

# The Future of Families and Health Research

Erica L. Spotts, Ph.D.

Division of Behavioral and Social Research  
National Institute on Aging

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# Division of Behavioral and Social Research

- Supports basic social and behavioral research and training on the processes of aging at both the individual and societal level.
  - How people change during the adult lifespan
  - Interrelationships between older people and social institutions
  - The societal impact of the changing age composition of the population

Biological



Individual/Dyadic



Societal & Economic

# Biological

- Caregiving as a model of chronic stress  
(Kiecolt-Glaser and colleagues)
  - Poorer immune functioning not correlated with sleep and exercise
  - Less likely to show an increase antibody titers after vaccination
  - Slower wound healing

# Individual/Dyadic

- Marital strain accelerates health decline with age (Umberson et al, 2006)
  - Marital quality affects health trajectories
  - Marital strain accelerates decline in self-rated health

# Societal and Economic

- Marital status and risk of death (Sbarra & Nietert, 2009)
  - Being widowed or single didn't confer as much risk as being divorced or separated
  - However, it's not separation or divorce that confers risk, but something about not remarrying.
  - Those who remarried didn't have the same risk as those who didn't.

# Future Directions

- 2008 NACA review of DBSR
  - Promote studies that improve the adaptive functioning of individuals in their daily environments
  - Focus on the effectiveness and role of social relationships across the lifespan and their influence on behavior, health and decision making.
  - Encouraged development of family demography

# Future Directions, cont.

- Life course approach
- Encourage the integration of the latest substantive and methodological advances
  - Social neuroscience, genetics, etc.
- Genetics



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[Spottse@mail.nih.gov](mailto:Spottse@mail.nih.gov)

301.496.3136