

seeps into some discussions (e.g., "Egalitarianism will put an end to gender-based oppression," p. 254).

Furthermore, there are editorial considerations that may yield mixed opinions. For example, there are numerous tables that present material with little or no discussion. The separate chapters on attraction and love often mix the two topics. In contrast, in Chapter 13, "The Social Network," Brehm attempts a strained union between divorce and the displaced topic of friendship without trying to bridge the two sections. However, none of these points should cause the reader to lose sight of Brehm's noteworthy accomplishments.

There is also what I consider a non-trivial omission: This book is written for young persons (students), and unfortunately, it is also almost exclusively about young persons. Brehm, along with mainstream social psychologists in general, repeatedly fails to consider the simple fact that relationships extend across the life span. For example, Brehm considers how the addition of children influences relationships, but not the effects of the children's departure. Changes that occur during the adult years influence, for example, sexual behavior, emotions, attractiveness, dependency, and social networks. Expanding the discussion to reflect adult life-span issues would help students better understand not only themselves but also their parents, grandparents, and intergenerational intimacy among adults.

There are also numerous nagging problems in the production of the book. These include typographic errors (p. 60, p. 108), an incorrect reference to a table (p. 253), an extra word (p. 375), and an omitted line of text (p. 297). Furthermore, I find the pictures to be of little importance to the quality of the book. This book deserved better work from the publisher.

Despite the aforementioned shortcomings, this book has several qualities to recommend it as a textbook. The outlines at the beginnings of the chapters and, especially, the summaries at the ends of the chapters are good. The book also contains interim summaries for particularly complex and potentially overwhelming sections. Finally, students should find the subject index to be very functional.

Kelley (1986) challenged professionals interested in personal relationships: "We must somehow learn to explain our enterprise in realistic terms" (p. 19). Although other authors have done this for the undergraduate (e.g., Berscheid &

Walster, 1978; Hendrick & Hendrick, 1983), *Intimate Relationships* is distinctively comprehensive, interdisciplinary, and far-reaching. It will not have universal acceptance, but such is the case when risks are taken.

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Social Factors and Depressive Symptoms

Nan Lin, Alfred Dean, and Walter M. Ensel (Eds.)
Social Support, Life Events, and Depression
Orlando, FL: Academic Press, 1986.
377 pp. \$49.50 hardcover;
\$29.95 paperback

Review by

Sheldon Cohen

Nan Lin is professor of sociology and adjunct professor of communication, of public policy, and of public health sciences at the State University of New York at Albany. He is author of Foundations of Social Research, Study of Human Communication, and coeditor of Social Structure and Network Analysis. ■ Alfred Dean, professor of social work at San Diego State University, is editor of Depression in a Multidisciplinary Perspective. ■ Walter M. Ensel, research sociologist at the State University of New York at Albany, contributed the chapter "Sex Differences in the Epidemiology of Depression and Physical Illness: A Sociological Perspective" to A. Dean (Ed.) Depression in a Multidisciplinary Perspective. ■ Sheldon Cohen is professor of psychology at Carnegie-Mellon University. He is coauthor, with G. W. Evans, D. Stokols, and D. S. Krantz, of Behavior, Health and Environmental Stress.

The concepts social supports and stressful life events have provided promise for persons interested in establishing the importance of psychosocial factors in the etiology of both mental and physical dis-

order. To a great extent, this promise has not been fulfilled. There has been little consensus regarding the conceptualization and measurement of these concepts and quite a bit of confusion regarding their individual and joint contribution to dysfunction.

The contributors to this book do not resolve these difficult problems. They do, however, provide some alternative ways of viewing the issues, and they report a few solid results that increase understanding of the intertwining roles of support and stress in the initiation of depressive affect. The volume provides a detailed description of the first two waves (separated by 1 year) of a longitudinal general population study (*N* of approximately 1,000) focusing on stressful life events and social supports as predictors of depressive symptoms. Two introductory chapters provide historical and conceptual contexts. These are followed by a series of chapters on the design of the study and the properties of each of the measures. Next are descriptions and tests of a number of hypothetical models linking social support to depressive affect. Subsequent chapters contain additional analyses, with emphases on the role of factors such as age, gender, marital status, social class, and prior history of illness and on the role of support in buffering the impact of "the most important" event. A final chapter summarizes major findings, suggests a theory of the relationship between different conceptions of support, and discusses possible future research.

Three questions have guided my approach to reviewing this book. First, is it a valuable resource for investigators? Second, are the results of the study valid and informative? Third, is the book interesting to psychologists (the work derives from a sociological perspective)? The answers to these questions are "yes," "yes," and "to some extent."

Is the book a valuable resource for investigators?

Resources in the book include descriptions of measurement instruments, of alternative models of the relationship between social support and depressive affect, and integrative reviews of the evidence for the role of a variety of psychosocial factors in the etiology of depressive affect. The detailed descriptions of the properties of each measure used in the study provide a valuable reference for researchers considering using these measures or designing similar measures of their own. Chapters 4 through 6 include exceptionally useful analyses and

reviews of the Center for Epidemiologic Studies–Depression (CES–D) Scale, the authors' stressful life events and personal competence instruments, and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale. These chapters include descriptive data, validity and reliability data, and in some cases interesting and potentially useful factor analyses. For example, the chapter on stressful life events provides event frequencies, desirability ratings for each event, a breakdown of subscales representing different types of events, and correlations of each of these subscales with the CES–D. Chapters 7 through 9 provide similarly useful data concerning measurement of intimate support, instrumental and expressive functions, and community network support. A limitation of these chapters when viewed as a measurement resource is that the focus is on the particular measures used in the study, with only occasional mention of alternatives.

I also found the outline of alternative models linking social support and life events to depressive affect (in Chapter 10) exceptionally useful. The authors propose three major classes of models reflecting the temporal ordering of support and events (effects of SS that precede life events, LE; contemporaneous effects of SS and LE; and effects of SS subsequent to LE) and four submodels in each class reflecting the nature of the influence of these predictors on depressive symptoms (an interactive submodel and three alternative main effect submodels). However, I found the review of the literature relevant to these models forced, with little recognition of the differences in the types of support measured in the reviewed studies or of the possible implications of differences in measurement for different models.

Finally, the volume includes summaries and conceptual integrations of research on the relationships between age and depression (Chapter 11), marital status and depression (Chapter 12), gender and depression (Chapters 12 and 15), social class and depression (Chapter 13), and prior history of illness and depression (Chapter 14). Several of these chapters provide excellent concise reviews and integrations of existing literature and also serve the purpose of introducing particular analyses.

Are the results of the study valid and informative?

This is in many ways an elegant study. The longitudinal design (although three waves will eventually be collected, only the first two waves are presented in the book) allows the authors to address ques-

tions about temporal sequence not possible in the more common cross-sectional studies. Other strengths of the work include the use of a number of social support measures with different conceptual underpinnings; the concern with the psychometric qualities of measures; the well-reasoned statistical approach; the comparison of alternative temporal models; and the examination of confounding, mediating, and moderating factors.

I found three major weaknesses in the study. First, it is unclear how depressive symptoms (as measured in this study by the CES–D) are related to clinical depression. As the authors themselves point out, one of the standardized diagnostic interviews would have been preferable to the CES–D. Second, several measures of social support used in the study turned out to have questionable psychometric qualities. Especially disappointing is the development of a functional support measure, the "strong-tie support" scale, chosen for use in a majority of the analyses. This scale breaks down into three factors roughly assessing isolation, dissatisfaction with relationships, and problems and conflicts with other people. In short, functional support in this study means having contacts and not having conflict. Merely lacking negative relationships is an odd and unrepresentative conception of the functions of social support. Finally, the major criterion for choosing which of a variety of support measures was to be used in the central analyses was the magnitude of the correlation of each scale with the depressive symptoms scale. Such a procedure capitalizes on chance, hence increasing Type I error.

There are so many analyses in the book that a cover-to-cover reading leaves one overloaded and a little dazed. Yet, because chapters were written to stand on their own, one could pursue an interest in a particular question without reading the entire book.

There are a number of interesting effects, however, that stood out for me. Some tidbits include the apparent importance of an opposite-sex confidant, the role that marital status plays in explaining gender differences in depressive affect, and the failure of self-esteem and personal control to mediate relationships between life events and depressive affect and between social support (as measured in this study) and depressive affect.

Is the book interesting to psychologists? From the broadest perspective, any study of the precursors of depressive symptoms

is of interest to psychologists. Moreover, life events and social support are concepts of central interest in community, clinical, organizational, and social psychology at this time. The authors also examine the possible mediating roles of personal control and self-esteem, psychological states presumed to link support to symptoms. But this work is disappointing for a psychologist (or at least for me) because of (a) the choice of primarily structural measures of social support, (b) the poor job in conceptualizing and measuring the only functional measure, (c) the failure to address seriously or to measure the role of perception of the support system, and (d) the failure to address alternative psychological mediators of support–depression and stress–depression effects.

One possible practical manifestation of the inadequate assessment of functional support is the failure to find a traditional (interactive) stress-buffering effect of support. One theme in the psychological literature on the stress-buffering process is that the perception of available help allows one to appraise or reappraise potentially stressful or demanding situations without the necessity of mobilizing one's network (e.g., Cohen & McKay, 1984; House, 1981). Consistent with this approach, recent reviewers of the literature have suggested that stress-buffering effects occur primarily when there is a perception of an appropriate available function (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Kessler & McLeod, 1985). Hence, a fair test of such an effect would require an assessment of the perceived availability of resources that are useful in the face of stressful events.

Conclusion

Overall, *Social Support, Life Events, and Depression* is an important and useful resource for persons actively working in this field and provides an excellent model of social-psychiatric epidemiologic research for graduate students interested in the area. Basically, however, this is a very detailed description of a single, large-scale study on the social etiology of depressive affect. Hence, the book is considerably less relevant for persons with tangential interests in these areas and for persons primarily interested in interventions in support or stress.

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Playing With the Larger Dolls

Carolyn N. Hedley and Anthony N. Baratta (Eds.)
Contexts of Reading
 Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1985. 207 pp.
 \$32.50 hardcover; \$19.95 paperback

Review by
 Merlynn Bergen

Carolyn N. Hedley, associate professor and director of reading programs at Fordham University Graduate School of Education, is author of the forthcoming book *Assessment and Instruction of Reading: Problems of the Special Learner*. ■ Anthony N. Baratta is professor and chairperson of the Division of Curriculum and Teaching at Fordham University School of Education, where he is also head of the Human Resources and Adult Education Program. ■ Merlynn Bergen is research associate in the Department of Medicine, Stanford University Medical Center and adjunct professor of research methodology at Azusa Pacific University (San Jose Extension, California).

When I was young, my father brought me a special toy from his travels. There are many versions of this toy; I called mine the "Grandmother Doll." She was made of wood. Her shape was nearly undefined, but wonderfully colorful clothing had been painted on her. Somewhere near her ample middle she came apart, revealing a slightly smaller, equally colorful grandmother doll that contained another and yet another until, finally, there was a solid but very tiny grandmother doll.

Just as there are larger and smaller grandmother dolls, there are larger and smaller contexts of reading. The largest dolls represent the community with its culture and subcultures that surround and influence the reading act; mid-sized dolls correspond to small groups or dyads of readers; the smallest dolls might be the

paragraph, sentence, or morpheme surrounding ever-smaller reading units. The notion of context has great currency in the literature. In grandmother-doll terms, at first the smaller dolls were played with the most. *Contexts of Reading* has joined other voices in an attempt to redress this bias by choosing to play with the larger and mid-sized grandmother dolls. Readers are tipped off by the editors' definition of reading as "a socially based, interactive language transaction that builds on personal and cultural constructs which motivate and limit comprehension of text" (p. xv). Not only do the authors wish researchers to play with the larger dolls, but they also want them to try some new kinds of play. The editors think the complexity of the reading task demands the addition of ethnographic methodology, and many of the chapters incorporate this notion.

Contexts of Reading is Volume 18 of the *Advances in Discourse Processing* series under Roy Freedle's general editorship. Editors Hedley and Baratta have compiled the contributions of 14 speakers and participants from the 1983 Fordham University Reading Institute. The book is about "the reading-thinking-learning process, the classrooms in which such reading and learning processes occur, and the means for studying these processes" (p. xv). The book is for "educators in many roles and at many levels" (p. xvi).

The Fordham Institute as well as the resultant book used a model one might call the "Whitman Sampler." There is a chapter each on research, special education, bilingual education, decision making, computers, and so on. It could be the perfect gift for persons wishing a small taste of each topic, but it could be a real disappointment for readers who want to indulge

The Whitman Sampler

The first set of chapters deals with interactive/participatory learning contexts. Wilkinson brings a sociolinguistic approach to student interactions in peer-directed reading groups. Although I disagree with Wilkinson's description (after Smith, 1983) of the differences between quantitative and qualitative research methods, I applaud her move toward a use of both methods. Unfortunately, she does not deliver. The reporting of the qualitative data (i.e., transcripts of the children's interactions) does enhance the statistical presentation of individual differences, as promised, but it is a weak use of powerful qualitative research methods to use verbal data merely as examples of numerical data, bringing to the

analysis no new structure or understanding (Guthrie & Hall, 1984).

Brause says things readers might all agree on. To learn, children need trusting, supportive, and content-rich environments in which the expectation is that they will eventually succeed. As in Wilkinson's chapter, Brause's use of transcripts as examples of concepts fails to illuminate the method of ethnography. However, the examples make for interesting reading and clearly help the reader understand the concepts.

The title and stated purpose of the book motivate some chapters much more than others. Although the words *teacher* and *school* are sprinkled throughout Baratta's chapter, it is thoroughly focused on a decision-making model that seems far from the scheme.

The five chapters of Part 2 move to reading instruction itself. Tierney and Pearson view reading and writing as similar processes of meaning construction. Their intriguing idea is that both are acts of composing. Their strong, vivid language (e.g., "tug of war between author and reader," p. 64) and compelling arguments carry the reader along through the various stages that the authors contend occur in both reading and writing. Early in the chapter the comment that "there is no meaning on the page until a reader decides there is" (p. 64) reminded me of Bruce's (1981) statement:

What we call the "structure of a text" is not . . . a property of sentences or texts at all, but rather an attribute conferred on the text by a reader on the basis of the "meaning of the text," which, in turn, is created by the reader in the process of reading. (p. 309)

I would argue, and Tierney and Pearson might well agree, that the text has a definite life of its own and one need not get as carried away in the excitement of viewing reading as interactive as these quotations indicate. Both structure and meaning exist on the page and can sensibly be considered apart from the reader (Calfee & Curley, 1984).

In a chapter closely linked to that by Tierney and Pearson, Fillion considers the shift in emphasis from skills to processes in reading research to be a positive one. He asserts that writing research, which never focused on skills, can inform this shift. He wants students to read and write in the classroom, but he has observed that when students do something poorly, they will be asked to do it less: "Aware of their students' reluctance and inability [to read and write], teachers have found ways to