Utilizing a Community-University Partnership to Meet Grandfamilies' Needs: Development and Evaluation of a Grandchildren-mentoring Program

Christine A. Fruhauf
Colorado State University - Fort Collins, christine.fruhauf@colostate.edu

A. Nancy Mendoza
The Ohio State University, mendoza.794@osu.edu

Pamela Bishop
NAU, pamela.bishop@nau.edu

Gail Engel
gail@grandfamilycoalition.org

Suzanna Hetchler
seniorsdir@mymvpc.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/grandfamilies

Part of the Community-Based Research Commons, and the Family, Life Course, and Society Commons

Recommended Citation

Research Article

Utilizing a Community-University Partnership to Meet Grandfamilies' Needs: Development and Evaluation of a Grandchildren-mentoring Program

Christine A. Fruhauf
Colorado State University – Fort Collins

Nancy Mendoza
Ohio State University

Pamela Bishop
Northern Arizona University

Gail Engel
Grand Families Coalition, Inc., Loveland, CO

Suzanna Hetchler
Mt. View Presbyterian Church, Loveland, CO

Correspondence can be directed to: Christine Fruhauf, PhD Behavioral Sciences Building, #417, College of Health and Human Sciences, Colorado State University; christine.fruhauf@colostate.edu

Abstract
In response to the increasing rate of grandparent-headed homes and the needs of grandparents and grandchildren, we engaged in a community-university partnership to develop, implement, and evaluate a grandchildren-mentoring program. Prior to developing the grandchildren-mentoring program, a county needs assessment was conducted. The needs assessment revealed that grandparents wanted opportunities for mentorship of their grandchildren. As a result, we partnered with an undergraduate practicum course to create a new option of college students engaging with grandchildren. During our inaugural grandchildren-mentoring program, we conducted focus groups/interviews with grandparents (n = 5) and grandchildren (n = 7) at the end of the nine-month program. Data analysis of the focus group transcripts revealed that grandparents believed the two-hour weekly meetings (between the grandchildren and the student mentor) provided respite and grandparents would enjoy having a student again. Grandchildren commented they trusted their student mentors and did not like that they could not see them after the program ended. The grandchild-mentoring program was well received by grandparents and grandchildren and, although it was designed to support grandchildren, the program met a stated need of grandfamilies in our community. As a result, this program may be beneficial to both grandparents and grandchildren and other university-community partnerships should

consider working with students to implement similar programming to support grandfamilies.

Keywords: aging families, community-based partnerships, engagement, program evaluation, grandchildren

The number of grandchildren in grandparent-headed homes increased after the 2008-2009 recession (Pew Foundation, 2010). In 2015, nearly 6 million children under age 18 were living with a grandparent (Generations United, 2015), with about 2.7 million grandparents having primary responsibility of these grandchildren (Ellis & Simmons, 2014). Grandparents often report the need to care for their grandchildren for many reasons including: drug and alcohol use and abuse, incarceration, financial hardship, abandonment and/or neglect/maltreatment, mental and physical illness, deportation, death of parent and/or divorce (Hayslip et al., 2019). Regardless of the reasons why grandparents assume primary responsibility for grandchildren, both grandparents and grandchildren experience challenges (Dunn & Wamsley, 2018). Researchers discovered that when compared to non-caregiving grandparents, grandparents with primary responsibility for their grandchildren have greater health risks and more chronic diseases, including mental health challenges (Hayslip & Kaminski, 2005; Musil, 2000). Yet, other researchers have found little support for negative effects on grandparents (Hughes et al., 2007). Grandchildren raised by grandparents because of abuse, neglect, or maltreatment from their parents might experience trauma. Experiencing a traumatic event or a series of adverse childhood events may lead to physical and mental health problems, and educational delays (Miller et al., 2019).

Because of such challenges, grandparents raising grandchildren often state they need the assistance of professionals when managing their caregiving demands (Hayslip et al., 2019), and recent research has examined the utility of programs and interventions for grandparents and grandchildren (McLaughlin et al., 2017). Despite the increased attention towards meeting the needs of grandfamilies (i.e., grandparents and the grandchildren in their home) through services and interventions, few programs have focused only on meeting the needs of grandchildren in grandparent-headed homes (Kolomer et al., 2008; Fruhauf et al., 2015). The purpose of this paper is twofold: (a) describe a university-community partnership that led to the development of a grandchildren-mentoring program and (b) describe findings from focus groups with grandparents and grandchildren who participated in the grandchildren-mentoring program

University-Community Engagement

University-community engagement may assist in shaping research foci for faculty, provide students with service-learning opportunities, practicum or internships, guide curriculum or program development, and assist community-based agencies and businesses with initiatives and projects (Fitzgerald et al., 2012; McCaslin & Barnstable, 2008). This may happen while further supporting applied research in gerontology (Andrews & Muzumdar, 2010) while at the same time uplifting the principles of community-based participatory research when working with vulnerable populations (Israel et al., 2005). In particular, communities have responded to the needs of grandfamilies by engaging in coalition building as well as examining the value in community-based partnerships (Fruhauf & Hayslip, 2013).

The current university-community partnership grew from activities of the Larimer County Alliance for Grandfamilies (LCAG; Miller et al., 2010). Established in 2007, the LCAG's mission is to work collaboratively to identify the needs of grandfamilies and support them through community education, development of support systems, and advocacy for change (for a detailed description of the LCAG, please see: Fruhauf et al., 2012; Miller et al., 2010). Members of the LCAG include grandparents, mental health providers, school liaisons and family counselors, aging specialists, and university faculty and graduate students (Miller et al., 2010). In 2010, the first author and another faculty member at the same university (both members of the LCAG) began conversations with a LCAG partner about establishing a grandchildren-mentoring opportunity through the local university and their social work program. Although there was excitement for a grandchildren-mentoring program, the agency faced barriers that prevented the formation of this partnership. For example, their budget did not allow for payment of background checks of students nor did it support a dedicated person at the agency to oversee the coordination of the mentoring program.

In 2014, a formal needs assessment was implemented through the LCAG and revealed similar results to Conway and Jones' (2012) findings, whereby grandparents believe their grandchildren need "mentoring opportunities" with young adults who could help with "homework" or "teach grandchildren how to ride a bike." Although programs such as Big Brothers, Big Sisters are available in the community, grandparents also stated that the wait times were lengthy and the mentors did not necessarily understand the complexity of grandfamily experiences. During a LCAG meeting, these results of the needs assessment were discussed and the fifth author, an alumna of the undergraduate social work program (McCaslin & Barnstable, 2008), stated she believed the social work practicum course at the university would meet grandfamilies' needs in our community. The agency engaged in the initial process stated they wanted to participate in this university-community partnership, but once again, did not have the capacity to provide oversight to the program. In the meantime, the Grand Family Coalition, Inc. (GFC), created in 2014, is a Colorado nonprofit and includes a network of grandparents and kin raising kin whose purpose is to provide programs and social activities for grandfamilies. GFC showed strong interest in partnering with the university to develop a grandchildren-mentoring program. Furthermore, the GFC did have a dedicated staff member (i.e., the fourth author), the financial support through grants to provide the background checks of the students, and an eagerness to build their nonprofit through university-community partnerships.

Development of the Grandchildren-Mentoring Program. Weinberger (2014) suggests there are four key elements that must be in place for a successful grandchildren mentoring program. These are: (1) program design and planning, (2) program management, (3) program operation, and (4) program evaluation. For program design and planning, the current grandchildren-mentoring program is part of an already developed undergraduate social work practicum course. The course is set up for students to have a one-on-one mentoring experience, thus this grandchildren-mentoring program would be one-on-one (i.e., between the grandchild and the student) and take place at a location of the grandfamily's choosing. Program management was completed by the fourth author whereby she worked with her advisory board to bounce off ideas related to managing program information and monitoring the program. She also utilized grant funding to support the students' background checks.

As is stated by Weinberger (2014) and experienced by the authors, a majority of the work was focused on the third element, program operations. For example, the GFC recruited and screened grandfamilies and students to participate in the program. The fourth author attended a

class session early in the semester and presented to students on the mission and vision of the GFC, as well as provided an overview of the challenges and strengths of grandfamilies. She also recruited grandfamilies during her monthly support group meetings and during social gatherings of the GFC. The number of grandchildren matched with students, depended on the number of students selecting GFC as their primary choice to complete their practicum. It is important to note that students were able to choose from a total of four sites, yet the instructor equally divided the number of students between sites. The students were then instructed to write a letter to GFC describing why they wanted to complete their experience with grandfamilies. Students also filled out a background survey including questions about their interests and hobbies to aide GFC in finding a good match, as grandchildren filled out a similar survey. Then the matching process came down to GFC comparing who would be the best match for each grandchild, looking for similar interests and even some differences that would complement the relationship-building process that was part of the curriculum objectives of the course. If a grandchild was not matched to a student, it was because of a shortage of students to serve as mentors and that grandchild would be first on the list for the following year. The GFC worked hard to provide mentors to all families that wanted a mentor, and in one case where a grandfamily had two grandchildren but there were not enough students, the fourth author worked with the grandfamily to assess which grandchild would benefit most from having a mentor; that grandchild was then selected to participate in the program.

Then, all authors worked together (Kolb & Conway, 2015) to create the student and grandchild mentoring applications and expectations, common FAQs for grandparents, and a student orientation. The three-hour orientation for students working with grandchildren consisted of a welcome activity, discussion of students' fears working with grandfamilies, overview of expectations, and case studies. Both the first author and two research assistants lectured on grandfamilies, childhood trauma, and grief and loss often experienced by grandchildren and grandparents. The fourth author spoke to the students and shared her story of raising her grandson. The orientation ended with students receiving information about the grandchild with whom they were paired for the mentoring program. Finally, the fifth author attended the orientation to help answer students' questions and to assist the fourth author with matching students with grandchildren.

After the initial grandfamily orientation, which students left with information on the grandchild with whom they were matched, the students were then instructed by their course instructor (i.e., the third author) to contact the grandparent to set-up their first two-hour meeting. During this first meeting, they also established a regular weekly meeting time and location. Then, as part of the requirement for the class, the students met with the grandchildren on a weekly basis, only skipping weeks during university breaks, for a total of nine months or two semesters. Further, the fourth author continued communication with the course instructor and visited the classroom of the student two times during the academic year. She also made herself available to speak by phone with grandparents and students if they had any questions.

Furthermore, in the course objectives and in the lectures to prepare students for the mentoring program, the course instructor engaged students in discussion on how to engage diversity and differences as these factors impact the helping relationship and communication processes with students' clients. The third author created opportunities for students to dialogue and recognize the extent to which a culture's structures and values may oppress, marginalize, alienate, create or enhance privilege and power. These included race, sexual orientation, values, socio-economic status, age, and lifestyles. Further, the course instructor discussed with the

students how to apply the values of the social work profession in working with all people. They also discussed how students were to maintain safe practices for themselves and their clients. It was imperative that students consult with the instructor if they had concerns about possible abuse or risks to the grandchildren or grandparents as they were mandated reporters, as well as any concerns or risks about going into clients' homes.

As a result of the previous literature review and description of the mentoring program, the guiding research questions for this process evaluation (i.e., step four of Weinberger's [2014] elements) are: (1) what are the experiences of grandparents and grandchildren who participated in the grandchildren-mentoring program? (2) what suggestions do grandparents and grandchildren have to strengthen the program? Further details about the pedagogical approach for the course and focus group data with the university students are not included in this manuscript, as the focus of those data were on social work practice and skills development and beyond the scope of this paper.

Methods

As Weinberger (2014) explained, measuring mentoring program processes is important to the success and future of any grandfamily-mentoring program. As a result, we engaged in a process evaluation using a basic qualitative approach (Merriam, 1998) whereby we addressed the current grandchildren-mentoring program. We engaged in a process evaluation to further our knowledge and help improve the program for the GFC as they continue to engage in supporting future cohorts of grandchildren in the mentoring program (National Research Center, 2005).

Procedures

Focus groups are a qualitative research method and a way for family studies researchers to support positive development for aging families (Gibson, 2012) through exploration and discovery, context, and depth, and interpretation of experiences (Morgan, 1998). Focus groups include group interviews, utilizing a trained moderator to guide the interview process, while a group of people with similar backgrounds and experiences discuss topics and answer questions the moderator asks them (Morgan, 1997, 1998). Not only are focus groups appropriate for adult participation, it is recommended that small focus groups. including children age seven or older, are the best way to obtain data from children, as it replicates a natural form of communication between peers (Gibson, 2007, 2012).

After human subjects' approval was granted from the university's Institutional Review Board, data were collected in April and May of 2016, after the program ended. Separate focus groups, with grandparents and grandchildren alone, were conducted, for a total of three focus groups (i.e., two focus groups were conducted with grandchildren—one with four children and the second focus group with three children). Further, due to a time conflict with one grandparent, a face-to-face interview using the same focus group protocol was conducted. Separate protocols (one for grandparents and one for grandchildren) were developed and used during the focus groups and interview. Each protocol included the focus group questions and additional probing questions to generate discussion among participants. A total of nine main questions were asked of grandparents and examples include, "what were some of the positive/negative aspects of the program?" and "how has the program changed or impacted your grandchild?" A total of seven questions were included in the focus group protocol for the grandchildren such as "how comfortable were you with your mentor?" and "what did you learn from your mentor?" The first author conducted the focus group with the grandchildren; the second author conducted the focus

group with grandparents. Two separate observers assisted during the grandparent and grandchildren focus groups. All focus groups and the interview were audio recorded to aid in data analysis procedures.

Participants

A convenience sample was utilized for this study. Participants were recruited from the eight grandfamilies who participated in the grandchildren-mentoring program in the fall 2015 and spring 2016. A total of four grandmothers and one grandfather, along with seven grandchildren, participated in the study. Five grandparents and four grandchildren did not participate in the focus group because they were too busy or the time and date of the focus group conflicted with previously scheduled activities.

All grandparents who participated in the study were raising their grandchildren with no parent present in the home. Grandparents were between the ages of 55 and 70 years old ($M = 61.5$), and three were married and two were single. Grandparents reported being Caucasian/non-Hispanic (n=4) and Native American (n = 1). Their education levels included: high school diploma (n = 2), some college (n == 1), and two participants did not report their educational level. Further, two grandparents were employed full-time, one was employed part-time, and two grandparents' employment status were unknown. Among the grandchildren that participated in the focus groups, their age range was nine to 12 years old and four were granddaughters and three were grandsons.

Data Analysis

After the focus groups and interview were completed, three separate graduate research assistants transcribed all data. The first author and two graduate research assistants, trained in qualitative methodology, read the transcripts line-by-line, taking notes in the margins about keywords and ideas that answered the research questions (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Once this step was completed, each researcher created an initial list of codes to aide in data analysis. They then discussed their initial list and refined the coding scheme to reflect their collective understanding of the data. Using the constant comparison approach, where patterns of the data were broken down into codes (Saldaῆa, 2009), the coding scheme was then used by all three researchers to independently go back to the transcripts and code the data line-by-line. The three researchers then met to discuss codes and come to 100% consensus of what the data revealed. Each time the coding scheme was refined to simplify and best reflect what the data represented. Please note, no different codes or themes were found between the two groups or the face-to-face interview.

Results

Findings from data analysis of focus groups/interview with five grandparents and focus groups with seven grandchildren revealed a total of four themes each. From the grandparent data, themes include: (a) how I view the program, (b) how I view the mentor, (c) building family-like connections, and (d) changes I would like to see. Themes from the grandchildren data are: (a) what I liked about my mentor, (b) what I learned from my mentor, (c) what I did not like about having a mentor, and (d) changes I would make to the program.

Themes from Grandparent Data

How I View the Program. All grandparents discussed general satisfaction of the grandchild mentoring program; they stated it was overall a positive experience. For example, a grandparent reflected, "[The program] wasn't what I thought. It was better!" Grandparents expressed they liked the one-on-one ratio, length of program, and believed the students gained a valuable experience. One grandparent stated "[the grandchildren] do so much better when they have one-on-one…" and that "it is good [for the students] to be able to see what the kids are really like." The same grandparent commented that she believes, the "students will take this [experience] with them the rest of their lives."

Some grandparents noted that having a mentor was a relief of hardships. For example, grandparents stated it was a "break" from the day-to-day caring for their grandchild, and it provided someone else for their grandchild to talk to. All grandparents stated having a younger adult in their grandchild's life was a benefit. That is, the student could serve as a role model, do things that are more physically active (i.e., ride a bike) with their grandchild and "do young lady things" that perhaps the grandparent could no longer do. One grandparent stated, "I'm old, and I wanted [my granddaughter] to be around someone younger to do things with her. I can't go roller skating…there are a lot of things I cannot do." Another grandparent stated, "It was nice having younger people around." A grandmother said, "it was fun for them to go without grandma to the swimming pool…or to the movie" and they went trick-or-treating together. Finally, grandparents stated that this mentoring experience taught their grandchildren about "healthy goodbyes" and was a great way for their grandchildren to learn and accept saying, "goodbye". This was illustrated when a grandparent stated that she believed knowing the relationship was only for eight months, taught her grandson "acceptance" that some relationships end.

How I View the Mentor. Grandparents stated that the mentors had a number of positive qualities. For example, grandparents stated mentors were kind, patient, well-rounded, reliable and consistent. Some grandparents reported the mentor taught their grandchild values, participated in their grandchild's school activities, and the mentor modeled respectful/good behavior and taught lessons to grandchildren. A grandparent stated the student, "allowed [my grandson] to express himself and at the same time she respected me so well that when she talked about [me], she would talk to him about how [to] do nice things...She was teaching him morals, understanding, kindness…" All but one grandparent stated that they believed their grandchild had things in common with his/her mentor. Grandparents stated the mentor had the ability to engage the grandchild, except for one grandparent who noted it was not a good match, as the student did not "[take] the time to do what [my grandson] wanted to do." Finally, all grandparents stated their mentor displayed respect. A grandparent reflected, "they were comfortable and we were comfortable having them [in our home]."

Building Family-Like Connections. Grandparents commented on the gradual process of the building relationships with the student. For example, a grandparent commented, "They did take it slow. They did things at home for a few times and then they would venture out a little bit more." All grandparents stated they and their grandchildren looked forward to spending time with the mentor. Grandparents also discussed the balance of sharing and not sharing information with the mentor. As their time together progressed, so did open communication between grandparent and mentor. The grandparents noted that some mentors reported to the grandparent about his/her time spent with grandchildren. For example, a grandparent stated, "my mentor

would always tell me exactly what went on and what was said, so I was on top of everything" and she also stated that her grandson "genuinely loved her and I could tell…the love wasn't what he could do for her, it was trust love."

Changes I Would Like to See. Grandparents stated that they would like their grandchildren to have longer visits with their mentor, better communication with the students about scheduling weekly visits, a shared calendar with the mentor, and pre-determined location on where to spend time together. Grandparents also offered that "a guidebook" including "brief background information and a photo of the mentor" would be helpful. Grandparents wanted to be able to share their expectations for the mentor and some grandparents needed clarity about the practicum course. For example, grandparents wanted to know the students' understanding of their role in the program, the course requirements, and expectations around home visits. Finally, some grandparents had to navigate challenges with their mentor and the program. For example, one grandparent commented that the undergraduate social work student needed more training/development before being matched with a grandchild. Another grandparent said there were not enough mentors (i.e., she had other grandchildren in her grandfamily who also wanted a mentor) and that the times of mentors' availability was a challenge due to other competing demands. Grandparents also stated that sometimes the students "didn't show-up or they called or sometimes they had to cancel and the grandchildren wanted to know what to expect." Despite these suggested changes, grandparents stated that the two hours a week provided some respite for them and that they would enjoy having a student mentor again for their grandchild. One grandparent suggested that the agency should "get a grant so that we can do it all year-round."

Themes from Grandchildren Data
What I liked about my mentor. Similar to the grandparents, grandchildren were generally satisfied with their individual mentor and the mentoring experience. Grandchildren stated their mentor was "nice" and they "had fun." One grandchild said he particularly enjoyed having someone to talk to stating, "I liked that he was open to conversation" and that they talked about "a lot of things." Grandchildren responded they enjoyed the activities they did with their mentors. For example, they enjoyed playing games, being outside, and engaging in sports. The grandchildren reflected on visiting museums, playing instruments and putting on facial/beauty masks. A grandson also reported he enjoyed teaching his mentor how to skateboard. Finally, all grandchildren said that they trusted their mentor.

What I learned from my mentor. Grandchildren stated what that they learned from their mentor. For example, they learned how to "make edible playdough" and a grandchild commented she "learned that we had fun." One grandchild said, her mentor "taught [her] really good life lessons" and another stated having a mentor meant that she needed to "have [her] chores done before [she] can go out and go places." One grandchild, however, stated she learned "nothing" from her mentor.

What I did not like about having a mentor. Most grandchildren did not indicate there was anything they did not like about having a mentor. However, one grandchild stated that, "when [my mentor] got sick and I can't do it because my grandma didn't tell me until that day, so I was disappointed." Another grandchild said, "it wastes your time" and then a separate grandchild reflected, "and then you don't get to play with your friends!" Finally, grandchildren stated they

did not like the fact that they could not see their mentor anymore. The grandchildren did not seem to understand the concept of termination. Many grandchildren wanted to continue seeing their mentor and would change that the program ended.

*Changes I would make to the program. G*randchildren wanted to spend time in the summer when it is nicer outside so they could engage in outside activities. Grandchildren wanted more time in the house and did not understand some of the boundary constraints placed on them by their grandparents or the limitations of the mentor (i.e., not having a car to take them places). One grandchild did not like that she did not find out if her mentor was going to be a boy or girl and said, "it was a surprise to find out." Finally, with the exception of one grandchild, most grandchildren stated they would have the same mentor again if they could.

Discussion

As previously described, Weinberger (2014) suggests that program evaluation is a key element to assessing mentoring programs. Thus, the guiding research questions for this process evaluation of a grandchildren-mentoring program are: (1) what are the experiences of grandparents and grandchildren who participated in the grandchildren-mentoring program? and (2) what suggestions do grandparents and grandchildren have to strengthen the program? Based on findings from data collected from five grandparents raising their grandchildren and seven grandchildren in grandparent-headed homes, after the completion of the grandchildren-mentoring program, revealed that both grandparents and grandchildren had a good experience engaging in the program, yet they also had strong suggestions for future cohorts of the grandchildren-mentoring program.

In particular, grandchildren stated that as a result of having a mentor, they learned important skills such as communication (i.e., opening up to someone else) and technical/life skills (i.e., cooking, engaging in art projects). Grandchildren also reflected that they did not like having to balance having a mentor and being required to meet with their mentor, while at the same time wanting to do other things (i.e., play with friends or play video games by themselves). However, grandchildren might have learned skills necessary to balancing or coping with competing demands. On the other hand, many grandchildren also stated that they did not like when the mentor was sick or could not come to their scheduled mentoring session, as they missed seeing their mentor. Finally, grandchildren also did not like when the program ended and they had to say goodbye to their student mentor.

This was similar to grandparents' experiences. For example, termination was a topic discussed by all grandparents and in particular, some grandparents disliked the fact that the program ended and the students could no longer see the grandchildren. On the other hand, some grandparents stated that they knew going into the start of the program that it was only going to be for nine months, and they prepared their grandchildren and themselves from the beginning that it was going to end. Regardless, the rewards of the grandchildren-mentoring program seemed to outweigh any negative drawbacks of the program having to end. For example, grandparents stated they were able to take a break from their day-to-day experiences when the student mentor was with the grandchildren. This respite might have provided grandparents with much-needed relief (Landry-Meyer, 1999), thus meeting a need and leading to positive well-being of grandparents caring for grandchildren (Sands et al., 2005). Finally, grandparents also discussed that they and their grandchildren built family-like connections with the student mentor. Grandparents commented on how much they truly enjoyed having the student in their lives and

that they saw their grandchildren building trust through sharing, when appropriate and only when grandchildren were ready to share. This later point might support the importance of tightening the generational gap between grandparents and grandchildren and that the students helped fill that gap. Although, grandparents reflected on this potential benefit, it was not an area fully explored and future research should consider how a grandchildren-mentoring program, such as this program, fills a generational gap.

In general, based on our second research question, grandparents seemed to have more suggestions on how to improve the program, than their grandchildren provided. Furthermore, grandparents' suggestions were more programmatic and less emotional. For example, grandparents recommended having longer weekly visits and welcomed useful tools for scheduling with the student mentor (i.e., shared calendar or increased communication) including set locations for meetings. Finally, grandparents also liked the idea of a guidebook that included background information on the student mentor along with the course requirements. Grandchildren also wanted to continue meeting with the student mentor, well into the summer months when it was nicer weather. Regardless, both grandchildren and grandparents stated they enjoyed having a mentor and would have a mentor again.

Limitations of the Study and Implications for Future Research

The findings from focus groups are limited to grandparents and grandchildren who participated in the mentoring program and who also participated in the focus group sessions. The grandparents and grandchildren who participated in the mentoring program but who did not participate in the focus group might have different opinions of the mentoring program than those who did participate. It could be that those who were "too busy" or had a conflict actually did not like the program or found the program challenging to manage. As a result, we cannot generalize the findings from this process evaluation to all grandparents and grandchildren that participated in the mentoring program. Further, the racial/ethnic diversity of the participant population was homogeneous and not reflective of national grandfamily data. Thus, these findings need to be taken with caution. Future research should continue to evaluate the usefulness of the grandchildren-mentoring program to see if preliminary results remain the same especially with more diverse samples. Finally, researchers might consider also examining outcomes (both for grandparents and grandchildren) that may change as a result of mentoring relationships between students and grandchildren.

Although not assessed in the current project, some grandparents used the two hours a week as time for respite. Researchers should examine what activities grandparents did during this time for respite, and how grandparents' feelings of restoration and productivity impacts their self-care practices (Fruhauf & Bundy-Fazioli, 2013; Manns et al., 2017) or general well-being. Researchers may also want to explore how the act of forming a relationship and then engaging in termination of the grandchild-student mentor affects the grandchildren in the future or the entire grandfamily as grandparents reflected building relationships with the students, too. Furthermore, at the onset of recruitment for this mentoring program, some grandparents shared with the community agency that they refused to participate because they did not want their grandchild to go through a nine-month program and build a relationship only to have it end. Grandparents reflected that they have had too many experiences of adults "running out on them" and this would be another difficult experience for these grandchildren. Attention to further training in trauma-informed practice, including attachment theory during the orientation process for the students and perhaps an orientation for grandparents, might be beneficial as grandchildren

develop secure attachments with a caregiver or trusted professional (Lee, 2017). As a result, future research might examine how grandfamilies navigate both professional and familial relationships with regard to ending and terminating relationships as it may impact their service use.

Conclusion

   This program illustrates how community partners and university faculty, students, and alumni can successfully work together to meet the needs of grandfamilies (Krout & Pogorzala, 2002). Similar to previous findings (Fruhauf et al., 2012), from this current project, we learned that it would have been nearly impossible for one agency to complete this grandchildren-mentoring program on its own. Together, we were able to utilize resources to successfully launch and maintain a new program targeting grandchildren. Although this program was focused on meeting the needs of grandchildren, it had positive implications on the entire grandfamily unit. Grandparents and grandchildren found they enjoyed having a mentor and they developed skills and connections with their mentor. Although there were a number of challenges in having students as mentors, these challenges did not negatively impact the university-community partnership. Instead, it strengthened this partnership and through this university-community partnership, before the second year (2016-2017) of the grandchildren-mentoring program, suggested changes were made to improve the program. The program has continued every year since the initial launch and this evaluation.

References

Andrews, G. J., & Muzumdar, T. (2010). Rethinking the applied: Public gerontology, global responsibility. *Journal of Applied Gerontology, 29*(2), 143-154. https://doi.org/10.1177/0733464809343110

Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (1998). *Qualitative research in education: An introduction to theory and methods* (3rd ed.). Allyn and Bacon.

Conway, F., & Jones, S. C. (2012). Training bachelor of social work students to meet the needs of grandparent caregivers. *Educational Gerontology, 38*(2), 127-137. https://doi.org/10.1080/03601277.2010.515912

Dunn, B., & Wamsley, B. (2018). Grandfamilies: Characteristics and needs of grandparents raising grandchildren. *Journal of Extension, 56*(5), 5RIB2.

Ellis, R. R., & Simmons, T. (2014, October). Coresident grandparents and their grandchildren: 2012. [P20-576]. *U.S. Department of Commerce,* Economic and Statistics Administration.

Fitzgerald, H. E., Bruns, K., Sonka, S. T., Furco, A., & Swanson, L. (2012). The centrality of engagement in higher education. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement, 16*(3) 7-27.

Fruhauf, C. A., & Bundy-Fazioli, K. (2013). Grandparent caregivers' self-care practice: Moving toward a strengths-based approach. In B. Hayslip, Jr. & G. C. Smith (Eds.), *Resilient grandparent caregivers: A strengths based perspective* (pp. 88-102). Routledge.

Fruhauf, C. A., Bundy-Fazioli, K., & Miller, J. (2012). The Larimer County Alliance for Grandfamilies: An innovative approach to meeting a community need. *Journal of Applied Gerontology, 31*, 193-214. https://doi.org/10.1177/0733464810385094

Fruhauf, C. A., & Hayslip, B., Jr. (2013). Understanding collaborative efforts to assist grandparent caregivers: A multileveled perspective. *Journal of Family Social Work, 16*(5)*,* 382-391. https://doi.org/10.1080/10522158.2013.832462

Fruhauf, C. A., Pevney, B., & Bundy-Fazioli, K. (2015). The needs and use of programs by service providers working with grandparents raising grandchildren. *Journal of Applied Gerontology, 34*(2), 138-157. https://doi.org/10.1177/0733464812463983

Generations United (2015). *The state of grandfamilies in America: 2014.* https://www.gu.org/resources/the-state-of-grandfamilies-in-america-2014/

Gibson, F. (2007). Conducting focus groups with children and young people: Strategies for success. *Journal of Research in Nursing, 12*(5)*,* 473-483. https://doi.org/10.1177/1744987107079791

Gibson, J. E. (2012). Interviews and focus groups with children: Methods that match children's developing competencies. *Journal of Family Theory & Review, 4*(2)*,* 148-159.

Hayslip, B., Jr., & Kaminski, P. (2005). Grandparents raising their grandchildren: A review of the literature and suggestions for practice. *The Gerontologist, 45*(2), 262-269. https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/45.2.262

Hayslip, B., Jr., Fruhauf, C. A., & Dolbin-MacNab, M. (2019) Grandparents raising grandchildren: What have we learned over the past decade? *The Gerontologist, 59*(3), e152-e163. https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnx106

Hughes, M. E., Waite, L. J., LaPierre, T. A., & Lou, Y. (2007). All in the family: The impact of caring for grandchildren on grandparents' health. *Journal of Gerontology : Social Sciences, 62*(2), 108-119. https://doi.org/10.1093/geronb/62.2.S108

Israel, B. A., Eng, E., Schulz, A. J., & Parker, E. A. (2005) (Eds.). *Methods in community-based participatory research for health*. Jossey-Bass.

Kolb, P., & Conway, F. (2015). Roles for education in development and implementation of evidence-based practices for community programs for older adults. *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education, 36*(3)*,* 226-241. https://doi.org/10.1080/02701960.2015.1031895.

Kolomer, S., McCallion, P., & Van Voorbis, C. (2008). School-based support group intervention for children in the care of their grandparents. In B. Hayslip Jr., & P. L. Kaminski (Eds.), *Parenting the custodial grandchild: Implications for clinical practice* (pp. 251-263). Springer.

Krout, J. A., & Pogorzala, C. H. (2002). An intergenerational partnership between a college and congregate housing facility: How it works, what it means. *The Gerontologist, 42*(6), 853-858. https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/42.6.853

Landry-Meyer, L. (1999). Research into action: Recommended intervention strategies for grandparent caregivers. *Family Relations, 48*(4)*,* 381-389. https://doi.org/10.2307/585245

Lee, Y. (2017). A model for school professionals working with grandparent-headed families. *Social Work, 62*(2), 122-129. https://doi.org/10.1093/sw/swx007

Manns, A., Atler, K. E., & Fruhauf, C. A. (2017). Daily activities and experiences of custodial grandparents: An exploratory study. *Physical & Occupational Therapy in Geriatrics, 35*(1)*,* 34-48. https://doi.org/10.1080/02703181.2017.1280112

McCaslin, R., & Barnstable, C. L. (2008). Increasing geriatric social work content through university/community partnerships. *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education, 29*(1)*,* 1-18. https://doi.org/10.1080/02701960802074214

McLaughlin, B., Ryder, D., & Taylor, M. F. (2017). Effectiveness of interventions for grandparent caregivers: A systematic review. *Marriage & Family Review, 53*(6), 509-531. https://doi.org/10.1080/01494929.2016.1177631

Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education.* Jossey-Bass.

Miller, J., Bruce, A., Bundy-Fazioli, K., & Fruhauf, C. A. (2010). Mobilizing a community to address the needs of grandparents raising grandchildren. *Journal of Extension, 48*(2), 21AW7.

Miller, J. J., Koh, E., Niu, C., Bode, M., & Moddy, S. (2019). Examining child trauma knowledge among kin caregivers: Implications for practice, policy, and research. *Children and Youth Services Review, 100*(C), 112-118. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2019.02.026

Morgan, D. L. (1997). *Focus groups as qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Sage.

Morgan, D. L. (1998). *The focus group guidebook: Focus group kit 1*. Sage.

Musil, C. M. (2000). Health of grandmothers as caregivers: A ten month follow-up. *Journal of Women and Aging, 12*(1-2), 129-145.

National Research Center. (2005). *Evaluation handbook for programs serving older adults* (2nd ed.).

Pew Foundation (2010). *Since the start of the great recession, more grandchildren raised by grandparents.* http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1724

Saldaῆa, J. (2009). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers.* Sage.

Sands, R. G., Goldberg-Glen, R., & Thornton, P. L. (2005). Factors associated with the positive well-being of grandparents caring for their grandchildren. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work, 45*(4), 65-82. https://doi.org/10.1300/J083v45n04_05

Weinberger, S. G. (2014). Mentors support grandfamilies raising grandchildren. *Grandfamilies: The Contemporary Journal of Research, Practice and Policy, 1*(1), 72-84.