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[Barbara Snell Dohrenwend Papers](#)

**BARBARA SNELL DOHRENWEND, 1927-1982.**

**Papers, 1956-2000 (bulk 1971-1982)**

**3.66 cubic feet (11 boxes)**

**BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE:** Barbara Snell Dohrenwend, psychologist and epidemiologist, was born in New York City on March 26, 1927 to Foster D. and Cornelia Tyler Snell. She received her B.A. from Wellesley College in 1947 and her doctorate in psychology from Columbia University in 1954. After holding researcher positions at the University of Michigan, Cornell University, and New York University, Dohrenwend became lecturer in psychology at the City College of the City University of New York in 1961. She was named a full professor in 1972. In 1979, Dohrenwend became professor and head of sociomedical sciences at the Columbia University School of Public Health, a position she held until her death.

Dohrenwend did important work on interviewer effects in research and on social class and mental illness. She is perhaps best known, however, for ground-breaking research on the link between stressful life events and the development of mental illness. She usually collaborated in this work with her husband, Bruce P. Dohrenwend. Together they edited *Stressful Life Events: Their Nature and Effects* (1974) and *Stressful Life Events and Their Contexts* (1981).

Dohrenwend was a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (1980); served as president of the Division of Community Psychology of the American Psychological Association (1976-77); was a member of the Task Group on Behavioral Effects of the President's Commission on the Accident at Three Mile Island (1979); and was on the editorial board of several professional journals. She received, along with her husband, the Award for Distinguished Contribution to Community Psychology and Community Health from the American Psychological Association and the 1981 Rema Lapouse Award for outstanding achievement in mental health epidemiology from the American Public Health Association.

Barbara Dohrenwend died June 28, 1982 in New York City, and was survived by her husband. The Barbara Snell Dohrenwend Award, given to a student in sociomedical sciences for either a distinguished research proposal or a published or publishable article, is named in her honor.

**SCOPE AND CONTENT:** The Dohrenwend Papers include correspondence, grant proposals, reprints of articles and book chapters, and biographical materials. The correspondence is entirely with professional colleagues in North America and western Europe and is often accompanied by

research proposals and drafts of articles on which Dohrenwend was asked to comment. Though it dates back as early as 1965, the bulk of the correspondence is from 1971-1981.

The reprints are not complete but do give a good picture of Dohrenwend's research interests. The biographical materials include curricula vita, obituaries and memorial statements, correspondence relating to academic and professional appointments, research notes, drafts of articles, and grant proposals. It appears to have been added to by Bruce Dohrenwend up until the time of his donation of the papers to the Health Sciences Library.

**ORGANIZATION:** Organized in three series: I. Correspondence & Subject Files; II. Biographical Materials; III. Reprints.

**PROVENANCE:** Gift of Bruce Dohrenwend, 2004 (acc. #2004.11.19)

**LANGUAGE:** English.

**ACCESS:** The papers are open without restriction.

**Subjects:**

Dohrenwend, Barbara Snell.

Dohrenwend, Bruce Philip, 1927-

Joseph L. Mailman School of Public Health. Dept. of Sociomedical Sciences.

Mental illness – Etiology.

Psychiatric epidemiology.

Psychologists – United States.

Psychology, Pathological.

Social psychiatry.

Stress (Psychology).

Women psychologists – United States.

Mental Disorders – etiology.

Psychopathology.

Stress, Psychological.

Columbia University. School of Public Health.

Papers processed by Clare Hilliard; finding aid written by Stephen E. Novak, 2010.

**Barbara S. Dohrenwend**  
**Papers, 1956-2000 (bulk 1971-1982)**

**Box    Folder**

**Series I: Correspondence & Subject Files**

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- 32 “Stressful Life Events, Social Support Systems, and Illness:” requests for copies, 1979
- 33 “Gender, Age, Life Roles, and Life Events,” Women and Psychotherapy Conference, American Psychological Association, March 1979
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