

BOOKS

Stress and the Family Volume I: Coping With Normative Transitions, Hamilton I. McCubbin and Charles R. Figley. New York, Brunner/Mazel, 1983. 216 pp. \$22.50, hardcover.

Coping With Normative Transitions is the first of two volumes that employ sociology research to focus on family stress. McCubbin and Figley have expanded the pioneering work of Reuben Hill into a general model of stress and family coping. As the editors state in their introduction, "Normative stressors and crises refer to those changes or life cycle transitions that are expected and predictable, which most or even all families will experience over the life cycle, and which require adjustment and adaptation. Stress is part of that developmental process" (p. xx). They delineate two sources of stress: normal life cycle transitions and unpredictable, catastrophic events.

Volume I begins with a conceptual chapter by McCubbin and Patterson outlining their theoretical model for understanding stress and the family's functional and dysfunctional coping patterns. Subsequent chapters, by contributors, consider two categories of stress: (a) family transitions (the life cycle) and (b) environmental demands on the family, such as work, societal stress (in the black family), environmental stress (in the rural family), and economic stress.

The editors gave each contributing author a set of objectives and specific questions within which to frame their essays. These involved understanding the family system as a stress absorber and stress producer, highlighting the particular stress in each life cycle phase, identifying important areas of research in the family stress field, and developing effective interventions for helping families to cope. This format gives the book a coherent structure.

McCubbin's and Patterson's chapter is one of the best, a concise presentation of their Double ABCX Model for understanding stress and the family's ability to cope. They define family stress as "a state that arises from an actual or perceived imbalance between demand (e.g., challenge, threat) and capability (e.g., resources, coping) in the family functioning" (p. 10). The Double ABCX Model is based on Hill's model. As Hill (2) describes it, "A (the stressor/crisis-provoking event), interacting with B (the family's crisis-meeting resources), interacting with C (the definition the family makes of the event), produces X (the crisis).

This model has become the cornerstone of family stress literature. It focuses on the precrisis variables that influence a family's ability to cope with stress. These variables determine whether the outcome will be a crisis for a particular family. McCubbin *et al.* have expanded the model to the *Double ABCX Model*, a more dynamic concept. In the Double Model, each factor is further developed: Aa, Bb, Cc. Thus, Aa implies the *pileup* of demands? the sum of many stressors, normative and nonnormative, that occur together. A given stressor (say, loss of father's job) can happen during the normal life cycle transition of another family member (son's adolescence), at a time that the family is already coping with strain (grandfather's death) and with the consequences of the family's shift in roles (mother went to work), all interacting to unbalance family stability. The factor Bb, family adaptation, describes the new structure needed to adapt to the pileup of stress, such as modification of roles, rules, and patterns of interaction. Adaptation is consolidated not only by intrafamily shifts but with the help of the family's natural support systems.

I wholeheartedly agree with the application of the stress concept to the life cycle. As a family therapist, this framework has always helped me to understand clinical dilemmas. Carter and McGoldrick (1) have presented the emotional tasks faced by the family system at each phase of its life cycle. Adding the Double ABCX Model allows us to look more closely at the configuration of stressors and coping efforts that result in some families' inability to adapt or to move to the next stage.

This volume seems to be addressed to an audience with varying levels of experience, and the roster of contributors reflects this diversity. Although all the authors follow the editors' format, there is wide variation in emphasis. Some focus more on reviewing the literature, others take a sociological approach, and still others write clinically. This diversity results in strengths and weaknesses, and overall I think the book works best for the student and the general reader. Experienced therapists may find some chapters oversimplified and trailing well behind the conceptual model. Among the most informative sections are those on marriage, sexuality, divorce, and the black family. The chapter on adolescence provides a beautiful synthesis of the model with a family systems point of view. The chapter on stepparenting, also outstanding, augments the stress model with direct clinical implications and recommendations.

In summary, Volume I is an ambitious work with wide relevance. For the student, it offers a rich overview of the family stress field and the family life cycle. The experienced clinician is well rewarded by this conceptual model and some of its applications but may be left desiring a stronger clinical and systems focus.

REFERENCES

1. Carter, E. and McGoldrick, M. (Eds.), *The Family Life Cycle: A Framework for Family Therapy*, New York,

Long Struggle Well Functioning Working Class Black Families

Jiyuan Zhang



Long Struggle Well Functioning Working Class Black Families:

Long Struggle Well Functioning Working Class Black Families Book Review: Unveiling the Power of Words

In a global driven by information and connectivity, the power of words has be much more evident than ever. They have the capability to inspire, provoke, and ignite change. Such could be the essence of the book **Long Struggle Well Functioning Working Class Black Families**, a literary masterpiece that delves deep to the significance of words and their effect on our lives. Written by a renowned author, this captivating work takes readers on a transformative journey, unraveling the secrets and potential behind every word. In this review, we shall explore the book is key themes, examine its writing style, and analyze its overall affect readers.

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