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TRACKING TRENDS & PERFORMANCE IN BASIC RESEARCH

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2009 : September 2009 - New Hot Papers : Constance Hammen

NEW HOT PAPERS - 2009

September 2009



Constance Hammen talks with *ScienceWatch.com* and answers a few questions about this month's New Hot Paper in the field of Psychiatry/Psychology.



Article Title: Stress and depression

Authors: Hammen, C

Journal: ANNU REV CLIN PSYCHOL

Volume: 1

Page: :293-319

Year: 2005

* Univ Calif Los Angeles, Dept Psychol, Los Angeles, CA 90095 USA.

* Univ Calif Los Angeles, Dept Psychol, Los Angeles, CA 90095 USA.

SW: Why do you think your paper is highly cited?

Stress is an important construct in understanding many disorders, and perhaps especially depression, and is a very active topic of research. A review article like mine is a good citation in place of listing a lot of references, and can also serve as a shorthand statement of up-to-date information on the topic.

SW: Does it describe a new discovery, methodology, or synthesis of knowledge?

It presents a synthesis of knowledge on the stress-depression field, and tries to highlight new directions for research.

SW: Would you summarize the significance of your paper in layman's terms?

Stress plays a critical role in depression, and is the trigger of depressive responses in the vast majority of cases. However, most people who face stressors do not get depressed, and the article attempts to describe what kinds of stress, what kinds of depression, and what kinds of personal characteristics are most susceptible to a stress-depression link.

There are also many intriguing aspects of the stress-depression link that we are becoming more aware of. For one thing, sometimes people with depression histories seem to contribute to the occurrence of stress and may be caught up in, or select themselves into, circumstances that will likely create more stress (and more depression). An example would be selecting a mate with whom conflict keeps recurring.

Another example of an interesting stress-depression connection is the idea that the nature of the association may change with repeated depression—so that possibly with time it takes less stress to trigger depression. These questions guarantee that

stress continues to be an important topic of research.

SW: How did you become involved in this research, and were there any problems along the way?

I have been a depression researcher all my career, and inevitably, in order to understand depression, one has to understand the kinds of lives people are living. I became intrigued with how stressful the lives of some depressed people are, even when they are not currently depressed, and how hard it is for many to find effective ways to cope with chronic and acute stress. Depressed people have led me to questions to pursue that have been fruitful, and the biggest challenge has been to find accurate and thorough ways to measure stress objectively.

SW: Where do you see your research leading in the future?

Presently, I am interested in two directions that are relatively new for me. One is the study of exposure to stress early in life and how it affects both the occurrence of later stress and how the person reacts to stress. The other is the integration of stress studies with biological mechanisms, such as genetic characteristics, to help further refine the question of why some people, but not others, develop depression when faced with stressors.

SW: Do you foresee any social or political implications for your research?

Only indirectly: there is no question that social adversity in many forms (low income, discrimination, single parenting, unemployment, or job insecurity—the list goes on) is extremely stressful. Stressed and depressed parents typically have negative effects on their children's mental health and adjustment.

Political and social policies that take people out of poverty, that provide resources to promote health and well-being and support families of all kinds, would definitely help to reduce depression, not just in adults but potentially help break the cycle of stress-depression that impairs the whole family.

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KEYWORDS: STRESSFUL LIFE EVENTS; CHRONIC STRESS; STRESS SENSITIZATION; STRESS GENERATION; REACTIVITY TO STRESS.



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