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## **Raising Grandchildren: Influence on a Grandmother's Daily Life**

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### Introduction:

The environment shapes the experiences of growing and aging when grandchildren and grandparents come together as an intergenerational family. Children require a safe and nurturing environment to achieve developmental milestones while grandparents require environmental supports to accommodate changes brought about by age. Custodial grandparents' overall health status is poor, particularly for those with intense caregiving responsibilities (Gibbons & Jones, 2003; Szinovacz & Davey, 2006).

### Objectives:

Participants will understand how custodial grandmothers re-engage in the parental role later in life and carry out typical child care tasks by altering the temporal, social, emotional and physical contexts of home.

### Methods:

Data collection included videotape and interview of mothers and custodial grandmothers in regard to typical routines of child care. A grounded theory approach was used, including constant comparison, concurrent collection, coding and microanalysis of video and interview data, and coding and description of key concepts of custodial grand-mothering.

### Results:

Discovered concepts and patterns in each of five categories illustrate how grandmothers and typical-age mothers meet and respond to the contextual challenges intrinsic to child care tasks: routines, social network, relationships, safety and environmental adaptation.

### Conclusions:

When presented with the situation to care for a grandchild, a grandmother's response pattern is three-fold as she activates prior role competencies, integrates the child into her existing routine and institutes subtle contextual adaptations.

### Contribution to the practice / evidence base of occupational therapy:

This new research should be of interest to occupational therapists concerned about the health and welfare of aging adults who shoulder strenuous caregiver roles. Primary contribution to practice is an understanding that any adaptation to enhance a grandmother's physical ability to care for a baby must be subtle and fit seamlessly with her typical routine. An additional contribution to practice is identification of the unique context of an intergenerational home.

### References:

- Gibbons, C., & Jones, T. C. (2003). Kinship care: Health profiles of grandparents raising their grandchildren. *Journal of Family Social Work*, 7(1), 1-14.
- Szinovacz, M. E., & Davey, A. (2006). Effects of retirement and grandchild care on depressive symptoms. *International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 62(1), 1-20.

