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# **Family Perceptions of Mild Cognitive Impairment**

**Karen A. Roberto, Ph.D.**

**Rosemary Blieszner, Ph.D.**

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# Focus and Purpose

**Focus: MCI and Family Relationships**

**Conceptual Framework: Boss' theory of ambiguous loss and Pearlin's caregiving stress framework**

**Purpose:**

- **Examine family members' perceptions of their elder relative's memory loss**
- **Explore under what circumstances changes in the elders' memory influence family relationship dynamics**

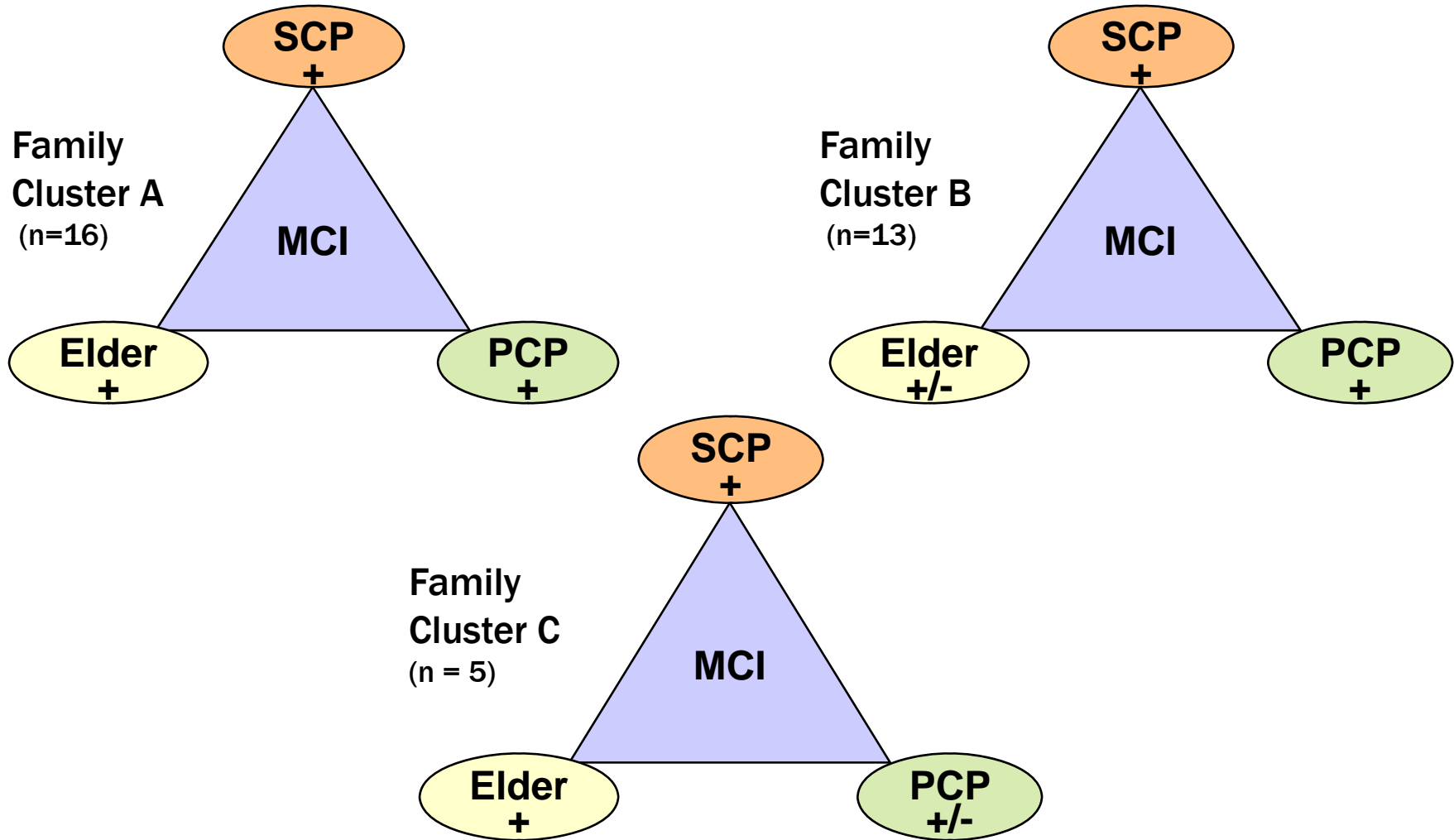
# 45 Family Triads

- **Elder: aged 60+**
  - 32 males; 13 females
  
- **PCP: family member most involved in the elder's life; familiar with clinic evaluation**
  - 9 males; 36 females
  - 34 spouses; 6 adult children
  
- **SCP: relatives aware of the elder's memory problems; monthly face-to-face contact with the elder & PCP**
  - 11 males; 34 females
  - 39 adult children

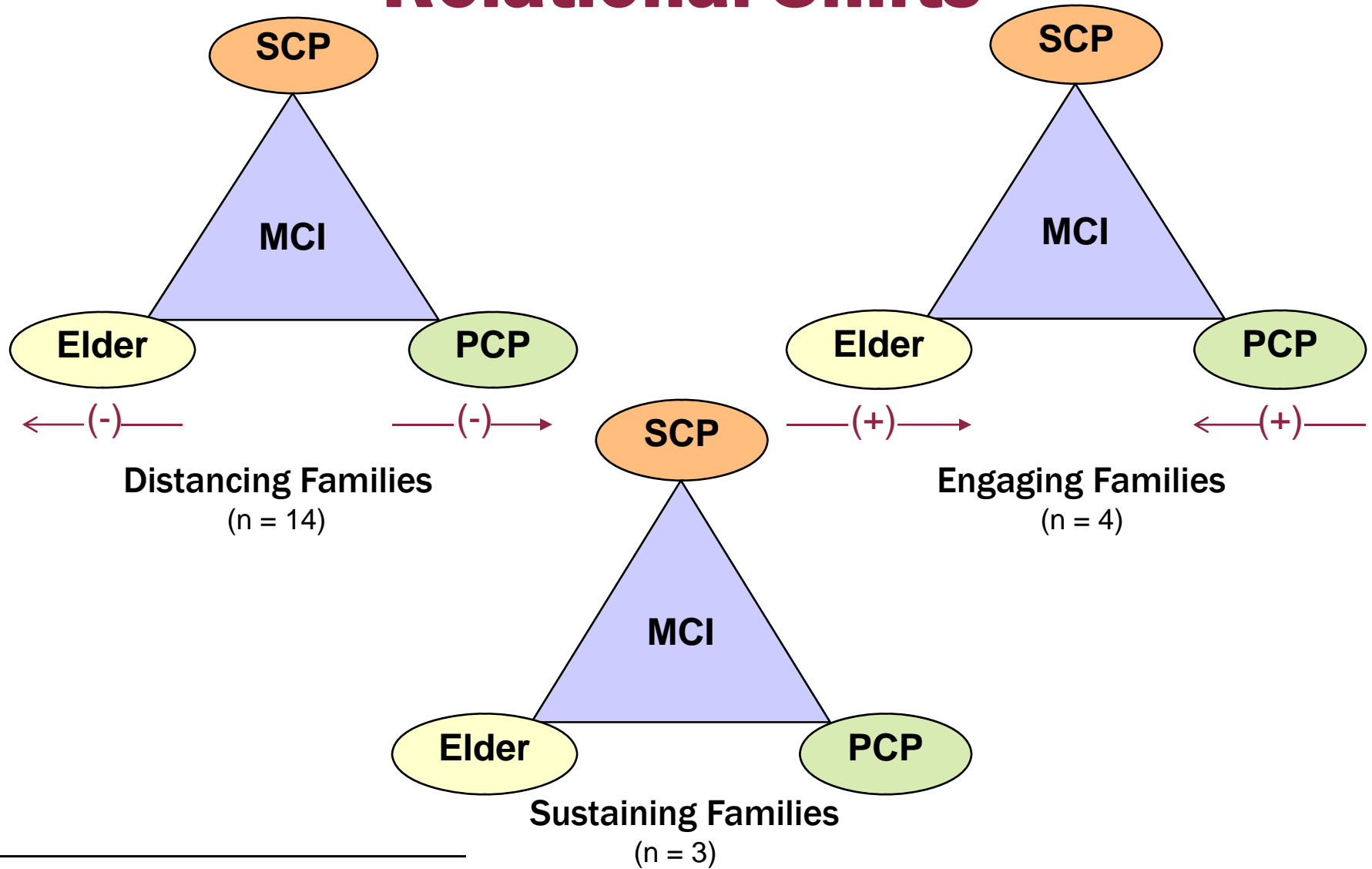
# Coding Categories

- Awareness of MCI changes
- Family/friend dynamics
- Social support
- Care partner role
- Negative emotions
- Positive emotions
- Negative interactions
- Positive interactions

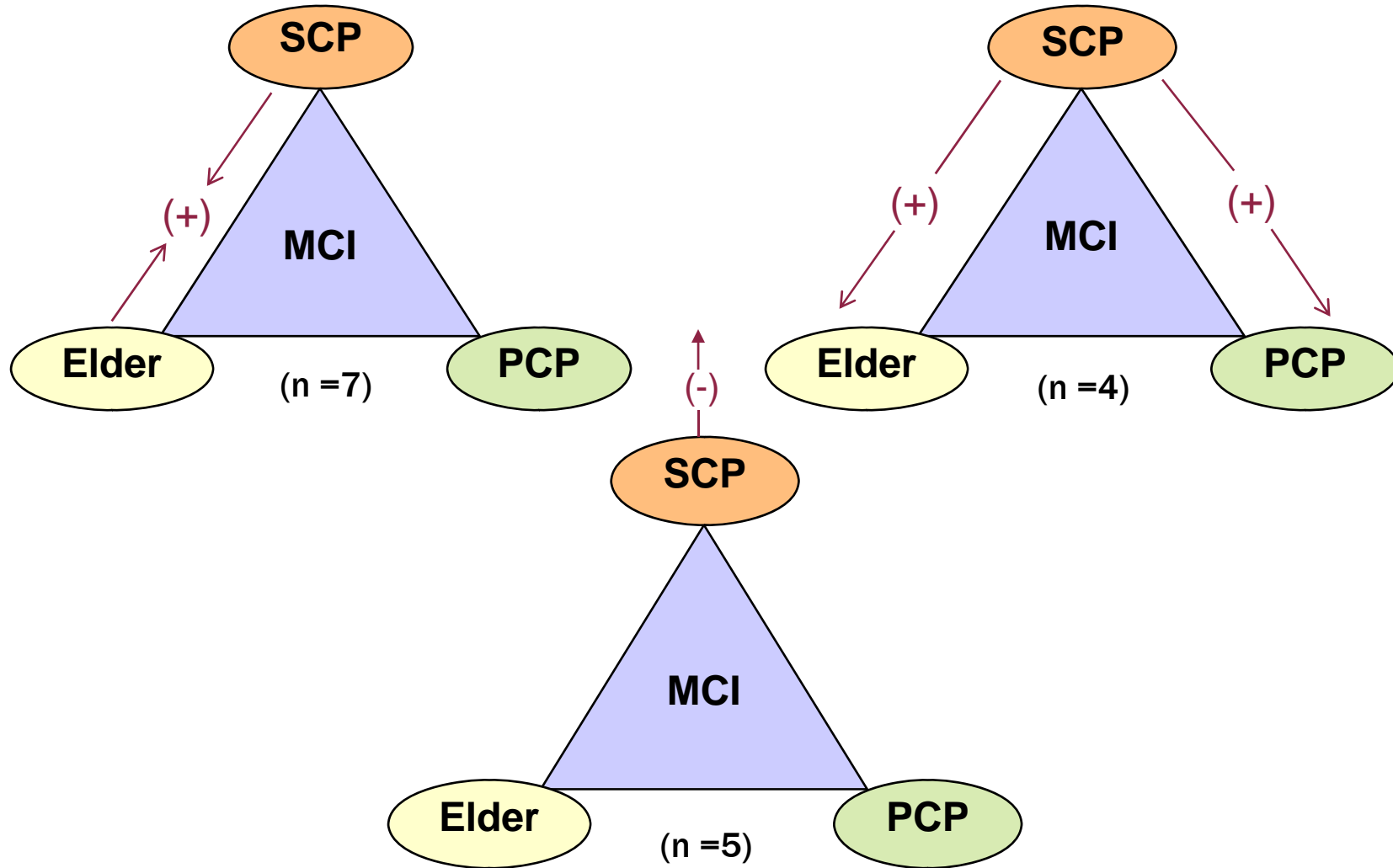
# Acknowledgement of MCI



# Relational Shifts



# Secondary Care Providers



# Summary

**Pronounced shifts in perceived closeness and quality of relationships in families in which an older member has MCI**

- **Acknowledgement of MCI**
- **Characterization of MCI**
- **PCPs expressed the most emotional stress**
- **SCPs response often associated with past relationship history**
  - **Intensify emotional support for the elder and PCP**
  - **With PCPs, collectively provide emotional support for the elder**
  - **Distance him/herself from family**



## **Conclusions**

- **When family members avoid acknowledging the changes and losses associated with MCI, relationships suffered**
- **MCI-related distress often led to communication problems, conflict, and aggravation of pre-existing relationship issues that affected family members' support and emotional involvement with one another**
- **Need for more family-level investigations to further understanding of relational complexities facing families in this pre-caregiving stage of memory loss**

## For more information

- ❑ [kroberto@vt.edu](mailto:kroberto@vt.edu)
- ❑ [rmb@vt.edu](mailto:rmb@vt.edu)
- ❑ Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI): What do we do now?

[http://www.gerontology.vt.edu/docs/Gerontology\\_MCI\\_final.pdf](http://www.gerontology.vt.edu/docs/Gerontology_MCI_final.pdf)