

Gender Differences in Mental Health: Variation by Social Class

Research Question

- Is there a gender difference in mental health?
- Does the association vary by social class?

Significance

- Mental health is one of the most important aspects of every day life.
- There have been many social movements to increase awareness of mental health issues: e.g. Bell Let's Talk ("Our Initiatives", 2019).
- Studying gender differences allows us to examine mental health consequences of gendered lives.

Background

- Gender roles contribute to worse mental health, with mental health advantages of holding multiple roles are fewer for women than men (Simon, 1995).
- Wives care about housework performance and feel that its burden is placed upon them, whereas husbands care about who performs paid work and feel that it is their responsibility (Glass & Fujimoto, 1994).
- Time spent in housework is associated with increased depression, whereas paid employment is associated with reduced depression (Glass & Fujimoto, 1994).
- Unemployment has more of an effect on mental health on men than women when considering gender, family responsibilities, and social class (Artazcoz et al., 2011).

Hypotheses

- Women overall will be more likely to be depressed than men.
- Gender differences will be greater for the higher social class.

Data and Sample

- 2016 General Social Survey (GSS)
- American adults aged 18 and older living in non-institutionalized households who speak English
- $N = 2,867$

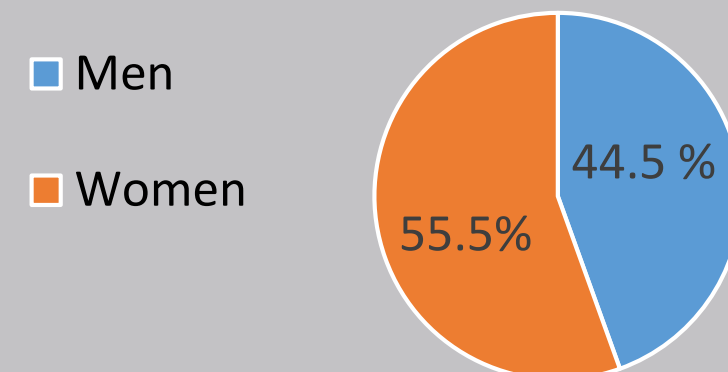
Dependent Measure

- Center of Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D)
- "Please tell me how much of the time during the past week..."
 - (a) you felt depressed
 - (b) your sleep was restless
 - (c) you were happy
 - (d) you felt lonely
 - (e) you felt sad
- 0= None or almost none of the time to 3= all or almost all of the time
- Sum of the five items; Range 0-15
➤ $M = 3.6, SD = 2.7$

Independent Measure

- Gender

Figure 1. % Distribution of Gender



Analytical Plan

- Compare means and independent sample t-tests using SPSS

Control Measure

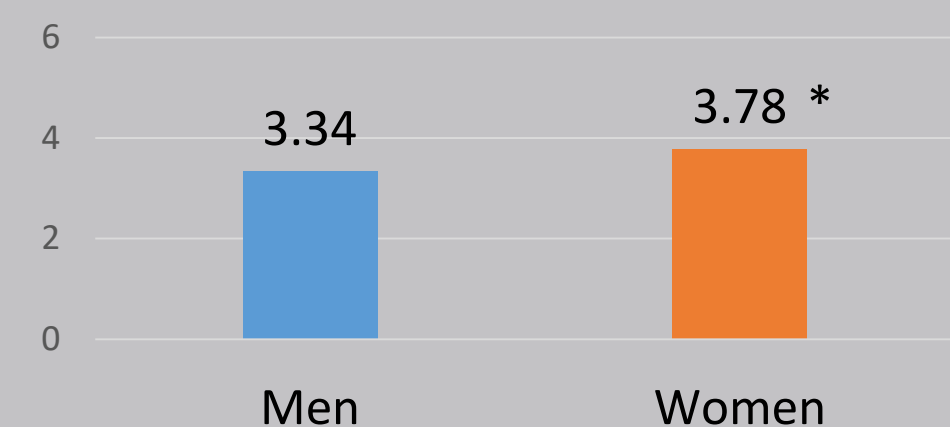
- Perceived Social Class
- "If you were asked to use one of four names for your social class, which would you say you belong in..."

Figure 2. % Distribution of Social Class



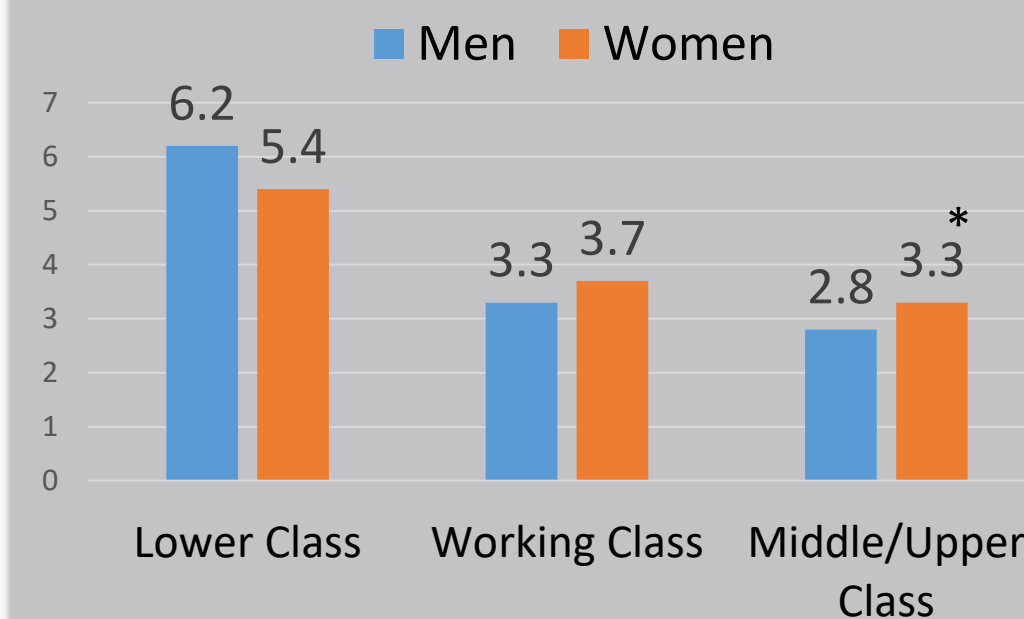
Results

Figure 3. Mean CES-D Scale by Gender



*Gender differences are significant at $p < .05$ (T-test).

Figure 4. Mean CES-D Scale by Gender and Social Class



*Gender differences are significant at $p < .05$ (T-test).

Summary of Findings

- Overall, the average depression score was significantly higher for women ($M = 3.8$) than men ($M = 3.3$) ($p < 0.05$).
- The average depression score was significantly higher for women ($M = 3.3$) than men ($M = 2.8$) for the middle or upper class ($p < 0.05$).
- There was no significant gender difference in depression among the working class.
- The average depression score was higher for men than women among the lower class, although not significantly different.
- My hypotheses were supported: mental health outcomes were worse for women than men in the middle/upper class, but there was not a significant difference in men and women in the lower or working class.

Discussion

- Further research could look into how men and women create meaning of themselves as a gender.
- Men of the lower class most likely experienced the higher depression levels over men in every other class because of the lack of financial resources. This in turn could lead to stress due to their career driven socialization.

References

- Artazcoz, L., Benach, J., Borrell, C., & Cortes, I. (2011). Unemployment and mental health: Understanding the interactions among gender, family roles, and social class. *American Journal of Public Health, 94*(1), 82-88.
- Glass, J. & Fujimoto, T. (1994). Housework, paid work, and depression among husbands and wives. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 35*, 179-191.
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- Simon, R.W. (1995). Gender, multiple roles, role meaning, and mental health. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 36*, 182-194.