

Momma Knows Best?

Untangling the Links Between Mothers' and Fathers' Traditional Gender Values and Their Parenting Practices

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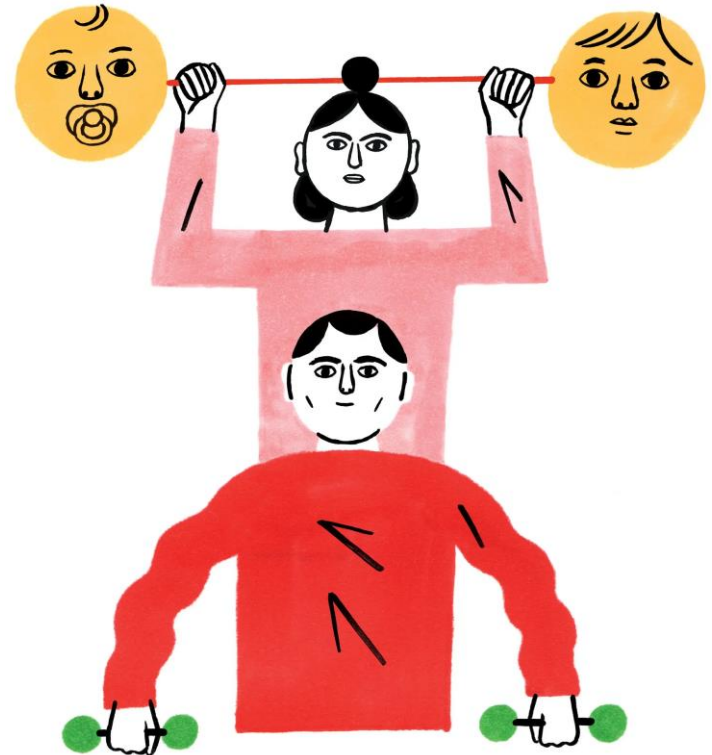
Study 1





The Role of Gender Essentialism

- Men and women **biologically distinct**, and thus **better suited for different societal roles**, including **parental roles** (Hays, 1996)
- Link with **gender inequalities in the family** and the division of childcare tasks (e.g., Pinho & Gaunt, 2021)



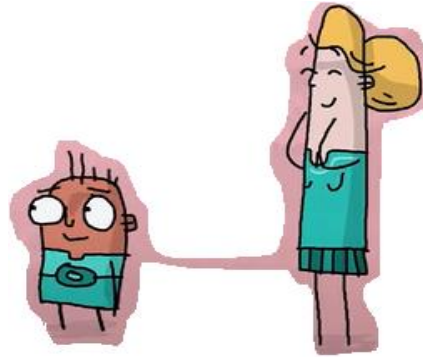
The Many Faces of Parents' Involvement

- 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

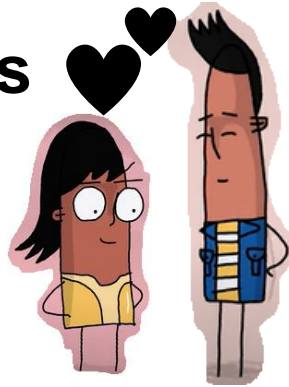


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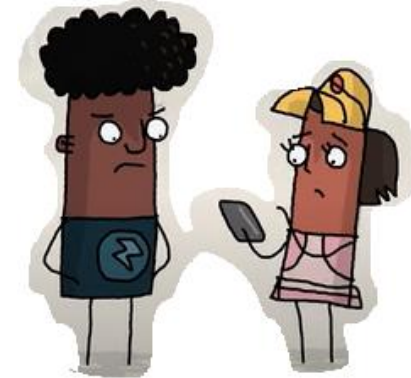
○ **Autonomy Support**



○ **Responsiveness**



○ **Controlling Parenting**



○ **Overprotection**



Research Goals

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

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



The Belgian Context

- Gender equality in the **public** sphere (5th out of 27 European countries; EIGE, 2023)
- However, in the **private** sphere inequalities persist:



→ Disparities in **parental leave policies** (Le Baromètre, 2022)

→ **Mothers'** overrepresentation in **part-time job** with 41% of part-time working women against only 12% of men (Statbel, 2023)

→ **Mothers more likely** than fathers to do the **housework** (76% of mothers vs. 35% of fathers) and **childcare tasks** (63% of mothers vs. 39% of fathers) (EIGE, 2023)

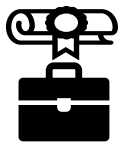


Participants

1,260 Belgian **parents of adolescents** (Mean age = 16.9, 54% girls)




Mean age = 48.9



= 45%

= 88%



 = 54%

(20% single/separated/divorced)



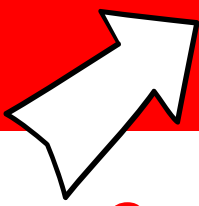
Mean age = 50.6



= 48%



= 92%



Measures

- **Gender Essentialism** (Liss et al., 2013; 5 items; MIMI, Loyal et al., 2017; 1 item)

According to me, men do not naturally know what to do with children.

- **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**

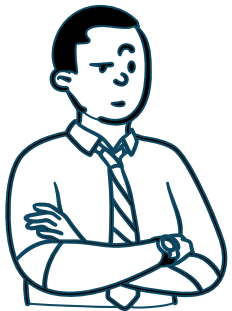
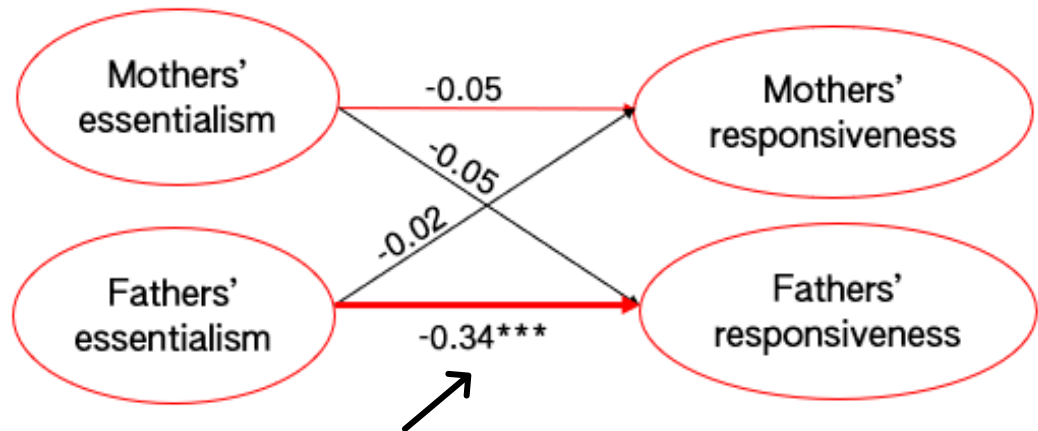
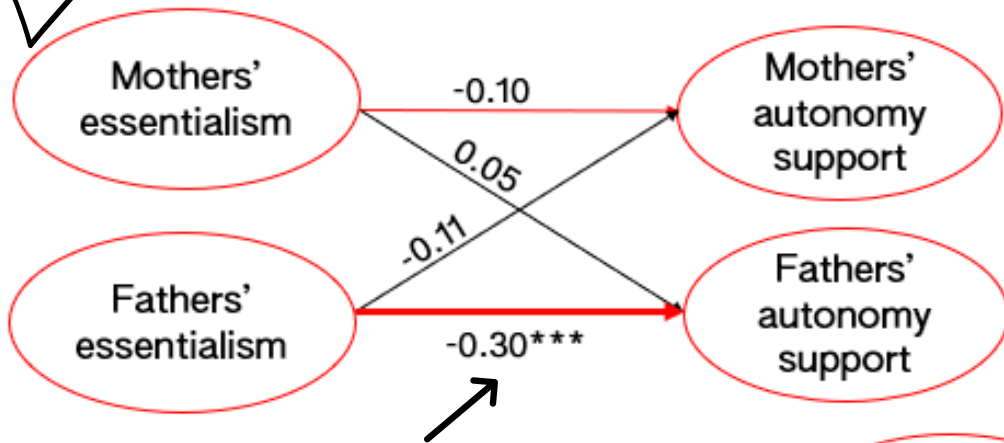
Controlling parenting (Cheung et al., 2016; 9 items)

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)

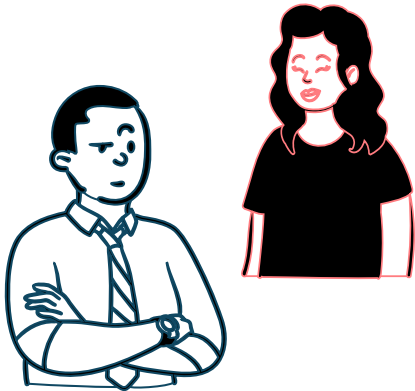
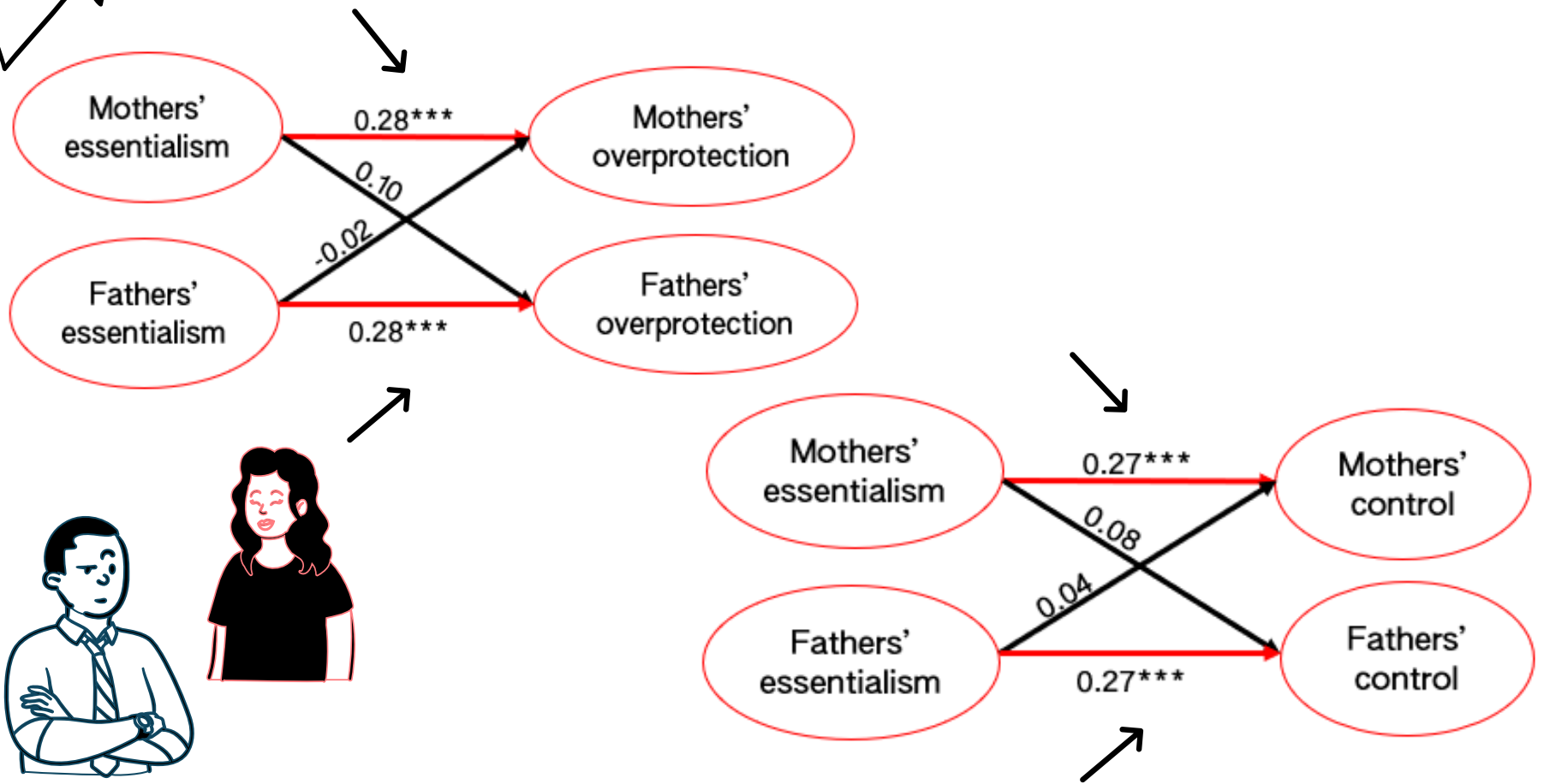
I immediately see danger whenever my child wants to do something new.

Positive Involvement



Fathers endorsing **gender essentialist beliefs** reported **less** autonomy support and responsiveness

Negative Involvement



Both **mothers** and **fathers** endorsing **gender essentialist beliefs** reported **more overprotection** and **controlling parenting**

Discussion

- Gender **essentialist** beliefs = **less attuned** involvement
 - **Deleterious** for children's and adolescents' wellbeing
 - Gender traditionalism : **public vs private** sphere
- **Traditional values** → Pressure toward parents to be **overly involved**





Soon preregistered!



Study 2

Social Role Theory

- Role of **cultural context** in influencing people's values and beliefs related to gender roles (e.g., Kosakowska-Berezecka et al., 2022)
- Gender inequalities **more pronounced in more traditional countries** (Eagly & Wood, 1999), as women and men are expected to behave in accordance with more **traditional gender role beliefs** (caregiver VS breadwinner) (Huffman et al., 2014).



Cross-Cultural Study

- RQ1: How mothers' and fathers' **gender essentialist beliefs** relate to their **parental involvement** (i.e., overprotection, responsiveness)?
- RQ2: Is this relationship **moderated** by the cultural context (country-level indicators of gender inequality)?



Cross-Cultural Study

- 11 different countries (i.e., Norway, Sweden, Belgium, Switzerland, Australia, France, Croatia, Slovakia, Georgia, Italy, and Greece)
- Multilevel design: Parents are nested within countries (~440 parents x 11 countries).
- Moderating role of **country-level gender inequality** in this relationship

→ 2 indexes of gender inequality (GIGI 2023, EVS '17-'18)



Gender Inequality Indexes

- 2 different aspects of gender inequality.

→ **Structural barriers** to women's and men's equality
(Global Gender Gap Index 2023, *Economic participation and opportunity, Political empowerment*)

→ Country specific **prevailing gender values**
(European Value Survey data of 2017-18)



To sum up

- **Gender essentialism** → interplay with parental involvement
– importance of **quality** not only quantity!
- **Role of macro-level gender inequality** when studying parenthood → how do societal dynamics relate to **the way** parents are involved in their children's lives





Thank you for your attention!

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