Stressed-out parents, overprotected kids?

Examining sources of parents' worries about adolescents' future

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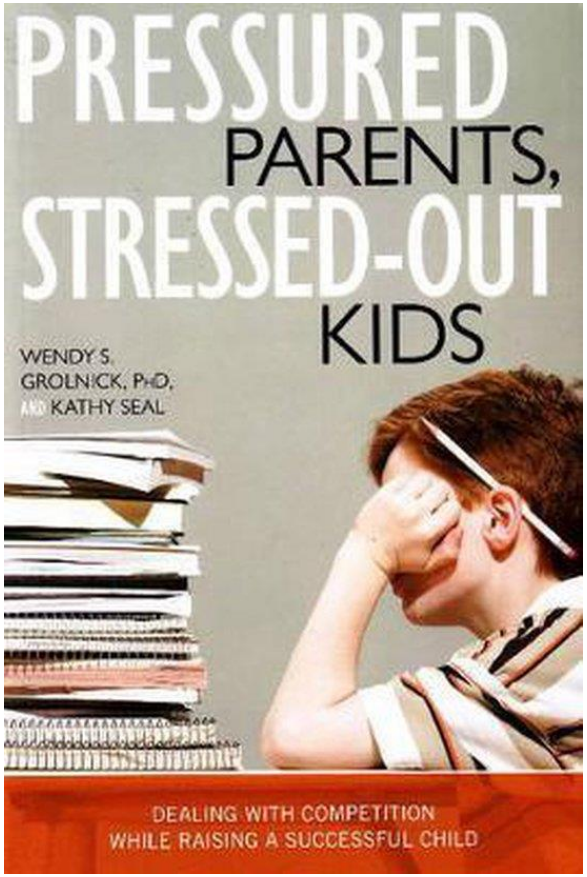
Introduction

Parenting nowadays...



(Grolnick & Seal, 2008)

Overprotective parenting

Conceptualization

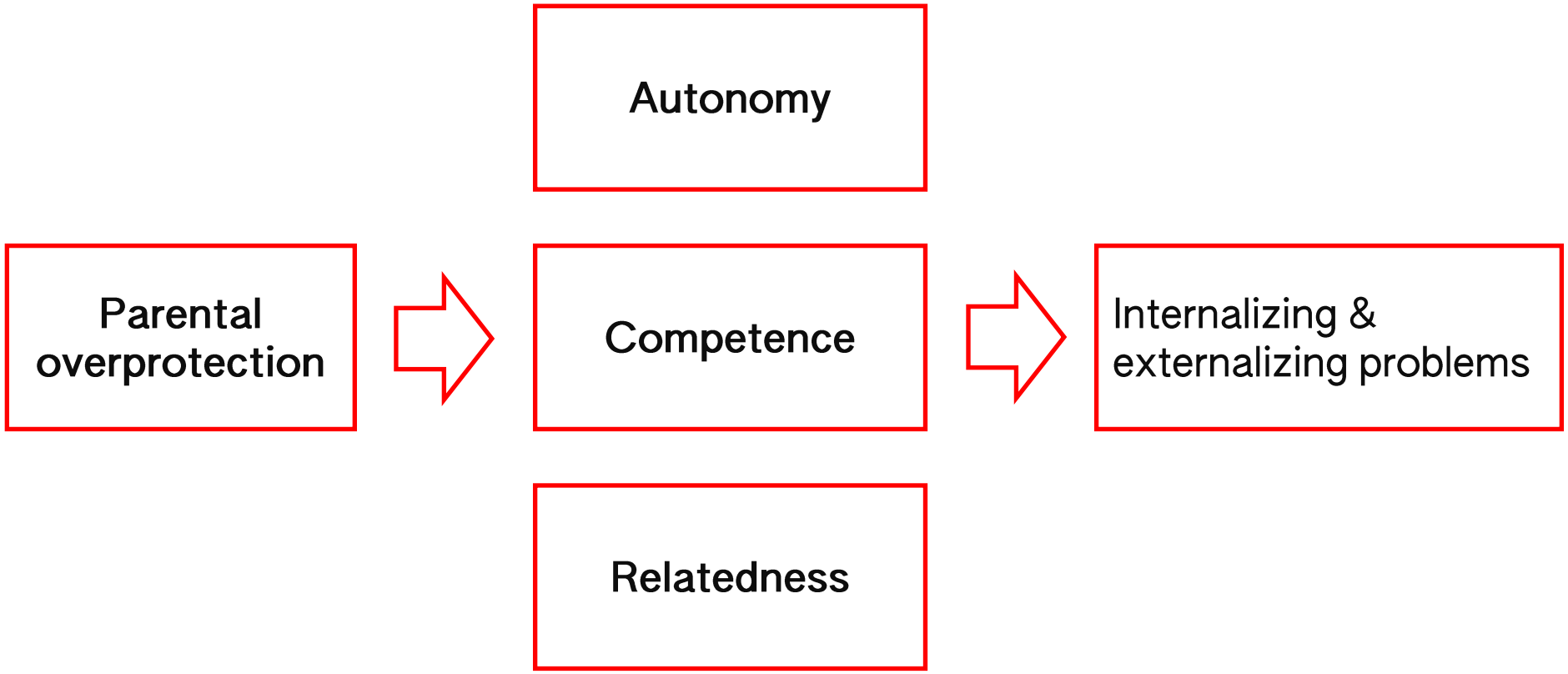
« The provision of a level of protection that is excessive, considering the child's developmental level » (Thomasgard et al., 1995)

In adolescence and young adulthood, e.g.,

- Premature problem-solving
- Anxious rearing
- Academic overinvolvement
- Infantilisation
- Intrusiveness

Consequences

Psychopathology and need frustration



Van Petegem, S., Antonietti, J. P., Nunes, C. E., Kins, E., & Soenens, B. (2020). The relationship between maternal overprotection, adolescent internalizing and externalizing problems, and psychological need frustration: A multi-informant study using response surface analysis. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *49*, 162-177.

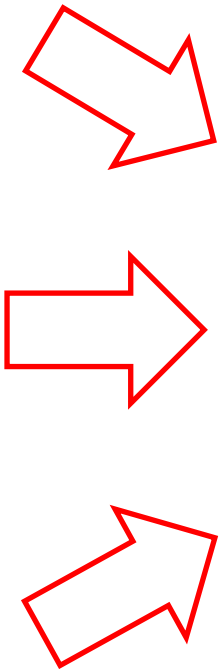
Overprotective parenting

Determinants

Parent factors
- Anxiety, perfectionism
- Attachment style

Child factors
- Inhibition
- Pediatric conditions

Contextual factors
Societal, economic and cultural factors?



Parental overprotection

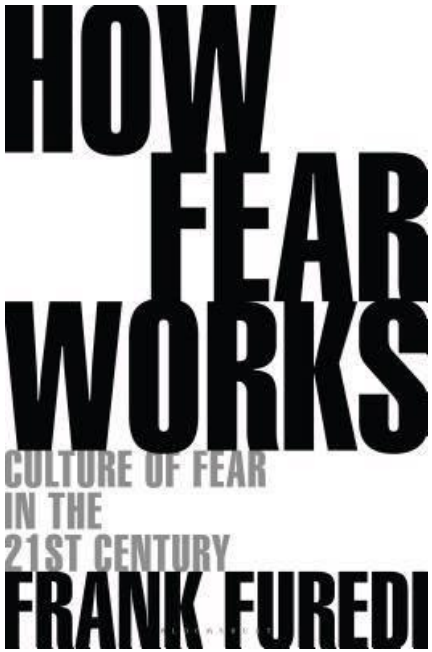
Venard, G., Pina Brito, V., Eeckhout, P., Zimmermann, G., & Van Petegem, S. (2021). Quand le parent veut trop bien faire: état de littérature sur le phénomène de surprotection parentale. *Psychologie Française.*

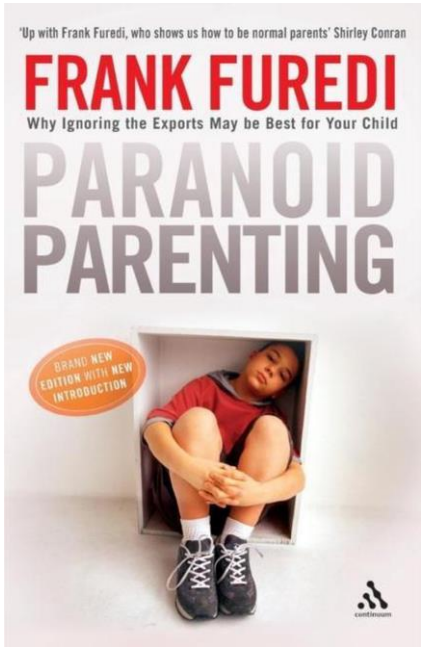
Determinants

Macrocontextual factors

World = threatening place?

- « culture of fear » (Furedi, 2018)





Parental worries

Survey

(HUMO, june 2022)

The Belgians are worried, concerned or afraid about...	
Rising prices and the own financial situation	82%
War, terror, and international security	81%
Climate change and extreme weather	73%
Health (incl. mental), pandemics and diseases	70%
Political situation in Belgium and Europe	67%
Refugees and migration	64%
Digitalisation	59%

Parental worries

Potential sources?

Economic insecurity (e.g., Doepke & Zilibotti, 2019)

- Perceived national job insecurity (Shoss et al., 2022)

Dangerous worldviews (e.g., Furedi, 2008)

- Beliefs about the social world as dangerous and threatening (Perry et al., 2013)

Climate anxiety (e.g., Crandon et al., 2022)

- Distress caused by climate change (Coffey et al., 2021)

Present study

Objectives

1) Context-related sources?
   - Perceived job insecurity
   - Dangerous worldviews
   - Climate-related anxiety

→ Predicts parental worries about children's future?

→... and overprotective parenting?

2) Controlling for individual-level factors
   - Trait anxiety
   - Financial scarcity

Method

Sample

N = 912 Belgian parents of adolescents (M_{age} = 17.4 years)

- 559 mothers (61%)
- Mean age = 47.9 years
- Subjective SES = 4.44 (on 1-10 scale)

- 353 fathers (39%)
- Mean age = 50.2 years
- Subjective SES = 4.06

Data gathered between 03/2022 and 01/2023

Method

Measures

Overprotective parenting (10 items; Chevrier et al., 2022)

- « I immediately see danger whenever my child wants to do something new » (α = . 81/.84)

Parents' worries (4 items; Gurland & Grolnick, 2005)

- « These are troubling times. Parents these days have reasons to be concerned » (α = . 74/.75)

Perceived job insecurity (4 items; Shoss et al., 2022)

- « In Belgium, a lot of people feel insecure about the future of their jobs » (α = . 74/.81)

Method

Measures

Dangerous worldviews (6 items; Perry et al. 2013)

- « There are many dangerous people in our society who will attack someone out of pure meanness, for no reason at all » (α = .82/.84)

Negative climate-related emotions (5 items; Ogunbode et al., 2021)

- « When I think about climate change, I feel anxious » (α = . 82/.84)

Parental trait anxiety (5 items; Zsido et al., 2020)

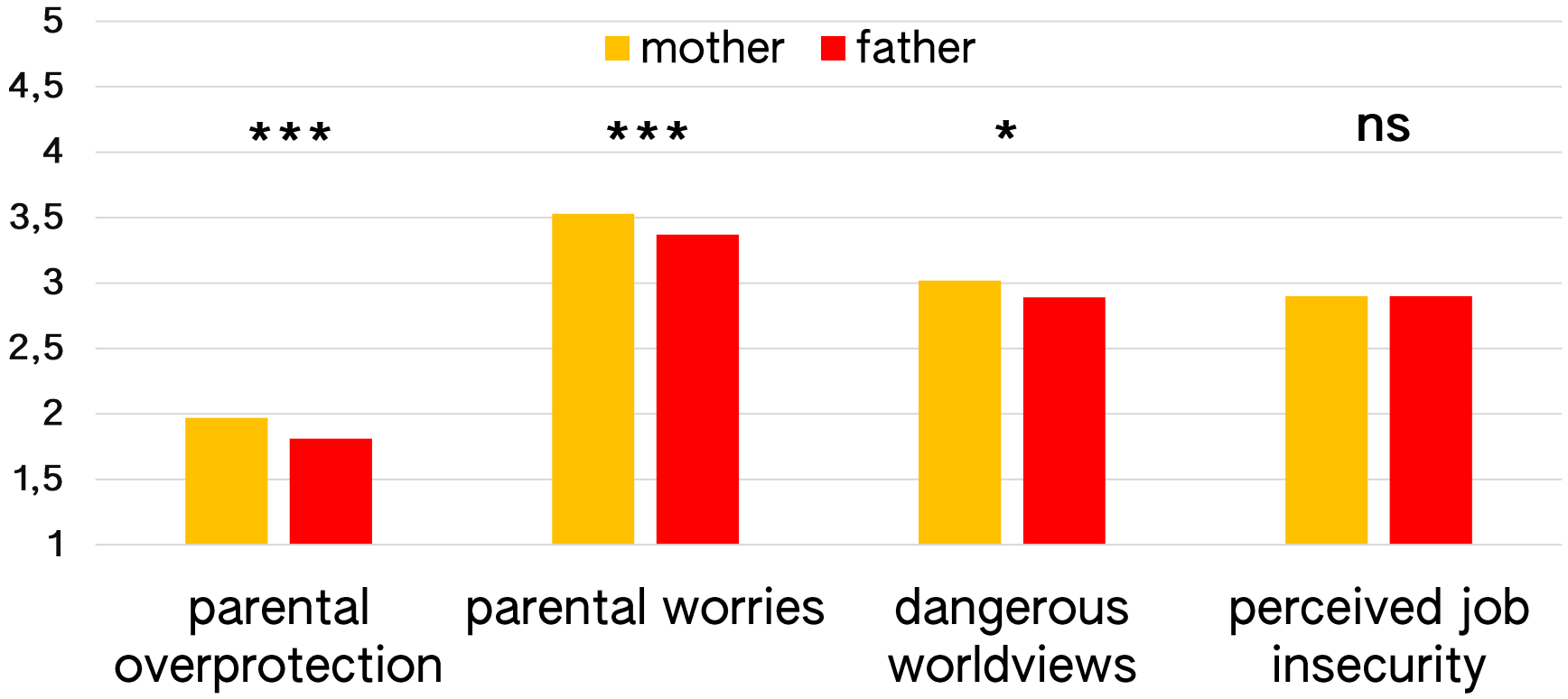
- « I worry too much about things that do not really matter » (α = . 85/.87)

Financial scarcity (12 items; Hilbert et al., 2021)

- « I often don't have the money to pay for the things I really need » (α = . 91/.91)

Results

Preliminary analyses



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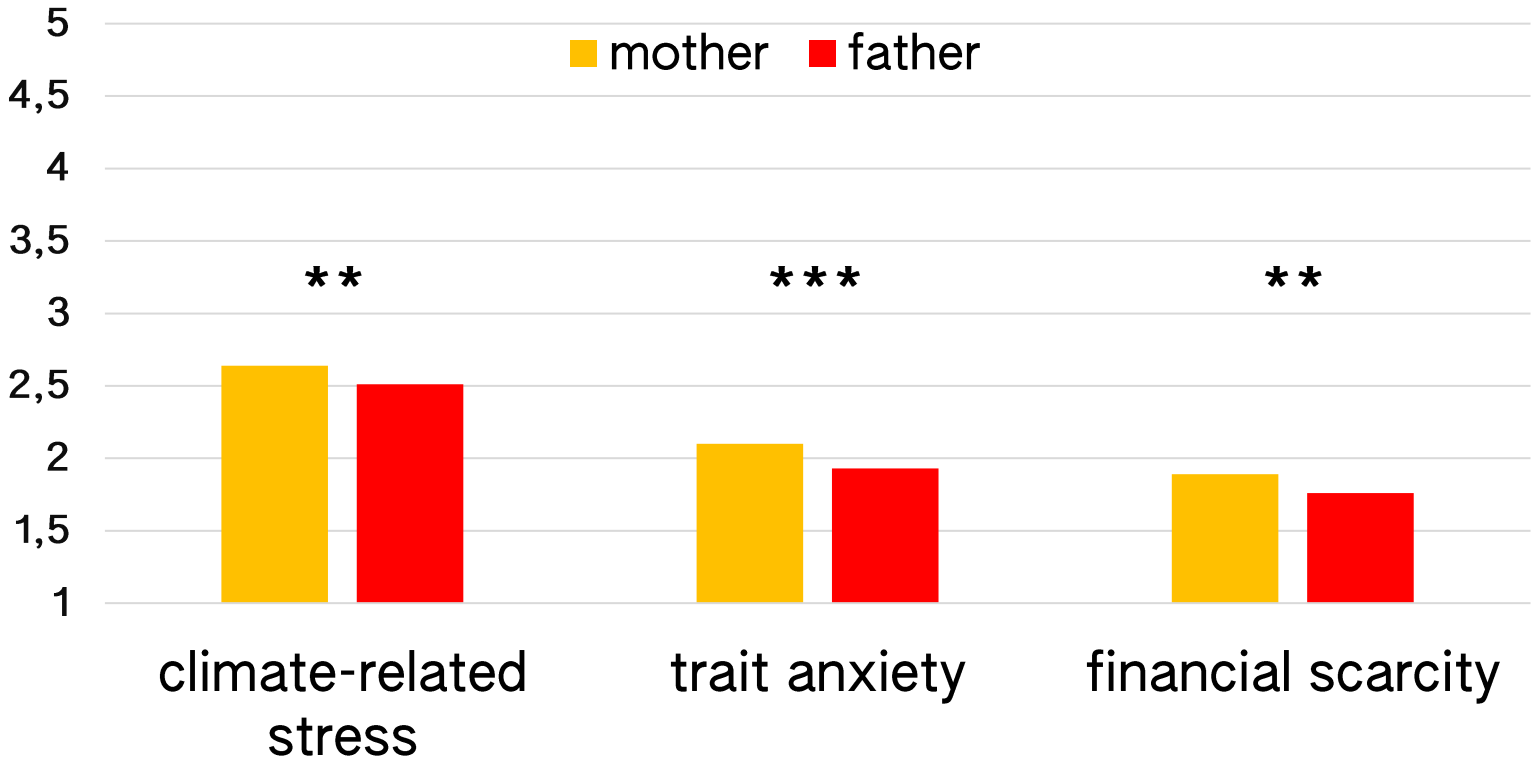
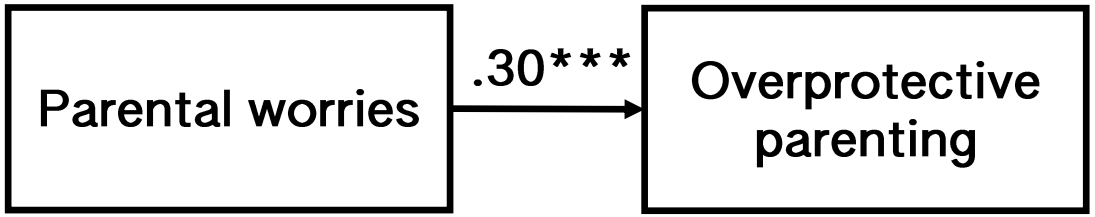


Results

Main analyses: mother model



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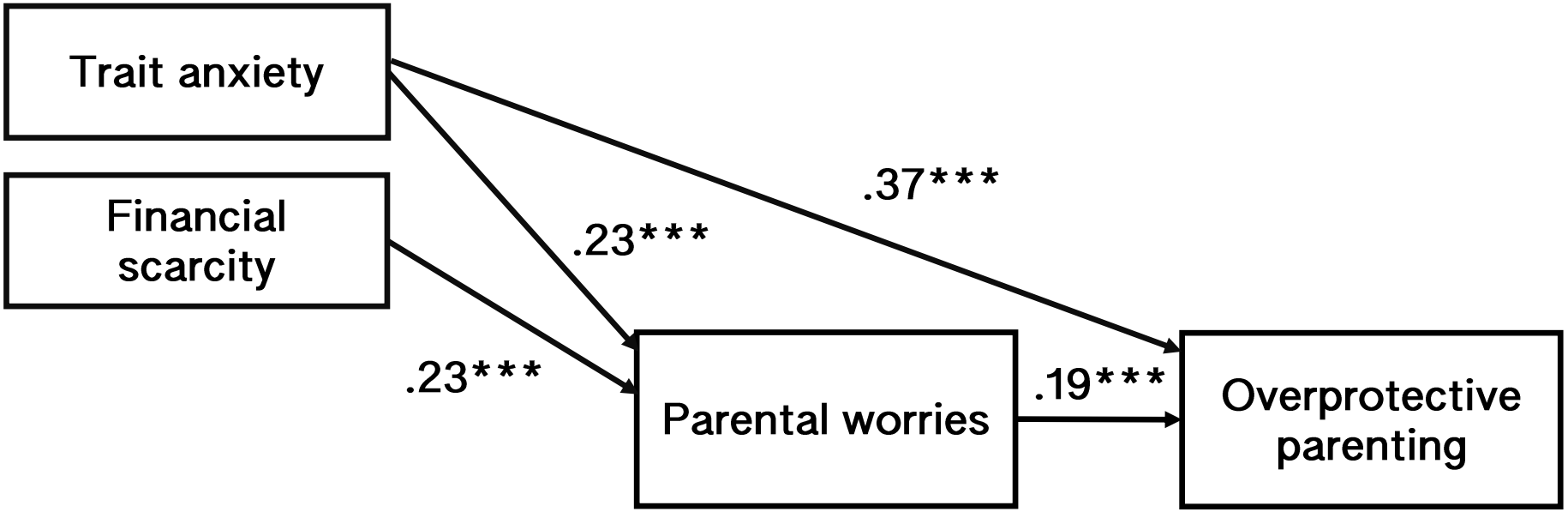

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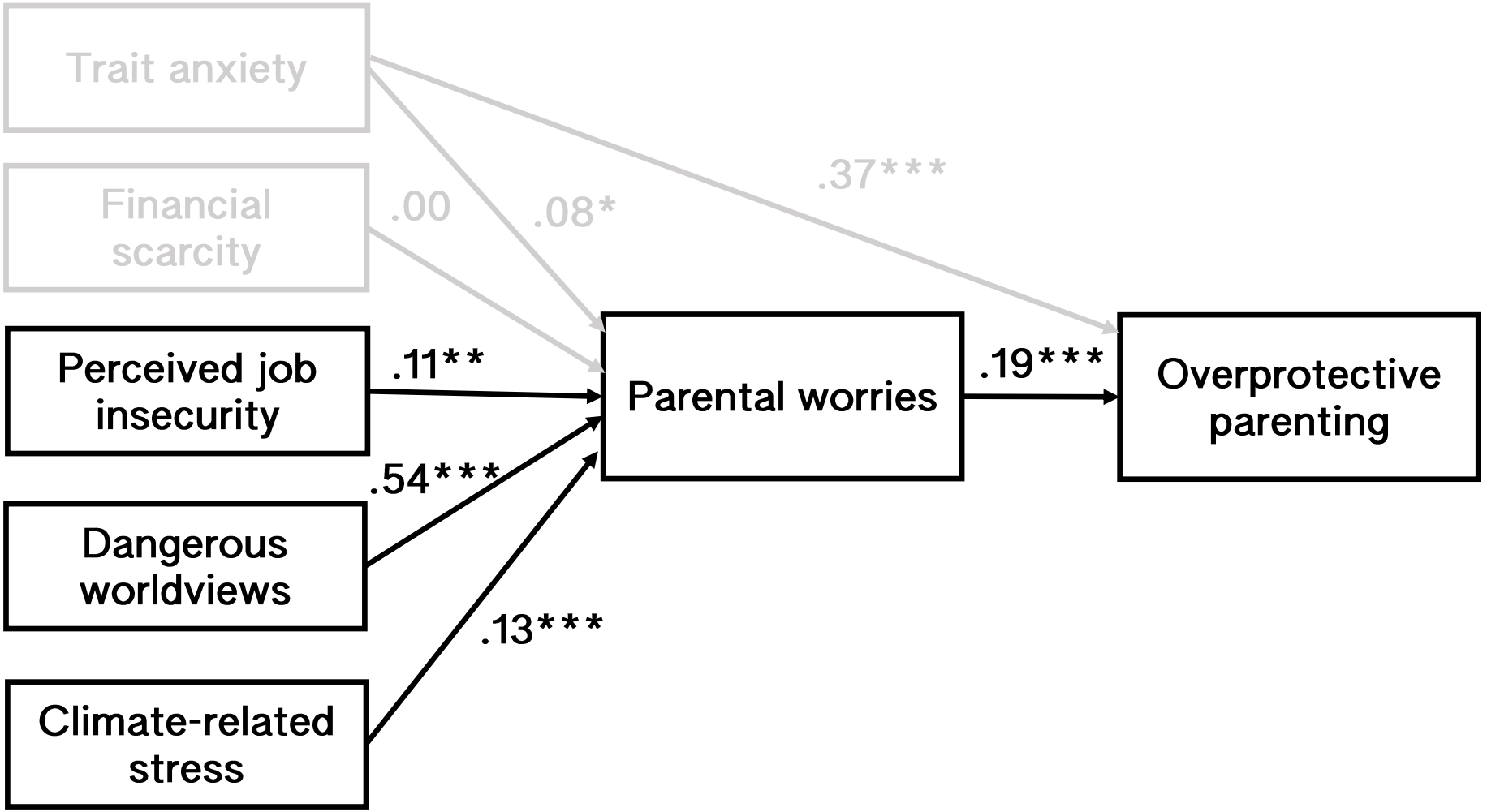
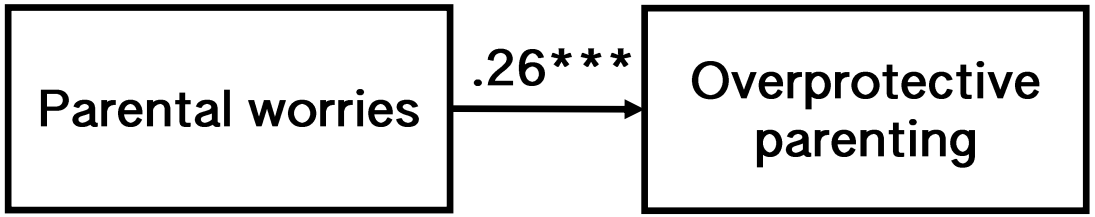


Results

Main analyses: father model



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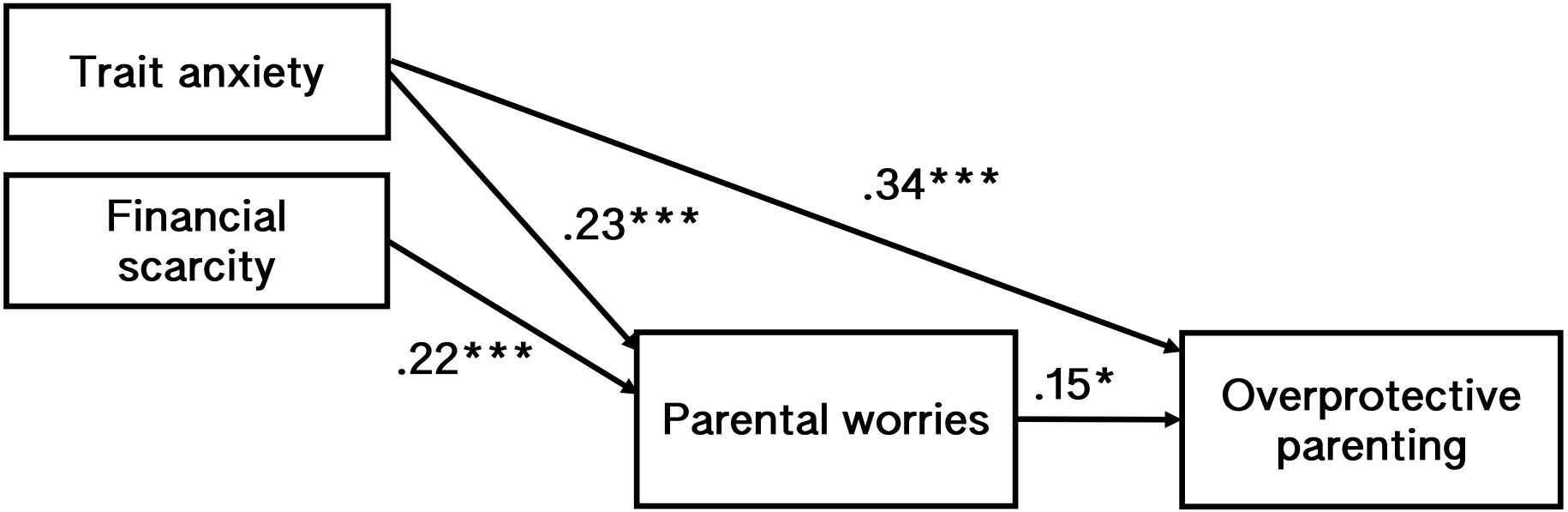

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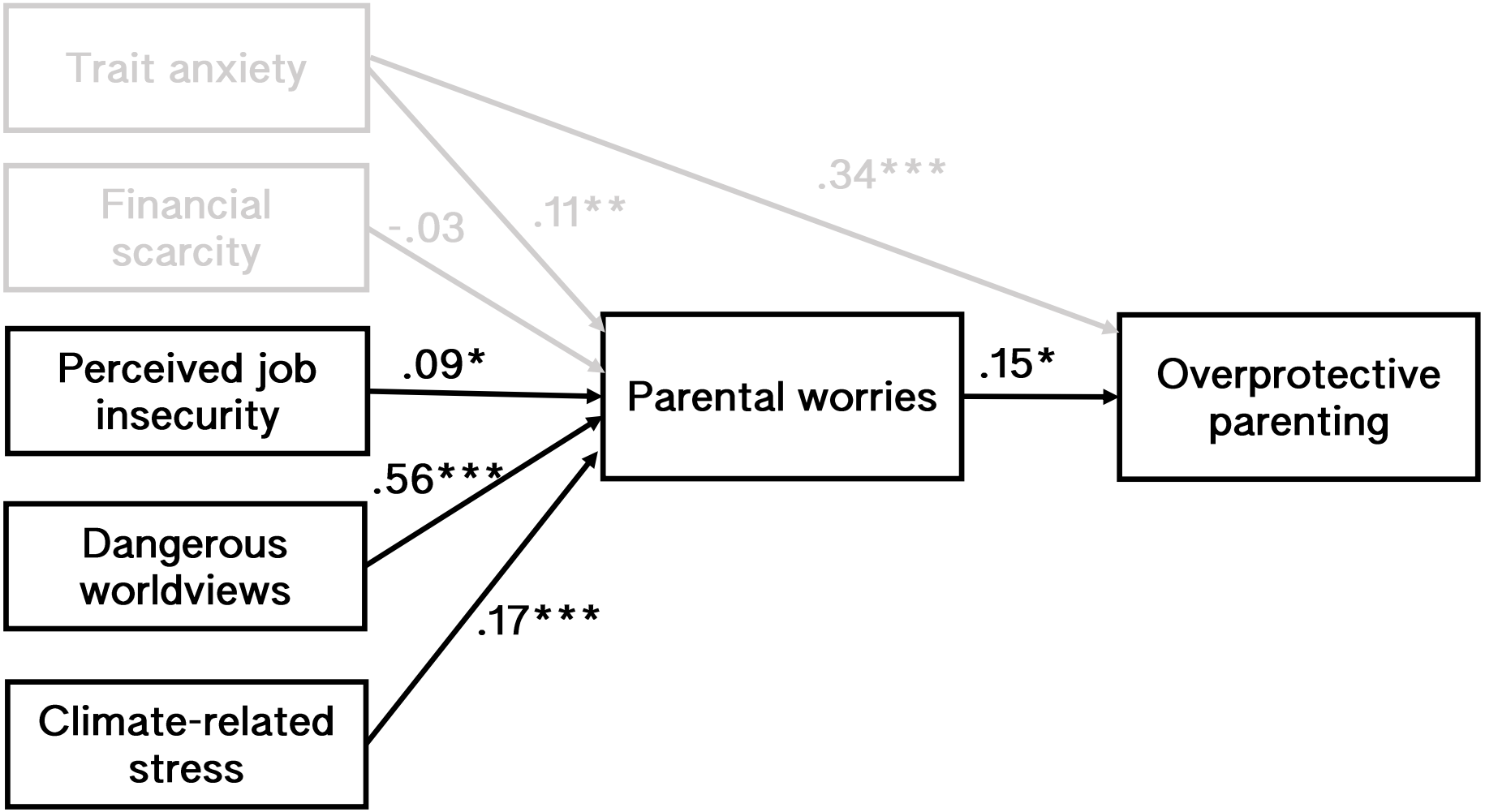

Discussion

Overview of findings

Context-related worries: partly explain overprotection

→ Similar for mothers and fathers

Above and beyond individual-level factors

Contextualize phenomenon of overprotection

→ Evolutionary? Smoke detector principle (Nesse, 2019)

- « better safe than sorry »

→ Refrain from parent-blaming (Bristow, 2014)

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