ABSTRACT
This study examined gender differences between mothers and fathers in exposure to parenting stressors. To examine parent gender differences between mothers and fathers in exposure to parenting stressors we used a t-test. This study also examined stressors by examining associations between parents’ parenting stressors and their health and well-being. To examine the correlations between parents’ gender, age, marital status, parenting stressors, daily negative affect, and physical symptoms we used regression analyses. Participants included individuals who identified as parents (N=1,118) from the Midlife in the United States Survey (MIDUS II) and the National Study of Daily Experiences (NSDE II). Participants were aged from 33 to 84 years old. Respondents were asked to report their physical and mental/emotional health, marital status, and number of children. For a series of eight days, respondents also reported on the stressors they experienced that involved their children (i.e., parenting stressors) as well as their negative affect and physical health symptoms. Findings revealed gender differences between mothers and fathers in exposure to parenting stressors, where mothers reported more parenting stressors than did fathers. Associations between parenting stressors and negative affect were greater for mothers than for fathers who experienced high parenting stressors, suggesting mothers may be particularly vulnerable to experiencing and reacting to parenting stressors.

INTRODUCTION
The Daily Stress Process
- Parenting stressors are the routine challenges of day-to-day family life that occur frequently and disrupt daily life and involve the respondent’s child (e.g. argument with child, sick child; Almeida, 2005).
- Exposure likelihood of experiencing a stressor (Almeida, 2005)
- Reactivity psychological or physical response to the stressor (Almeida, 2005)

Literature Review
Gender Differences in the Daily Stress Process
- Women tend to have more opportunities to experience stress because of mothers spending more time around children.
- To examine reactivity to parenting stressors by examining associations between parents’ parenting stressors and their health and well-being (i.e., negative affect, physical symptoms). I hypothesize that those who experience more parenting stressors will also report higher negative affect and more physical health symptoms.
- To examine how demographic characteristics (i.e., age, gender, and marital status) moderate associations between parenting stressors, health, and well-being. I hypothesize that associations between parenting stressors, health, and well-being will be greater for those who are younger, female, and unmarried.

OBJECTIVES
To examine gender differences between mothers and fathers in exposure to parenting stressors. I hypothesize that mothers will experience more parenting stressors than fathers because of mothers spending more time around children.

METHODS
Participants were from the National Study of Daily Experiences (NSDE Examine day).

Example items: worthless, hopeless

Exposure

Filled out questionnaires and completed phone interviews

264

Mothers and fathers are from different families

2005

Negative affect

Findings suggest that mothers may be more vulnerable to the negative effects of parenting stressors when they experience more parenting stressors.

Fathers

Older mothers are thought to have less stress because of the fact they

Women tend to have more opportunities to experience stress because of

To examine gender differences between mothers and fathers in exposure to parenting stressors we used a t-test. This study also examined stressors by examining associations between parents’ parenting stressors and their health and well-being. To examine the correlations between parents’ gender, age, marital status, parenting stressors, daily negative affect, and physical symptoms we used regression analyses. Participants included individuals who identified as parents (N=1,118) from the Midlife in the United States Survey (MIDUS II) and the National Study of Daily Experiences (NSDE II). Participants were aged from 33 to 84 years old. Respondents were asked to report their physical and mental/emotional health, marital status, and number of children. For a series of eight days, respondents also reported on the stressors they experienced that involved their children (i.e., parenting stressors) as well as their negative affect and physical health symptoms. Findings revealed gender differences between mothers and fathers in exposure to parenting stressors, where mothers reported more parenting stressors than did fathers. Associations between parenting stressors and negative affect were greater for mothers than for fathers who experienced high parenting stressors, suggesting mothers may be particularly vulnerable to experiencing and reacting to parenting stressors.

PARTICIPANTS
Participants were from the National Study of Daily Experiences (NSDE Examine day), part of the larger Midlife in the United States (MIDUS II) sample. Participants in this study were all parents (Total N = 1,118).

Adults aged 33-84 years (M = 58.0, SD = 12.4).

Sample characteristics:
- 58.4% female
- Mothers and fathers are from different families
- 5.3% have less than a high school diploma
- 49.6% have high school diploma/college
- 31.5% have college degree/some graduate school
- 13.6% have an advanced degree
- 77% are married
- Average number of children (M = 2.95, SD=1.6, 1-12)

METHODS (cont.)

Average Parenting Stressors

T-test results: t(1007) = 2.98, p < .01

Gender Differences in Exposure to Parenting Stressors

Mothers Reported More Parenting Stressors Compared to Fathers

Gender and Reactivity to Parenting Stressors

METHODS
Procedure
- MIDUS (Midlife in the United States)
- Filled out questionnaires and completed phone interviews

NSDE II (National Study of Daily Experiences)
- Participated in 8 days of diary interviews
- Reported on the stressors they experienced across the days
- Reported on their negative affect and physical health symptoms

Measures
- Parenting Stressors
- Stressful experiences which involved the respondent’s child

DISCUSSION
Gender Differences in Exposure and Reactivity to Parenting Stressors
- Findings suggest that mothers may be more vulnerable to the negative effects of parenting stressors when they experience more parenting stressors.
- It is possible that marital status did not moderate reactivity because most of our respondents were married, so there was less variability in marital status.
- Findings suggest that older parents may not experience as much stress because they have a little more experience with stress than younger parents.
- Older parents are also not actively involved in childrearing activities because their children are young or middle-aged adults, which may decrease their reactivity to parenting stressors.
- These findings are important because they help with targeting solutions for reducing stress among parents.

LIMITATIONS
- Many respondents were in midlife & later life, so they may not be actively involved in childrearing activities
- Mothers and fathers are from different families
- Who’s living in the household (e.g., adult children moved out or child & adolescent in the home)

FUTURE DIRECTION
- Include child’s perspective
- Include parents from the same family
- Consider the division of household labor in the family
- Examine day-to-day within person variability in exposure and reactivity to parenting stressors
- To examine whether co-residence and child’s age moderate the associations between parenting stressors and health and well-being

REFERENCES


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