

## Parenting typologies in Georgian and Belgian adolescents: Associations with self-esteem

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## Parenting typologies in Georgian and Belgian adolescents: Associations with self-esteem

### Abstract

The parenting context is of fundamental importance for the optimal development of children and adolescents. Making use of a person-centered approach, we derived parenting typologies from the perspective of Georgian and Belgian adolescents based on four dimensions of perceived parenting (responsiveness, structure, psychological control, and autonomy support). Further, we examined how perceived parenting typologies were associated with adolescents' self-esteem. The study sample included 511 Georgian and 830 Belgian adolescents ( $N = 1341$ ; 48% female). A cluster-analytic procedure on the full sample was conducted separately for mothers and fathers. The analysis yielded five parenting typologies: Supportive - Highly structuring (high responsiveness and structure), Highly structuring - Moderately controlling (high structure and psychological control, moderate - responsiveness), Supportive - Low structuring/controlling (high responsiveness and autonomy support, low structure and psychological control), Highly controlling (very high psychological control, low responsiveness and autonomy support) and Uninvolved (low on all dimensions). Results indicated that the Highly structuring - Moderately controlling paternal cluster was more prevalent in the Belgian sample. Further, adolescents from the maternal and paternal Supportive - Low structuring typology and paternal Supportive - Highly structuring typology reported the highest levels of self-esteem, whereas the lowest levels of self-esteem were observed in adolescents from the Highly controlling profile for both parents. Finally, a country moderating effect was found with the paternal Uninvolved profile associated with low levels of self-esteem in Belgian adolescents, but with moderate levels of self-esteem in Georgian adolescents. Overall, the findings offer evidence for both cultural-specific as well as universal perspectives on parenting.

**Keywords:** Parenting typologies, Self-esteem, Cluster analysis, Cross-cultural perspective

**Statement of Relevance:** The parenting context is one of the most important relationship contexts for psychosocial development. Though research on parenting is ample, there is a lack of cross-cultural studies focusing on parenting typologies explicitly comparing different countries. In addition, only a few studies focused on parenting dynamics in non-EU post-Soviet countries and there are no studies comparing parenting in non-EU post-Soviet and Western European

countries. We examined perceived parenting profiles and their association with self-esteem in adolescents from two distinct cultural contexts: Belgium and Georgia. The findings offer evidence for both cultural-specific as well as universal perspectives on parenting.

## Introduction

The provision of a parenting context that is developmentally appropriate and responsive to a child's needs is essential for fostering their development and adjustment. A vast body of research indicates that a parenting context characterized by high responsiveness, high structure, and autonomy support is associated with better outcomes, whereas a context characterized by low responsiveness, low structure, and psychologically controlling practices is less favorable for child development (Pinquart, 2017; Rothenberg, et al., 2020; Soenens et al., 2019). However, the cross-cultural generalizability of the accumulated evidence remains debated, given that most of the studies are conducted in Western countries (i.e., North-America and Western European countries). For example, some evidence indicates that controlling parenting practices are associated with more favorable outcomes in Asian families (Wang & Phinney, 1998), whereas approaches high in responsiveness and low in structure would be more adaptive in Southern European and South American families (García & Gracia, 2014). In this study, we made use of a person-centered approach to identify perceived parenting typologies based on four dimensions of parenting (responsiveness, structure, psychological control, autonomy support). While variable-centered approaches provide an understanding of the importance of separate parenting dimensions across individuals, a person-centered approach prioritizes individuals as the unit of analysis (Bergman & Magnusson, 1997) and delineates subgroups of individuals with similar perceived parenting profiles allowing, researchers to identify family functioning typologies (e.g., Zimmermann, et al., 2020). Thus, assuming there is heterogeneity in adolescents' perceptions of parenting within our population, a person-centered approach is particularly suitable for identifying typical patterns that can describe specific subgroups of individuals that share their pattern of perceived parenting (von Eye & Bogat, 2006). Further, we examined how these typologies were associated with adolescents' self-esteem in a sample of Georgian and Belgian adolescents. These countries are quite distinct from each other both geographically (the former is situated on the South Caucasus and the latter in Western Europe) and also in terms of cultural (Schwartz, 2006) and socio-economic (UNDP, 2019) characteristics.

### Parenting styles

Scholars interested in the implications of family dynamics for child development often focused on parenting styles, which refer to the emotional climate in which child socialization

takes place (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). In Baumrind's seminal work (1966, 1991), three distinct parenting styles were proposed: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. Authoritative and authoritarian parenting are described to be high on monitoring and discipline of child behavior. At the same time, authoritative parents are warm, responsive to the children's needs and, tend to encourage horizontal, open communication with children, whereas authoritarian parents tend to be cold and controlling in their approach. Permissive parents are described as low on discipline and monitoring, but responsive and warm towards their children. Baumrind viewed parenting styles as configurations, where the effects of one characteristic of parenting (e.g., responsiveness) could not be isolated from the effects of other characteristics (Soenens et al., 2019). Later, Maccoby and Martin (1983) proposed that parenting styles should be conceptualized in terms of two underlying dimensions : control/demandingness and responsiveness. The focus on these underlying dimensions allowed for the identification of a fourth style, neglectful parenting, which is low on both demandingness and responsiveness. More recently, scholars have tried to gain a more nuanced understanding of these underlying parenting dimensions leading to the more widespread focus on the dimensional approach and the identification of additional dimensions, such as autonomy support (Soenens et al., 2019).

The dimension of parental responsiveness, originally proposed by Maccoby and Martin, refers to the affective nature of the parent–child relationship. It describes the extent to which parents are responsive to a child's needs, and the degree of parental involvement, acceptance, and warmth (Davidov & Grusec, 2006). It has been found that perceived parental responsiveness is positively linked with academic achievement (Pinquart, 2016), subjective well-being (Filus et al., 2019), and prosocial behavior (van der Storm et al., 2021), and negatively linked with depressive and anxiety symptoms (Wouters et al., 2018; Yap et al., 2014). Structure, similar to the demandingness dimension in the Maccoby and Martin (1983) conceptualization, refers to a set of active parental strategies involving the communication of clear and consistent expectations for appropriate behavior. It pertains to the provision of guidelines and rules for children's actions (Grolnick & Pomerantz, 2009). Research indicates that low levels of perceived structure are associated with internalizing and externalizing behavior problems (Lansford et al. 2014; Pinquart, 2018; Rothenberg et al., 2020). Two other parenting dimensions, frequently examined in the literature along with responsiveness and structure, are psychological control and autonomy support. Psychological control should be differentiated from structure and is defined as parental

attempts to manipulate the child's psychological experiences by using guilt induction, shaming, and love withdrawal when their child does not meet parental expectations (Barber, 1996; Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2010). Perceived parental psychological control has been associated with internalizing (Bleys et al., 2018; Gargurevich & Soenens, 2015; Lunetti et al., 2021; Nelemans et al., 2019) and externalizing behavior problems (Lansford et al., 2018; Mabbe et al., 2016; Piquart, 2017), problematic separation-individuation from parents (Kins et al., 2012), relational aggression (Nelson, et al., 2013), and lower academic achievement (Piquart, 2016). Finally, autonomy support is characterized by an empathic approach to the child's perspective, affording adolescents with choice opportunities whenever possible and encouraging their exploration based on their personal values and interests (Soenens et al., 2007). It has been found that perceived parental autonomy support has positive effects on child functioning in terms of academic performance (Vasquez et al., 2016), anxiety (Möller et al., 2016), and general well-being (Bindman et al., 2015; Neubauer, 2021).

### **Identifying parenting typologies**

In addition to these variable-centered studies examining the correlates of individual parenting dimensions, a limited number of studies have used person-centered approaches to identify parenting typologies and to examine the joint effects of these parenting dimensions. Although earlier conceptualizations of parenting dimensions focused solely on responsiveness and structure/demandingness (Maccoby & Martin, 1983), later studies incorporated psychological control and autonomy support (e.g., Kaniušonytė, & Laursen, 2020; Kerr, et al., 2012; Kocayörük et al., 2015; Luyckx et al., 2011; Manzeske & Stright, 2009; McNamara et al., 2010; Padilla-Walker et al., 2012; Rodríguez-Meirinhos, et al., 2020; Smetana & Ahmad, 2018; Teuber et al., 2021). New profiles of perceived parenting that emerged after incorporation of new dimensions added nuances to the types found in seminal studies (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Though past research varies to some degree in regard to their specific findings concerning parenting types, there are also a number of more general trends that emerge across these studies, as is discussed below.

A first profile that is often discerned, is a *supportive and high structuring* parenting environment. In this case, parents are perceived as responsive to children and provide clear rules and expectations regarding their behavior. In addition, these rules are provided in an autonomy-

supportive way. This typology is similar to the authoritative parenting style identified by Baumrind (1966, 1991). In most studies, this profile has been associated with high self-esteem (Gao et al., 2021; Li et al., 2010; Piquart & Gerke, 2019; Raboteg-Saric et al., 2014; Szkody et al., 2020) and adaptive development and adjustment outcomes such as academic achievement (Piquart & Kauser, 2016; Teuber et al., 2021), prosocial behavior (Kaniušonytė & Laursen, 2020; Padilla-Walker et al., 2012), adaptive coping (Gao et al., 2021), less substance use, and less internalizing and externalizing problems (Olivari et al., 2018; Piquart, 2017a, b; Steinberg et al., 2006). A second profile, is a *supportive - low structuring/controlling* parenting environment, which is characterized by high levels of perceived responsiveness and autonomy support as well as low levels of both structure and psychological control. This profile is similar to the permissive parenting style identified in the seminal work of Baumrind (1966, 1991) and Maccoby and Martin (1983). Findings regarding permissive parenting style's association with adaptive outcomes have been inconsistent. A recent meta-analysis studying the links between parenting styles and self-esteem suggested the existence of moderators such as country (Piquart & Gerke, 2019), proposing that this parenting profile is linked to positive outcomes in some countries but not in others. Further, it has been found that this supportive-low structuring/controlling parenting is on the one hand positively associated with self-confidence (Aunola et al., 2000) and active problem coping (Wolfradt et al., 2003), but on the other hand, positively associated with less school involvement (Lamborn, 1991), and higher levels of externalizing problems (Piquart, 2017). A third parenting profile, corresponds to a *highly controlling* parenting environment, which is associated with low responsiveness and autonomy support and high levels of both structure and psychological control (i.e. structure being provided in a controlling way; Steinberg, 2001). Highly controlling parenting is, thus, similar to the authoritarian parenting style. It has been shown to be negatively associated with self-esteem (Piquart & Gerke, 2019), academic achievement (Piquart, 2016), and empathic behaviour (Antonopoulou et al., 2012) and positively linked with depersonalization and anxiety (Wolfradt et al., 2003), psychological distress (Parra et al., 2019), externalizing problem behavior (Katz et al., 2019; Kuppens & Ceulemans, 2018) and internalizing symptoms (Kuppens & Ceulemans, 2018; Piquart, 2017). Finally, some studies have also identified an *uninvolved* parenting typology (e.g., Kuppens & Ceulemans, 2018). This parenting constellation is characterized by low levels on all dimensions. Thus, there is little responsiveness and autonomy-support as well

as low levels of structure and psychological control. This parenting typology is therefore similar to the neglectful style of Maccoby and Martin (1983) and is typically related to negative outcomes. For instance, it has been associated with lowered self-esteem (Pinquart & Gerke, 2019), delinquency (Hoeve et al., 2008), poor academic achievement (Pinquart, 2016), and internalizing and externalizing symptoms (Pinquart, 2017a, b).

### **Considering the macro-context of parenting**

The great majority of the previously discussed studies made use of Western samples. However, experiences of parenting and their associations with adolescent development and adjustment are likely to differ across countries due to variations in socio-economic conditions and differences in cultural emphasis on specific values (Bornstein et al., 2011). According to ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1986), countries and their norms and values (i.e., the macrosystem) provide the context for family interactions (i.e., the microsystem). For example, in cultures that emphasize interdependence, it has been suggested that parents more often require children to be obedient and restrain from expressing their personal needs in favor of considering others' opinions (Chao, 1994; Wang & Phinney, 1998). These goals would be often achieved with controlling parenting practices. As far as such approaches are regarded as culturally normative, some authors argue that they are less harmful for children (e.g., Rudy & Grusec, 2006) or even associated with more optimal functioning (e.g., Leung et al., 1998). Further, some studies suggest that in a cultural context that emphasizes affection, cooperation, mutual respect, and egalitarian relations, parenting approaches characterized by low structure and high responsiveness and autonomy support are associated with better outcomes, compared to a supportive-high structuring parenting profile (García & Gracia, 2014; García et al., 2019; Martínez et al., 2007). In other words, this suggests that the correlates of specific parenting profiles would be relative, that is, they would be dependent on the specific cultural context. In line with this relativist position, a number of studies found that in interdependent cultural contexts, controlling parenting approaches are not associated with harmful outcomes (Dwairy et al. 2006; Ho et al. 2008; Louie et al. 2013; Rudy & Halgunseth, 2005). Similarly, other studies have found that in cultural contexts characterized by high levels of affection and horizontal relationships, parenting characterized by low structure and high responsiveness is associated with optimal outcomes (Alonso-Geta, 2012; Martínez & Garcia, 2007, 2008).



In contrast to such a relativist view of the effects of parenting on child outcomes, other approaches attend to a more universalistic perspective (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2010). They propose that more optimal parenting typologies (e.g., supportive-high structuring) would yield more beneficial outcomes, whereas less optimal parenting typologies (e.g., highly controlling) are detrimental across cultures (Lunetti et al., 2021; Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2010; Sokhrabi, 2005). This would be due to the fact that some parenting dimensions (e.g., responsiveness, autonomy support) are supportive of children's basic psychological needs and therefore would foster optimal development across cultural contexts, whereas other parenting dimensions (e.g., psychological control) would frustrate children's psychological needs and therefore would undermine healthy development (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2010). In line with this perspective, it was found that parents' psychological control negatively predicts, whereas autonomy support positively predicts children's emotional and academic functioning in the United States and China – two culturally distinct contexts (Wang et al., 2007). Further, Soenens and colleagues (2012) found that the associations between psychological control, depressive personality, and depressive symptoms were similar between South Korean and Belgian adolescents.

To reconcile these two points of view, it has been proposed that relativistic and universalistic perspectives on the association between parenting and child adjustment and well-being are not contradictory or mutually exclusive (Soenens et al., 2015). Shweder and Sullivan (1993) suggested the principle of *Universalism without Uniformity* to describe and explain the potential existence of variety of forms of psychological functioning across cultural contexts, but at the same time recognizing the existence of an underlying common human nature. Certain parenting practices, as a function of one's cultural background and one's individual characteristics, may be differently interpreted and translated into subjective experiences. As a consequence, universal mechanisms behind the link between parenting and their effects on child functioning might operate differently, in the sense that the effects of certain parenting practices are qualified as a function of how these practices are experienced and interpreted (Soenens et al., 2015). Indeed, studies found that parenting practices have different meanings and hence relate differently to positive and negative child outcomes across cultural settings (Camras et al., 2012, 2017; Chao & Aque, 2009; Chen et al., 2016; Helwig et al., 2014; Shigeto et al., 2019). For example, Chen and colleagues (2016) found that Chinese adolescents, in contrast to Belgian adolescents, experienced certain controlling parenting practices as less controlling and

correspondingly less need-frustrating. These differences in perceptions explained why these controlling practices were associated differently with child outcomes in Chinese vs. Belgian adolescents.

### **Present study**

Investigating the similarities and differences in the patterns of perceived parenting and their associations with adolescents' outcomes cross-culturally is one way to examine how culture and parenting are interrelated. In the present study, we investigated parenting in a sample of Georgian and Belgian adolescents. As most previous cross-cultural research on parenting made use of a dimensional approach, there is a lack of cross-cultural research focusing on parenting typologies (e.g., Barnhart et al., 2015; Garcia et al., 2020; Gherasim et al., 2017) explicitly comparing different countries. In addition, only few studies focused on parenting dynamics in non-EU post-Soviet countries (Hamzallari, 2018) and there are no studies that explicitly compare parenting in non-EU post-Soviet and Western European countries.

Belgium is located in Northwest Europe. Its culture is characterized by individualistic rather than collectivistic values. Children are socialized to define themselves in terms of their individual characteristics rather than by affiliation to social groups. Perceived parenting practices, according to Belgian adolescents, is generally close to the authoritative parenting ideal (Goossens & Luyckx, 2007). Georgia, on the other hand, is located at the crossroads of Eastern Europe and Western Asia. Though Georgia has been undergoing rapid socio-economic and cultural change during the last three decades, earlier cross-cultural research indicates that its culture is relatively high on cultural embeddedness, and emphasizes the importance of social relationships, group identifications, and participation in shared ways of life (Schwartz, 2006). In such an interdependent culture, the role of parental authority is assumed to be important and is supposed to influence one's decision-making. In line with this, a recent nation-wide study among Georgian youth found that in half of the sample, parents influence the decisions made by their 18-29-year-old children in important ways (Omanadze et al., 2018). Further, Georgia is a post-Soviet country, and traditional Soviet pedagogy focuses on child obedience and group-mindedness (Yakhnich, 2016). At the same time, parental withdrawal of love and privileges were often seen as accepted ways of controlling children (Shor, 2000). Further, traditional gender-defined family roles are still strong in Georgia, with men viewed as the principal breadwinner

and women being mostly responsible for family life (CRRC, 2019). Georgia's more collectivistic cultural orientation and traditional vision on gender roles might create conditions for parenting distinct from Western European countries, such as Belgium, which holds the opposite position on the cultural dimension of social embeddedness (Schwartz, 2006) and where traditional gender role stereotypes are relatively weak (Goossens & Luyckx, 2007). Embedded in a bioecological perspective on human development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Cassels & Evans, 2020), we believe that comparing contexts with distinctly different socio-economic and historical backgrounds may contribute to a clearer understanding of how macro-level differences are linked to micro-level developmental processes.

The overall aim of the present study was to investigate the relation between typologies of perceived parenting and adolescents' self-esteem in a sample of Belgian and Georgian adolescents. Thereby, we relied upon adolescent reports of parenting and self-esteem, and we made use of a person-centered approach in order to identify subgroups of adolescents that share their patterns of perceived parenting. The present study had three goals. The first goal was to examine patterns of Georgian and Belgian adolescents' perceptions of their mothers' and fathers' parenting using cluster analysis. We expected to find parenting typologies similar to those found in earlier studies using the same methodology, that is, supportive - highly structuring, supportive - low structuring/controlling, highly controlling, and uninvolved (e.g., Kocayörük, 2015). The second goal was to examine whether the prevalence of these parenting profiles was different across the Georgian and Belgian samples. We hypothesized that parenting styles high on psychological control and structure would be more prevalent in the Georgian sample due to the more collectivistic nature of the Georgian culture and the influence of Soviet pedagogy on the parents' generation. The third goal was to examine the associations of these different parenting typologies with self-esteem and to test for the possible interaction effect of country in these associations. In the overall sample, we expected to find a pattern of associations similar to the ones found in Piquart and Gerke's (2019) recent meta-analysis, with the highest level of self-esteem among adolescents in the supportive - highly structuring cluster, and the lowest levels in the highly controlling cluster and the uninvolved cluster. At the same time, following a relativistic approach, we hypothesized that the highly controlling parenting typology would be particularly associated with lower levels of self-esteem in the Belgian sample in comparison with

Georgian sample, as as higher levels of psychological control would be experienced as less normative in the Belgian parenting context than in the Georgian parenting context.

## **Method**

### **Participants and procedure**

Five hundred and eleven Georgian ( $M_{age} = 15.41$ ,  $SD = 1.43$ , 57.3% female) and 836 Belgian ( $M_{age} = 16.27$ ,  $SD = 1.39$ , 58.1% female) adolescents participated in the study. Eighty-three percent of Belgian and 75% of Georgian participants came from families where the two biological parents lived in the same household. Fifteen percent of the Belgian sample and 16% of the Georgian sample indicated that their parents were separated, whereas 6% of the Belgian sample and 9% of the Georgian sample reported that one of their parents had passed away.

Belgian participants were recruited from public schools in 2013-2014. Specifically, trained Master's students visited public schools, where adolescents were invited to participate in the study. After providing general information about the set-up of the study, and after explaining the voluntary nature of participation and the anonymous treatment of the data, informed consents and questionnaires were distributed, which were filled out in the classroom. The study was in compliance with the ethical guidelines of Ghent University. A similar procedure was used at Ilia State University to recruit Georgian participants in 2018. University and school institutional review board approvals were obtained before starting the investigation. All adolescents chose to participate and were free to withdraw from the study at any time. At the beginning, they were informed about the goal of the study and assured that if they participate, their answers would not be revealed to anyone, including their parents or teachers. Self-report questionnaires were group-administered in class in the presence of two trained Master's students.

### **Measures**

Participants completed existing Dutch or Georgian versions of the parenting questionnaires (Beyers & Goossens, 1999; Skhirtladze et al., 2017; Soenens et al., 2006; Vansteenkiste et al., 2005). Items of the parenting questionnaire were filled out separately for mothers and fathers. When adolescents reported having only one parent (e.g., because one of the parents passed away), they left the relevant items empty. The self-worth scale was already available in Dutch, but not in Georgian. Using a double-translation and reconciliation procedure,

the scale was translated from English into Georgian and the final version was decided following a discussion among the group of researchers. All items of the study instruments were completed on a scale ranging from 1 (*completely disagree*) to 5 (*completely agree*).

**Responsiveness.** Perceived parental responsiveness was assessed with seven items of the parental support scale of the Child Report of Parent Behavior Inventory (CRPBI; e.g., “My mother/father is able to make me feel better when I am upset”, Schaefer, 1965; Schludermann & Schludermann, 1988). This scale is a well-validated questionnaire for measuring parental responsiveness/support, and has been successfully used in Dutch (Beyers & Goossens, 1999) and in Georgian (Skhirtladze et al., 2017).

**Structure.** Perceived parental structure was assessed with five items of the behavioral expectations subscale of the Behavioral Control Scale (e.g., “My mother/father wants me to learn to follow rules and regulations in and outside of the home”, Barber, 2002 ). The measure is validated in Dutch (Soenens et al., 2006) and in Georgian (Skhirtladze et al., 2017).

**Psychological control.** Perceived parental psychological control was assessed with eight items of the Psychological Control Scale (e.g., “My mother/father is less friendly with me if I do not see things her/his way”, Barber, 1996). The measure is validated in Dutch (Soenens et al., 2006) and in Georgian (Skhirtladze et al., 2017).

**Autonomy support.** Perceived parental autonomy support was assessed by six items of the autonomy support subscale of the Perceptions of Parents Scale (POPS; e.g., “Whenever possible, my mother/father allows me to choose what to do”, Grolnick et al. 1991). The measure is validated in Dutch (Vansteenkiste et al., 2005) and in Georgian (Skhirtladze et al., 2017).

**Self-esteem.** Self-esteem was assessed by five items of the general self-worth subscale of the Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents (Harter, 1988). The factorial validity of the Georgian version of the measure showed good indices (CFI = .99; RMSEA = .06).

## **Data Analysis**

The data analysis was conducted in the following steps. As the first and preliminary step, we assessed measurement equivalence of perceived parenting and self-esteem variables in country and gender groups via measurement invariance analyses according to Dimitrov’s guidelines (Dimitrov, 2010). First, metric equivalence of the measurement models was tested by

constraining the factor loadings of the items to each latent construct to be equal across the groups. When metric invariance is reached, it is legitimate to compare the relations between latent variables across groups. Second, scalar equivalence of measurement models was tested by constraining the factor intercepts of each latent construct to be equal across the groups. At each step, the constrained model was compared with the model without constraints. A change in comparative fit index (CFI) of .010 or less was used as the threshold to determine whether the scale was invariant across cultural and gender groups (Cheung & Rensvold, 2002). As the second preliminary step, we conducted two multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVAs) to investigate gender, country and family structure differences as well as their interaction, in the prediction of perceived parenting dimensions, which was done separately for mothers and fathers. As the third step, cluster analysis was conducted on the four perceived parenting dimensions, separately for mothers and fathers, using a two-step procedure (Gore, 2000). Specifically, we first conducted a hierarchical cluster analysis, using Ward's method with squared Euclidean distances (Steinley & Brusco, 2007). Second, these initial cluster centers were used as non-random starting points in an iterative *k*-means clustering procedure. We compared different cluster-solutions using three criteria: a) interpretability of cluster solutions; b) the stepsize criterion, which is similar to the scree plot generated by exploratory factor analysis; and c) the *F*-ratio, which indicates the percentage of variance in the clustering variables that is explained by the cluster solution. As the fourth step, we examined difference in the prevalence of the maternal and paternal parenting clusters in Georgian and Belgian samples using Chi-square test and standardized residuals. In a final step, we conducted ANOVAs to examine the effects of the parenting cluster and country on self-esteem and the moderating effect of country on the associations between parenting clusters and self-esteem.

## Results

### Preliminary analysis

**Measurement invariance.** When testing for metric and scalar invariance across gender groups, we found evidence of equivalence for the scales assessing maternal and paternal perceived responsiveness, perceived structure, perceived psychological control, perceived autonomy support, and self-esteem (see Table 1). When testing metric invariance across countries, we found evidence of equivalence for perceived maternal and paternal responsiveness,

psychological control, and autonomy support scales. Structure was partially invariant across countries as one item from the scale demonstrated unequal loading across groups (Vandenberg & Lance, 2000). We allowed the unequal item to be estimated freely across groups to achieve partial invariance. When testing for scalar invariance, all four parenting dimension scales were partially invariant across countries. We freed one of six items of the responsiveness, two of five items of the structure scale, one of eight items of the psychological control scale, and two of six items of the autonomy support scale to achieve partial scalar invariance. The self-esteem scale was invariant across countries on a metric and a scalar level. In Table 2, detailed results with respect to the metric and scalar invariance of our measures are presented.

### **Associations of country and gender with perceived parenting dimensions**

First, we performed a MANOVA with gender, country, family structure and the three two-way interaction terms as fixed factors and the maternal parenting dimensions as dependent variables (i.e., responsiveness, structure, psychological control, and autonomy support), which yielded a significant multivariate effect of gender (Wilks's  $\lambda = .97$ ,  $F(4, 1261) = 9.37$ ,  $p = .000$ ,  $\eta^2 = .03$ ), and country (Wilks's  $\lambda = .92$ ,  $F(4, 1243) = 64.57$ ,  $p = .000$ ,  $\eta^2 = .23$ ). Second, we performed a MANOVA with gender, country, family structure and the three two-way interaction terms as fixed factors and the paternal parenting dimensions as dependent variables (i.e., responsiveness, structure, psychological control, and autonomy support), yielding a significant multivariate effect of gender (Wilks's  $\lambda = .98$ ,  $F(4, 1243) = 3.84$ ,  $p = .004$ ,  $\eta^2 = .01$ ), country (Wilks's  $\lambda = .83$ ,  $F(5, 1243) = 64.57$ ,  $p = .000$ ,  $\eta^2 = .17$ ), family structure (Wilks's  $\lambda = .97$ ,  $F(4, 1243) = 9.62$ ,  $p = .000$ ,  $\eta^2 = .03$ ), and family structure X country interaction (Wilks's  $\lambda = .99$ ,  $F(4, 1243) = 2.92$ ,  $p = .02$ ,  $\eta^2 = .009$ ). Inspection of follow-up univariate effects revealed differences across gender, country, family structure, and yielded two significant interaction effects. The results are summarized in the Table 3. Specifically, girls scored higher on perceived maternal responsiveness and lower on perceived maternal and paternal structure and psychological control as compared to boys. Georgian adolescents scored higher in perceived maternal and paternal responsiveness and maternal autonomy support and lower on perceived maternal and paternal structure and psychological control, in comparison with Belgian adolescents. Finally, adolescents from intact families scored higher on perceived paternal responsiveness and autonomy support and lower on paternal psychological control than

adolescents from nonintact families. Regarding interaction effects, perceived paternal responsiveness in intact families and perceived paternal psychological control in nonintact families was significantly higher in the Georgian sample than in the Belgian one.

### **Main analysis**

**Cluster Analysis.** Prior to conducting cluster analysis, we removed 50 univariate (i.e., values more than three standard deviations below or above the mean) and 8 multivariate outliers (i.e., individuals with high Mahalanobis distance values ( $> 18.47$ )). Solutions with four to seven clusters were compared. A solution with 5 clusters was selected based on the stepwise criterion, interpretability, and explanatory power (i.e., the cluster solution had to explain at least 50% of the variance in each of the constituting dimensions). The five-cluster solution accounted for respectively 64% and 62% of variance in maternal and paternal responsiveness, 55% and 58% in maternal and paternal structure, 61% in maternal and paternal psychological control, and 66% and 64 % in maternal and paternal autonomy support. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the five-cluster solutions for perceived maternal and paternal parenting respectively.

The cluster solutions were highly similar for mothers and fathers. The Supportive - Highly structuring cluster ( $n = 346$  and  $n = 275$  for mothers and fathers respectively) was characterized by relatively high scores on responsiveness, structure, and autonomy support as well as relatively low scores on psychological control. The Highly structuring - Moderately controlling cluster ( $n = 289$  and  $n = 344$  for mothers and fathers respectively) was characterized by higher than average scores on structure and psychological control and moderate scores on responsiveness and autonomy support. The Supportive - Low structuring/controlling cluster ( $n = 234$  and  $n = 276$  for mothers and fathers respectively) was characterized by relatively high scores on responsiveness and autonomy support and low scores on structure and psychological control. The Highly controlling cluster ( $n = 178$  and  $n = 214$  for mothers and fathers respectively) was characterized by very high scores on psychological control, higher than average scores on structure and low to very low scores on responsiveness and autonomy support. Lastly, the Uninvolved cluster ( $n = 235$  and  $n = 154$  for mothers and fathers respectively) was characterized by low scores on all dimensions.

**Cluster proportions in two countries.** Table 4 illustrates the proportions of adolescents for each cluster in the Belgian and Georgian contexts. Chi-square tests were used to detect



differences in the proportion of participants in each cluster. Results indicated that the proportion of Belgian and Georgian adolescents in each maternal parenting cluster did not differ significantly ( $\chi^2(4) = 4.12$ , Cramér's  $V = .06$ ,  $p = .389$ ), whereas there was a significant difference in the proportion of Belgian and Georgian adolescents by paternal parenting cluster ( $\chi^2(4) = 10.35$ , Cramér's  $V = .09$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Based on the standardized residuals, there was a significant difference for the High structuring - Moderately controlling paternal cluster, which was significantly less frequent than expected in the Georgian sample.

**Parenting cluster associations with adolescents' self-esteem.** An ANOVA was conducted with cluster membership, country, and its interaction as independent variables and self-esteem as a dependent variable. The results are presented in Table 4. Across maternal clusters, the adolescents of the Supportive - Low structuring/controlling cluster presented the highest scores of self-esteem, followed by the Supportive - Highly structuring cluster and the uninvolved cluster. Scores among adolescents in the Highly structuring - Moderately controlling cluster were significantly lower, whereas adolescents of the Highly controlling cluster presented the lowest scores of self-esteem. Across paternal clusters, the adolescents of the Supportive - Highly structuring and the Supportive - low structuring/controlling clusters presented the highest scores of self-esteem, followed by adolescents of the Uninvolved cluster and the Highly structuring - Moderately controlling cluster. Similar to the maternal clusters, adolescents of the Highly controlling cluster reported the lowest scores of self-esteem. As for the between-country differences, Belgian adolescents ( $M = 3.70$ ,  $SD = .03$ ) scored significantly higher on self-esteem than Georgian adolescents ( $M = 3.37$ ,  $SD = .03$ ,  $F = 73.08$ ,  $p = .000$ ,  $\eta^2 = .10$ ). One country X parenting cluster interaction effect was found – the Uninvolved paternal cluster was associated with moderate self-esteem scores in the Georgian sample ( $M = .3.46$ ;  $SD = .85$ ), whereas for Belgian adolescents it was associated with significantly lower scores ( $M = 3.55$ ;  $SD = .67$ ,  $F(4, 1253) = 2.60$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

## Discussion

The present study aimed to examine cultural similarities and differences in perceived parenting typologies and their associations with self-esteem in Georgian and Belgian adolescents. More specifically, we used a person-centered approach to derive parenting typologies and examined patterns based on four parenting dimensions (responsiveness, structure,

psychological control and autonomy support). Given that there is significant debate in the literature regarding the meaning and correlates of certain parenting dimensions across different cultural and socio-economic contexts (Bornstein, 2012; Wang & Phinney, 1998), it is important to study parenting across diverse populations. Overall, we found both similarities and differences across countries, underscoring variety within the common human nature (Shweder & Sullivan, 1993).

First, we examined patterns of adolescents' perceptions of their mothers' and fathers' parenting using cluster analysis (first goal) and we examined whether there were differences in terms of cluster prevalence in the Belgian vs. Georgian sample (second goal). We identified four profiles consistent with the literature (Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Rodríguez-Meirinhos et al. 2020; Smetana & Ahmad, 2018): Supportive - Highly structuring (high responsiveness and structure), Highly structuring - Moderately controlling (high structure and psychological control, moderate responsiveness), Supportive - Low structuring/controlling (high responsiveness and autonomy support, low behavioral expectations and psychological control), Highly controlling (very high psychological control, low responsiveness and autonomy support), and Uninvolved (low on all dimensions). There was no difference in terms of cluster prevalence between the Belgian vs. Georgian sample. This is surprising, as we particularly expected a higher prevalence of the Highly controlling parenting in the Georgian sample, in comparison to the Belgian sample, based on a more interdependent cultural orientation (Schwartz, 2006) and possible influences of Soviet pedagogy on the generation of Georgian parents (Yakhnich, 2016). However, our analysis did not find evidence for differences in the prevalence of Highly controlling profile across the samples. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, tremendous social change has taken place in the countries previously belonging to the Soviet Union, which is likely to be reflected in people's psychological functioning and characteristics (Lebedeva et al., 2018). Indeed, empirical findings point to important differences and changes of value priorities across generations in the post-Soviet countries (Lilleoja & Raudsepp, 2018; Sumbadze, 2011). This rapidly changing macro-context may bring about new norms regarding micro-level life situations, including approaches to parenting. Thus, although a Highly controlling parenting might have been more prevalent in Georgian parents 40 or 50 years ago, our results suggest that this is no longer the case. In other words, although more research is needed to examine how societal changes are linked to changing gender role representations and beliefs about parenting, these findings generally illustrate the

importance of conducting research in non-Western countries to gain more insight into the ways historical, macrocontextual changes are related to changing psychological conceptions, for instance, about parenting.

In the addition to the previously discussed four profiles, we also found a Highly structuring - Moderately controlling type with especially high levels of structure combined with moderate levels of psychological control, average levels of responsiveness, and low levels of autonomy support. Interestingly, this was the only cluster where we found between-country differences in terms of prevalence. Specifically, this cluster was more prevalent for fathers (but not for mothers) in the Belgian sample, compared to the Georgian sample. This finding could be interpreted in light of differential cultural expectations regarding father involvement in child rearing (cf. Hofferth, 2003): in Belgium, more involved fathering is likely regarded as more normative and therefore more expected from fathers. Indeed, studies conducted in western European countries document increases in father involvement, although gendered disparities remain (e.g., Gregory & Milner, 2006; Hook, 2006). However, at the same time, mothers continue to be considered most often as the primary caregiver, which is often further reinforced at the societal, organizational, and institutional level (e.g., Eagly et al., 2020; Meeussen et al., 2019). Potentially, involved fathering then could become particularly apparent through a more frequent adherence to a traditional conception of the role of the father (e.g., Randles, 2018), which could explain the higher prevalence of Highly Structuring - Moderately controlling fathers in the Belgian sample. However, there is clearly more research needed to examine explicitly the role of normative expectations regarding father involvement. Nevertheless, the parenting profiles found in our sample contribute valuable information to the limited findings from post-Soviet countries regarding parenting and offer important insights into cultural differences in parenting more generally.

The next goal of our study concerned examining the associations between parenting clusters and adolescent self-esteem, and whether country moderated these associations. We found that a maternal and paternal Supportive - Low structuring/controlling parenting profiles and paternal Supportive - Highly structuring parenting profile were associated with the highest levels of self-esteem. The highly structuring - Moderately controlling style was associated with lower levels of self-esteem than the highly structuring but supportive style (Supportive - Highly structuring). The lowest levels of self-esteem were obtained in the Highly controlling cluster.

These results corroborate earlier empirical findings, indicating that the correlates of structure depend on the way in which structure is provided (e.g., Grolnick et al., 2014; Soenens et al., 2009; Van Petegem et al., 2017): when the communication style of parental expectations is controlling and manipulative, it is associated with lower level of child adjustment, compared to when rules are set with a more autonomy-supportive communication style. Further, for all but one cluster, country did not moderate the association with self-esteem. This corroborates some of the basic tenets of Self-Determination Theory, which suggests that a parenting context that is perceived as supporting one's basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence and relatedness), such as through responsive and autonomy-supportive parenting and through refraining from relying on controlling practices, is universally beneficial for optimal development and psychological growth (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Vansteenkiste, Ryan, Soenens, 2020).

Although mostly finding evidence for similarity across countries, we found that country moderated the association between the Uninvolved paternal parenting cluster and adolescent self-esteem. Specifically, the Uninvolved paternal cluster was associated with lower self-esteem in the Belgian sample, but not in the Georgian one. Potentially, this may be due to cultural differences in children's interpretation of this parents' behavior. Specifically, the same parenting practice may carry different meaning or have different functional significance for children with different cultural backgrounds (Soenens, et al., 2015). As a consequence, certain parenting practices may be more or less detrimental if seen as normative within a particular cultural context (Chen et al., 2016). In Georgia, where conceptions about gender roles remain relatively traditional (i.e., mothers who are mostly expected to be nurturing and emotionally involved in children's lives and fathers are particularly responsible for financial security; CRRC, 2019), fathers from the Uninvolved cluster may be perceived by Georgian adolescents as fulfilling their duty as the bread winner. However, future research should examine explicitly whether these differences are explained by differential conceptions about father involvement.

Besides the answers to the main questions, the study found evidence for country differences in terms of self-esteem, with Belgian adolescents indicating higher levels of self-esteem than Georgian adolescents. Through numerous studies, self-esteem is found to be associated with important life outcomes (Orth et al., 2012) and a considerable amount of research has focused on the mean level differences in self-esteem across cultural contexts. Some studies

indicate that average scores of self-esteem are lower in samples from interdependent cultures (e.g., Heine, 2004; Schmitt & Allik, 2005). One explanation focuses on the cultural norms and standards for expressing high self-esteem. In more collectivistic cultural contexts, where humility, modesty, and group harmony are highly valued, lower reported self-esteem may be a reflection of such underlying cultural values (Wang & Ollendick, 2001). Other explanations question the universal importance of self-esteem, highlighting that in interdependent cultures the primary task of the individual is to fit into the social context instead of standing out from it (Kitayama et al., 1995). One line of research regarding cultural differences in self-esteem emphasizes the universality of relations between self-esteem and other variables, thus emphasizing the functional universality of self-esteem (Braun et al., 2009; Farruggia et al., 2004). In our findings, self-esteem was mostly similarly associated with different parenting styles across the two cultural groups, which to a certain degree supports the universalistic view of self-esteem.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

The present study had some limitations which should be addressed in future investigations. First, our data is based solely on adolescents. Past research has shown that adolescents generally are more accurate in reporting parenting behaviors as compared to parents (e.g., when considering observations of parenting; Hendriks et al., 2018). In addition, when predicting children's well-being and behavior, it seems that their perceptions of parenting are ultimately the most important predictors (Janssen et al., 2021). Nevertheless, recent empirical findings also illustrate the importance of multiple-informant information to obtain a fuller picture of the parenting context (Rote & Smetana, 2016; Van Petegem et al., 2020). Indeed, research has highlighted the diversity of subjective experiences of parenting (De Los Reyes, 2013; Korelitz & Garber, 2016), with studies documenting how discrepancies between parents' vs. adolescents' may help to explain differences in adolescents' psychosocial adjustment, above and beyond single-informant data (Ohannessian, 2012; Van Petegem et al., 2020). Therefore, future research would do well taking into account multiple perspectives. Second, the study design was cross-sectional which limits the conclusions we can make regarding directionality of effects. Recent evidence (e.g. Vrolijk et al., 2020) puts into question the directionality of the link between parenting and adolescent characteristics, suggesting that the existence of a causal effect of parental autonomy support on adolescent problem behavior may have been overemphasized.

Further, scholars indicate that different parenting approaches have common as well as unique interpretations across cultures that can be revealed through qualitative approaches as well, as it allows an in-depth focus on the meaning attached to these parenting approaches, and how these interpretations vary across cultural contexts (Cho et al., 2020). Third, the data collected in Belgium was considerably older in comparison with the data collected in Georgia.

Despite its limitations, this study contributes to the literature by providing new findings regarding parenting typologies across two distinct cultural contexts, including one cultural context that is considerably understudied in terms of parenting. Moreover, the person-centered analysis yielded evidence for a new typology of Highly structured - moderately controlling parenting which might be replicated in future studies. Further, cross-cultural studies that rely upon person-centered analyses are scarce. Our study particularly provided evidence for cross-cultural similarity in terms of prevalence of parenting typologies, suggesting that societal changes in Georgia are also apparent in the parenting domain. In addition, we found mostly evidence for cross-cultural similarity in terms of associations with self-esteem. Nevertheless, our findings revealed one context-related difference where the uninvolved parenting cluster was associated with lower self-esteem only in the Belgian sample. Overall, the findings offer evidence for both cultural-specific as well as universal perspectives on parenting that converge with the notion of universality without uniformity (Schweder & Sullivan, 1993).

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**Table 1.** Means, Standard Deviations, and Alpha Reliability Coefficients

	Culture			
	Belgian		Georgian	
<b>Mother</b>	M (SD)	$\alpha$	M (SD)	$\alpha$
Responsiveness	3.87 (.66)	.89	4.27 (.67)	.85
Structure	3.9 (.57)	.71	3.14(.84)	.64
Psychological control	2.29(.60)	.77	2.1(.72)	.80
Autonomy support	3.88 (.56)	.73	4.1(.7)	.77
<b>Father</b>				
Responsiveness	3.52(.78)	.91	3.75(.95)	.89
Structure	3.88(.68)	.72	3.05(.89)	.77
Psychological control	2.2(.65)	.82	2.05(.76)	.81
Autonomy support	3.72(.65)	.79	3.79(.8)	.76
Self-esteem	3.73 (.64)	.83	3.36 (.86)	.74

**Table 2.**  
*Measurement Equivalence as a Function of Adolescent Gender and Country of Residence*

Metric	Responsiveness		Structure		Psychological control		Autonomy support		Self-esteem
	Mothers	Fathers	Mothers	Fathers	Gender		Mothers	Fathers	
					Mothers	Fathers			
Invariance $\Delta$ CFI	.002	.002	.001	.001	.001	.001	.002	.002	.002
Scalar invariance $\Delta$ CFI	.001	.001	.003	.003	.004	.002	.002	.001	.001
					Country				
Invariance $\Delta$ CFI	.003	.004	.005	.004	.001	.001	.003	.006	.006
Scalar invariance $\Delta$ CFI	.002	.001	.005	.001	.001	.004	.001	.001	.007

**Table 3.***Univariate Follow-up Analyses of Gender, Country and Family Structure on the Parenting Dimensions*

	Gender				Culture				Family structure			
	Girls	Boys	$F(1, 1264)$	$\eta^2$	Belgian	Georgian	$F(1, 1264)$	$\eta^2$	Intact	Nonintact	$F(1, 1264)$	$\eta^2$
<b>Mother</b>												
Responsiveness	4.09	3.93	8.16**	.006	3.87	4.27	82.74***	.06	4.02	4.03	.56	.000
Structure	3.54	3.7	24.22***	.02	3.90	3.14	251.72***	.17	3.62	3.52	.01	.000
Psychological Control	2.17	2.28	9.82***	.008	2.29	2.1	15.32***	.01	2.22	2.22	.59	.000
Autonomy support	3.99	3.93	1.42	.001	3.88	4.11	23.78***	.02	3.97	3.96	.01	.000
<b>Father</b>												
Responsiveness	3.68	3.52	3.74	.003	3.52	3.75	7.42**	.006	3.66	3.4	22.76***	.02
Structure	3.53	3.58	5.1**	.004	3.88	3.05	215.17***	.15	3.60	3.34	3.46	.003
Psychological Control	2.08	2.23	10.62**	.008	2.20	2.05	2.51	.008	2.12	2.21	5.07*	.004
Autonomy support	3.8	3.69	1.69	.001	3.73	3.79	.06	.000	3.80	3.53	30.84***	.020

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

**Table 4.***Cross-tabulation of Parenting Clusters and Countries*

	Supportive – High structuring	Highly structuring – Moderately controlling	Supportive – Low structuring /controlling	Highly controlling	Uninvolved
<i>Georgia</i>					
Mother parenting	141 (29%) [.6]	100 (20%) [-1.1]	98 (20%) [.8]	70 (14%) [.2]	86 (17%) [-.5]
Father parenting	110 (22%) [.2]	112 (23 %) [-2]	113 (23%) [.5]	97 (19%) [1.4]	63 (13%) [.3]
<i>Belgium</i>					
Mother parenting	205 (26%) [-.5]	189 (24%) [.9]	136 (17%) [-.6]	108 (14%) [-.1]	148 (19%) [.4]
Father parenting	165 (22%) [-.2]	232 (30%) [1.6]	163 (21%) [-.4]	117 (15%) [-1.2]	91 (12%) [-.3]

*Note.* Standardized residuals between parentheses



**Table 5.***Means (SD) in Self-esteem as a Function of Parenting Cluster and Culture*

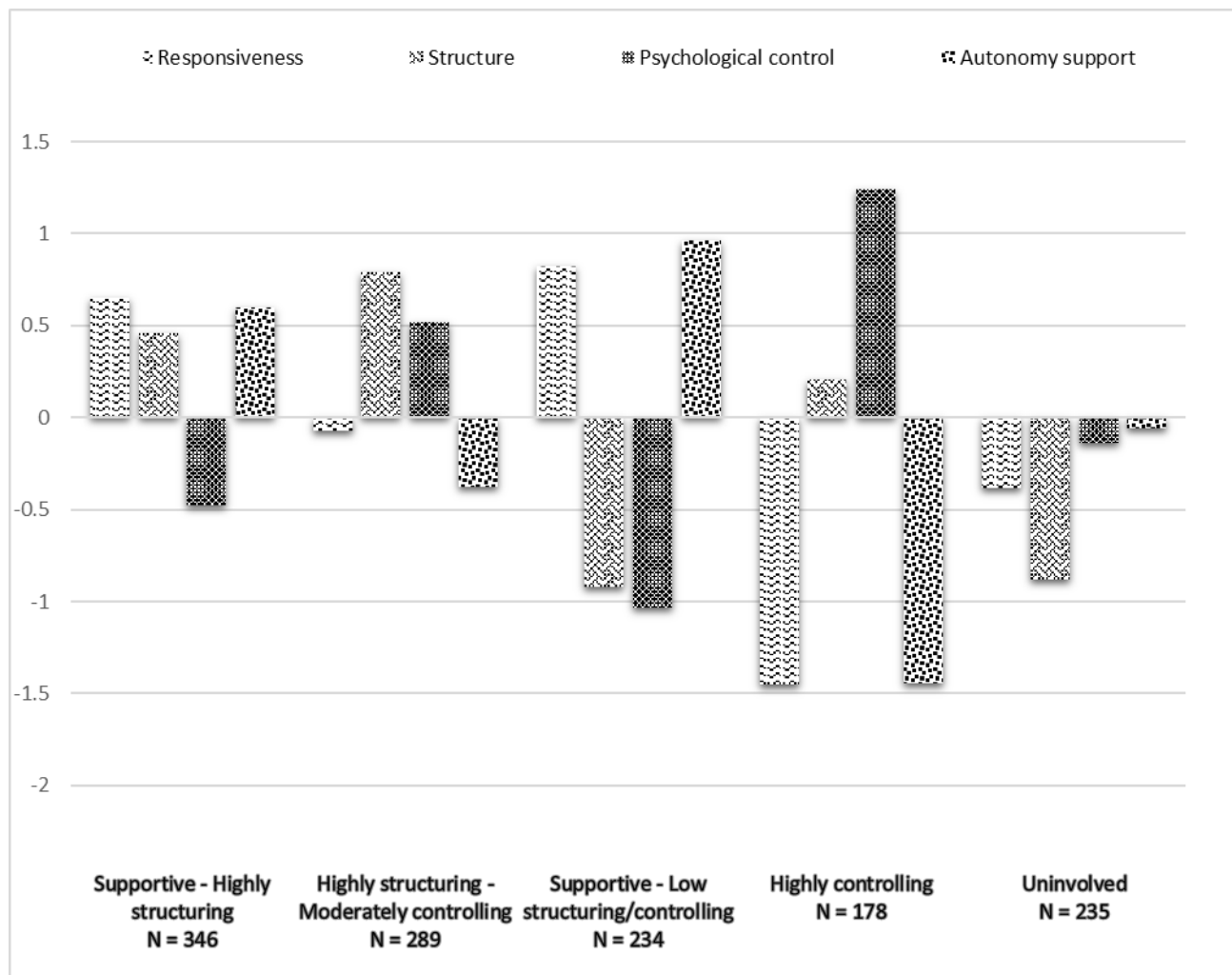
Supportive – Highly structuring	Highly structuring – Moderately controlling	Supportive – Low structuring/controlling	Highly controlling	Uninvolved	<i>F</i> - value	$\eta^2$
<b>Maternal parenting</b>						
3.48 <sup>b</sup> (.84)	3.18 <sup>c</sup> (.84)	3.78 <sup>a</sup> (.87)	2.86 <sup>d</sup> (.78)	3.33 <sup>bc</sup> (.85)	36.74 <sup>***</sup>	.05
<b>Paternal parenting</b>						
3.7 <sup>a</sup> (.05)	3.45 <sup>b</sup> (.04)	3.76 <sup>a</sup> (.05)	3.26 <sup>c</sup> (.05)	3.51 <sup>b</sup> (.06)	17.83 <sup>***</sup>	.05

*Note.* A cluster mean is significantly different from another mean if they have different superscripts. A mean without a superscript is not significantly different from any other mean.

\*\*\* $p < .001$ .

**Figure 1.**

*Maternal Parenting Clusters (Z-score on the vertical axis)*



**Figure 2.**

*Paternal parenting clusters (Z-score on the vertical axis)*

