



Navigating emotions and relationship dynamics: family life review as a clinical tool for older adults during a relocation transition into an assisted living facility

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Relocation for the purpose of receiving care may be one of the more challenging transitions for older adults. The purpose of this study was to facilitate a family life review (FLR) session aimed at enhancing family relationships and assisting older adults in coping with the challenges associated with a relocation.

Methods: Fourteen dyads comprised of older adults who relocated to an assisted living facility (ALF) and a chosen family member or friend participated in a FLR session and semi-structured follow up interview. Data were analyzed using the constant comparative method and triangulated with descriptive statistics.

Results: Emergent themes suggested participating in FLR influenced families by raising emotions, systemically thinking, and navigating the relocation. FLR facilitated positive connections, enhanced existing relationships, and promoted self-acceptance. Families indicated mutual storytelling was enjoyable and reminded them of the urgency to share their story. FLR allowed dyads to reflect and thus prompted a renewed perspective on some of the more challenging components of the relocation transition.

Conclusion: Study findings provide insight into how families organize individual and interpersonal narratives and use these narratives during transitional times. FLR can aid families in making a smoother and fulfilling move to an ALF and other late life transitions.

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Introduction

Late life involves a variety of transitions that shape older adults' individual development, relationships, and future decision-making. Normative late life transitions include retirement, grandparenthood, caregiving or care receiving, relocation, and widowhood. While common, transitions often require significant adjustment periods. Using the guiding frameworks of life course perspective (Elder, 1998) and general systems theory (Umpleby & Dent, 1999), intervening in a late life relocation transition was the focus of the current study.

Older adults relocate for a variety of reasons: increased care needs (Cummings & Cockerham, 2004), home no longer meets their needs or is difficult to maintain (Naditz, 2003), falls, injuries, or a major illness (Chen et al., 2008; Kennedy, Sylvia, Bani-Issa, Khater, & Forbes-Thompson, 2005), or death of a spouse or loved one (Baker et al., 2014). Although most older adults prefer to age in their own home within their community (Davey, Nana, de Joux, & Arcus, 2004), doing so is not always viable. An inability to live independently and receive the level of care needed prompts a move to a more supportive environment.

Assisted living facilities (ALF) are the fastest growing choice for long-term care in the United States. More than one million older adults live in over 31,000 ALF (Baker et al., 2014; Ball, Kemp, Hollingsworth, & Perkins, 2014). To ease older adults' transition, ALF work to mitigate the challenges of relocation by providing supplemental services (e.g. concierge services), such as having staff remind residents of mealtime. However, transitions do not occur

in isolation – they can involve and impact multiple members of a family (Elder, 1998). During relocation older adults and their family members can feel disjointed in thoughts, feelings, or decision-making (Tompkins, Ihara, Cusick, & Sook Park, 2015).

Family provides a 'network of shared relationships' (Elder, 1998, p. 4) that play an instrumental role in supporting older adults through relocation. Maintaining family involvement throughout ALF relocation was as important for older adults' emotional well-being as meeting their health, safety, and daily living needs (Baker et al., 2014; Gaugler, 2006). Yet, family members of residents are, at most, available weekly for visits (Gaugler, 2006) and often focus available time handling proximal needs (e.g. selling the home, organizing appointments). Residents were fearful of asking family for more time together or visits because they did not want to be perceived as dependent or unappreciative (Tompkins et al., 2015).

The majority of research has explored reasons older adults relocate and effects of relocation on older adults' well-being (Kennedy et al., 2005) with little consideration regarding family adjustment to relocation (Gaugler, 2006). We hypothesized that both older adults and their family members may benefit from a structured and safe space to express relocation concerns, explore current relational challenges, and navigate the transition in light of prior and upcoming transitions. The purpose of this research was to facilitate a family life review (FLR) intervention with older adults and a selected family member to explore the value of FLR for families experiencing an ALF relocation.

Life review with older adults

Life review interventions are popular and widely used in residential settings with older adults (Westerhof, Bohlmeijer, & Webster, 2012). They provide residents opportunities to review and process memories (Smith, Ruzgyte, & Spinks, 2011). de Vries, Birren, and Deutchmann (1990) proposed that:

the act of telling one's story and listening to the story of others provides models to buffer transitions, to bridge historical times, and to communicate values, essential components of family identification and adaptation. (p. 6)

While participation in life review has been associated with positive psychological (i.e. self-esteem) and personal enhancement outcomes (i.e. improved adaptation and self-integration) (Chiang, Lu, Chu, Chang, & Chou, 2008), studies of interpersonal influences of life review on individual and family relationships are limited. Facilitating life review with 13 ALF residents, Haber (2008) found that the intervention enhanced friendships and cross-cultural communication. Dahley and Sanders (2016) employed life review with nursing facility residents. For their project family members were encouraged to observe but not correct residents' memories. Content analyses, conducted separately for residents and family members, revealed the value of life review in the presence of a family member for family members' enhanced communication, affirmation of the older adults' story, and improved end-of-life care.

Variations of collaborative life review, reminiscence, and legacy projects (e.g. Life Story, Dignity Therapy) have been used with families engaged in palliative or end of life care (Fitchett, Emanuel, Handzo, Boyken, & Wilkie, 2015; Ingersoll-Dayton, Spencer, Campbell, Kurokawa, & Ito, 2016). These similar, but distinct types of interventions have unified couples in their communication and promoted a living legacy for couples and loved ones experiencing dementia or chronic illness. With respect to life review and transition research, researchers have not explored a *mutual* life review process during a transition to ALF. Specifically, prior research has not addressed the processes experienced while participating in mutual recall of events (e.g. honing in on the creation, reflection, or reconciliation of memories as a family unit during transitional times) or how these processes influence other family dynamics (e.g. the relocation transition). Although enhancing life review beyond individuals to incorporate families during transitional times has been proposed theoretically (de Vries et al., 1990; Hargrave & Anderson, 1997), its implementation has only been addressed in two published studies. Although these projects explored family-level outcomes (e.g. family coping, family interactions), Dahley's (2013) family member participants only observed and Comana, Brown, and Thomas (1998) reminiscence therapy with family members did not emphasize connecting memories to current transitions (e.g. caregiving of an older adult with chronic renal failure).

Building on de Vries et al. (1990) conceptualization, we suggest that FLR provides a forum to address and process the memories and transitions that occur within families over their lifespan. Families can then integrate these perspectives into current narratives to manage the relocation and subsequent transitions together. Toward this end, two overarching questions guided our study: (1) How do families participating in family life review respond to current issues (e.g. adjustment to an ALF, family involvement, loneliness) that they are encountering? (2) What family

dynamics are evident during and after participation in a family life review session?

Methods

Site selection, participant criteria, and recruitment

Six ALFs in Harford and Baltimore County, Maryland, and Arlington County, Virginia were invited to participate based upon size (i.e. 15+ beds) and geographical proximity to the first author. Each ALF approved the project using an internal review system. Criteria for older adult participation were (a) aged 65+, (b) able to speak/read English, (c) cognitively able to consent (Mini-Cog; Borson, Scanlan, Brush, Vitaliano, & Dokmak, 2000), (d) had the stamina to complete questionnaires, (e) agreed to participate in the FLR and follow-up interview with a non-spouse family member or close friend¹ aged 21 years or older, and (f) had moved into the ALF within six months prior to the FLR. Older adults were recruited through the ALF. A list of potentially eligible participants was provided to the first author who called the older person or made in-person visits to describe the project. If the older adult showed interest in the project, their selected family member was contacted to assess willingness to participate. In total, fifty-two older adults were invited to participate in the project; sixteen family dyads agreed. ALF cooperation and collaboration with the project did not appear to influence the willingness of families to participate. The primary reasons for refusal from either the resident or family member included disinterest in the project and scheduling challenges. Some older adults did not have a family member they were comfortable participating with and in several cases family members did not believe the older adult had the stamina or cognitive ability to participate, despite the researcher's assessment and suggestion of the ALF. The fourteen dyads who completed all measures and interviews served as the study sample.

Two of the fourteen older adult participants were male. Older adults identified predominately as Caucasian ($n = 13$) or African American ($n = 1$) and ranged from 75 to 98 years old ($M = 84.64$, $SD = 6.13$). Five older adult participants reported graduating college or beyond. They spent between 16 years to 59 years in their previous home ($M = 33.11$, $SD = 15.82$). The fourteen family member participants ranged from 44 to 73 years of age ($M = 56.21$, $SD = 7.95$). They were mostly female ($n = 9$), identified as Caucasian ($n = 13$), and had graduated college or graduate/professional school ($n = 11$). Relationships to the older adults were biological child ($n = 11$), niece ($n = 1$), or friend ($n = 2$).

Procedure

The Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board approved this research. Pre-session measures (e.g. Mini-Cog, UCLA Loneliness Scale, CES-D, Family Involvement Questionnaire) took approximately thirty minutes to complete. The FLR session lasted between 54 and 90 min ($M = 69.01$, $SD = 9.82$). The content and process used to facilitate the FLR intervention was derived from, *The Life Validation Interview* (see O'Hora, 2015). It explores, connects, and validates salient memories across the life course. By reviewing significant events in history, families can connect their transitions and relationships to various points in time, linking their resilience and mutual narrative across their lives (e.g. linked lives). Follow up interviews took

between 20 and 75 min ($M = 47$, $SD = 17.45$). The family member was present and engaged in both the FLR session and follow up interviews. Each participant received a five-dollar gift card for a retail store at the beginning of the FLR and at follow up.

Follow-up interview

The family dyads were asked seven open-ended questions during the semi-structured, follow up interview. We were interested in the dyads' experience of the FLR (e.g. influence of the FLR on their relationship, adjustment to the ALF), recollection of something meaningful and/or challenging discussed during the FLR session, recollection of a shared experience that took place in the past month that was meaningful and/or challenging, value of FLR, overall experience of the FLR process, recommendations for another family going through a relocation, and perspective on the influence of the FLR on their future. Prompts were used to help the dyad organize their thoughts and vague comments were explored further using gentle probing (e.g. 'when you say FLR has helped you, what do you mean? Tell me a bit more about that...').

Analysis

Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. The first author made margin notes (e.g. open coding) during the interview process and wrote a reflexive account of each interview upon completion of the follow up interview. To keep with the dyads' lived experiences, highlighting their own terminology and voice, the constant comparative method was used to organize and develop themes (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Following the approach described by Charmaz (2006), codes were arranged based on emerging concepts. Connections were linked between codes and organized into categories (e.g. axial coding) and then compiled in a coding sheet and arranged into themes that highlighted the relationship between codes (e.g. selective coding). The second author crosschecked themes to validate nuances within the coding scheme. Passages from the interviews were extracted to emphasize the dyads experience within each theme (Charmaz, 2006). Emergent codes were quantitized to provide specificity to the data (Sandelowski, Voils, & Knafl, 2009). Although this layer of analysis has its limitations, as the counting of data is subjective and can promote distinctive boundaries within families' fluid experiences, the advantage of this approach is that it allows additional layers of meaning to be extracted that cannot otherwise be answered solely through a qualitative approach.

To establish trustworthiness, process notes were made during data collection and analysis. Discrepancies in the researchers' coding were discussed and reconciled by mutually choosing the best understanding of the code along with participants' lived experience. In addition, codes and themes were crosschecked and reviewed by a senior life review scholar (T. Pierce, personal communication, February 22, 2017). These steps allowed the authors to consider biases within the research process and ensure participants' experiences were being accurately portrayed such as discerning whether the dyad believed the older adult was staying true to self throughout the aging process or specifically during the relocation. Saturation was reached after ten interviews when no new codes emerged. Four more interviews were

completed to ensure reliability of saturation and verify the concepts that were emerging in the data (Patton, 2001).

Family transitions and life review

Our analytical approach integrated information from both members of the dyads to develop an understanding of their mutual reflection of FLR and the relocation. We present our findings holistically, incorporating both the individual voice (i.e. older adult; family member) as well as the dyadic voice (e.g. mutual narrative). Three interrelated themes emerged contributing to the understanding of participants' individual and collective experience.

Navigating the relocation

FLR prompted dyads to discuss their navigation of the relocation. Navigation involved engaging in relocation processes and confronting the reality of the circumstances, both of which were often the most gripping and salient aspects of their transition experience. Family dynamics contributed to relocation challenges. For example, family members lived between 2 and 360 miles ($M = 77.74$, $SD = 123.55$) from the ALF; these relational aspects of the transition had the potential to negatively or positively influence dyad relationships. Similarly, if the decision to relocate was made by one member of the dyad (e.g. the family member, typically), older adults often reported feeling frustrated, hurt, and confused.

Relocation processes. Relational aspects of relocation, mentioned 145 times by all 14 families, included disagreements about the need for relocation, family member guilt about the relocation decision-making process, caregiving role reversals from childhood to late life, and relational satisfaction or dissatisfaction throughout the transition. These concepts were deeply embedded within relationships and carried intense meaning. For example, Patty shared her concern over her mother's satisfaction in ALF and her extended relatives' perspective of the relocation process. Her mother, Dee, expanded on these relational relocation concerns.

Patty (daughter): She finally used the word happy, which made me feel better that you used the word happy and not satisfied, which is what she used to describe it...that made me feel a little better... I don't want the relatives to feel like, pardon the expression, I'm throwing my mother's ass in a home. I don't know that they do but I guess that's my Catholic girl guilt.

Dee (older adult): The thing that I can't say to my cousin is that this is much better being here [ALF] than it would be to rely on [my cousin] taking care of me... she wants to help but she's really not helpful ...I can't tell her that I really wouldn't want to be in her hands.

Dyads also tackled proximal future planning concerns (e.g. finances, selling a home) along with issues at the ALF. Future planning concerns were emphasized by dyads. They were mentioned 81 times across 13 families. For many dyads, these concerns needed to be addressed immediately to ensure the well-being of the resident, such as one son's frustration that the ALF would only send a male to shower his mother. Other relocation processes involved feelings of isolation and whether the older adults were staying true to themselves during the relocation, such as expressing their normal joy, humor, or engaging in typical hobbies (e.g. puzzles, reading) when

interacting with other residents, the family member, or even the researcher.

Confronting the reality of the circumstances. Dyads commented 67 times on the reality of the circumstances surrounding relocation, either acknowledging older adults' increasing cognitive and physical limitations or reflecting on aspects of the older adults' social support. Residents' self-reported health concerns mirror existing literature on older adults' health status when entering ALF (Ball et al., 2014; Jungers, 2010). The majority of older adults rated their health status as fair ($n = 7$). They struggled with one or more health concerns, such as diabetes, heart problems, memory decline, strokes, and immobility. Both family members and older adults expressed urgency in planning for the future while not letting the future dominate the present. They recognized the obvious: all family members are aging and some will have cognitive and physical limitations. Frank (son) captured the sentiment of most dyads, stating, 'The challenge is not recognizing her limitations but accepting them.'

Older adults reflected on decreasing social ties through death, geographical changes, or disappointment in personal relationships. They struggled to maintain positivity in the face of a dwindling network, even when encouraged by their family members. Developing friendships or romantic relationships after the relocation aided older adults' transition, helping them feel connected to their new community.

Raising emotions in families

Despite dyads' emphasis on wanting and needing to address the relocation transition, the most prevalent theme was raising emotions in families, mentioned 411 times. All dyads believed FLR had either positive and/or neutral influences on their relocation transition; ten dyads also identified at least one negative aspect of FLR.

Positive aspects of family life review. Twelve dyads believed FLR enhanced their relationship. Participation promoted inter-generational connectivity, such as linking their story with prior and future generations as well as validated existing relationships, reinforced mutual narratives (e.g. sharing a similar story or experience), and prompted collaboration (e.g. working together to solve a problem). For example, Natalie described traveling with her mother, Violet, and reflected on the great memories they had shared. FLR prompted them to relive these experiences and connected their memories with greater understanding of one another.

Natalie (daughter): Do you feel like being ninety-one right now and looking back at all those different things [makes you feel valuable]...

Violet (older adult): [my travel] has made an impression on me. [I have seen people explore] the world of tomorrow, and I've lived through all that. I love my life, it was really interesting.

Natalie: It's really neat to talk about all the different things you experienced...it gives me perspective as to who she is too, what influenced her life and what made her the person she was.

Reflecting on their narrative helped the dyads shape their understanding of their individual and mutual story.

Sandra (daughter): When we moved to Holland I approached a new country without a real sense of anxiety about it because I had been told [by my mother] that I had done this before and succeeded... You [mother] gave me some life skills that could be transported.... It was very consistent with how you lived as well.

In addition to enhancing relationships, twelve dyads believed FLR provided new perspective on their view of each other. Of these dyads, ten commented FLR was an enjoyable process and eleven found FLR influenced self-awareness and acceptance such as learning something new about themselves or having their story validated by their family member, linking to their own acceptance of the experience. Perspective was gleaned through the dialogue that led to insights and the molding of existing memories. For example, Frank commented that while his story was created from his perspective, exploring memories with his mother provided another lens that enhanced his understanding.

Frank (son): If [your family is] open enough... you get a much better sense of [an] event. I think of memories as notoriously imperfect in the first place. In addition, they're all memories through a particular prism. Every single person's prism and the way the light went through it is going to be different... So only by putting it all together would you get it right.

Influenced self-awareness and acceptance involved participants individually acknowledging the fragility of their life, their lifelong resilience, and gratefulness for their life experiences. Self-awareness and acceptance was reflected in participants' acknowledgment of their own story such as commenting that they had not considered their own resilience across the life course.

Neutral aspects of family life review. While all dyads believed FLR was beneficial, they also indicated that the effects of the FLR could not be directly seen in their relationship or relocation transition (e.g. too soon to see the effects). Some dyads were clear about the lack of influence whereas others recognized through FLR there were still more memories to explore.

Steve (Son): For me [FLR] sort of opened up, there's things that I still, after forty something years, still don't know and still would really like to find out... I need to make time and I need to ask those questions. I need to pursue those things, that would be a shame to never find out.

Negative aspects of family life review. Ten families also mentioned a negative aspect of FLR, including challenges with the general content of memories (e.g. physical abuse) and the taxing process of sharing (e.g. reliving an experience). Gabriella shared memories of when children were being bused to predominately White schools during segregation (e.g. relational process). As her daughter Ida noted, this transitional time also had instrumental challenges such as inner city schools becoming vacant and desolate, as well as, navigating the economic changes within the community. Reliving this experience was challenging for Gabriella and Ida.

Ida (daughter): When you're talking with someone else about your life a whole lot of things come up. You're able to remember things that you don't want to remember... some things that you just want to keep in the past, and not relive it again... like my mom as far as talking about segregation and integration [during the FLR session]. Those types of things I try not to talk about or discuss.

While segregation was a difficult topic to remember and explore, this dyad also acknowledged overcoming other

challenging situations in their life and began to view relocation as another transition they would navigate together. The extent of dyads reflecting on positive, neutral, and negative experiences during the FLR suggests FLR is not merely a positive reflection exercise but challenges families to dig deeper into lifelong and relational struggles and challenges to pull them toward a more resilient perspective of the transition.

Seeing self in systems

The third theme involved family dyads seeing themselves existing and relating to various systems. They were keenly aware of the dynamics unique to their relationship and extended family, the role of FLR intrapersonally and interpersonally, and the overall purpose of the research. Findings suggest that the dyads recognized links between the past, present, and future and internalized these links in relationship to their surrounding context.

Family dynamics. Family dynamics, mentioned 136 times, involved twelve dyads acknowledging other influences within their own family system. Throughout their reflections, individuals saw themselves within a larger context – often the family, but also the research project and the world at-large. They remarked about the value of quality time, power of memorabilia in triggering memories, benefit of life review for individual versus family processing, depth of the what it means to be a family (i.e. beyond their own relationship), and importance of relational reciprocity, self-worth, and sharing legacies. Dyads highlighted spending time together and transformed FLR into opportunities to validate and celebrate accomplishments. Half of the dyads emphasized their family values by sharing memories between and across generations, reflecting on the past, or mutually remembering as a tradition. One son connected the importance of sharing stories with the overall sense of who their family is and who they become.

Dave (son): [The] kinds of things that get people together serve to find out who we are, right?...We're the people who you know... the 'us' of our connectedness. This great word in Japanese, [uchi, ウチ] it's like we, us...so there's this we and us, the family. We and us, the neighbor. These kinds of things, weddings and that kind of stuff we use to define we and us.

Role of FLR process in one's life. Dyads also had an acute awareness of their storytelling process and their comfort in sharing with other family, friends, and the facilitator. Eleven dyads commented 123 times on their desire to share more, recommended other families engage in FLR, and maintained openness in sharing with others. Molly (daughter), highlighted the value she saw in engaging in FLR stating, '*Absolutely do [FLR] and take it seriously, it can be a precious opportunity to learn about your loved ones.*'

Other participants were more inclined to keep stories private or within their family system. These dyads believed their story was only interesting to them or were not as comfortable sharing with outsiders. Seven dyads acknowledged FLR can be challenging due to external circumstances, such as busy schedules. As Thalia's comment illustrates, sharing their story had not crossed their minds.

Thalia (daughter): Most of the time it probably wouldn't come up in my head. There's too many other things I got to think or worry

about... sometimes you don't even think about things until something happens and then you're like oh yeah, I remember that now.

Dyads also recognized how macrohistorical events and cultural narratives have influenced their family system. Albertina, who lived in France during Nazi Germany invasion had a unique understanding of safety, the value of family relationships, and sacrifice. Her thoughts on phases of her life tied to her son's current perception of the relocation transition. Felix felt strongly that Albertina's experiences be acknowledged and commemorated, which was evident in the memorabilia and artwork displayed throughout her room.

Dyadic critique of FLR. Thirteen dyads also had an awareness of the research system (e.g. aspects of the project), mentioned 39 times. Nine dyads believed the project format was challenging (e.g. excessive paperwork). Eight dyads appreciated the intervention structure and the facilitator's empathy. Multiple participants suggested FLR be held informally, over coffee or lunch. In general, dyads had many positive experiences and insights as a result of their participation. Although they clearly understood that the purpose of the follow up interview was to reflect back on the FLR, all fourteen dyads, including Sandra, engaged in additional remembering during the follow up, suggesting a notion of wanting more (Tompkins et al., 2015).

Sandra (daughter): I actually came away thinking one session probably isn't enough. But done over a period of time...I could see where this could be a valuable way to ...get at things that the two of us probably couldn't have done individually.

Discussion

Findings suggest FLR served as a unifying and collaborative resource for families, during relocation, especially in exploring and sharing the challenges of relocation (e.g. relational and instrumental aspects) and in enhancing family relationships. Dyads' candid and thoughtful comments lead to a deeper understanding regarding what is salient to them throughout this transitional time and the role of FLR in their adjustment.

FLR prompted dyads to be aware of how their current decision-making (e.g. 'Navigating the Relocation Transition') regarding relational and instrumental aspects of relocation was influenced by prior life experiences and likely will influence subsequent transitions. Relocation decision-making occurs before, during, and after the transition (Chen et al., 2008; Saunders & Heliker, 2008). As life course theory maintains, decisions and experiences are understood contextually through prior opportunities and constraints over the life course (Elder, 1998, p. 2). As practitioners intervene in the lives of families experiencing relocation, a focus on relational and instrumental concerns must be at the forefront of facilitators' dialogue with the family. Systemically, this research demonstrates the importance of hearing and valuing each family members voice as they uniquely describe their needs and experience of the relocation transition. Practitioners and researchers would benefit from using a systemic lens to consider the layers within the family as well as social, political, historical, and cultural experiences. Using this lens helps to contextualize experience rather than marginalize or limit family experience during relocation.

The FLR was an opportunity to take a break from the stress of the transition to spend time reflecting on family history, a

process nearly all participants enjoyed. Yet, the benefits of FLR extended beyond enjoyment. Dyads learned about one another, engaged in self-acceptance, reconciled difficult memories, and experienced relationship enhancement as evident through the categories within the theme 'Raising Emotions in Families.' Knowing ALF residents long for increased contact with their support network (Tompkins et al., 2015) and tend to invest more in family ties during relocation (Perkins, Ball, Kemp, & Hollingsworth, 2012), FLR can facilitate connection.

Although this study focused on older adults' relocation transition, facilitation of FLR at various moments throughout the life course has the potential to bring members together for future, collaborative decision-making. As suggested by Kennedy and colleagues' (2015) research on older adult adjustment to ALF, '[p]ast patterns of decision-making, forged by previous life experiences...[provides] a contextual background for everyday decision-making' (p. 22). Life review served as an avenue for open communication that facilitated conversations intended to enhance the relationship and future decisions (Dahley & Sanders, 2016). Dyads recognized by connecting historical influences and their personal and mutual trajectory (Elder, 1998), they could make sense of the current transition. As a preventative intervention tool, FLR can foster unity before transitions, perhaps preventing or reducing emotional difficulties among residents (e.g. social isolation) or familial challenges (e.g. caregiver burnout) as a result of the adjustment, potentially expanding beyond the dyad to other significant persons in the relocation process.

Reflecting on macrohistorical memories (e.g. historical time and place) prompted an intrapersonal and interpersonal dialogue between family members. For many dyads, exploring macrohistorical events was a launching place for discussing lifelong family living, coping, and relating. These nodal events oriented dyads (Elder, 1998). In addition, dyads commented on their values (e.g. reciprocity) and how these values were displayed during transitional moments in their lives. Elder (1998) suggested that 'historical forces' (p. 2) influence individual and relational systems. The value of sharing one's story can only be understood within the individual, relational, historical, and cultural influences of life as evidenced by how dyads spoke about FLR. For a few participants, exploring their mutual story was a painful or neutral process, reinforced by internal cultural messages to suppress their story.

Decreasing social supports during relocation and adjusting to an unfamiliar environment can contribute to older adults' overall feelings as well as their satisfaction with family relationships (Plys & Bliwise, 2013; Stadnyk, Jurczak, Johnson, Augustine, & Sampson, 2013). Yet, FLR provided dyads with a more robust perspective of each other's story, increased self-awareness, facilitated reconciliation, and led to an enhancement of their existing relationship. Finding avenues to connect families and address underlying concerns (e.g. via reconciliation) can support their desire for a quality relationship.

Limitations and future research

To our knowledge, this is the first study to explore the benefits of FLR during a relocation transition. Findings provide valuable insights into how FLR shapes families during transitional times. A limitation of the study is that the homogenous sample (e.g. mostly White/Caucasian). Larger, more diverse

samples are necessary to explore the influence of race/ethnicity on the FLR process. Larger, diverse samples as well as a tailored intervention format to include specific ethnic or cultural variations (e.g. Black history) as part of The Life Validation Interview (O'Hora, 2015) would promote cultural sensitivity by highlighting the importance of each family system and their unique background. We speculate that a greater ethnic variation in the sample could provide a deeper understanding of the social support systems or residents' care convoy (Ball et al., 2014) that links their prior life experiences to current relocation transition. A more geographically diverse sample also would illuminate the nuances of the tasks, challenges, and resources associated with relocation. For example, rural families may be more concerned with selling property than urban families.

Second, although the study inclusion criteria was intended to reach a particular population and focus on the transition process, it can be argued that families within six months of the relocation transition have already completed the most difficult aspect of the adjustment process – the move. These families may be less 'in transition' than those who are experiencing cognitive or physical limitations but have not made the decision to relocate, are unwilling to relocate, or are looking for other long-term care options. In addition, the data suggested that dyads prioritize relational and instrumental aspects of relocation. More information is needed to determine whether FLR could aid before a relocation transition such as meeting with dyads or multiple family members through community outreach or local organizations (e.g. agencies on aging, religious communities).

While FLR is a valuable tool that can be used by practitioners seeking to assist older adults and their families during relocation and other late life transitional times, a general concern is the lack of standardization for life review interventions (O'Hora & Roberto, under review). While there is benefit to having various interventions that explore unique aspects of individual, group, and family lives, transferability of findings is difficult across projects when the mechanisms of change are variable (e.g. discussing macrohistorical events, autobiographical processing). Future research using rigorous experimental designs are needed to evaluate FLR outcomes and identify FLR processes facilitating change.

Note

- Two participants identified as a friend of the older adult residents. They are referred to as family members throughout the paper.

Disclosure statement

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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