



Cultural Influences as the Structure and Content of Social Networks, Large and Small

Bernice A. Pescosolido

Indiana University

Presentation at the “Understanding and Reducing Health
Disparities: Contributions from the Behavioral and Social
Sciences” Conference, National Institutes of Health,
October 24-25, 2006

Focus

Get underneath socio-demographic differences

- Replace assumptions of cultural beliefs, attitudes with actual data
- Replace a view of the individual in action with the individual in interaction, given a context
- Replace a view of the individual with a view of the interaction of community and treatment systems
- Replace decision points with dynamic process

The NEM's Basic Argument

- Issue of access, prejudice and discrimination can be understood, at least in part, as the operation of social interactions that provide information, influence, resources, understanding and compassion.

Refocus

- **From Individuals to Communities**
- **From Decision Point to Entire Process**
- **From Categories to Context**
- **From Individual Action to Social Influence**

Traditional Explanatory Models

- **Health Belief Model (Rosenstock, 1966)**
 - Perceived Susceptibility to Illness
 - Perceived Efficacy of Medical Care
- **Socio-Behavioral Model (Andersen, 1968)**
 - Need
 - Enabling Characteristics
 - Predisposing Characteristics
- **Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975)**
 - Intentions
 - Attitudes
 - Social Norms (Expectancy and Value)
- **Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1988)**
 - Theory of Reasoned Action
 - Perceived Behavioral Control (self-efficacy)

Strengths of Dominant Models

- **Comprehensive listing of contingencies**
- **Convergence over time**
- **“Clean” and “orderly” theories**
- **Nice fit with conventional survey methods and econometric techniques**



Weaknesses of Dominant Models

- Inability to explain delay and compliance
- Inability to address help-seeking for chronic vs. acute problems
- Static and individualistic
- Need “drives” the system
- Rational choice base
- Voluntaristic tone
- Revisions - more opaque for protocol and testing



Department
of Sociology

Indiana
Consortium
for Mental
Health
Services
Research

The Key: Social Networks as Theoretical Foundation

- Puts human face on issues of access, barriers, intervention, by conceptualizing these as actions of individuals.
- Relationships are “fundamental” mediators of human adaptations”.
- Networks are the “active ingredients of environmental influences”.

Neurons to Neighborhoods

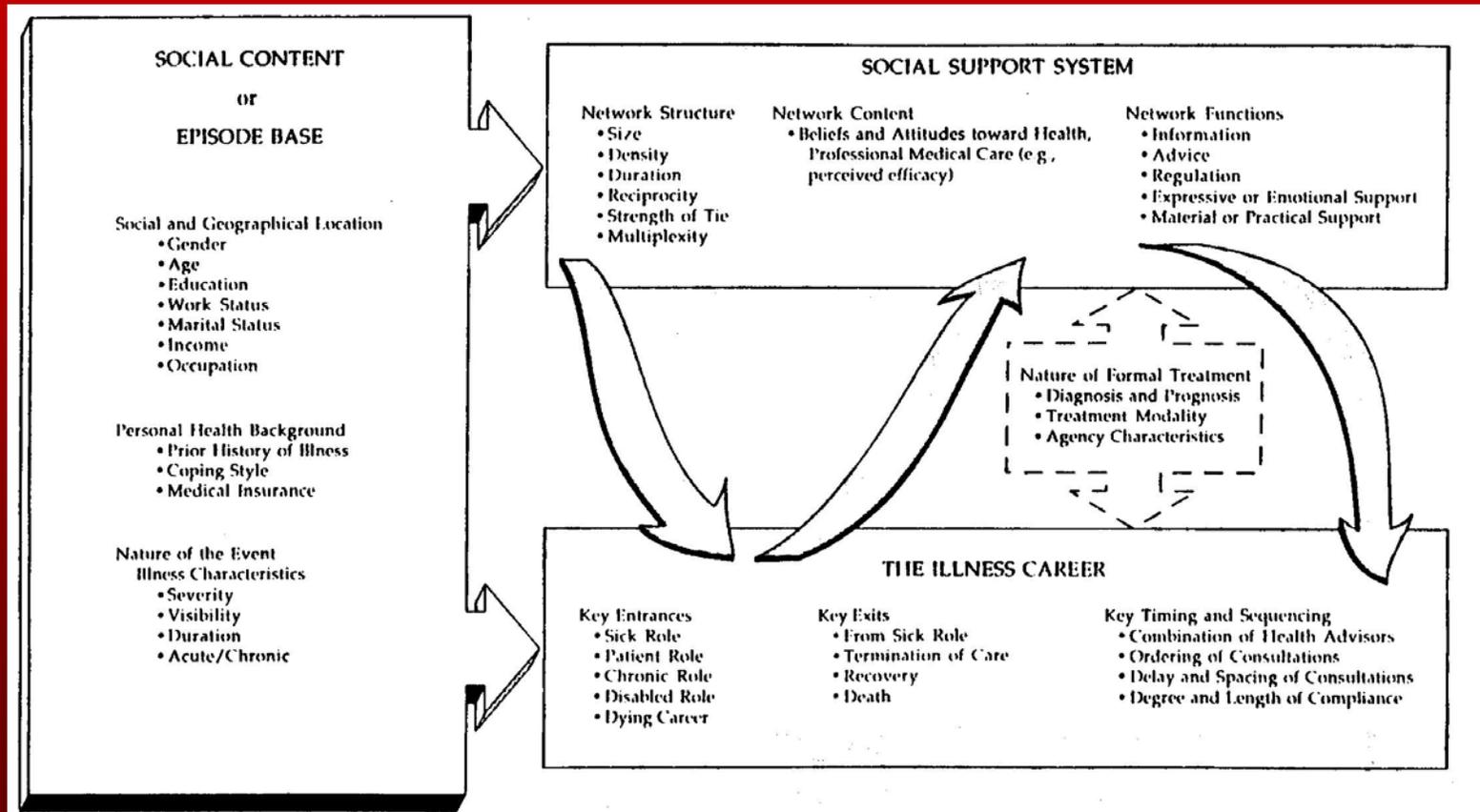


SOS: The Response

(Social Organization Strategy Framework, AJS 1992)

- **The Role of Others**
- **The Role of Cultural Toolboxes**
- **The Role of Time**
- **The Role of Options**
- **Embeddedness – “Social Networks”**
- **Habit/Knowledge – “Content”**
- **Dynamics**
 - “Patterns & Pathways”
 - “Turning Points, Trajectories”

The Network-Episode Model – Phase I



(Pescosolido, *Advances in Medical Sociology*, 1991)



The NEM – Phase I

Support

Choice, Coercion & “Muddling Through”

- 46% 25% 33%
(*Social Science & Medicine*, 1998)
- Medical and social correlates

Patterns of Care & Social Influence

(*Medical Care*, 1998)

- Context = trajectory plus culture

Limits

Role of Treatment / Organizations (static)



Department
of Sociology

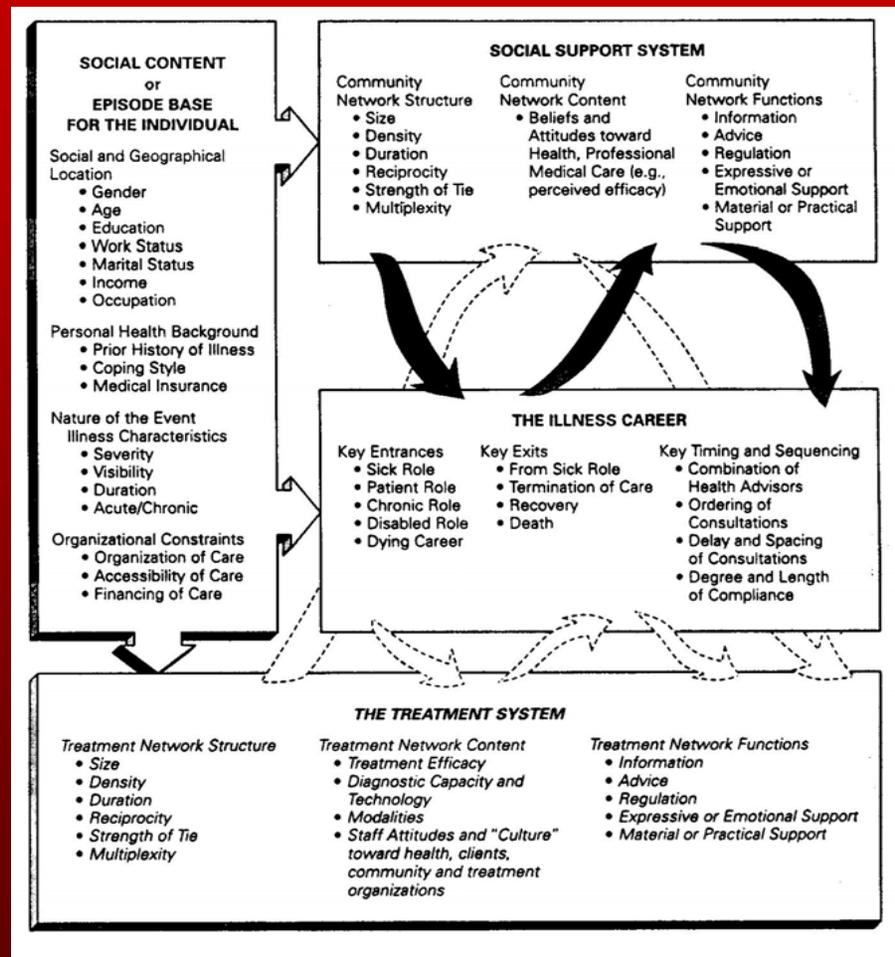
Indiana
Consortium
for Mental
Health
Services
Research

Network-Episode Model – Phase II

- **The Dynamics of Treatment, Organizational and Policy Change**
- **Networks**
 - “Outside” Networks
 - “Inside” Networks



The Network-Episode Model – Phase II



(Pescosolido & Boyer, *A Handbook for the Study of Mental Health*, 1999)

The NEM – Phase II

Support

- Power of Organizational Context
(Wright, *Psychiatric Services*, 1997)
(Glisson and Hemmelgarn, *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 1998)

Limits

- Role of Disease Course
- Role of Individual
- Role of Community



Department
of Sociology

Indiana
Consortium
for Mental
Health
Services
Research

The Network Episode Model – Phase III (Under construction)

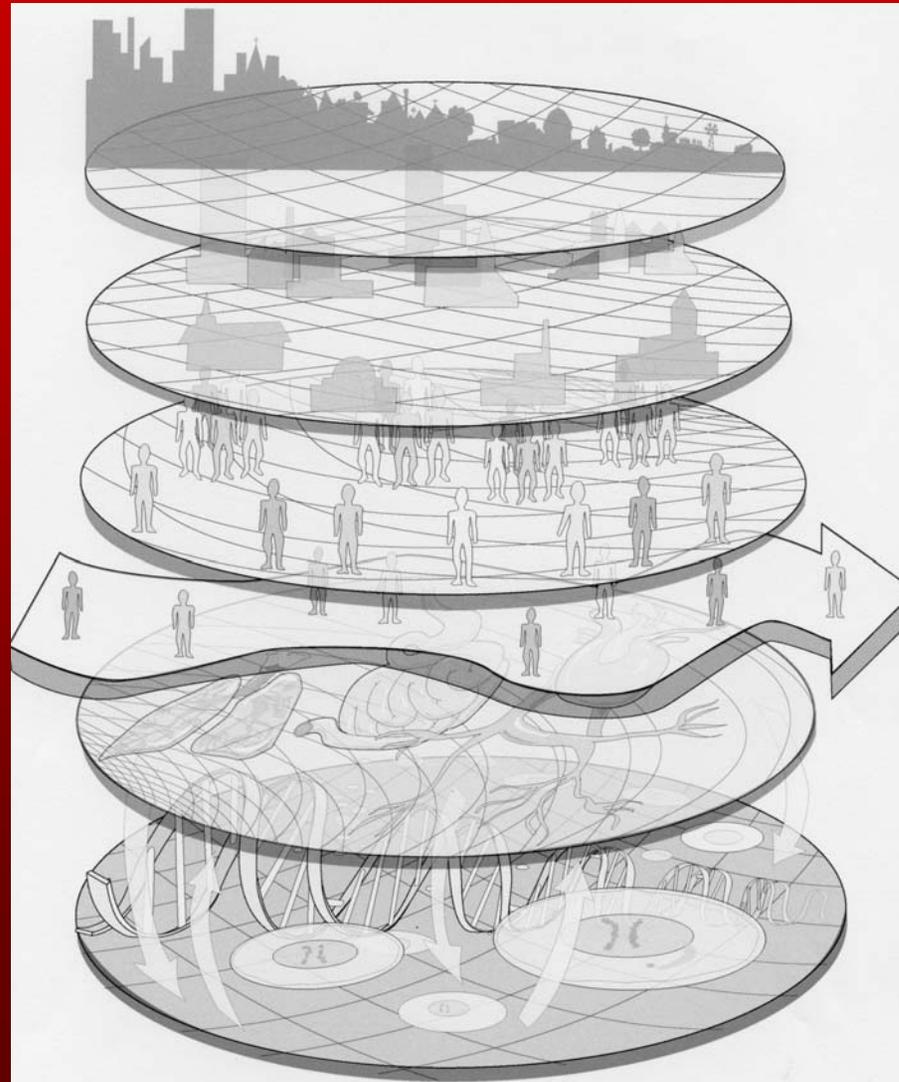
- **The Elaboration of “Contexts”**
- **Focus on Multi-disciplinary Integration and Synergies**
- **People as the Agents of Change**
- **Networks as Mechanism that Connect Different Levels and Processes**

Department
of Sociology

Indiana
Consortium
for Mental
Health
Services
Research



The NEM III - Under Construction



Tailored Spin-Offs

- **Family Network-Based Model (Costello et al, 1998)**
- **Gateway Provider Model (Stiffman et al, 2004)**
- **Socio-Cultural Framework of Health Service Disparities (Alegría and Pescosolido, 2006)**