Structural levels of mental illness stigma and discrimination.
Abstract

Most of the models that currently describe processes related to mental illness stigma are based on individual-level psychological paradigms. In this article, using a sociological paradigm, we apply the concepts of structural discrimination to broaden our understanding of stigmatizing processes directed at people with mental illness. Structural, or institutional, discrimination includes the policies of private and governmental institutions that intentionally restrict the opportunities of people with mental illness. It also includes major institutions' policies that are not intended to discriminate but whose consequences nevertheless hinder the options of people with mental illness. After more fully defining intentional and unintentional forms of structural discrimination, we provide current examples of each. Then we discuss the implications of structural models for advancing our understanding of mental illness stigma, including the methodological challenges posed by this paradigm.

Keywords: Stigma, serious mental illness, sociological structures

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