

A PROPOSITIONAL PARADIGM FOR ESTIMATING THE IMPACT OF DISASTERS ON MENTAL HEALTH*

George J. Warheit
University of Florida
Gainesville, Florida 32601, USA

This paper reviews the literature on communitywide disasters and their relationships to subsequent mental health problems. In addition, it describes the theoretical notions of psychological stress which have guided past research and it outlines the dimensions of a comprehensive stress paradigm. This paradigm is based on an integration of research findings from three separate fields of inquiry: disaster research; studies of psychosocial stress; and, psychiatric epidemiology. The theoretical propositions on which the paradigm is based are outlined and offered as guidelines for future research. The paper concludes with a brief discussion of some of the problems confronting researchers interested in disasters and their mental health sequelae.

Introduction

This paper has two major objectives. It summarizes briefly the literature on disasters and their mental health consequences and it presents a number of postulates which can be used as guidelines for those doing research on the relationships between disasters and mental health.

Disaster Events and Their Mental Health Consequences: A Brief Review and Comment

The literature on disasters and their relationships to subsequent mental health problems is an extensive one. However, it includes

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