Week 5

model#1

 The film “The Savages” helped illustrate some of the challenges that siblings face as a parent’s health deteriorates. At the opening of the film, siblings Wendy and John hadn’t spoken with their father in years and didn’t even know where lived. As is typical when adult siblings face an aging parent’s care needs, this challenge brought about a new phase of their relationship (Ingersoll-Dayton et al, 2003).

As stated by Connidis, “Support to parents is not anticipated to be equal, and siblings with family and paid work responsibilities are seen to have a legitimate excuse for not providing care.” (Connidis, 2010) However, gender roles bring about different expectations, which featured prominently in the film. Wendy was extremely distraught by the idea of “placing” her father at a skilled nursing facility, saying “We are horrible, horrible people.” John viewed this transition much differently, saying “We are doing the right thing, taking better care of the ‘Old Man’ than he ever did of us.”

Ingersoll-Dayton et al assert that “Because women are seen as natural caregivers, they may be particularly susceptible to feeling guilty when they do not conform to traditional gendered family roles . . . legitimate excuses used by siblings to forge psychological equity in parent care may be less available to sisters than to brothers.” (Ingersoll-Dayton et al, 2003) John illustrated this concept well, telling Wendy “I’m working. .. your life is much more portable than mine. You don’t have a ‘job job’, you are a freelance worker.”

In my opinion, tackling today’s “structural lag” in which sisters (women) are still assumed to be much more available than brothers is the key issue in negotiating care responsibilities among siblings. Unequal expectations are likely to continue to create highly ambivalent relationships, and encourage the type of “game theory” scenarios presented in lecture.

The equity theory concept we reviewed this week is one approach siblings will continue to use in the face of this lag, namely “requesting behavioral changes from siblings and making cognitive changes.” (Ingersoll-Dayton et al, 2003) Unfortunately, these methods are not always effective and sometimes make the situation worse. The limited number of children of the baby boom generation will likely significantly impact how siblings negotiate care for their aging parents, representing a fertile are for future research.

Model#2

Siblings

As it is demonstrated in one of the readings, family members play a really important role in aging family(Pillemer & Suitor, 2013). Specifically, such as family support, including financial support, ADLs and some IADLs, etc, is considered to fulfill that role duties. Younger adults(i.e. parents) is considered to be one part of family members, additionally, siblings of those older family members could be considered as well. They could provide family support and care in some aspects, too. However, in my opinion, since those elders’ siblings are somewhat at the same age as the older adults, they seem to offer more emotional care for them rather than health care due to their physical conditions. In terms of those siblings of those younger adults in aging family, since they were raised by one certain couple of older adults, they might provide bothmaterial and emotional support.

However, based on the geographic distance and the intimacy quality during childhood, different siblings of younger adults will provide different family/sibling support. Like Doctor Silverstein says, there is a gamble-related sibling support in a certain aging family. As far as I am concerned, it is reasonable that someone provides more, while the other provides less due to those reasons. And the relatively equitable equilibrium could be considered in some aspects, to those geographically close siblings, they could provide more emotional and health support, like being with those elders; and to those geographically far siblings, they could offer more material support, like money, etc. Although this sounds miserable that those far siblings could not be with the elders all the time, considering money as a compensatory thing of emotional support is somewhat reasonable.

In China, the geographic distance is somewhat considered as a really important issue in sibling support. In other words, followed by filial piety, Chinese siblings will try and try to manage more time to be with their older family members. And there are many traditional Chinese festivals, such as Spring Festival, Dragon Boat Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival, etc, which are the moments for siblings and family members reunion(Cultural China, 2014). Besides money and other material support, they provide emotional support via video-call, festival reunion, etc. It seems really nice for Chinese people to have so many festivals.

Model#3

Siblings relationships are unique. Siblings share a family history, they have a relationship that can last a lifetime, and they are members of the same generation. Older adults often mention the importance of their brothers and sisters, and as people age, the sibling bond becomes even more important. Adult siblings are an important source of love, support and companionship to each another. Sometimes siblings become closer when they have to plan care for an aging parent.

However, past tensions and family feuds can keep siblings apart. If parents have kept their children in emotional bondage by withholding approval and love, children compete for affection and become alienated from one another. In such families, adult siblings may be unable to reconcile until one or both parents die (Moyer, 1993).

Some research suggests that caregiving affects relationships among family members. For example, as Ingersoll- Dayton stated, siblings may quarrel over the division of caregiving tasks (Ingersoll‐Dayton et al, 2003). Caregiving also can generate tension between primary caregivers and their siblings. Primary caregivers often report that siblings do not carry their share of the burden and that their efforts are unappreciated (Townsend and Noelker, 1987). Disagreements over how to care for a parent may lead to depression. Disagreements over whether siblings are taking their fair share of responsibility more often generate anger (Semple, 1992). In my opinion, this is also the most important issue in caring for aging parents by siblings.

Therefore, allocating and ordinating tasks reasonably is the effective way addressing the unbalance division of caregiving tasks, which can avoid more unnecessary conflicts among siblings. Besides, building up a family network is beneficial to caring work. From the studies by Pillemer and Suitor, emotional closeness and affection are regarded as a key factor determining the quality of caregiving by siblings or other family members (Pillemer & Suitor, 2014). Actually, caregiving can also be a positive influence on the family relationship by bringing kin together to accomplish a shared goal, by making family members appreciate the contributions each makes to the family unit, and by reestablishing connections that may have been weakened over the years.