

WGS.151 Reading Reflection

The most interesting part of this week's set of readings for me was the Krieger piece on the ways both gender relations and sex-linked biology can independently and jointly influence health outcomes as well as each other. One implication for understanding gender and health is highlighted in this paper by the many examples Krieger provides for how gender relations and sex-linked biology can potentially both contribute to exposure and health outcomes, and influence one another either independently or "synergistically." The one that stood out the most to me was the last one, in which there is a greater rate of mortality among women compared with men due to intimate partner violence. I found this to be particularly significant in its implications, because it showed how gender and sex-linked biology both have the potential to affect exposures and outcomes, and really feed back on one another. Both gendered roles and scripts pertaining to power have an obvious effect on domestic violence, but it is also interesting how Krieger explains that men's greater physical strength than women, what many would merely consider biological factor, is also influenced by gender relations which encourage men to be more active and have more resources to increase their strength as compared to women. Krieger even mentioned something I had never thought of: gender-related skills and training in inflicting and warding off physical attack. What this example shed light on for me was that despite sex and gender being different concepts, it is still sometimes very hard to disentangle the two as distinct causes. This is really relevant when thinking about public health, because oftentimes not only are sex and gender conflated, their synergistic effects on exposure risks and health outcomes are overlooked. In order to conduct truly useful scientific research on population health, a nuanced examination of how both gender and sex-linked biology might affect the health issue in question is very important, and Krieger does a great job of laying down a framework for how gender, sex, and health interconnect in incredibly relevant ways to epidemiology.

MIT OpenCourseWare
<http://ocw.mit.edu>

WGS.151 Gender, Health, and Society
Spring 2016

For information about citing these materials or our Terms of Use, visit: <http://ocw.mit.edu/terms>.