Examining the Relationship Between Social Class and Mental Health

Jackson Pahle (Jpahle@Bgsu.edu)
Department of Sociology
Bowling Green State University

Research Questions
- Is there a relationship between education, and mental health?
- Does the association vary by gender?

Significance
- In 2017, an estimated 46.6 million adults aged 18 or older were living with a mental illness in the United States (National Institute of Mental Health, 2017)
- While the benefits still outweigh the costs of college, the gap is decreasing quickly (Abel & Deitz, 2014).

Background
- Previous studies found that the higher a person's social class, the better their mental health (Muntaner et al., 2007, Muntaner et al., 2015).
- People with higher education have higher incomes and better job conditions (Muntaner et al., 2007).

Hypotheses
- There will be a negative relationship between education and poor mental health.
- There will be similar results for both men and women.

Data and Sample
- The 2014, 2016, and 2018 General Social Survey (GSS).
- A nationally representative sample of American adults aged 18 and older living in non-institutionalized households in the U.S. continent who speak English or Spanish.

Chi-Square Tests
- Chi-square tests were significant at p < .001 for the total sample and were significant for both men and women at p < .05.

Summary of Findings
- Those with more education are less likely to report having 6 or more days of poor mental health than those with less education, regardless of gender.
- Women are more likely to report more days having poor mental health than men.
- Differences in mental health by education level were small.

Future Research
- Socioeconomic status can also be measured through income and occupation level.
- Moving forward, more research should be done either focusing on one of these aspects, or socioeconomic status as a whole.

References