

Gender, Social Ties and Cancer Screening among Elderly Persons

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Social Ties: Susan B. Anthony to Alice Paul, My Former Landlady



Susan B. Anthony



Alice Paul



Background

- Social ties related to health status
- Potential mechanisms - support, influence, access to information
- Some research has found that social networks are related to preventive health behaviors including colorectal and breast cancer screening
- Married people more likely to have prostate and breast cancer screening



Similarities between Breast And Prostate Cancer

- Each is second leading cause of cancer mortality
- Mortality and incidence increase with age
- Policy initiatives to remove screening barriers for elderly

Some Distinctions

Breast cancer

- Evidence that early detection reduces mortality
- No upper age limit in guidelines for screening
- Greater complexity & effort
- Major component of inaccuracy of reporting is telescoping

Prostate cancer

- Controversy about whether early detection reduces mortality
- Guidelines suggest a 10-year life expectancy for men screened
- Less complexity and effort to obtain
- Errors of omission & over-reporting

Objective

Assess the relationship of social ties and cancer screening for elderly women and men

Data source

- Longitudinal Study on Aging II (LSOA II)
- Nationally representative study
- Sample is 4,419 self-respondents to the Wave 2 CATI interview
 - **Excludes persons aged 85 or older at baseline & those reporting prostate or breast cancer**



Dependent variables

- Report of mammogram in past 1-2 years
- Report of prostate exam in past 1-2 years

Social Ties

- Indicators similar to those in Social Network Index
 - **Marital status**
 - **Sociability – contact with friends and neighbors, relatives, added adult children**
 - **Church attendance**

Control Variables

- Socio-demographic variables
 - **Sex, age, race, education, income +/- \$20,000**
- Health status
 - **Perceived health**
 - **Nagi measures of physical functioning (e.g. walk quarter of mile, carry 10 pounds)**

Analysis

- Correlates measured at Wave 1, dependent variables at Wave 2
- Analyses stratified by gender
- Analyses use survey procedures of Stata 9.0 to account for unequal probability of selection & complex sample design

Sample Description

Women

- 64% of sample
- Mean age 74.9
- % income < \$20 k - 57%
- Mean physical difficulties = 1.28

Men

- 36% of sample
- Mean age 74.0
- % income < \$20 k - 39%
- Mean physical difficulties = 0.79

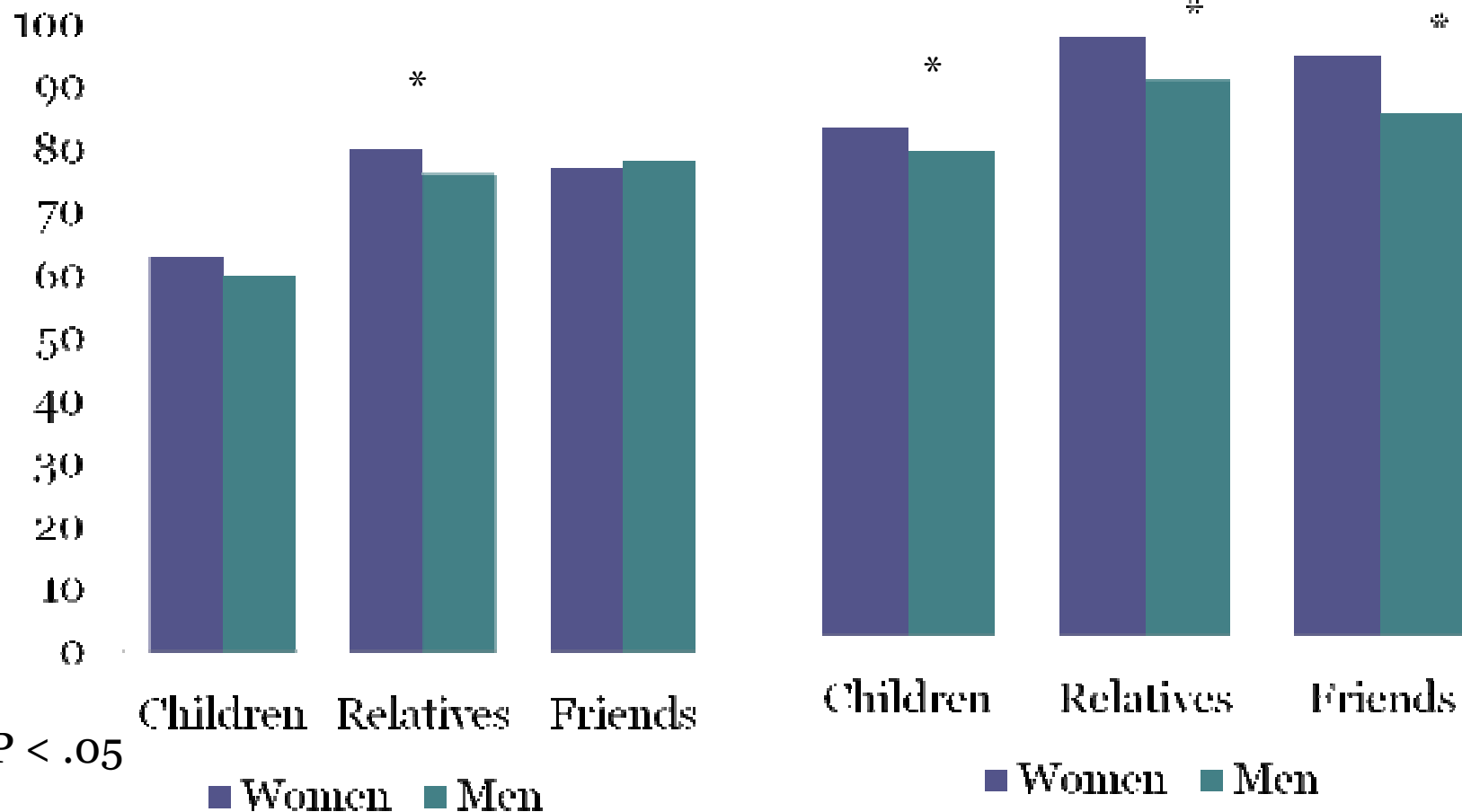
Receipt of Screening

- 67% of women reported mammogram in past 2 years
- 83% of men had prostate exam

Sociability - Past Two Weeks

Visit with

Phone



* P < .05

Gender and Social Ties

- Women report greater sociability, particularly over the telephone
- Marital status
 - **Men 2 times more likely to be married**
 - **Modal category for women is widowed**
- 60% of women reported church attendance vs. 54% of men

Results Summary: P-values from Logistic Regression for Mammography & Prostate Exam

	Women	Men
	P-value	P-value
Marital Status	.278	.021
Friends	.004	.164
Relatives	.049	.658
Children	.009	.671
Church	.160	.002
Age	.001	.931
Education	.026	.028
Income	.007	.018
Physical difficulty	.536	.661
Perceived health	.009	.963

Summary

- For women, interaction with friends, relatives and adult children were positively related to mammography
- For men, being married and attending church were positively related to having a prostate exam

Conclusion

- Except for marriage, women more likely to report recent sociability and church attendance
- Social ties influence cancer screening for both women and men, but with different patterns
- The odds ratios are not large

Social Ties as Social Influence

- Umberson (1992) – wives monitor the health of husbands more than the reverse
 - **Adult children agents of control for health of widowed mothers**
- Consistent with association of marriage on screening for men and of interaction with adult children on mammography for women



Potential for Intervention

- To influence screening for elderly women consider involving social ties of friendship or adult children
- To influence screening for elderly men consider involving the spouse or working with churches