

Meso- and Micro-level Structural Sexism and Mental Health: Comparing Women and Men in Different-gender Couples

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INTRODUCTION

- Women tend to have poorer mental health compared to men
- So far, research has largely focused on individual factors to explain gender differences
- Feminist scholars argue that gender is a multi-level system & analyses should better reflect this

METHODS

- The National Couples' Health and Time Study (NCHAT)
 - Nationally-representative study of cohabiting and married U.S. adults aged 20 to 60 ($N = 3642$)
 - STATA 16.0; weighted ordinary least square regressions
 - Analyses include 968 couples where both partners completed the survey and were in different-gender relationships
- **Independent Variables:**
 - **Micro-level structural sexism:**
 - Respondents' perception about the safety of their living area for women (1: not a good place – 5: good place)
 - **Meso-level structural sexism:**
 - Between men and women partners
 - Logged ratio of annual incomes
 - Ratio of ages
 - Relative educational attainment
- **Dependent Variables:**
 - Loneliness (continuous; 3 items; $\alpha = .84$)
 - Depressive symptoms (continuous; 10 items; $\alpha = .87$)
 - Generalized anxiety (continuous; 7 items; $\alpha = .92$)

CONCLUSION

- Micro-level structural sexism was not only harmful for women's but also for men's mental health
- Meso-level structural sexism mattered in that:
 - Women were lonelier when there was a wider age gap with their older partners who were men
 - Men who had the same educational attainment as their partners had more anxiety
- **Creating healthy relationships and safe spaces and neighborhoods for women is essential for improving both women and men's mental health**

RESULTS

- The safer the respondents perceived their area to be for women, the lower the level of loneliness, depression, and anxiety for both women and men
- The older the man compared to the woman, the more loneliness women reported
- Among men, having the same educational attainment as their partner was associated with higher levels of anxiety compared to when their partner had higher educational attainment

Table 1

	Loneliness		Depressive Symptoms		Generalized Anxiety	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Neighborhood safety for women	***	***	***	***	***	***
Logged ratio of annual incomes						
Ratio of ages	**					
Relative educational attainment						*
N	826	827	803	803	817	815

Note: *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$