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TYPES OF STRESS ASSOCIATED WITH THE ONSET OF PANIC DISORDER AND SOCIAL PHOBIA

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The present study examined the association of different types of stress with the onset of both panic disorder and social phobia. Twenty-three subjects who met the DSM-III-R criteria for panic disorder and twenty-three subjects who met the DSM-III-R criteria for social phobia were matched on the demographic variables of sex, race, level of education, and time of retrospection. Data related to circumstances surrounding onset were collected from initial diagnostic interviews. Descriptions of the circumstances were then rated and classified by blind independent raters into categories of no stress/stress, conditional stressor/background stress, and evaluation related stress/not evaluation related stress. Results indicated that stress was found at the onset of both panic disorder and social phobia. Moreover, conditional stressors were found to be associated with the onset of social phobia, whereas background stress was more associated with the onset of panic disorder. Furthermore, evaluation related stressors were more associated with the onset of social phobia than panic disorder. However, evaluation related stressors were not found to discriminate between the subtypes of social phobia. Possible treatment and preventative implications are discussed.