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PRESS RELEASE

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**Young Adolescent Girls' Depression
Is Tied to More Stressful Life Events**

Starting in early adolescence, girls experience depression more often than boys, but little is known about why. A new study finds that girls experience more stressors, especially in their interpersonal world, than boys, and that their exposure and reaction to events, especially those involving peers, contribute to their higher levels of depression.

These findings come from researchers at the University of South Carolina and the University of Illinois at Chicago, and are published in the January/February 2007 issue of the journal *Child Development*.

Researchers studied 562 8th- and 10th-grade students from 18 Chicago-area schools, looking at girls' and boys' depressive symptoms, their use of alcohol, and the occurrence in their lives of stressors. Students recorded their experiences daily in diaries, which allowed the researchers to assess negative events in the children's lives.

The researchers found that girls reported more depressive symptoms and experienced more stressors, especially involving peers, family, and their romantic lives, than did boys, who experienced more stressors involving athletics. The gender difference is partly explained by the fact that the girls reported more stressors.

The study also found that youths who were depressed at the start of the study were more likely to report more romance-related stressors 6 and 12 months later. Furthermore, adolescents who reported stressors involving peers and stressors outside of the youths' control at the start of the study had increased levels of depressive symptoms over time. Finally, when levels of stressors rose, girls reported higher levels of depressive symptoms than boys.

"We think the results from this study are interesting as these are the first findings, to our knowledge, that examined negative life events daily in the lives of typical adolescents over a long period of time and how these stressors relate to the sex difference in depression," according to Benjamin L. Hankin, assistant professor of psychology at the University of South Carolina. "Girls seem to get a double hit from peer stressors—they experience more of these events and they react with higher depression as a result."

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Summarized from Child Development, Vol. 78, Issue 1, *Sex Differences in Adolescent Depression: Stress Exposure and Reactivity Models*, by Hankin, BL (University of South Carolina), and Mermelstein, R, and Roesch, L (University of Illinois at Chicago). Copyright 2007 The Society for Research in Child Development, Inc. All rights reserved.

