



# Georgia Gwinnett COLLEGE

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Gaynell M. Simpson, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor  
Human Services and Cultural Studies



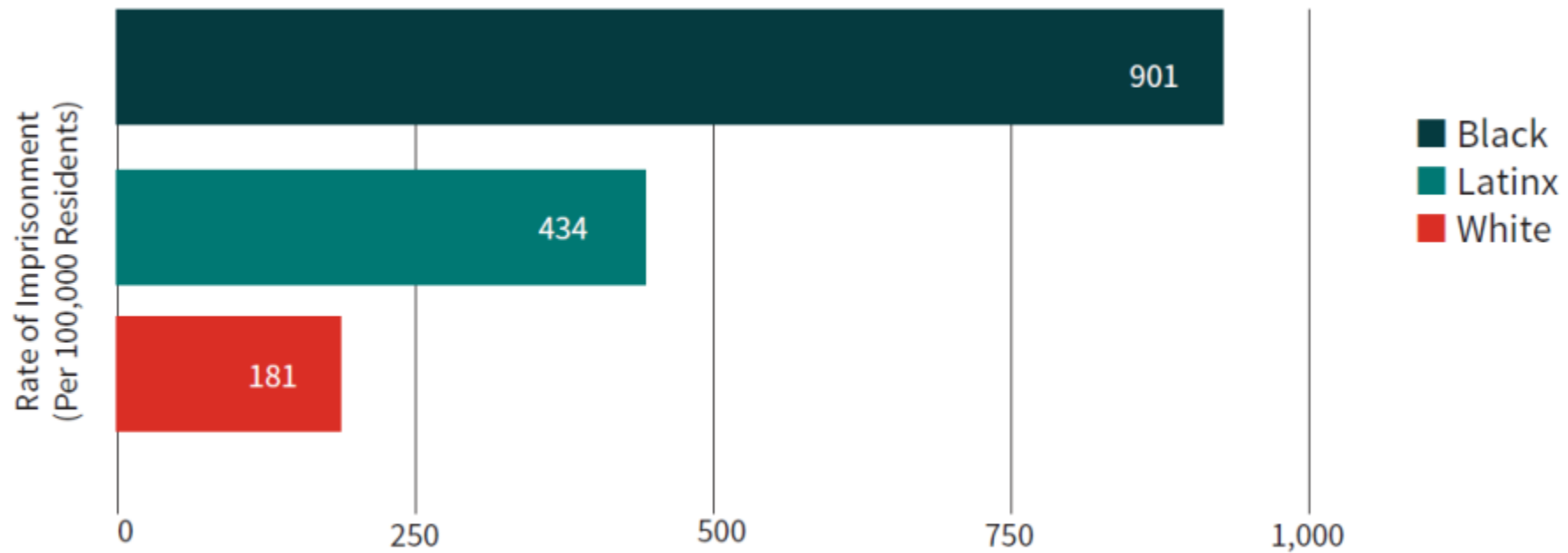
# Missouri Juvenile Justice Association

## **Parental Incarceration and Informal Kinship Care Providers: African American Grandmother's Perspective**

Attendees will achieve the following objectives:

- Increase participants' knowledge of social supports, stressors, and coping strategies of African American grandmother caregivers.
- Communicate and apply an understanding of how grandmothers' family structure and functioning is affected by individual, family, and community factors.
- Critically think about advocacy to address family issues

# The Color of Justice: Racial and Ethnic Disparity in State Prisons



Source: Carson, E. A. (2022). [\*Prisoners in 2021-Statistical tables\*](#). Bureau of Justice Statistics.

# The Color of Justice: Racial and Ethnic Disparity in State Prisons



- Black Americans are incarcerated in state prisons nearly **5 times** the rate of White Americans.
- Nationally, **one in 81 Black adults in the U.S.** is serving time in state prison.
- Wisconsin leads the nation in Black imprisonment rates; one of every 36 Black Wisconsinites is in prison.
- In **12 states more than half the prison population is Black:** Alabama, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, New Jersey, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia.

# Incarcerated Parents: Survey of Prison Inmates (2016)



## State Statistics

- An estimated 684,500 **state** and **federal** prisoners were parents of at least **one minor child**.
- In **state** prison, about **58% of females** were parents with minor children, compared to **46% of males**.
- In **state** prison, **50% of African American females**, **62% of Hispanic females**, and **60% of White females** reported having a minor child.



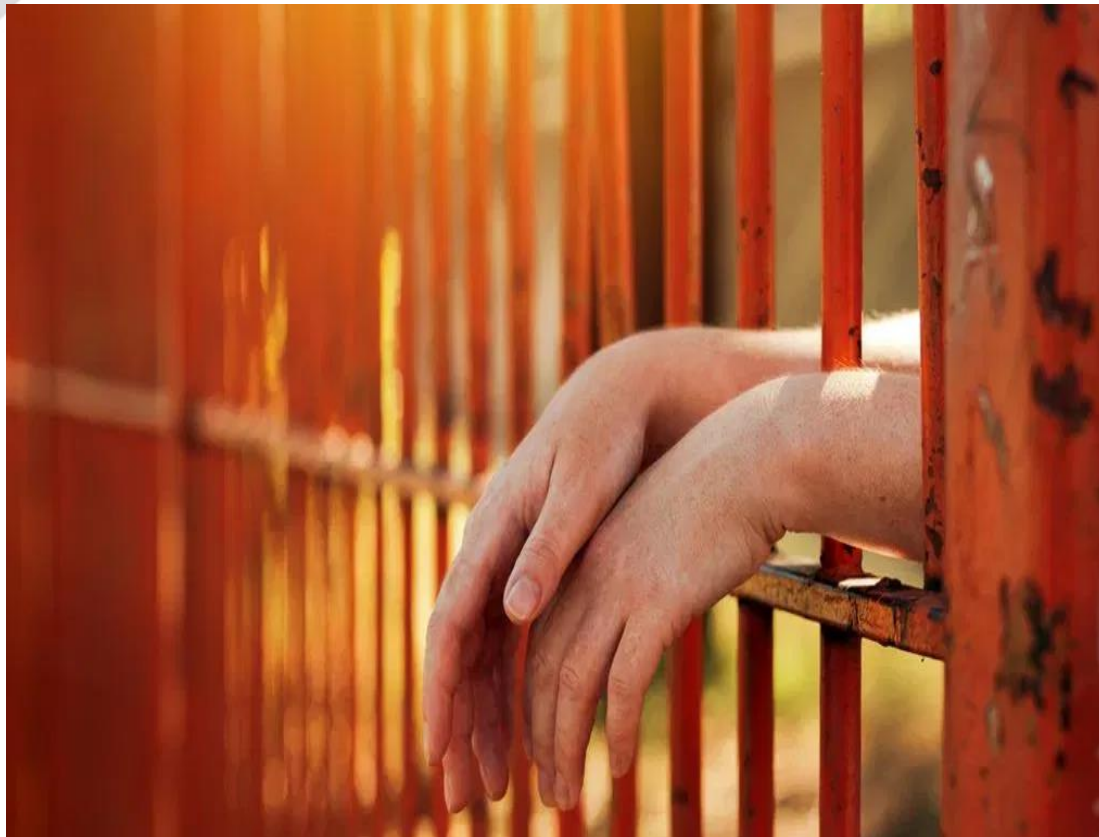
*Female hands behind prison yard bars, incarcerated captivated person in jail (SBG)*

# Incarcerated Parents: Survey of Prison Inmates (2016)



## Federal Statistics

- In **federal** prison, about **58% of females** were parents with minor children, compared to **57% of males**.
- In **federal** prison, **64% of African American males**, **64% of Hispanic males**, and **34% of White males** were fathers with minor children



*Female hands behind prison yard bars, incarcerated captivated person in jail (SBG)*



Question: Who are most likely to care for minors of incarcerated parents within the African American community?

# Caring Through Struggle: Caregivers of Children with Incarcerated Parents







## Emotional Effects

Confusion

Anger

Distress

## Behavioral Responses

Stigma

Bullying

Fighting

Defiance

Trouble Sleeping





## Positive Effects

Stable Environment

Improved Academics

Developmental Advancements

# Family Social Resources Grandmother Headed Households

A Qualitative Perspective of Family Resources among Low  
Income African American Grandmother Caregivers  
(Simpson, 2008)



# Context of the Community

West side of Baltimore City

Maryland, ranks 8<sup>th</sup> pertaining to children living with grandparents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000)

Baltimore City and Baltimore County, has the third highest percentage of children residing with grandparents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000)

The legal arrangements of these grandparent-maintained households are unknown; however, it can be estimated that large proportions of grandparents are providing informal care (Mayfield, Pennucci, and Lyon, 2002).

# Participants Profile



Participants	Age	Number of Grandchildren (age range)	Length of caregiving	Civil Status	Education Level	Employment Status	Monthly Income
1	72	1 (8)	5	Widowed	2yrs of college	Retired/disabled	1500
2	74	7 (2-14)	10	Widowed	6 <sup>th</sup> grade	Unpaid labor	570
3	68	3 (10-13)	8	Divorced	2yrs of college	Resigned	1666
4	60	1 (11)	11	Single	7 <sup>th</sup> grade	Unpaid labor	525
5	65	2 (15-17)	17	Divorced	9 <sup>th</sup> grade	Employed	600
6	53	4 (3-14)	9	Single	10 <sup>th</sup> grade	Resigned	1235
7	52	4 (10-14)	10	Single	9 <sup>th</sup> grade	Employed	776





# Perceptions of Family Support

- Absent Family Support
- Unavailable Family Support
- Dependent Family Support
- Reliable Family Support



Photo by [Neil Thomas](#) on [Unsplash](#)





# Absent Family Support

## **Mrs J described:**

*“[husband’s name]’s been dead about 7 years. . . . He had a heart attack, some sort of heart condition. . . . Well, when my husband was living, he took care of us. I always worked. But we worked together. And so I didn’t go through these changes that we are going through now . . . because he was a helping hand. And he always seen that we had whatever we need. And I think between the two of us, we were always able to make it.”*



# Unavailable Family Support

## **Mrs. T expressed:**

*She don't take her medication [for manic depression]. She drinks [alcohol] every night on that step. Every night she's drinking. And then in the morning, she don't want the children to say nothing to her. . . . She does nothing but stay up in that room all day. . . . And the only way I keep her in my house is so I can watch them [great grandchildren], cause she will hurt them. . . . She is what you call a manic-depressive.*

## Dependent Family Support



### **Mrs. C expressed frustration:**

*My son, Jerod, is a correctional officer . . . never give me no problems; he does things for me, asks about, calls me on his break . . .but Denisha [first biological daughter] doesn't come around, only if she wants to borrow some money, that's it. . . . Denisha was a long distance operator, telephone operator. Blew it for drugs. Tina [second daughter] is an artist and she could, she laid the tile in my house when I needed it, and could do all kinds of work. . . . Winopa [third daughter] is a tailor and interior decorator. And Yvonne [fourth daughter] is a licensed plumber, and they [daughters] want drugs. And they come to me on the third looking for loans, for money. Steal. I've lost microwaves, the children lost games, TV's because of them.*



## Reliable Family Support

**Mrs. C expressed:**

*“My son is basically my backbone. He’s my back-up person.”*

*“My son, they’re [grandchildren] going over to [named street location of son’s home]; they leaving tonight. I just finished talking to him. He picking them up tonight. They going out of here (laughs)!”.*



## Depleted Family Structure: “There is no one!”

**Ms. F expressed mutual frustration:**

*No one, 'cause the ones that I would [have relied on] they dead!”*

Ms. F.'s sister, who died of cancer, had been the designated caregiver of her grandchild

# Community Resources Grandmother Headed Households

Responsibility without Community Resources (Simpson & Lawrence-Webb, 2009)





**Mrs. T shared the following:**

*“It’s a big difference back then and now. People back then, everybody cared about everybody.*

*You know, when you were a neighbor, you were neighbors...you were there if anybody was sick, you were there! They needed help, you were there.*

*Now, you can get sick and die and nobody will know, they just doesn’t care. Everybody’s wrapped in themselves!”*

# Formal Social Service Agencies: Inappropriate or Unresponsive



**Mrs J's statement reflects this feeling:**

*Who am I gonna ask? You know, I wouldn't mind asking for help if I knew where to go and who to ask what, well; but I have nobody to ask for help! ... I don't run to no agencies. I've tried, but all they got to do is say, no! Or either they want so much from you.*

*They want things you can't give. They want to know all of your business. And I don't think that's all necessary. It's not like I'm going for me. If I'm going for me, I expect 'em to ask for me all of my business. But when I going for somebody else [referring to grandchild], I don't think they should be asking me about me.*

# Formal Social Service Agencies: Inappropriate or Unresponsive



Mrs. T shared:

*“That was a mistake to put him in. ... They don't do anything for these children but make them worse . . . dope them up and make 'em worse. They told me they wasn't going to send him back home. You know, after 3 months they shipped him back home. Told me to come and get him. I said, "Well, you said he wasn't coming back home." They made me take him out of there. He ran through the place [mental institution] like he owned”*



# Responsibilities without Community Resources

Ms. C shared:

*“When I moved over to East Baltimore and, let me see, the children's worker had came out and I had asked her about if I could get them some school clothes. And she told me her supervisor would not sign the papers for it [school clothes]. And I told her, I said, “Well, y'all might as well get these children cuz I cannot take care of these children!” I have to give 'em up because I done went to my limit. . . . I done moved all over town with these children trying to hold on to 'em, but I can't get no help you know. And my son, he came up and I started telling him about they didn't have no clothes and I was giving them up. That was a time too. He cried and I cried. ... I am tearful just to think of that I almost gave them.”*

# Survival strategies of older African American grandmother caregivers.

Simpson, G. M., Pressley, T PD., Carthron, D., & Stansbury, K. (2017).

<https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/grandfamilies/vol4/iss2/5/>



# Participants Health Profile

Participants	Age	Self Reported Health Status
1	72	Diabetes; leg amputated
2	74	Diabetes; chronic arthritis
3	68	Anxiety; hypertension; arthritis
4	60	Chronic arthritis
5	65	none
6	53	Heart disease (hardening of arteries); high blood pressure; emphysema; claustrophobia
7	52	none





Reliable Social Support

Unavailable and Dependent Social Support



Being Strong

Self-Sacrificing

Praying to God

“...And sometimes, honey, its not easy. It's so hard. I just don't cry anymore; I cried out. And crying don't help. And I'm at the point now that if I start crying, I will never stop. I won't know how to stop because I held back so long. A couple of times this year I felt like I wanted to cry, just wanted to holler and scream. But I knew I couldn't do that because if I did that, they [referring to grandchildren] wouldn't of have no one because I would have been gone. And those kinds of things because it bothers me and

“I don't know honey, I don't know. I guess it's by the grace of God. I'm a hard praying woman; cause I pray hard,, you know, and ask Him, 'please keep me in my right state of mind.' And I thank Him for my seeing, hearing, and talking and walking and all. And I also ask Him, 'continue on strengthening me', that's the only thing I can think of...”

“but a lot of times I let myself go lacking so that I can take care of them [referring to four grandchildren], what their needs are. After their needs are all taken care of, then if I have time to I reach back or relax and work on mines....[laughter]...I never get around to meeting mine though.”

“Well a lot of times I have to pray to the Lord because I know he's able and without Him I couldn't make it. So I pray for him to give me some of his strength and let me lean on him...”

# Implications for Practice and Policy



# Implications for Direct Practice

- Challenges previous assumptions of a reliable and supportive informal social support structure.
- Service providers need to pay greater attention to who is present and absent; their roles and functions within the grandmothers' informal social support structure.
- Use of clinical tools (e.g. genogram and ecomap) are essential and necessary for treatment planning and intervention.



# Implications for Direct Practice

- Assumption of African American female caregiving role is challenged
- Service providers need to pay greater attention to male (kin and fictive kin) family members
- African American males are often not recognized or un-assessed during intake and treatment planning (must establish trusting relationship, information not used to determine their receipt of social services)



# Implications for Macro Practice

- Intergenerational programs aimed at strengthening family units.
- Kinship community collaboration includes reaching caregivers outside of child welfare system, receive similar services of kin within the system.
- Respite Care Programs
- Restructuring of informal social support (e.g. crisis support plan).



# Implications for Policy

- Point of entry for voluntary kinship care providers.
- Policies inclusive of different caregiving arrangements.
- Subsidized guardianship (child welfare demonstration project), include voluntary caregivers.





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Gaynell M. Simpson, Ph.D.  
[drgmsimpson@gmail.com](mailto:drgmsimpson@gmail.com)  
770-896-6376



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