

Public Lecture

Wednesday 24th February 2016 at 1pm

Lecture Theatre, Oxford Martin School (corner of Holywell and Catte Streets)

‘Adult Children Providing Support to their Aging Parents: Mixed Motives over the Family Life Course’



Professor Merrill Silverstein

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Abstract: This presentation explores the question of why adult children provide support and care to their older parents. Absent strong bio-evolutionary hypotheses, the effort to understand these motives has largely focused on social explanations, primarily those related to social-affective connections and the norm of reciprocity. Using data from a multi-panel and multi-generational data set, I present evidence for long-term reciprocity and family culture as forces that drive support provision from children. I then theoretically integrate micro-family interactions within the broader social contexts of culture and the welfare state to develop an emergent framework of intergenerational exchanges under the concept of moral capital.

Professor Silverstein is inaugural holder of the Marjorie Cantor Endowed Professorship in Aging Studies at Syracuse University in the Department of Sociology and School of Social Work. Prior to his current appointment, he served as Professor of Gerontology and Sociology at the University of Southern California. In over 150 publications, Silverstein has primarily focused on aging in the context of family life, with an emphasis on intergenerational relationships over the life course. His research has been supported by various grants from NIH, NSF, and the Templeton Foundation. Silverstein currently serves as principal investigator of the Longitudinal Study of Generations, a project that has tracked multigenerational families for more than four decades, and continues to direct a fifteen-year longitudinal study that has examined intergenerational exchanges, health, and well-being among older adults in rural China. He also has had collaborative projects in Sweden, the Netherlands, Israel, and Germany on related topics. Silverstein is a Fellow of the Gerontological Society of America, the Brookdale National Fellowship Program, and the Fulbright International Senior Scholars Program. Between 2010-2014 he served as editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences* and currently sits on its editorial board.