

Jennifer C. Greenfield – Statement of Research Interests

Research Philosophy

My broad research goal is to impact state and national long-term care policy through research on how long-term care service utilization and caregiving responsibilities impact financial security, especially among vulnerable groups. My goals and approach to research are grounded in my experiences as a community organizer, where I saw how scientific evidence, paired with stories of those who are most impacted by policy changes, can have a meaningful impact on the policy-making process. I employ a variety of data collection and analysis methods in my work, but I strive to keep my research grounded in the needs and stories of those who are most affected by our country's aging and health policy decisions.

Research Methods Training

Over the last several years, I have developed proficiency with a number of research methodologies, including both qualitative and quantitative approaches, while also learning how to write competitive grant proposals. As a member of several research teams, I have worked on projects from conceptualization to final analysis and dissemination. I have also successfully secured external funding for my work, published first-authored research articles, and presented at scientific conferences, while also helping community partners evaluate their programs and inform their ongoing program development efforts.

As an MSW student, I developed skills in conducting and evaluating qualitative research through coursework and a yearlong research assistantship with Dr. Roy Ruckdeschel, who was co-editor of the *Journal of Qualitative Social Work* at the time. Since then, I have continued my involvement with the journal by serving as a peer reviewer. I have also applied my knowledge of qualitative methods – content analysis, specifically – through a research project, led by Drs. Nancy Morrow-Howell and Michelle Putnam, in which we analyzed survey instruments from several public, nationally representative, longitudinal studies to understand how activity is measured across commonly used data sets.

As a PhD student, I wanted to broaden my research repertoire by learning a range of quantitative methods. I have completed courses or external workshops on linear regression, multi-level modeling, social network analysis, structural equation modeling, and latent growth curve modeling. I am also in the process of learning survival analysis. I have applied this knowledge in a variety of projects during my doctoral training, and have become proficient with software such as SAS, MPlus, R, LISREL, Pajek, and Stata.

Current Research Highlights

My dissertation, chaired by Dr. Nancy Morrow-Howell, uses data from six waves of the Health and Retirement Study (HRS) to examine how patterns of asset accumulation and income differ between caregivers and non-caregivers and among subpopulations of caregivers, and how differences in the duration and intensity of caregiving affect these patterns. I am using latent growth curve analysis to examine how the trajectories of income and assets differ among the subpopulations of interest. The John A. Hartford Foundation, the Center for Retirement Research at Boston College, and the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) have funded this work.

In addition to my dissertation, I am also involved in several other ongoing research projects, many of which I hope to build on in the next five years. One of these, for instance, uses data from the HRS to examine how the Great Recession has impacted long-term care insurance (LTCI) purchase decisions. Another is a biannual, national program evaluation with the OASIS Institute, a national nonprofit organization that provides educational and volunteer opportunities to adults aged 50 and above. I helped develop their program evaluation survey instrument and methodology in 2008-2009, and have been involved since then in analysis of data collected through this biannual effort.

Future Research Plans and Interests

Over the next several years, I plan to continue work on my research agenda by exploring the following questions:

1. *What factors influence individual long-term care insurance purchase decisions?* Specifically, how do economic circumstances affect insurance purchase decisions, and to what extent do differences in employer and public long-term care policies affect individual choices regarding the purchase of insurance and subsequent LTC services?
2. *How does the shift in public policy toward home- and community based services (HCBS) affect informal caregivers?* As demand for long-term care services increase, the short-term need to conserve state and federal funds may conflict with the long-term interest of supporting caregivers' physical, emotional, and financial wellbeing, and yet, neglecting the latter may put families at risk for needing more assistance later in life.
3. *Do caregivers allocate financial resources differently than non-caregivers?* A recent study analyzed spending patterns of poor, middle class, and wealthy households and found that on average, though these households spent roughly the same percentage of income on housing and food, differences emerged in spending on health care, transportation, education, and retirement savings. I plan to investigate whether these spending patterns are further altered when caregivers from each economic stratum are compared to non-caregivers.
4. *How are informal caregivers selected within family systems?* Economists often argue that the lowest wage earner in a family is most likely to be tapped as the primary caregiver when a parent or sibling requires care. However, in an increasing number of families, proximity and the characteristics of the bonds between individuals within the family system seem to loom large in decision-making about care provision. I am interested in understanding how both individual and policy contexts influence these decisions.

Many of these projects will require the support of outside funding. I have a history of securing competitive grants, including dissertation funding from the Center for Retirement Research at Boston College, the John A. Hartford Foundation, and NASW. My research questions fit well with several recent funding program announcements from both public entities such as the National Institute on Aging and private funders like the Center for Retirement Research. Additionally, within my first three years as a junior faculty member, I plan to apply for an NIH/NIA Career Development Award (such as a K07 award) to support my work, and I will continue to explore new funding opportunities as they arise.