

Grandparents' involvement in the care of their grandchildren is nearly a universal phenomenon. However the intensity and style, well as the precipitating conditions of involvement vary substantially across countries and regions of the world.

Grandparents who devote substantial effort to the care of their grandchildren are typically classified into two types: "child savers" who provide extenuating child-care when parents are incapacitated or unavailable to raise their children, and "mother savers" who provide child-care so that parents (usually mothers) are able to work for pay outside the home. However useful this dichotomy, it does not comfortably fit patterns of grandparenting in parts of the developing world where grandparents are simultaneously child- and mother-savers, and personally benefit as a result of their efforts. Grandparent caregivers in rural China present examples of what might be called "family savers" as they are embedded in an integrated multi-generational multi-household economic system within which resources are mutually shared. Grandparents provide childcare for grandchildren left behind in rural villages from which adult children have migrated to take advantage of labor markets in rapidly developing urban regions; in return, adult migrant children send remittances back to their older parents and young children.