Reviewer's report

Title: The effects of mid-life socioeconomic disadvantage and perceived social support on trajectories of subsequent depressive symptoms among older Taiwanese women

Version: 3 Date: 12 March 2014

Reviewer: Dana Garbarski

Reviewer's report:

The authors have done a great deal of work to respond to the reviewers' comments, and have responded to both sets of comments quite well. I only have one outstanding revision:

Major Compulsory Revision

Original revision suggested:

2) The manuscript discusses “cumulative effects.” The literature on cumulative disadvantage and inequality is rather broad and disparate, and it is unclear which sort of accumulation the authors are seeking to address.

REPLY: We take a life-course perspective and define cumulative disadvantage effects as accumulating SES disadvantage across the life course as Blane (2006) suggested. Mid-life SES disadvantage is thus hypothesized to be associated with not only onset of but changes related to subsequent depressive symptomatology (Pg. 3-4).

Additional revision requested:

I appreciate this definition, but the mechanism through which this occurs is not clearly explicated in the paper. For example, does the effect of SES disadvantage on subsequent depressive symptoms occur through the lack of SES resources compounding over time? Does midlife SES disadvantage lead to multiple other risk factors that compound over time? Is the mechanism actually compounding over time, or do we see this pattern because we are missing the complex and time-varying interplay between SES disadvantage and depressive symptoms that is missed with the modeling strategy in this paper in which, for example, midlife SES is time-invariant? These are two of several plausible examples. While the manuscript spells out the pattern of an exposure of interest being associated with a later outcome, it doesn't explicate as clearly why we might expect that to occur.