

Grand Connections Data and Evaluation Report



Program development: Kathy Kinsner, MS Ed (kkinsner@zerotothree.org)

Data analysis: Kaitlin Brunick, PhD (kbrunick@zerotothree.org)

Introduction

In the absence of accessible and affordable options for working families, grandparents have increasingly become the cornerstone of early child care in the U.S. One out of four children under the age of five is cared for by a grandparent while a parent works or goes to school.¹ The number of multi-generational families (three or more generations living in the same household) is up.² The number of families in which grandparents are raising grandchildren is up.³

Because grandparents make such a significant and irreplaceable contribution to child care in this country, ZERO TO THREE set out to discover what support or guidance might be needed by families sharing child care between generations. Over the last five years, we explored grandparents' lived experiences through focus groups and a series of documentary videos, concluding with a national survey of grandparents providing part-time child care to young grandchildren. Our research helped us shape the development of a series of seven workshops tailored to the needs of both custodial grandparents and those sharing the care with their grandchild's parent(s).

The goals of the program were threefold:

- To offer the latest guidance on child-rearing topics to grandparents caring for grandchildren under the age of five
- To describe strategies to make sharing the care between generations easier
- To provide a place for grandparents to connect and share the joys and challenges of caring for young children

The Grand Connections program was piloted at seven sites in the spring of 2021: Las Vegas, NV; North Bend, WA; Opelika, AL; Phoenix, AZ; Athens County, OH; Logan, UT; and Goleta, CA. Grandparents caring for grandchildren under five were recruited to participate. Due to the pandemic, the program was delivered virtually at all sites, with between 5 and 12 grandparents participating online at each.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau. (2013). *Who's minding the kids? Child care arrangements: Spring 2011*. Found on the Internet at <https://www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/p70-135.pdf>

² Generations United. (2021). *Family Matters: Multigenerational Living is on the Rise and Here to Stay*. Found on the Internet at <https://www.gu.org/resources/multigenerational-families/>.

³ The PEW Charitable Trusts. (2016). *Why More Grandparents Are Raising Grandchildren*. Found on the Internet at <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2016/11/02/why-more-grandparents-are-raising-children>.

Two sites delivered the program to custodial grandparents, with the remainder delivering the program to grandparents sharing the care with parents. Two sites conducted the workshops entirely in Spanish. Surveys were offered in both English and Spanish to maximize completion of the surveys based on participants' preferred language.

Overview of Survey Methodology

Facilitators at each site distributed two links to electronic surveys at two timepoints. The first survey, completed by respondents at the start of the workshops, collected information about participants in the workshop as well as their thoughts on childrearing practices (feeding, sleeping, social-emotional development, etc.) The second survey, completed by respondents at the end of the workshops, asked respondents for their thoughts on the same childrearing practices and asked for evaluative feedback on the workshops. At one site, surveys were conducted by phone to support a population that struggled with technology.

Respondents

Participants were encouraged to complete both the pre-workshop and post-workshop survey, with 54% of participants completing both surveys.

Survey completions from all respondents will be represented throughout this report:

- Those who completed the **pre-workshop survey only** will be included in the **participant demographic** portion of the report
- Those who completed the **post-workshop survey only** will be included in the **workshop evaluation portion** of the report
- Those who completed **both surveys** will be included in **all three sections** of the report (participant demographics, knowledge change on key constructs, and workshop evaluation)

Demographic Information

A total of 52 responses were recorded for this portion of the pre-workshop survey. Responses are aggregated across sites.

Grandparent Demographics

Most of the participants completing this portion of the survey (over 90%) identified as female. There were roughly even proportions of participating grandparents in their 40s, 50s, and 60s, though 2 participants reported being in their 70s. About 40% of respondents described themselves as white or Caucasian; 31% described themselves as Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino; 11.5% described themselves as Black or African American; the remaining 8% described themselves as multiracial or declined to answer.

There was representation across a spectrum of education levels, with about half of grandparents reporting some high school or a high school diploma as their highest education level.

Grandparent-Family Demographics

About one-third of respondents report sharing a household with their children and grandchildren. Considerable variation existed in the amount of care grandparents in the sample provided per week, with approximately one-third caring for grandchildren for fewer than 15 hours per week, one-third caring for grandchildren between 15 and 40 hours a week, and the final third providing care for more than 40 hours a week.

Knowledge Change on Key Constructs

A total of 36 respondents completed both the pre-workshop and post-workshop surveys. From their responses in the pre- (Time 1) and post-workshop (Time 2) surveys, knowledge change scores were computed on 15 childrearing principles. Data have been aggregated across sites and key findings have been highlighted below.

Table 1 shows areas where significant pre/post differences were observed. Correct responses based on information offered in the workshops are shown in parentheses following each item.

Table 1. Significant Changes in Parenting Constructs

<p>Significant response change in the expected direction</p>	<p>Eating</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Children who are picky eaters are not likely to get the food they need to grow and thrive.</i> (Disagree/strongly disagree) <p>Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Babies are listening and learning language even when they're too young to speak.</i> (Agree/strongly agree) • <i>Children begin to learn skills needed for math and reading starting at birth.</i> (Agree/strongly agree) <p>Managing Challenging Behavior</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A two-year-old should be able to remember and follow rules.</i> (Disagree/strongly disagree) <p>Screens</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Video chat is a good way for children of all ages to connect with friends and family</i> (Agree/strongly agree)
<p>Approaching significant response change</p>	<p>Eating</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Toddlers should stay at the table until they've finished everything on their plates.</i> (Disagree/strongly disagree)

Response changes to other questions were not significant (see Table 2). For many of these questions, this outcome reflected grandparents' prior knowledge upon entering the program. For example, before beginning the program, 88% of grandparents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that spanking was an effective discipline technique; post-program, 100% disagreed or strongly disagreed, but this difference was not statistically significant. At the beginning of the program, 76% of grandparents agreed or strongly agreed that babies should be placed on their backs to sleep, as compared with 94% following the program. This change was also not statistically significant.

One question showed significant response change in the opposite of the expected direction (see Table 2). This may be because this item conflates the use of flashcards/worksheets and grandparent involvement. In other words, grandparents may have been more likely to agree with this item as a signifier of involvement even though the curriculum emphasized the importance of informal interaction rather than "instruction."

Table 2: No Significant Changes in Parenting Constructs

<p>No significant response change</p>	<p>Eating</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Babies know when they are full and when they are hungry.</i> (Agree/strongly agree) <p>Sleeping</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Picking up a 4-month-old every time they cry will spoil them.</i> (Disagree/strongly disagree) • <i>Babies should sleep on their backs in a bassinet or crib without pillows, blankets, or toys.</i> (Agree/strongly agree) • <i>Playing on phones or tablets at bedtime helps children fall asleep.</i> (Disagree/strongly disagree) <p>Managing Challenging Behavior</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Children under five learn rules best if adults use an angry voice so children take them seriously.</i> (Disagree/strongly disagree) • <i>Spanking is an effective form of discipline.</i> (Disagree/strongly disagree) <p>Screens</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Background television noise won't affect a child's learning.</i> (Disagree/strongly disagree) • <i>Children under two can learn on their own using educational apps and children's programs.</i> (Disagree/strongly disagree)
<p>Significant response change in the opposite of the expected direction</p>	<p>Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Worksheets and flashcards are a good way to help preschoolers get ready for kindergarten.</i> (Disagree/strongly disagree)

Workshop Evaluation

A total of 40 respondents completed the post-workshop survey evaluation items.⁴ The workshop evaluation consisted of five open-ended and nine 4-point Likert scale items that asked participants to rate their experience in various facets of the program. A full index of unedited open-ended responses can be found in Appendix A.

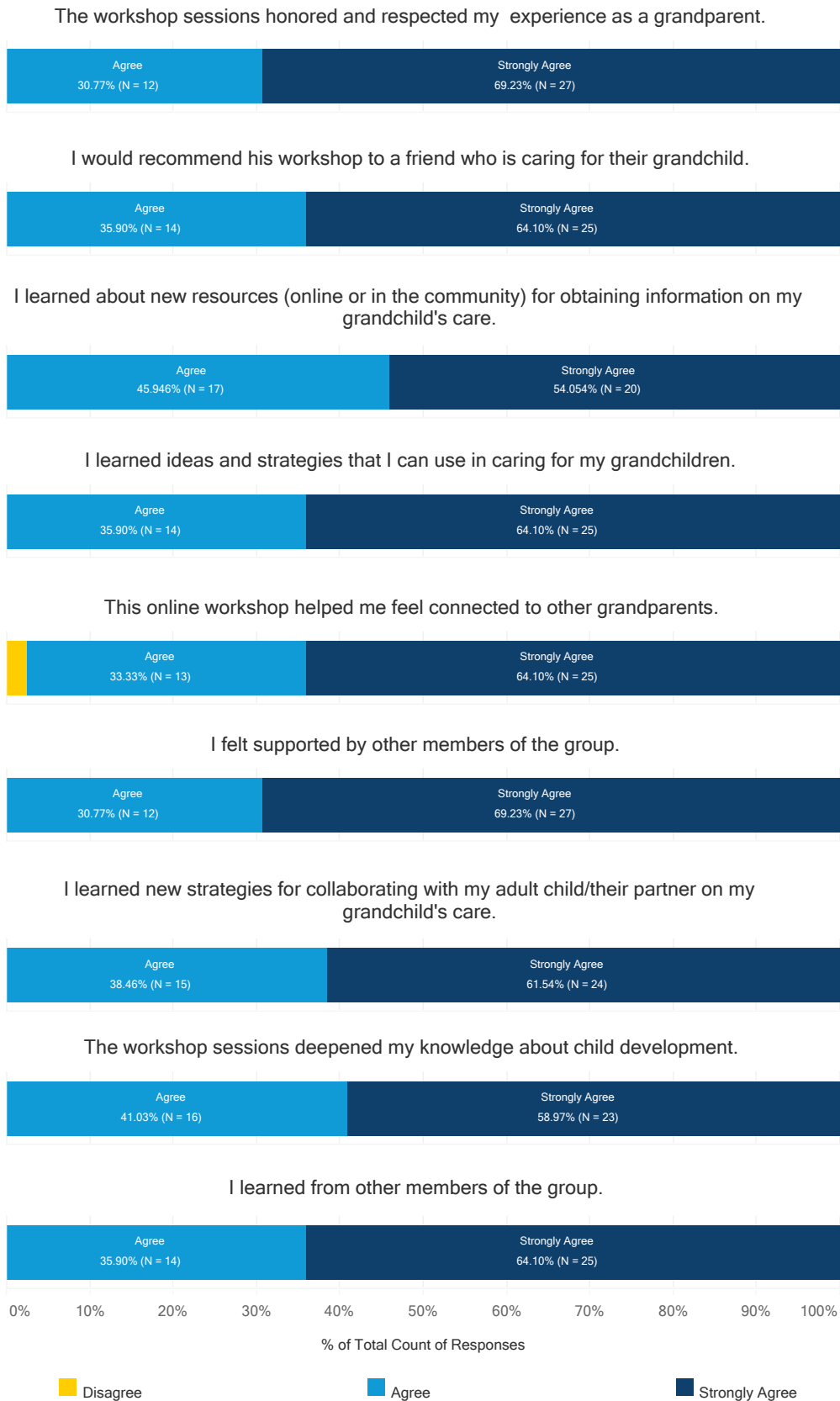
Likert Evaluation Items

Responses to the Likert evaluation items (e.g., “The workshop sessions deepened my knowledge about child development,” “I learned ideas and strategies that I can use in caring for my grandchildren,” “I learned new strategies for collaborating with my adult child on my grandchild’s care” were overwhelmingly positive. All but one of the Likert-scaled evaluation items received 100% positive feedback (“Agree” or “Strongly Agree”). Only one evaluation item, “*The online workshop helped me feel connected to other parents*” received a single response of “Disagree”.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of responses for the Likert-scale evaluation items.

⁴ Participants at one site only completed the post-workshop knowledge construct items and did not complete the evaluation items. Their responses were included in the previous section, but there is no data from those respondents in this section.

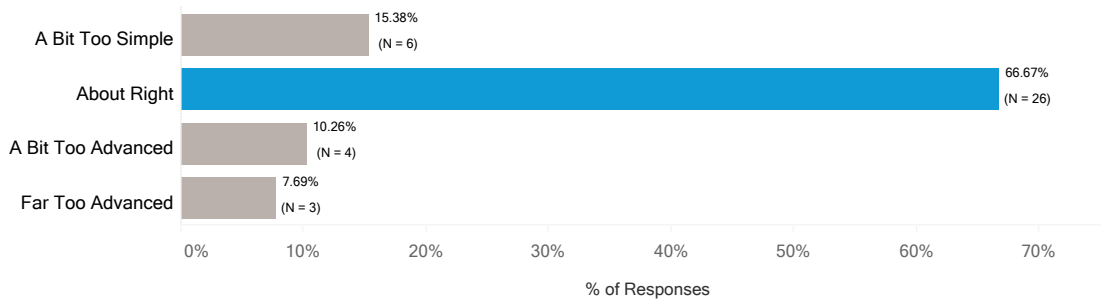
Figure 1. Likert-Scale Evaluation Item Responses



Content Level Rating Evaluation Item

There was one additional evaluation rating item within the evaluation. This item read, “*The information presented in these workshops was...*” and offered the following choices: Far Too Simple, A Bit Too Simple, About Right, A Bit Too Advanced, and Far Too Advanced. Two-thirds of the feedback (66.67%) estimated the content level to be “About Right.” The remaining feedback was evenly split between ratings of too simple (15.4%) and too advanced (17.9%). Figure 2 below shows the distribution of responses to this evaluation item.

Figure 2. The information presented was...



Open-Ended Response Items

There were five open-ended questions posed to respondents as part of the evaluation:

- What else would you like us to know about this experience? (Response Rate = 92.3%)
- What did you like best? (Response Rate = 87.2%)
- What, if anything, was missing? (Response Rate = 82.1%)
- What, if anything, would you change? (Response Rate = 82.1%)
- Are you likely to keep in touch with other members of the group? Why or why not? (Response Rate = 87.2%)

The response rate across these items was very high (86.2% overall). A full list of unedited responses can be found in Appendix A.

Conclusions

Though the results of our pre/post surveys are encouraging, we want to be cautious in interpreting this data. The number of participants who completed both surveys is small (n=36), and it's possible that responses were more likely among those who were more technologically adept or most enthusiastic about the program.

It should be noted that African Americans are slightly under-represented in this survey; two sites that had planned to participate in the pilot and that served primarily African American communities—one in Chicago, one in South Carolina--were ultimately unable to facilitate the program due to recruitment issues and a staff change. Because two sites offered Spanish-only programs, Latinas are over-represented as compared with the general population. More information is needed about how grandparents in other communities, such as Native Americans and Asian Pacific Islanders, might respond to the guidance offered in the Grand Connections program.

One of our goals in developing the program was to acknowledge the vast parenting experience that grandparents bring to the tasks of child care. We were gratified by the overwhelmingly positive response in this regard—both in terms of the strong positive response to questions like *This program honored and respected my experience . . .* and the reported connections grandparents made through the program (positive responses to *I felt connected and supported*). Open-ended feedback confirmed this theme with comments such as “It was so helpful to know that other grandparents are facing the same challenges as I am experiencing. That I am not alone.” and “There was no judgement, only acceptance and suggestions and other viewpoints of how to deal and cope.” This feedback suggests a real need for validation and community among grandparents caring for young grandchildren.

Finally, our pre/post data on objective measures (the 15 parenting constructs) illustrate knowledge acquisition in a number of areas. It's especially exciting to see significant improvements in grandparents' understanding of child development such as the development of language and mathematics skills from an early age and the very gradual acquisition of social-emotional skills like self-control. In other areas, such as safe sleep and discipline, data suggests grandparents seem to understand many the basics and are ready to ask and answer more sophisticated questions.

We are honored to serve the needs of this essential group of early childhood care providers, and welcome additional feedback from others who elect to embrace this task.

Appendix A: Open-Ended Response Data

Below are the unedited responses to the open-ended response evaluation questions (post-workshop survey). Responses are grouped by question and response language. For simple answers that are duplicated (e.g., "none," "NA," "yes," or "no"), the answer appears once with a note of how many times this response was present in the sample.

What else would you like us to know about this experience?

English Responses

- I feel a group of 10 participants or less would encourage more participation and collaborative effort than any group larger than 10, including instructors, especially when using zoom.
- I would like to see more answers, options for how to handle, certain problems, issues. For example, how to communicate more effectively with parents on their priorities of importance, for certain tasks?
- Hearing other grandparents are going through same things I've gone through!
- I think the information is great for Grandparents who are co-parenting. For Foster Kinship it needs a little more stuff geared towards our situations.
- It was a good experience. Would need more research into drug exposed children.
- It was so helpful to know that other grandparents are facing the same challenges as I am experiencing. That I am not alone. The content was very helpful.
- It provides great information
- it was wonderful
- fun (N = 3)
- i learned alot
- nothing
- good
- none (N = 2)
- i liked it
- All good for now.
- I am so grateful that this agency has developed a curriculum focusing on Grandparents and their Grandchildren. I would also like to know how to be a kind and loving grandmother to children of different cultures than myself. I married into a family that has Caucasian grandchildren, African American grandchildren, Native American Grandchildren and some that are mixed. I struggle with the different cultures and ethnicities.
- In general the classes being very "easy going" were also very informative. Even if I knew some of the info, it was a good refresher course. The newer rules showed me I still can learn.
- Very good (N = 2)

Spanish Responses (English translations in green)

- Fue interesante **It was interesting**
 - Quiero dar las gracias a todas las personas que asen posibles estas clases son de gran ayuda i aprendizaje. Gracias. **I want to thank all the people who make these classes possible, they are of great help and learning. Thank you.**
 - Me di cuenta de que mas familias viven situaciones similares a las de mi familia. **I realized that more families experience similar situations to my family.**
 - Para mi fue muy bonito aprender de otros abuelos **It was very nice for me to learn from other grandparents**
 - Me gusto mucho! **I loved it! (N = 2)**
 - me gusto la clase. **I liked the class.**
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- Me gusto conocer mas abuelos **I liked knowing more grandparents**
 - Mi gusto participar en la s clase de abuelos **My pleasure to participate in the grandparents class**
 - Fue muy divertidad. **It was a lot of fun.**
 - Me gusto mucho la clase por que nos dieron muchas ideas como ayudar a nuestros nietos **I really liked the class because they gave us many ideas how to help our grandchildren**
 - me gusto mucho. **I loved it.**
 - Fue muy Buena experiencia **It was a very good experience**

What did you like best?

English Responses

- Everyone was easy going, the material was well organized
- Hearing that we (grandparents) are performing a valuable service, and appreciate receiving help and recognition for our concerns, efforts to better handle all aspects of child care (changes, new studies show...)
- Relaxed home environment!
- There was no judgement, only acceptance and suggestions and other viewpoints of how to deal and cope.
- I love knowing that I am doing the right things
- I liked all the information.
- Learning to new positive enforcements to put in place. Not how I was raised or how I raise my children. New technicals more effective
- Old school vs new
- Being able to talk with other grand parents
- everyone (N = 2)
- group
- the toddler talking video
- handouts
- fun (N = 2)
- all
- everything
- the kids
- Learning the information, the books that were included that were age appropriate and fund for the grandchildren. I liked the interaction between the grandparents attending the group.
- I liked listening to others experiences, suggestions and thoughts. I also liked the books given to read with my grandkids.

Spanish Responses (English Translations in green)

- La informacion que dan ahi que yo desconocía **I was unaware of the information they gave us. It was new to me**
 - Compartir experiencias con otras abuelas **Share experiences with other grandmothers**
 - Me gusto mucho poder conocer y hablar con otras abuelas sobre temas importantes y darnos tips entre nosotras. **I really enjoyed being able to meet and talk with other grandmothers about important issues and give each other tips.**
 - Lo mucho que aprendí- ya que soy nueva abuela **I learned a lot since I am a new grandmother**
 - Aprendí- de otras personas **I learned from other people**
-

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- Las actividades con mis nietos/as **The activities with my grandchildren**
 - Que aprendi mas y me gustaron las actividades. **I learned more and I liked the activities.**
 - Las palticas **The talks (N = 2)**
 - Las conversaciones. **The conversations.**
 - Las conversaciones y los temas **Conversations and topics**
 - las tareas **The homework**
-

What, if anything, was missing?

English Responses

- More examples, suggestions of how to find options or giving alternatives?
- We did meet one grandmothers grand daughter! Would of been nice to meet at least one grand child of every participant!
- I don't feel at this time anything was missing.
- More information on ways to deal with foster children situations.
- More info on drug and trauma exposure.
- Nothing I can think of
- would like more info on substance abuse in children
- face to face
- none (N = 4)
- nothing was missing to me
- nothing (N = 3)
- nope
- no
- Places to find more activities for grandparents and their grandchildren
- I can't really think of anything that was missing. I only tend my grands on an off and on basis and what was learned was good.

Spanish Responses (English translations in green)

- Estuvo muy complete **It was very complete**
 - Yo creo que todo fue increÃ-ble todo me gusto mucho. **I think everything was incredible, I liked everything a lot.**
 - No creo que falto nada, las facilitadoras del taller son muy profesionales y nos brindaron informaciÃ³n muy importante, valoraron mucho lo que cada uno de los participantes tenÃ-a para aportar. **I don't think I was missing anything, the workshop facilitators are very professional and gave us very important information, they highly valued what each of the participants had to contribute.**
 - Creo que me tengo que dar mÃ¡s tiempo para compartir en familia **I think I have to give myself more time to share with my Family**
 - No faltÃ³ nada las personas organizadoras fueron muy buenas para explicar **Nothing was missing, the organizers were very good at explaining**
 - Mas clases **More classes**
 - No (N = 5) **No**
 - Nada **Nothing**
-

What, if anything, would you change?

English Responses

- Less videos of "successful/happy" cooperation between parents, and grandparents and more options for improving, resolving some of the "lack" or problems with communication.
- Continue with more zooms to keep in touch!
- I would suggest that the participants (if possible) to somewhere quiet where they will not be disturbed. To turn off all "chatter" or background noise (tv, radio) if possible.
- Some classes were short and some were too long, maybe rearrange some things so it is more balanced
- More research on drug and trauma exposure.
- To have an in person class with children present.
- Interactive activities during class
- face to face
- none (N = 4)
- all sounded great
- nothing (N = 3)
- nope
- no
- It would have been fun to meet in person, but with COVID things had to change.
- I don't think anything. This was my first class of any kind on zoom, so I have no idea if there should be anything to change.

Spanish Responses

- Asi esta perfecto **It is is perfect like that**
- Yo pienso que el tiempo que en lugar de siete clases deberÃ-an de ser mÃ-ajs ay muchas cosas que necesitamos aprender. **I think that the time. Instead of seven classes, should be more and there are many things that we need to learn**
- Nada y me gustarÃ-a que hagan mas talleres como este, es una excelente herramienta para ayudar a las generaciones de abuelos a ponernos mas al dÃ-a con la crianza de los nietos. **Nothing, I would like you to do more workshops like this one, it is an excellent tool to help generations of grandparents to get more up to date with raising their grandchildren.**
- Todas las personas fueron sÃ-per amables **All the people were super nice**
- Nada **Nothing (N = 2)**
- Que tu vieramos mas clases **That we have more classes**
- No (N = 3) **No**
- Que dure mas semanas **That we had extended to more weeks**
- Tener mas clases. **Have more classes.**

Are you likely to keep in touch with other members of the group? Why or why not?

English Responses

- If someone reaches out to me, yes
- Whether instructors, other participants, or websites, or ways to seek solutions, I take comfort from the small supportive group this was and the options they can provide.
- I think it is a very good idea I need all the help i can get!
- I would like to keep in touch, to know how everyone is doing and if they find ways to deal with some of the personal situations that were brought up during the course.
- I think an in person class would have made this more personal.
- No. I don't feel the need.
- Yes (N = 8)
- no. we never tried.
- we are
- we already are
- yes we will
- yes it was nice to talk
- yep
- I am sure that we will all meet again.
- Not really. Unless there are other classes we can take. Just didn't have the opportunity to get to know them on a more personal level.

Spanish Responses

- Si seguire en contacto porque es interesante y de mucha ayuda saber de experiencias y tratar otras alternativas. **Yes, I will keep in touch because it is interesting and very helpful to know about experiences and try other alternatives.**
- Si me gustar a por que me es importante compartir experiencias con otras abuelas gracias por todo. **Yes, I would like because it is important for me to share experiences with other grandmothers, thank you for everything.**
- Si quiero seguir en contacto con el grupo pienso que podemos seguir apoy ndonos y este taller nos dio la oportunidad de conocernos y tenemos mucho que aprender las u as de las otras y se que podemos seguir creciendo juntas. **Yes, I want to keep in touch with the group. I think we can continue to support each other and this workshop gave us the opportunity to get to know each other and we have a lot to learn from each other and I know that we can continue to grow together.**
- Me encantar a que me siguieran tomando en cuenta me gusta aprender! **I would love to be taken into account because I like to learn!**
- Si por qu  me gustar a seguir aprendiendo y sobre todo ay consejos y ay ayuda con materiales **Yes, I would like to continue learning and above all, the advice and the help with many materials**
- muchas gracias muy amables todas organizadoras Dios les bendiga **Thank you very kind all the organizers, God bless you**
- claro **Sure**
- si **Yes (N = 4)**
- Ojala que si **Hopefully yes**
- tal vez **Maybe**