Background

While the transition to parenthood is considered one of life’s major stressors, the ongoing act of parenting also serves as a continual source of stress. In fact, parenting stress has been associated with a number of negative outcomes among the family system including: higher psychological distress among both mothers and fathers, increased child behavior problems, lower parental self-esteem, and lower parental satisfaction with marriage, work, and family (Creasey & Reese, 1996; Klime et al., 1991). Important contextual factors that are likely to influence parenting stress are culture and parent gender.

PURPOSE

The present study investigated whether parenting stress differed by a) ethnicity and b) gender within ethnic groups among five couple ethnic Makeup types.

Methods

SAMPLE

- Secondary analysis of data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Birth Cohort (ECLS-B). Present study uses data from the third wave (preschool wave).
- Couple types:
  - European American (n = 2650)
  - African American (n = 300)
  - Latino (n = 700)
  - American Indian (n = 100) (Dropped)
  - Asian American (n = 700)
  - Interethnic (n = 850)

TOTAL: n = 5,200

MEASURE

Parenting Stress

1) Being a parent is harder than I thought it would be
2) I feel trapped by my responsibilities as a parent
3) I find that taking care of my child/children is much more work than pleasure
4) I often feel tired, worn out, or exhausted from raising a family
5) I find myself giving up more of my life to meet my child’s needs than I ever expected

1 = Strongly Disagree to 4 = Strongly Agree

Participants

Number of children
- M = 2.52 (SD = 1.09)
- Mode = 2

Marital status
- 92% of couples were married at wave three

Educational attainment
- Some college coursework/2-year degree (same for mothers and fathers)

Annual household income
- Median: $50,001 – $75k
- M = $40,001 – $50k

Parent age
- Mothers M = 33.82 (SD = 5.78)
- Fathers M = 36.36 (SD = 6.64)

Results

RQ1

- A main effect of couple ethnic makeup relating to parenting stress, with Asian American mothers and fathers reporting the most parenting stress and Latino fathers reporting significantly lower parenting stress than all other fathers.

RQ2

- Latino and Asian American fathers reported significantly less parenting stress than Latino mothers and Asian American mothers, respectively. In contrast, European American father reported significantly higher parenting stress than European American mothers.

Analyses

RQ1

- ANCOVA (separate analyses for each parenting variable as the outcome, separate analyses for fathers and mothers)
- All covariates (annual household income, educational attainment, marital status, number of children in the home, parent age) included in initial model, removed if not significant, analysis repeated
- Post hoc comparisons: Dunnett C

RQ2

- Matched samples t-tests for each parenting variable, separately by couple type

Conclusion

Findings suggest implications of cultural context for the perceptions of stress among parents of young children.

- Asian American parents reported greater parental stress than parents of other ethnic groups, indicating that within this cultural group perceptions of parenting young children as a negative experience are greater.
- Latino fathers reported lower parental stress than all other fathers and Latino mothers, which may be due to cultural norms of mothers taking greater responsibility for childrearing. (This is confirmed by the related finding that Latina mothers express higher parenting stress than Latino fathers)
- European American fathers expressed greater parental stress than European American mothers, which may be a result of egalitarian family values.

**RQ2: Parenting Stress**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mothers</th>
<th>Fathers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interethnic (A)</td>
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<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European American (B)</td>
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<td>2450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American (C)</td>
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<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino (D)</td>
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<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American (E)</td>
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<td>600</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Couple Type Main Effect</th>
<th>Mothers</th>
<th>Fathers</th>
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