

THE EFFECT OF PARENTING STRESS
ON CHILDREN'S COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT:
EXAMINING THE VARIABLES OF SEX AND RACE/ETHNIC ORIGIN

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ABSTRACT

Little research has focused on children's age, sex, and race/ethnicity as variables that may moderate the relations between parenting stress and children's cognitive development. Using Bronfenbrenner's (1986) bioecological systems theory as a basis, this study used a sample of mothers and their children who participated in the Early Head Start Research and Evaluation Project to examine the effects of parenting stress when children were 14 months old on children's cognitive scores on five measures when children were 24 and 36 months. Hierarchical multiple regression analyses revealed that there was a significant negative association between 14 month parenting stress and 24 and 36 month child cognitive scores. Analyses on four measures indicated that this relation was not moderated by child sex. However, analyses on two measures suggested that European American and African American children showed stronger negative relations between maternal parenting stress and children's cognitive outcomes than Mexican American children.