GENDER AND THE TRADEOFF MODEL:
PAID WORK AND INTERGENERATIONAL CARE AMONG OLDER ADULTS

Natalia Sarkisian
Department of Sociology
Boston College
140 Commonwealth Ave
Chestnut Hill, MA 02467

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ABSTRACT: Many people faced with demands for eldercare have to decide how to combine caregiving with paid work. Theoretical literature on employment and caregiving suggests that individuals approach this decision as a tradeoff; increases in one of these activities are theorized to lead to reductions in the other. Theoretical literature also suggests that this tradeoff might be particularly pronounced for women. Little research, however, empirically tests these assumptions. This paper uses longitudinal data from the 1931-1941 birth cohort surveyed by the Health and Retirement Study (HRS) biennially between 1992 and 2008 to examine the reciprocal relationship between employment hours and caregiving to parents and parents-in-law. Cross-lagged longitudinal structural equation models show that for this cohort of older adults, the tradeoff model holds for men (with employment hours exhibiting causal predominance), but for women, there appear to be no causal links between employment hours and hours of eldercare.

Individuals who take care of their aging parents fulfill a function crucial not only to their families but to the society as a whole. Caregiving, however, can be a highly demanding activity, ranging from a few hours per week of helping out to 40 or more hours per week , essentially a full time job. Caregivers for aging parents help out with a range of activities. Some of them are relatively undemanding, such as giving a ride to a doctor's appointment or helping with grocery shopping. In contrast, other activities can be highly demanding, such as bathing, dressing, and feeding the care recipient.

Caregivers often struggle to combine these caregiving activities with paid employment—a task that can be very challenging, especially when parents require many hours of care. According to the National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP study (2004, p. 13), a majority of caregivers (59%) reported that they have worked at some time while they were actively providing care. Of these, 62% reported that they had to make some work-related adjustments in order to provide care. 57% of these employed caregivers reported that as a result of their caregiving responsibilities, they have had to adjust their work schedules or take time off from work.

Not surprisingly, then, theoretical literature on employment and caregiving suggests that individuals approach paid work and caregiving as a tradeoff: Increases in one of these activities are theorized to lead to reductions in the other. Theoretical literature also suggests that this tradeoff might be particularly pronounced for women.

Most scholars make the tradeoff argument in a unidirectional way. For instance, some studies discuss the effects of caregiving on employment, arguing that caregivers are often forced to curtail their paid work—to reduce hours and to lose out in terms of pay. Other scholars make arguments regarding the effects of paid work on caregiving, stating

that those who work longer hours and earn more money are less likely to provide care to their parents– they often leave this task to their siblings, spouses, or paid caregivers.

Similarly, most empirical studies a priori assume one of these directions and use cross-sectional data to assess this link, which introduces endogeneity bias. Not surprisingly, the findings are mixed: Some studies find this link to exist, others fail to confirm the postulated relationship. Little research, however, empirically tests the tradeoff model by examining the reciprocal nature of the link between employment and caregiving.

Addressing these gaps in the literature, this paper uses longitudinal data from the 1931-1941 birth cohort surveyed by the Health and Retirement Study (HRS) biennially between 1992 and 2008 to examine the reciprocal relationship between employment hours and caregiving to parents and parents-in-law and to assess how the link differs for women and men.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Given the importance of the link between family caregiving and paid employment, many studies have attempted to address this link. Typically, much of the literature addressing this issue assumes that this relationship is governed by the trade-off model. That is, the literature views caregiving and employment as detracting from one another, so that increases in one of these activities lead to reductions in the other. Theoretical literature also suggests that this tradeoff might be particularly pronounced for women as they are more likely to be the ones balancing family and work.

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EMPLOYMENT AND DOMESTIC WORK

Because it examines related issues about the trade-offs between employment and family work, I first draw on the well-developed literature on domestic work. Although the findings are inconsistent, this research did find that the amount of domestic work is related to various aspects of employment, and that there are both some similarities and some differences in the relationship of employment to men's and women's domestic work.

Looking at women, studies find that their employment is directly linked to their domestic work. Most of these studies look at employment as exogenous and show that employed women do less housework than nonemployed women, that both the amount and proportion of household income that women earn is negatively associated with the time they spend on housework (Brines, 1994; Hersch & Stratton, 1997; Hundley, 2000) and mothering (Budig & England, 2001), and that the more hours women spend on the job, the fewer hours they spend on housework (Bianchi, Sayer, & Robinson, 2000; Shelton & John, 1996).

Less research has focused on men. Looking just at employment status, Berk (1988) suggests that employed men's housework differs little from that of nonemployed men,

although both Brines (1994) and Greenstein (2000) argue that men without jobs do less domestic work. Even less research examines the relationship of men's employment characteristics to their domestic work. Importantly, almost all of this research finds that employed men's housework is less tied to job demands than women's (Hochschild, 1989). Whether in terms of income or hours, the relationship with domestic work for men is either weaker than for women or nonexistent (Bianchi et al., 2000; Hersch & Stratton, 1997; Silver, 1993).

Overall, the body of research on domestic work emphasizes that, especially for women, jobs shape domestic work: the more money women earn and the more hours they work for pay, especially on standard schedules, the less housework they do. On the other hand, this literature also suggests that men and women respond to similar employment circumstances in somewhat different ways, and, men's employment is less tied to domestic work than women's.

EMPLOYMENT AND HELP TO PARENTS

The second set of relevant literature focuses specifically on help to parents, and its relationship to employment. Much of this literature on intergenerational assistance explores the effects of paid work on care provision or the effects of caregiving on employment and its characteristics. This literature often mentions the issue of causal direction, but few studies utilize longitudinal data to empirically examine both types of effects simultaneously.

A number of studies examined the relationship of employment conditions and help to parents for women and men separately. Of those that looked at women, some studies found that both having a job and working longer hours are associated with giving

less help to parents (Archbold, 1983; Boaz & Muller, 1992; Doty, Jackson, & Crown, 1998; Ettner, 1996; Johnson & Lo Sasso, 2000; Lang & Brody, 1983; Starrels, Ingersoll-Dayton, Dowler, & Neal, 1997; Stone & Short, 1990). In contrast, other studies found that women's employment status (Brody & Schoonover, 1986; Farkas, 1992; Himes, Jordan, & Farkas, 1996; Matthews & Rosner, 1988) and hours on the job (Pezzin & Schone, 2000; Rossi & Rossi, 1990; Wolf & Soldo, 1994) are not significantly associated with the likelihood or amount of help to parents. Yet a third set of studies reported mixed findings regarding the relationship between women's employment characteristics and the help they give. Pavalko and Artis (1997) found that although having a job did not affect whether women began to give help to a disabled relative or friend, employed women who started giving help subsequently reduced the hours they spent on the job, whereas in one of the rare studies that looks at earnings rather than hours, Couch, Daly, and Wolf (1999) found that helping elderly parents is negatively associated with the wage rates of married, though not unmarried, women.

The literature on men is smaller than on women, but somewhat more consistent. Most studies found that longer work hours (Johnson & Lo Sasso, 2000; Rossi & Rossi, 1990; Starrels et al., 1997) and higher incomes (Campbell & Martin-Matthews, in press; Couch et al., 1999) are associated with less help to parents. In contrast to these studies, a study by Gerstel and Gallagher (2001) found that neither income nor job hours have a significant relationship to total hours of help that married men give to either parents or parents-in-law.

Overall, there is a fair amount of disagreement about the relationship between help to parents and the employment conditions. The inconsistent findings are likely the result of three important differences among the studies.

First, studies used widely different operationalizations of help and employment. Sometimes defining it broadly and sometimes narrowly (Connidis, 2001), the operationalization of help ranged from the likelihood of providing any help (e.g., Laditka & Laditka, 2001; Neal et al., 1993; Stern, 1995), to the likelihood of providing specific kinds of help (e.g., Campbell & Martin-Matthews, in press; Farkas, 1992) or certain amounts of help (Johnson & Lo Sasso, 2000), to the number of tasks provided (e.g., Finley, 1989; Starrels et al., 1997), to the hours of help, whether annual (e.g., Couch et al., 1999; Laditka & Laditka, 2001) or monthly (e.g., Gerstel & Gallagher, 1994, 2001). In terms of time spent in paid work, some looked at total employment hours, either per week (e.g., Gerstel & Gallagher, 1994, 2001; Pavalko & Artis, 1997) or annual (e.g., Johnson & Lo Sasso, 2000), in some cases including those not employed as working zero hours (e.g., Laditka & Laditka, 2001), whereas others compared those employed full time to those employed part time and not employed (e.g., Boaz and Muller, 1992; Pezzin & Schone, 2000). In terms of earnings, some focused on wage rates (Couch et al., 1999) but others examined yearly incomes (Campbell & Martin-Matthews, in press; Gerstel & Gallagher, 1994, 2001). Moreover, most studies either treated employment as a dichotomy or examined only one employment characteristic at a time, failing to examine simultaneously how a number of employment characteristics shaped the help children gave parents.

Second, the studies differed in their methods of analysis and in their use and definitions of controls. While most studies treated help to parents as a dependent variable

and employment as an independent one, some used help as an independent variable and employment as an outcome (e.g., Starrels et al., 1997; Stone & Short, 1990; Wolf & Soldo, 1994), and some used help as both a dependent and an independent variable, estimating multiple equations (e.g., Ettner, 1996; Johnson & Lo Sasso, 2000; Pavalko & Artis, 1997; Pezzin & Schone, 2000). The majority of analyses were based on cross-sectional data, but there are a few that utilized longitudinal data (e.g., Johnson & Lo Sasso, 2000; Pavalko & Artis, 1997; Stern, 1995). Related to the different ways of measuring help and employment, and different kinds of data used, studies used different analytic techniques–some used qualitative analyses (e.g., Archbold, 1983; Matthews & Rosner, 1988), many used linear (e.g., Doty et al., 1998; Finley, 1989; Gerstel & Gallagher, 1994, 2001) or logistic (e.g., Farkas, 1992; Himes et al., 1996; Laditka & Laditka, 2001) regression methods to model either help to parents or employment conditions. Still others used various methods for joint or subsequent estimation of multiequation models predicting both paid employment and help to parents (e.g., Couch et al., 1999; Johnson & Lo Sasso, 2000; Pezzin & Schone, 2000). Studies also differ in their use and definitions of control variables, which we address in more detail below.

Third, the studies focused on different populations and used different types of samples. Some drew on nonprobability samples (e.g., Archbold, 1983; Brody & Schoonover, 1986; Matthews & Rosner, 1988) or regional samples (e.g., Finley, 1989; Gerstel & Gallagher, 1994, 2001; Pezzin & Schone, 2000; Rossi & Rossi, 1990). Most collected information from those giving help, but a few others collected it from recipients (e.g., Doty et al., 1998; Stern, 1995). Studies also often focused on a certain stratum of givers–for example, middle-aged (e.g., Farkas, 1992; Lang & Brody, 1983), or married

(e.g., Brody & Schoonover, 1986; Gerstel & Gallagher, 1994, 2001; Wolf & Soldo, 1994). Further, even though some included all parents and parents-in-law (e.g., Gerstel & Gallagher, 1994, 2001; Rossi & Rossi, 1990), many studies focused on a certain type of recipients–for example, impaired or disabled parents (e.g., Ettner, 1996; Himes et al., 1996; Stone & Short, 1990; Wolf & Soldo, 1994) or disabled elders more broadly (e.g., Doty et al., 1998), just on mothers (e.g., Finley, 1989; Lang & Brody, 1983), on parents in a certain age range (e.g., Finley, 1989; Laditka & Laditka, 2001; Matthews & Rosner, 1988), or on respondents' own parents but not their parents-in-law (e.g., Farkas, 1992; Laditka & Laditka, 2001). Studies also often sampled on the dependent variable, often focusing exclusively on those who gave considerable care to impaired parents (e.g., Boaz & Muller, 1992; Doty et al., 1998; Montgomery & Kamo, 1989). Such research yields a truncated view that makes much labor invisible: It not only neglects those in the early stages of a "caregiving career"–before a family member is seriously disabled (Aneshensel, Pearlin, Mullan, Zarit, & Whitlatch, 1995; Stoller, 1990)–but also neglects that large population who provide routine but intermittent help to those who are not seriously impaired but do need some informal assistance. The study population foci or sample selection procedures of such studies make it impossible to generalize to the general population of women and men with living parents.

In sum, no prior research has examined the reciprocal links between employment and paid work separately for women and men. Much research used narrow operationalizations of help and a narrow range of employment characteristics and focused on limited populations of help providers. Finally, much research examined only women or, less frequently, only men, making it impossible to assess whether employment

conditions–including wages, job hours and schedules, self-employment, or satisfaction–differentially shape the help that women and men give, and whether caregiving differentially affects employment characteristics. Each of these analyses is needed to substantiate a trade-off model of employment and caregiving.

OTHER RELEVANT FACTORS SHAPING HELP TO PARENTS AND EMPLOYMENT

Although the primary focus of this paper is the relationship between employment and help to parents, research shows that other factors that we will use as controls also influence both employment hours and the help adult children provide to their parents. Studies vary greatly in their use of controls, sometimes making it difficult to compare findings. One thing is clear, however – carefully selected controls are essential to examining the relationship between employment help to parents. Previous studies have identified a number of important factors, including characteristics of the individual adult child, characteristics of the adult child's nuclear family, and extended family characteristics.

With regard to characteristics of the adult child, one important variable is race. Research also suggested that as adult children age, they reduce the unpaid help they give to their parents (Couch et al., 1999; Ettner, 1996; Pavalko & Artis, 1997). A number of studies found that men's and women's education shapes their help to parents, albeit the findings are inconsistent as to whether it is those with more or less education who provide more help (Couch et al., 1999; Himes et al., 1996; Laditka & Laditka, 2001; Shuey & Hardy, 2003). Some research also suggested that when men and women are themselves in poor health, they are less likely to give help to their parents (Johnson & Lo

Sasso, 2000; Laditka & Laditka, 2001; Pavalko & Woodbury, 2000), even though other researchers found that not to be the case (Dautzenberg et al., 2000; Himes et al., 1996).

In terms of nuclear family characteristics, research suggested married daughters give less help to their parents than unmarried ones (Johnson & Lo Sasso, 2000; Rossi & Rossi, 1990). Although some research on men showed the same pattern (Rossi & Rossi, 1990), other research found unmarried sons give less help to their parents than do married sons (Campbell & Martin-Matthews, 2000). Further, at least some research suggested that the presence of children reduces assistance to parents (Gerstel & Gallagher, 2001; Pezzin & Schone, 2000); others, however, find no relationship (Dautzenberg et al., 2000; Laditka & Laditka, 2001).

Finally, extended family characteristics are especially important. Johnson and Lo Sasso (2000) argued that the relationship between help given and employment is much weaker when extended family characteristics are excluded from the analysis (see also Eggebeen & Hogan, 1990). Indeed, many studies attested to the importance of these factors in shaping help to parents, reporting that greater number of siblings, especially sisters, reduces the amount of help one gives to parents (Dautzenberg et al., 2000; Matthews, 1987; Spitze & Logan, 1990). Thus, we include as controls in our models these characteristics of the adult child (including race, age, education, and health), characteristics of adult child's nuclear family (including partnership status and number of minor children), and extended family characteristics (including number of living parents and parents-in-law and number of siblings).

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

In sum, most empirical studies a priori assume one of these directions and use cross-sectional data to assess this link, which introduces endogeneity bias. Not surprisingly, the findings are mixed: Some studies find this link to exist, others fail to confirm the postulated relationship. Little research, however, empirically tests the tradeoff model by examining the reciprocal nature of the link between employment and caregiving.

This paper's contribution to the literature is the use of longitudinal data to examine the reciprocal relationship between general population national sample of individuals across the adult life course to assess the relationship both of employment status and key employment characteristics to the gender gap in the amount of routine help adults give to parents and parents-in-law. We also assess whether the relationship between employment and help operates similarly for women and men. Hence the paper has three main research hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1. Employment hours have a negative effect on caregiving hours, and this effect is more pronounced for men than for women.

Hypothesis 2. Caregiving hours have a negative effect on employment hours, and this effect is more pronounced for women than for men.

METHODS

Data and Sample

The paper uses data from the Health and Retirement Study (HRS), a nationally representative, biennial, panel survey of older Americans and their spouses (University of

Michigan 2009). The HRS began in 1992 and the data are available through 2008. We selected our sample from the age-eligible individuals belonging to the initial HRS cohort. These are 9,760 individuals born between 1931 and 1941 who became HRS respondents in 1992. For these individuals, I included data from those time points where they had at least one surviving parent or parent-in-law. Thus, the paper utilizes a subsample of those who had at least one surviving parent or parent-in-law during the period between 1992 and 2008. Based on these criteria, of the 9,760 individuals in the HRS cohort, XX were included at the first wave (1992) and XX in the last wave (2008). This subsample was further divided into two subsamples by gender.

Outcome Variables

The dependent variables are hours of employment and hours of help given to parents and parents-in-law. The hours of employment variable reflects the usual hours worked per week at the main and second jobs (combined), topcoded at 80. Hours of help given to parents and parents-in-law variable is based on questions inquiring about the help with ADLs and IADLs that respondents and their spouses provided to their parents and parents-in-law in the past year (topcoded at 1000 hours).

Controls

To isolate the effect of employment on parental care and vice versa, it is necessary to control for a number of possible confounding factors. Therefore, I include controls for demographic characteristics, nuclear family characteristics, and extended family composition.

Demographic characteristics of adult child include age, race/ethnicity, years of education, and health. The first three of these were time-invariant, measured at the first

wave (in 1992). Race/ethnicity was a dichotomy indicating Black/African American individuals who do not identify as Hispanic; the reference category includes respondents who classified themselves as White/Caucasian and non-Hispanic. Other racial/ethnic groups such as American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, Brown/combination, Hispanic or Latino, and other were omitted from analysis. Age is measured in years. Our education variable is a dichotomy indicating those who had less than high school education. In addition, I used one time-varying demographic variable, health. Health was a dichotomy indicating excellent or good health, based on respondent's self-reported health status rated on a scale from 1 ("excellent health") to 5 ("poor health").

Nuclear family characteristics included marital status and number of children; both of these variables are time-varying. Marital status is a dichotomy indicating married or partnered respondents. Number of children indicates the number of minor children in the household. We applied a logarithmic transformation to this variable to improve its distributional properties.

Extended family composition measures included two time-varying variables. This includes number of living parents and parents-in-law, as well as number of siblings, logged to improve its distribution.

Analytic Strategy

The panel nature of the HRS is extremely valuable for a study on the reciprocal links between employment and parental care. Most studies examining this relationship use cross-sectional designs, which can raise serious concerns about the direction of causation and about self-selection biases. This study takes advantage of the longitudinal

nature of the HRS by examining cross-lagged effects of employment on parental care and of caregiving on hours of employment. In addition, I include a rigorous set of control variables to further minimize potential self-selection issues.

The analyses utilized LISREL 8.8 to estimate cross-lagged longitudinal structural equation models using FIML to deal with missing data and attrition. Figure 1 presents a simplified version of the main model based on three waves; the actual analyses were based on a similar model for nine waves of data. The model was first estimated for both women and men separately, as an unconstrained multigroup model. Further, a fully constrained model and a partially constrained multigroup model were estimated as well. In all of these models, both cross-lagged effects and the lagged dependent variable effects were assumed to be stable over time.

RESULTS

Table 1 presents the unconstrained multigroup models exploring the reciprocal relationship between hours of employment and hours of care. As the bivariate model indicates, clearly, there is a large degree of stability in both employment and caregiving hours over time for both women and men. With regard to cross-lagged relationships, however, we find that for men, hours of work at a given wave reduce care to parents at the next wave, while caregiving at a given wave leads to reduced work hours at the following wave. In contrast, for women, there appear to be no causal links between employment hours and hours of eldercare.

Next, I introduce controls for demographic characteristics and nuclear and extended family composition. As RMSEA value and the confidence interval indicates,

this model has a good fit, although FIML Chi-square is significantly different from zero, which is not surprising given the sample size.

The fill model confirms the findings of the bivariate model: For men, higher hours of work result in lower hours of care to parents at the following wave, and caregiving is tied to reduced employment hours at the next waveFor women, I once again find no causal links between employment hours and hours of parent care.

To test whether these diverging patterns between women and men are significantly different, I estimated a fully constrained multigroup model; this model had a chi-square of 5558.71 (df=1996), which is significantly different from the chi-square for the unconstrained model (5382.167, df=1976): The difference of 176.54 (df=20) is statistically significant with $p<.001$. Thus, overall, the models for women and men are significantly different. To further evaluate which effects were significantly different, I estimated a series of partially constrained models, constraining one relationship at a time and evaluating model fit. Based on these models, I identified the final partially unconstrained model that highlights similarities and differences by gender. As the comparison of chi-square test results for multivariate models in Tables 1 and 2 indicate, this final partially constrained model is not significantly different from the unconstrained model, which supports my choice of constraints. The partially constrained model confirms that the cross-lagged effects of employment hours on care hours and of care hours on employment hours exist for men but not for women.

Furthermore, a causal predominance test was conducted by examining standardized coefficients for the cross-lagged effects of employment hours and

caregiving hours for men; this test suggests that employment hours exhibit causal predominance for men.

CONCLUSION

The findings demonstrate that for this cohort of older adults (those born between 1931 and 1941), the tradeoff model holds for men but not for women. Thus, the applicability of the tradeoff model depends on gender. The first hypothesis suggesting that employment hours have a negative effect on subsequent caregiving hours was supported for men but not for women.

The finding indicating that the tradeoff model does not hold for women is very surprising; it clearly contradicts my second hypothesis. It is possible, however, that this lack of tradeoff between employment and hours of care for women is more characteristic of this cohort of women than of more contemporary cohorts.

Table 1. Unconstrained Multigroup Cross-Lagged Longitudinal Structural Equation Model

	Hours of employment		Hours of care	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Bivariate model:				
Hours of employment (lagged)	0.683***	0.693***	0.002	-0.004***
Hours of care (lagged)	-0.000	-0.069*	0.405***	0.403***
Full model:				
Hours of employment (lagged)	0.650***	0.646***	-0.001	-0.004**
Hours of care (lagged)	-0.024	-0.086*	0.399***	0.398***
Controls				
Age	-0.406***	-0.564***	0.024*	0.012
Non-White	0.383*	0.421	0.013	-0.087
Years of education	0.112***	0.153***	0.043***	0.010
Married	-1.369***	0.886**	-0.266***	-0.215***
Number of children (log)	0.020	0.312	-0.098	-0.046
Poor health	-3.083***	-4.989***	-0.155	-0.007
Number of living parents	0.365**	0.865***	0.270***	0.154***
Number of siblings (log)	-0.024	0.262	-0.332***	-0.161***

Bivariate model fit statistics: FIML Chi-Square=2192.725 (df=280, p<.001), RMSEA=0.046, 90% CI:=(0.044, 0.447).
Multivariate mode fit statistics: FIML Chi-Square =5382.167 (df=1976, p<.001), RMSEA= 0.0229, 90% CI=(0.022 ; 0.024).

Table 2. Partially Constrained Multigroup Cross-Lagged Longitudinal Structural Equation Model

	Hours of employment		Hours of care	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Bivariate model:				
Hours of employment (lagged)	0.688***		0.002	-0.004***
Hours of care (lagged)	0.000	-0.071*	0.404	
Full model:				
Hours of employment (lagged)	0.648***		0.000	-0.004**
Hours of care (lagged)	-0.023	-0.088*	0.399***	
Controls				
Age	-0.408***	-0.561***	0.025*	0.013
Non-White	0.365*	0.463*	-0.056	
Years of education	0.129***		0.052***	0.007
Married	-1.424***	0.956***	-0.242***	
Number of children (log)	0.128		-0.062	
Poor health	-3.088***	-4.986***	-0.051	
Number of living parents	0.367**	0.868***	0.258***	0.161***
Number of siblings (log)	0.082		-0.215***	

Bivariate model fit statistics: FIML Chi-Square=2194.907 (df=282, p<.001), RMSEA=0.045, 90% CI:=(0.044, 0.447).
Multivariate model fit statistics: FIML Chi-Square =5397.183 (df=1986, p<.001), RMSEA= 0.023, 90% CI=(0.022 ; 0.024).

Figure 1. Cross-Lagged Longitudinal Structural Equation Model for Three Waves