GSA Webinar Series

Translating Basic Research on the Aging Family to Caregiving Intervention

SUPPORTED BY THE GSA INNOVATION FUND: THE GENERATIVITY EFFECT
Webinar Panel

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Publishes innovative, conceptually sound, methodologically rigorous research on aging and the life course that has high potential for translating scientific knowledge to improve older adults’ health, functioning, and well-being.

Studies may present results from community, clinical, or laboratory settings and should focus on issues directly relevant to aging and the life course. Journal content reflects the wide-ranging research interests of GSA members.

Types of studies may include: (a) validation of novel conceptual or theoretical models; (b) assessment of factors that influence older adults’ health, functioning, and well-being; (c) evaluation of interventions, approaches, or policies; (d) implementation of innovative research methods, including new techniques, devices, evaluation methods, or protocols; (e) interdisciplinary research that transfers concepts, methodologies, and interventions from other fields to studies of aging and the life course; and (f) modeling and simulations that explore factors and processes that affect outcomes during aging and the life course.

Contributions are welcome from scholars from many fields, including technology, engineering, architecture, economics, business, law, political science and public policy, education, public health, social and psychological sciences, biomedical and health sciences, and the humanities and arts.
Background on Caregiving
Webinar Overview

- Translational Research: Moving Basic Science into Practice
- Families in Later Life: Fertile Ground for Translation
- Future Directions
Translational Research

- Systematic translation of research findings into the development of innovative interventions that ultimately improve real-world practices

- From interventions and practices back to basic research
Translational Research: Moving Basic Science into Practice

Too-distant relationship between fundamental scientific discoveries in the field of aging and the life course on the one hand, and attempts to address the challenges of later life on the other.

Basic research

Practice
Families in Later Life: Fertile Ground for Translation

- Over the past several decades, interest has increased in individuals caring for older family members

- Family caregivers are at elevated risk of a number of negative outcomes including: psychological distress, physical illness, and economic strain
Caregiver Interventions

- Provide education, counseling, and concrete services based on clinical observation or applied research about client needs
- Derived from studies of caregiver stress and burden
- Empirically based
- Virtually no attempts to use findings from *basic research* to inspire and design empirically based interventions
Translational Research

Basic Research

Practice

The Gerontological Society of America
Within-Family Differences: A New Paradigm for Understanding Parent-Child Relations in Later Life

- The study of within-family differences is grounded in classic theories of social interaction in both sociology and psychology.

- The relationship between a parent and any one of his or her children is likely to be affected by the parent’s relationships with other children in the family.

- Within-family approaches have been used by developmental psychologists to demonstrate differences in parent-child relations in families in the early years.

- Growing body of research examining within-family differences in families later in life.
Within-Family Differences: A New Paradigm for Understanding Parent-Child Relations in Later Life
Within-Family Differences in Later Life
Summary of Findings

Common and enduring
- Compelling evidence of parent’s favoritism (or disfavoritism) in terms of relationship quality, evaluation of adult children, and exchanges of support

Consequential
- Negatively impacts sibling relationships
- Detrimental effects on psychological well-being
Examples of How Research on Within-Family Differences Can Be Applied to Caregiving Interventions

- Who Cares? Within-Family Differences in Caregiver Selection
- Family-Based Caregiving Intervention: Considering the Family as a Unit
- Incorporating Within-Family Differences in Family Therapy
- Within-Family Differences Perspectives as a “Sensitizing Concept”
Who Cares? Within-Family Differences in Caregiver Selection

Summary of Findings

- How do particular offspring become the primary caregivers while other siblings do not?

- We asked each mother to select which of her children would be most likely to care for her on a day-to-day basis if she became ill or disabled; we also asked mothers which of their children they would prefer to have care for them.

- Mothers were most likely to select children on the basis of gender similarity, perceived similarity in values, and degree of emotional closeness.
Mothers expressed clear preferences and expectations for future caregivers.

These preferences have implications for mothers’ well-being.

Professionals should assess older parents’ expectations as well as those of adult children.

These discussions should happen prior to the onset of care needs.

Develop ways in which families can follow an older parents’ preferences.
Most previous caregiving studies and interventions have focused exclusively on either the primary caregiver or the caregiving dyad (i.e., the care recipient and one caregiver).

Caregiving is usually a “family affair” negotiated among siblings.

Parents’ relationships with other children have implications for the overall caregiving experience.
Professionals who work with older adults should consider the larger family unit beyond the primary caregiver because parents’ relationships with other children have implications for the overall caregiving experience.

Clinicians should consider the differing demands of older adults’ offspring.

Understanding differential support patterns among adult children can be useful in determining the best use of older parents’ resources.
Family therapy approaches are growing for caregivers.

Family therapists are often trained to see the family as an “emotional unit”.

Within-family differences appear to intensify the consequences of caregiving.

Parents’ relationships with other children have implications for the overall caregiving experience.
Family therapists should assess systematically long-standing patterns of parental preferences and differential treatment.

Therapists could incorporate questions that provide parents and adult children with an opportunity to describe the perceptions of parental differential treatment.

Therapists should be aware of the detrimental consequences of parental differential treatment.
Sensitizing concepts provide a general frame of reference and point toward enlightening lines of inquiry.

Sensitizing concepts provide guidance in approaching a particular phenomenon.

Within-family differences may serve as a sensitizing concept for professionals and practitioners.

Summary of Findings

Within-Family Differences Perspectives as a “Sensitizing Concept”
Researchers and clinicians frequently encounter typical responses when asking older parents about the quality of relationships with their children: “I get along with all my children” or “They’re all good kids”.

Influenced by within-family differences as a sensitizing concept, a practitioner would continue the dialogue by asking detailed questions about the quality of the relationship with each individual child.
Future Directions: Caregiving Interventions

- Basic research can be applied to interventions to improve the intergenerational caregiving experience.

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<th>Who Cares? Within-Family Differences in Caregiver Selection</th>
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Future Directions: Evaluation

- Within-family perspectives also have implications for the evaluation of caregiving interventions.

- Evidence for current evaluations is mixed: relatively small number of studies have employed adequate research designs (e.g., randomized, controlled design methodology and adequately powered samples).

- Evaluators should take advantage of multilevel modeling techniques to assess the outcomes of multiple family members.

- Evaluators should consider collecting qualitative data from parents and adult children to capture multiple family members’ perspectives and experiences.
Future Directions: Researcher-Practitioner Collaboration

- Practitioners, who are the eventual end-users of research, should be engaged as partners in establishing research priorities.

- Benefit to using methods that are now available to facilitate researcher-practitioner collaboration (e.g., community-based participatory research and consensus-building methods).

- Create a better marriage of science and service that leads to more creative and effective intervention designs.
Innovation in Aging
An Interdisciplinary Open Access Journal of GSA

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Thank you!

- Today’s webinar will be posted on GSA’s YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/user/TheGerontologicalSoc
Clarifying Questions?

- We will not be using the “raise hand” feature today
- Please use the “questions” feature accessible on the right side of your screen
- If we do not get to all of the questions today, we will email responses after the webinar
Webinar Evaluation

In an effort for continual improvement, we would like to hear your thoughts. Please provide feedback by clicking the survey link at the end of the webinar.

Thank you again and we hope you enjoyed the program!
Thank You

GSA: Advancing Innovation in Aging

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