Preliminary Validation of an Orthodox-Jewish Stigma Scale

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1. Introduction

Individuals with mental illness face stigmatization, with numerous negative consequences. Like many aspects of mental illness, stigma is influenced by culture. Thus, while many previously examine stigma, research within the Orthodox Jewish community requires use of a culturally appropriate measure.

2. Orthodox Jewish Stigma

Within the family-centric Orthodox Jewish community, stigma focuses on the perceived impact of mental illness on family functioning and stability, marriage prospects, and social status. The current study developed a scale suitable for measuring these aspects of stigma, using an adaptation of an ethnographic interview (Rosen et al, 2007).

3. Method

- 162 Orthodox & 72 non-Orthodox recruited through jpsych.com.
- Participants read moderate-severe OCD vignette.
- Completed stigma measures: Social Distance (Link et al., 1999), AQ-SF (Corrigan et al., 2001) and OJSS.
- Completed recognition, explanatory models, and help-seeking items (see Pirutinsky, Rosmarin & Pargament, 2008).

Table 1

Orthodox Expressed More OJSS Stigma

	M (*SD*)					
	Orthodox	Non-Orthodox	*df*	*t*	*p*	*d*
OJ Stigma Scale	27.31 (5.29)	24.90 (5.22)	235	3.23	**.001**	.42
Social Distance	11.29 (3.66)	11.39 (3.60)	237	-.20	.84	-.03
AQ-SF Stigma	16.92 (6.74)	16.18 (6.28)	232	.79	.43	.10

Table 2

OJSS Positively Correlated with Bio-Medical Approach

	OJSS	SD	AQ-SF
OJ Stigma Scale (OJSS)	—		
Social Distance (SD)	.20**	—	
AQ-SF Stigma	.03	.57**	—
Recognition of MI	.16*	.04	-.06
Biological Explanatory	.19*	-.17*	-.20*
Socio-Religious Explanatory	.03	.13	.28**
Professional Help-Seeking	.20**	.02	-.11
Religious Help-Seeking	-.03	-.06	-.01

* *p* < ..05   ** *p* < .01

4. Results

- OJSS was *unidimensional* - single factor, eigenvalue = 4.06 & variance = 45%.
- Internally *consistent* (α = .84).
- Orthodox expressed more OJSS, despite equal SD & AQ-SF (Table 1).
- OJSS correlated with SD, but not with AQ-SF (Table 2).
- OJSS correlated differently with community attitudes (Table 2).

5. Discussion

- Despite numerous stigma scales, none examine culture-specific family & marriage aspects measured by OJSS.
- Future research & practice sensitive to this stigma is critical to successful Orthodox mental health care.
- A bio-medical approach favoring professional assistance may increase family & marriage stigma, despite benefiting other dimensions.