

Social Psychiatry

1. Highlights

Dr. Bruce Dohrenwend and his colleagues' paper, "The Psychological Risks of Vietnam for U.S. Veterans," was published in the August 18th 2006 issue of *Science*. The paper addresses major controversies about combat-related rates of PTSD and makes extensive use of new data from military records and historical accounts to demonstrate a strong dose/response relationship between severity of exposure to war-zone stressors and rates of PTSD. There was a great deal of media coverage of the paper, and a symposium about the implications of its findings was held on November 6th at the 2006 annual meeting of the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (ISTSS).

Dr. Bruce Dohrenwend and his co-authors received an award for the paper from the Sociology of Mental Health for the best publication in the sociology of mental health at the 2007 annual meeting of the American Sociological Association

Dr. Mindy Fullilove and her colleagues worked with other university and community groups involved in "City Life Is Moving Bodies" (CLIMB) sponsored the third annual "Hike the Heights" on June 16th in Highbridge Park. Four hundred people joined in the festivities designed to help people be more active.

Dr. Mindy Fullilove and colleagues were awarded a grant from the Sterling-Currier Fund to sponsor a symposium, "Governance and Public Health," held at the National Conservatory of Arts and Trades in Paris, France, in July. The fund is interested in Franco-American cooperation.

Dr. Bruce Link will receive the Rema Lapouse Award from the American Public Health Association in November 2007.

2. Staff

Bruce P. Dohrenwend, Ph.D, Chief of Research
Mindy T. Fullilove, M.D., Research Psychiatrist II
Bruce G. Link, Ph.D., Research Scientist VI

3. Overview

The Division of Social Psychiatry has three components. These are as follows:

The Social Psychiatry Research Unit headed by Dr. Dohrenwend. The purpose of this unit is to develop and sustain a program of research on important substantive and methodological issues in psychiatric epidemiology. The focus of the substantive research is on questions about the role of adversity and stress in the onset and course of psychiatric disorders that are inversely related to socioeconomic status (SES) -- especially schizophrenia, major depression, antisocial personality, alcoholism, substance

use disorders, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The methodological issues center on how to conceptualize and measure major stressful life events as risk factors for the development of disorders that are inversely related to SES.

The Community Research Group headed by Dr. Fullilove. This group studies community-level processes that affect health and mental health. Its work has examined AIDS, crack, violence, tuberculosis, asthma and other epidemics that have shaped life in poor neighborhoods in the US. On the basis of that work, the Community Research Group began to explore the public policies that have undermined urban life in the US, such as the federal urban renewal program in effect from 1940-1973. Most recently the group has studied the effect on social organization of repeated displacement.

The Stigma and Mental Illness and Violence Group headed by Dr. Link. This group is focused on understanding the impact of stigma related processes on people with mental illnesses and their families. The initiative tracks public conceptions about mental illness such as whether members of the public are optimistic about treatment and whether they believe people with mental illnesses are dangerous and to be avoided. The initiative also addresses the experience of stigma for people with mental illnesses by examining whether and to what extent stigma seriously complicates their lives and keeps them from receiving the treatment they need. Finally, this initiative is directed toward understanding the connection between mental illnesses and violent behaviors

4. Current Research

Social Psychiatry Research Unit

Two main studies are being conducted in the Social Psychiatry Research Unit. One is a continuation of research on the conceptualization and measurement of major stressful events over the life course. This research has been supported by a five-year R01 grant from the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) which ends on January 31, 2007, and by a current one year grant from an anonymous private foundation. The second project involves research on post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in U.S. veterans of the war in Vietnam. This research was conducted with a three-year R01 grant from NIMH and has been continued with grants from an anonymous private foundation.

Community Research Group

The Community Research Group has two major research projects with the Columbia Center for Youth Violence Prevention. The first is examining the effect of a new youth center on street life in Washington Heights. The second is examining the experiences of youth who are re-entering the community after incarceration. We are also working with Abyssinian Development Corporation, a major force in the revitalization of Harlem, to understand the organization's position and possibilities. Dr. Lourdes Hernandez-Cordero, a member of this group, was awarded a new investigator grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Active Living Program.

The Stigma and Mental Illness and Violence Group.

In the area of violence and mental illness a study of people assigned to outpatient commitment under New York State's Outpatient Commitment law (Kendra's Law) recently completed data collection and data are currently being analyzed. In the area of stigma research results from a NIMH-funded nationwide study of public attitudes was just completed. The current study conducted in 2006 replicates a study conducted in 1996 thereby allowing an examination of changes in public knowledge, attitudes and beliefs about mental illness. Another NIMH-funded study of the experience of stigma in people with psychosis is currently underway.

5. Education and Training

Dr. Bruce Dohrenwend continues on the Steering Committee of the NIMH-supported Research Training Program in Psychiatric Epidemiology, which is co-sponsored by the School of Public Health and the Department of Psychiatry at Columbia University

Dr. Mindy Fullilove continues as co-director of the Urbanism and Built Environment Track in the MPH program in the School of Public Health. The Community Research Group released two new educational films, "Road to Recovery," about the parks of Northern Manhattan, and "Raccommodage: Mending Our Destiny," about the repair of cities.

Dr. Bruce Link is Director of the Psychiatric Epidemiology Training Program and Co-Director (with Peter Bearman) of the Robert Wood Johnson Health and Society Scholars Program.

6. Clinical Services

None.

7. Awards/Honors

Dr. Mindy Fullilove was awarded the "Furee-ous Educator Award" by the Brooklyn-based Families United for Racial and Economic Equity (FUREE).

The Community Research Group's film, "Urban Renewal is People Removal," was awarded "Best Short Documentary" at the Trenton Film Festival.

Bruce Link received the Reeder Award for distinguished contributions to Medical Sociology in August 2007

Dr. Bruce Link along with others at NYSPI (including Drs. Dohrenwend and Fullilove) successfully procured five more years of funding for the Psychiatric Epidemiology Training Program from the NIMH.

8. Publications

Abraido-Lanza, A.F., White, K., Armbrister, A.N., Link, B. (2006) Health status, activity limitations, and disability in work and housework among Latinos and non-Latinos with arthritis: an analysis of national data. Arthritis & Rheumatism, 55:442-50.

Anglin, D., Link, B., Phelan, J. (2006) Racial Differences in Stigmatizing Attitudes about People with Mental Illness: Extending the Literature. Psychiatric Services 57:857-862.

Dohrenwend, B.P. Inventorying Stressful Life Events as Risk Factors for Psychopathology. (2006) Psychological Bulletin, 132:477-495.

Dohrenwend, B.P., Turner, B.J., Turse, N.J., Adams, B.J., Koenen, K.C., Marshall, R. (2006) The Psychological Risks of Vietnam for U.S. Veterans: A Revisit with New Data and Methods. Science, 313:979-982.

Koenen, K.C., Stellman, S.D., Dohrenwend, B.P., Sommer Jr., J.F., Stellman, J.M. (2007) The Consistency of Combat Exposure Reporting and Course of PTSD in Vietnam War Veterans. Journal of Traumatic Stress, 20:3-13.

Link, B., Phelan, J. (2006) Stigma and its Public Health Implications Lancet, 367:528-529.

Marshall, R.J., Lewis-Fernandez, R.T., Koenen, K.C., Neria, Y., Dohrenwend, B.P. (2006) Symptom Patterns Associated with Chronic PTSD in Male Veterans: New Findings from the National Vietnam Veterans Readjustment Study. Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease 194:275-278.

Perlick, D., Miklowitz, D., Link, B., Struening, E.L., Kaczynski, R., Gonzalez, J., Manning, L., Wolfe, N., Rosenheck, R. (2007) Perceived Stigma and Depression Among Caregivers of Patients with BiPolar Disorder. British Journal of Psychiatry, 190:535-536.

Stettler, K.N., Link, B., Phelan, J., Chang, C., Virginia, W. (2006) Trends in the Association of Poverty With Overweight Among US Adolescents, 1971-2004. JAMA: Journal of the American Medical Association, 295:2385-2393.

Stueve, A., Dash, K., O'Donnell, L., Tehranifar, P., Wilson-Simmons, R., Slaby R.G., Link, B. (2006) Rethinking the bystander role in school violence prevention. Health Promotion Practice. 7:117-24.

Wallace, R., Fullilove, M., Fullilove, R.E., Wallace, D. (2007) Collective consciousness and its pathologies: Understanding the failure of AIDS control and treatment in the United States, Theoretical Biology and Medical Modeling, 4:10 (26 Feb 2007) <http://www.tbiomed.com/content/4/1/10>.

Yang, L., Kleinman, A. Link, B., Phelan, J., Lee, S., Good, B. (2007) Culture and stigma adding moral experience to stigma theory. Social Science & Medicine. 64(7):1524-35.