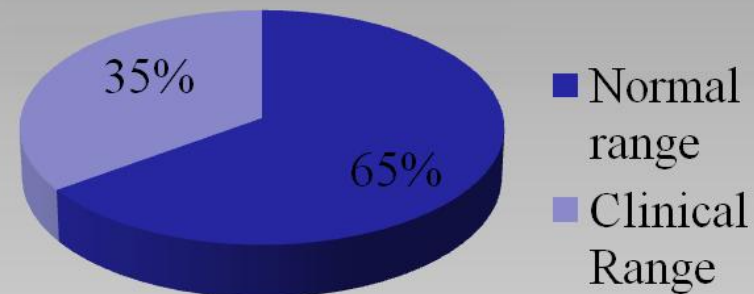


Parenting Stress

Among All Parenting Adults in the General Population

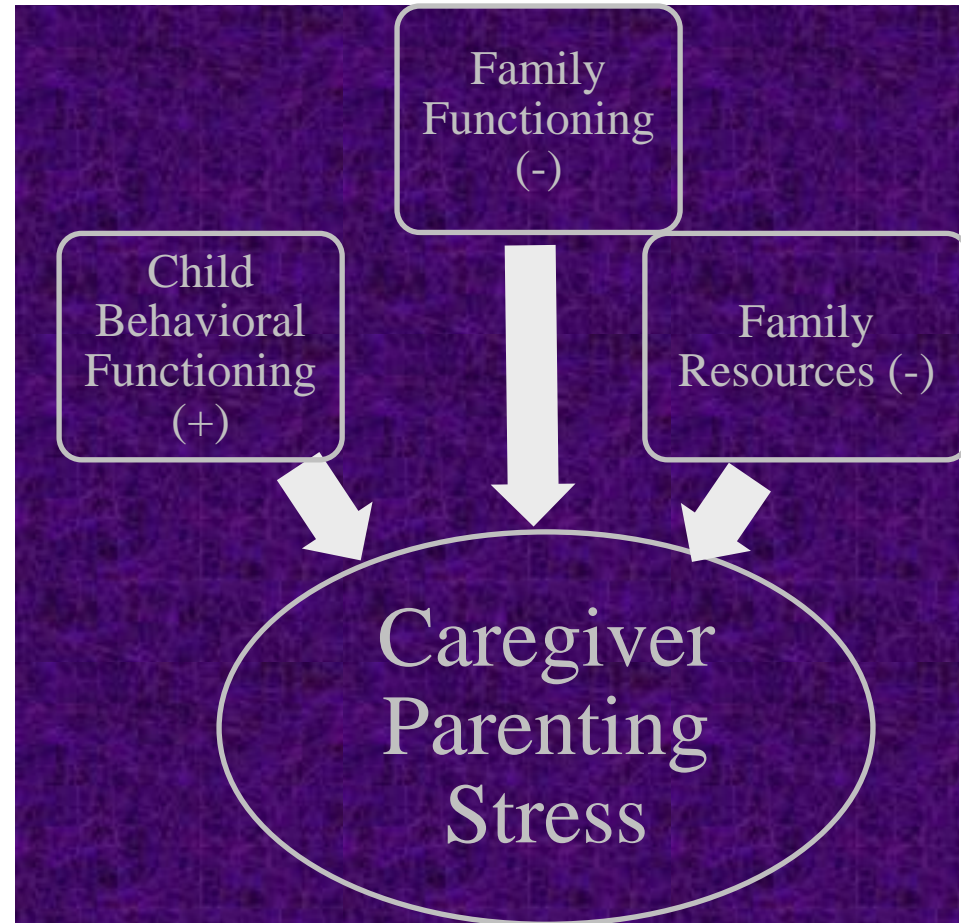
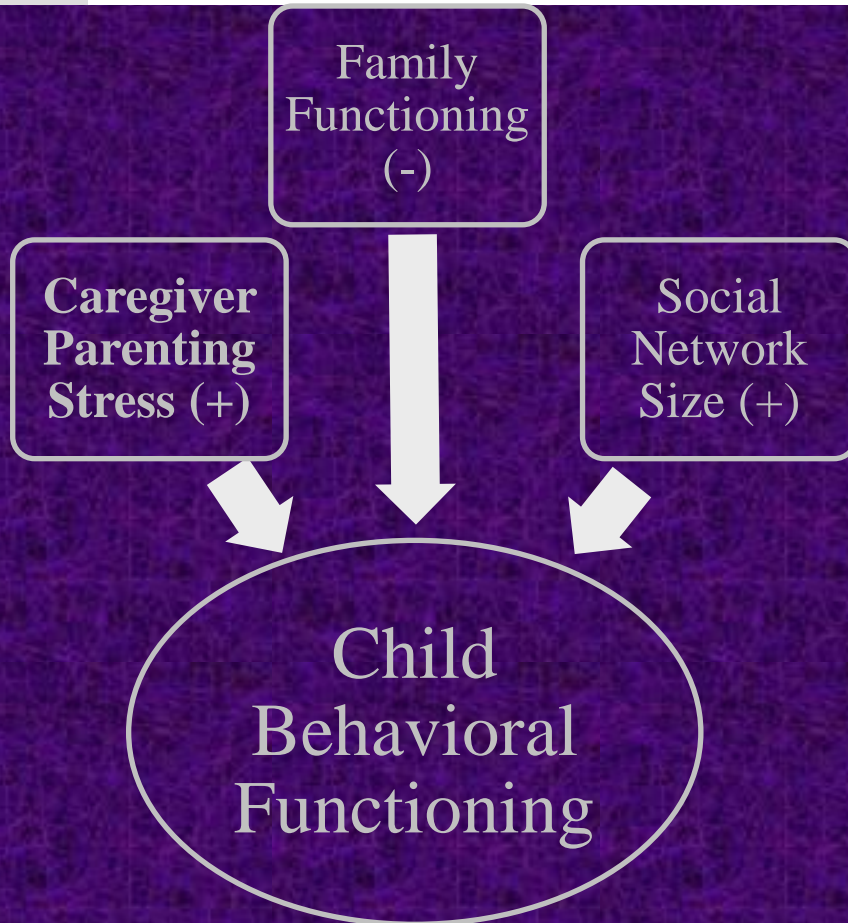


Among Kinship Caregivers



What contributes to child functioning & caregiver stress?

(Gleeson et al, 2008)



Emerging & Promising Practices



Access to resources, Caregiver health and well-being? Safety, Stability, Permanency, Well-being & Prosocial Behavior

- Kinship Navigator Programs
- Kinship Caregiver Support Groups
- Peer Mentors (Denby, 2011)
- Family Group Decision Making (FGDM), Family Meetings, Mediation (Pennell, Edwards & Buford, 2010)
- Strengthening Parent - Kinship Caregiver Coparenting Relationships (Gleeson, Strozier, & Littlewood, 2011)



Thank you!