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Title: A Happy Union between Biomarkers and the Social World? Examining the Validity of Proximate Allostatic Load

Abstract: It is thought that the cumulative physiological costs of adapting to life stress (or allostatic load) may play a role in the causal pathway from greater social integration to improved health. Positive and stable social relations could reduce allostatic load. Using an index of biomarkers that purportedly captures allostatic load has been predictive of negative health outcomes. To date, however, there has been less evidence to show that the index is actually a reflection of what it is supposed to be. This paper, using a nationally representative population survey, attempts to validate a measure called proximate allostatic load in regards to marriage. Initial analysis reveals mixed results. The widowed do not appear to have higher loads than the married although increasing age does yield a worse profile.

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