ABSTRACT
              Although research has suggested that level of social
stress relates to psychosocial problems in adolescents and that
social stressors impact more on females than on males, past studies
have not considered whether gender differences in stress are related
to perception of stressfulness or higher levels of experience, and if
any types of events consistently distinguish gender differences. In
this study the Offer Self Image Questionnaire (OSIQ) was administered
to 84 16- to 18-year-old males and females to test the relationship
of ratings and experience of four types of social stressors
(Developmental Transitions, Induced Transitions, Daily Hassles, and
Circumscribed Events) to self-image. Differences found in the
stressfulness ratings of the four stressors were relatively parallel
for both genders, and no significant correlations between ratings and
experiences were found. Only the Daily Hassles score correlated with
the self-image scales for both genders. Comparisons of subjects with
clinical range scores and those with normal range scores on the OSIQ
indicated that for both genders, the two groups differed
significantly only on the Daily Hassles score. The results suggest
that gender differences are less influential than previously reported
and that day-to-day stress is most influential in overall adjustment.
A 23-item reference list and 3 tables are included. (KS)

Types of Stress and Transitions and Adolescent Self Image

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Abstract

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84 16-18 year old male and female volunteers were sampled
to test the relationship of ratings and experience of four
types of social stressors. (Developmental Transitions, Induced
Transitions, Daily Hassles, and Circumscribed Events) with
scales of the Offer Self Image Questionnaire. Contrary to
previous research we did not find correlations between ratings
and experience and few gender differences in ratings.
Although differences were found in the stressfulness ratings
of each of the four types of social stressors, these
differences were relatively parallel for both genders.
Correlational analyses indicate that Daily Hassles score was
the only type of stressor to correlate to self image scales
for both genders. Comparisons of subjects with clinical range
scores and those with normal range scores on the OSIQ indicate
that for both genders, the two groups differ significantly on
the Daily Hassles score only. These results suggest that
gender differences are less influential than previously
reported and that day-to-day stress is most influential on
overall adjustment.

A large number of studies have demonstrated that level
of social stress relates to subsequent psycho-social problems
among adolescents (Coddington, 1972; Gersten, Langner,
Eisenberg, & Simcha-Fagan, 1977: Johnson & McCutcheon, 1980).
Recently there have been attempts to extend this approach
beyond correlation of life stress scores to physical and
psychological symptoms to a more general explanation of
differences in overall adjustment and developmental progress
(Ryff & Dunn, 1985). Concurrently, a great deal of research
has focused on what type of life events and qualities of those
events (e.g. negative versus positive experience) are salient
in the effects on psycho-social adjustment observed (Compas,
Davis, & Forsythe, 1985; Newcomb, Huba, & Bentler, 1981).

Among these studies three major concerns can be
identified that are relevant to studies of adolescence.
First, is the issue of orienting scoring to individual
perceptions of stressfulness of events versus objective
weighting (Dohrenwend & Dohrenwend, 1974; Compas et al., 1985;
Newcomb et al., 1981). Compas et al. and Newcomb et al.
report a general consistency among adolescents in the valence
assigned (positive and negative) life experiences, but
considerable variability in extent of life change attributed
to a given event. Newcomb et al. suggest that simple counts
of events rather than weighting based on each adolescent's
perceptions is adequate and psychometrically more sound.

Also, Newcomb et al. suggested counting only negative events in measuring social stress, although others report overall life change is a more useful metric (Gersten et al., 1977; Kale & Stenmark, 1983). These findings mirror results from studies of adults (Ross & Mirowsky, 1979). The present study examines to what extent individual perception relates to and distinguishes experience of social stressors to determine if personal perception merits consideration in scoring life events' impacts on adolescents. If there is either exceptional consensus or variation in the ratings of life events then weighting impact by personal ratings would not be meaningful, and is likely to confuse subject variance with effect (Swearingen & Cohen, 1985a).

The second concern is the types of events to consider and what dimensions to use to distinguish them (Felner, Farber, & Primavera, 1983; Newcomb et al., 1981). Various schemas have been suggested or used in the study of adolescence. Felner, et al. (1983) noted that there is a need to differentiate social stress that is related to relatively circumscribed or discrete traumatic events (e.g. auto accident) and "events" that are more accurately described as markers of life transition (e.g. parental divorce). Similarly, as adolescence is considered to be a time when life is "embedded in transition", it seems important to further distinguish transactions that are induced (e.g. parental divorce) from those that are developmentally expectable (e.g. puberty) when studying this age group (Moss, 1981). Another important

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distinction is between the social stress related to
transitions or traumatic events and that related to the day-
to-day chronic stressful patterns of life. Newcomb, et al.
(1981) and Swearingen and Cohen (1985b) report that among
their samples, psychological difficulties are more related to
social stress from daily "hassles" such as arguments over use
of the family car and hairstyles than to circumscribed
traumatic events.

Thus, four "types" of social stressors can be
distinguished (daily hassles, circumscribed events, induced
transitions, developmental changes). This study examines the
relative perceived stressfulness of each, and then their
impact on adolescent self image.

The third issue, which has been raised less frequently,
but when considered has shown importance, is the effect of
gender on life stress effects (Siddique & D'Arcy, 1984;
Compas, et al., 1985). Gender differences in developmental
tasks and developmental course during adolescence have been
amply demonstrated (Conger & Peterson, 1984). It would follow
then that gender differences in impact of social stress is
likely. Previous research reports that females perceive
events as more stressful than males (Compas et al., 1985;
Siddique & D'Arcy, 1984).   Swearingen & Cohen (1985b) report
that females reported more negative events than males.
Newcomb et al. (1981) reported that the likelihood of
experiencing several life events was affected by gender. For
example, females reported events such as parental divorce and

finding a new group of friends, whereas males were more likely to report getting in trouble with the law and starting to make money on their own. This accumulating research suggests that social stressors impact more on females than males (Burk & Weir, 1978), although this matter is far from settled (Gove & Herb, 1974). These studies have not considered whether the gender differences in stress are related to perception of stressfulness or higher levels of experience, and if any types of events consistently distinguish gender differences. For example, one relevant question is whether or not the developmental transitions of adolescence are more difficult for females or males. The present study addresses these issues by including such a comparison as well as gender comparisons of perception, experience, and the relationship of perceptions and experience.

The focus here is on a "normal" sample to determine if the social stress model is useful for explaining normal as well as abnormal variations. Offer, Ostrov, and Howard (1982) have developed a self image questionnaire (the OSIQ) to measure general adjustment and variations in development. In addition, the OSIQ has shown ability to distinguish clinical populations. Therefore, overall adjustment can be studied as well as clinically significant variations in adjustment.

Method

Subjects

84 (49 females, 35 males) 16-18 year old adolescents solicited through their suburban high school were utilized as subjects. The sample was 83% white and primarily middle class, although all levels of socioeconomic status and a range of ethnic backgrounds were represented in the sample.

Instruments

Social Stress Measure. This is a 69 item measure developed by the senior author and derived through a review of several measures of social stress for adolescents (Coddington, 1972; Johnson & McCutcheon, 1980; McCubbin, Patterson, Bauman, & Harris, 1982). Items were categorized into the four scales described above by comparing the categorizations of three independent raters working from operational definitions developed by the senior author. Seventy percent of the items were categorized by agreement across all three raters. Two out of three raters agreed on the classification all but two items (97%). Items with less than unanimous agreement were categorized into the group that the two agreeing raters had assigned. These categorizations yielded a 9 item developmental transition scale, a 17 item induced transitions scale, a 28 item circumscribed events scale, and a 16 item daily hassles scale. Subjects were asked first to indicate whether or not the occurrence of each item's referred to event would be a positive or negative experience and if so, how much

change (on a scale of 1 to 5) each would require. Rating

scores were calculated in terms of total change required.

Then, in a separate administration, they were asked to

indicate whether or not each item had happened to them in the

last twelve months. Rating scores were recorded as the

average score across the items on the scale.

Offer Self Image Questionnaire (OSIQ). This is a 130

item self descriptive questionnaire developed to measure the

adjustment of teenagers (Offer, et al., 1982). The OSIQ

contains eleven scales: Impulse Control, Emotional Tone, Body

and Self-Image, Social Relationships, Morals, Vocational-

Educational Goals, Sexual Attitudes, Family Relationships,

Mastery of the External World, Psychopathology, and Superior

Adjustment. The OSIQ has been used widely with normal

adolescents from a variety of cultural backgrounds and with

various clinical groups and has shown validity as a measure of

relative adjustment (see Offer et al., 1982; Offer, 1986).

Although Offer et al. report gender differences on several of

the OSIQ scales, all scores were converted to standardized

scores based on the manual's norms to control for this effect.

In addition, subjects were categorized into clinical and

normal levels of adjustment following the manual's criteria of

categorizing subjects with a $\underline{Z}$ score of at least one on three

or more scales as clinical.

A demographic questionnaire was used to record gender,

ethnic group, age, and parental education and occupation.

Preliminary analyses indicate none of these variables

correlated significantly to self image or stress level scale scores.

Procedure

Subjects were solicited through social science classes in a suburban high school of a large Midwestern city. Of those solicited approximately 70% agreed to participate and received parental permission to do so. Subjects were administered the questionnaires for individual completion during class time.

Results

Gender Differences in Stress

Initial analyses were performed to determine if there were gender differences in ratings of stressors, experience of stressor types, and the relationship between experience and rating. The rates of endorsement of each item in the stress scale for males and females was tallied and are presented in Table 1. Chi-square analyses of the rates of endorsement of each item by gender revealed only one significant difference with more females reporting "got poor grades in school"; ($\underline{X}2$ (1,1) = 8.51, $\underline{p}$ < .01).

Table 1 about here

To determine if males and females differed in their rating or experience of any of the four types of stressors, ANOVAs were performed. Of the eight ANOVAs, one was significant and another approached significance. Females

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rated chronic Daily Hassles as more stressful than males
(F (1, 82) = 4.92, p < .05). The comparison of experience of
Daily Hassles approached significance (F (1, 82) = 3.77,
p < .06), with the female mean higher (see Table 2 for means).

Table 2 about here

Next, Pearson product-moment correlations were calculated
for each gender between level of experience and stressfulness
rating to determine if rating was influenced by experience.
No significant correlations were found for either gender
group, and therefore no gender comparisons were made.

ANOVAs were then performed within gender to determine if
rating of stressfulness for each of the four stress scales
differed in either gender. Significant differences were found
for both genders (females- F (3, 45) = 43.83, p < .001),
males- F (3, 32) = 34.96, p < .001)). Scheffe post-hoc
comparisons of the means indicate that both genders rated
Developmental Transitions as less stressful than the other
three types of stressors. Also, males rated Circumscribed
Events as more stressful than Daily Hassles. (See Table 2 for
means).

Relationship of Stress Types and Self Image

Pearson product-moment correlations were calculated
between each of the eleven OSIQ scales and score on each of
the four stress-type scales broken down by gender. Of the 88
correlations, only five were significant at the .01 level and

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all included Daily Hassles score. For females, Daily Hassles
correlated significantly with Impulse Control (r = -.35), Body
and Self Image (r = -.36), Morals (r = -.50), and Family
Relationships r = -.47). For males, the only significant
correlation was between Family Relationships and Daily Hassles
(r = -.43).

The final analysis was performed to compare the four
stress scale scores of subjects scoring in the clinical range
(three or more scales with a Z score more than one) with the
normal range subjects, sorted by gender. The means for each
group are presented in Table 3. ANOVAs of each gender
indicate Daily Hassles scores of the clinical group were
higher than the normal group for both genders (females-F (1,
47) = 5.42, p < .05); males- F (1, 34) = 4.35, p < .05)).
None of the other ANOVAs in this analysis were significant.

Table 3 about here

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine three issues
related to understanding the relationship of social stress to
developmental functioning of adolescents: the importance of
perception in impact, the relative importance of
distinguishing types of stress, and the prominence of gender

differences. In each case our study supports, in part, what
has been previously reported, but also reports new or
different findings than previously reported.

The analyses comparing rates of experience indicate
little difference between males and females for particular
items. Comparison of ratings of the four types of stressors
indicates women rate Daily Hassles as more stressful than
males. There was no significant difference on any other
comparisons between genders of stress ratings. Within each
gender, differences in scale ratings were parallel, with both
females and males rating Developmental Transitions as less
stressful than the other three types. The only gender
difference was that males rated circumscribed events as more
stressful than daily hassles whereas females did not.
However, as Table 3 indicates the means' rank order is the
same for both genders. When experience levels were compared,
the only indication of gender differences was a close to
significant difference of females reporting more experience of
daily hassles.

Thus, it appears that, at least for this sample, the most
striking and consistent finding is that males and females are
quite similar in their perception of stress and their
experience of stress. The only notable distinction is that
females report that the day-to-day conflicts with peers,
family, and teachers, and worries such as school performance
are more stressful for them. This may reflect greater levels

of experience as is hinted at by the experience comparison.
However, many of the items on this scale refer to personal
relationships and managing conflicts and change in these. The
difference observed here may reflect a difference in the
genders' orientation to day-to-day relationships with female.-
placing more value on these (Gilligan, 1982), and hence,
feeling more adjustment required to cope with day-to-day
stressors. This latter explanation could also account for
males reporting that traumatic events, which tend to be self
oriented, as significantly more stressful than other types.

A clear distinction shown here is that expectable
developmental transitions are seen as less stressful than
others. This could be due to their predictability and
perceived "controlability" (Dohrenwend & Martin, 1979;
Swearingen & Cohen, 1985a) or it could be due to the positive
nature of the change brought on by several of the events
referred to by its items, such as starting to drive. This
positive tone may have led to a rating as requiring less
change. However, it may also be that adolescents are more
aware of and prepared for developmental changes than for other
types of life stress and therefore rate such changes as less
stressful. Whichever explanation is borne out by further
research, these res'' ; support the contention that, for most
adolescents, deve.   ital changes do not impose excessive or
overwhelming stress (Offer, 1986; Rutter, Graham, Chadwick, &
Yule, 1976). Adolescent "turmoil" is less a developmental
phenomenon and more related to day-to-day problems.

When the correlations to the OSIQ scales were
calculated, it was revealed that only Daily Hassles correlated
significantly with any of the OSIQ scales. For females a high
level of Daily Hassles correlated to lower levels of self
control, comfort with their body, sense of duty,
responsibility, and concern for others, and poor communication
and relationship with their family. For males Daily Hassles
was also the only significantly relating stress scale and it
only correlated with Family Relationships. Thus, although
family problems correlates to higher levels of day-to-day
stressors for both males and females, females are affected
more broadly. The emergent gender difference seems to be the
extent and type of effect of Daily Hassles. This finding is
congruent with Newcomb et al.'s (1981) and Swearingen and
Cohen's (1985b) conclusion that daily hassles are most
pertinent to understanding stress effects on adolescents, but
differs in finding that Daily Hassles seems less specific for
females than for males.

Also, Daily Hassles was the only scale that
differentiated the "clinical" and "average" groups, and did so
for both males and females. This suggest, in light of the
pattern of correlations found above, that Daily Hassles may be
distinctly useful compared to other types of social stress in
distinguishing adolescent likely to be experiencing
significant emotional problems.

In sum, social stress impact and perception differs little by gender. A social stress approach appears to be less useful for understanding variations in normal developmentand adjustment, but one type of stress, Daily Hassles is of some use. Apparently day-to-day "hassles" effect adolescent female's self image more broadly thamn males. Daily Hassles seems most useful, however, for distinguishing symptomological from "average" adolescents of either gender.

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Table 1.

Percentage of Subjects Endorsing Stress Items by Gender

Item	Percent Endorsing	
Developmental Transitions	Males	Females
1. Teenager began having sexual intercourse	27.0	16.3
2. Lost your virginity	16.2	18.4
3. You got your first job	24.3	16.3
4. Puberty started	0.0	0.0
5. Found a new group of friends	32.4	42.9
6. Started to drive	10.8	14.3
7. Made a new friend	78.4	71.4
8. Started high school	2.7	0.0
9. Started going steady	18.9	38.8
Induced Transitions		
10. Family member started a new business (farm, store etc.)	8.1	10.2
11. Parents separated or divorced	8.1	4.1
12. Parent remarried	2.7	0.0
13. Parents adopted a child	2.7	0.0
14. Transferred to a new school	5.4	4.1
15. Brother or sister moved away from home	13.5	18.4
16. Young adult family member entered college, vocational school or armed forces	16.2	14.3
17. Family moved to a new home	8.1	6.1
18. Birth of a brother or sister	0.0	0.0

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Table 1 - continued

		Males	Females
19.	Family went on welfare	2.7	0.0
20.	Brother or sister died	0.0	0.0
21.	Parent died	0.0	0.0
22.	Family member became physically disabled or was found to have a long-term health problem (allergies, asthma, diabetes, etc.)	8.1	12.2
23.	Parent(s) have more responsibility to take care of grandparent(s)	13.5	20.4
24.	Increase of parent's time away from the family	29.7	26.5
25.	Had to leave home (kicked out)	0.0	2.0
26.	Placed in a special academic program	29.7	22.4

Circumscribed Events

		Males	Females
27.	Parent quit or lost a job	18.9	14.3
28.	Family member was found to have a learning disorder or problem	8.1	4.1
29.	Family member was married	16.2	4.1
30.	A member started junior high school or high school	35.1	26.5
31.	Parent started school	5.4	2.0
32.	Parent(s) started or changed to a new job	18.9	22.4
33.	Unmarried family member became pregnant	0.0	2.0
34.	Family member had an abortion	0.0	2.0
35.	Damage to or loss of family property due to fire, burglary or other disaster	8.1	2.0
36.	Close family relative died	24.3	18.4
37.	Death of a close friend or family member	24.3	36.7

Table 1 - continued

38.	Family member or close family friend attempted or committed suicide	0.0	10.2
39.	Family member became seriously ill or injured (NOT hospitalized)	21.6	8.2
40.	Family member was hospitalized	29.7	28.6
41.	Grandparent(s) became seriously ill	32.4	16.3
42.	Family member ran away	2.7	2.0
43.	More financial debts due to credit cards or charges	10.8	16.3
44.	Child or teenage member was suspended from or dropped out of school	13.5	4.1
45.	Family member went to jail, juvenile detention, or was placed on court probation	13.5	6.1
46.	Family member was robbed or attacked (physically or sexually)	2.7	4.1
47.	Family pet died	18.9	6.1
48.	Lost alot of weight	16.2	16.3
49.	Gained alot of weight	13.5	26.5
50.	Received a special academic honor	54.1	61.2
51.	Got someone pregant or	0.0	2.0
52.	Got pregnant	0.0	2.0
53.	Lost a good friend	18.9	30.6

Daily Hassles

54.	Family member had emotional problems	13.5	24.5
55.	Increased family living expenses for medical care, food, clothing, energy costs (gasoline, heating)	27.0	34.7

Table 1 - continued

		Males	Females
56.	Child or teenage member resists doing things with family	29.7	51.0
57.	Increase in arguments between parents	16.2	36.7
58	Children or teenagers started having more fights with each other	21.6	26.5
59.	Parent(s) and teenager(s) have increased arguments (hassles) over: use of car or hours to stay out	37.8	53.1
60.	Parent(s) and teenager(s) have increased arguments (hassles) over: choice of friends and/or social activities	24.3	36.7
61.	Parent(s) and teenager(s) have increased arguments (hassles) over: attendance at religious services	8.1	18.4
62.	Parent(s) and teenager(s) have increased arguments (hassles) over: personal appearance (clothes, hair, etc.)	27.0	30.6
63.	Increased arguments about getting jobs done at home	45.9	59.2
64.	Increased pressure for a member in school to get "good" grades or do well in sports or school activities	67.6	53.1
65.	Family member uses drugs (not given by doctor)	16.2	34.7
66.	Family member drinks too much alcohol	21.6	30.6
67.	Parent(s) and teenager(s) have increased arguments (hassles) over: use of cigarettes, alcohol, or drugs	18.9	24.5
68.	Got poor grades in school	2.7	26.5
69.	Got into trouble with a techer or principal at school	13.5	14.3

Table 3.

Anovas of Experience Levels on Four Stress Scales of Clinical vs. Normal Groups, by Gender

	Clinical		Average	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Life Events	5.40	3.51	4.05	3.78
Daily Hassles	6.24	7.36	3.52*	4.80*
Induced Transitions	1.70	1.70	1.53	1.36
Developmental Transitions	1.53	2.25	2.44	2.16

* $p < .05$ difference between clinical and average groups

Table 2

Mean ratings and number of stressors experienced by gender

	Males	Females	Gender Difference
Rating of Life Events	3.60	3.76	NS
Rating of Daily Hassles	3.12	3.42	$p < .05$
Rating of Induced Transitions	3.34	3.52	NS
Rating of Developmental Transistions	2.57	2.69	NS
Experienced Life Events	4.32	3.78	NS
Experienced Daily Hassles	4.00	5.60	$p = .06$
Experienced Induced Transitions	1.53	1.36	NS
Experienced Developmental Transitions	2.16	2.16	NS

NS = not significant