

**Boom or Bust? Content Analysis of Articles on Aging in  
National Council on Family Relations Publications**

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**ABSTRACT.** Despite significant aging within the United States population, there is a concern that research on aging has not developed at a similar pace. In this content analysis we examine the extent to which National Council on Family Relations' (NCFR) publications address aging and older adults' family relationships over the last 20 years. On average, 9% of NCFR articles are on aging and family life issues with variations by year and type of publication. Most articles address the internal dynamics of older persons' family relationships; fewer articles consider the bidirectional relationship between older persons and other social institutions. Older adults or family members are primary sources of information on aging and family ties in NCFR publications. The study proposes critical next steps toward increasing the presence of older adults and their family relationships in NCFR publications.

*Keywords:* Content analysis, aging, gerontology, family science

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### **Boom or Bust? Content Analysis of Articles on Aging in National Council on Family Relations Publications**

Political and scholarly interest in aging issues has gained momentum over the past several decades as countries around the world experience population aging. Between 2015 and 2050, the world's population of adults aged 60 and older is forecasted to double, from 901 million to 2.1 billion, with the population of adults aged 80 and older expected to triple (United Nations, 2015). In the United States, approximately 49.2 million or 15% of Americans are currently aged 65 and older (Administration for Community Living & Administration on Aging, 2018). This age group is expected to increase to 21% of the United States population by 2050 (Colby & Ortman, 2014; United Nations, 2015). Longer life expectancies and the large size of the baby boomer cohort raise the questions of how older adults will contribute to social and economic development, how the health needs of older adults will be met, and what overall impact aging populations will have on aging individuals, their families, and societies.

Unfortunately, the rapid growth of aging populations has not been matched with the same speed of exploration to address the needs and opportunities of later life (Raposo & Carstensen, 2015). One barrier to moving this field of inquiry forward stems from ageism. Ageism is intentional and unintentional discrimination against individuals based on their age, which can occur at personal, institutional, and societal levels (International Longevity Center, 2006). In societies that reward youthfulness, older adults are implicitly and explicitly viewed negatively and as less important than their younger counterparts (International Longevity Center, 2006; Robbins, 2015). Some argue that the aging process remains an underexplored topic because "fear of deterioration, dementia, and dependency is powerful" (International Longevity Center, 2006, p. 17). Ageism contributes to decreased funding for research on and programs for older adults (Blancato & Ponder, 2015), the exclusion of older adults from research studies (Gupta, Shekhar, & O'Mahoney, 2013; Raposo & Carstensen, 2015), a focus on negative outcomes of aging (Raposo & Carstensen, 2015), and fewer students pursuing aging-related careers (Bardach & Rowles, 2012; Lun, 2012; Olson, 2007). As a result of these factors, there is low enrollment in and reduced availability of curricula or programs that prepare future generations of professionals (e.g., doctors, nurses, social workers, engineers, financial experts, therapists, policymakers, and researchers) for meeting the needs of older persons.

Another barrier to the study of aging is that only select disciplines, such as psychology and medicine, currently lead this area of inquiry (Alkema & Alley, 2006). Family scientists, however, are equipped to address diverse needs of and opportunities for older adults. In support of a family science lens, research shows that social connections (i.e., relationships with spouses, children, or friends) have significant impacts on health in later life, often more than do other indicators of health such as nutrition and physical exercise (Cornwell & Waite, 2009; Umberson & Montez, 2010). Furthermore, all aging occurs in contexts of complex intragenerational and intergenerational family relationships across the life course (Connidis & Barnett, 2019). For example, approximately 80% of assistance to adults aged 50 and older is provided by family caregivers (e.g., spouses and adult children), representing 14% of the United States' population (National Alliance for Caregiving & AARP, 2015). This informal, unpaid care is valued at \$470 billion and exceeds the amount spent on formal, paid care (AARP Public Policy Institute, 2015). Most older parents are financially assisting their adult children and almost half provide unpaid

child care to their grandchildren (Pew Research Center, 2015). Older adults and their families are also navigating a wide range of complex issues such as retirement, changes in physical and psychological health, health care accessibility and affordability, inheritance planning, and dynamic interpersonal relationships.

Another strength of a family science lens is that it provides an opportunity to understand aging from multiple perspectives, such as those of older adults and their spouses, partners, siblings, children, grandchildren, extended relatives, and fictive kin. These sources of information influence our understanding of aging and family life because perspectives differ within and across family members and generations. For example, a middle-generation adult's reports on how much support they receive from their older parents differ from how much an older parent reports giving to their adult children (Kim, Zarit, Birditt, & Fingerman, 2014; Lin & Wu, 2018; Mandemakers & Dykstra, 2008). Furthermore, research that extends beyond individual reports of aging to dyadic- or family-level perspectives has potential to offer a more accurate, nuanced picture of aging and family ties (Fingerman, Pillemer, Silverstein, & Sutor, 2012; Kim et al., 2014; Sayer & Klute, 2005; Sutor et al., 2018).

Despite these strengths of using a family lens on aging, the extent to which the family science field advances knowledge on pertinent aging issues is unclear. Silverstein and Giarrusso (2010) completed a decade review (2000-2009) of select scholarly articles on aging and family life from a range of family science and social gerontology peer-reviewed journals. Their results highlighted four primary content areas that were the focus of this body of literature: (a) emotional characteristics of families (e.g., solidarity and ambivalence), (b) diverse family formations (e.g., cohabitation and childlessness), (c) interdependent family relationships (e.g., grandparenting and intergenerational resource exchanges), and (d) caregiving. Theoretical and methodological limitations were also summarized. This broad review provides critical insights into the array of knowledge produced on the topic of aging and families and on how to advance future research. What remains unclear, however, is an understanding of family scientists' involvement in these endeavors and areas of aging and family life included in or excluded from published family science studies.

As the leading family science organization, it is important for the National Council on Family Relations (NCFR) to assess the role it plays in representing older adults and their families. Members of this organization include family scientists, educators, practitioners, and policy makers who look to NCFR for the most up-to-date information on issues affecting families across the life course (NCFR, 2016). A content analysis of articles on aging issues found in premier NCFR publications will bring attention to and increase dialogue about the breadth of research on aging issues the family science field produces. Three research questions guided this investigation:

1. To what extent have articles in NCFR publications addressed aging issues?
2. What areas of family life are most and least represented by the aging literature in NCFR publications?
3. Who are the informants on aging issues in NCFR publications?

## Methods

### Collection Procedure

This content analysis was guided by procedures used in previous content analyses in the family science field (Blumer, Green, Knowles, & Williams, 2012; Blumer, Hertlein, Allen, & Smith, 2014). To answer the first research question, we started by restricting our search to articles from 1996 through 2016 because baby boomers started turning 50 years of age in 1996 and 65 years of age in 2011 (Colby & Ortman, 2014). This 20-year span provides a unique opportunity to assess how NCFR and its members have responded to this aging cohort over time. We then selected four NCFR publications to analyze: *Journal of Marriage and Family* (JMF), *Family Relations: Interdisciplinary Journal of Applied Family Studies* (FR), *Journal of Family Theory and Review* (JFTR), and *Family Focus* (FF) articles in the *NCFR Report Magazine*. The first three publications are peer-reviewed scholarly journals; the fourth is a quarterly magazine. The JFTR was first published in 2009 and the NCFR Report Magazine did not start publishing FF articles until 2001; therefore, we analyzed these publications beginning with their available start dates, through 2016. The following issues of NCFR Report Magazine were not available on the NCFR website or from NCFR in other formats at the time of data collection and were not included in the analysis: 2001(4), 2005(2), 2008(3), 2015(4). NCFR conference proceedings were not included in the analysis because their abstracts did not consistently provide adequate information to determine if the conference session or individual presentations addressed older persons and their family relationships.

To answer the first research question, we conducted independent searches to collect articles focused on aging. While we had anticipated searching solely for articles by keywords such as *aging*, *aged*, *elderly*, *late adulthood*, *gerontology*, and *older adults*, it became apparent early on that not all articles on older adults and aging used these terms to identify their work. As a result, important aging-focused articles were being missed. Therefore, along with these keywords, we expanded our search to encompass any articles focused primarily on adults 65 years of age or older and included a range of keywords. For empirical articles, we included articles whose samples had a mean age of 65 and older. Empirical articles were excluded if they (a) did not use one of the above aging keywords and (b) had an average participant sample age younger than 65. For content or literature review articles, we included articles that stated their age focus was older adults, which often meant the articles focused on topics and used subject keywords such as *grandparenting*, *caregiving*, and *parent-adult child relationships*. We excluded articles that did not use any of the above keywords for aging and that did not clearly focus on older adults and their family relationships in their titles, keywords, and abstracts. Two independent searches of each publication were completed to ensure reliability and validity of the selection process. Reviewers of each publication completed their searches independently and then met to discuss their selections to verify agreement was met. While more time-intensive, this proved to be a more inclusive approach and ensured inclusion of all articles involving older adults ages 65 and older.

All scholarly articles from JMF, FR, and JFTR, and FF articles between 1996 and 2016 that met the above criteria were included. Excluded articles were editorials, book reviews, or general publication components such as calls for papers, memorial pieces, or edition introductions. Of the 3,600 articles reviewed, 322 (8.94%) remained after application of

exclusion criteria. A reference list of these articles on aging and family life is available from the authors on request.

### Sorting Process

The first-order and second-order sort answer the second research question regarding areas of family life most and least represented in NCFR publications. The first-order sort involved aligning each article on aging with one or more of the ten family life education (FLE) content areas (NCFR, 2014): (a) families and individuals in societal contexts, (b) internal dynamics of families, (c) human growth and development across the lifespan, (d) human sexuality, (e) interpersonal relationships, (f) family resource management, (g) parent education and guidance, (h) family law and public policy, (i) professional ethics and practice, and (h) family life education methodology. Two of the authors completed this sort independently and then met to reach consensus. A third author served as independent reviewer of the first-order sort and to further ensure reliability and validity of the sorting process. The second-order sort involved thematic analysis of aging articles within each FLE content area. Two authors independently categorized the articles into themed categories and met with a third author to reach consensus.

The third research question was answered with the third-order sort, which categorized articles based on the informant(s) of the information. Each article was placed into one of five categories: (a) older adult, (b) family member, (c) intragenerational, (d) intergenerational, and (e) multigenerational. *Older adult* articles included adults aged 65 and older and were about their experiences with aging (e.g., older adult reporting on dating in later life) or their perspectives on lived experiences of younger generations (e.g., grandparent reporting on their grandchildren). *Family member* articles focused on younger generations' perspectives on adults aged 65 and older (e.g., middle generation reporting on resources received from parents) or younger generations' perspectives on their own experiences in relationship to an older adult (e.g., elder care with focus on the adult child caregiver). *Intragenerational* articles included data from an older adult and another family member from within the same generation, such as a spouse, partner, or sibling. *Intergenerational* articles included perspectives from an older adult and another family member from a different generation such as their child, grandchild, niece or nephew. *Multigenerational* articles included perspectives from three or more generations such as an older adult, child, and grandchild.

## Results

### Articles on Aging in NCFR Publications

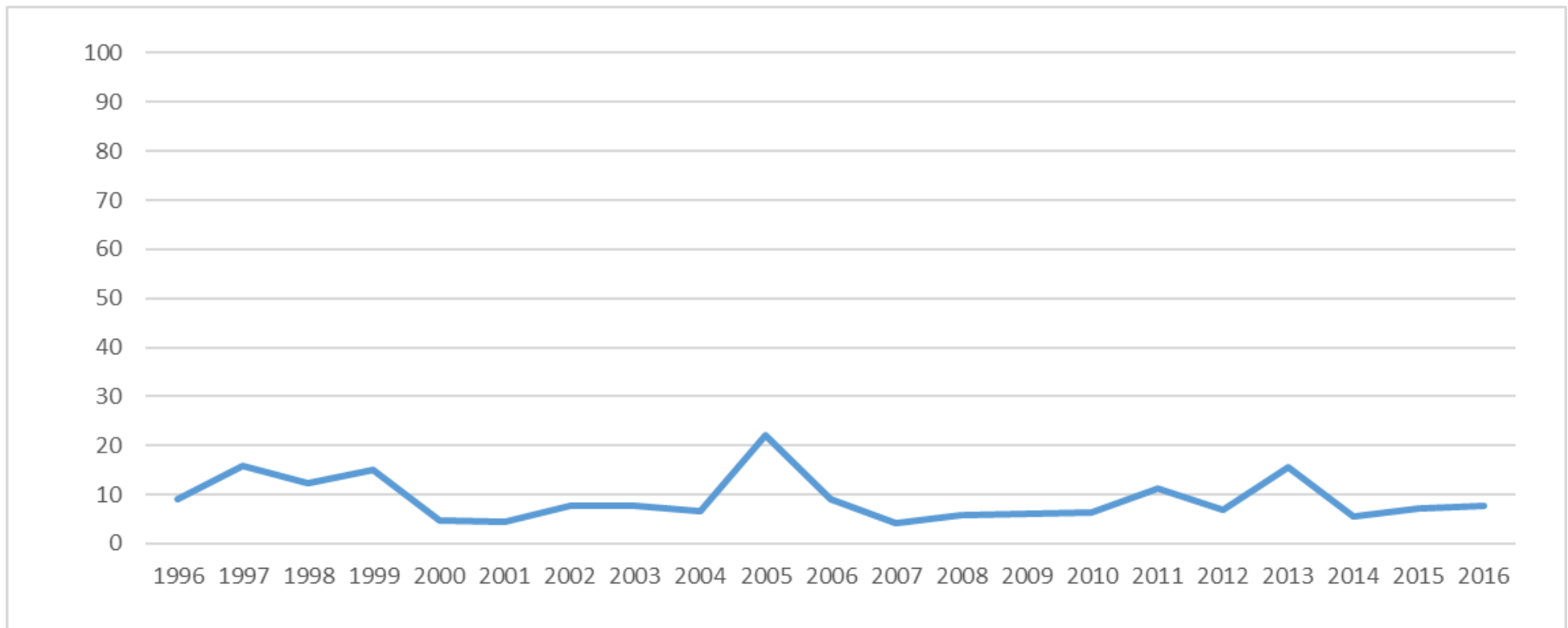
From 1996 to 2016, an average of 9% of articles published in NCFR publications were on aging issues (see Table 1). As Figure 1 illustrates, the total percentage of articles on aging varied over the 20-year time frame, with a low of 4% in 2007 and a high of 22% in 2005. On average, *Family Focus* published the most articles on aging (10%) followed by JMF (9%) and FR (9%), and JFTR (1%; see Table 1). Over the 20-year time frame, the percentage of articles on aging ranged from 2% to 24% for JMF, 0% to 31% for FR, 0% to 6% in JFTR, and 0% to 72% for FF. While there is a slight trend towards publishing more articles on aging over time in JMF, there is an opposite trend in FR and FF. JFTR has published only one article on aging since its inception.

Table 1  
*Number and Percent of Articles on Aging in NCFR Publications, 1996-2016*

Year	Journal of Marriage and Family			Family Relations			Journal of Family Theory and Review			Family Focus			All Journals Combined		
	Total Articles	Articles on Aging	% Aging Articles	Total Articles	Articles on Aging	% Aging Articles	Total Articles	Articles on Aging	% Aging Articles	Total Articles	Articles on Aging	% Aging Articles	Total # of Articles	Articles on Aging	% Aging Articles
1996	80	8	10.00	51	4	7.84	--	--	--	--	--	--	131	12	9.16
1997	72	5	6.94	42	13	30.95	--	--	--	--	--	--	114	18	15.78
1998	74	10	13.51	47	5	10.64	--	--	--	--	--	--	121	15	12.39
1999	82	6	7.32	45	13	28.89	--	--	--	--	--	--	127	19	14.96
2000	83	2	2.41	47	4	8.51	--	--	--	--	--	--	130	6	4.61
2001	87	2	2.30	42	4	9.52	--	--	--	47	2	4.26	176	8	4.54
2002	85	7	8.24	39	5	12.82	--	--	--	46	1	2.17	170	13	7.64
2003	75	8	10.67	41	2	4.89	--	--	--	53	3	5.66	169	13	7.69
2004	95	8	8.42	57	2	3.51	--	--	--	56	4	7.14	208	14	6.73
2005	95	3	3.16	49	5	10.20	--	--	--	51	34	66.67	195	42	21.54
2006	92	5	5.43	51	11	21.57	--	--	--	44	1	2.28	187	17	9.09
2007	89	3	3.37	40	3	7.50	--	--	--	39	1	2.56	168	7	4.16
2008	97	7	7.21	50	3	6.00	--	--	--	25	0	0.00	172	10	5.81
2009	88	7	7.95	48	3	6.25	6	0	0.00	41	1	2.44	183	11	6.01
2010	90	8	8.89	46	5	10.87	19	0	0.00	48	0	0.00	203	13	6.40
2011	79	7	8.86	47	3	6.38	11	0	0.00	33	9	27.27	170	19	11.17
2012	78	11	14.10	63	3	4.76	20	0	0.00	44	0	0.00	205	14	6.82
2013	87	21	24.14	60	1	1.67	18	1	0.06	41	9	21.95	206	32	15.53

2014	68	9	13.24	51	0	0.00	19	0	0.00	41	1	2.43	179	10	5.58
2015	81	11	13.58	49	0	0.00	20	0	0.00	31	2	6.45	181	13	7.18
2016	89	13	14.61	49	3	6.12	16	0	0.00	51	0	0.00	205	16	7.80
TOTAL	1766	161	9.12	1014	92	9.07	129	1	1.00	691	68	9.84	3600	322	8.94

Figure 1  
*Percent of Articles on Aging, 1996-2016*



**Most and Least Represented Areas of Family Life**

Content of the 322 articles on aging focused on at least one of the ten Family Life Education (FLE) Content Areas (see Table 2). About 34% of all articles on aging applied to more than one FLE category; 2% applied to three of the FLE content areas. Across publications, most articles on aging represented internal dynamics of families (59%) and interpersonal relationships (15%), followed by families and individuals in societal contexts (7%), parent education and guidance (6%), family resource management (5%), human growth and development across the lifespan (4%), family life education and methodology (2%), family law and public policy (2%), and human sexuality (0.31%). No articles on aging represented the FLE category of professional ethics and practice. As Table 2 indicates, similar patterns existed for each NCFR publication. FR articles on aging represented 8 FLE content areas, followed by 7 in FF, 6 in JMF, and 1 in JFTR.

Table 2  
*Number and Percentage of Articles on Aging in CFLE Content Areas*

CFLE Content Areas	Total (n = 322)		JMF (n = 161)		FR (n = 92)		JFTR (n = 1)		FF (n = 68)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
1. Families and individuals in societal contexts	22	6.83	11	6.83	3	3.26	0	0.00	8	11.76
2. Internal dynamics of families	188	58.37	91	56.52	65	70.65	1	100.00	31	45.59
3. Human growth/development across the lifespan	13	4.04	5	3.12	1	1.09	0	0.00	7	10.29
4. Human sexuality	1	0.31	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	1.47
5. Interpersonal relationships	49	15.22	25	15.53	10	10.87	0	0.00	14	20.59
6. Family resource management	17	5.28	13	8.07	4	4.35	0	0.00	0	0.00
7. Parent education and guidance	19	5.90	16	9.94	3	3.26	0	0.00	0	0.00
8. Family law and public policy	6	1.86	0	0.00	2	2.17	0	0.00	4	5.88
9. Professional ethics and practice	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
10. Family life education and methodology	7	2.17	0	0.00	4	4.35	0	0.00	3	4.41

To support these FLE content area findings, an overview of article topics for each FLE category appears in Table 3. NCFR publications have considered a wide range of internal and interpersonal dynamics of relationships in later life. Other FLE content areas involving external contexts that impact older adults and their family relationships (e.g., education, policy, law and professional ethics) are fewer in number and more limited in breadth of topics.



Table 3  
*List of Aging Article Topics by FLE Category*

CFLE Content Areas	Article Topics
1. Families and individuals in societal contexts (n = 22; 7%)	Class, status, and power Culture and acculturation Demographic trends Diversity Economics and finances Family caregiving Gender differences Geriatric services Research methodology Work and retirement
2. Internal dynamics of families (n = 188; 59%)	Abuse and neglect Caregiving and support Dementia and Alzheimer’s disease Parent-child relationships Co-residence, family structure, and living arrangements Death and bereavement Decision-making Disabilities Divorce, remarriage, and stepfamilies Filial responsibility Gender differences Grandparent-grandchild relationships Health and wellbeing Marriage Mental illness and addiction Multigenerational relationships Parent-child relations Relationship quality Retirement Sibling relationships Stress, conflict, and transitions Widowhood
3. Human growth/development across the lifespan (n = 13; 4%)	Aging Functional change Parenthood
4. Human sexuality (n = 1; .31%)	Health of sexual minorities

5. Interpersonal relationships (n = 49; 15%)	Abuse and neglect Ambivalence Cohabitation and Living Apart Together Grandparent-grandchild relationships Health and wellbeing Love, romance, intimacy Marriage Multigenerational relationships Parenting Siblings Social support Widowhood
6. Family resource management (n = 17; 5%)	Filial responsibility Racial, ethnic, and gender differences Reciprocity Support exchanges (financial, social, tangible)
7. Parent education and guidance ((n = 19; 6%)	Ambivalence Grandparent-grandchild relationships In-law relationships Parent-child relationships
8. Family law and public policy (n = 6; 2%)	Eldercare programs and policy Inheritance
9. Professional ethics and practice (n = 0; 0%)	--
10. Family life education and methodology (n = 7; 2%)	Attendance Community resources Education techniques Needs assessments

**Informants of Aging Issues**

The third and final research question asked about who is reporting on aging issues in NCFR publications. As Table 4 indicates, informants are first and foremost older adults aged 65 and older (44%) followed by family members (30%) such as adult children and grandchildren. Fewer articles incorporated intragenerational (12%), intergenerational (9%), and multigenerational (6%) perspectives. These trends were consistent from 1996 through 2016 and for most publications. FF articles were the only exception, with most articles including the perspective of older adults (44%) followed by intergenerational perspectives (21%), family

members only (13%), intragenerational perspectives (13%), and multigenerational perspectives (9%).

Table 4  
*Informants of Aging Issues in NCFR Articles on Aging, 1996-2016*

	JMF (n = 161)		FR (n = 92)		JFTR (n = 1)		FF (n = 68)		Total (n = 322)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Older adult	67	41.61	42	45.65	1	100.00	30	44.12	140	43.48
Family member	60	37.27	26	28.26	0	0.00	9	13.24	95	29.50
Intragenerational	16	9.94	13	14.13	0	0.00	9	13.24	38	11.80
Intergenerational	7	4.35	8	8.70	0	0.00	14	20.59	29	9.01
Multigenerational	11	6.83	3	3.26	0	0.00	6	8.82	20	6.21

**Discussion**

This content analysis provided an overview of the extent to which NCFR publications addressed older adults and their family relationships over the last two decades. Similar to the general exploration of aging (Raposo & Carstensen, 2015), the numbers of articles on aging and family life in NCFR publications did not increase in response to longer life expectancies and the aging of the baby boom generation. Instead, there was variability in the numbers of articles on aging published over the last 20 years. While some publications such as *Journal of Marriage and Family* revealed a promising increase in aging-related articles over time, other publications such as *Family Relations* and *Family Focus* experienced a decline. *Journal of Family Theory and Review* had no trend in publishing aging and family life articles since its inception in 2009.

There are three explanations of why aging and family life articles in NCFR publications have been varied and oftentimes limited. First, other family science and gerontological journals such as *Family Science Review*, *Journal of Family Issues*, and *Journals of Gerontology: Psychological and Social Sciences* also publish on aging and family life topics (Connidis & Barnett, 2019; Silverstein and Giarrusso, 2010). This means family scientists are publishing their aging related work in NCFR journals as well as in journals external to NCFR, potentially reducing the presence of aging and family life articles in NCFR publications. Articles on relationships of persons younger than 65, however, are also published in external journals, and current study findings indicated this did not limit their coverage in NCFR publications. About

91% of articles in NCFR publications over the last two decades focused on individuals younger than 65 and their family life issues. As the premier family science organization, NCFR should consider why studies on aging and older adults' relationships are being published elsewhere. Is it because these articles are a better fit for other publications, or are there other reasons within NCFR's purview?

A second explanation is that aging is just one of many topics covered in NCFR publications and there is finite space in each publication. Some may suggest that an average of 9% of articles on older adults and their relationships over the last 20 years is relatively high, given the breadth of NCFR publication topics. The study of aging and family life issues has certainly made significant progress over the last two decades (Connidis & Barnett, 2019; Silverstein & Giarrusso, 2010). There are several reasons, however, to view 9% of articles on aging in NCFR publications as relatively low. First, older adults currently make up more than 9% of the population in the United States as well as worldwide, a percentage that is expected to increase (Colby & Ortman, 2014; United Nations, 2015). Our research should keep pace with shifting demographics and life experiences of individuals and families if we aim to represent their relationships accurately (Connidis & Barnett, 2019). Second, if late adulthood is, according to most developmentalists, the last of four developmental stages, equal representation of family relationships across the lifespan should lead to approximately 25% of NCFR publications on family relationships of older persons. This percentage was only met or exceeded by *Family Relations* in 1997 and 1999 and by *NCFR Report* in 2005 and 2011. Finally, the percentage of articles on aging reported in this study is generous, because we used a broad, inclusive definition of articles on aging. Restricting our analysis to articles that used *aging*, *aged*, or *gerontology* as keywords would have further reduced the percentage of articles on aging published within the study's time frame.

A third explanation of why aging and family life articles in NCFR publications have been varied and often limited involves ageism. Ageism affects the study of aging in other fields (Bardach & Rowles, 2012; Gupta, Shekhar, & O'Mahoney, 2013; Lun, 2012; Olson, 2007; Raposo & Carstensen, 2015). The family science field is no exception. Ageism is deeply ingrained in our society, influencing personal and institutional attitudes and behaviors toward older adults and the aging process (International Longevity Center, 2006). Ageism can lead to more family scientists choosing to study issues impacting younger versus older family members. If few family scientists study aging and family life issues, then few articles on these issues will be published. Ageism also brings into question whether manuscripts on aging and family life submitted to NCFR have an increased likelihood of being dismissed in the peer-review and editorial processes. Similar to other content analyses in the family science field (Blumer et al., 2012), this study was unable to determine the degree of discrimination, specifically ageism, in the submission and acceptance process. However, the low number of articles on aging and family relationships of older adults over the last 20 years calls for NCFR to carefully consider whether unintentional or intentional ageism among editors, reviewers, and other members limits the representation of older adults as active, involved family members in scholarly literature.

Whether aging and family life articles are published in NCFR publications or elsewhere, most articles represent internal dynamics of relationships in later life (Connidis, 2010; Silverstein & Giarrusso, 2010). Examples of such topics in this study include caregiving, parenting,

grandparenting, and marital status transitions. One exception to this pattern was human sexuality in later life covered by only one article. These findings do not indicate that research on internal dynamics of older adults' family ties is saturated. Connidis (2010) and Silverstein and Giarrusso (2010) emphasize that there continues to be a range of understudied aspects of older persons' intimate and intergenerational relationships, and a need for more research using diverse conceptual frameworks and methodologies. By contrast, this study calls attention to additional areas of aging and family life that remain relatively unexplored by articles in NCFR publications.

One underrepresented area involves how older adults and their family members navigate major social institutions such as government, religion, education, healthcare, and the economy. This suggests that NCFR and family scientists have not yet capitalized on what a family science lens has to offer the study of aging. Using relational and systemic lenses, family scientists are readily equipped with tools necessary for examining the diverse ways that older adults and their family members influence institutions and, in turn, how their relationships are influenced by institutions (Bengtson, Acock, Allen, Dilworth-Anderson, & Klein, 2006). This includes the bidirectional dynamics between micro-, meso-, and macro-level influences (Connidis, 2014; Herlofson & Hagestad, 2011). Family life educators are also experts in examining how to best provide services to and meet needs of families, including older adults, in a range of contexts and settings (NCFR, 2014). Expanding parent education and family life education resources to and publications about older adults and their families will be critical in meeting needs of our aging population. Overall, by using theoretical and methodological strengths from the family science field, family scientists have opportunities to make significant contributions to the study of aging and practice with older adults and their family members.

A methodological advantage of the family science field examined in this study was the expertise in using data from multiple perspectives to understand aging and family life issues. Findings indicated that family scientists have used a range of informants in exploring aging and family life issues. Most articles, however, sought to understand aging from older adults or their family members; fewer articles have included perspectives of more than one family member in understanding aging and family ties. Advantages and challenges of collecting and analyzing intragenerational, intergenerational and multigenerational data are well-documented (Gilligan, Karraker, & Jasper, 2018; Kim et al., 2014; Sayer & Klute, 2005; Sutor et al., 2018). The current study findings encourage family researchers to continue using and developing relational theories and data that allow for more nuanced understanding of diverse aging and family ties within and across families.

Given the forecasted growth in population aging (United Nations, 2015), aging processes and related issues being understudied (Raposo & Carstensen, 2015), and a need for more research on aging and family life issues (Connidis, 2010; Silverstein & Giarrusso, 2010), family scientists have various options for future research endeavors. To increase the presence of articles on aging and family life issues in NCFR publications, NCFR as an organization needs to welcome and encourage a wide range of research on aging and family relationships. Initially, this can be accomplished by regularly offering special issues on aging in all types of NCFR publications and conference sessions. Over time, this can also be addressed through careful exploration of ageism in family science undergraduate and graduate programs, and in the NCFR editorial and review process. Undergraduate and graduate family science programs should assess

whether they are adequately preparing future family scientists for the study of and practice in aging and family life issues. For CFLE approved programs, this may involve integration of aging related issues throughout program curricula along with meeting the content area criteria of Human Growth and Development across the Lifespan. NCFR members who participate in the editorial and peer review processes should consider how implicit and explicit assumptions and biases about aging affect their decisions. This could be pursued by individual NCFR members or at an institutional level through discussions at board and section meetings throughout the year and at annual conferences.

The study of aging and family life has come a long way over the last 20 years (Connidis, 2010; Silverstein & Giarrusso, 2010) and NCFR members have been part of that progress. Study findings, however, call for NCFR to increasingly represent older adults and their family ties in the years to come. Ultimately, the more we know about our own aging and the aging of our family members, the better equipped we will be to meet the needs of our families, societies, and global aging population in the future.

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