



# Black & Gay in the Church: The effects of religious homophobia on mental health



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## Abstract

Black lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (lgbt) folks in the United States often face violence and harm by way of homophobia embedded within the religious teachings they absorb and the religious settings they are in. In turn, the harm and violence experienced, negatively impact their mental health in various ways. The current study was a secondary analysis from Project STRIDE (New York 2004-05). The present study aimed to examine if Black lgbt individuals would be more likely to experience mental health issues via depression and anxiety disorders if they identified as being religious compared to those who did not identify as religious. Results indicated that there was neither a significant relationship between religiosity and mental health disorder diagnoses nor were there differences in depression scores for the two groups, challenging the findings in existing literature. The results of the current study highlight the need for further research on the impact that religiosity has on the lived experiences of black lgbt individuals and their mental health.

## Introduction



- Heterosexism is embedded in America's fabric
- Re: Non-heterosexuality as a mental health disorder
- Lgbt folks: more frequent and severe mental health issues (vs straight folks)
  - Religion=oppressive structure for lgbt folks
  - Minority stress theory (MST)
- Intersectionality of oppression for black, lgbt, and religious folks
  - Poor health outcomes (early death, chronic diseases)

### Gaps in Literature

- Info from Black LGBT folks individually
- Info on intersection of race, sexuality, and religion
- Mental health indicators of Black LGBT+ folks

## Objectives

**Research Question:** Are Black lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals who identify as religious, more likely to experience mental health issues (depression and anxiety)?

## Objectives

### Hypothesis:

Black lgbt individuals who identify as religious will experience more anxious and depressive like symptoms compared to their heterosexual counterparts.

## Methods

The current study is a secondary Analysis from Project STRIDE (longitudinal study) conducted in New York from 2004 to 2005.

### Sample:

- Purposive & Snowball
- Black & Non-hetero participants (N=131)

### Data collection:

- Ethnographic immersion

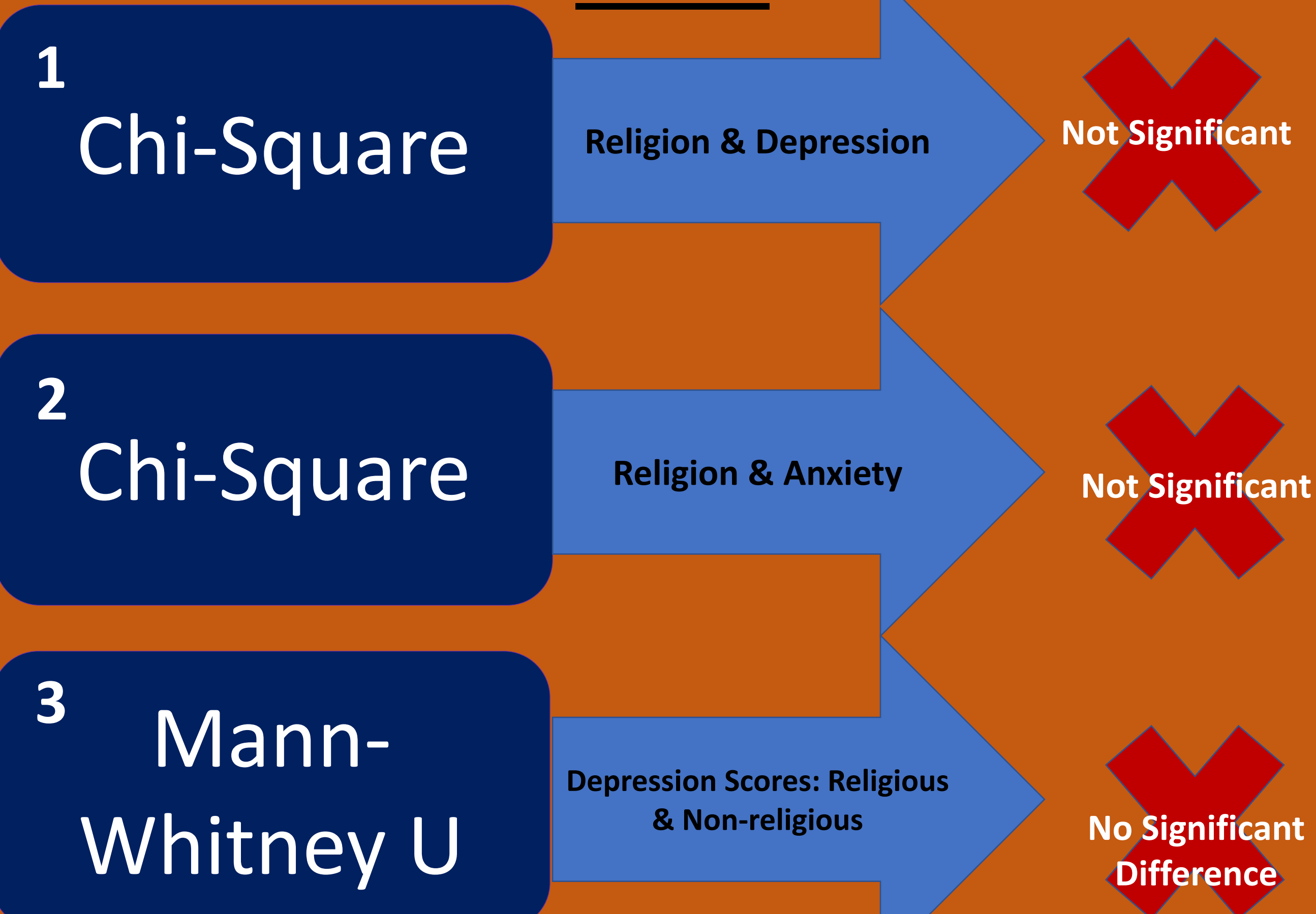
### Measures

- IV: Religion
- DV: Depressive and anxious symptoms (via diagnosis) and Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression measure

### Statistical analysis:

- Chi-Square Test of Independence and Mann-Whitney U Test
- Descriptive statistics conducted for sample demographics

## Results



## Discussion

Results challenge existing literature.... Here's why:

- 1) **Finding1 & Finding2 vs Literature:** (Nodin et al., 2015) (Diaz et al., 2001) (Price-Fenney et al., 2020)
  - A) Homophobia → targeted violence, discrimination, & harm → negative impact on mental health
  - B) Impact is heightened for Black AND religious lgbt folks
- 2) **Finding3 vs Literature:** (Bostwick et al., 2014; Kolysh, 2017)
  - A) Minority stress theory → more frequent and more severe impacts for black lgbt folks than straight folks
- 3) **More considerations: Study Design**
  - A) Religion characterization
  - B) Religions as a protective factor vs risk factor

## Strengths

- Standard measurement tools
- Inferential statistical test → validity

## Limits

- Sampling method
- Sample size (generalizability)
- Symptoms measures by diagnosis only

## Resources

Suicide Prevention Hotline: 800-273-8255

LGBTQIA+ Hotline: 888-843-4564

Black Clinician Locators:  
<https://therapyforblackmen.org/>  
<https://therapyforblackgirls.com/>  
 Black Queer&Trans Clinician Locator:  
<https://www.ngtctn.com/>



## Future Direction

**For the Black community:**  
 - Destigmatize mental health

**For researchers:**  
 - Use more Black voices across the gender and sexuality spectrum  
 - Create safe spaces for Black folks in education

**For policy makers:**  
 - Make mental health accessible and digestible to the Black community

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