

# **Neighborhood Stressors and Social Integration, Living Arrangements, and Characteristics and Variabilities of Sleep in Old Age**

**Jen-Hao Chen**

Department of Sociology, National Chengchi University  
No. 64, Sec. 2, ZhiNan Rd., Taipei 11605, Taiwan  
E-mail: [jenhao@nccu.edu.tw](mailto:jenhao@nccu.edu.tw)

## **Abstract**

Decades of research has demonstrated that where individuals live can affect their health and well-being. Using theories and research from sociology and sleep medicine, this study will extend the literature on how neighborhoods affect health to examine how neighborhoods and living conditions affect sleep among the elderly, which is an important but overlooked health topic in the social science literature. This study hypothesizes that neighborhood stressors, such as perceived danger, undermine the elderly's sleep, while factors contributing to neighborhood integration, such as social connectedness and a sense of community, promote the elderly's sleep. Second, the study hypothesizes that

living arrangements (i.e., living alone or with a spouse, family member, or other person) moderate the relationship between neighborhood and sleep. The analysis uses nationally-representative data from the National Health, Social Life, and Aging Project (N=684), which includes objective assessments of older adults' average sleep characteristics and variabilities. Overall, findings suggest that the social dynamics of neighborhoods can independently predict older adults' sleep characteristics, but the processes are complex and may vary by living arrangements. Specifically, the study finds that neighborhood was not associated with average actigraphic sleep characteristics, but social connectedness was associated with less variability in sleep duration and marginally associated with less variability in wake time after sleep onset. Older adults who lived in intergenerational households had greater variability in sleep fragmentation when they perceived higher degree of danger in their neighborhood, and less variability in sleep fragmentation when they felt social connectedness and a sense of community in their neighborhood. In addition, some gender differences were found.

**Key Words:** aging, neighborhood effects, living arrangements, sleep