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TBD

Cynthia Brown, *Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center - New Orleans, New Orleans, Louisiana, United States*

Chair: Lori Simon-Rusinowitz; Panelists: Representatives of GSA Sections - Phillip Rozario (SRPP), Stephen Helfand (BS), Tamara Baker (BSS), Cynthia Brown (HS), Judith Howe (AGHE), Darina Petrovsky (ESPO); Discussant: Brian Lindberg. This interactive session is an interdisciplinary look at policy issues in aging with the speakers representing views from their sections. This session, organized by the GSA Public Policy Panel, will provide both GSA section leadership and attendees an opportunity to have an open dialogue on important public policy issues of significance in the field of aging. Presentations will likely address the COVID-19 pandemic, how GSA, each section and its members, and the federal government responded during the past year; how the policy work has been influenced by the increased acknowledgement of institutional and societal racism; and member experiences with the influx of additional economic relief, research funding, and funding for aging supports and services programs.

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Session 4295 (Paper)

Religion and Spirituality

A MULTIDIMENSIONAL CONSTRUCT OF RELIGIOSITY AMONG BABY BOOMERS AND TRAJECTORIES OF SOCIAL ATTITUDES

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Although a number of studies have examined relationships between religiosity and social attitudes, less is known about how these relationships change over the life course using a multidimensional construct of religiosity among Baby Boomers. A multidimensional construct of religion allowed us to take a more person-centered approach to religiosity, whereby we examine the association between Baby Boomers with different types of religiosity and the trajectories of their political and gender role attitudes over a period of transition from early to later adulthood. We selected 798 young-adult Baby Boomers from the 1971 wave (mean age: 19 years) of the Longitudinal Study of Generations (LOSG) and tracked their political and gender role attitudes through until the 2016 wave (mean age: 64 years). Using latent class analysis, we identified four latent religious typologies: strongly religious, weakly religious, liberally religious, and privately religious. We found that Baby Boomers in the strongly religious class reported the most conservative political and gender role attitudes among the four classes over this period of transition. Baby Boomers in the privately religious class were conservative in their political and gender role attitudes than those in the weakly religious class. The liberally religious group generally reported the second most conservative political attitudes among the four identified groups, but reported the least conservative gender role attitudes of the four groups. Findings suggest that early religiosity may serve as a significant predictor affecting political and gender role attitudes throughout the adult life course.

FAMILY CAREGIVERS OF PERSONS WITH MILD DEMENTIA SHARE THEIR SPIRITUAL STRUGGLES

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The lives of family caregivers of persons with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias (ADRD) may change dramatically with disease progression in their loved one. Many rely on spirituality as a resource for coping. There is evidence that persons experiencing transition/losses, as a consequence of disease/illness, can experience spiritual struggles or a crises in meaning. However, there is limited research related to spiritual struggles among family caregivers of persons with ADRD, particularly in the beginning stages of the disease process. In this study, three domains of spiritual struggle were identified after analyzing 27 caregiver interviews using the constant comparative method: 1) changes in relationship with their higher power (e.g., feelings of anger towards, feeling punished by, feeling disconnected from, and questioning); 2) changes in spiritual practices (e.g., decreased participation as a consequence of feeling unsupported, judged, or misunderstood by spiritual communities); and 3) dissonance between previously held core beliefs and current life circumstances (e.g., feelings of shame, doubt, and guilt as well as cessation of self-care activities due to the belief that they must sacrifice everything for their loved one). Notably, 74% experienced spiritual struggle in one domain; 33% in two domains, and 11% in three domains. The majority of participants had come to resolution of these spiritual struggles by the time they were interviewed. However, 40.7% were experiencing ongoing spiritual struggles, at the time of interview, suggesting the importance of identifying and addressing