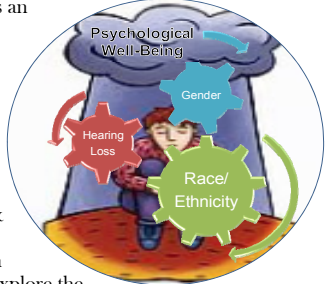


DIFFERENTIAL EFFECT OF HEARING IMPAIRMENT ON PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL BEING BY GENDER AND RACE/ETHNICITY

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INTRODUCTION

Hearing impairment is a chronic condition producing negative associations with communication, social integration, cognition and overall psychological well-being. Social psychological research has also hypothesized that there is an association between social status and psychological well-being (McCleod & Owens, 2004). In an attempt to explore the possible effects of social stratifiers (gender & race/ethnicity) on the psychological well-being of hearing impaired individuals, the following questions have been asked:



- Are individuals who are exposed to multiple dimensions of social disadvantage (i.e. race, class, gender) affected more negatively by hearing-impairment than individuals in the social majority?
- And if so, what implications might these results have for audiologists?

“Double Jeopardy” vs. “Cumulative Disadvantage”

“Double jeopardy” describes the dual discriminations of racism and sexism that negatively affect African-American women. The idea of “cumulative disadvantage” has expanded double jeopardy to include multiple forms of discriminations (e.g. discriminations due to age, class, disability). Previous quantitative research studies have confounded cumulative disadvantage with double jeopardy. Although qualitative analysis strongly supports the double jeopardy hypothesis, quantitative analysis gives little support to this theory in its original form (McCleod & Owens, 2004).

METHOD:

Interview data from the nationally representative *National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey* (NHANES) were used for analysis. Subjects who reported some degree of perceived hearing impairment and who received the World Health Organization Composite International Diagnostic Interview (CIDI) were analyzed.



NHANES assesses the health & nutritional status of adults and children in the United States. It is a major program for the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). As part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) NCHS has the responsibility for producing vital health statistics for the Nation. This study examined three two-year cycles of the continuous NHANES for the years 1999 to 2004.

Controlling for income, the cumulative effects of gender and ethnicity on psychological well-being of hearing impaired individuals were assessed using logistic regression.

DEPENDENT VARIABLE:

Psychological distress: The presence or absence of one or more of the following: anxiety, major depression or panic disorders as diagnosed through the CIDI

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES:

Background factors: Annual family income was used as a control variable

Gender: Male; Female

Race/Ethnicity: White; Black; Hispanic; Other

Perceived hearing loss: Hearing difficulty; No hearing difficulty

Self-reported hearing loss has proven to be an accurate estimate of hearing loss when compared to audiometrically derived measures (Nondahl et al., 1998).

RESULTS:

Effects of gender & race/ethnicity on the psychological well-being of hearing impaired individuals.

GENDER	Male				Female			
	White	Black	Hispanic	Other	White	Black	Hispanic	Other
MODEL CHI SQUARED	.96 N = 261	3.88 N = 122	1.38 N = 169	1.5 N = 28	3.37 N = 338	6.69 N = 140	1.5 N = 209	.53 N = 31
ODDS RATIO	1.09	5.66	.73	4.74	1.71	8.17	2.62	2.70

★ = p < .05

Eight logistic regression equations were used to predict the presence of psychological distress from effects of gender and race/ethnicity for hearing impaired individuals. Only the regression for Black hearing impaired women was significant beyond the .05 level. The odds ratio for this group (8.17) reveals that, among Black women, the likelihood one will report one or more symptoms of psychological distress are 717% higher for women who report a hearing loss than for those who do not. No other combination of gender or race/ethnicity was associated with symptoms of psychological distress.

CONCLUSIONS / IMPLICATIONS:

The results from this analysis suggest that African-American women are uniquely at risk for psychological distress as a result of hearing impairment.

While these findings support the much-debated double jeopardy hypothesis in its original form, we cannot universally state that all individuals who are exposed to multiple dimensions of social disadvantage (i.e. race, class, gender) are affected more negatively by hearing impairment than individuals in the social majority. This is due to the fact that these findings do not also support the theory of cumulative disadvantage which would have included other minorities with hearing-impairment.

Focusing solely on an individual's hearing impairment ignores all other relevant aspects of that individual's identity. By ignoring these characteristics, we run the risk of missing variations in each individual experience of hearing-impairment. In addition, these results underline the importance of representative sampling so that our research findings may be generalizable to all clinical populations.

FURTHER STUDY:

Future studies should investigate what it is about the ways that African American women with hearing impairment are positioned in the social structure that makes them vulnerable to psychological distress.

This poster is available for download at
<http://isc.memphis.edu/wmst/> or
www.janijohnson.org

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