

Psychotherapy is Less Effective
for Girls Living in Places with High
Structural Sexism:
Results from a Spatial Meta-Analysis

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What is structural sexism?

Structural Sexism =

norms, policies & laws that create & sustain

systematic gender inequity in power & resources (Homan,
2019)

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Example: Attitudes about men's vs. women's suitability for politics



What health inequities are
associated w/ structural
sexism?

Women in states w/ high structural sexism experience more:

- Violence (intimate partner violence, risk for homicide)
- Physical health problems (chronic health probs, poor physical functioning)
- Mental health problems (depression, PTSD) ←

Does structural sexism affect
mental health by undermining
treatment?

Example:

Anti-Black racism undermines HIV treatment efficacy

Spatial meta-analysis found that among 78 majority-Black samples, HIV prevention interventions were LESS effective in places w/ high structural racism



Does structural sexism reduce psychotherapy efficacy for girls?

Price, M., McKetta, S., Weisz, J., Ford, J., Lattanner, M., Skov, H., Wolock, E., & Hatzenbuehler, M. (in press). Cultural sexism moderates efficacy of psychological therapy for girls: Results from a spatial meta-analysis. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*.

How did we study this?

Spatial meta-analysis

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Spatial meta-analysis = how spatial factors (e.g., prejudicial norms, residential segregation) relate to intervention efficacy

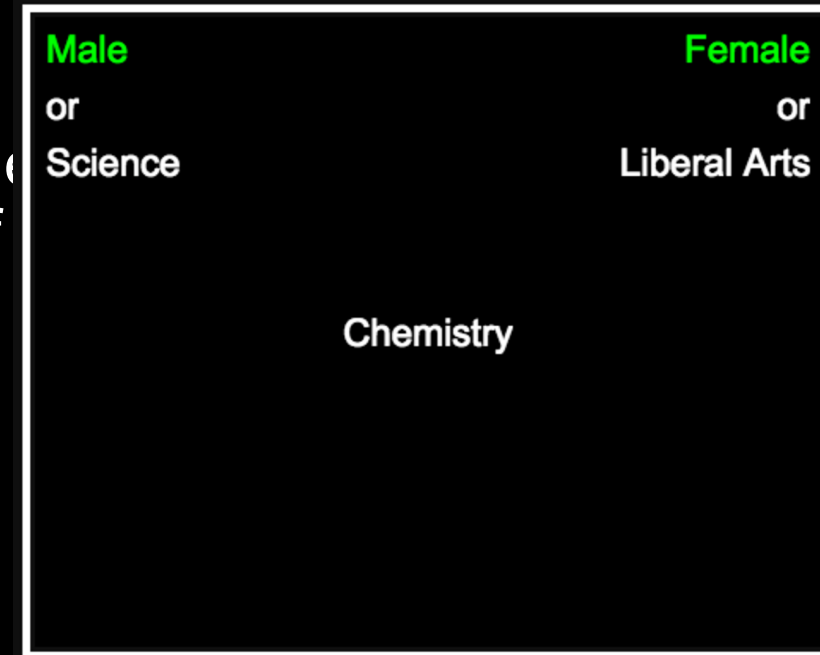
How did we study this?

1. Measure structural sexism across the U.S. (factor analysis)
2. Meta-analysis of studies with mostly girls *across states* (2-level random-effects meta-regression)

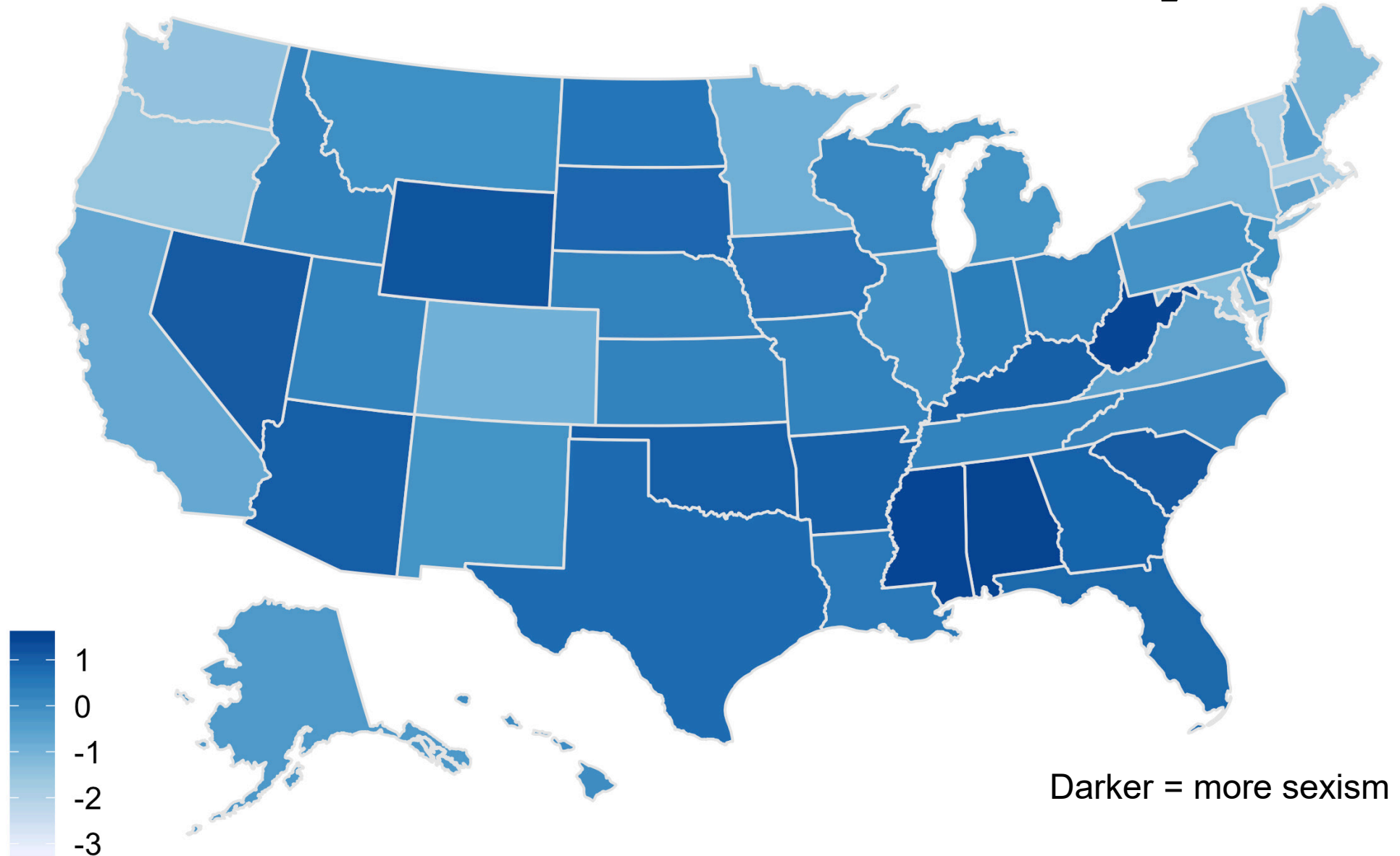
First, **measure structural sexism**

Focused on state-level attitudes/norms about women

- Implicit – from *Implicit Association Tests (IAT)*
 - Scores on gender-career & gender-science
- Explicit – from IAT+ national survey
 - *Ex:* “It is much better for everyone involved if the man works outside the home and the woman takes care of the children”



Structural Sexism Across Country



Second, meta-analysis

- *Data:* RCTs of child psychotherapy w/ majority-girl samples [from large database of >600 studies; Weisz et al., 2017; 2019]
- *Outcome:* effect size (ES; Hedge's g)
- *Moderator:* structural sexism
- *Covariate:* median household income
 - Potential confound because associated w/ outcome & moderator

Sample

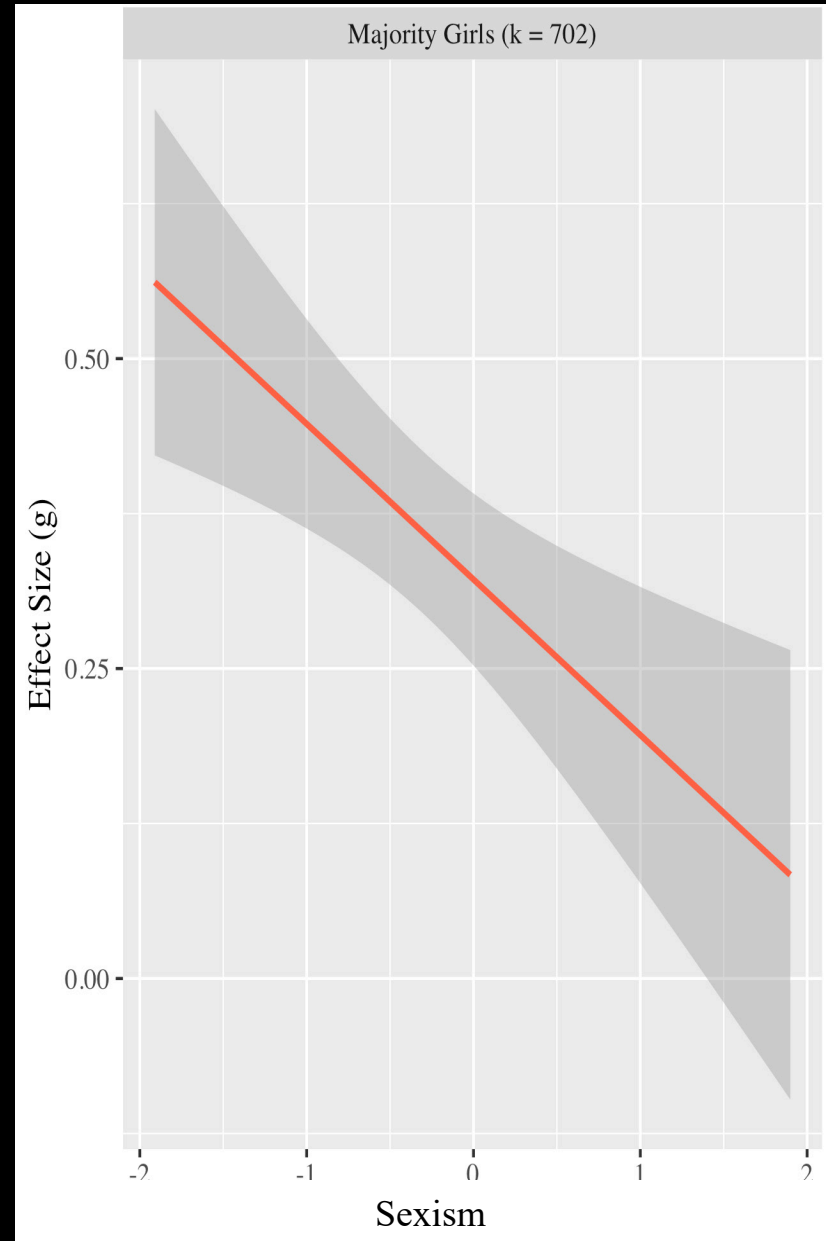
93 studies of mostly ($\geq 50\%$) girls

- $N = 5,980$ youth ages 4-18
- 702 effect sizes
- 32 states

Main finding?

- Treatment efficacy sig. lower in states with higher structural sexism ($\beta=-0.07$, $p<0.05$)

Figure 3. State-level Cultural Sexism and Effect Size Across Subsets by Majority Sex



To strengthen inferences

Also ran our analysis w/ 221 **majority-boy studies**

No significant effect ($\beta=0.003$, $p=0.86$)

[also ran several additional sensitivity analyses detailed in paper]

Figure 3. State-level Cultural Sexism and Effect Size Across Subsets by Majority Sex

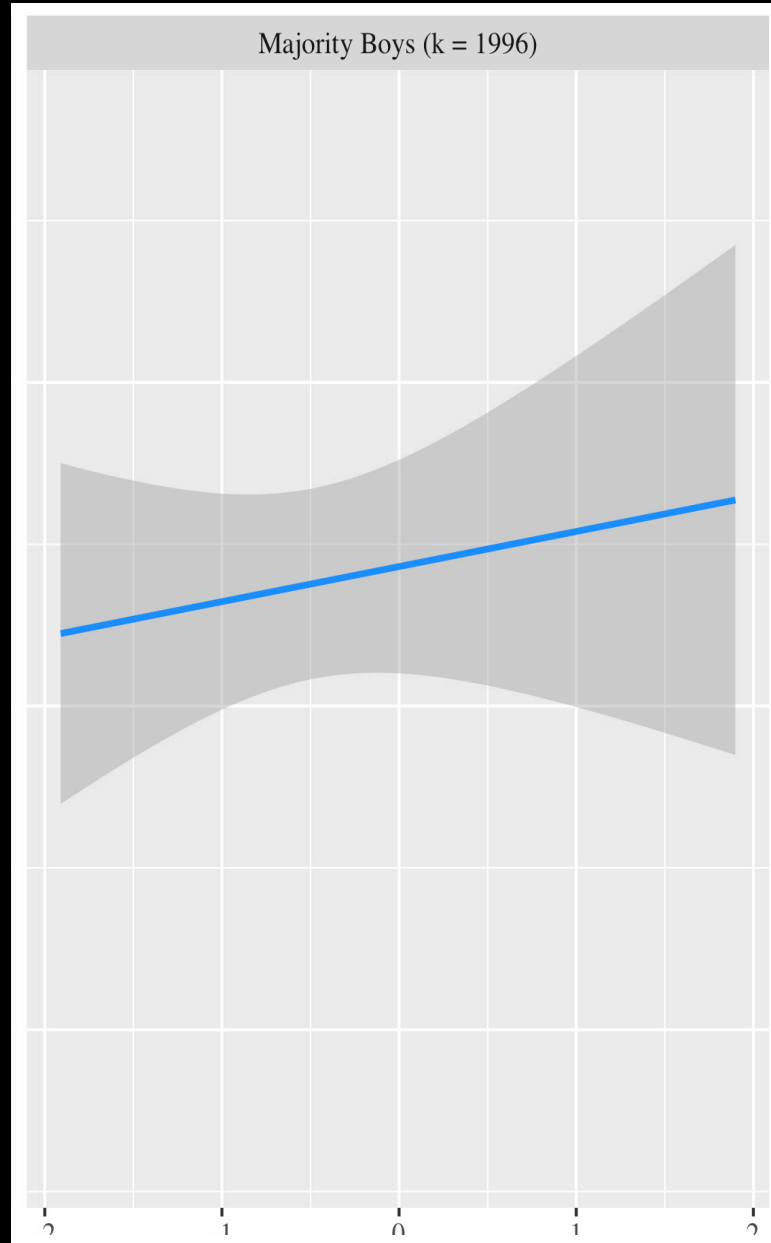
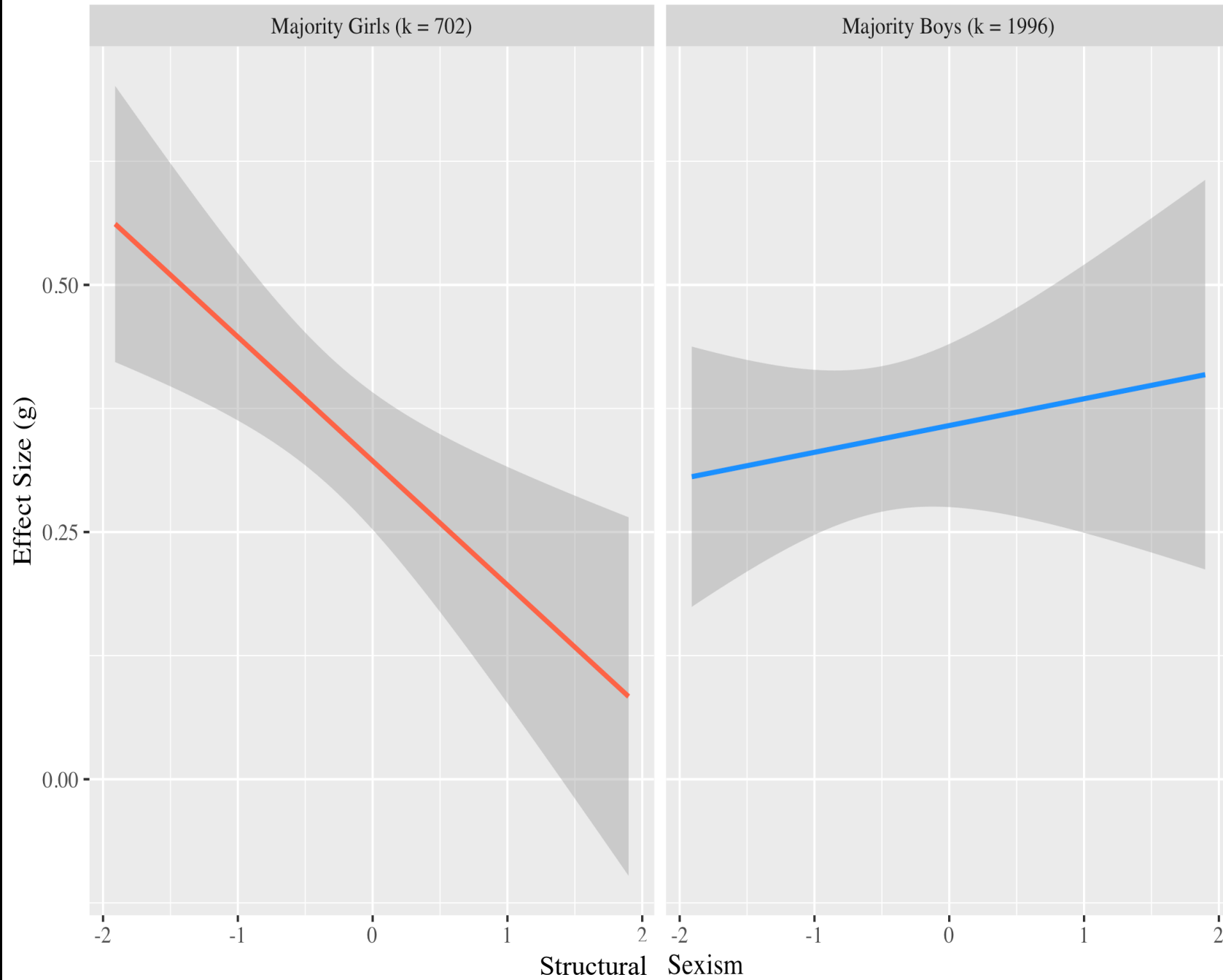


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What's the takeaway?

Structural sexism seems to makes it harder for girls to benefit from therapy

Implications

Explore causal mechanisms

- Does structural sexism → processes (e.g., hopelessness, hypervigilance) that hinder treatment engagement?
- Would addressing structural sexism (e.g., via multi-level interventions) enhance outcomes?

Study other forms of structural stigma

- Recently replicated this study examining anti-Black racism (Price et al., 2021)

COVID-specific implications

- Heightened material sexism (e.g., unemployment) due to COVID, it may be critical to examine impact of on treatment efficacy for girls/women

THANK YOU!

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www.affirmlab.org ←preprints here



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