

***Interaction Among  
Research, Practice and Policy:  
The Health of Grandparents***

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***Plenary Panel Session II***

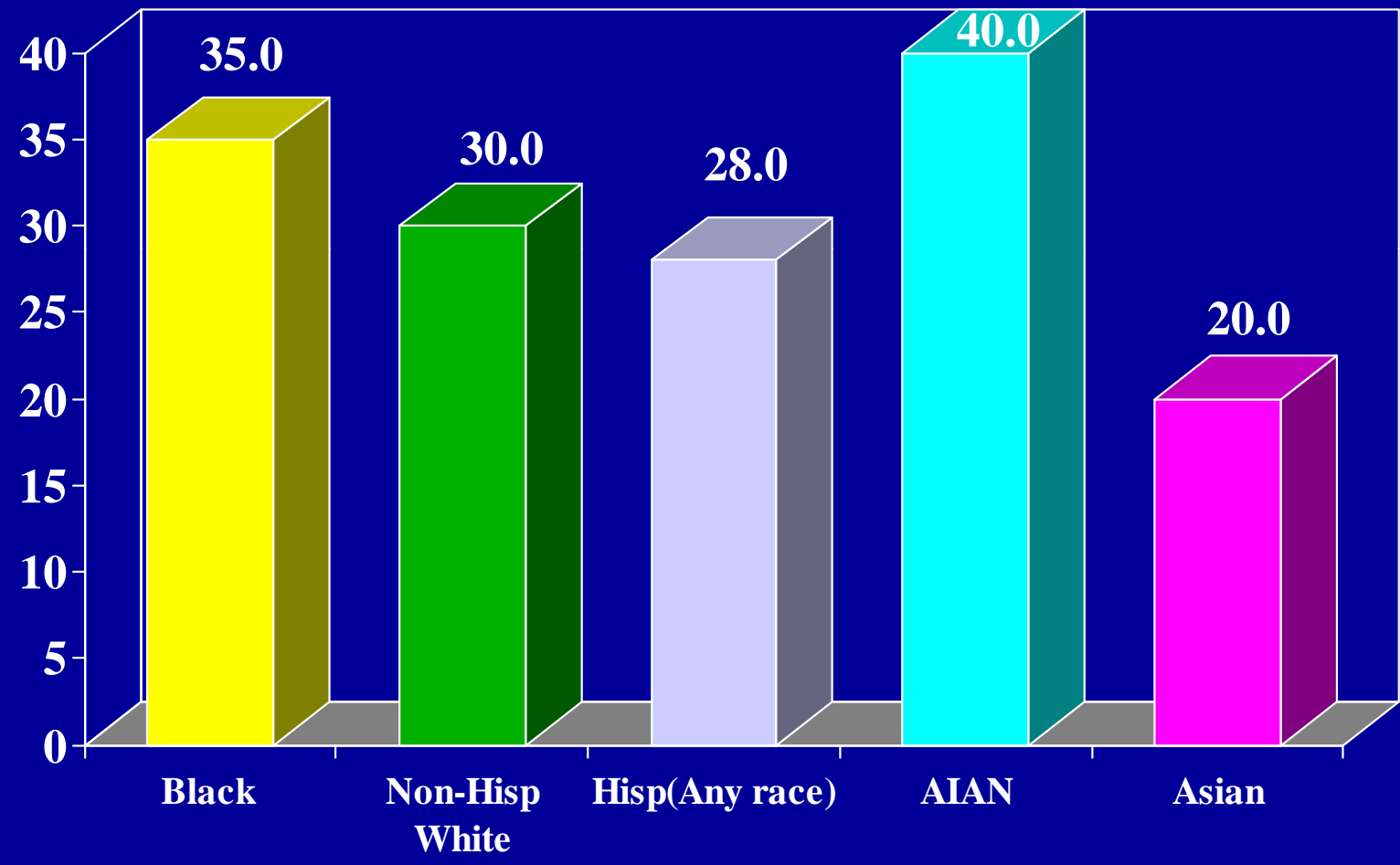
*2<sup>nd</sup> Symposium on Grandparents Raising Grandchildren*

*Atlanta, Georgia, March 11, 2009*

# Headlines Since January

- **Worst Year for Jobs Since '45**
- **Foreclosures Rise at Record Speed**
- **States Look To Cut Medicaid Funding**
- **Workers Worry about Child Welfare Cuts**
- **Some Attribute Child Abuse Spike to Recession**

# Among Grandparents Aged 45+ Raising Grandchildren % with any Disability American Community Survey 2003



“Oh, sure, I have high blood pressure and diabetes. I have sleepless nights. But I’m not concerned about my health. What does worry me is this pace I’m trying to keep up.”

Minkler & Roe, 1993

# “I don’t have the luxury of being sick so.....

- “I bandage my leg, grab my cane and keep going”
- “I use my asthma pump and keep going”
- “I take my medicines and keep going”
- “I *don’t* take my medicines because they make me drowsy and I have to be alert for these kids”

Minkler & Roe, 1993

“I realized I was neglecting myself so I started seeing a doctor, losing weight, and taking care of myself, because I’m the only one he has now.”

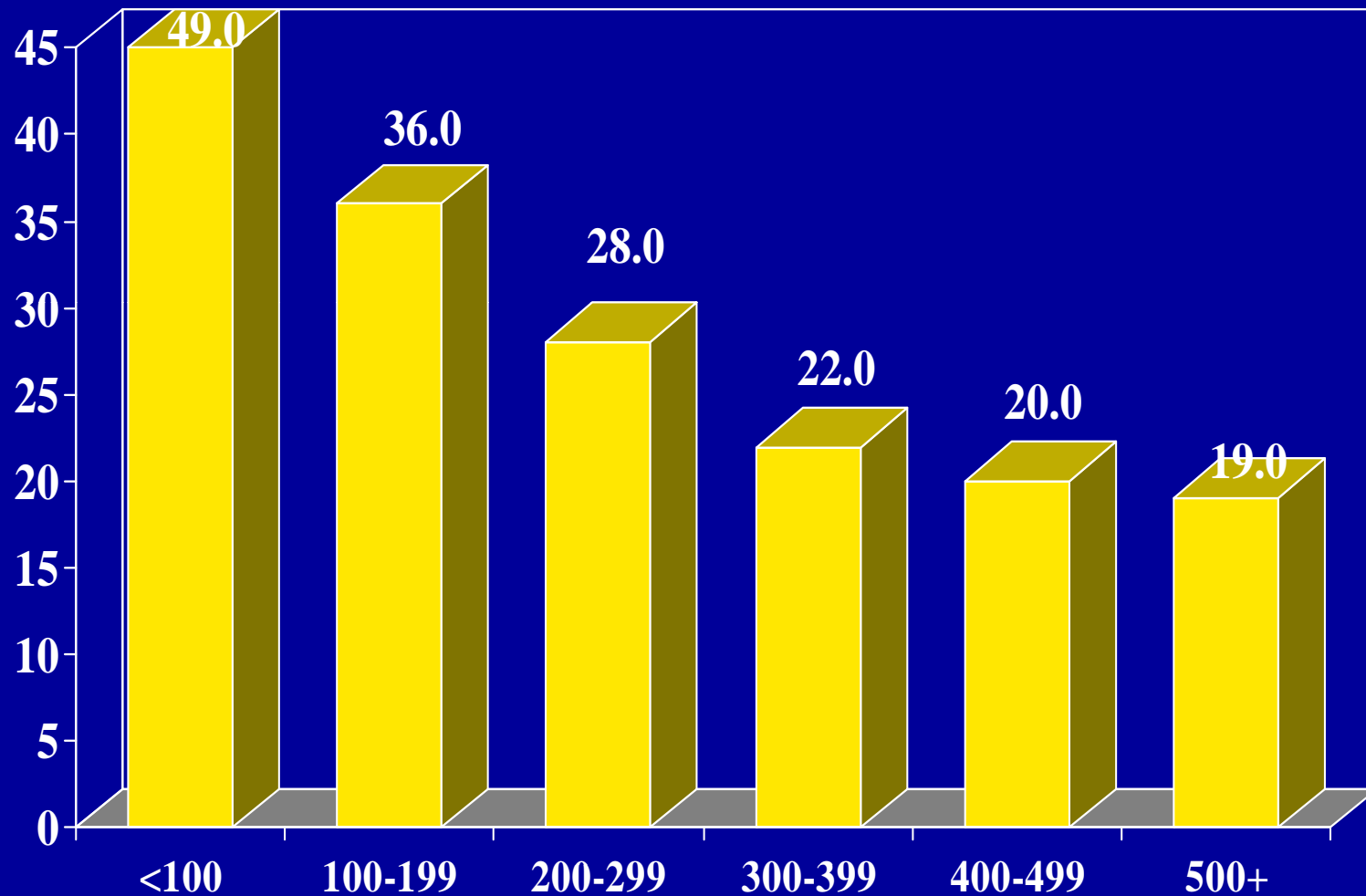
Minkler & Roe, 1993

# Why do grandparents experience poorer health than their peers?

- Conditions exacerbated by the physical demands of raising infants (e.g. carrying)
- No time or \$ to do regular check-ups
- Lower incomes, more financial strain
- Neighborhoods violent, unsafe, exercise difficult.

Hagland, 2000; Kelley, 1993, Waldrop & Webber, 2001; Minkler & Roe, 1993

# Percent of Grandparent Caregivers 45 and over with Any Limitation by Family Poverty Level



# Even part-time caregivers have poor health outcomes

- Women who babysit grandchildren 9-20 hours per week had 55% higher odds of coronary heart disease
  - Prospective Nurses' Health Study
  - 54,412 women 46-71, followed 4 years
  - Made adjustments for age, hypertension, diabetes, smoking, family history, BMI, etc.
- Perhaps due to role conflict, physical demands of caregiving, less sleep, stress

Lee, Colditz, Berkman & Kawachi, 2003

# Health Insurance

- Medicaid under strain
- Unemployed without health benefits
- New administration making efforts to reform health care

# Promising Policies for Respite

## 1. Increased Head Start Funding

- American Recovery & Reinvestment Act

## 2. Information, Referral & Respite

- National Family Caregiver Support Program

## 3. Life Span Respite Care Act

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