Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.
An Evaluation of The Relationship Between

STRESSFUL LIFE EVENTS, SOCIAL SUPPORT

And

DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in Psychology
at Massey University

Margaret Ada Stewart Jensen
1985
ABSTRACT

A replication of Bell, Le Roy and Stephenson's (1982) study in New Zealand Rural, Country Town and City living conditions found no significant differences between the three communities in overall measurements of Stressful Life Events, Social Support and Depressive Symptoms. There were significant differences, however, within the communities. Sociodemographic groups within both Rural and City communities shared similarities that were conspicuously absent in Country Town living where significant differences were shown for Race, Sex, Age, and Socioeconomic Status.

With the same levels of Social Support, New Zealand numbers of Stressful Events and Depressive Symptoms were significantly higher than in the United States study.

The best model for explaining the findings in terms of this study, is that Stressful Events have a direct negative effect on Depressive Symptoms and that Social Support has a weak beneficial direct effect at intermediate levels of support. There was a tendency for Depressive Symptoms to increase at both low and high levels of support.

While the number of depressive symptoms increased with increasing numbers of stressful events there was no evidence that this was a contingent relationship with the level of Social Support or that the effect was other than of the additive variety. The New Zealand study did not confirm the Bell et al. (1982) conditional effect finding but as in the Bell et al. study, there was no evidence of interactive effects.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

| TITLE | 1 |
| ABSTRACT | ii |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | iii |

## CHAPTER

### I INTRODUCTION

Summary | 5

### II LITERATURE REVIEW

The Models | 11
Direct Effects | 11
Conditional Effects | 13
Interaction Effects | 18
Summary | 19

### III RESEARCH PROJECT

The Research Questions | 23
Ethical Issues | 24
Summary | 25

### IV MAJOR VARIABLES

Independent Variables
- Stressful Life Events | 26
- Social Support | 30
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dependent Variable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depressive Symptoms</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V  SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomic Status</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI  METHOD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjects</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measuring Instruments</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedure</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistical Analysis</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII  RESULTS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographic Location</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression Scale Scores by Geographic Location</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variables by Sociodemographics</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression Scale Scores</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 1</td>
<td>Goodness of Fit of Age Distribution of Sample Population with New Zealand Census (1981)</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 2</td>
<td>Goodness of Fit of Male-Female Distribution of Sample Population with New Zealand Census (1981)</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 3</td>
<td>Summary Table. Socioeconomic Status by the Entire Sample and Geographic Location. Summary Table.</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 4</td>
<td>Mean Depression Scale Scores Number of Life Events and Social Supports by Community Location</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 5</td>
<td>The Distribution of Significant Differences Within Each of the Three Geographic Locations</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 6</td>
<td>Depression Scale Scores by Sociodemographics (N=343)</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 7</td>
<td>Rural Depression Scale Scores by Sociodemographics</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 8  Town Depression Scale Scores by Sociodemographics
TABLE 9  City Depression Scale Scores by Sociodemographics
TABLE 10 Stressful Life Events by Sociodemographics (N=343)
TABLE 11 Rural Stressful Life Events by Sociodemographics
TABLE 12 Town Stressful Life Events by Sociodemographics
TABLE 13 City Stressful Life Events by Sociodemographics
TABLE 14 Social Support Scale Scores by Sociodemographics (N=343)
TABLE 15 Rural Social Support Scale Scores by Sociodemographics
TABLE 16 Town Social Support Scale Scores by Sociodemographics
TABLE 17  City Social Support Scale Scores 76
by Sociodemographics

TABLE 18  Race and Sex by Type of Social 78
Support

TABLE 19  Life Events and Mean Depression 81
Scale Scores (direct effects) (N=343)

TABLE 20  Rural Life Events and Mean 81
Depression Scale Scores (direct
effects)

TABLE 21  Town Life Events and Mean 82
Depression Scale Scores (direct
effects)

TABLE 22  City Life Events and Mean 82
Depression Scale Scores (direct
effects)

TABLE 23  Social Support and Mean Depression 83
Scale Scores (direct effects)
(N=343)

TABLE 24  Rural Social Support and Mean 84
Depression Scale Scores (direct
effects)
TABLE 25 Town Social Support and Mean Depression Scale Scores (direct effects)

TABLE 26 City Social Support and Mean Depression Scale Scores (direct effects)

TABLE 27 Two-way and Three-way Analyses of Variance with Depression by Stressful Life Events (SLE) Social Support (SS) and Socioeconomic Status (SES) for Entire Population Sample (N=343) (interaction effects)

TABLE 28 Correlation of significant Variables with Depression Scale Score (N=343)

TABLE 29 Mean Depression Scale Scores for Social Support by Numbers of Life Events (conditional effects) (N=343)

TABLE 30 Rural Mean Depression Scale Scores for Social Support Groups by Number of Life Events (conditional effects)

TABLE 31 Town Mean Depression Scale Scores
for Social Support by Number of Life Events (conditional effects)

TABLE 32 City Mean Depression Scale Scores 93
for Social Support by Number of Life Events (conditional effects)

TABLE 33 Female Mean Depression Scale scores 94
for Social Support by Numbers of Life Events (conditional effects)

TABLE 34 Male Mean Depression Scale Scores 95
for Social Support by Numbers of Life Events (conditional effects)

TABLE 35 Results of Regression Analysis of 98
Depression Symptom Scores (N=343)

TABLE 36 Means Standard Deviations and 100
Intercorrelations Between the Independent Variables and the Dependent Variable (N=343)
LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1 Regression Analysis: Proportion of 99
Variance in Depression Scale Score
Attributed to Life Events, Age,
Socioeconomic Status, Social Support,
Sex, Community Location and Race.

FIGURE 2 Male and Female first Admissions to 107
New Zealand Mental Hospitals 1964–1978
Rate per 100,000 Population, McDonald,
Pearce, Salter and Smith (1982).
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS


Support in Time of Crisis
Artist, L. Barr.
<--
LIST OF APPENDICES 171

APPENDIX A  Bell, Le Roy and Stephenson (1982) Survey Schedule
   I Depression Scale 171
   II Stressful Life Event Inventory 172
   III Social Support Inventory 173

APPENDIX B  Description of the three New Zealand Demographic Locations
   I Rural 174
   II Town 174
   III City 175

APPENDIX C  The New Zealand Survey Schedule 176

APPENDIX D  Calculation of Socioeconomic Status 178

APPENDIX E  Bell, Le Roy and Stephenson (1982) Survey Result Tables (United States)
   Table I Depression Scale 180
   II Stressful Events 180
   III Social Support 181
   IV Direct Effects Life Events 181
   V Direct Effects Social Support 181
VI  Conditional Effects  182
VII  Interactive Effects  182