

Stress, Strain, and Health Among Primary and Secondary Caregivers

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Introduction

- Stress process theories and role strain theories would suggest that primary caregivers (CGs) and CGs of parents have greater demands and worse outcomes
- Interactions between primary CG status and relationship type may represent (in)consistencies with usual caregiving patterns that may affect CG outcomes

Aims

- Compare care demands, stress, strain, and health between primary and secondary CGs
- Compare care demands, stress, strain, and health across relationship type
- Explore interactive effects of primary CG status and relationship type on stress, strain, and health
- Determine if differences across primary CG status and relationship type are attributable to differences in care demands

Participants

- Data: National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP Caregiving in the U.S. 2015
- Population-based sample: 844 primary and secondary older CGs providing care (currently or within the past 12 months) for a parent, family member, or friend

Measures

Primary CG status

- Primary: CGs who reported providing the majority of care
- Secondary: CGs who reported someone else provided the majority of care

Measures cont.

Relationship type

- Self report that care recipient was a parent, other family, or friend (including neighbors)

Care demands

- ADL/IADL assistance (Sum of assistance with 7 ADLs and 6 IADLs)
- Duration of care (Number of years)
- Hours of care (Average per week)

Outcomes

Measure	Range (1-5)
Emotional Stress	1: not at all stressful - 5: very stressful
Financial Strain	1: not a strain at all - 5: very much a strain
Physical Strain	1: not a strain at all - 5: very much a strain
Health Status	1: poor 2: fair 3: good 4: very good 5: excellent

Statistical Analyses

- Chi-square and independent samples *t* tests for descriptive analyses
- 2 (primary CG status) x 3 (care recipient relationship) ANOVAs for differences in stress, strain, and health across primary CG status and relationship type
- Covariate adjustment for ADL/IADL assistance and duration of care

Results

Descriptive analyses

- Primary and secondary CGs were similar in age, sex, education, income, and race; secondary CGs were more likely to be married or living with a partner
- Family and friends were equally likely to be primary CGs

Results

Do care demands vary across primary CG status and relationship type?

Primary CG status:

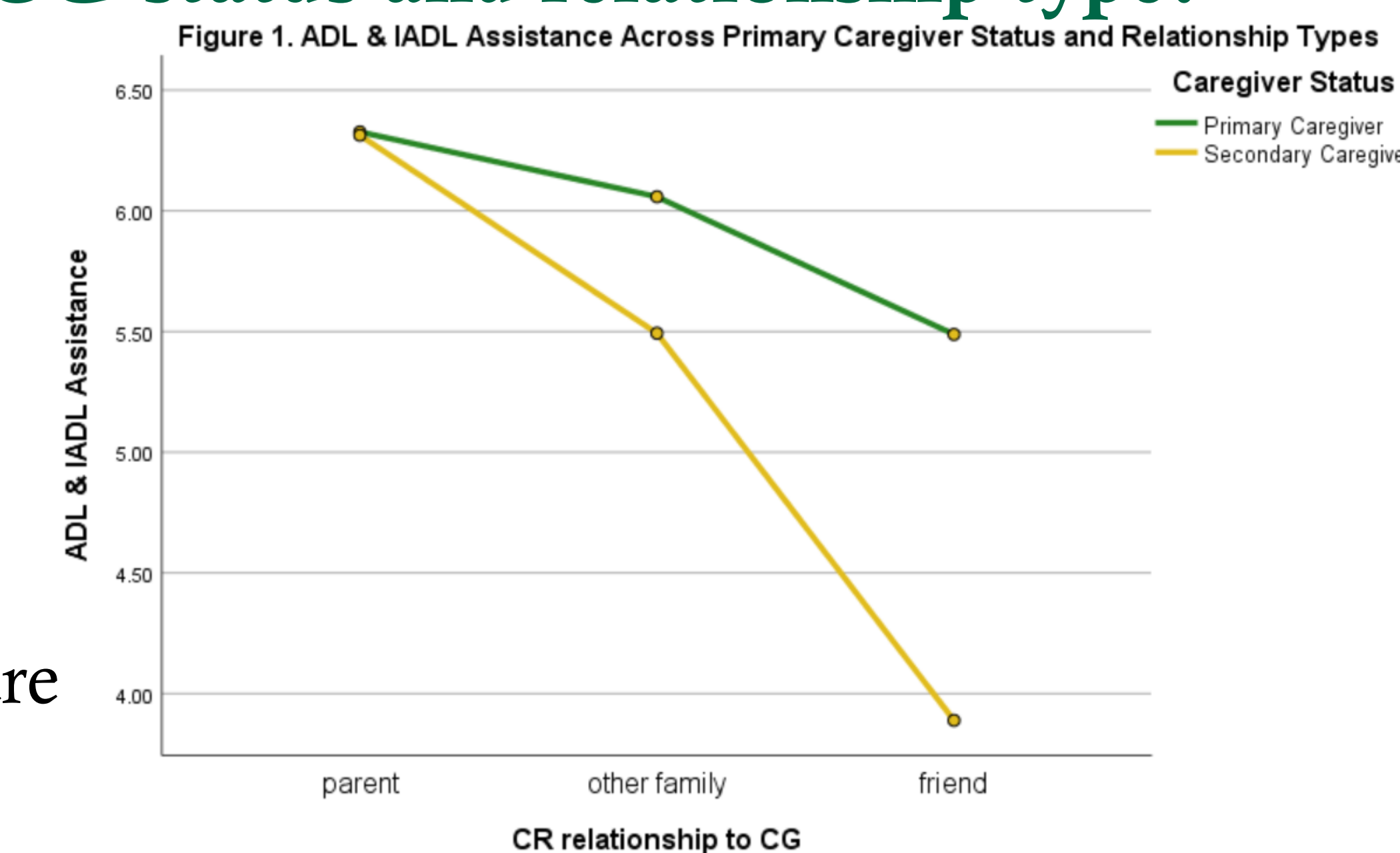
- Duration of care did not vary
- Primary CGs reported more hours of care

Relationship type:

- Family CGs reported longer duration of care than CGs of friends
- CGs of parents reported the most hours of care

Primary CG status * Relationship type

- A significant interaction between primary CG status and relationship type for ADL/IADL assistance showed primary caregivers of friends provided more assistance (Figure 1)



Do outcomes vary across primary CG status and relationship type?

Primary CG status:

- Primary and secondary CGs reported similar emotional stress
- Primary CGs reported more physical and financial strain
- No difference in self-rated health

Relationship type:

- CGs of parents reported the most and CGs of friends reported the least emotional stress, physical strain, and financial strain
- No difference in self-rated health

Table 2. Caregiver Stressors & Outcomes by Primary Caregiver Status and Care Recipient Relationship

Measure	Primary n = 475						Secondary n = 369					
	Parent n = 254		Other Family n = 137		Friend n = 84		Parent n = 166		Other Family n = 140		Friend n = 63	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Stressors												
Hours of care	32.23	31.09	27.05	29.51	17.56	25.05	23.20	27.98	18.28	26.17	7.75	13.93
Duration of care	5.33	8.37	4.15	9.16	1.96	3.07	3.03	4.32	3.44	6.79	2.17	3.27
ADL & IADL Assistance	6.33	3.10	6.06	3.37	5.49	3.31	6.31	2.99	5.49	3.11	3.89	2.53
Stress, Strain, & Health												
Emotional Stress	3.26	1.28	2.89	1.29	2.46	1.27	3.18	1.27	2.94	1.29	2.02	1.10
Physical Strain	2.58	1.20	2.56	1.22	2.25	1.15	2.55	1.20	2.46	1.23	1.76	0.96
Financial Strain	2.42	1.30	2.18	1.23	1.82	1.19	2.13	1.20	2.02	1.12	1.52	0.98
Self-Rated Health	3.31	0.94	3.50	0.89	3.48	0.96	3.45	0.97	3.39	0.92	3.41	1.07

Note. ADL = activities of daily living, IADL = instrumental activities of daily living; ADL & IADL Assistance if total count of help provided; duration of care measured in years.

Conclusion

- Despite fewer care demands, secondary CGs reported emotional stress comparable to primary CGs
- When they are needed, friends take on the role of primary CG and make significant care contributions
- Shared stressors (e.g. witnessing the decline of a loved one) may impact CG well-being more than care demands alone
- Future research should include understudied subgroups of friend and secondary CGs