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DEPRESSION AS A FUNCTION OF STRESSFUL LIFE EVENTS, SOCIAL SUPPORT AND PERSONALITY

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Psychology at Massey University

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ABSTRACT

The effects of stressful life events, personality factors (extroversion, socialization/psychoticism and emotionality/neuroticism) and social support on depression were assessed. A questionnaire consisting of The Eysenck Personality Questionnaire, College Life Stress Inventory, Depression Inventory, and The Brief Social Support Questionnaire was administered to a sample of 124 volunteer university students enrolled in undergraduate psychology courses. Results showed that other than for socialization, with women scoring higher on average than men, there were no significant differences between men and women, or between ethnic groups, on any of the variables. Age was found to be inversely related to stressful university life events. Emotional instability and low satisfaction with social supports predicted depression. The effects of university life events on depression were mediated by satisfaction with social supports, but not by number of social supports. Emotional stability was found to predict satisfaction with social supports. Emotional instability predicted severity of university life events and explained the largest proportion of variance in depression scores.