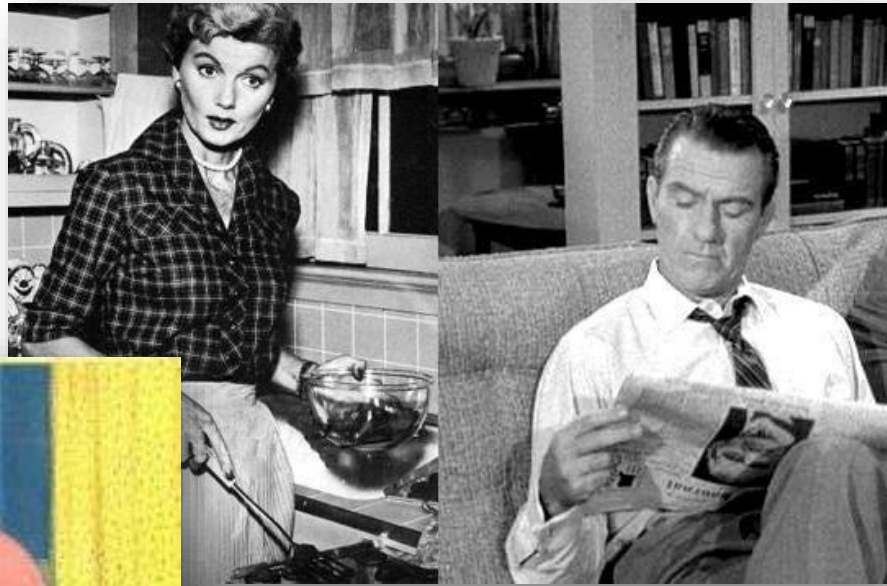


# A Mother's Intuition?

## The Link Between Mothers' and Fathers' Gender Essentialist Beliefs and Their Parental Involvement

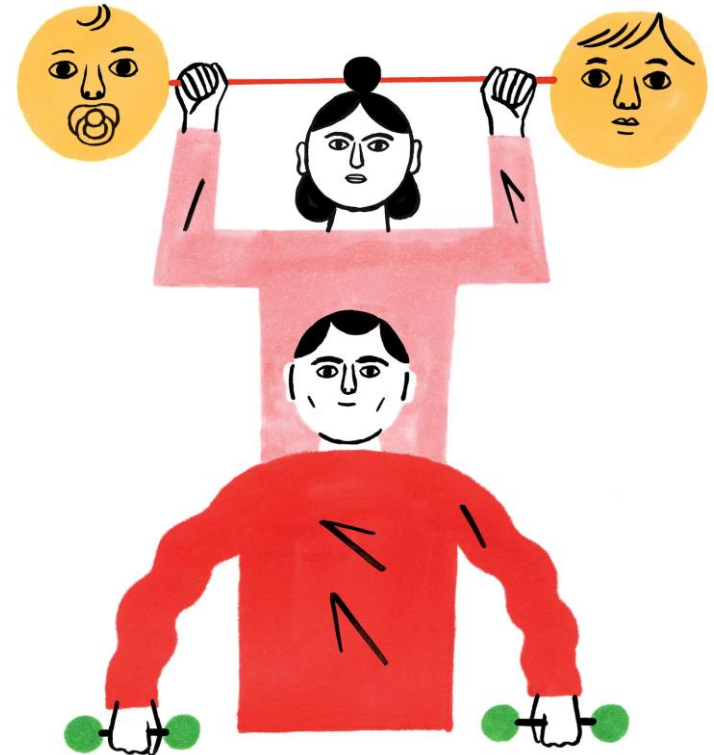
Elli-Anastasia (Elliana) Lampryanidou<sup>1</sup>, Cindy Eira Nunes<sup>1</sup>, Ruth Gaunt<sup>2</sup>, Gaëlle Venard<sup>3</sup>, & Stijn Van Petegem<sup>1,4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Université Libre de Bruxelles, <sup>2</sup>University of Lincoln, <sup>3</sup>University of Lausanne, <sup>4</sup>FNS-FNRS Research Associate



# The Role of Gender Essentialism

- Men and women **biologically distinct**, and thus **better suited for different societal roles**, including **parental roles** (Hays, 1996)
- A lens to examine **culturally embedded gender inequalities** between mothers and fathers (Bem, 1993)
- Link with **gender inequalities in the family** and the division of childcare tasks (e.g., Pinho & Gaunt, 2021)



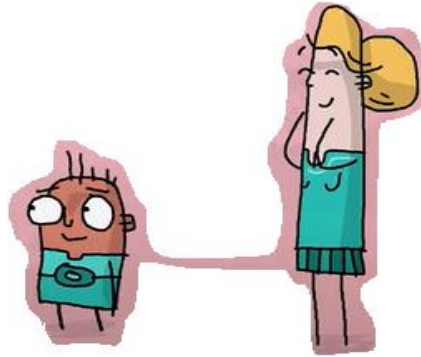
# The Many Faces of Parents' Involvement

- What about parental **involvement** in terms of **quality**?
- **Involvement** that is **more attuned / less attuned** to the children's and adolescents' developmental and psychological needs

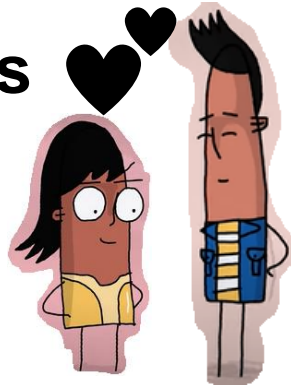


# The Many Faces of Parents' Involvement

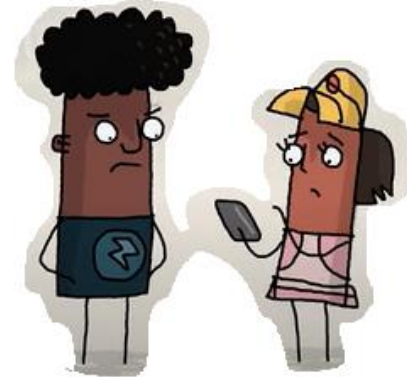
○ **Autonomy Support**



○ **Responsiveness**



○ **Controlling Parenting**



○ **Overprotection**



# Research Goals

How do mothers' and fathers' **gender essentialist beliefs** translate into their parenting?

→ Focus on **more attuned (positive)** and **less attuned (negative)** involvement

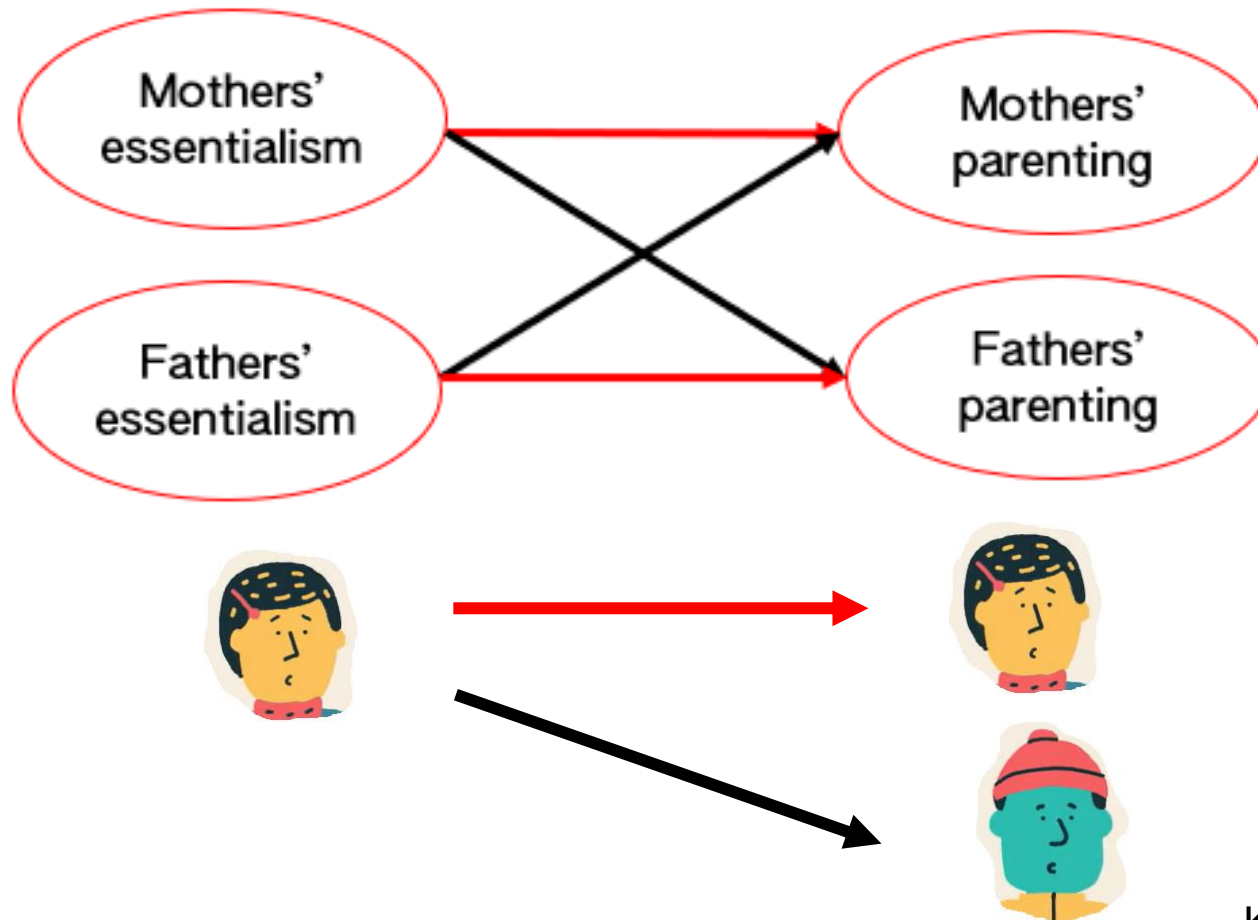
→ Look into transactional **associations between parents**



# Actor-partner Interdependence Model

**Actor effect** = relationship within one parent

Partner effect = relationship from one parent to the other parent



# Participants

1,260 parents of adolescents (Mage = 16.9, 54% girls).



N = 774

Mage = 48.9

= 45%

= 88%



= 54%

(20% single/separated/divorced)



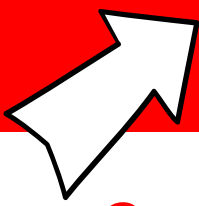
N = 486

Mage = 50.6

= 48%

= 92%





# Measures

- **Gender Essentialism** (Liss et al., 2013; 6 items)

*Although fathers are important, ultimately children need mothers more.*

- **Positive involvement**

**Autonomy support** (Cheung et al., 2016; 7 items)

*I allow my child to make choices about his/her studying as much as possible.*

**Responsiveness** (Schaefer, 1965; 7 items)

*I give my child a lot of care and attention.*

- **Negative involvement**

**Controlling parenting** (Cheung et al., 2016; 9 items)

*Even if my child is not having trouble with his/her homework, I tell him/her how to do it.*

**Overprotection** (Chevrier et al., 2023; 10 items)

*I immediately see danger whenever my child wants to do something new.*



# Preliminary Analyses

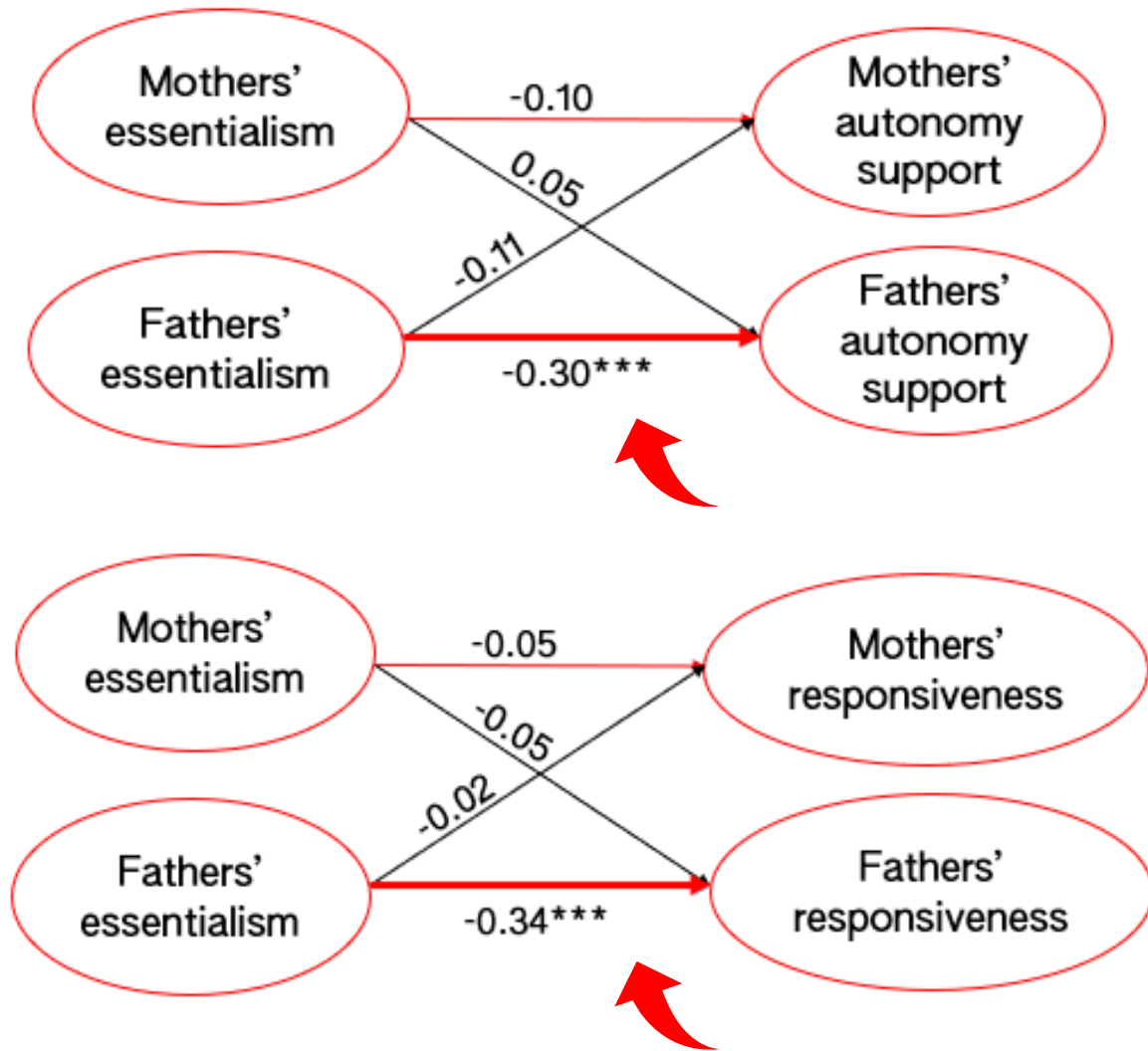
→ All gender differences are **significant!**

	Mothers Mean (SD)	Fathers Mean (SD)
Essentialism	1.98 (0.8)	1.86 (0.7)
Autonomy support	4.40 (0.5)	4.32 (0.5)
Responsiveness	4.18 (0.5)	3.94(0.6)
Overprotection	1.80 (0.5)	1.68(0.5)
Parental control	1.89 (0.7)	2.02 (0.7)

→ No differences between parents participating alone or with their partner!

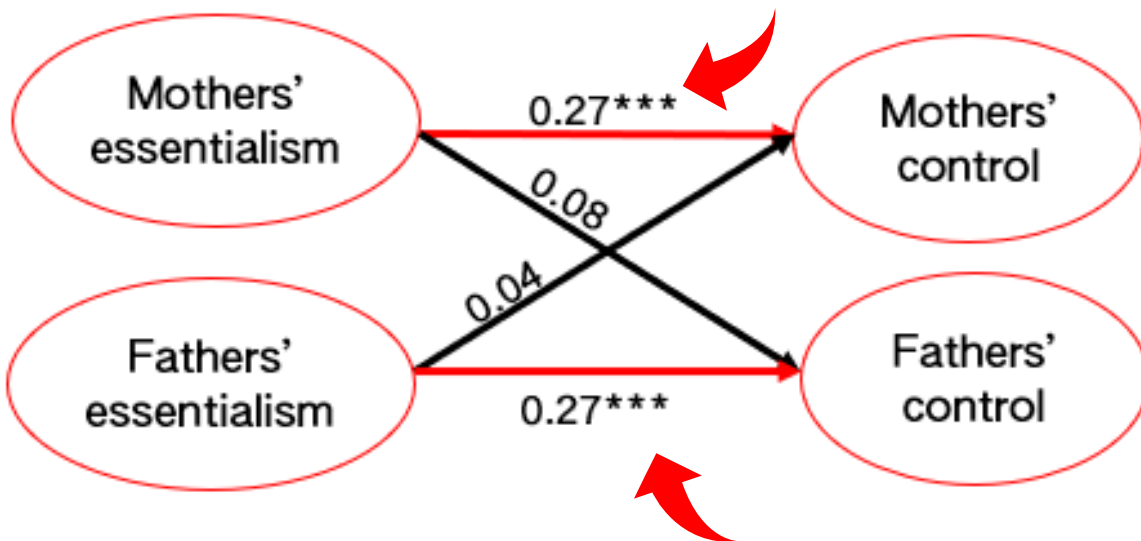
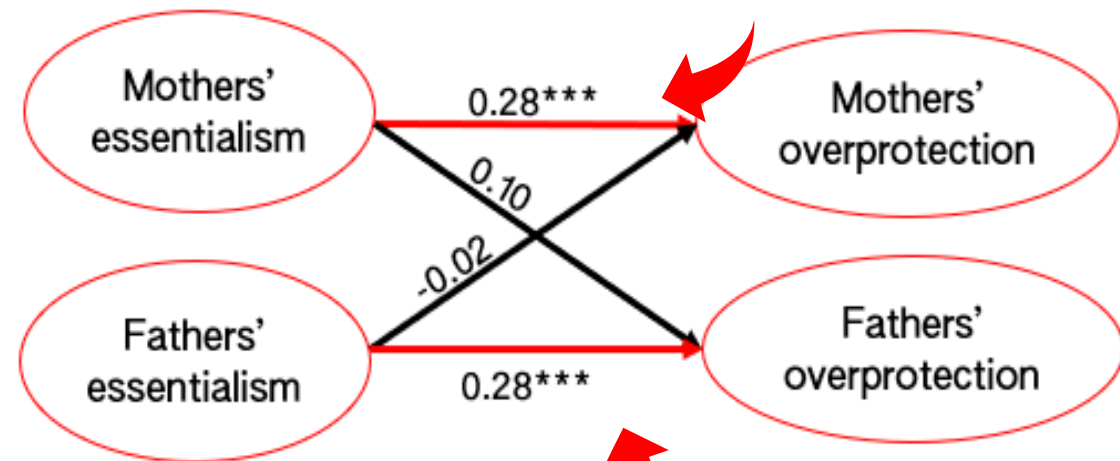
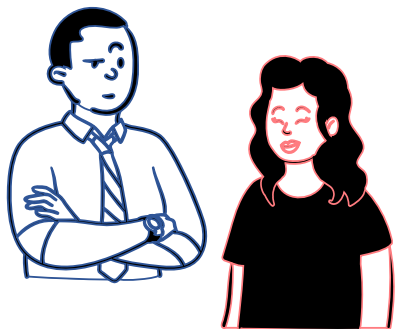
# Positive Involvement

**Fathers** endorsing gender essentialist beliefs reported **less** autonomy support and responsiveness (actor effects)



# Negative Involvement

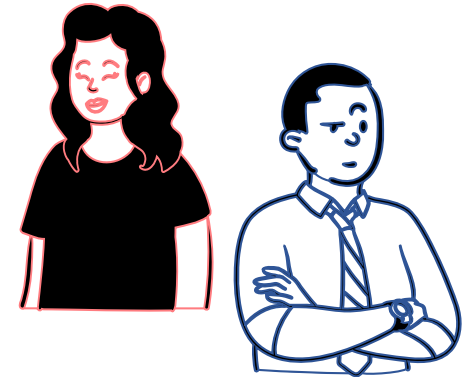
Both **mothers** and **fathers** endorsing **gender essentialist beliefs** reported **more overprotection** and **controlling parenting** (actor effects)

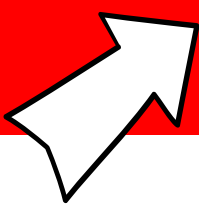


# Discussion

Gender **essentialist** beliefs = **less attuned** involvement

→ **Deleterious** for adolescents' wellbeing





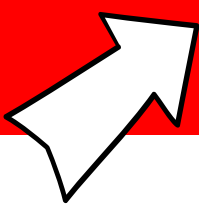
# Discussion - Mothers

**More** essentialism → **more** overprotection and controlling parenting

**Intensive mothering ideology**  
(Hays, 1996) ?

- The “**natural**” caregiver?
- Enormous pressure for mothers  
(Forbes et al., 2020)  
→ *overly* involved in their adolescents' lives





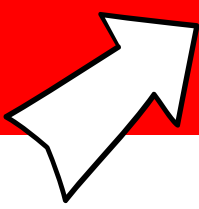
# Discussion - Fathers

**More** essentialism → **more** overprotection and controlling parenting // **less** responsiveness and autonomy support

## Essentialism and fathers?

- **“Protector”** of the family and rule setter (Silverstein & Auerbach, 1999).
- Traditional **masculine norms** emphasizing discipline and lack of emotional expression (Petts et al., 2018).



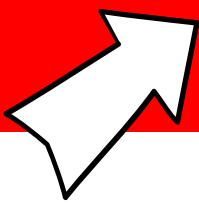


# Discussion

No partner effects 🙄

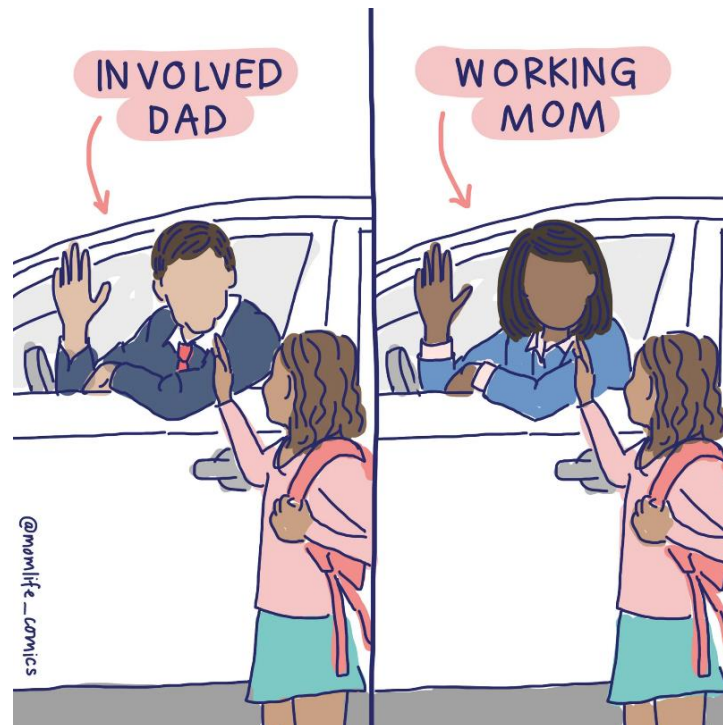
- Parenting in adolescence → Parents more likely to influence each other at the transition to parenthood
- Statistical reason? Conservative approach, partner effects may be underestimated in the present study





# Take Home Message

Deconstructing gender essentialist stereotypes can not only foster a more egalitarian mindset but can also be especially **meaningful** in the context of **parenting!**



# Thank you for your attention!



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