



## **Comparing the Behaviours and Perceptions of Family Caregivers and Care-recipients**

*Gery Karantzas*  
*Deakin University, Australia*

# The Issue of Family Caregiving

- **Deciding how to manage caregiving for older parents has become a significant problem for many Australian families and families around the globe:**
  - Older parents (65+ yrs.) living longer (with and without ill-health)
    - o *Approx. 4.2 million Australians by 2021 (ABS, 2005; AIHW, 2008).*
  - Governments expect family involvement (Goodnow et al., 2002; Schultz & Schultz, 1998)
  - Decline in family members available to contribute to care of older parents (ABS, 2005; Himes, 1994)
  - Reduced family size, changes in family structure (ABS, 2005; de Vaus, 1996)
- **These shifts raise important questions about how the attitudes, intentions and behaviours of caregivers and care recipients align regarding family care arrangements.**

# The Issue of Family Caregiving

- **A plethora of studies have identified various factors that influence carers attitudes, intentions, and behaviours towards caregiving**
  - the needs of the care-recipient
  - contemplating future care plans
  - demographic variables (e.g., age, gender, culture, socio-economic status [SES])
  - family size
  - geographic distance between caregiver and care-recipient
  - gender
  - filial obligation
  - parent-child attachment bond

(for example see Cicirelli, 1998, 1993; Dilworth-Anderson, Gibson, & Williams, 2002; Karantzas et al., 2010; Lawrence et al., 2003; Pinquart & Sorensen, 2003)

# The Issue of Family Caregiving

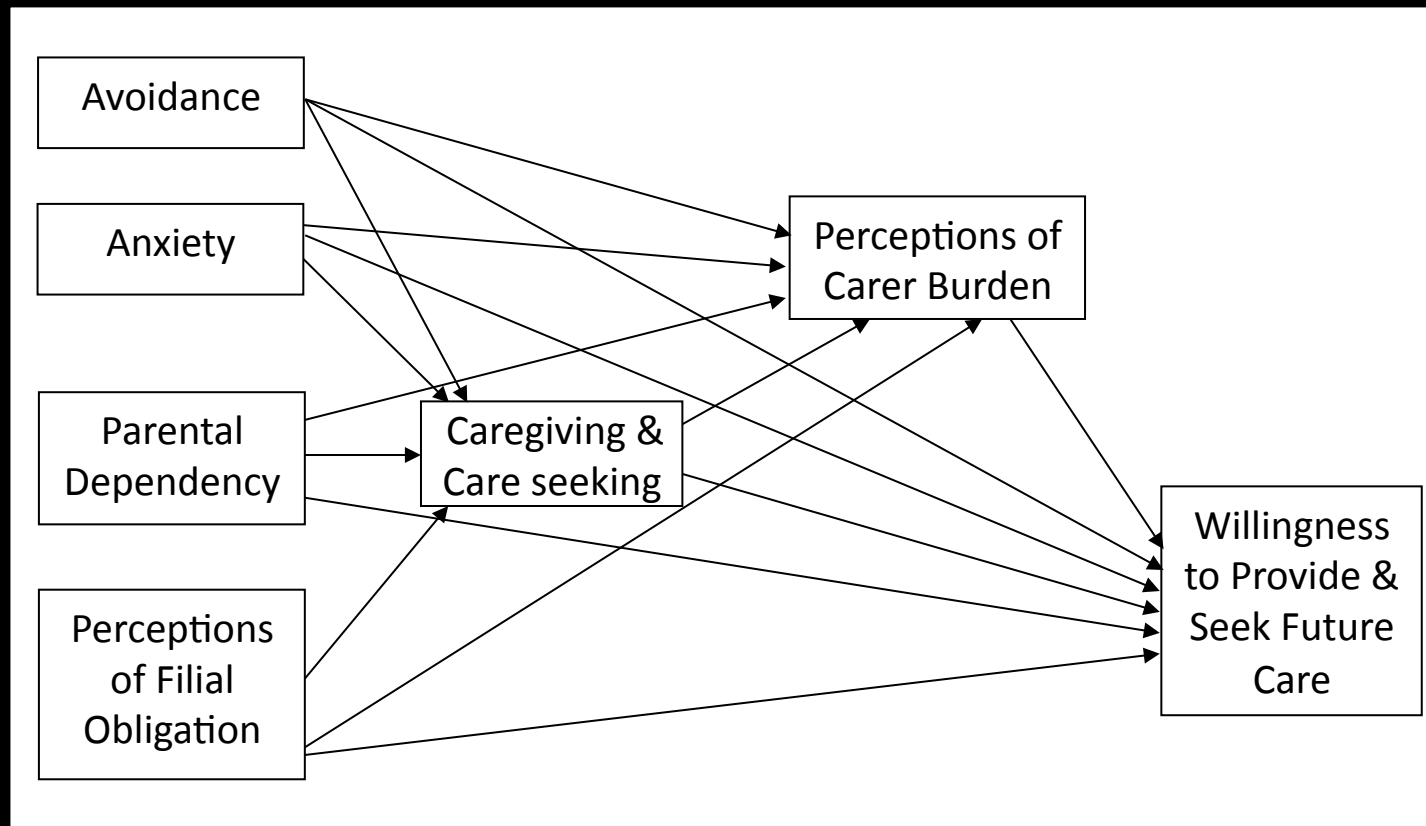
- **While much is known about how carers perceive, navigate and experience caregiving, very few studies have examined the views of care recipients**
- **Even fewer have compared caregivers and care recipients** (Blieszner, 2006)
- **Unless the perspective of older care recipients are considered, research in this area can be considered as incomplete** (Morris, 1995)
- **What do we know about care recipients?**
  - turn to adult children for support (Silverstein et al., 2006)
  - do this due to generational emotional bonds (Blieszner & Mancini, 1987)
  - parent-child attachment bond (Karantzas et al., 2010)
  - willing to receive care from adult children (Lawrence et al., 2003; Martini et al., 2003)
    - *cite affection/emotional support as most valued/important* (Karantzas et al., 2006b)
  - family conflict with adult children → less reliant for future care (Roberto et al., 2001)
  - filial obligation (Cicirelli, 1993)
  - perceptions of vulnerability increase future care planning (Pinquart & Sorensen, 2000)
  - preference for informal support over formal arrangements (Pinquart & Sorensen, 2002)

# The Issue of Family Caregiving

- **Some suggest research should redress the emphasis placed on the carers' of ill or frail older parents** (e.g., Roberto et al., 2001)
  - focusing on help given to parents of relatively good health (Martini et al., 2003)
  - attitudes of healthy older parents and their adult children toward future care needs → insights into normative family caregiving (Sorensen et al., 2002)
  - comparing current and future family caregiving of frail elderly with healthy parents may generate more appropriate social policy, aimed at meeting the needs of caregivers and care-receivers across diverse caregiving contexts (Karantzas et al., 2010; Lawrence et al., 2002; Roberto et al., 2001).

# The Issue of Family Caregiving

- Based on previous work (Karantzas et al., 2010) that examined:



# Aims

- **The aim of this research was to examine whether differences exist between adult children and older parents on perceptions of:**
  - filial obligation
  - attachment style
  - current and future caregiving/ care receiving
  - perceptions of carer burden

# Participants

## **n = 148 independent older adults - U3A & NSA (active in community)**

(43 male, 105 female) ( $M = 72.14$  yrs,  $SD = 7.41$  yrs)

IADL ( $M = 13.03$ ,  $SD = 3.74$ , scale range 0 – 16)

90% emotional, instrumental + financial assistance to adult children

80+% requested either instrumental or emotional support

70% offered caregiving assistance to their own parents

## **n = 119 adult children providing occasional help to a parent - LCG & NSA**

(40 male, 79 female) ( $M = 50.11$  yrs,  $SD = 9.93$  yrs)

IADL of parent ( $M = 13.03$ ,  $SD = 3.74$ )

41% emotional + instrumental, 23% emotional, 21% emotional, instrumental + financial

**The two samples were not related**

# Materials

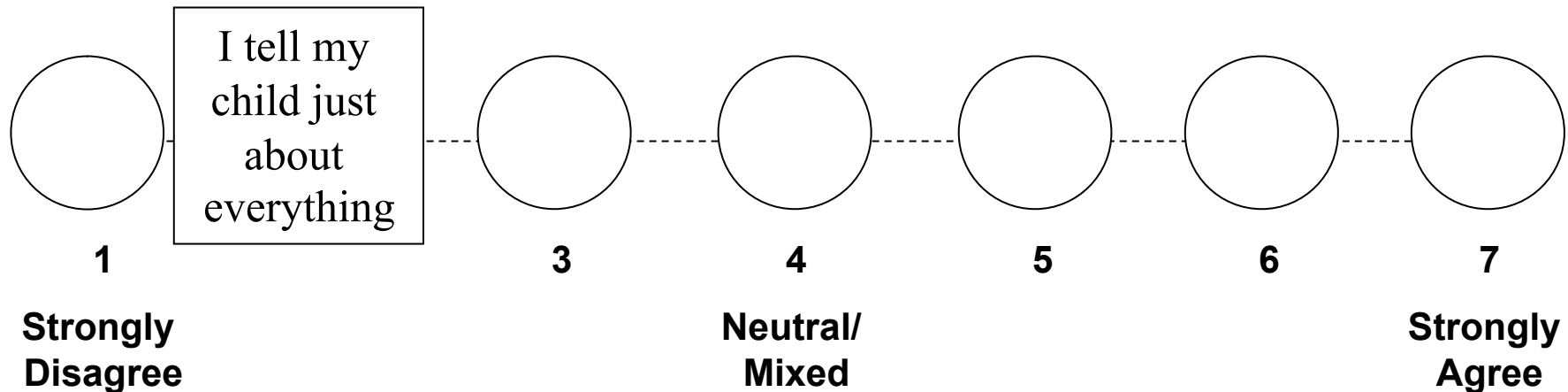
## Card Sorting Tasks (Older Adults) / Questionnaire Booklet (Adult Children)

- Provision of Caregiving/care-receiving (26 items) (Karantzas, et al. 2010)
- Filial Obligation (7 items) (Cicirelli, 1993)
- Experiences in Close Relationships (ECR) Modified (32 items)  
(Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998)
- IADL/PADL (15 items) (Lawton, 1971)
- Burden Index (50 items) (Poulshock & Deimling, 1984)

# Procedure

## Attachment

HOW MUCH DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THIS?



# Results

## Do older parents differ to adult children?

Variable Name	Adult Children		Older Parents		Scale Range
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
	<i>n</i> = 119		<i>n</i> = 148		
Filial Obligation	3.67	.68	2.59	.81	1-5
Attachment Anx.	2.47	.96	1.94	1.00	1-7
Attachment Av.	3.33	1.27	3.45	.77	1-7
C.Give/C.Receive	1.48	.69	.79	.31	0-4
W.Give/W.Receive	3.14	.47	2.61	.65	0-4
Burden	45.76	10.10	43.17	7.62	31--143

# Summary of Findings

- **Significant differences were found between adult children and older parents after controlling for parental dependency**
- **Adult children consistently rated higher on:**
  - filial obligation
  - attachment anxiety
  - current caregiving vs care receiving
  - future caregiving vs care receiving

# Conclusions/Implications

- **Findings support limited past research. For instance:**
  - Adult children held higher expectations regarding filial duties compared to their ageing parents (Blieszner & Hamon, 1992; Hamon & Blieszner, 1990; Cicirelli, 1981)
  - Adult children's filial obligation exceeds older generations expectations (Yue & Ng, 1999)
  - Adult children > care than parents received, and > willingness to provide future care than parents willing to receive → parents may be reluctant to receive care as this signals declining independence (Roberto et al., 2001)
    - o *Social value placed on independence, especially in Western society, results in a desire for self-reliance (Dean et al. 1989; Nadler, 1991)*
    - o *Older parents may feel uncomfortable or resist the receipt of care to maintain their independence for as long as possible (Martini et al., 2003)*
  - Alternatively, older parents in this study were quite independent so may not require much assistance, nor can adequately foresee future caregiving needs
    - o *In support of this argument, low levels of perceived vulnerability prevented the planning for future care across cultures (Pinquart & Sorensen, 2002)*

# Conclusions/Implications

- **Differences in attachment anxiety may reflect normative developmental changes with anxiety decreasing with age** (Karantzas et al., in press; Noller et al., 2001)
- **Despite high independence of parents, care was still provided and received**
- **Both carers and care recipients perceived burden, despite modest care**
- **In line with past research → parental need alone does not influence caregiving and burden** (Cicirelli, 1993; Karantzas et al., 2010; Yue & Ng, 1999)
  - filial obligation
  - attachment
  - culture
- **In closing, irrespective of the level of caregiving, health professionals should consider:**
  - caregivers and care recipients do not necessarily hold the same views and attitudes about current and future caregiving arrangements
  - cultural and filial norms alongside attachment dynamics in helping families deal with caregiving arrangements