

The unique and special role of grandparents in the lives of families from areas of urban disadvantage.

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Background

Many grandparents provide support for families and have influence over the lives of their grandchildren. There are benefits associated with being a grandparent, such as positive well-being and a feeling of fulfilment. Although there has been an increase in scholarship on intergenerational relationships, to date the focus has been largely on the grandparent-grandchild relationship from the perspective of the parent, or the grandparent, and not the child.

'My Family' drawing including grandparents by Lucy, 8 years old.

GF13: "Well I like that fact that I have grandchildren most of all, and being able to care for them through the years, give help. And they've all grown up very, very loving, which is one good thing".

'My Family' drawing including living & deceased grandparents by Bobby, 11 years old.

Study Aim and Objective

The aim of the study was to explore the health and well-being experiences of school-aged children who live in an area of urban disadvantage. The objective of the study was to explore what 'family' means to school-aged children and their family.

Methodology

Case study research was employed and multiple sources of 'evidence' were collected. Face-to-face interviews with 19 children, 14 parents and 6 grandparents from 15 different families were conducted. The child interviews incorporated three drawing activities relating to family composition, health and well-being and daily life.



Findings and Conclusions

Grandparents, and in particular the maternal grandmother, occupy a very significant space in the lives of families from areas of urban disadvantage. The significance of the role of the grandparent in the lives of children and families is not limited to grandparents who are alive but extends to deceased grandparents also. Findings from the study indicate that grandparents provide a variety of supports within the family system such as emotional support, financial support and practical supports. It is the maternal grandmother who occupies the grandparent role of greatest significance in the lives of these families.

