

# 가족구조에 따른 아동의 문제행동과 조부모의 역할에 대한 인식 비교\*

## The Comparisons of Children's Emotional and Behavioral Problems and the Roles of Grandparents in Nuclear and Extended Families\*

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### < Abstract >

본 연구에서는 핵가족과 확대가족의 구조가 한국 초등학교 아동의 문제행동에 미치는 영향을 비교하였다. 서울과 인천에 거주하는 417명의 초등학생을 대상으로 그들의 문제행동을 Children's Behaviour Questionnaire(CBQ: Rutter, 1967)에 의해서 교사가 평가하였으며, 아동은 그들 조부모의 역할을 Grandmother's Role Questionnaire(GRQ: Suh, 1991)에 의해서 평가하였다. 그 결과, 확대가족의 아동은 핵가족의 아동보다 문제행동을 덜 보였으며, 확대가족의 조부모가 손자녀를 정서적으로 지지하고 돌보아 주며 생활에 간섭하는 역할을 하는 반면에 핵가족의 조부모는 손자녀를 훈계하는 역할을 주로 하는 것으로 나타났다. 즉, 확대가족에서의 조부모는 손자녀의 정서적인 안정을 뒷받침하고 또한 부모의 스트레스를 완화시키며 가족의 화목한 분위기를 증진시키는 등의 역할을 통해서 손자녀에게 직접적, 간접적으로 영향을 미치며, 이러한 조부모의 역할은 아동의 문제행동에 근간이 되는 가족의 역동성에 영향을 미친다고 본다.

**주제어(Key Words):** 가족구조 (family structure), 조부모역할 (roles of grandparents), 문제행동 (emotional and behavioral problems)

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## I. Introduction

Emotional and behavioral problems are manifest in a variety of different forms and severities. Children with these problems exhibit unusual problems of adaptation to a range of physical, social and personal situations. They may set up barriers between themselves and their learning environment through inappropriate, aggressive, bizarre or withdrawn behaviour (Kauffman, 1997).

The frequency of children's emotional and behavioral problems varies significantly with different social conditions of children's families, which include family structure, family atmosphere, parents' education and parents' involvement in their child's teaching and development.

Much research on children's emotional and behavioral problems and their origins has been undertaken, but few studies have focused on the problems in relation to family structure, and even less so, in relation to extended families, as in many societies these are a minority family type.

A '*nuclear family*' is composed of two adults of opposite sex, living in a socially approved sex relationship, with their own or adopted children (Murdock, 1957). The nuclear family is limited to parents and their children, ordinarily a small number of persons. Their interactions and relationships are limited and contacts and alternatives are fewer, and a chronic atmosphere of tension from which there is little escape can develop when there are conflicts between members of the nuclear family (Clarizio & McCoy, 1976).

In contrast, the term '*extended family*' is more commonly applied to a system in which the ideal

family contains several generations living under one roof (Goode, 1982). Extended family comprises two or more nuclear families related by blood, for example, grandparents, parents and children all living together. The extended family structure provides various models for family roles. Children in extended families can be expected to profit from multiple identification models without having to be concerned with pleasing only one particular person, and attaining help should be an easier matter (Clarizio & McCoy, 1976). Children can also learn social rules and relations within extended families, which strengthen children's resilience to behaviour problems (Rutter, 1985).

Until recently, the importance of the extended family as an influence on child development and family life has been largely ignored by Western research because the normative nuclear family definition of family simply disregards the extended family (Goode, 1982).

However, the traditional extended family structure, where a child lives with many adults, provides emotional stability or regularity which may contribute positively to a child's development. A close relationship between a child and his grandparents can be reciprocally beneficial. Children from extended families experience greater social relations and roles, because many adults live with them and become role models for the children, compared to children from nuclear families. The dynamics and functioning of nuclear and extended families can be explained in relation to these differences.

In addition, grandparents may be of great benefit to the third generation both directly through their interactions with grandchildren and indirectly by supporting their adult children, the

parents of their grandchildren. That is, grandparents have direct influence through participation in child rearing, schooling or interaction with children, and have indirect influence by supporting parents or by enhancing the family atmosphere. Support from grandparents usually consists of babysitting, housework, providing information and advice, moral support, and financial aid (Sung, 1993).

According to Hong (1984), the roles of the grandmother at home were to inherit and transmit traditional culture, to counsel young family members based on life experience and knowledge, to alleviate conflict and opposition which are caused among family members and relatives, to take care of and educate the grandchild, and to participate in housework actively.

Suh (1989) analysed data from 417 grandchildren in the fifth grade (10 year olds) of Korean primary schools with regards to patterns of contact and content and level of grandmothers' role performance. According to the findings, the family type, the attitude of the mothers and the health condition of grandmothers were related to the level of the grandmothers' role performance. The role of the grandmothers consisted of six dimensions, these being discipline, surrogate parenting, interference, history adviser, confidant and material provider.

The study by Al Awad and Sonuga-Barke (1992) examined the relation between emotional and social development and family structure in Sudan. They found that children who were brought up in traditional extended families fared better than those living in Western-style nuclear families. Living in a nuclear family was associated with more mother-reported behavioral, emotional and

sleep problems, overdependence, and poorer overall self-care in the children. According to their discussion, the advantage of living in an extended family might be due to the advice and information about child care and management provided by the grandmother to the inexperienced mother. It might also be due to advice on cultural practices and ideals of behaviour provided by the grandmother. Additionally, the grandmother might provide social support that reduces the risk of maternal isolation and depression (Puckering, 1989), increase parenting efficacy and thus lead to less risk of emotional and behavioral problems (Goodman & Brumley, 1990). Finally, grandparents' direct social and affectionate relationships with their grandchildren may help the children to cope with otherwise stressful conflicts and demands.

Few studies of the effects of extended family structure on children's development have been carried out and there is also a dearth of direct evidence to isolate and document the precise effects of grandparents on children's development.

This study was carried out in Korea because this country's cultural and family traditions have supported the existence of extended families alongside nuclear families, making a comparison of the implication of these family factors for emotional and behavioral problems practicable and worthwhile.

This study was devised to compare nuclear with extended family structures for their effects on the emotional and behavioral problems of Korean primary school children, and to find out the reasons why the differences were caused. To examine the roles of grandparents in extended families would be useful to understand children's

emotional and behavioral problems.

Research questions for this study were:

- (1) Is there any difference in the emotional and behavioral problems of Korean primary school children from nuclear and extended families?
- (2) Is there any difference in the roles of grandparents between nuclear and extended families?

## II. Research Methods

### 1. Subjects

Four hundred and seventeen Korean children between 7 and 13 years old, in grades 2 to 6, from 8 primary schools in Seoul and Incheon, participated in this study. Of the 417 children, 213 children were from nuclear families (51.1%) and 204 (48.9%) were from extended families (212 boys, 205 girls). Amongst extended families, 48 families (23.5%) lived with both grandparents. One hundred and thirty-four families (65.7%) lived only with grandmothers, and 22 families (10.8%) lived only with grandfathers. As more extended families live with the grandmother, which can be expected as a woman's life span is longer than a man's, the results of this study may refer more to the roles of the grandmothers.

### 2. Instruments

#### (1) Emotional and Behavioral Problems

The subjects were assessed by teachers using the Children's Behaviour Questionnaire (CBQ; Rutter, 1967). CBQ consists of 26 brief statements

concerning a child's behaviour. The teacher has to check whether the statement 'certainly applies', 'applies somewhat' or 'doesn't apply' to the child in question. These responses are given a weight of '2', '1' and '0' respectively to produce a total score within a range of 0-52, by summation of the 26 scores.

In this scale, a cut-off score was used to identify children with high levels of reported problems. A total score of 9 or more indicated a child likely to show some emotional or behavioral problem.

The high level of reliability and validity has been demonstrated independently for this questionnaire when used as screening instrument for the general population. According to Rutter (1967), the test-retest reliability, examining 80 children aged 7, was .89 over a 2 month interval. The inter-rater reliability was tested by getting 4 teachers to complete the ratings for 70 boys and girls, and this was .72.

Boyle and Jones (1985) evaluated several measures for assessing emotional and behavioral problems in childhood in a general population and commented that Rutter's scale was among the most reliable and valid for these purposes. The CBQ has been used in different many countries. Considering the age of subjects and the number of questions, Rutter's CBQ was the most suitable for screening purpose in this study.

#### (2) Roles of Grandparents

The roles of their grandparents were investigated using the Grandmother's Role Questionnaire (GRQ; Suh, 1991). GRQ is a self-report questionnaire devised in Korea by Suh (1991). Based on the literatures concerning the roles of grandparents, it was designed to measure

grandmothers' 6 roles which are appropriate to the Korean context. These roles were exhorting (6 items), surrogate parenting (4 items), interference (5 items), historical advisory (3 items), confiding or supporting (4 items), and material providing (2 items).

It comprises 24 items, and is a likert-type scale utilizing a 5-point response format. Children indicate whether their grandmothers do each item 'always', 'often', 'sometimes', 'rarely', and 'never', and these responses are scored 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 accordingly. The total score of the grandmother's role is obtained by summing up the mean scores of the 6 roles. These scores can therefore range from a minimum of 6 to a maximum of 30. Six points indicates that the grandmother never performs her role in looking after the child while 30 points means she always does.

Most of the items ask about children's understanding of grandparents' roles, rather than what grandparents actually do or how often they do it. The reliability of the GRQ was analysed by Cronbach's coefficient alpha. The total alpha score was .89, and the alpha subscales ranged from .63 to .83 (Suh, 1991).

### 3. Procedures and Data Analysis

For the subjects for this study, more than 10 schools were selected randomly from the yellow pages school list in Seoul and Incheon areas. Eight schools among them agreed to participate in this study. The school records were reviewed, and the children living with their grandparents were selected as subjects. The number of children from extended families in each class was more or less 5.

<Table 1> Comparison of family backgrounds of the subjects

		Nuclear Family				Extended Family			
		Father		Mother		Father		Mother	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Parents' educational levels	university	56	26.3	24	11.3	68	33.3	29	14.2
	high school	123	57.7	132	62.0	92	45.1	105	51.5
	middle school	20	9.4	41	19.2	24	11.8	51	25.0
	primary school	2	.9	2	.9	7	3.4	7	3.4
	no response	12	5.6	14	6.6	13	6.4	12	5.9
Parents' occupational levels	professional	9	4.2	6	2.8	4	2.0	4	2.0
	managerial	18	8.5	3	1.4	22	10.8	1	.5
	clerical	115	54.0	7	3.3	89	43.6	26	12.7
	sales	25	11.7	14	6.6	40	19.6	21	10.3
	service	14	6.6	9	4.2	14	6.9	0	.0
	agricultural	1	.5	1	.5	0	.0	0	.0
	laboring	25	11.7	6	2.8	27	13.2	21	10.3
	unemployed	2	.9	163	76.5	0	.0	125	61.3
no response	4	1.9	4	1.9	8	3.9	6	2.9	
Living standard	high	11		5.2		11		5.4	
	middle	179		84.0		149		73.0	
	low	6		2.8		25		12.3	
	no response	17		8.0		19		9.3	
Total		213		100.0(%)		204		100.0(%)	

After selecting children from extended families, the same number of children from nuclear families was selected taking into consideration their parents' education levels, occupation levels and living standards. This matched sampling method was employed to exclude the effects of parental education, occupation and living standard on the children's emotional and behavioral problems. Details of family background data are explained in Table 1. The subjects from nuclear and extended families could be said to be similar in terms of their demographic factors.

The teachers were asked to give independent judgements about approximately 10 children's (5 from nuclear and 5 from extended families, in each class) emotional and behavioral problems, and then to fill in the CBQ ratings for these children. On the other hand, the subject children were asked to fill in the GRQ ratings.

The data obtained were analysed and interpreted using the SPSS for Windows 10.0. Descriptive data were explored using means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages. The CBQ cut-off scores were obtained by cross tabulation. In order to compare the differences in children's emotional and behavioral problems and grandparents' roles between nuclear and extended

families, t-tests were used.

### III. Results

#### 1. Children's Emotional and Behavioral Problems

Of the total of 417 children, the number whose total CBQ scores were 9 or greater was 54, so that the prevalence was 12.9% with Rutter's cut-off score. Considering the prevalence rates of emotional and behavioral problems in nuclear and extended families, with Rutter's cut-off score, the number of children who scored 9 or over was 42 among 213 in nuclear families, giving a prevalence of 19.7%. In extended families 12 children showed problems among 204, giving a prevalence of 5.9%. This difference was large and statistically significant ( $\chi^2=17.70$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

The mean CBQ score for the subjects as a whole was 5.08 ( $SD=3.88$ ). For children from nuclear families the mean CBQ score was 6.13 ( $SD=4.46$ ) and from extended families 3.99 ( $SD=2.78$ ). Table 2 shows that this difference was significant ( $t=5.89$ ,  $df=415$ ,  $p<.01$ ). That is, the children from extended families showed significantly lower emotional and

<Table 2> Means and T-Test of the CBQ Factor Scores with Respect to Nuclear and Extended Families

Factor	Nuclear		Extended		Total		t (df=415)
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
Antisocial-overactive	.31	.34	.17	.17	.24	.28	5.07*
Neurotic	.28	.29	.23	.23	.26	.26	1.94
Misdemeanour	.18	.32	.12	.27	.15	.30	1.93
Mannerism	.17	.31	.13	.27	.15	.29	1.37
Immaturity	.16	.33	.10	.27	.13	.29	1.93
Total	6.13	4.46	3.99	2.78	5.08	3.88	5.89**

\* $p<.05$  \*\* $p<.01$

behavioral problem scores than children from nuclear families. The children from nuclear families showed more problems on the following items; 'very restless', 'squirmy, fidgety child', 'often destroys belongings', 'frequently fights with others', 'not much liked by other children', 'irritable', 'sucks thumb or finger', 'has poor concentration', 'tends to be fearful or afraid', 'often tells lies', 'bullies other children'. Among the above items, one item (fearful) was included for the neurotic problems, and four items (destroys, fights, lies, and bullies) were categorized as antisocial problems (cf. Rutter, 1967). Therefore, the children from nuclear families tended to present antisocial behaviors.

The factor derived from this study were antisocial-overactive, neurotic, misdemeanour, mannerism, and immaturity factors. The difference of problems between nuclear and extended families was further examined using the factor scores. The children from nuclear families had significantly higher scores than those from extended families on the antisocial-overactive factor ( $t=5.07$ ,  $df=415$ ,  $p<.05$ ). However, the factor scores of the other four factors (neurotic, misdemeanour, mannerism, and immaturity) were not significantly different even though the children from nuclear families tended to show higher factor scores compared to those from extended families. These findings for factor scores also strengthen the above findings about comparisons of the CBQ mean scores item by item, that is, that the children from nuclear families tended to present antisocial and overactive behaviour problems in particular.

On the other hand, the mean score of the CBQ for boys was 6.40 and for girls 3.39. This difference was highly significant( $t=6.22$ ,  $df=415$ ,  $p<.01$ ). The

results showed that boys tended particularly to have more antisocial behavior. Boys showed more problems than girls in over half the CBQ items, and these were: 'very restless', 'squirmy, fidgety child', 'destroys belongings', 'often fights', 'not much liked by others', 'irritable', 'has twitches', 'bites nails or fingers', 'is often disobedient', 'has poor concentration', 'tends to be fearful or afraid', 'often tells lies', 'has a stutter or stammer', 'has other speech difficulty' and 'bullies other children'.

In contrast, the problems that girls showed more often were: 'often worried', 'often appears miserable and unhappy', and 'fussy or over-particular child'. These items pointed to neurotic behavior. However, the gender differences on these items were not significant.

## 2. Roles of Grandparents

The roles of grandparents were examined using the Grandmother's Role Questionnaire (GRQ). The GRQ was examined in terms of the mean scores. Grandparents' six roles were listed according to the size of mean scores: confiding ( $M=4.09$ ), history/advisory (3.85), surrogate parenting (3.82), interference (3.54), exhorting (3.43) and material providing (3.42).

The roles of grandparents differed according to family structure. The total mean score of grandparents' role on the GRQ was 23.19. The total score of the nuclear families was 22.67 and that of extended families was 23.72. These two scores showed a significant difference ( $t=-2.32$ ,  $df=415$ ,  $p<.05$ ). That is, grandparents living in extended families showed a higher score in their roles, and so played a greater part than those in nuclear families. That these mean scores are not more

different is almost certainly a result of the questions asked by the GRQ. That is, many items of the GRQ ask about children's concepts of their grandparents' roles rather than about their actual behaviors.

The nature of grandparental roles also differed between nuclear and extended families. The grandparents from extended families performed roles in the following order: confiding or supporting ( $M=4.41$ ), surrogate parenting (4.30), history/advisory (3.87), interference (3.68), material providing (3.25), and exhorting roles (3.18). Compared to grandparents from nuclear families, they showed more surrogate parenting ( $t=6.36$ ,  $df=415$ ,  $p<.001$ ), confiding or supporting ( $t=3.69$ ,  $p<.001$ ), and interference ( $t=2.87$ ,  $p<.05$ ) roles. They took care of, confided in and supported their grandchildren emotionally as well as physically, they had closer relationships with them, and were more involved in their everyday lives, while they performed less exhorting roles and provided less material support.

On the other hand, the grandparents of children from nuclear families performed roles in the following order: history/advisory ( $M=3.84$ ),

confiding or supporting (3.76), exhorting (3.68), material providing (3.65), interference (3.42) and surrogate parenting (3.30) roles. They tended to teach their grandchildren about their family history, confided and supported them, and exhorted them, but they did not perform as much surrogate parenting as grandparents from extended families. Compared to grandparents from extended families, they showed a more exhorting role ( $t=-3.08$ ,  $df=415$ ,  $p<.01$ ). That is, they only gave grandchildren general advice related to moral norms (i.e. table manners, making a bow, respecting the elders) as they did not share everyday activities with them. Therefore, in nuclear families, grandparents' exhorting role was perceived to be more central than in extended families.

These results provide some insights into the characteristics of nuclear and extended families. Generally, grandparents in extended families were perceived by their grandchildren to contribute more to family life than grandparents in nuclear families, especially in emotionally supporting their grandchildren and giving mothers support by surrogate parenting. The results of grandparent's

<Table 3> Roles of Grandparents

Roles of Grandparents	Nuclear		Extended		Total		t (df=415)
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
Exhorting	3.68	.48	3.18	.52	3.43	.54	3.08**
Surrogate parenting	3.30	.51	4.30	.57	3.82	.75	6.36***
Interference	3.42	.37	3.68	.57	3.54	.52	2.87*
History/Advisory	3.84	.75	3.87	.54	3.85	.67	.15
Confiding/Supporting	3.76	.72	4.41	.52	4.09	.70	3.69***
Material providing	3.65	.74	3.25	.92	3.42	.83	1.65
Total	22.67	1.62	23.72	1.95	23.19	1.85	2.32*

\* $p<.05$  \*\* $p<.01$  \*\*\* $p<.001$



roles and their comparisons are shown in Table 3.

#### IV. Discussion

Children from extended families showed fewer emotional and behavioral problems generally than those from nuclear families. However, it would be more accurate to conclude that they showed fewer behavioral, that is, antisocial or 'externalizing' problems. Emotional problems did not differ between children from nuclear and extended families. According to Merrell (1999), teachers are more likely to identify externalizing problems and to miss internalizing problems in children. In addition, behavioral problems are considered more worrisome than emotional problems (Weisz et al., 1988). The findings of this study may reflect their viewpoint in part.

The results of this study concerning the roles of grandparents provide some insights into the characteristics of nuclear and extended families. In this study, it was found that the roles of grandparents differed according to family structure. That is, grandparents living in extended families performed their roles more than those from nuclear families. In extended families, grandparents live together with their grandchildren and share everyday activities, so it is understandable that grandparents in extended families perform more roles than those from nuclear families. In addition, generally, grandparents in extended families were perceived by their grandchildren to contribute more to family life than grandparents in nuclear families, especially in emotionally supporting their grandchildren and giving mothers support by

surrogate parenting.

The nature of grandparental roles also differed between nuclear and extended families. In extended families, grandparents supported their grandchildren emotionally as well as physically, and took care of them, while they performed less exhorting roles and provided less material support. This finding, that the roles of grandparents in extended families were mainly for confiding in and caring for their grandchildren, is consistent with the results of many other studies (i.e. Al Awad & Sonuga-Barke, 1992; Hong, 1984; Suh, 1989; Sung, 1993). In extended families, the main role of grandparents is to take care of the children and by performing this role, grandparents not only care for their grandchildren but also support their mothers.

In the case of nuclear families, children reported that their grandparents' roles were history/advisory, confiding or supporting, exhorting, or material providing rather than surrogate parenting or interference. There have been few studies about the roles of grandparents who do not live with their grandchildren, so the results of this study cannot be compared to other studies. The exception is Suh's (1989) study, where it was found that the grandparents of nuclear families showed a higher role in material providing, than grandparents from extended families. The study by Suh (1989) is consistent with the findings of this study.

Then, how do grandparents contribute to the differences in family structure and in children's emotional and behavioral problems? Based on Tinsley and Parke's (1984) and Sung's (1993) studies, there are probably three main ways in which grandparents affect children's behavioral

development: (1) grandparents can be role models for children's socialization; (2) grandparents can influence children indirectly through parents and family atmosphere; and (3) grandparents can influence children directly by child caring and by providing an affectionate and supportative relationship.

Firstly, compared to children from nuclear families, children from extended families can see a wide range of adult models intimately (cf. Goode, 1982). Children's behaviour is modified by their observations of the behaviour of other people, and there is a tendency for limitation to be more likely in the context of a warm or nurturant relationship (Rutter & Cox, 1985). Also, in a Korean extended family, the relationship between grandparents and parents based on filial piety can provide a good living-in model for children. From the relationships between grandparents and children and between grandparents and parents, children in extended families can learn cultural value and precepts as well as filial piety. Also, grandparents are models of morality and may introduce the child to the customs of their culture.

Secondly, grandparents influence children indirectly via their parents. It was found, in this study, that grandparents took care of their grandchildren, and also participated in housework. That is, grandparents help parents, especially mothers by reducing the burden of child care and housework. In extended families, it seems likely that parents feel comfortable about their roles as parents because grandparents can support child care and provide information and advice, and these supports can affect parents' self-esteem (Johnston & Mash, 1989). Because of the support grandparents provide, parenting self-esteem and

satisfaction can be greater in extended family parents than among parents of nuclear families. In the present study, it seems likely that grandparents' help and support increased parents' self-esteem and that this also influenced parenting styles to be more accepting which, in turn, operated to reduce children's behavioral problems.

Thirdly, grandparents influence their grandchildren directly by interacting with them. For Willoughy, Kupersmidt & Bryant (2001) a central consideration in the prevention of behaviour problems is the presence of a caregiver whose relationship to the child is marked by warmth, affection, supportiveness and the absence of severe criticism. In extended families, mothers and grandparents were alternative caretakers as well as main caretakers. Considering the quality of caring which children could get from alternative caretakers, mothers or grandparents can be expected to provide more appropriate and affectionate caring than other alternative caretakers (e.g. paid housekeepers, older siblings).

A further point is that the interaction with grandparents provides emotional support for children. The closeness of grandparents widens the children's range of opportunities for affection, attachment and knowledge, and provides the security of being loved and cared for (Roberto & Stroes, 1992). Grandparents can help their grandchildren, share their feelings and concerns, solve personal and interpersonal problems, discuss conflicts within the family, or lessen the stresses and conflicts of everyday life. Children can receive emotional stability by contact with grandparents (Mead, 1934) and, especially, a psychological cushion against the shocks of crises (Nye & Berardo, 1973), thus they can cope better with

stress and overcome disadvantages (Mead, 1934).

In sum, by providing such supports, the extended family can play a significant role in buffering children against the adversities and stresses which give rise to behavioral problems. The environment of extended families provides several of the conditions found to protect children against the causes of behaviour problems. That is, extended families provide a warm parenting style, harmonious family atmosphere, lots of adult contact, adult role models, reduced stress, and supportative relationships with grandparents. These advantages of extended families reduces children's emotional and behavioral problems, especially, behavioral problems, in Korean schools.

In conclusion, there is now evidence that extended families have at least some advantages for children's development. The challenge for the future is to understand the whole effects of extended families on children's general development and to identify the most beneficial alternative family structures.

Lastly, the findings of this study provide support for the growing use of family and community interventions in preventing and treating behaviour problems. Grandparents can play an important role for their grandchildren in preventing their problems (Szinovacz & Roberts, 1998). The possibility that one or two grandparent-like 'mentors' can facilitate children's behavioral development, and an understanding of the processes involved, seem worthy targets for further research.

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