

Parents' Use of Everyday Conflict Tactics in the Presence of Children: Predictors and Implications for Child Behavior



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Introduction & Rationale



- Family Processes that undermine family stability
- Interparental Discord and Child Development
- Distressed by psychological aggression, constructive conflict ameliorates (Cummings & Davies, 1994; 2002).
- What types of conflict are children most exposed to?
- Many marital discord studies focus on behavior in dyad and omit questions about children's presence
- Child development studies examine child presence during conflict in laboratory settings or use methods less suitable for large-sample studies

Cummings et al.



- Laboratory-based training for parents on the MDR
- 15 days
- More conflict took place in the absence of the child than in the presence
- Greater use destructive conflict tactics and negative parental emotion

- Exposure to destructive conflict was associated with heightened negative emotionality of children
- Child negative emotionality was linked to internalizing and externalizing behavior problems

Current Study: Research Questions



- Can we measure child presence during parents' use of psychological aggression and negotiation **using a parent survey?**
- Does it explain greater proportion of the variance when explaining child outcomes?
- Which parent characteristics (individual, dyad) predict use of such tactics in the presence of the child?

Sample



- Family Life and Stress Study
- N = 74; (35 girls and 39 boys)
- Mean age of 5.6 years (ranging from 3.2 to 7.9 years)
- Approximately 25% received counseling depression, marital problems

Measures



- **Conflict Tactics.** Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS-2; Straus & Hamby, 1996), **Child Presence***
- **Marital Adjustment.** Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS; Spanier, 1978)

Measures ... continued



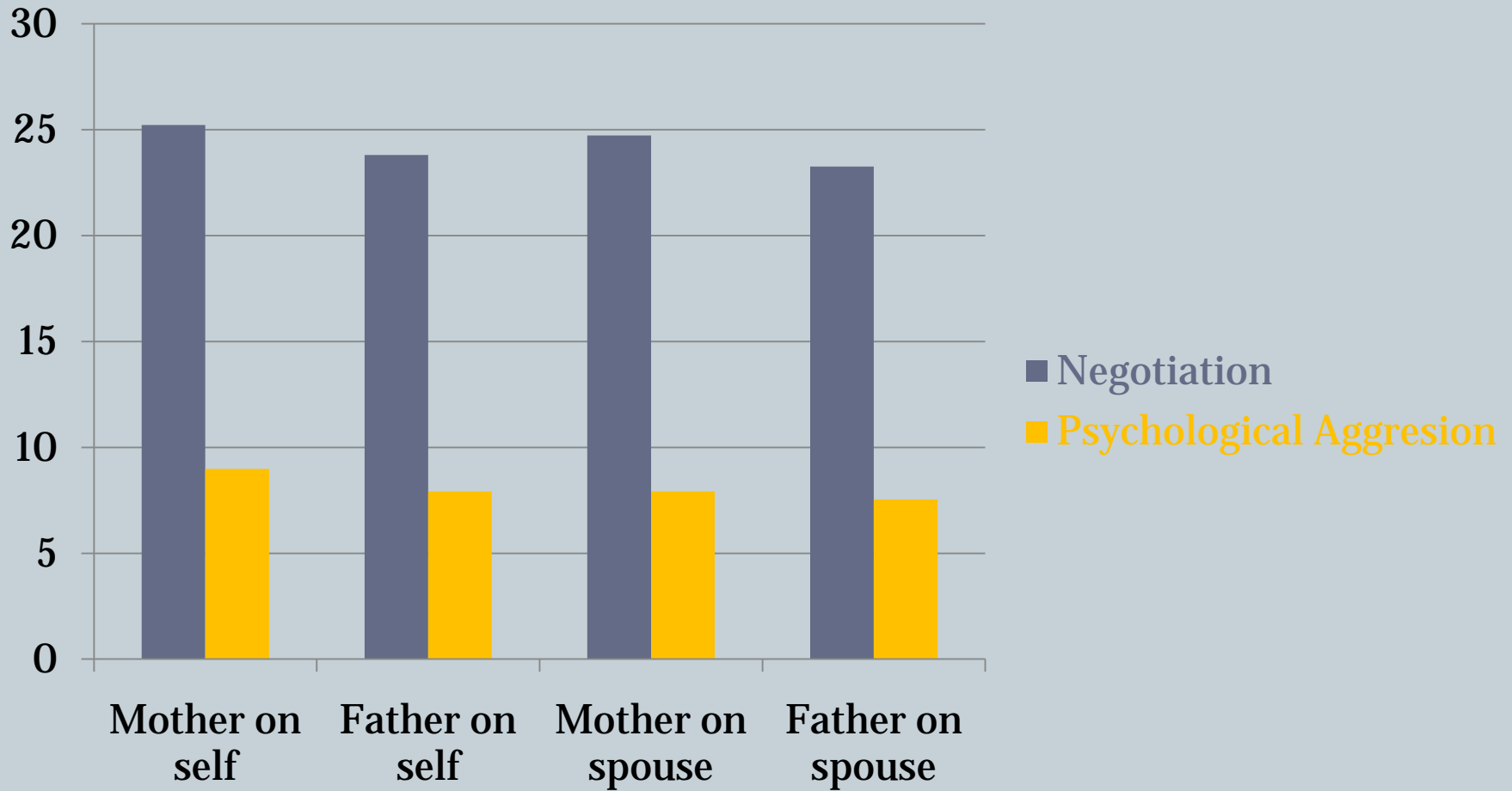
- **Emotional Maladjustment**
 - Inventory to Diagnose **Depression** (IDD; Zimmerman & Coryell, 1987).
 - Penn State **Worry** Questionnaire (PSWQ; Meyer et al. 1990).
 - Beck **Anxiety** Inventory (BAI; Beck & Steer, 1990).

Measures ... continued

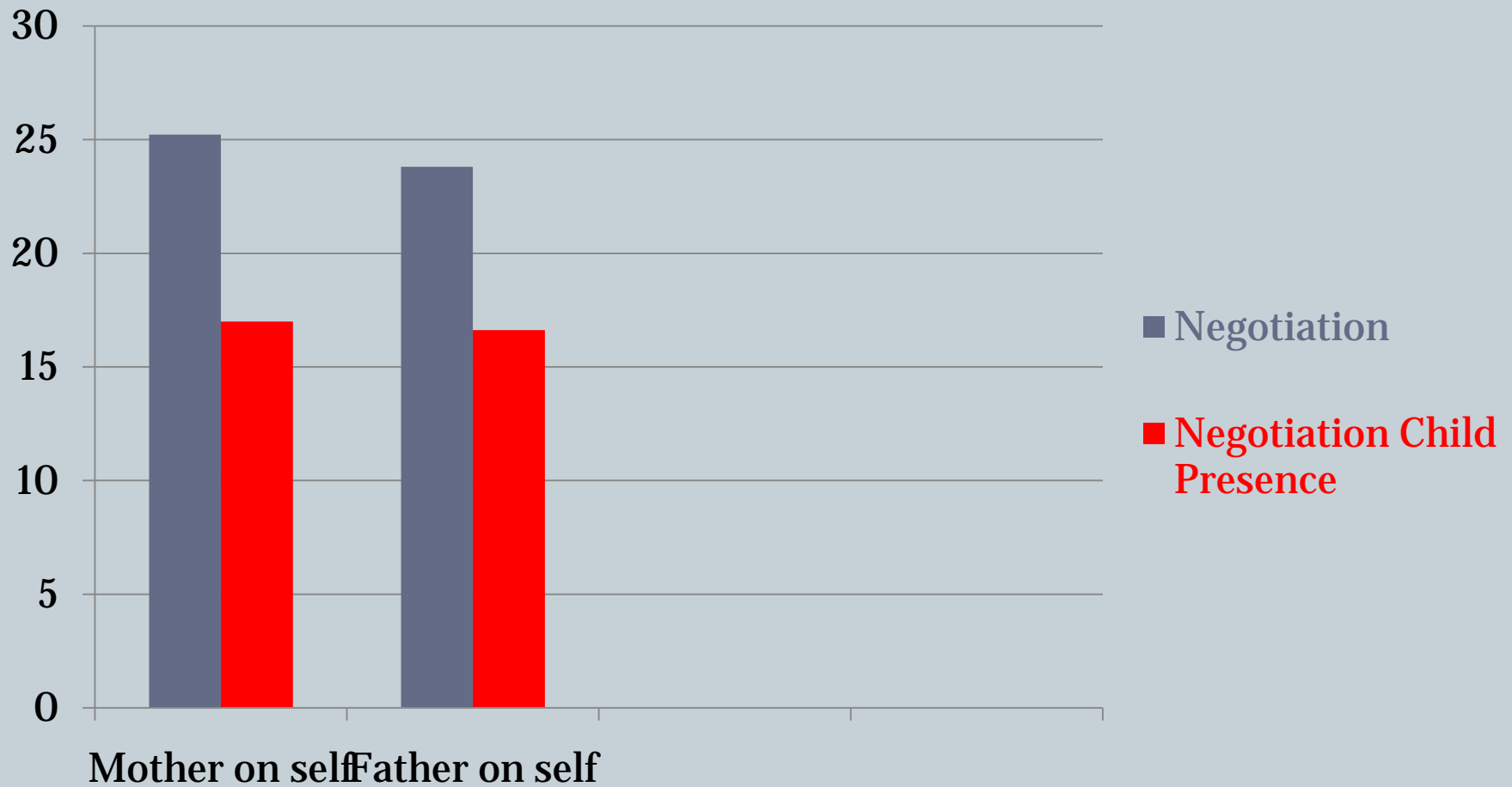


- **Parenting Quality**
 - Parental involvement was measured by averaging scores on an activities checklist (Adam & Pendry, 2007)
 - The Parent Child Relationship Inventory (PCRI; Gerard, 1994)
- **Child internalizing and externalizing behavior problems.** The Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL; Achenbach, 1991)

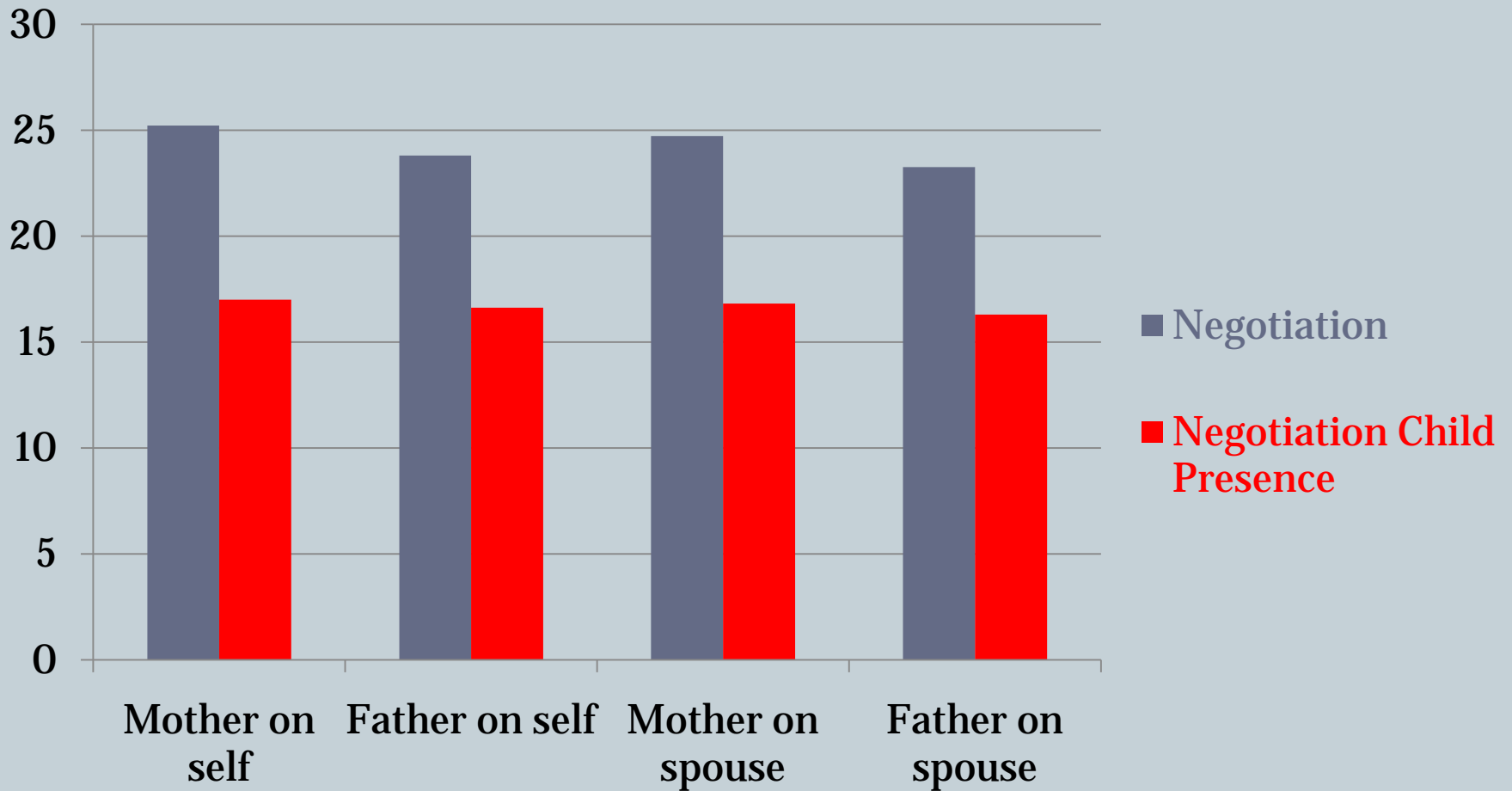
Total Use of Parents Conflict Tactics



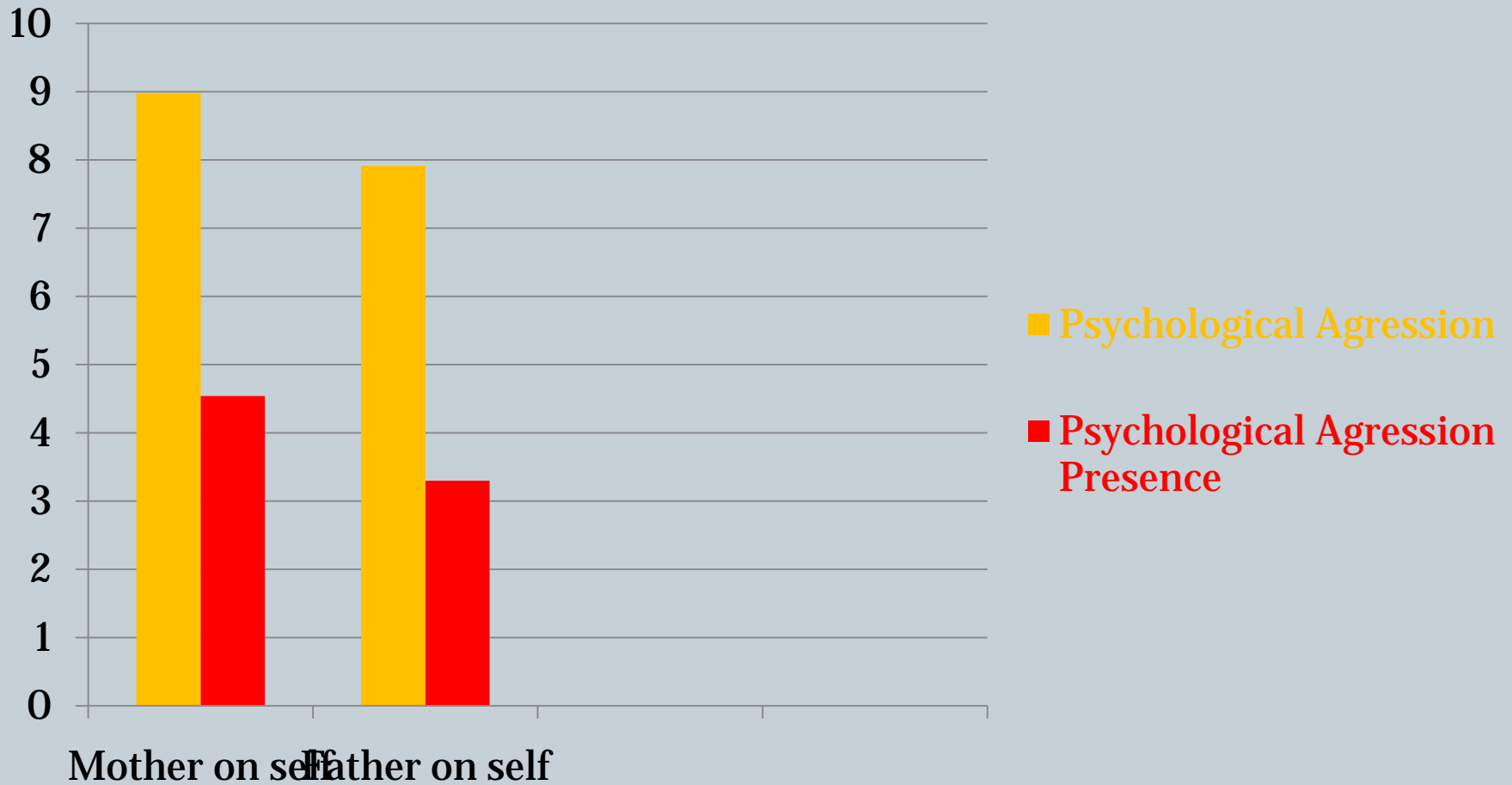
Use of Negotiation



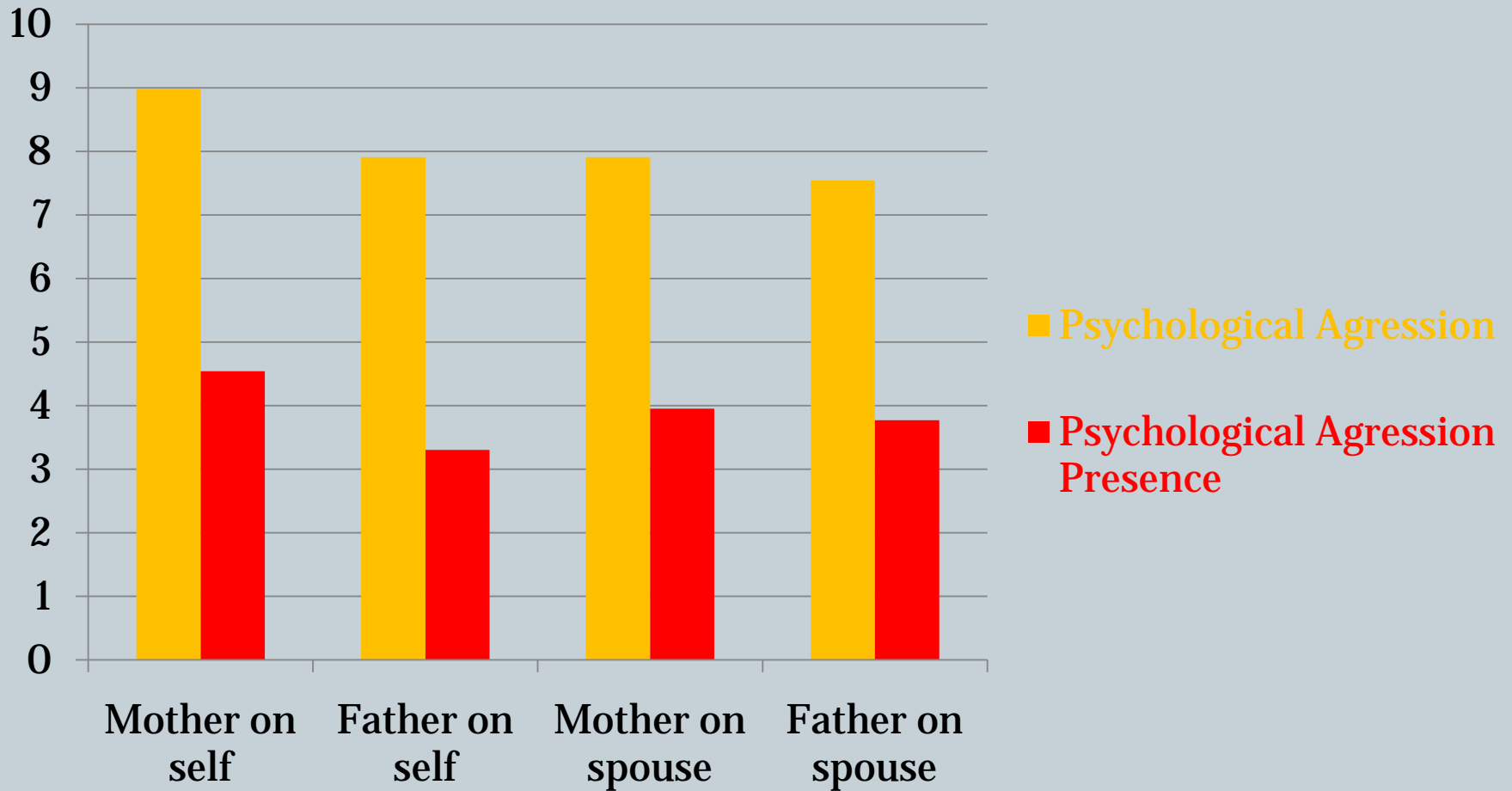
Use of Negotiation



Use of Psychological Aggression



Use of Psychological Aggression



Parents' use of conflict tactics



	Mother Report Mean (SD)	Father Report Mean(SD)
Use of Conflict Tactics		
<i>Report on self</i>		
Negotiation	25.22(6.58)	23.80(7.49)
Psychological Aggression	8.98(11.35)	7.91(9.68)
<i>Report on Partner</i>		
Negotiation	24.72(6.82)	23.26(7.76)
Psychological Aggression	7.91(8.27)	7.54(8.97)
<hr/>		
Use of Conflict Tactics in Child Presence		
<i>Report on self</i>		
Negotiation	17.00(8.48)/67%	16.62(9.43)/69%
Psychological Aggression	4.54(5.97)/50%	3.30(6.05) /42%
<i>Report on Partner</i>		
Negotiation	16.81(8.52)	16.30(9.22)
Psychological Aggression	3.95(5.36)	3.77(6.19)

Model 1: Predicting Child Internalizing Behaviors



<i>Variable</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Sig</i>
($R^2 = .545$)		
Constant	-.041	.745
Psychological Aggression	-.113	.268
Negotiation	.032	.720
Child Gender	.176	.313
Child Age	.246	.006**
Emotional Problems	.562	.000***
Marital Adjustment	-.479	.000***
Parenting Quality	.022	.861

Model 2: Predicting Child Internalizing Behaviors



<i>Variable</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Sig</i>
($R^2 = .540$)		
Constant	-.029	.819
Psychological Aggression in Child Presence	.083	.432
Negotiation in Child Presence	-.044	.648
Child Gender	.146	.406
Child Age	.249	.005**
Emotional Problems	.496	.000***
Marital Adjustment	-.417	.001***
Parenting Quality	.009	.945

Model 3: Predicting Child Externalizing Behavior



<i>Variable</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Sig</i>
($R^2 = .413$)		
Constant	-.220	.129
Psychological Aggression	.206	.075
Negotiation	.040	.693
Child Gender	.411	.039*
Child Age	-.037	.704
Emotional Problems	.446	.000***
Marital Adjustment	-.157	.238
Parenting Quality	-.244	.088

Model 4 Predicting Child Externalizing Behaviors Considering Child Presence

<i>Variable</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Sig</i>
($R^2 = .470$)		
Constant	-.197	.153
Psychological Aggression in Child Presence	.344	.003**
Negotiation in Child Presence	.011	.916
Child Gender	.375	.048*
Child Age	-.020	.832
Emotional Problems	.418	.000***
Marital	-.119	.344
Parenting Quality	-.272	.045*

Predictors of Psychological Aggression



- Physical aggression
- Depression
- Length of relationship
- SES
- Family of origin (Parent Gender)
- Gender differences

Model 1: Predicting Mother Psychological Aggression



<i>Variable</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Sig</i>
($R^2 = .449$)		
Constant	-025	.862
Maternal Age	-.236	.028*
Child Gender	.042	.833
Child Age	.025	.797
Maternal Education	-.009	.931
Maternal Emotional Problems	.585	.000***
Maternal Involvement	.176	.098
Maternal Warmth	.025	.807
Maternal Marital Adjustment	-.082	.591

Model 2 : Predicting Mother Psychological Aggression in Presence of Child



<i>Variable</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Sig</i>
($R^2 = .296$)		
Constant	-.069	.651
Maternal Age	-.204	.075
Child Gender	.096	.650
Child Age	.012	.908
Maternal Education	-.113	.327
Maternal Emotional Problems	.282	.012**
Maternal Involvement	.303	.009**
Maternal Warmth	-.106	.338
Maternal Marital Adjustment	-.122	.459

Model 3 : Predicting Father Psychological Aggression



<i>Variable</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Sig</i>
($R^2 = .344$)		
Constant	.114	.493
Paternal Age	-.169	.187
Child Gender	-.124	.583
Child Age	.103	.404
Paternal Education	-.281	.020*
Paternal Emotional Problems	.253	.044*
Paternal Involvement	.027	.821
Paternal Warmth	-.091	.578
Paternal Marital Adjustment	-.265	.032*

Model 4 : Predicting Father Psychological Aggression in Presence of Child



<i>Variable</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Sig</i>
($R^2 = .426$)		
Constant	.025	.870
Paternal Age	-.269	.026*
Child Gender	.075	.721
Child Age	.005	.968
Paternal Education	-.145	.191
Paternal Emotional Problems	.292	.014*
Paternal Involvement	.083	.457
Paternal Warmth	-.173	.259
Paternal Marital Adjustment	-.399	.001***

Summary



- Considering child presence during conflict tactics using self-report measure is useful for explaining child externalizing behavior
- Gender differences in
 - Predictors of psychological aggression
 - Predictors of aggression in presence of child

Future Work



- Modeling other outcomes – physiological arousal
- Considering child temperament
- Modeling other parent and dyadic predictors
- Considering greater variety of covert conflict behaviors

Thank you!