

Do medical models of mental illness predict  
*increased or decreased* stigmatization among  
Orthodox Jews?

David H. Rosmarin

McLean Hospital/Harvard Medical School

Steven Pirutinsky

Teachers College, Columbia University

Association for Psychological Science 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Convention

May 30, 2010 – Boston, MA

# Medical Models and Stigma

- Stigma

Social rejection

Perceived dangerousness

Housing/employment discrimination



Increased Symptoms

- Medical Models of Mental Illness

- Medical models  Decreased stigma (Link et al., 1999/2004)

- Efforts to “medicalize”

- NAMI, NIMH & MHA

# Stigma & Orthodox Jews

- Widely noted: stigma a principle barrier to treatment seeking among Orthodox Jews (Loewenthal, 2004)
- Stigma focused on *family functioning* (Schnall, 2006)
  - Marital stability
  - Children
  - Siblings
- Research Question: Might medical models exacerbate stigma in this population?

# Participants & Procedure

- Recruitment
  - Study posted online at [www.jpsych.com](http://www.jpsych.com)
  - Orthodox event listings, synagogue groups, discussion forums
  - Note: Recent evidence on internet use in community
- Sample ( $n = 91$ )
  - Age:  $M = 26$ ,  $SD = 12.04$ , Range 18-68
  - 68% female ( $n = 62$ )
  - 44% Ultra Orthodox ( $n = 40$ )

# Participants & Procedure

- Case Vignette “Binyamin”
  - Moderate-Severe Symptoms of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
  - Reviewed by Orthodox & non-Orthodox research-clinicians
- Questionnaire
  - Perception of mental illness (1-item)
  - Belief in causal models of mental illness (series of 6-single items: genetics, chemical imbalance, bad character, poor parenting, stressful life circumstances, God’s Will)
  - Family/marriage stigma (Based on Raguram & Weiss; Rosen et al., 2007)
    - 9-items ( $\alpha = .86$ ), e.g., Might this cause any problems for Binyamin’s family? Might this make it more difficult for Binyamin to marry?

# Results

## Predictors of Family/Marriage Stigma among Orthodox Jews

	Model 1			Model 2		
<i>Attribution</i>	<i>B</i>	SE <i>B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	SE <i>B</i>	$\beta$
- Bad Character	2.44	2.16	0.12	3.37	2.14	0.16
- Chemical Imbalance	1.43	1.09	0.15	1.07	1.08	0.11
- Bad Parenting	0.15	0.72	0.02	0.20	0.70	0.03
- Life Stress	0.01	0.91	0.00	0.33	0.90	0.04
- Genetics	<b>2.79**</b>	0.91	0.35	<b>2.25*</b>	0.92	0.28
- God's Will	-0.10	0.56	-0.02	-0.21	0.55	-0.04
<i>Perception of MI</i>				<b>2.03*</b>	0.88	0.25
$\Delta R^2$	.17			.05		
<i>F</i> for $\Delta R^2$	2.81*			5.27*		

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$

# Discussion

- Main Findings
  - Unlike the general population, medical models predict *increased* stigma among Orthodox Jews
  - Specific risk of genetic causal models to exacerbating family/marriage stigma
- Implications
  - Clinical –Psychoeducation for patients & their families; Labeling symptoms as “mental illness”
  - Research – Importance of cultural sensitivity in stigma and mental health research; Belief in moral/medical causes may not be universally bad/good

# Discussion

- Limitations
  - Internet-based recruitment only
  - Single vignette (OCD)
- Future Directions
  - Efficacy of community-wide intervention to target stigma
  - Examination of broader implications of marriage/family stigma
  - Further research on implications of perceived moral/spiritual causes of mental illness among Orthodox Jews



Do medical models of mental illness predict  
*increased or decreased* stigmatization among  
Orthodox Jews?

David H. Rosmarin

McLean Hospital/Harvard Medical School

Steven Pirutinsky

Teachers College, Columbia University

Association for Psychological Science 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Convention

May 30, 2010 – Boston, MA