

Victoria University

School of Psychology

Current Issues in Psychology

Community Psychology and Health

Lecturer: Associate Professor Adrian Fisher

Content

In this subject we will explore, from a Community Psychology perspective a variety of issues related to health and well-being in contemporary society. An introduction to basic concepts and Community Psychology will be provided to orient students to the ways of conceptualising, researching, and analysing within this framework.

The core concepts of the subject will include issues related to health inequalities, prevention versus health promotion, and the healthy cities movement.

Text and readings:

Although there is no required text, there is a recommended one (which is on Reserve in the Footscray Park Library):

Rudkin, J. K. (2003). *Community psychology: Guiding principles and orienting concepts*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

A variety of other readings will be set from book chapters and journal articles. These will be either on e-reserve, or available through e-journals.

Assessment:

Assessment for the subject will consist of:

A research proposal in the area of health and Community Psychology

Assessment

Assessment for this subject will comprise a research proposal in an area broadly defined as health – this may have an illness or disease focus, prevention, health promotion, or even wellness.

The proposal will be approximately 15 – 20 pages in length and must have the following components:

& Introduction

- Introduction to the specific topic
- Why it is important (extent of problem etc)
- Aims and significance of the research
- Literature review
- Hypotheses or research questions

& Method

- Participants – including number, characteristics, and why this particular sample was chosen (a convenience sample is NOT acceptable)
- Materials – what you actually intend to use in your research, including data collection issues
- Procedure – exactly how you are to go about the research

& Proposed analyses

- Once you have your data, how do you intend to analyse them – specific data handling and analysis techniques. Why have these been chosen.

Draft Due in class Week 8 (3 May 2004) 25%

Final Due 12 June 2004 75%

Subject Content

Week 1/2: 1 March, 8 March 2004

In these two classes we will begin with an orientation to Community Psychology, its history and international development. Specific theories and theoreticians will be considered.

Fisher, A. T. (1992) Community Psychology in Australia. *The Community Psychologist*, 25, 19-20.

Robertson, N. R., Thomas, D. R., Dehar, M. B., & Blaxall, M. (1989). Development of Community Psychology in New Zealand: A Waikato experience. *New Zealand Journal of Psychology*, 18, 13 – 24.

Rudkin, Chapter 1 (2 optional)

Week 3: 15 March 2004

Values in Community Psychology and levels of analysis.

A key feature of Community Psychology is the importance placed on explicit values within research and practice. Key elements of these will be explored – including the value placed on multiple levels of analysis and intervention.

Rudkin, Chapter 3.

Week 4: 22 March 2004

Traditional focus in many areas of health research has focused on physical and behavioural risk factors. Current research is moving to include a lot more information and understanding of social determinants in the causes of diseases – including mental health issues.

Social determinants of health.

Brunner, E., & Marmot, M. (1999). Social organization, stress, and health. In M. Marmot and R. G. Wilkinson (Eds.), *Social determinants of health* (pp. 17 – 43). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

World Health Organization. (1998). *The solid facts: Social determinants of health* (Introduction and Chapter 1). <http://www.who.dk/document/e59555.pdf>

Week 5: 29 March 2004

Health inequalities.

Current research in psychology, epidemiology and other social sciences are placing a huge emphasis on the disparity of resources within a community and the impact that these have on health outcomes of individuals and groups.

Catford, J. (2001, October). Health inequalities in Victoria: A new agenda of research, policy and services. *Health of Victorians: Chief Health Officer's Bulletin*, 1(2), 21-24.

Wilkinson, R. G. (1996). *Unhealthy societies: The afflictions of inequality*. London: Routledge. (chapters 1 & 2).

Week 6: 19 April 2004

Healthy cities movement

From the mid-1980's there has been a concerted effort to develop broad level social and policy changes so the focus on health is not just an individual level intervention, but one which encompasses a broad reach of communities.

Rudkin – pages: 198, 199-200,

Wolff, T. (nd). Healthy communities: One vision of civic democracy. Amherst, MA: AHEC/Community Partners.
(http://www.tomwolff.com/resources/cb_civic_democracy.pdf)

Week 7: 26 April 2004

Healthy cities movement critiques

While the Healthy Cities movement has had considerable support, there are also strong critiques about how well it can work across all types of communities – particularly those with limited access to a variety of resources.

Wolff, T. (2003). The healthy communities movement: A time for transformation. *National Civic Review*, 92, 95-112. (<http://www.tomwolff.com/resources/ncrhc.pdf>)

Urban Health Workgroup, Ontario Public Health Association. (2003). *Health In Cities: The Role For Public Health*.
<http://www.opha.on.ca/ppres/2003/urbanhealth.html>

Week 8: 3 May 2004

Social support and self-help groups in health

While much of medicine and psychology emphasises the role of the professional in the delivery of services, there are many functions served by people who share a common problem coming together to provide support and information to each other.

Rudkin, pages: 228 – 236.

Chinman, M., Kloos, B., O'Connell, M. & Davidson, I. (2002). Service providers' views about psychiatric mutual support groups. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 30, 349-366.

Heller, K., & Swindle, R. W. (1983). Social networks, perceived social support, and coping with stress. In R D. Felner, L. A. Jason, J. N. Moritsugu, and S. S. Farber (Eds.), *Preventive psychology: Theory, research and practice* (pp.87 – 103).New York: Pergamon Press.

Week 9: 10 May 2004

Social Cohesion/social epidemiology

Berkman, L. S., & Glass, T. (2000). Social integration, social networks, social support and health. In L. S. Berkman and I. Kawachi (Eds.), *Social epidemiology* (pp. 137-173). New York: Oxford University Press.

Mitchell, R. E., & Trickett, E. J. (1980). Task force report: Social networks as mediators of social support: An analysis of the effects and determinants of social supports. *Community Mental Health Journal*, 16, 27-44.

Week 10: May 2004

Prevention

Much of psychology and health is less about treatment and more about the alleviation of problems. That is, differing ways in which we can use psychological knowledge and skills to prevent diseases from occurring.

Rudkin, Chapter 9

Bishop, B., & Syme, G. (1988). *Walking Backwards Into the Future: Prevention and the Prediction of the Future*. Paper presented at the 24th International Congress of Psychology, Sydney.

Cowen, E. L., (1977). Baby-steps towards primary prevention. *American Journal of Community Psychology* 5, 1-22.

Week 11: 24 May 2004

Health promotion.

In this class we discuss issues related to Health Promotion. In particular, there will be a focus on the use of general strategies for promoting health and well-being without a specific disease or problem focus.

The evaluation of the Walking School Bus project will be discussed as a health promotion strategy and as a use of psychological research methods in this area.

VicHealth Newsletter (to be distributed in class)

Wong, C. O., & McMurray, N. E. (2002). Framing communication: Communicating the antismoking message effectively to all smokers. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 30, 433 – 447.

Week 12: 31 May 2004

Wellness, well-being

Rudkin, Ch 7.

Prilleltensky, I. (in press). The role of power in wellness, oppression, and liberation: the promise of psychopolitical validity. *Journal of Community Psychology*. (<http://people.vanderbilt.edu/~isaac.prilleltensky/pubs.html>)