

Better safe than sorry?

Identifying determinants and consequences of overprotective parenting

Stijn Van Petegem
Université libre de Bruxelles



Introduction

Better safe than sorry?



Introduction

Better safe than sorry?



Overprotective parenting

Conceptualization

History: pediatric and psychiatric literature (e.g., Parker, 1983)

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

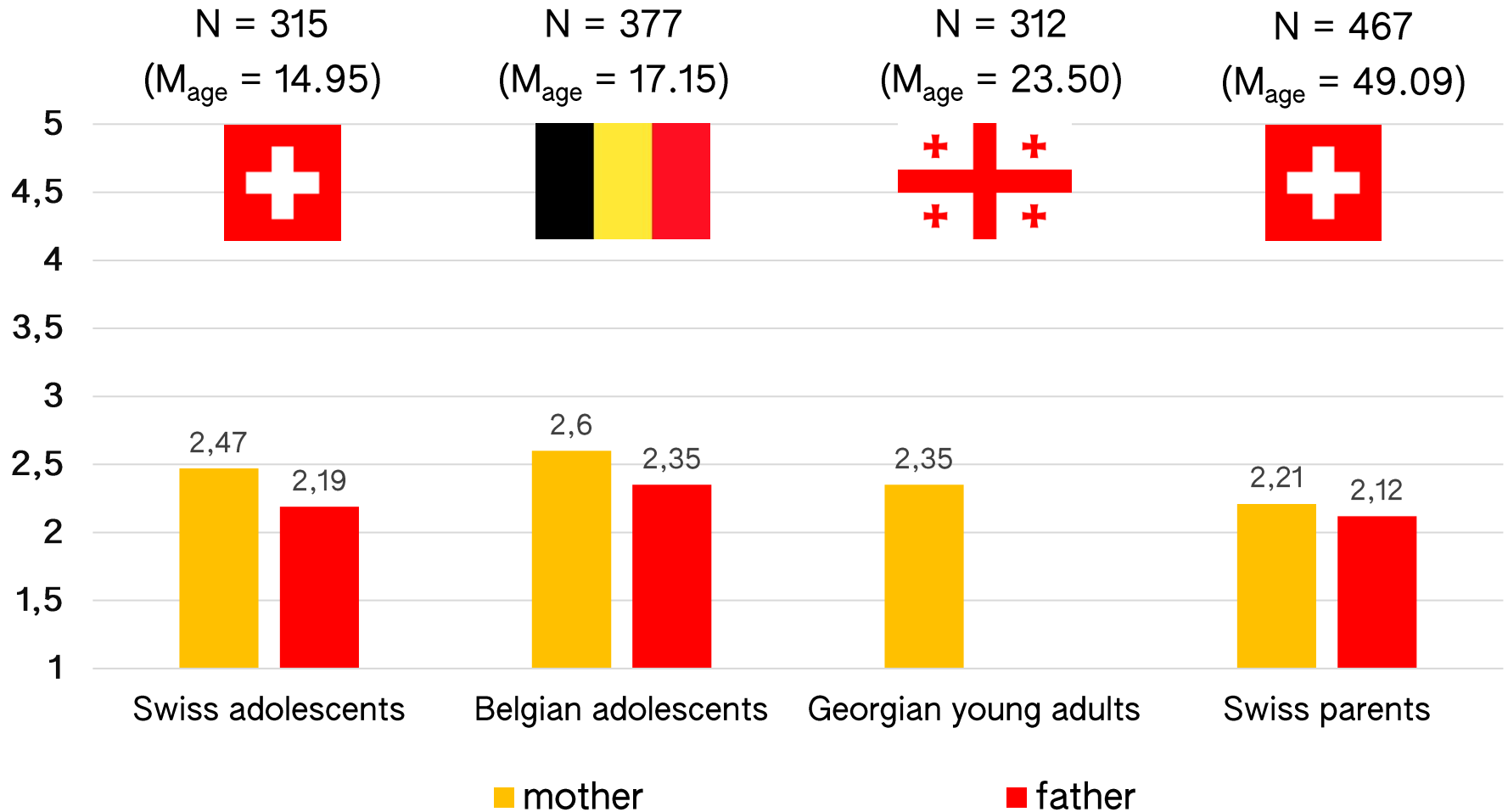
In adolescence and young adulthood, e.g.,

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

E.g., « My mother/father often intervenes in things that I could actually solve myself » (Chevrier et al., 2023)

Overprotective parenting

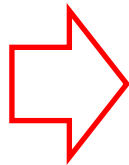
Some prevalence data



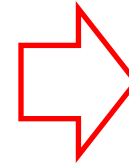
Consequences

Psychopathology and need frustration

Parental
overprotection



Competence



Internalizing &
externalizing problems

Autonomy

Relatedness

Consequences

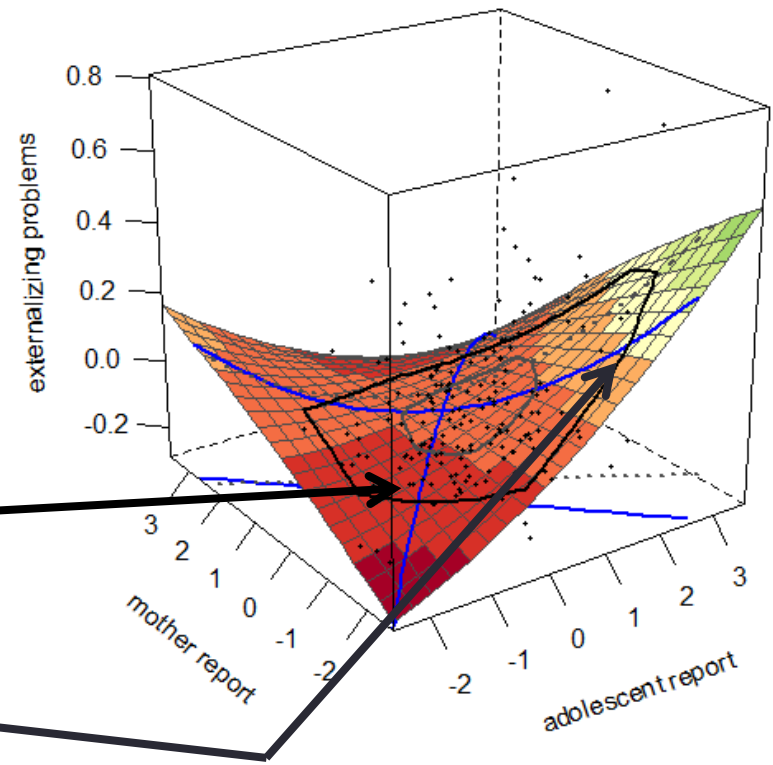
Externalizing symptoms

Polynomial regression coefficients

b_1 – AR	.04**
b_2 – MR	-.01
b_3 – AR ²	.01
b_4 – AR*MR	-.03
b_5 – MR ²	.00

Response surface parameters

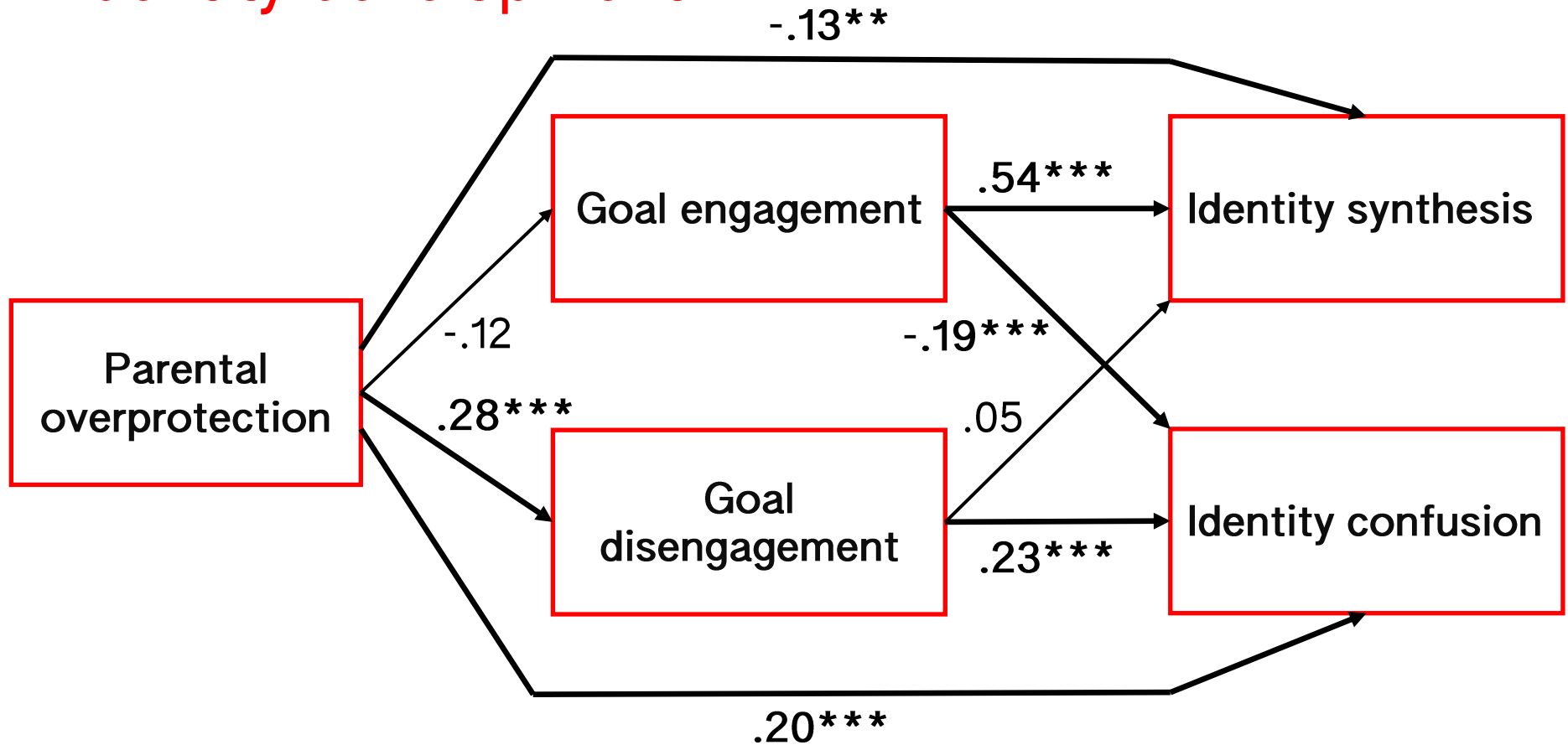
a_1 – slope LOC	.03*
a_2 – curvature LOC	-.02
a_3 – slope LOIC	.05*
a_4 – curvature LOIC	.04



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.

Consequences

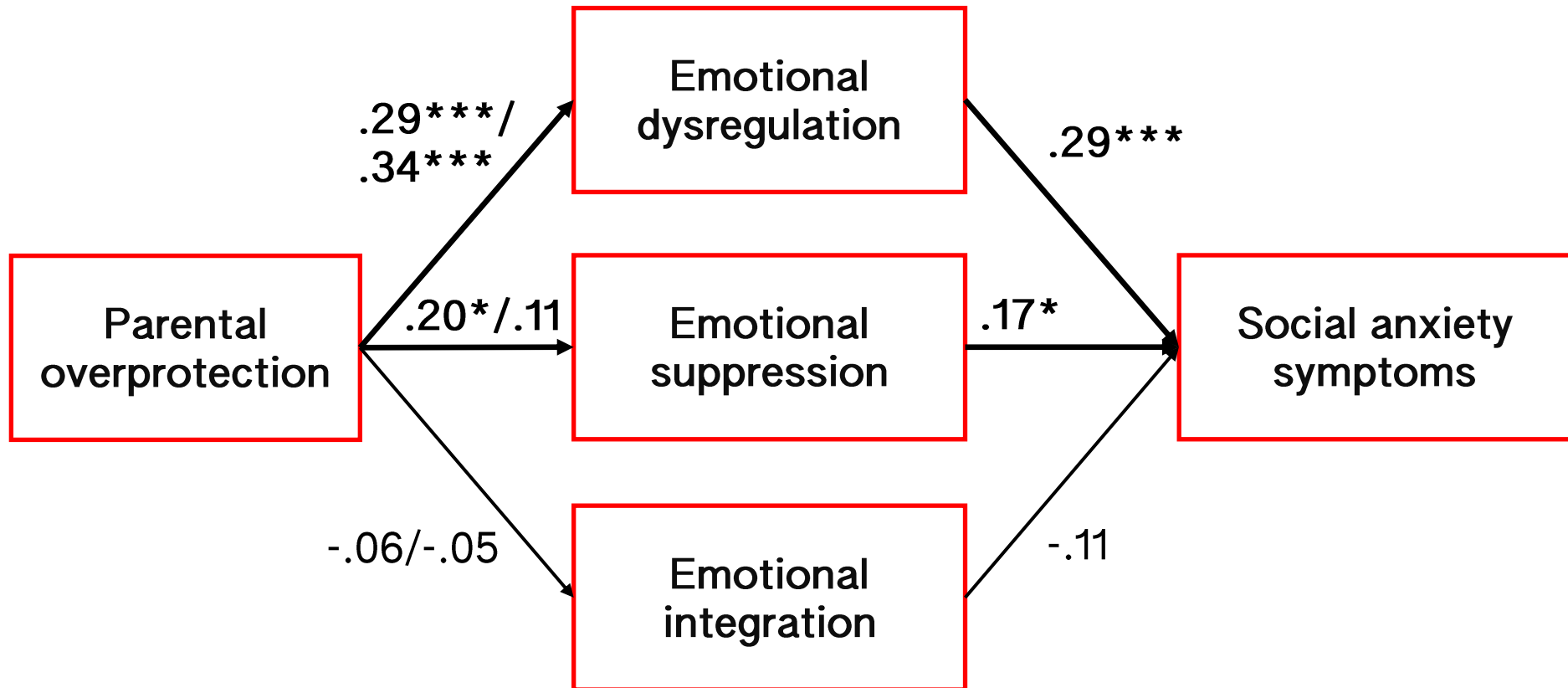
Identity development



Skhirtladze, N. & Van Petegem, S. (2024). Perceived overprotective parenting and identity synthesis and confusion in Georgian emerging adults: The intervening role of goal engagement and disengagement. *Journal of Adult Development*.

Consequences

Emotion regulation



Overprotective parenting

Determinants

Parent factors

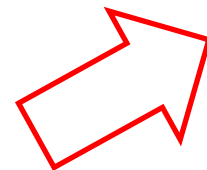
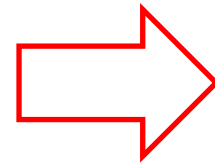
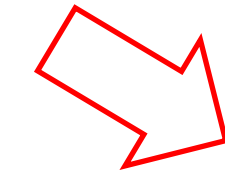
- Anxiety, perfectionism
- Attachment style

Child factors

- Inhibition
- Pediatric conditions

Contextual factors

Societal, economic and cultural factors?



Parental
overprotection

SAFE-SORRY

Macrocontextual factors

Intensive mothering ideology
(Hays, 1996)

E.g., self-sacrifice

- Pressure, guilt, shame
- Gendered representations

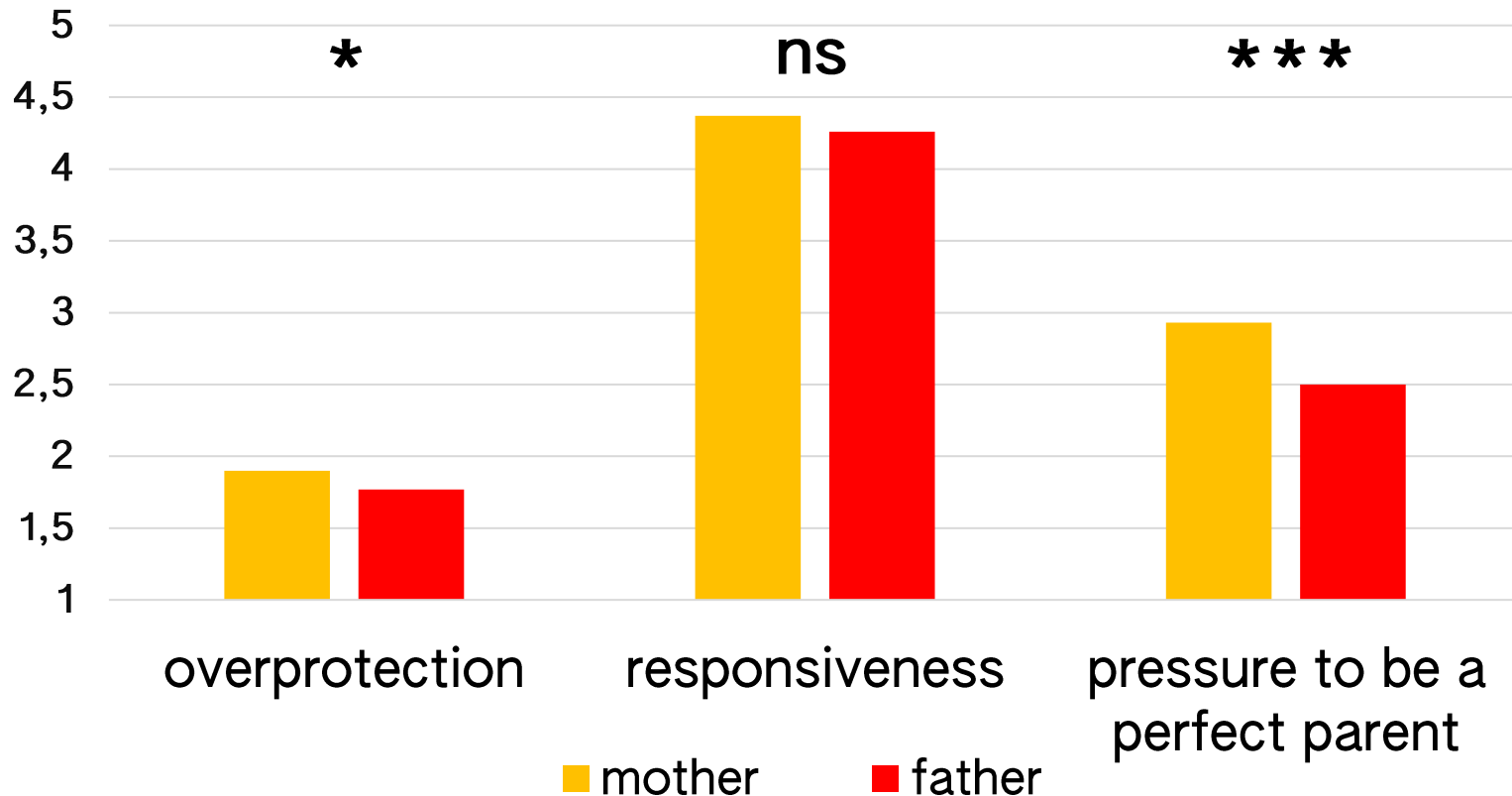


Societal expectations



Parents under pressure

N = 146 mother-father dyads

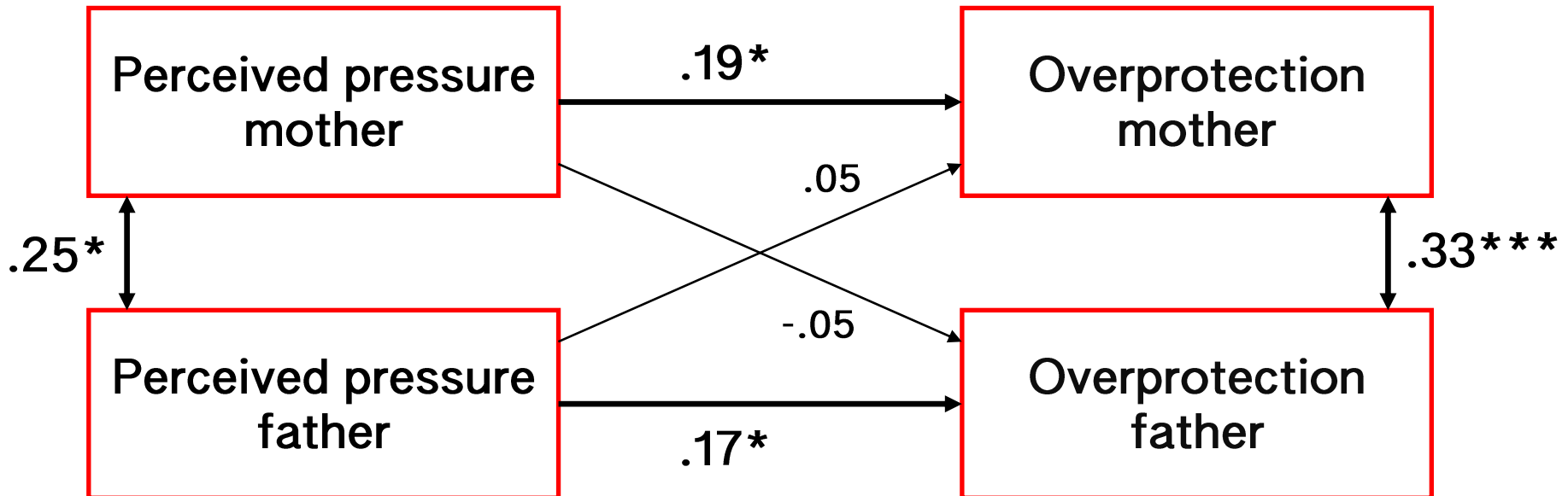


Societal expectations

Parents under pressure



N = 146 mother-father dyads

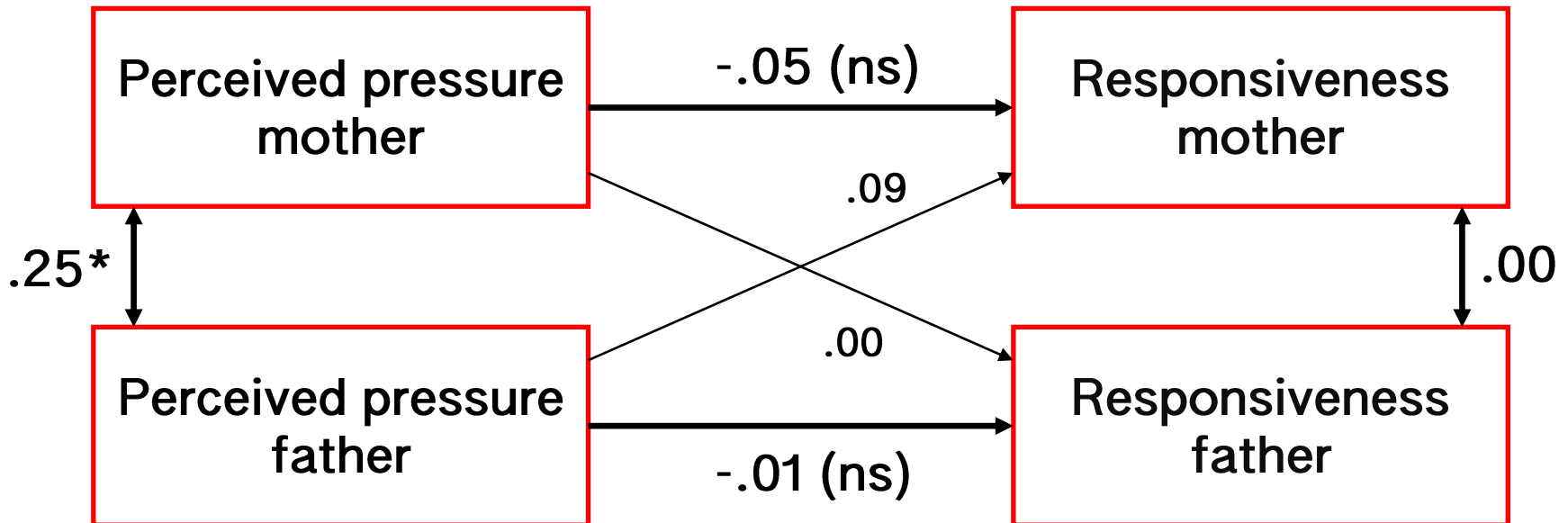


Societal expectations

Parents under pressure



N = 146 mother-father dyads



Societal expectations



N = 1002 parents

Typological approach

- Perceived pressure to be perfect
- Intensive parenting beliefs
- Essentialist beliefs

→ Positive and negative involvement

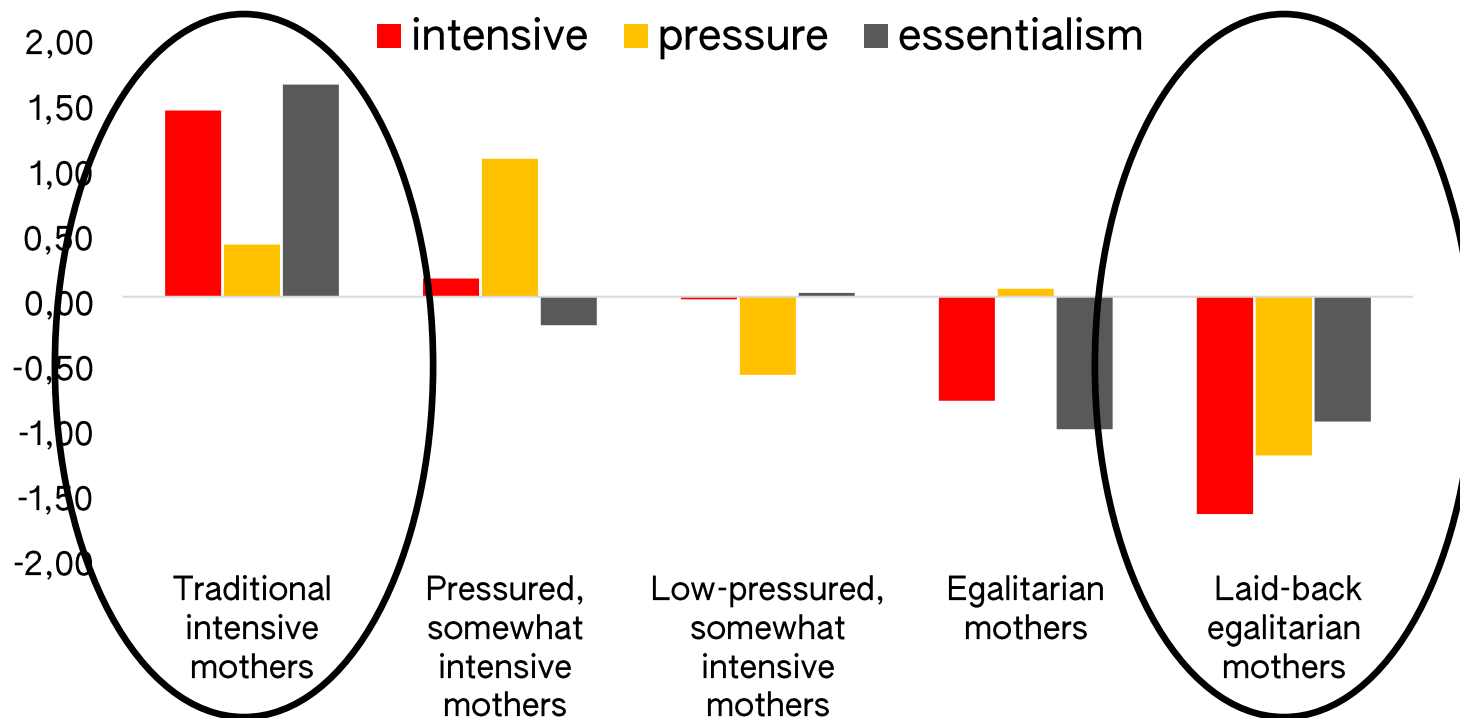
→ In general and in school context

Societal expectations



N = 1002 parents

Typological approach

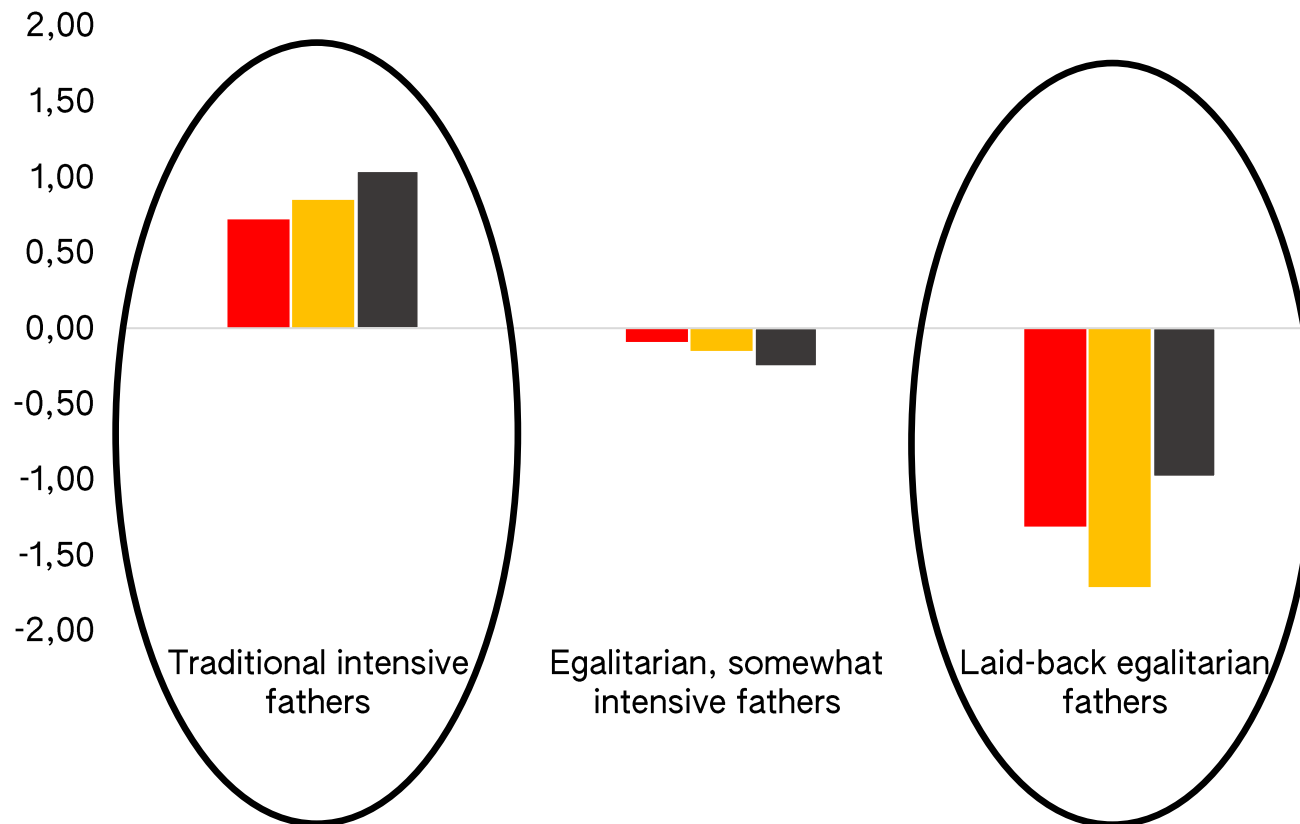


Societal expectations



N = 1002 parents

Typological approach

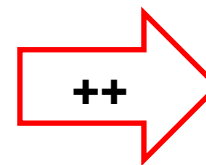
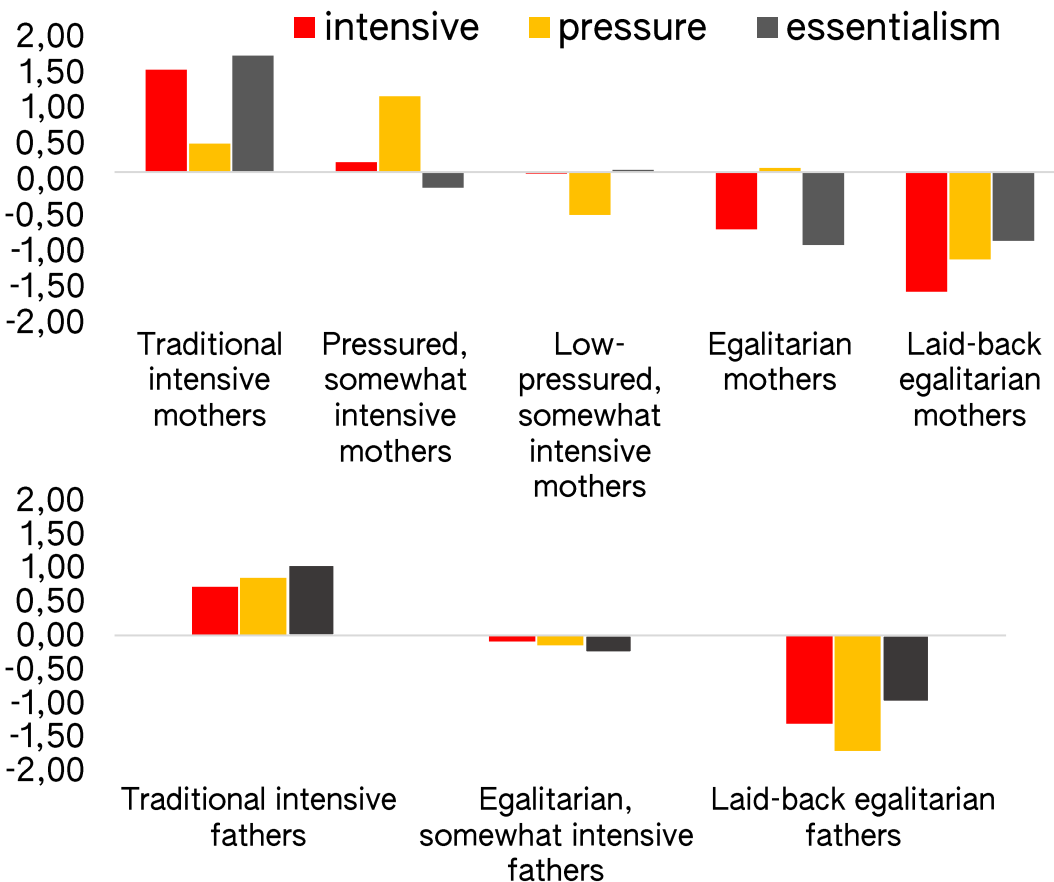


Societal expectations

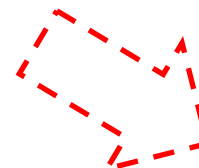


N = 1002 parents

Typological approach



Overprotection & controlling involvement



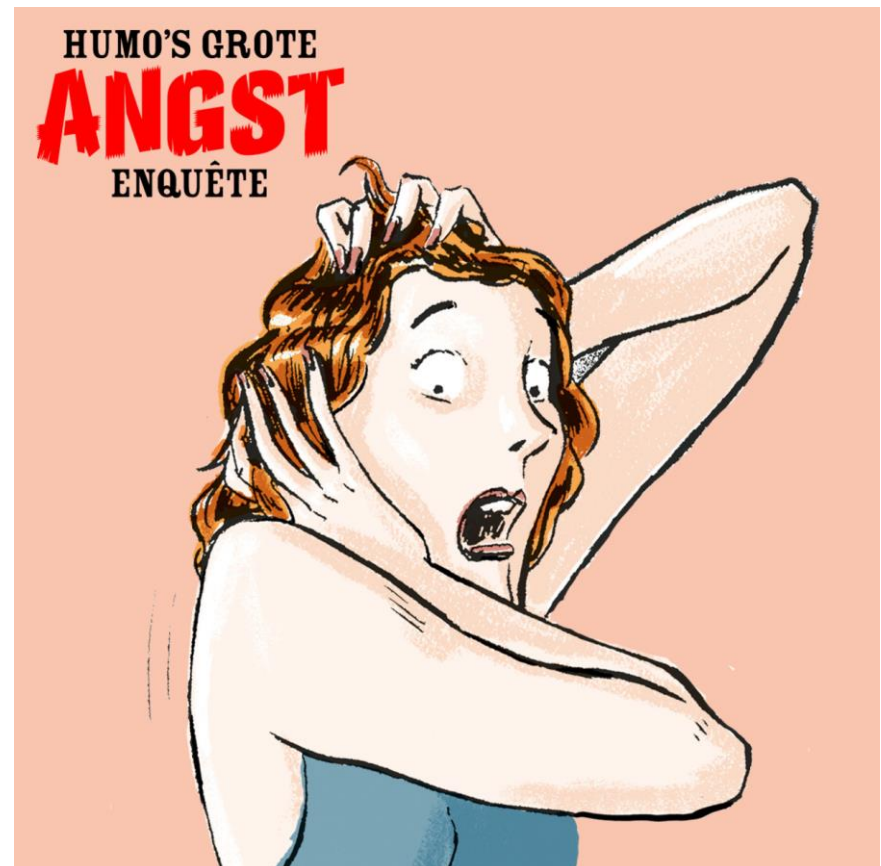
Responsiveness, autonomy support

Macrocontextual factors

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%



Perceived threat

Emotional tone

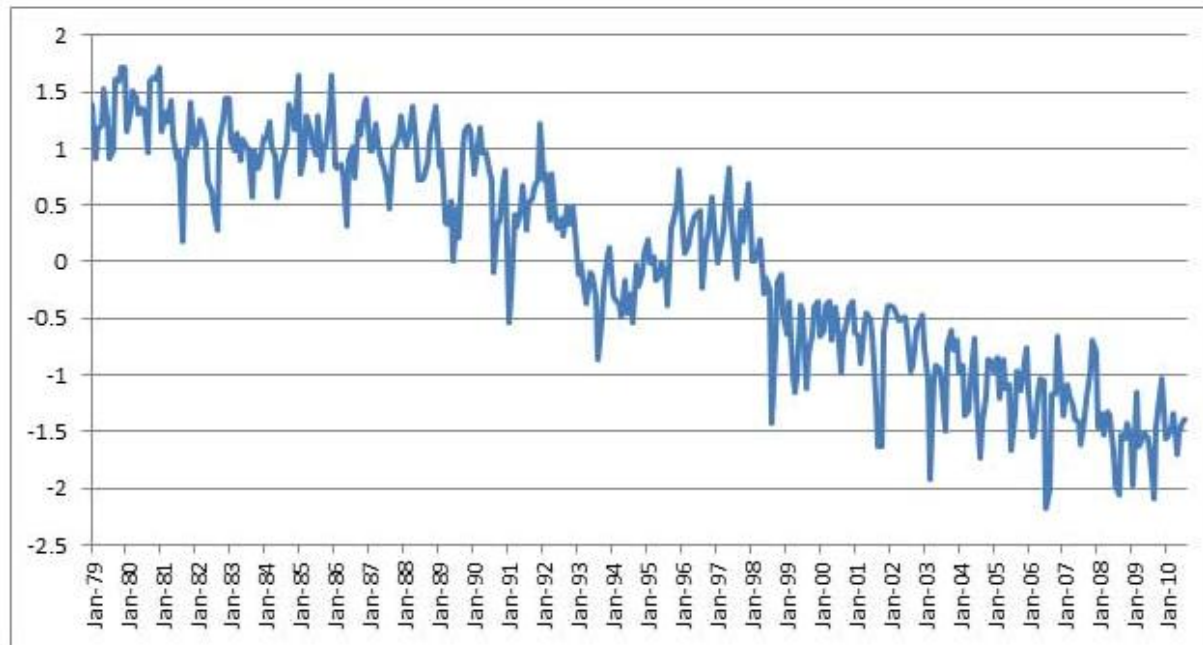
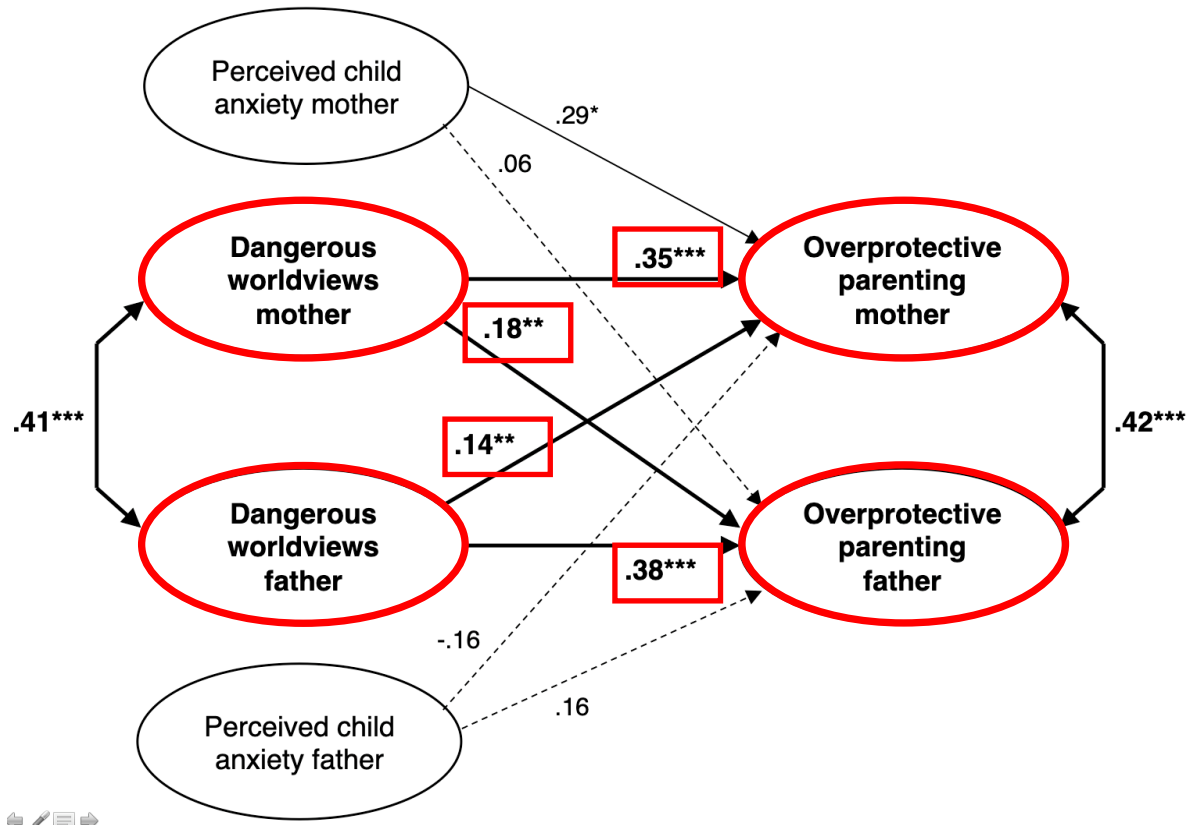


Figure 11: Average monthly tone of *Summary of World Broadcasts* news content, January 1979–July 2010 (Y-axis are standard deviations from mean).

(Leetaru, 2011; Pinker, 2018)

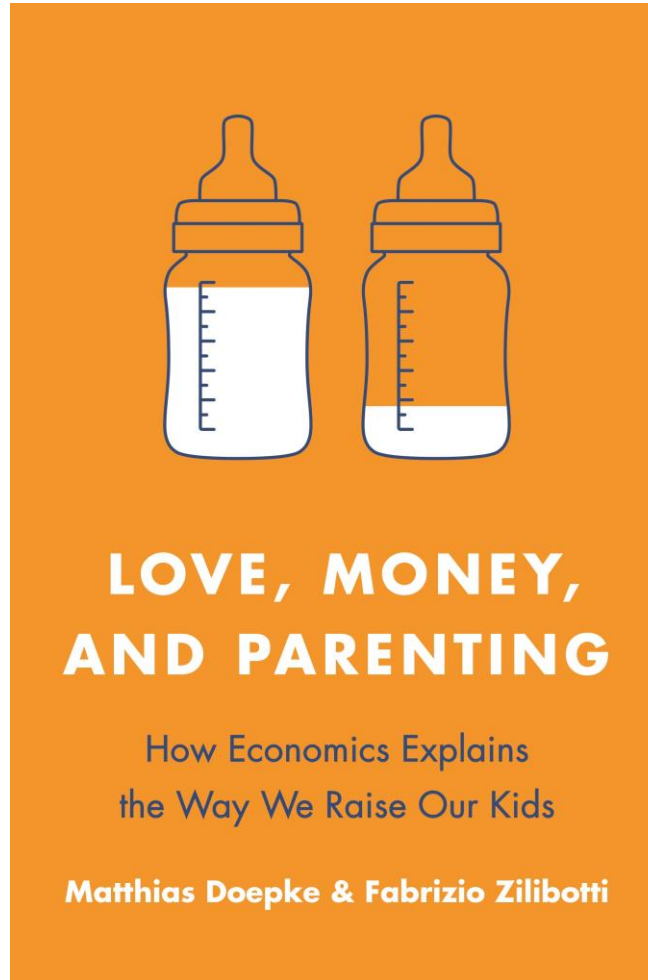
Perceived threat

Parents of adolescents



Macrocontextual factors

Economic inequality and parenting



Conclusion

What to take home?

Overprotective parenting

- Psychosocial and developmental difficulties
- Multiple perspectives

Macrocontextual factors

- Societal expectations and pressures
- Social worldviews
- Economic insecurities

contact

www.safesorry.be

stijn.van.petegem@ulb.be