

# Parenting Styles and Mother-Child Relationship Quality

## Research Question

- How are authoritative and permissive parenting styles associated with the quality of a child's relationship with his/her mother?
- Do the associations vary by socioeconomic status (SES)?

## Previous Research

- Authoritative parenting involves directing a child and exerting firm but not punitive control (Baumrind 1971).
- Permissive parenting involves exercising less control over a child and permitting larger amounts of autonomy (Baumrind 1971).
- Education, an indicator of SES, is related to parenting styles, and higher educational achievement is related to authoritative parenting (Lareau 2011).

## Hypotheses

- Higher levels of authoritative parenting will be related with greater mother-child closeness and lower mother-child conflict.
- Higher levels of permissive parenting will be related with less conflict and less closeness.
- College education will strengthen these associations for authoritative mothers and weaken these associations for permissive mothers.

## Data

- NICHD's Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development (SECCYD), a longitudinal study following families over a 15 year period (1991-2008).
- Cohort of mothers with 3<sup>rd</sup> grade children (N = 1007).

## Dependent Measures

**Mother-Child Closeness** is measured as the sum of 8 items, consisting of statements such as "If upset, my child seeks comfort from me." Range: 8-40, categorized into low (<38; 46.1%) and high (≥38); 53.9%).

**Mother-Child Conflict** is measured as the sum of 7 items, consisting of statements such as "My child easily becomes angry at me." Range: 7-35, categorized into low (<15; 45.9%) and high (≥15; 54.1%).

## Independent Measures

**Authoritative Parenting** is measured as the sum of 6 items about responsiveness. Range: 6-24, categorized into low (<20; 27%), average (20-22; 49.2%), and high (>22; 23.8%).

**Permissive Parenting** is measured as the sum of 9 items about leniency. Range: 9-26, categorized into low (<12; 28.4%), average (12-15; 48.3%), and high (>15; 23.2%).

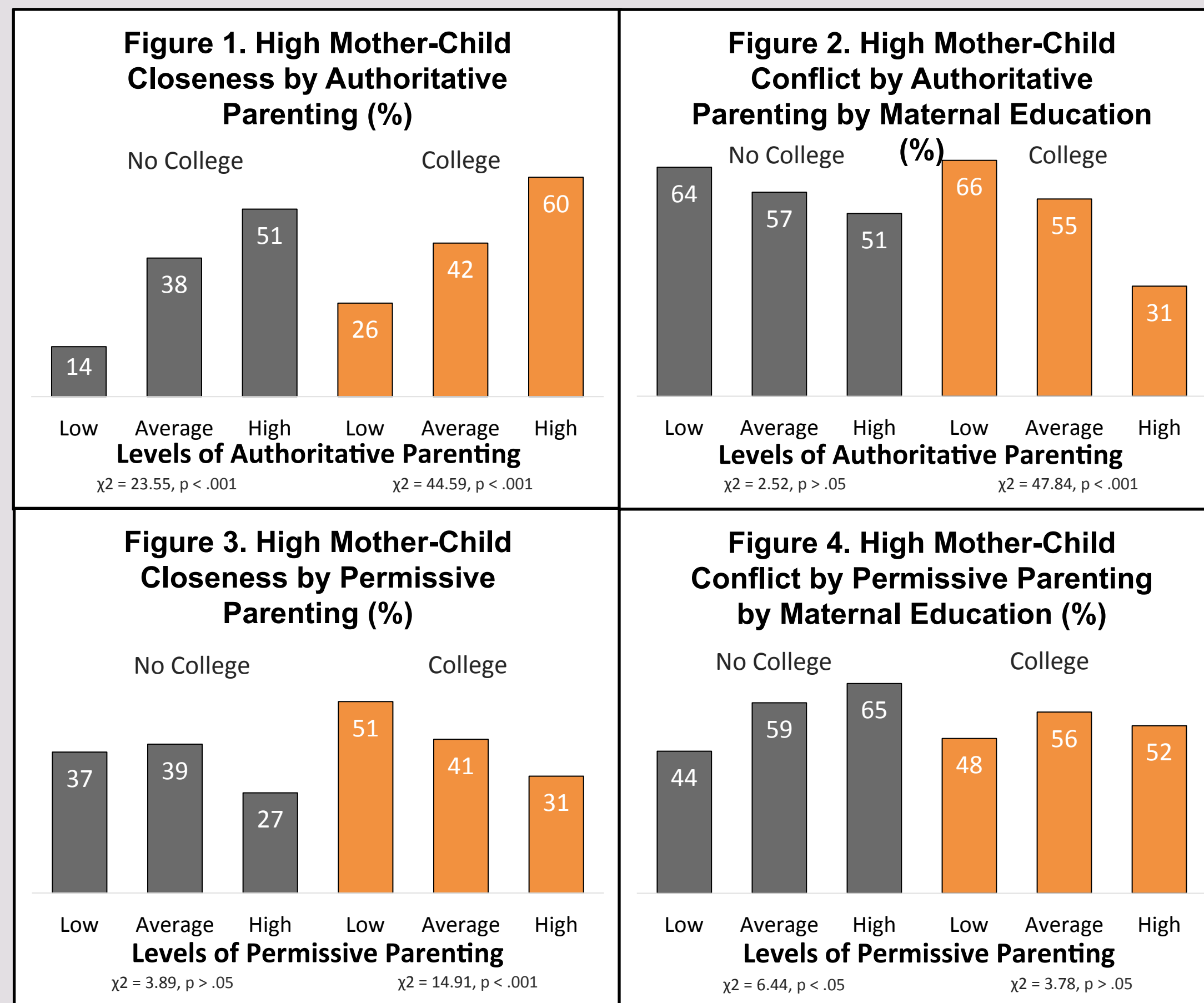
## Control Measure

**SES** is measured as maternal education level. Education level is split into two groups: no college education (27.2%) and college education or higher (72.8%).

## Summary of Results

- Highly authoritative mothers have greater closeness with their child regardless of their educational levels (Fig. 1).
- Among mothers with college education only, authoritative parenting is related to more mother-child conflict (Fig. 2).
- Permissive parenting is related to less closeness with their child among mothers with college education (Fig. 3).
- Permissive parenting is related to more conflict among mothers without college education (Fig. 4).

## Results



## Implications

The results suggest that authoritative parenting styles, regardless of education level, foster closer and more peaceful parent-child relationships.

## References

- Baumrind, D. (1971). Current patterns of parental authority. *Developmental psychology*, 4(1) 1-103.
- Lareau, A. (2011). *Unequal childhoods: Class, race, and family life*. Univ. of California Press.

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