

Same Family, Different Emotions: Comparing Mothers and Fathers

Patty Kuo, Ph.D.

Department of Child, Youth and Family Studies

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Theoretical & Empirical Background

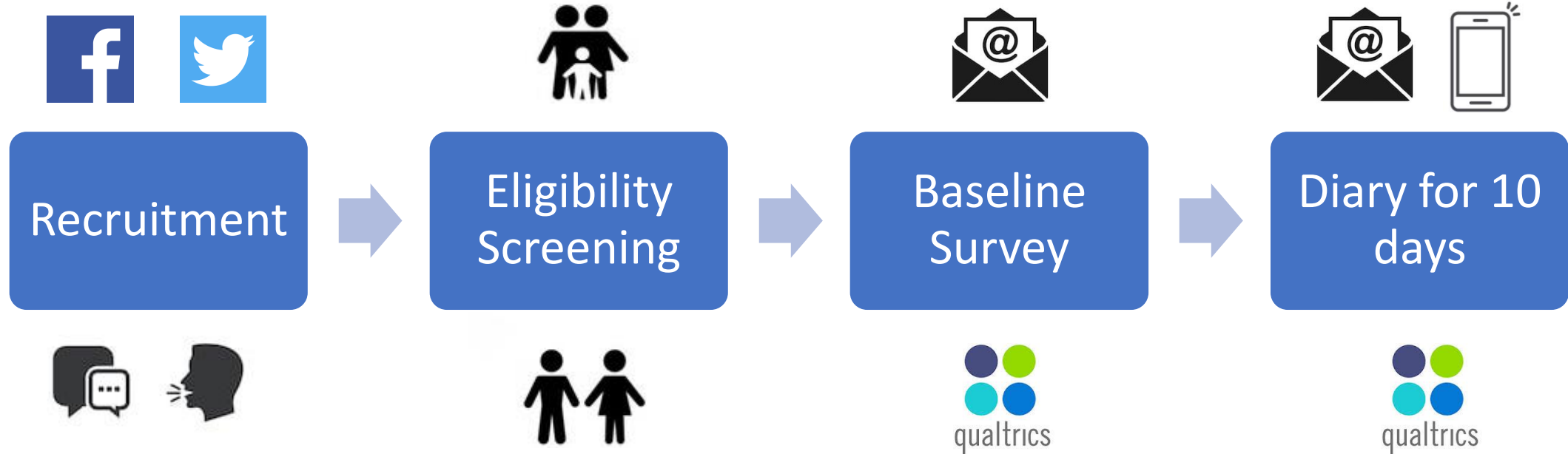
- Marital to parenting spillover is well-documented & theoretically supported (e.g., Cox & Paley, 2003).
- Debate as to whether this happens more for fathers compared to mothers (Erel & Burnham, 1995; Cummings et al., 2010).
- Father vulnerability hypothesis: fathers are more likely to experience spillover because **being a father is less central to their overall identity** compared to women's identity as mothers. As a result, mothers are better able to **compartmentalize** their marriages from their relationships with their children (Cummings et al., 2004).
- However, the 'compartmentalizing' process is much more likely a result of emotion regulation capabilities (which often also falls along gendered lines) rather than parental identity processes.

Core Research Questions

Do fathers experience more spillover than mothers in couples with young children?

What factors might mitigate or exacerbate spillover? (as related to identity & compartmentalizing)

Study Design



Measures & Methodology - Baseline

Construct	Measure Name
Marital Satisfaction	Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale
Parenting Stress	Parental Stress Scale
Parental Identity	Caregiving & Breadwinning Identity & Reflected Appraisal Inventory
Emotion Regulation	Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (Reappraisal, Suppression)
Coparenting	Parenting Alliance Inventory
Demographics	N/A

Measures & Methodology - Diary

Construct	Measure Name
Mood	Positive and Negative Affect Scale
Stressors	Daily Stressor Checklist
Emotional Quality with Partner & Child(ren)	Single Items

Sample Characteristics of Mothers & Fathers

Mothers

- 32.59 years old (SD = 4.17)
- 87.1% white; 5% Hispanic
- 76% Bachelor's Degree or higher
 - 36.4% working full-time

Fathers

- 34.20 years old (SD = 5.97)
- 89.1% white; 2% Hispanic
- 70.4% Bachelor's Degree or higher
 - 84.7% working full-time

Sample Characteristics of Couples

N = 198 mothers & fathers; 96 couples

89.7% Married

9.89 years together in a relationship

2.24 children living with couple

1.1 male or female children / family

Average age of children: 3.22 years

Median income group: \$70,000 - \$79,000

65% Midwest

Using baseline data only...


Do fathers experience more spillover than mothers in couples with young children?

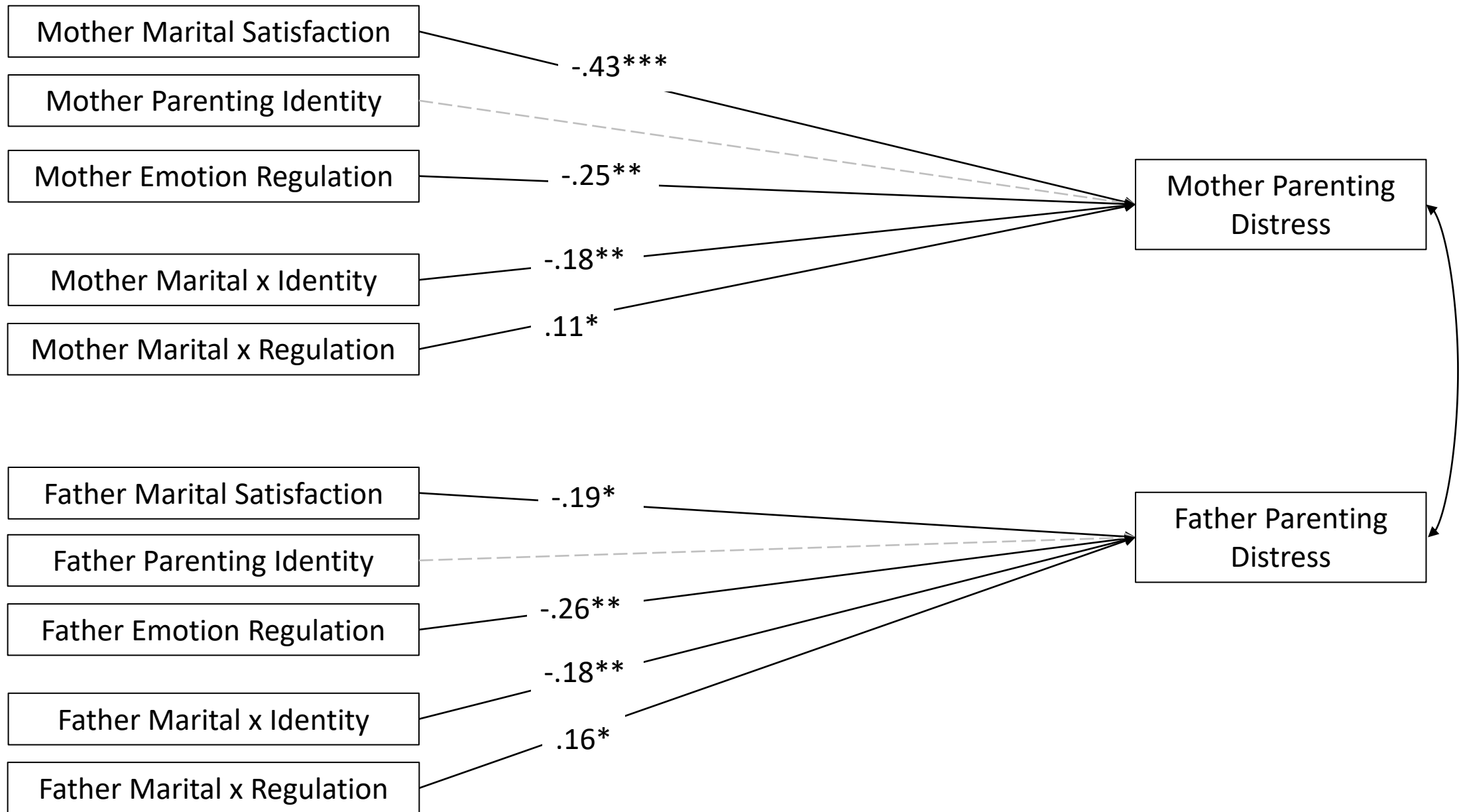
Does parenting identity and cognitive reappraisal mitigate spillover?

FAMILY PROCESS



Whose parenting stress is more vulnerable to marital dissatisfaction? A within-couple approach examining gender, cognitive reappraisal, and parental identity

PATTY X. KUO* 
VICTORIA J. JOHNSON*

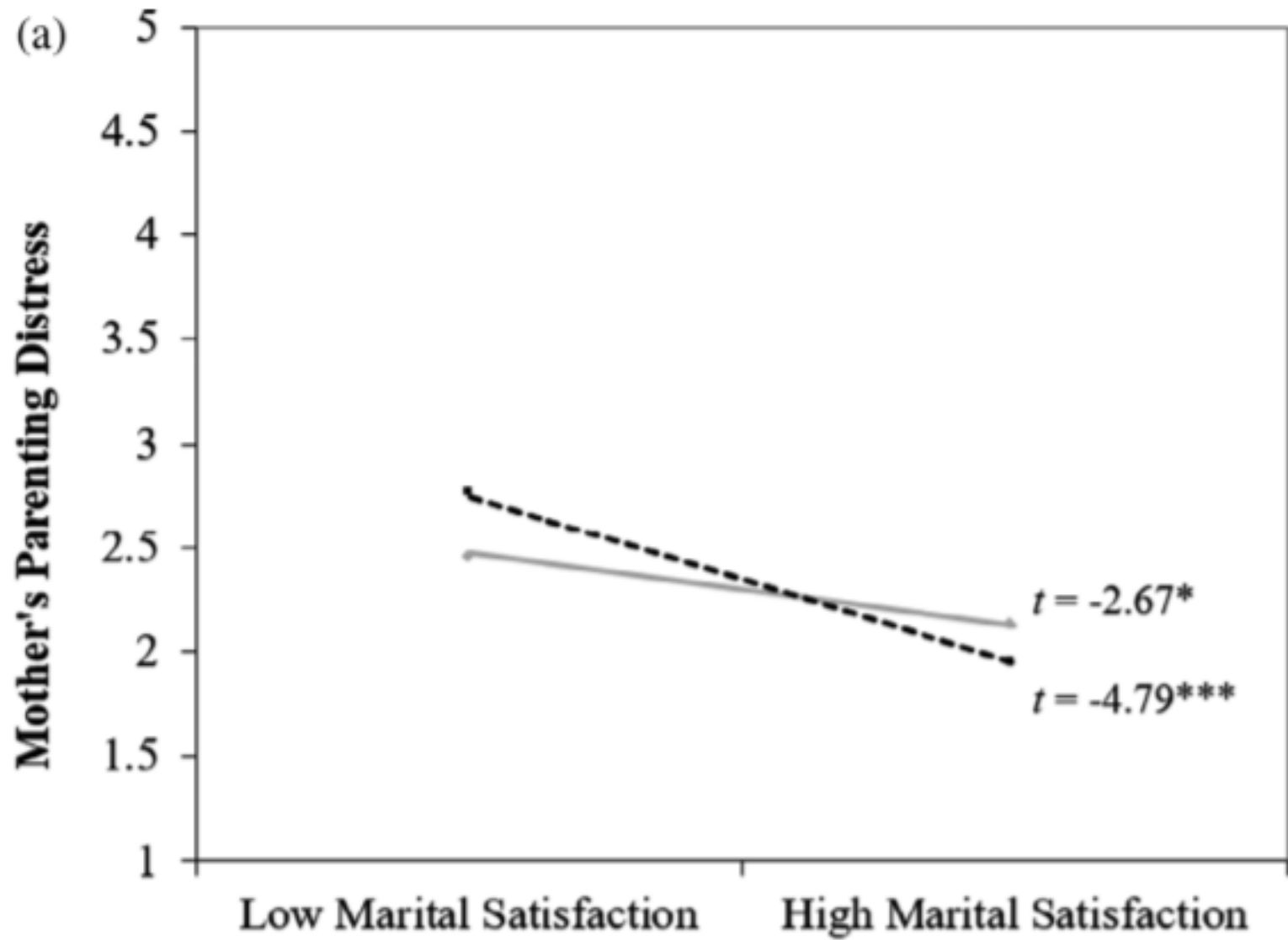


Do fathers experience more spillover than mothers in couples with young children?

Answer: Mothers experience more spillover than fathers!

Does parenting identity and cognitive reappraisal mitigate spillover?

Answer: Cognitive reappraisal does, but parenting identity intensifies it!



Conclusion and next question

- Compartmentalizing as a protective factor (“father vulnerability hypothesis”) is due to reframing emotion regulation strategies (cognitive reappraisal) not parenting identity.
- Surprises: mother vulnerability, parenting identity exacerbates spillover effect - why?
- Spillover is within- and between-individual.

Using diary data...

Do fathers experience more spillover than mothers in couples with young children within and between days?

Does cognitive reappraisal and coparenting support mitigate spillover within and between days?

Analytic Strategy

Dyadic multilevel models to examine within-day and between-day marital-to-parenting spillover.

DV = Parent-Child Emotional Climate

IV = Marital Emotional Climate

Moderating variables = coparenting support, cognitive reappraisal

Covariate = day



Within-day model results


Regression Coefficients	b	SE	p
<i>Father</i>			
Intercept	1.85	.07	<.001
Time (Day)	-0.01	.01	.387
Marital Emotional Climate	0.23	.04	<.001
Father's Cognitive Reappraisal	-0.05	.07	.412
Father's Coparenting Quality	-0.45	.12	<.001
Marital emotional climate * Father's Cognitive Reappraisal	-0.09	.04	.019
Marital emotional climate * Father's Coparenting Quality	-0.001	.08	.995
<i>Mother</i>			
Intercept	1.78	.06	<.001
Time (Day)	-0.01	.01	.231
Marital Emotional Climate	0.26	.04	<.001
Mother's Cognitive Reappraisal	-0.15	.06	.021
Mother's Coparenting Quality	-0.13	.09	.137
Marital emotional climate * Mother's Cognitive Reappraisal	0.02	.04	.694
Marital emotional climate * Mother's Coparenting Quality	0.06	.07	.416

Both mothers and fathers experienced 'spillover' in the emotional climate between their marriage and with their children.

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Mothers' emotional climate with her children improved when she used reframing emotion regulation strategies, but the same was not true for fathers. (Fathers' reframing didn't make a difference!)

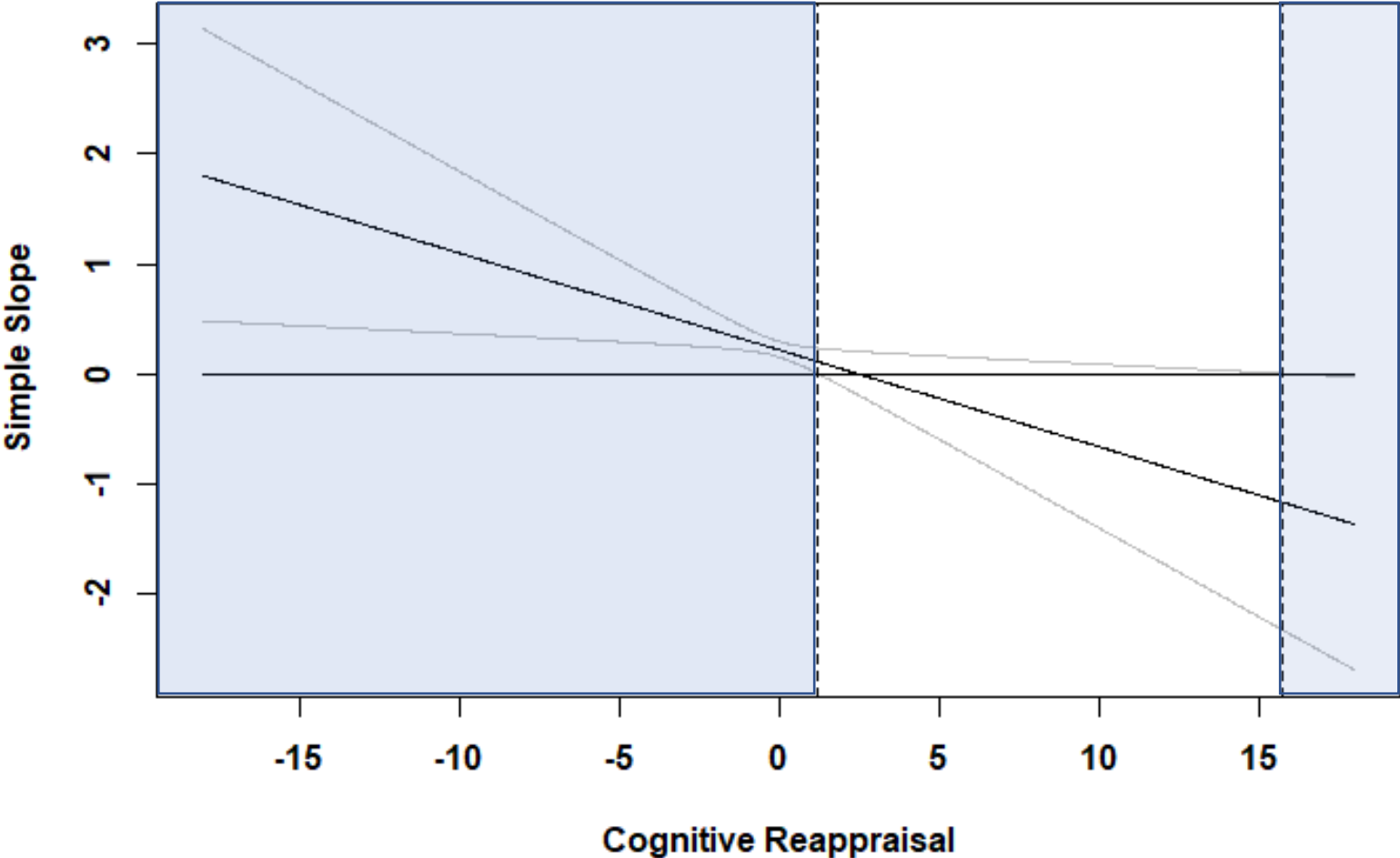
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Fathers reported better emotional climate with their children when their wives were supportive coparents.

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Regions of Significance Using the Johnson-Neyman Technique




Fathers' use of reframing strategies attenuated 'spillover' between his marital emotional climate and parent-child emotional climate.

Between-day model results.
Is there day-to-day effects?

Only for fathers!

Fathers had more positive parent-child emotional climate when the previous day's marital climate was poor.

Regression Coefficients	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
Intercept	1.84	.07	<.001
Time (Day)	-0.01	.01	.421
Marital Emotional Climate	-0.06	.04	.137
Coparenting Quality	-0.54	.13	<.001
Cognitive Reappraisal	-0.03	.07	.636
Marital emotional climate * Coparenting Quality	0.05	.08	.591
Marital emotional climate * Cognitive Reappraisal	-0.01	.04	.819



Coparenting support accounted for fathers' day-to-day compensation between marital emotional climate and parent-child emotional climate.

Key takeaway points from both papers

- Spousal dynamics are critical for parental well-being and parent-child relationships.
- Fathers are **not** more vulnerable to negative spousal relationships than mothers.

Potential Practice Impacts?

- Family systems approaches to parent education?



CHILD, YOUTH AND
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William J. Shaw
Center for Children
& Families



UNIVERSITY OF
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Thank you

pkuo2@unl.edu