

Parenting Perceptions and Behaviors in the first three years: evidence from the LSCDQ cohort

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The contribution of parenting in the early years

- Although parenting behaviours are generally perceived as the cornerstone of socio-emotional development in early childhood, there is no consensus concerning the extent and nature of parental influence.
- **General view:** the developmental processes are complex, multifaceted, and not unidirectional: the characteristics of the child, the personality and personal history of each parent, and contextual factors (e.g., SES) likely interact to influence the parent-child dynamic throughout the child's youngest years.
- Parents perceptions, beliefs and expectations, as well as parenting behaviours are likely involved in the process (Parke & Buriel, 1998).
- These processes are in place early, if not before the child is born.

Parent's Cognition and Conduct Toward the Infant Scale:

1) Aims of the PACOTIS

- Self-report assessing specific parenting perceptions and behaviours that presumably reflect the quality of parents' involvement toward a recently born infant.
- ...within the context of
 - each parent's specific relation with his/her infant; that is, likely to vary as a function of 1) the parent and 2) the child, within the same family;
 - a community, population-based sample (i.e., non-clinical), homogeneous as to the age of the child;
 - a longitudinal follow-up (i.e., items relevant for the first two years of life).

2) Dimensions of the PACOTIS

- Two dimensions, parental self-efficacy and perceived parental impact, focus on parents' **beliefs** about their role as parent.
 - Parental self-efficacy refers to the perceived ability to carry out tasks associated with the role of parent, specifically within the context of caring for a particular infant (adapted from Teti & Gelfand, 1991).
 - Perceived parental impact relates to the parent's evaluation of the effect of his or her behaviour on the developing child.
- Two dimensions, parental coercive behaviours and parental overprotection, reflect **behavioural tendencies**.
 - Parental coercive behaviours include hostile and restrictive responses to difficult behaviours in the infant.
 - Parental overprotection refers to behaviours reflecting excessive concern for the safety and protection of the child.

First findings at five months...

- ...a clear and consistent factor structure, both across informants and across samples (including a parallel sample of 510 families of twins)
- yielded expected significant mean differences in parenting between mothers and fathers, as well as between parents of twins and parents of singletons
- a differentiated and congruent pattern of risk factors for each dimension of parenting.

Factor loadings from the principal component analysis of the Inventory of Parenting Styles (IPS)

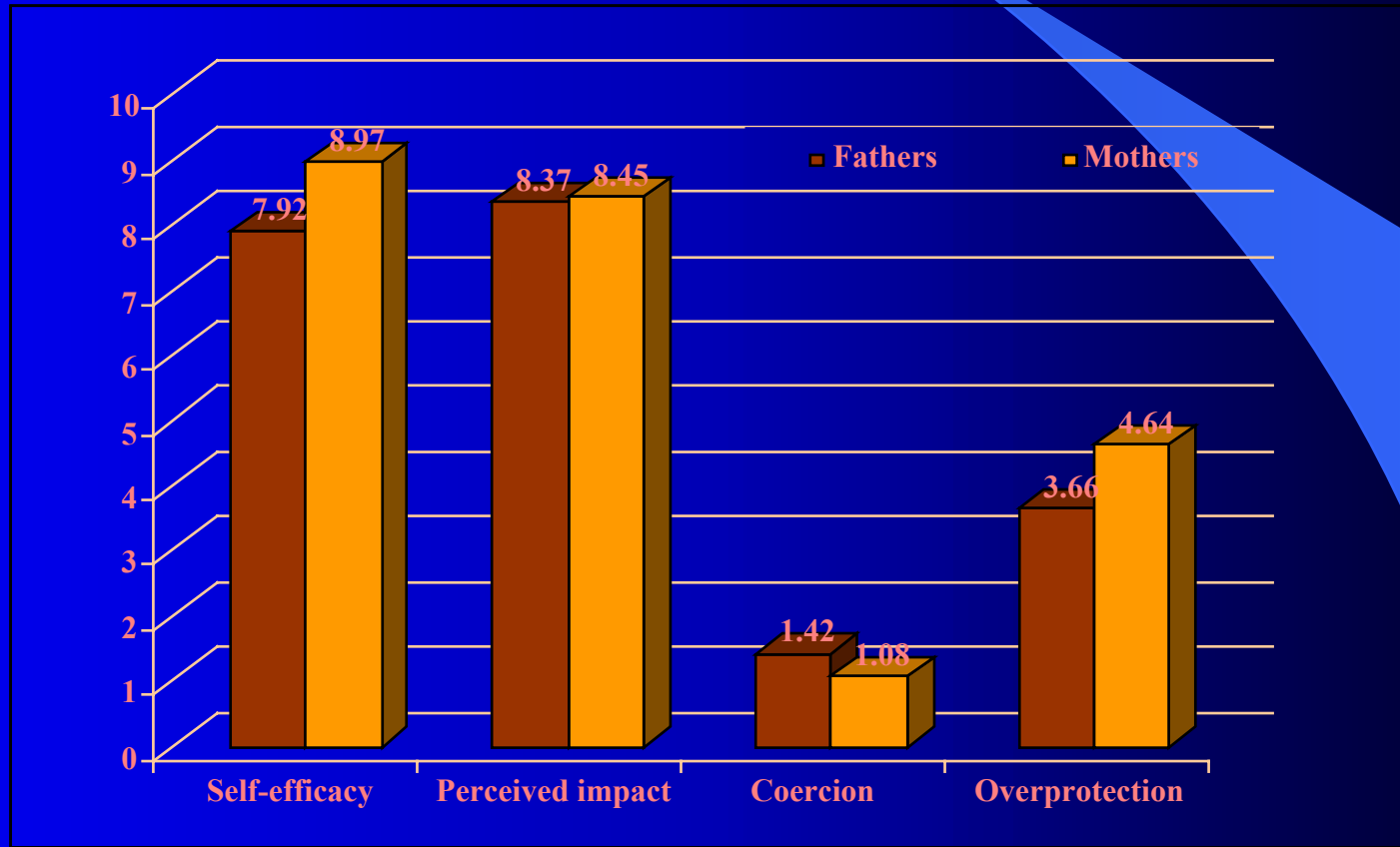
Item Summary	Scale ^a	Factor Loadings																				
		Mothering				Fathering				Mothering				Fathering								
		L1	L2	L3	L4	L1	L2	L3	L4	L1	L2	L3	L4	L1	L2	L3	L4					
Keeping busy	PSE	.69				.73				.61				.61				.75				.74
Child's development	PSE	.63				.52				.61				.61				.61				.60
Keeping busy	PSE	.53				.58				.58				.58				.60				.60
Attracting attention	PSE	.65				.69				.60				.60				.75				.75
Feeding, clothing, bathing	PSE	.60				.37				.62				.61				.43				.43
Good mother/good father?	PSE	.56				.61				.57				.57				.63				.63
Personal development	PPI		.50				.53				.61				.61			.61				.60
Child's development	PPI		.40				.43				.47				.47			.52				.52
Intellectual development	PPI		.67				.66				.74				.74			.63				.63
Development of motivation	PPI		.65				.65				.67				.67			.70				.69
How child interacts with others	PPI		.60				.64				.67				.67			.62				.61
Anger with child	PC	B		.68				.76				.77				.77		.79				.79
Child's temper	PC	B		.62				.62				.70				.70		.67				.67
Risely behaviour	PC	B		.75				.76				.74				.74		.76				.76
Spoken to	PC	B		.23				.19				.30				.30		.43				.42
Left child alone	PC	B		.55				.55				.68				.68		.57				.56
Left child alone	PC	B		.37				.39				.39				.40		.38				.38
Shaken	PC	B		.35				.27				.25				.25		.24				.24
Child's closeness	PO				.49				.47			.50				.50		.45				.45
« Remoteness »	PO				.55				.48			.55				.55		.46				.46
Child's self-esteem	RO				.32				.35			.39				.39		.40				.40
Miss child's company	PO				.73				.77			.78				.78		.73				.73
Child's relationship	PO				.61				.67			.65				.65		.63				.63

^aPSE=parental self-efficacy; PPI=perceived parental impact; PC=parental child behaviour; RO=parental rejection

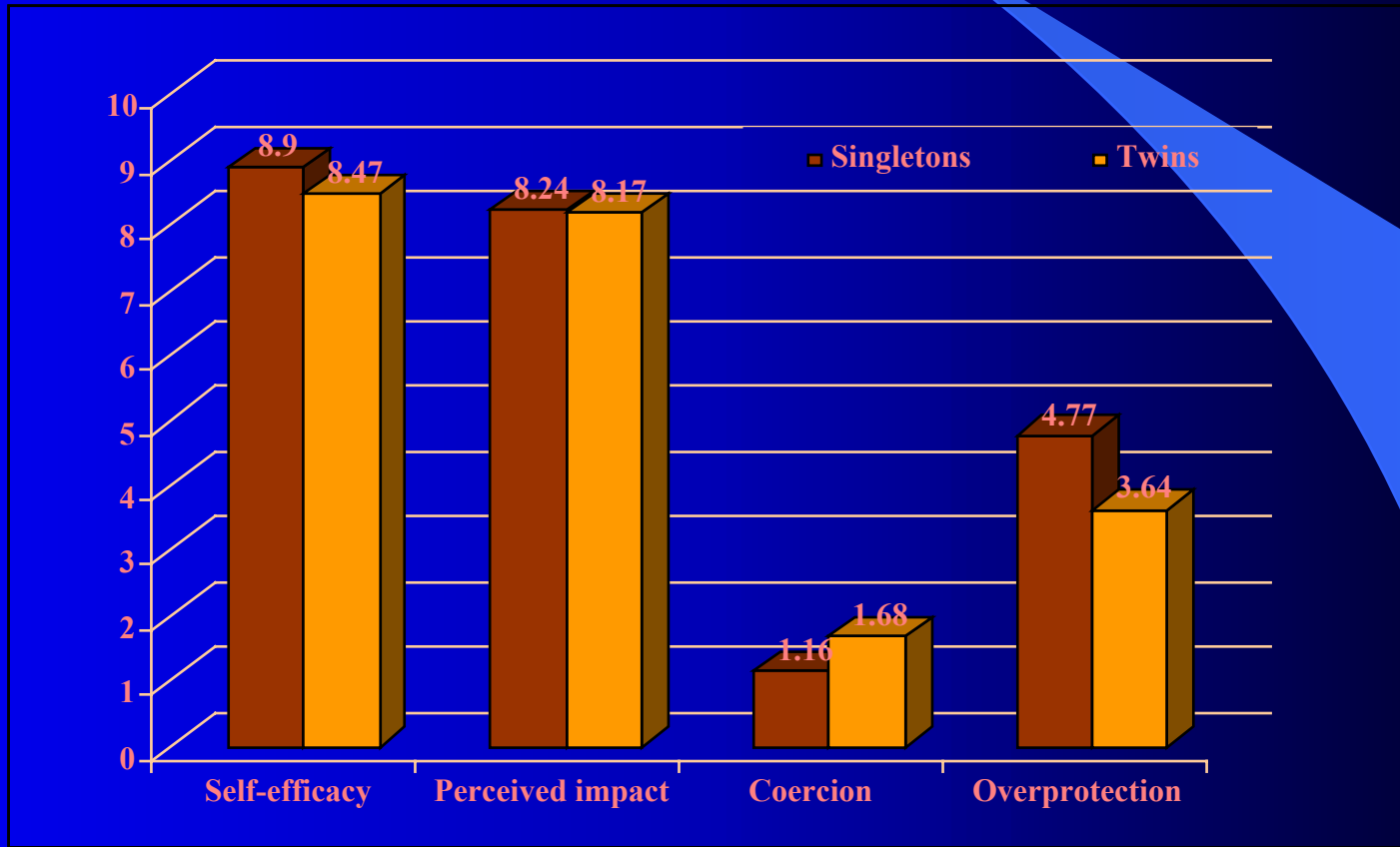
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Mothers versus fathers of LSCDQ at 5 months



Parenting singletons versus twins at five months (mother scores)



First findings at five months...

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PACOTIS: unique contributions at 5-months

- ⌘ **Parental self-efficacy**
 - ⌘ **Difficult temperament (-)**
 - ⌘ **Perceived spousal support**
 - ⌘ **Maternal depression (-)**
- ⌘ **Perceived parental impact**
 - ⌘ **Family income**
 - ⌘ **Mother education**
 - ⌘ **Maternal depression (-)**
- ⌘ **Parental coercive behavior**
 - ⌘ **Difficult temperament**
 - ⌘ **Maternal depression**
 - ⌘ **First child**
- ⌘ **Parental overprotection**
 - ⌘ **Family income (-)**
 - ⌘ **Mother education (-)**
 - ⌘ **Maternal depression**

Longitudinal Follow-up

- **Purpose:**
 - to examine the evolution of four dimensions of parenting perceptions and behaviours for the mothers and the fathers of LSCDQ, when the children were 5, 17 and 29 months old
- **Mean:**
 - modified 16-item version of the Pacotis was developed for the longitudinal follow-up. For each item, the parent or spouse had to answer using an 11_point Likert scale (“0 = not at all ” to “10 = exactly”) to indicate the extent to which the item corresponded to what they did, thought or felt with regard to the child.

Dimensions of the PACOTIS, longitudinal version

● Parental self-efficacy

- I feel that I am very good at attracting the attention of my child.
- ...at calming my child down when he/she is upset, fussy or crying.
- ...at keeping my child amused.
- ...at keeping my child busy while I am doing other things.

● Perceived parental impact

- My behavior has little effect on the personal development of my child. (-)
- Regardless of what I do, my child will develop on his/her own. (-)
- My behaviour has little effect on the intellectual development of my child. (-)
- ... on the emotional development of my baby.
- ... on how my baby will interact with others in the future.

Dimensions of the PACOTIS, longitudinal version

● Parental coercive behaviors

- I have been angry with my child when he/she was particularly fussy.
- I have raised my voice with, or shouted at, my child when he/she was particularly fussy.
- I have spanked by child when he/she was particularly fussy.

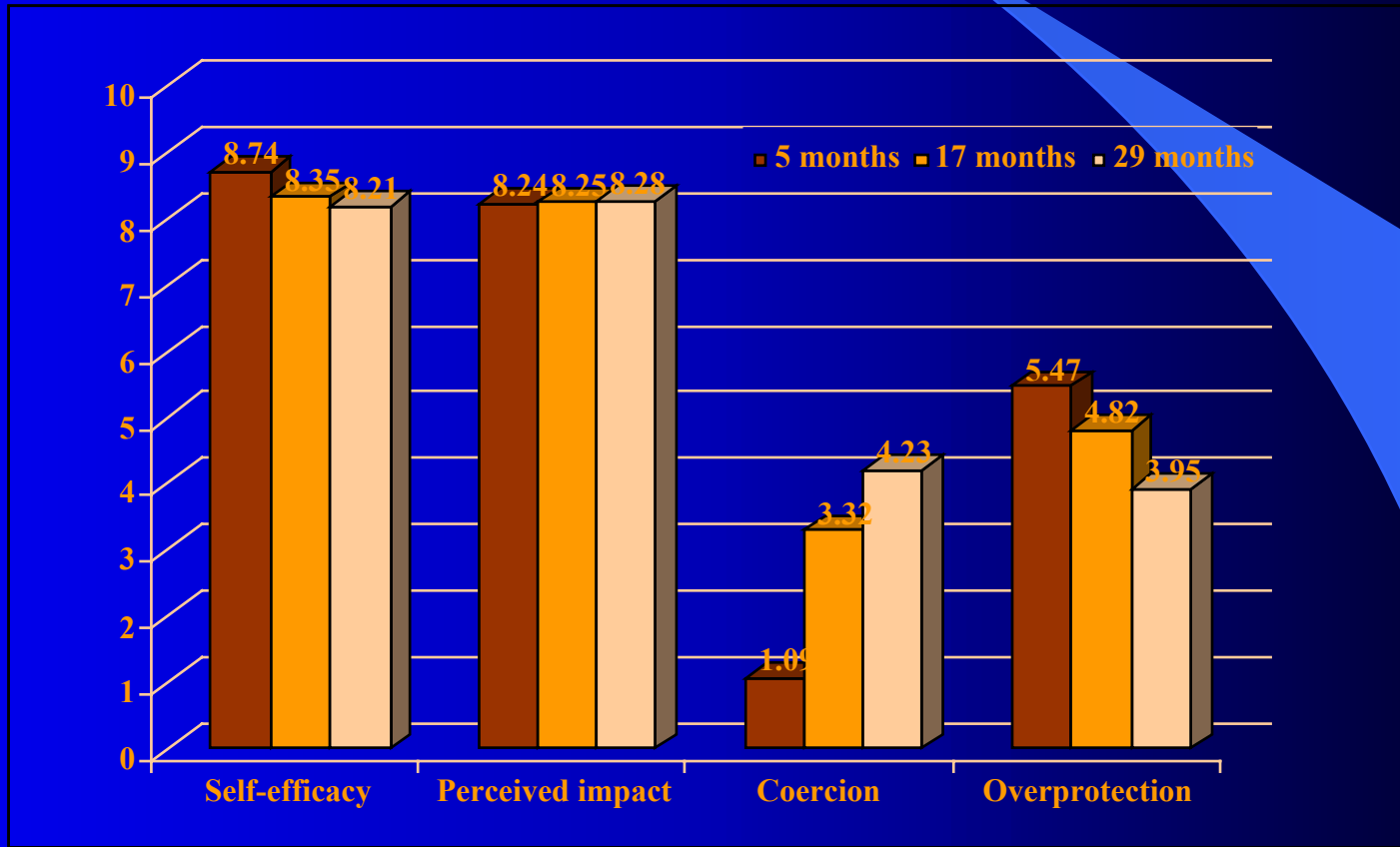
● Parental overprotection

- I insist upon keeping my child close to me at all times, within my eyesight and in the same room as I am.
- I consider myself a “real mother hen”.
- When I leave my child with a baby-sitter, I miss him/her so much that I cannot enjoy myself.
- I can never bring myself to leave my child with a baby-sitter.

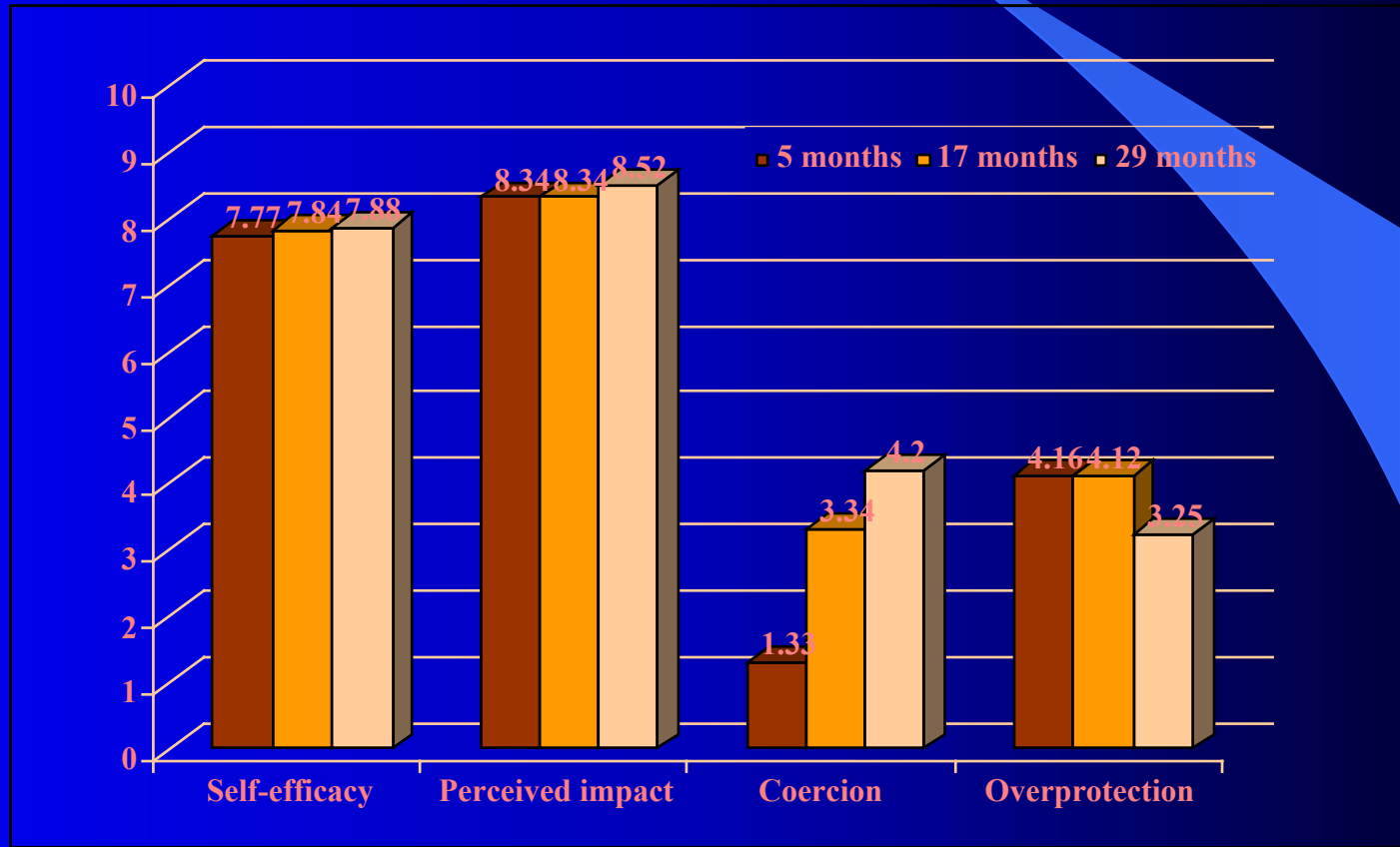
Longitudinal sample

- 2120 families in 1998 (5-month assessments)
- 1985 families also participated at 17 months and 29 months
- Complete longitudinal data on the PACOTIS for 1836 biological mothers and 1423 biological fathers
- with...1409 families where both biological mothers and biological fathers were present (mother-father comparisons)

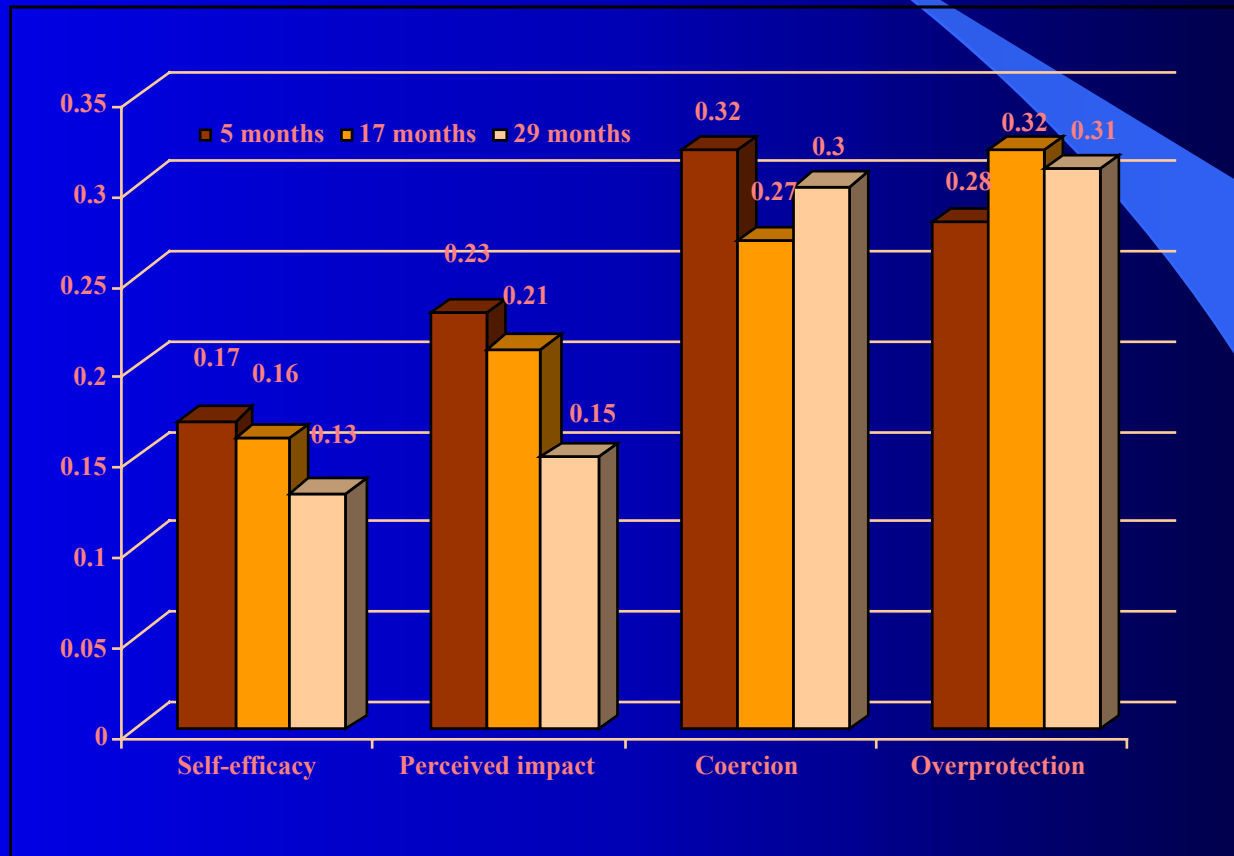
Evolution of mother's perceptions and behaviours with age of the child



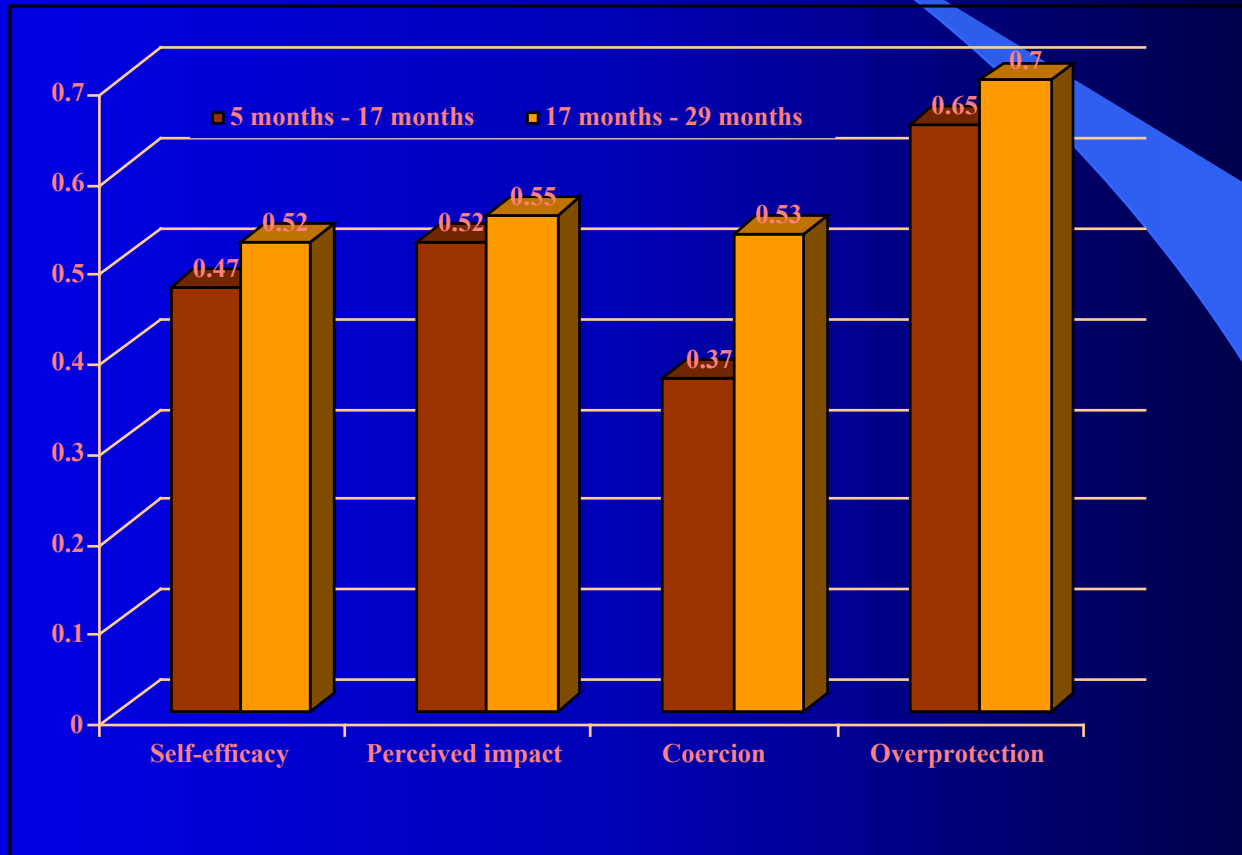
Evolution of father's perceptions and behaviours with age of the child



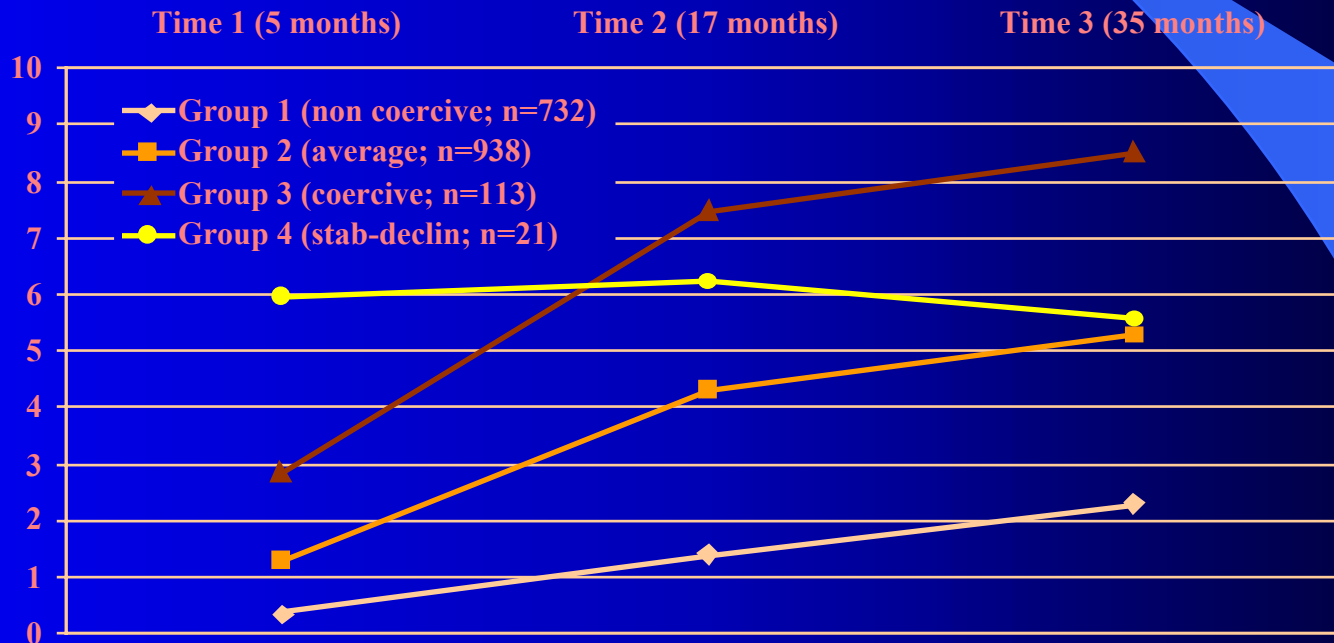
Evolution of mother-father correlations with age of the child



Stability of mother scores from 5-months to 29 months

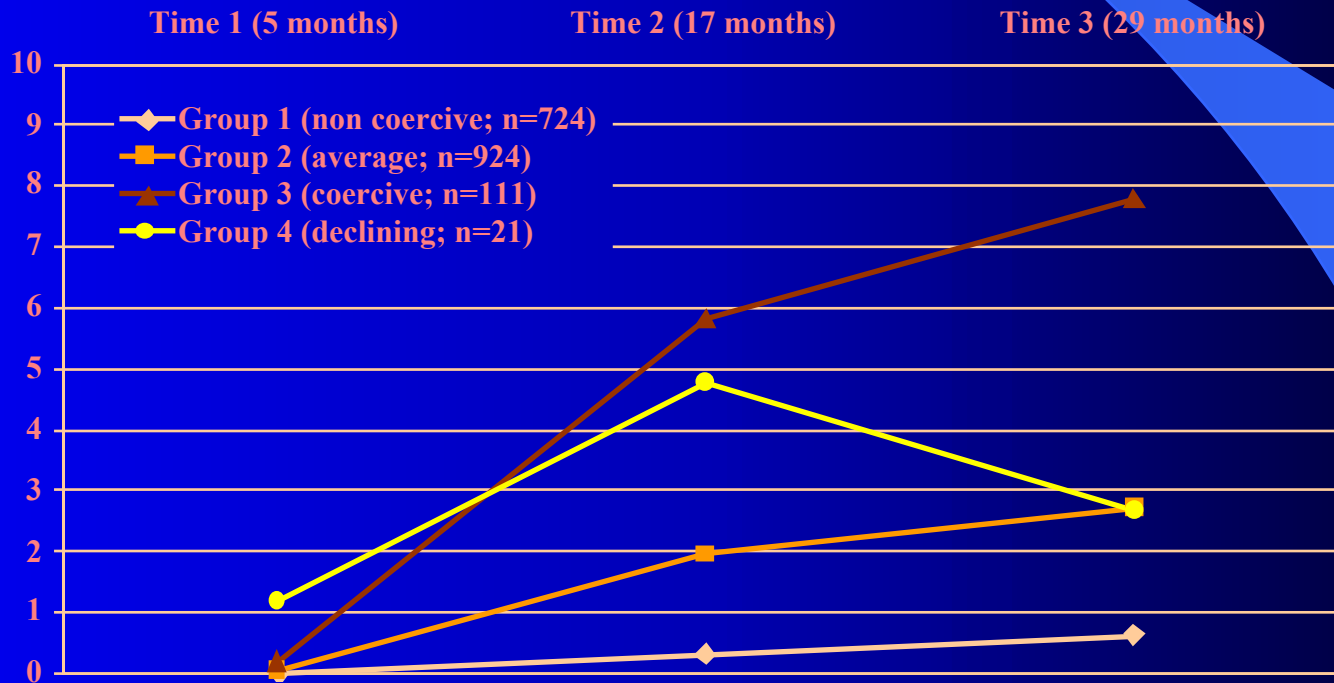


Trajectories of mothers' coercion (spanking + shouting + angry)

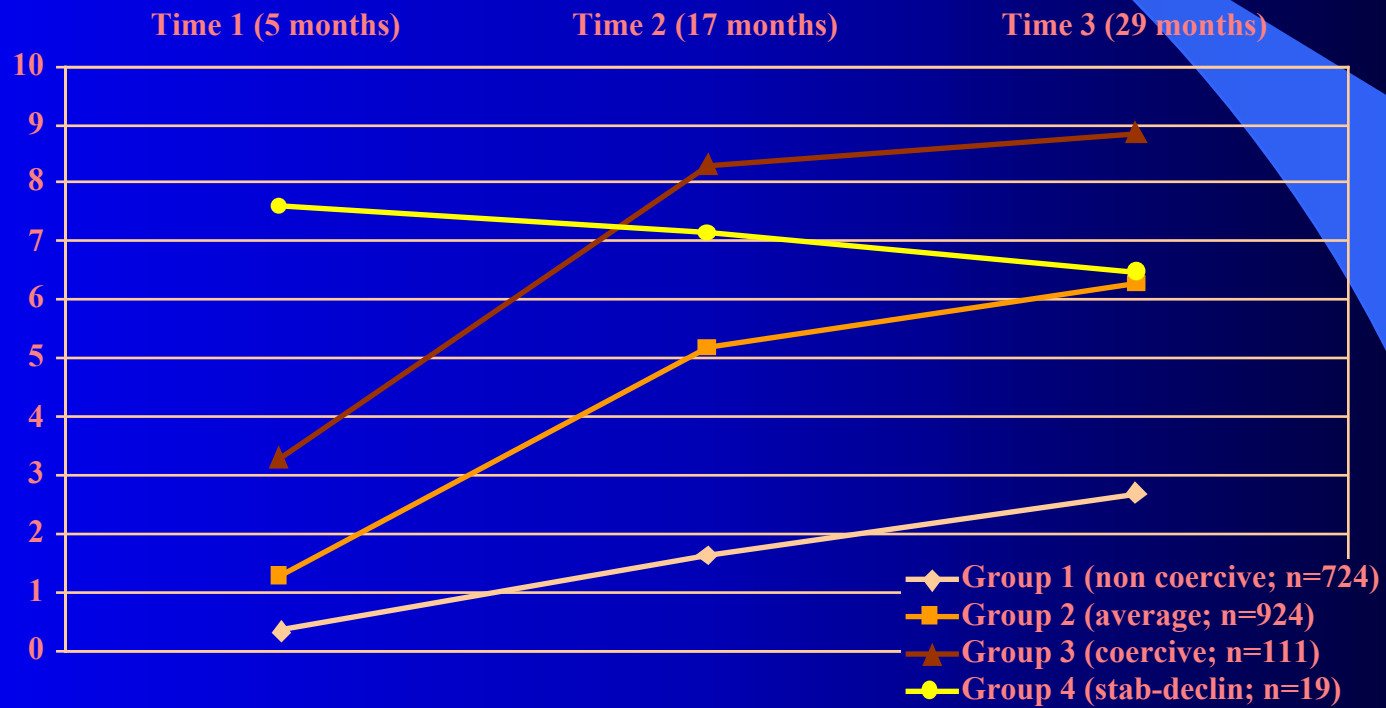


Note: Trajectories were estimated through TRAJ, a semi-parametric clustering procedure developed by Nagin et al, (1999). Best fitting solution was based on BIC.

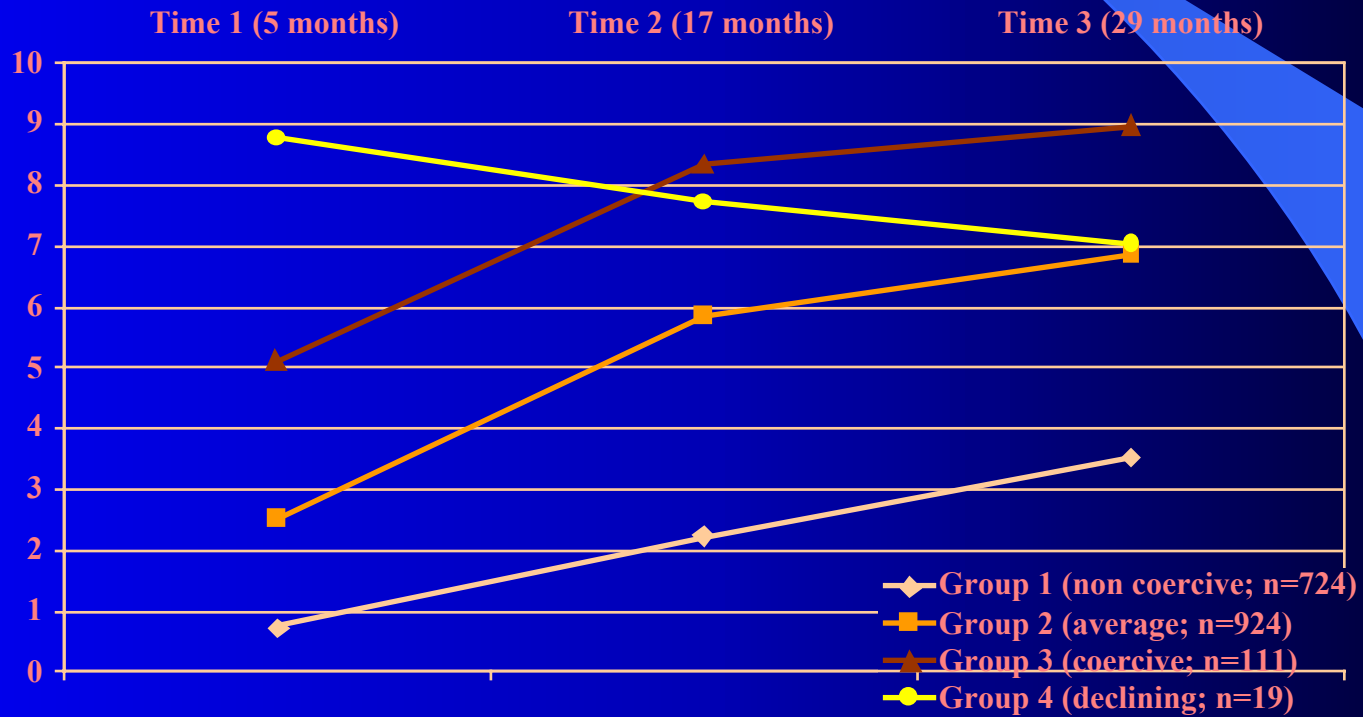
Trajectories: spanking



Trajectories: shouting



Trajectories: angry



Epilogue: who are these «coercive» mothers?

- Preliminary findings:

- Mothers with boys (59% versus 47% and 52% for the first two groups)
- Mothers with a more «difficult infant» at 5 and 17 months
- Mothers with infants reported as more «oppositional», more «physically aggressive», but also more «anxious»
- Mothers more depressed at 5 months and 17 months.
- Mothers more likely to work at 17 and 29 months.
- Mothers more satisfied with their work, but less satisfied with their marital relationships (at 29 months)
- Not distinctive with respect to age, low education (maybe of higher education), income, nor type of family (single moms)

Conclusions

- **Significant changes were observed during infancy: the parents became progressively less preoccupied with the health and safety of their infant. They also reported, on average, more frequent use of coercive behaviours between 5 months and 29 months.**
- **Coercive behaviours: sharp rise that characterized 99 % of mothers and fathers. Child factors are likely involved: increased mobility, oppositional and aggressive behaviours; infant appears less vulnerable.**
- **Caveat: parental coercion reflect a parental response to a situation presented as hard to manage (“... when your child is fussy”): “child initiated” reactive parenting versus “general” coercive parenting?**

Conclusions

- **Parental roles are more sharply distinguished when the child was 5 months old: the most important differences between the fathers and mothers were observed when the child was 5 months old, and they tended to become smaller as the child got older.**
- **Moderate degree of convergence was observed between the parents, in particular with regard to coercive behaviours and overprotection: it is possible to characterize some family environments along these dimensions.**
- **But of limited magnitude: it is important to gather information on both parents if we are to understand the nature of the child's social experience within his or her family.**