Race, Socioeconomic Status and Mothers' Parental Stress

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ABSTRACT

Studies on parenting and mental health have documented both racial differences in mothers' parental stress levels and mixed evidence on the impacts of mothers' socioeconomic status (SES) on their parental stress. Less is known about how the association between mothers' SES and parental stress varies by race, or to what extent this variation contributes to racial differences in mothers' levels of parental stress. This study addresses these questions using data from the second wave of Early Childhood Longitudinal Study: 2010-11 Kindergarten Class (N=8,548). The ordinary least squares (OLS) regression and Blinder-Oaxaca decomposition results show that compared with White and Asian mothers, low income and education have more detrimental impacts on Black and Hispanic mothers' feelings of parental stress. This racially diverse association between mothers' SES and parental stress is an important reason why Asian mothers face higher parental stress than Black and Hispanic mothers.

Keywords: parental stress, race, SES, mental health, motherhood

Previous research on mothering and mental health has paid much attention to maternal parental stress, which refers to the stress mothers experience from their parental roles (Abidin 1992; Belsky 1984). Despite popular beliefs among U.S. adults that raising children brings fulfillment and happiness (Hansen 2012), empirical studies have found that parents in general, and mothers in particular fare worse than adults not raising children across dimensions of mental health, including stress, depression, fatigue, and life satisfaction (Glass, Simon, and Andersson 2016; Nomaguchi and Milkie 2020; Simon and Caputo 2019). The emotional, time, and financial demands of childrearing can be a source of stress for mothers, and mothers from some social groups are found to suffer more from high parental stress than other mothers (see Nomaguchi and Milkie 2017, 2020 for a review). High parental stress is not only detrimental to mothers' health, but also causes poor family relationships and adverse child outcomes such as difficult temperament and behavior problems (McQuillan and Bates 2017; Nomaguchi and Milkie 2020). Therefore, studying variations in mothers' parental stress across social groups is critical for understanding the reproduction of social inequalities and informing interventions to buffer the negative mental health consequences of mothering and improve children's well-being.

This study focuses on the socioeconomic (SES) and racial heterogeneities in mothers' parental stress. Existing studies have shown SES to be an important predictor of mothers' parental stress but presented mixed findings on the relationship between them. While some research documents parental stress to be higher for mothers with lower income and education (Carrillo et al. 2017; Gershoff et al. 2007; Kimbro and Schachter 2011; Williams, Cheadle, and Goosby 2015), increasing studies have suggested greater stress among higher SES mothers (Hays 1996; Kushlev, Dunn, and Ashton-James 2012; Lareau 2003; Negraia and Augustine 2019; Nomaguchi and Brown 2011). One potential explanation for the mixed findings is that the impacts of mothers' SES on

parental stress vary by race and findings on the relationship between SES and parental stress differ depending on analytic samples' racial compositions.

Mothers from different racial groups tend to hold different motherhood ideologies and practices even when having similar SES (Cheadle and Amato 2011; Collins 1999; Dow 2016, 2019; Lee and Zhou 2015; Segura 1994), which may shape the impacts of SES on parental stress. Moreover, the systemic racism and the criminalization of unauthorized immigrants in the U.S. have affected the parenting experience of Black and Hispanic mothers (Dow 2019; Elliott and Aseltine 2013; Elliott, Powell, and Brenton 2015; McCormack 2005; Noah and Landale 2018). This may either exacerbate the detrimental impacts of low SES on Black and Hispanic mothers' parental stress or make the protective effects of high SES on parental stress smaller for them as compared to White and Asian mothers. However, current studies on the racial determinant of parental stress have focused mainly on racial differences in mothers' parental stress levels and how these differences can be explained by SES disparities between racial groups (Cardoso, Padilla, and Sampson 2010; Nam, Wikoff, and Sherraden 2015; Nomaguchi and House 2013; Yu and Singh 2012). Limited attention has been paid to whether the impacts of SES on mothers' parental stress vary by race, or how much of the racial differences in mothers' parental stress levels can be attributed to racially diverse associations between SES and parental stress.

To better understand the relationship between race, SES, and mothers' parental stress, I draw upon data from the second wave of Early Childhood Longitudinal Study: Kindergarten Class of 2010-11 (ECLS-K: 2011). The analysis of this study consists of three parts. First, I compare the parental stress levels between White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian mothers. Second, I use the Blinder-Oaxaca decomposition method to examine the extent to which racial differences in mothers' parental stress can be attributed to racial disparities in mothers' SES (measured by

mothers' education levels, households' poverty levels, and food security status), and the extent to which the differences can be explained by racially diverse impacts of SES on parental stress. Third, I investigate how the direction and strength of associations between mothers' SES and parental stress vary by race. Conducting these analyses enables both a deeper interpretation of racial differences in the sources of mothers' parental stress and a more systematic understanding of the relationship between mothers' SES and parental stress.

BACKGROUND

SES and Mothers' Parental Stress

Sociologists usually interpret the determinants of parental stress from the perspectives of the family stress model and the role strain model. The family stress model suggests that economic hardship places parents at increased risks of emotional distress, which intensifies conflicts between family members and limits parents' ability to take care of and interact with children (Conger and Conger 2008). Empirical studies have found economic and material hardships to be important causes of high parental stress (Gershoff et al. 2007; Williams et al. 2015). Low education level, which is associated with low income, less predictable work schedules, lack of networks for support, and poor stress coping capabilities also increase the stress of parenting (Carrillo et al. 2017; Cooper et al. 2009; Nomaguchi and Johnson 2016). The poor living conditions and home insecurity that many low SES parents face also trigger stress and fears about children playing outdoor (Alleyne-Green, Kulick, and McCutcheon 2019; Kimbro and Schachter 2011; Thornock et al. 2013).

The family stress model, however, is incomplete for two reasons. First, mothers with higher SES may also find it challenging to take good care of their children. The past few decades witnessed the increase of women's labor force participation and the growth of average work hours in the U.S. While inflexible working hours and lack of child care support make it difficult for

working-class mothers to balance work and family responsibilities, mothers with high-income jobs are also stressed by work-family conflicts and time deprivations with children due to long working hours and blurred work-nonwork boundaries (Bianchi 2011; Boushey 2016; Milkie, Nomaguchi, and Schieman 2019; Schieman, Glavin, and Milkie 2009). Second, the family stress model overlooks SES differences in mothers' parenting standards and the emotional rewards they can gain from parenting, which are also likely to affect their feelings of parental stress (Hays 1996; Kushlev et al. 2012; Lareau 2003; Negraia and Augustine 2019; Nomaguchi and Brown 2011).

The role strain theory argues that parents experience stress and other negative emotions when their resources and capacities cannot satisfy their expectations of parenting roles. From the role strain perspective, lacking resources to meet children's demands can indeed make lower SES mothers vulnerable to stress caused by role overload (the demands of parenting exceed mothers' capacities) and poor parental-child relationships. However, mothers can also experience role overload and role captivity (the extent to which mothers are unwilling to fulfill their parenting role) related stress when they have high parental role expectations and intensive mothering standards, or when they do not find parenting to be meaningful or emotionally rewarding (Abidin 1992; Nomaguchi and Brown 2011; Nomaguchi and Milkie 2017, 2020; Pearlin 1989).

Socioeconomically disadvantaged women are found to gain more emotional rewards from motherhood than their more privileged counterparts (Edin and Kefalas 2005). Mothers with a college degree or higher education experience lower parenting anxiety, but more role captivity and less new meaning in life from parenting than those with lower education. This is in part because while higher education can provide more resources to ease parental anxiety, it also increases women's expectations for career success and the interference of work to family life (Nomaguchi and Brown 2011; Schieman et al. 2009). Studies that apply time-use data also show that caring for

minor children is associated with more stress and fatigue only among women with some college or higher education (Negraia and Augustine 2019), and more affluent mothers find less meaning in life during time spent with children (Kushlev et al. 2012).

Higher SES is also often associated with greater investments in childrearing and higher standards of parenting. Particularly, the ideas of intensive mothering and concerted cultivation have been increasingly adopted by middle and upper-class parents to secure their children's future social status. Setting children's well-being as mothers' responsibility, intensive mothering and concerted cultivation emphasize mothers' role in protecting children and cultivating children's abilities for future success (Hays 1996; Lareau 2003; Nelson 2010). A handful of studies document the negative mental health consequences of intensive mothering. Beliefs and practices such as perceiving mothers as the most necessary parents, providing high levels of emotional support to children, and putting children's needs before their own are associated with higher stress and depression (Gunderson and Barrett 2017; Rizzo, Schiffrin, and Liss 2013). Feeling guilty of not doing enough is also frequently observed among mothers who attempt to meet the intensive mothering standards (Hays 1996; Sutherland 2010).

Overall, existing studies have presented mixed evidence on the relationship between mothers' SES and parental stress levels. Low SES is a source of high maternal parental stress. But high SES does not necessarily mean low parental stress possibly because the high career expectations and intensive mothering standards of women with high education and income are competing for mothers' limited energy, hence offset the protective effects of high SES on mothers' parental stress. Yet, limited attempts have been made to explore why findings on the association between mothers' SES and parental stress are mixed or examine if the impacts of SES on parental stress vary across social groups such as race. If there are racial differences in how SES predicts

parental stress, findings on the relationship between mothers' SES and parental stress may vary depending on analytic samples' racial compositions.

Racial Differences in Mothers' Parental Stress

Studies on racial differences in mothers' parental stress generally find Black, Hispanic, and Asian mothers experience higher parental stress than White mothers. But depending on the size and demographic characteristics of the analytic sample, the findings are inconsistent in whether the parental stress differences between White and Black/Hispanic mothers are significant (Cardoso et al. 2010; Nam et al. 2015; Nomaguchi and House 2013; Yu and Singh 2012). Some of the racial differences in mothers' parental stress can be attributed to racial and nativity differences in mothers' SES. Nomaguchi and House (2013) found part of native-born Black, and foreign-born Asian and Hispanic mothers' higher parental stress relative to native-born White mothers could be explained by the disadvantages of mothers of color and immigrant mothers in education, English proficiency, and family income. Controlling for the availability of social support can also reduce racial differences in mothers' parental stress (Cardoso et al. 2010; Nam et al. 2015).

Current studies of racial differences in parental stress face two limitations. First, comparisons are made with White mothers as the only reference group. Little is known about the parental stress differences between Black, Hispanic, and Asian mothers despite their diverse SES and parenting experience. For example, it is unclear whether Asian mothers' parental stress levels are different from that of Black and Hispanic mothers given Asian Americans' socioeconomic advantages. Second, limited attention has been paid to whether the impacts of mothers' SES on parental stress differ across racial groups. For example, Nomaguchi and House's (2013) study only showed how much of the racial differences in parental stress were explained by racial disparities in mothers' SES. Less is known about how the strength and direction of the association between

SES and parental stress vary by race, or whether the racially diverse parental stress associations of SES account for racial differences in mothers' parental stress levels.

By decomposing racial differences in parental stress, Nam and colleagues (2015) found Hispanic mothers' higher parental stress relative to White mothers could be attributed to both Hispanic mothers' lower education levels and the different impacts of education on the parental stress of White and Hispanic mothers. However, decompositions were only made for the parental stress differences between White mothers and mothers of color. The parental stress differences between Black and Hispanic mothers and factors that contribute to the differences were left unexamined. Besides, the analytic sample was not nationally representative and Asian mothers were not included. Asian mothers report higher parental stress than White mothers despite their similar SES (Nomaguchi and House, 2013). Also, Asian parents, even those who are not highly educated are found to have high educational aspirations for children and invest heavily into children's education (Lee and Zhou 2015; Liu and Xie 2016). Therefore, whether the relationship between SES and parental stress among Asian mothers differs from mothers of other races requires special attention. Further, when conducting the decomposition, the authors did not break down income and education into detailed categories, hence might overlook some racial differences if the relationships between parental stress and income/education were not linear.

Race, SES and Mothers' Parental Stress

The association between mothers' SES and their levels of parental stress is likely to vary by race first because there are racial and SES heterogeneities in women's beliefs about what *good mothers* should do. While some studies argue that all mothers feel the pressure to conform to the hegemonic intensive motherhood ideologies (Blair-Loy 2003; Hays 1996; McCormack 2005), others have found racial and SES disparities in mothering ideologies and practices. The practice of intensive

mothering and concerted cultivation has been documented mostly among middle and upper-class White mothers. To safeguard children's future success, they make great time, energy, and financial investments into childrearing, and often feel guilty for not meeting the standards of "good mothers" (Dow 2016, 2019; Hays 1996; Lareau 2003; Segura 1994; Sutherland 2010). Also, because intensive mothering posits conflicts between mothering and women's engagement in paid work, highly educated White mothers find it stressful to balance between their high career aspirations and the intensive mothering standards (Dow 2016; Hays 1996; Sutherland 2010). This may reduce the protective effects of high SES on White mothers' parental stress.

Studies of Black and Hispanic motherhoods have long criticized the intensive mothering and concerted cultivation ideologies for only telling White middle-class mothers' stories. Despite being economically similar, Black and Hispanic middle-class mothers do not usually share the same beliefs in parenting with their White counterparts. For example, although concerted cultivation is commonly observed among middle-class mothers regardless of race (Lareau 2002, 2003), Black and Hispanic middle-class mothers' organization of children's education and activities are constrained by residential segregation and racial discrimination (Cheadle and Amato 2011; Dow 2019). Besides, different from the intensive mothering ideology, which posits conflicts between mothering and paid employment, Black and Hispanic mothers perceive working for pay as an important part of their mother identity and usually rely on relatives and community members for child care supports (Collins 1999; Dow 2016, 2019; Segura 1994). Highly educated Black and Hispanic middle-class mothers may, therefore, be less stressed by the conflicts between mothering and career aspirations or feel guilty about not meeting the intensive mothering standards than their White counterparts. Asian parents in general, and the highly educated first-generation immigrants in particular, are found to have high expectations of their children and invest intensively into

children's education (Lee and Zhou 2015, 2017; Liu and Xie 2016). However, little is known about to what extent Asian mothers of different SES adhere to the intensive mothering and concerted cultivation ideologies or the mental health consequences of Asian mothers' parenting practices.

The systemic racism in the U.S. may also result in racially diverse relationships between SES and parental stress. Studies have found Black mothers' concerns about children encountering racial discrimination increase as their children become older (Dow 2019; Elliott and Aseltine 2013). The policing of undocumented immigrants has also made parenting increasingly stressful for Hispanic mothers (Armenta 2017; Cardoso et al. 2018; Noah and Landale 2018). On the one hand, the systemic racism and police surveillance may exacerbate the detrimental impacts of low SES on Black and Hispanic mothers' parental stress as compared to White mothers. For example, studies have found mothering to be particularly challenging for poor Black mothers. In addition to financial difficulties, the stereotype that associates *poor* and *Black* with *bad mothers* makes them the targets of social scrutiny (Cohen 2009; Collins 1999; Elliott et al. 2015; Elliott and Reid 2019; McGuffey 2005). Their children also encounter more discrimination, violence, and experience disproportionate targeting for surveillance and criminalization (Charles 2003; Elliott et al. 2015; Elliott and Reid 2019; Jencks and Mayer 1990). On the other hand, there are studies showing that the protective effects of high education and income on individuals' mental health are systematically smaller for the Black and Hispanic populations than for the Whites (Assari 2018; Farmer and Ferraro 2005; Holmes and Zajacova 2014; Kimbro and Schachter 2011; Williams et al. 2010). While to what extent this is also true in terms of parental stress is unclear, higher SES may be less effective in reducing Black and Hispanic mothers' parental stress than White mothers.

The "model minority" stereotype of Asian Americans may to some extent protect Asian American children and their mothers from the discrimination and surveillance that the Black and

Hispanic population face. Studies show that Asian children and young adults are preferred by teachers at school and face fewer years of sentences when encountering the criminal justice system than their Black and Hispanic peers (Lee and Zhou 2015). Therefore, the impacts of low SES on Asian mothers' parental stress may be less detrimental compared to that on Black and Hispanic mothers. However, the model minority myth may also result in high social expectations of Asian children's achievements and false beliefs that Asian children can achieve high on their own without social support (Lee et al. 2009; Ngo and Lee 2007; Wing 2007). Also, despite being the model minority, Asian Americans still face racial discrimination (Gee et al. 2007; Wing 2007; Yip, Gee, and Takeuchi 2008). These may make parenting particularly stressful for low SES Asian mothers who do not have enough resources for childrearing. The mental health consequences of low SES may thus be more negative for Asian mothers at least when compared with White mothers.

In sum, the impacts of SES on mothers' levels of parental stress may vary by race because mothers with different racial and SES backgrounds usually hold different mothering ideologies and practices, the mental health consequences of which may not be the same. The systemic racism against mothers of color, particularly Black and Hispanic mothers may also either exacerbate or reduce the protective effects of high SES on mothers' parental stress.

The Current Study

To better understand the relationship between race, SES, and mothers' parental stress (see Figure 1 for a conceptual model), I investigate the following three questions:

1. Do White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian have different levels of parental stress?
2. To what extent can the racial differences in mothers' parental stress be attributed to racial disparities in mothers' SES (measured by mothers' levels of education, households'

poverty levels, and food security status), and to what extent can the parental stress differences be attributed to racially diverse impacts of SES on mothers' parental stress?

3. How does the direction and strength of the association between mothers' SES and parental stress levels vary by race?

Previous studies have also shown nativity differences in the levels and sources of parental stress (Nomaguchi and House 2013; Yu and Singh 2012). However, due to the small sample size of foreign-born Black (71) and native-born Asian mothers (62) in the ECLS-K: 2011, I only focus on racial differences in mothers' parental stress. Mothers' nativity status is controlled as a covariate.

Based on existing studies' findings discussed above, I test the following four hypotheses. Hypothesis 1a and 1b examine how mothers' parental stress levels vary by race. Hypothesis 2 and 3 test if there are racial differences in how mothers' SES predicts their parental stress and how much of the racial differences in mothers' parental stress can be explained by racially diverse relationships between mothers' SES and parental stress.

Hypothesis 1a: White mothers report lower parental stress than Black, Hispanic, and Asian mothers.

Hypothesis 1b: Asian mothers report lower parental stress than Black and Hispanic mothers.

Hypothesis 2: Racial differences in mothers' parental stress are caused by both racial differences in mothers' SES and racially diverse impacts on SES on parental stress.

Hypothesis 3: Compared with White and Asian mothers, lower SES has more detrimental impacts on Black and Hispanic mothers' parental stress.

[Figure 1 about here]

DATA AND METHODS

Data

I used the parent interview data from the second wave of Early Childhood Longitudinal Study: Kindergarten Class of 2010-11 (ECLS-K: 2011), a nationally representative study of American children. The age of children in the second wave ranged between 4 and 7.5 years old with an average age of 6. Parent interview data were collected from 10,922 parents of children. I dropped cases for which the parent was not the child's mother (N=9,576). Mothers who reported to be Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islanders (38), American Indian or Alaskan (57), and non-Hispanic multiracial (152) were also dropped (N=9,230) due to their small sample size. About 7.39 percent of the cases had missing values, most of which came from mothers' parental stress levels (4.47 percent) and physical health conditions (5.35 percent). The missing values should have limited impacts on the results of this study because the racial and SES distributions of the sample were similar with and without cases with missing values (Table A1 in Appendix). Further, the great majority of missing values happened either because the interview was incomplete or because mothers did not answer certain questions without specifying why (such as "don't know" or "refuse to answer") (Tourangeau et al. 2015). The missing of mothers' parental stress might, therefore, be relatively random. Applying the listwise deletion method and using the multiple imputation method to impute missing data with five replicates of the dataset (Allison 2001) have also produced similar results. Hence, I present models that applied the listwise deletion method (N=8,548).

Measures

Dependent measure. The dependent variable was mothers' parental stress levels, measured as the reverse mean score of mothers' levels of agreement (*1=completely true, 2=mostly true, 3=somewhat true, 4=not at all true*) to the following four questions derived from Abidin's (1990)

Parenting Stress Index: (1) “Being parent is harder than expected”, (2) “Child does things that bother me”, (3) “I sacrifice to meet child’s need”, and (4) “I often feel angry with the child”. Higher scores indicated higher levels of parental stress. The Cronbach’s alpha score (α) for the index was .57 (White: α =.60; Black: α =.54; Hispanic: α =.54; Asian: α =.53). This four-item index has been adopted by multiple nationally representative surveys such as the National Surveys of American Families and the National Surveys of Children’s Health and was proven to be a valid measure of parental stress (Blumberg et al. 2005; Macomber and Moore 1997). The index has also been widely used in previous parental stress studies with Cronbach’s alpha scores ranging between .50 and .70 (for example, Hill and Palacios 2021; Lee et al. 2018; Nomaguchi and House 2013; Yu and Singh 2012), a range that includes the Cronbach’s alpha in this study. Therefore, although the index’s Cronbach’s alpha scores in the four racial groups all suggest only moderate reliability, the results of this research are comparable to previous studies. I address the limitations of the parental stress index in the discussion section.

Independent measures. The focal independent variables were mothers’ race (*White, non-Hispanic Black, Hispanic, and Asian*). Additional key independent variables were mothers’ SES: mothers’ levels of education (*high school diploma or lower, vocational training, some college, Bachelor’s degree, and graduate or professional level education*), household poverty level (*below the poverty line, between the poverty line and 200% of the poverty line, and above 200% of the poverty line*), and household food security status (*high security and low security*).

Control variables. The covariates included mothers’ age, nativity (*native-born and foreign-born*), English proficiency (*proficient and not proficient*), employment status (*employed, looking for jobs, and not in the labor market*), marital status (*married, separated/divorced/widowed, never married, and civil union/partnership*), use of non-parental child care (*no non-parental child care,*

relative care, non-relative care, and center-based care or multiple types of care), and self-reported physical health conditions (*excellent, very good, good, fair, poor*). Previous studies have shown close associations between these items and mothers' parental stress (Belsky 1984; Cardoso et al. 2010; Nomaguchi and Milkie 2017). I also controlled for the number of pre-school age (0-7) boys and girls at home, the number of school age (8-17) boys and girls at home, and age of the youngest household child, all of which have been found to affect mothers' parental stress (Dow 2019; Elliott and Aseltine 2013; Simon and Caputo 2019). Moreover, because parents experience higher parental stress when their children have disabilities or health problems (Baker et al. 2003; Hastings 2002), I also controlled mothers' reports of child's physical and developmental disabilities (*yes/no*), and health conditions (*excellent, very good, good, fair or poor*).

Analytic Strategies

To test racial differences in the levels of mothers' parental stress, I ran ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models with mothers' race as the key independent variable. Comparisons were made not only between White mothers and mothers of color, but also between mothers of color. I then steadily added mothers' SES and other covariates to the models to examine how adjusting for them would influence the parental stress differences between mothers from different racial groups. OLS regression assumes the impacts of SES on parental stress to be the same across all racial groups. Therefore, adding mothers' SES to the models could only show how much of the racial differences in parental stress was explained by racial disparities in the levels of mothers' SES. The Blinder-Oaxaca decomposition method, in contrast, makes it possible to tell how much of the outcome differences between two groups is the results of group differences in the levels of independent variables, and how much is caused by differences in the magnitude of regression coefficients (Jann 2008). Therefore, to better explore the role of SES in explaining racial differences in parental stress,

I applied the Blinder-Oaxaca decomposition method to divide the parental stress differences between any two racial groups into two parts: 1) the *explained* part that captures racial differences in mothers' SES; and 2) the *unexplained* part that captures racial disparities in how mothers' SES predicts their parental stress.

To further explore racial differences in the association between mothers' SES and parental stress (the *unexplained* part), I ran an OLS regression model with mothers' SES as the key independent variables for each racial group and then conducted cross-racial group comparisons using Stata's *suest* and *test* commands (Mize, Doan, and Long 2019). These commands examined whether the impact of an SES variable on parental stress (coefficient of the SES variable) in one racial group was significantly different from that in another racial group. All analyses were weighted using the weight provided by the ECLS-K: 2011.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

As presented in Table 1, over 63 percent of the sampled mothers were non-Hispanic White. The proportions of non-Hispanic Black, Hispanic, and Asian mothers were 11 percent, 20 percent, and 6 percent respectively. More than 90 percent of White and Black mothers were native-born. In contrast, over 60 percent of Hispanic mothers and almost 90 percent of Asian mothers were born outside the U.S. Among foreign-born Hispanic mothers, about 73 percent came from Mexico (not presented). For mothers from other racial groups, information on ethnicities or countries of origin was not available. Without controls, Asian mothers reported the highest level of parental stress, followed by Hispanic, Black, and White mothers. White and Asian mothers had higher SES than Black and Hispanic mothers. Among them, Asian mothers were the most socioeconomically advantaged, especially in respect of education. About 33 percent of the sampled Asian mothers

received graduate or professional education, which was almost double that of White mothers. In contrast, more than 60 percent of Hispanic mothers and almost 40 percent of Black mothers only had high school or lower education, much higher than that of White (20 percent) and Asian (15 percent) mothers. About half of the sampled Black and Hispanic mothers lived below the poverty line. Whereas, for White and Asian mothers, the figures were only 13 and 11 percent respectively. Similarly, Black (17 percent) and Hispanic (22 percent) mothers were more likely to live in households with low food security than White (9 percent) and Asian (6 percent) mothers (see Table A2 in Appendix for correlations between indicators of mothers' SES).

Compared with Black and Hispanic mothers, White and Asian mothers were older, more likely to be married, had fewer children, and reported better physical health. Black mothers had higher labor force participation and non-parental child care usage than mothers from other racial groups. In contrast, Hispanic mothers were the least likely to be employed or use non-parental child care possibly because many foreign-born Hispanic mothers had limited education and low English proficiency. According to mothers' reports, White children had better health but were more likely to have physical or developmental disabilities than Black, Hispanic, and Asian children.

[Table 1 about here]

Racial Differences in Mothers' Parental Stress Levels

Table 2 shows the OLS regression results for racial differences in mothers' parental stress levels. Model 1a shows without control variables, Hispanic ($p=.003$) and Asian ($p<.001$) mothers reported significantly higher parental stress than White mothers. Asian mothers' parental stress was also significantly higher than that of Black mothers ($p=.035$), and marginally significantly higher than that of Hispanic mothers ($p=.086$) (Model 1b). No significant parental stress difference was observed between White and Black mothers, or between Black and Hispanic mothers. Therefore,

hypothesis 1a was only partially supported and hypothesis 1b was rejected. The parental stress gap between White and Hispanic mothers became non-significant after controlling for mothers' education, household poverty, and food security (Model 2a). Whereas, for White and Asian mothers, adding the SES variables to the model had little impact on the parental stress difference between them. Asian mothers' higher parental stress than Black and Hispanic mothers was further enlarged after controlling for SES differences between them (Model 2b). Controlling other covariates (Model 3a and 3b), particularly mothers' nativity and the number of household children of different ages and sexes reduced some of Asian mothers' higher parental stress compared with White, Black, and Hispanic mothers. But the parental stress difference between Black and Asian mothers became larger after controlling for differences in their marital status. Constrained by the length scope of this study, the impacts of these factors were not elaborated.

[Table 2 about here]

Decomposition of Racial Differences in Mothers' Parental Stress

The OLS regression results presented above show that socioeconomic disadvantages were important reasons why Hispanic mothers faced higher parental stress than White mothers, but could not explain Asian mothers' higher parental stress relative to mothers from the other three racial groups. Because OLS regression assumes the impacts of SES on parental stress to be the same across racial groups, what remains unclear is whether the association between mothers' SES and parental stress varied by race and if so, to what extent this racially diverse association could explain the overall racial disparities in mothers' parental stress. To answer these questions, I used the Blinder-Oaxaca decomposition method to decompose racial differences in parental stress.

Table 3 presents the decomposition results. The *explained* part shows how much of the racial differences in maternal parental stress could be attributed to racial differences in mothers'

SES. Low SES, specifically, lack of food security explained a significant proportion of the parental stress differences between White, Black, and Hispanic mothers. More than 40 percent (-.023/-.055) of Hispanic mothers' higher parental stress relative to White mothers and about 30 percent (-.010/-.032) of the parental stress difference between White and Black mothers could be attributed to Black and Hispanic mothers' lower food security. Similarly, if Black and Hispanic mothers were to have the same level of food security, their parental stress difference would also decrease significantly. Yet, eliminating SES differences was not always effective in reducing racial differences in parental stress. For example, Asian mothers already had higher household income and food security than mothers from the other racial groups. If they were to share the same level of income and food security, Asian mothers' parental stress would become even higher, enlarging the parental stress difference between them and mothers of other racial groups. Further, higher SES did not always predict lower parental stress. If the proportion of Black mothers with graduate education were to increase to the level of White mothers, the parental stress difference between them would increase, instead of decrease. This means graduate education, as compared to high school or lower education did not necessarily reduce Black and White mothers' parental stress. Also, if the percentage of Asian mothers with graduate education decreased to the level of White mothers, the parental stress difference between them would become smaller, instead of larger. This again indicates that compared with high school or lower education, graduate education might be associated with higher parental stress for White and Asian mothers.

The *unexplained* part of Table 3 shows that a significant proportion of racial differences in mothers' parental stress could be attributed to the racially diverse impacts of SES on mothers' parental stress, which supported hypothesis 2. About 57 percent (-.047/-.082) of the parental stress difference between Asian and Black mothers, and about 69 percent (-.041/-.059) of that between

Asian and Hispanic mothers could be explained if the impacts of having some college education (as compared to having high school or lower education) on parental stress were the same for them. Additionally, if the strength and direction of the association between household income and parental stress were the same for Black and Asian mothers, their parental stress difference would decrease significantly (at marginal level). Further, the different impacts of living above 200 percent of the poverty line (as compared to living below the poverty line) on parental stress contributed to more than 100 $(-.054/-.023)$ percent of the parental stress gap between Black and Hispanic mothers. In contrast, if the effects of having vocational training (as compared to having high school or lower education) on parental stress were the same for White and Hispanic mothers, Hispanic mothers' parental stress would increase, which enlarged the parental stress difference between them. Black mothers' parental stress would also become higher if they were to share the same coefficient of living above 200 percent of the poverty line with White mothers. In sum, the direction and strength of the associations between some SES indicators and parental stress were significantly different across racial groups, which could either reduce or exacerbate the racial differences in mothers' parental stress.

[Table 3 about here]

Racial Differences in the Association Between SES and Mothers' Parental Stress

To better clarify racial differences in the direction and strength of the association between mothers' SES and their parental stress, I ran an OLS regression model with mothers' SES as the key independent variables for each racial group and then used Stata's *suest* and *test* commands to examine whether the association between SES and parental stress in one racial group was significantly different from that of the other. The results are presented in Table 4. White and Asian mothers with vocational training or some college education tended to report higher parental stress

than those with only high school or lower education. Whereas, among Black and Hispanic mothers, the parental stress of mothers with vocational training or some college education tended to be lower than those with high school or lower education. Cross-racial group comparison results show the impacts of having some college education (relative to having high school or lower education) on parental stress were significantly (or marginally significantly) different for Asian mothers as compared to Black ($p=.029$) and Hispanic ($p=.022$) mothers, as well as for White mothers as compared to Black ($p=.078$) and Hispanic ($p=.033$) mothers. The parental stress consequence of receiving vocational training (relative to having high school or lower education) was also significantly different between White and Hispanic mothers ($p=.022$). In short, among mothers without a Bachelor's degree, lower education had significantly more harmful impacts on Black and Hispanic mothers' parental stress than on White and Asian mothers. However, mothers who had at least a Bachelor's degree all experienced higher parental stress than those with only high school or lower education, and there was no significant racial difference in the coefficients.

High household income was particularly effective in reducing Black mothers' parental stress. Compared with Black mothers who lived below the poverty line, the parental stress of those living between the poverty line and 200 percent of the line was about 7 percentage points lower. This was significantly different ($p=.047$) from Asian mothers, among whom, higher household income tended to be associated with higher parental stress. The stress level of Black mothers who lived above 200 percent of the poverty line was about 19 percentage points lower than those living under the poverty threshold. Whereas, among White, Hispanic, and Asian mothers, higher income was associated with only slightly lower, if not higher parental stress. Cross-racial group comparisons show the impacts of living above 200 percent of the poverty line (as compared to living below the poverty line) on parental stress were significantly different between Black and

White mothers ($p=.035$), Black and Hispanic mothers ($p=.021$), and marginally significantly different between Black and Asian mothers ($p=.057$). Nevertheless, lacking food security was associated with higher parental stress for mothers of all racial groups, and no significant racial difference was observed.

[Table 4 about here]

DISCUSSION

Using a national sample of children and their mothers, this study finds Hispanic and Asian mothers report higher parental stress than White mothers. Asian mothers' parental stress is also higher than that of Black and Hispanic mothers. A significant proportion of Hispanic mothers' higher parental stress than White mothers can be explained by Hispanic mothers' lower food security. Whereas, Asian mothers' higher stress than White, Black, and Hispanic mothers is not the result of racial differences in SES. Instead, a significant part of Asian mothers' higher parental stress relative to Black and Hispanic mothers can be attributed to racially diverse impacts of SES on parental stress. Compared with White and Asian mothers, low education and income have more detrimental impacts on Black and Hispanic mothers' parental stress. Specifically, among mothers without a Bachelor's degree, higher education tends to be associated with lower parental stress for Black and Hispanic mothers, but higher parental stress for White and Asian mothers. Yet, mothers who have at least a Bachelor's degree all experience higher parental stress than those with high school or lower education regardless of race. In terms of income, although low food security predicts high parental stress for mothers of all racial groups, living below the poverty line is associated with particularly high parental stress for Black mothers than for mothers of other racial groups.

One possible explanation for the racially diverse relationships between mothers' SES and their parental stress levels is that the systemic racism against and policing of the Black and

Hispanic population have exacerbated the negative impacts of low SES on Black and Hispanic mothers' mental health. As discussed above, the stereotype that associates *poor* and *Black* with *bad mothers* and the challenges that poor Black mothers face protecting their children from violence and police brutality may explain why low income predict particularly high parental stress for Black mothers (Elliott and Aseltine 2013; Elliott et al. 2015). Similarly, the policing of immigrants has made even routine childrearing activities such as sending children to school stressful for Hispanic mothers in general, but the disadvantaged foreign-born and undocumented mothers in particular (Armenta 2017; Yu and Singh 2012). While Asian Americans also face systemic racism, the model minority stereotype may have protected low SES Asian mothers and their children from some of the stressors their Black and Hispanic peers face (Gee et al. 2007; Lee et al. 2009; Ngo and Lee 2007; Wing 2007; Yip et al. 2008), making the impacts of low SES on parental stress less detrimental for Asian mothers than for Black and Hispanic mothers.

Racial and SES heterogeneities in motherhood ideologies may also explain the racially diverse impacts of SES on mothers' parental stress. The results of this study suggest that among White and Asian mothers, the benefits of high income and education on parental stress may be attenuated by high SES mothers' intensive mothering standards, high career expectations, and the conflicts between them. Intensive mothering and concerted cultivation practices such as investing heavily into children's education and carefully organizing children's activities require high emotional, time, and financial commitments, which may increase privileged White and Asian mothers' parental stress (Blair-Loy 2003; Hays 1996; Lareau 2002, 2003; Lee and Zhou 2015). Mothers with high income and education, who usually have high career expectations and gain limited emotional rewards from mothering (Edin and Kefalas 2005; Kushlev et al. 2012; Negraia

and Augustine 2019; Nomaguchi and Brown 2011) may also find it stressful to balance between pursuing career success and meeting the intensive mothering standards.

Compared with White and Asian mothers, high SES Black and Hispanic mothers seem to conform less to the ideologies of intensive mothering and concerted cultivation or feel less stressed about not meeting the intensive mothering standards, making high SES more beneficial to their mental health. Perceiving paid employment as a part of their mother identity may have also protected high SES Black and Hispanic mothers from the stressful struggles between career and mothering (Collins 1999; Dow 2016, 2019; Segura 1994). However, mothers who have at least a Bachelor's degree all face higher parental stress than those with high school or lower education regardless of race. This seems to be consistent with Lareau's (2003) findings that class, instead of race, is the key determinant of the practice of concerted cultivation.

Studies on mothering and adult well-being have long documented that although raising children can bring fulfillment and happiness, mothering is also a source of stress. Mothers report higher levels of stress, depression, and fatigue than women not raising minor children (Glass et al. 2016; Nomaguchi and Milkie 2020; Simon and Caputo 2019). Despite decreasing birth rates, most U.S. women do still enter into motherhood. Identifying mechanisms of mothers' parental stress is, therefore, critical for informing interventions aimed at buffering the negative mental health consequences of mothering and improving women's mental health over the life course. Mothers' parental stress levels vary depending on their social backgrounds (Nomaguchi and Milkie 2017, 2020), and the results of this study have revealed complex racial and socioeconomic heterogeneities in mothers' parental stress levels. Consistent with the family stress model, lacking resources and abilities to meet children's demands due to low income and education is a critical trigger of high parental stress, particularly among Black and Hispanic mothers. However, high

income and education can also predict high parental stress if privileged mothers, such as high SES White and Asian mothers hold intensive standards of mothering and/or face role captivity/conflict due to their aspirations for career success. As the role strain theory has argued, when interpreting mothers' parental stress, it is necessary to also take mothers' parental role expectations and the multiple roles that women have to fulfill into consideration. This has become particularly true with the growing social pressures on mothers to conform to the intensive mothering standards (Blair-Loy 2003; Hays 1996; McCormack 2005) and the increasing work-family conflicts that many mothers face (Milkie et al. 2019). Current studies on status variations in stress have mostly examined disparities across race within SES and across SES within race (Turner 2013; Turner and Avison 2003). Given the racial differences in how SES predicts maternal parental stress that this study has found, more attention should be paid to how the intersection of race and SES may influence individuals' exposure and vulnerability to stress. Further, high parental stress is found to be associated with adverse child outcomes and the negative impacts of poor maternal mental health on children's mental well-being can persist into adulthood (Kamis 2021; McQuillan and Bates 2017). However, if high SES mothers' intensive mothering standards can also cause high parental stress and there are racial differences in how SES predicts parental stress, the relationships between parental stress and child outcomes may require more detailed examination in future work.

Constrained by data limitations and the scope of this study, I can only interpret the racially diverse impacts of SES on mothers' parental stress based on existing theoretical and empirical studies. More studies are needed to explore why the association between SES and mothers' parental stress varies by race. Besides, the causes of Asian mothers' higher parental stress compared with White mothers require future studies because neither racial differences in SES nor racially diverse impacts of SES on parental stress are very effective in explaining it. Further, the

four-item index that the ECLS-K used to measure parental stress, though widely adopted by national surveys and previous studies on parental stress, has only moderate internal reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .57$). This may in part be because the index is derived from Abidin's (1990) 36-item index, which measures parental stress from three dimensions: parental distress, parent-child dysfunctional interaction, and difficult child. The four questions are thus measuring different dimensions of mothers' parental stress. Due to the complexity of mothers' parental stress and its relationship with race and SES, it is hard to estimate how the index's moderate internal reliability may influence the results of this study. Future studies can use the original 36-item index to explore if the impacts of race and SES on parental stress are consistent across different dimensions of parental stress and redesign the shorter index accordingly. Additionally, because Cronbach's alpha scores were lower for Black (.54), Hispanic (.54), and Asian (.53) mothers than for White (.60) mothers, more studies are needed to examine to what extent the current index can accurately capture mothers' perceptions of parental stress in different racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Despite these limitations, this study contributes to current literature on mothering and mental health by first, exploring racial differences in parental stress not only between White mothers and mothers of color but also within mothers of color; and second, studying how the relationship between mothers' SES and parental stress varies by race, and how the racially diverse parental stress consequences of SES contribute to racial differences in parental stress. The results of this study enable a deeper interpretation of racial heterogeneities in the sources of parental stress, which can inform efforts to reduce mothers' parental stress in the racially diverse U.S. society. The results also provide a more systematic understanding of the relationship between SES and parental stress, showing racial differences in how mothers' SES predicts their parental stress may be a reason for the mixed findings on the association between SES and mothers' parental stress.

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Table 1. Weighted Means (Standard Deviations) or Percentage Distributions for Dependent and Independent Variables by Race (N=8,548)

	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian
Parental stress level*	1.93 (.61)	1.96 (.63)	1.98 (.63)	2.04 (.82)
Mother's education level (%)				
High school diploma or lower	19.94	37.28	63.10	15.49
Vocational	5.86	6.41	5.92	1.27
Some college	29.11	36.29	18.39	15.36
Bachelor's degree	27.80	12.58	8.50	34.77
Graduate/Professional	17.30	7.44	4.09	33.12
Household poverty level (%)				
Below poverty line	12.95	45.26	50.18	10.92
Poverty line-200% of poverty line	19.22	28.37	25.65	15.9
Above 200% of poverty line	67.83	26.37	24.17	73.18
Household food security (%)				
Low security	9.26	16.53	22.14	6.43
High security	90.74	83.47	77.86	93.57
Mother's age	34.72 (5.89)	31.71 (6.22)	32.53 (6.25)	35.99 (6.75)
Mother's nativity (%)				
Native-born	95.99	92.23	38.86	12.91
Foreign-born	4.01	7.77	61.14	87.09
Mother's English proficiency (%)				
Proficient	99.82	99.72	88.45	92.00
Not proficient	.18	.28	11.55	8.00
Mother's employment (%)				
Employed	65.09	66.34	48.98	59.57
Looking for job	4.56	15.49	9.78	5.46
Out of the labor force	30.35	18.16	41.24	34.97
Mother's marital status (%)				
Married	79.43	36.22	61.74	90.05
Separated/Divorced	10.48	15.64	12.30	4.47
Never married	7.35	46.04	20.47	4.55
Civil union	2.73	2.09	5.49	.93
Mother's physical health (%)				
Excellent	31.55	23.15	23.59	31.38
Very good	39.22	34.02	28.74	38.59
Good	22.86	29.57	30.60	24.19
Fair	5.47	11.35	15.68	5.04
Poor	.91	1.90	1.40	.80
No. of household girls aged 0-7	.81 (.74)	.87 (.79)	.88 (.79)	.80 (.95)
No. of household girls aged 8-17	.39 (.64)	.46 (.72)	.51 (.75)	.35 (.87)
No. of household boys aged 0-7	.87 (.77)	.84 (.74)	.91 (.80)	.80 (.99)
No. of household boys aged 8-17	.43 (.66)	.50 (.73)	.55 (.76)	.35 (.81)
Age of the youngest household child	.92 (.35)	.99 (.43)	.87 (.41)	.90 (.46)
Use of non-parental child care (%)				
No non-parental child care	58.08	45.29	64.87	59.05
Relative care	16.85	28.77	21.65	16.21
Non-relative care	6.57	2.88	3.20	2.55

Center-based care or multiple types	18.50	23.06	10.27	22.19
Child has physical/developmental disabilities (%)				
No	76.58	82.21	84.18	88.97
Yes	23.42	17.79	15.82	11.03
Child's health (%)				
Excellent	65.91	57.04	50.49	53.58
Very good	24.16	28.65	28.49	30.97
Good	8.46	11.54	16.60	13.04
Fair or poor	1.46	2.77	4.42	2.42
N	5,410	951	1,672	515

Note: * ranged from 1 to 4, higher scores indicated higher levels of stress

Table 2. OLS Regression Models Predicting Racial Differences in Mothers' Parental Stress Levels (N=8,548).

	Model 1a	Model 2a	Model 3a		Model 1b	Model 2b	Model 3b
Race (ref=White)				Race (ref=Asian)			
Black	.032 (.025)	.014 (.026)	.007 (.027)	White	-.114*** (.032)	-.110*** (.032)	-.090* (.038)
Hispanic	.055** (.019)	.024 (.021)	.017 (.024)	Black	-.082* (.038)	-.096* (.039)	-.084+ (.044)
Asian	.114*** (.032)	.110*** (.032)	.090* (.038)	Hispanic	-.059+ (.034)	-.087* (.036)	-.074* (.037)
Mother's education level (ref=high school diploma or lower)				Mother's education level (ref=high school diploma or lower)			
Vocational		-.045 (.034)	-.019 (.084)	Vocational		-.045 (.034)	-.019 (.084)
Some college		-.015 (.021)	-.041 (.051)	Some college		-.015 (.021)	-.041 (.051)
Bachelor's degree		.005 (.024)	.058 (.066)	Bachelor's degree		.005 (.024)	.058 (.066)
Graduate/Professional		.032 (.027)	.098 (.076)	Graduate/Professional		.032 (.027)	.098 (.076)
Household poverty level (ref=below poverty line)				Household poverty level (ref=below poverty line)			
Line-200% of line		-.039 (.024)	-.050 (.055)	Line-200% of line		-.039 (.024)	-.050 (.055)
Above 200% of line		-.032 (.023)	-.156* (.065)	Above 200% of line		-.032 (.023)	-.156* (.065)
Food security (ref=low security)				Food security (ref=low security)			
High security		-.180*** (.025)	-.162*** (.025)	High security		-.180*** (.025)	-.162*** (.025)
Constant	1.927*** (.009)	2.122*** (.028)	2.183*** (.194)	Constant	2.041*** (.030)	2.233*** (.040)	2.274*** (.196)
Covariates	No	No	Yes	Covariates	No	No	Yes
R ²	.002	.013	.030	R ²	.002	.013	.030
N	8,548	8,548	8,548	N	8,548	8,548	8,548

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. All analyses were weighted. The dependent variable was mothers' parental stress levels (ranged from 1 to 4, higher scores indicated higher levels of stress). Covariates included mothers' age, nativity, employment status, English proficiency, marital status, self-reported physical health and use of non-parental childcare; number of household boys and girls aged 0-7 and 8-17, age of the youngest household child; mother's report of child's disability and health. † p = .10, * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001, two-tailed.

Table 3. Blinder-Oaxaca Decomposition Results of Racial Differences in Mothers' Parental Stress Levels (N=8,548).

	White vs. Black		White vs. Hispanic		White vs. Asian	
Overall difference	-.032 (.025)		-.055** (.019)		-.114*** (.032)	
	Explained	Unexplained	Explained	Unexplained	Explained	Unexplained
Mother's education level (ref=high school diploma or lower)						
Vocational	.000 (.000)	.004 (.006)	.000 (.000)	.011* (.005)	.001 (.002)	-.003 (.003)
Some college	-.001 (.002)	.038+ (.022)	.000 (.002)	.024* (.011)	.006 (.004)	-.024 (.017)
Bachelor's degree	.005 (.004)	.003 (.013)	.004 (.005)	.005 (.009)	-.003 (.002)	-.042 (.038)
Graduate/Professional	.007* (.003)	-.010 (.010)	.006 (.004)	.008 (.005)	-.011* (.005)	.001 (.038)
Household poverty level (ref=below poverty line)						
Line-200% of line	.004 (.003)	.012 (.018)	.001 (.002)	-.003 (.013)	-.001 (.001)	-.035 (.021)
Above 200% of line	-.018 (.013)	.061* (.030)	.000 (.012)	-.013 (.023)	.001 (.002)	-.051 (.082)
Food security (ref=low security)						
High security	-.010*** (.003)	-.058 (.130)	-.023*** (.004)	.096 (.102)	.004+ (.002)	.192 (.233)
N	6,361		7,082		5,925	
	Black vs. Hispanic		Black vs. Asian		Hispanic vs. Asian	
Overall difference	-.023 (.028)		-.082* (.038)		-.059+ (.034)	
	Explained	Unexplained	Explained	Unexplained	Explained	Unexplained
Mother's education level (ref=high school diploma or lower)						
Vocational	-.001 (.001)	.007 (.007)	-.001 (.004)	-.005 (.004)	-.007* (.003)	-.006 (.004)
Some college	-.012+ (.006)	-.001 (.020)	-.009 (.011)	-.047* (.021)	-.001 (.002)	-.041* (.018)
Bachelor's degree	.002 (.002)	-.002 (.012)	-.013 (.015)	-.041 (.041)	-.011 (.014)	-.043 (.038)
Graduate/Professional	.003 (.002)	.014 (.008)	-.025 (.020)	.018 (.040)	.010 (.018)	-.035 (.036)
Household poverty level (ref=below poverty line)						
Line-200% of line	-.001 (.001)	-.017 (.020)	-.006 (.007)	-.046+ (.024)	.000 (.004)	-.034 (.021)
Above 200% of line	-.001 (.001)	-.054* (.023)	.073* (.031)	-.166+ (.086)	-.006 (.022)	-.032 (.080)
Food security (ref=low security)						
High security	-.010** (.004)	.152 (.135)	.013* (.006)	.252 (.250)	.033*** (.007)	.091 (.237)
N	2,623		1,466		2,187	

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. All analyses were weighted. The dependent variable was mothers' parental stress levels (ranged from 1 to 4, higher scores indicated higher levels of stress). Covariates included mothers' age, nativity, employment status, English proficiency, marital status, self-reported physical health and use of non-parental childcare; number of household boys and girls aged 0-7 and 8-17, age of the youngest household child; mother's report of child's disability and health. † p = .10, * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001, two-tailed.

Table 4. OLS Regression Models of the Socioeconomic Predictors of Mothers' Parental Stress Levels by Race and Cross-Racial Group Comparisons (N=8,548).

	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	W vs B	W vs H	B vs A	H vs A	B vs. H
Mother's education level (ref=high school diploma or lower)									
Vocational	.012 (.044)	-.047 (.089)	-.167** (.064)	.220 (.237)		p=.022			
Some college	.037 (.028)	-.073 (.056)	-.073+ (.043)	.188+ (.106)	p=.078	p=.033	p=.029	p=.022	
Bachelor's degree	.042 (.030)	.029 (.084)	.040 (.067)	.164 (.107)					
Graduate/Professional	.077* (.033)	.213* (.106)	.016 (.083)	.071 (.113)					
Household poverty level (ref=below poverty line)									
Line-200% of line	-.024 (.037)	-.074 (.060)	-.010 (.042)	.195 (.121)			p=.047		
Above 200% of line	-.012 (.036)	-.191* (.077)	.019 (.049)	.058 (.106)	p=.035		p=.057		p=.021
Food security (ref=low security)									
High security	-.153*** (.036)	-.121* (.060)	-.205*** (.043)	-.252* (.115)					
Constant	2.364** (.723)	2.408* (1.038)	2.264*** (.384)	1.921** (.658)					
R ²	.030	.061	.053	.103					
N	5,410	951	1,672	515					

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. All analyses were weighted. The dependent variable was mothers' parental stress levels (ranged from 1 to 4, higher scores indicated higher levels of stress). Covariates included mothers' age, nativity, employment status, English proficiency, marital status, self-reported physical health and use of non-parental childcare; number of household boys and girls aged 0-7 and 8-17, age of the youngest household child; mother's report of child's disability and health. † p< .10, * p< .05, ** p< .01, *** p< .001, two-tailed.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model for the Relationship between Mothers' Race, SES, and Parental Stress

APPENDIX

Table A1. Racial and SES Distributions of the Sample with and without Cases with Missing Values

	Include cases with missing values (N=9,230)				Exclude cases with missing values (N=8,548)			
	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian
Mother's education level (%)								
High school diploma or lower	20.2	37.0	63.1	16.0	19.9	37.3	63.1	15.5
Vocational	5.9	6.5	5.6	1.3	5.9	6.4	5.9	1.3
Some college	29.3	35.8	18.4	14.9	29.1	36.3	18.4	15.4
Bachelor's degree	27.5	12.9	8.8	34.8	27.8	12.6	8.5	34.8
Graduate/Professional	17.1	7.8	4.0	33.1	17.3	7.4	4.1	33.1
Household poverty level (%)								
Below poverty line	13.1	44.7	49.3	10.9	13.0	45.3	50.2	10.9
Line-200% of line	19.5	28.5	25.8	15.4	19.2	28.4	25.7	15.9
Above 200% of line	67.4	26.9	24.9	73.7	67.8	26.4	24.2	73.2
Household food security (%)								
Low security	9.1	16.7	22.0	6.1	9.3	16.5	22.1	6.4
High security	90.9	83.3	78.0	93.9	90.7	83.5	77.9	93.6
N	5,741	1,069	1,845	575	5,410	951	1,672	515

Table A2. Correlations Between Indicators of Mothers' SES by Race.

White			
	Mother's education level	Household poverty level	Food security
Mother's education level	1.00		
Household poverty level	.44	1.00	
Food security	.21	.32	1.00
Black			
	Mother's education level	Household poverty level	Food security
Mother's education level	1.00		
Household poverty level	.48	1.00	
Food security	.11	.16	1.00
Hispanic			
	Mother's education level	Household poverty level	Food security
Mother's education level	1.00		
Household poverty level	.50	1.00	
Food security	.18	.28	1.00
Asian			
	Mother's education level	Household poverty level	Food security
Mother's education level	1.00		
Household poverty level	.49	1.00	
Food security	.26	.38	1.00

Note: Higher scores indicated higher education level, lower household poverty level, and higher food security.