

Intergenerational Networks & Mortality Risk

Mediating Pathways in Later Life

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Introduction

Population aging, arising from continuous low fertility and increasing life expectancy, results in a **prolonged shared life time between generations** and underscores the relevance of research regarding this topic. Recent research has shown that intergenerational relationships are characterized by **reciprocal transfers and solidarity** over the shared life span. There might be **undetected potentials** on the individual and macro level, especially for grandparents and grandchildren. But also the second generation could benefit over and above the social-welfare state's financial impact.

Contribution

Previous research examined **direct and indirect effects** of intergenerational relationships on psychological well-being of the elderly. But there has been little explicit theoretical nor empirical analysis of how intergenerational relations may impact physical health outcomes such as mortality in later life. This relationship is not only suggested by other scientists but moreover theoretically conceivable.

This study contributes to the existing literature in two ways:

- explicitly stating **theoretical arguments** linking intergenerational relations to mortality in late life
- **empirically investigating** mortality among the elderly as an outcome in a longitudinal perspective

The objective is to provide **longitudinal empirical evidence** regarding the relationship between intergenerational relationships and longevity.

Research Questions

Can variations in mortality risk among the elderly be explained by intergenerational relationships?
How are intergenerational relationships influencing mortality in older adults?

Theoretical Background

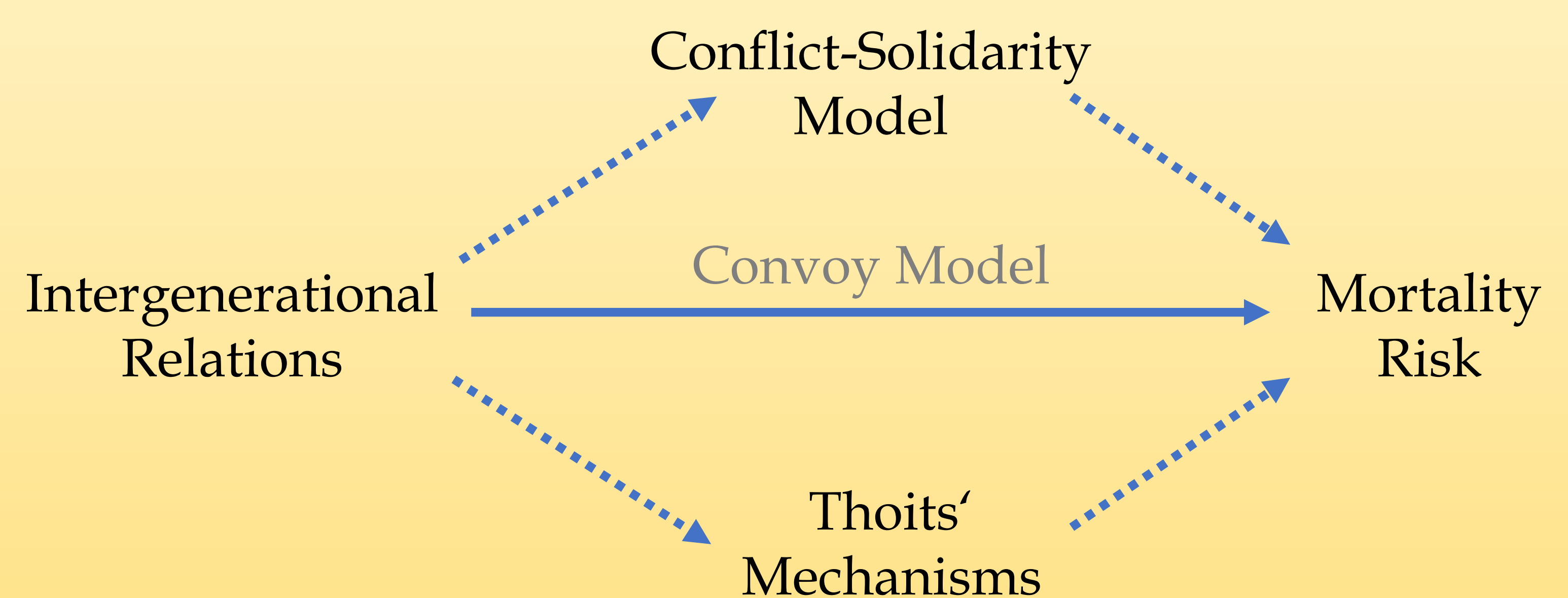
Bringing together three approaches:

First, the **Social Convoy Model** is referred to as an overarching framework. Second, drawing on Bengtson's **Solidarity-Conflict-Model** specific hypotheses regarding applicable solidarity types will be derived. Third, **Thoits** theorizes **seven mechanisms** linking social ties and support to physical and mental health.

The most relevant theoretical arguments combined are expected to **partly explain** the relationship between intergenerational networks and survival rates.

Conceptual Model

The model depicted below visualizes the mechanisms theoretically and empirically specified.



The **mediation model** suggests that all three theoretical approaches enhance understanding the mediating **pathways** between intergenerational relationships and survival.

Data & Analytical Strategy

Survey data such as the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA) or the German Family Panel pairfam (Panel Analysis of Intimate Relationships and Family Dynamics) will be exploited. Combination with official register information on mortality or discrete information based on the survey is proposed. It is intended: a) to capture **network dynamics over time** (critical life events), b) to account for **ambivalent perspectives** and c) incorporating **other kin relationships**, e.g. parents-in-law.

Survival Analysis: Using Cox proportional hazard regressions, mortality will be predicted based on the individual intergenerational relationship characteristics, adjusting for sociodemographics and several health confounders.

