Reviewer's report

Title: Relationship between Family Interaction Types and Depression among Sixth Graders in Taiwan

Version: 1 Date: 15 December 2006

Reviewer: Michele Berk

Reviewer's report:

General
This study examined the relationship between family interaction variables and depressive symptoms in a sample of 6th school children in Taiwan. Results showed that children who reported higher levels of discipline and conflict in their families had higher levels of depression. Strengths of the study are the public health importance of understanding family factors in childhood depression and the use of a Chinese sample, which may help answer questions about how family factors in depression are similar and different across cultures. However, as detailed below, I feel the study currently needs major compulsory revisions before it is ready for publication. In particular, cross-cultural issues, which seem to be the major potential contribution of this research, are discussed only briefly throughout the manuscript. The manuscript could be strengthened by making this its central focus.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

Introduction:
1. Several of the references are quite old. Please specify if newer research exists or not and include it if it does exist.
2. Please elaborate on the mechanisms by which family interaction styles may lead to depressive symptoms.
3. Several studies are presented in terms of how researchers grouped family interactions into types, but the results of these studies are not presented. These studies need to be discussed in greater detail. In its current version, the introduction does not give the reader a good understanding of prior research, nor how the present research contributes to the literature.
4. Discussion of prior relevant studies conducted in Taiwan or other countries besides the United States and the similarities and differences between these findings should be added and would greatly strengthen the contribution and purpose of this manuscript.

Method/Results:
1. Why were 6th graders chosen?
2. Is there reliability or validity data for the measure of depressive symptoms used? How was the measure scored? Are the cutoff scores for mild/moderate/severe depression? The fact that the average score was 10, in a range of 7 to 21, suggests that depressive symptoms in this sample were very low. Even in the “disciplined” group, the average depression score appears to be 11.94. Please address this and how it impacts the results. Your findings appear to be accounting for mild depression at best.
3. Were the dependent measures completed only by children or also by their parents? If so, please present results separately for adult and child data. Also, if measures were only completed by children, please comment on the reliability of self-report data in this age group.
4. Why were the particular categories of family interaction styles chosen? They appear to mirror the American literature presented, but how do these relate to Chinese culture? I would expect family interaction styles and values to be quite different in each culture.

Discussion:
1. Again, I think this manuscript would be greatly strengthened by making cultural issues the major focus of this discussion.
2. A more detailed discussion of how high levels of discipline in families in this sample may lead to depressive symptoms in children would be helpful. Also some context for understanding the findings would be helpful – for example, what is the typical level of discipline in Chinese families?
3. The finding that girls have a higher rate of depression in this sample than boys should be mentioned in the Results section as well as the discussion. What might be the reason for this gender difference?
Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Introduction:
Page 4: Please specify what the Disability Adjusted Life Year is.

General:
There are several misuses of the English language. I assume this is due to English not being the authors’ primary language.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.