



The Great Recession & Symptoms of Depression in Mexican-origin Families: Considering Youth Perceptions & the Timing of Resilience Factors

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Introduction

- While the effects of chronic poverty has been explored in depth, limited research has centered on the impact of unpredictable and acute economic events, such as the great recession of 2008.
- Latinx families faced the largest decline in wealth, compared to any other racial group in the country¹.
- Youth perceptions of stressful events might drive individual differences in psychosocial development^{2,3}.
- Warm, positive relationships with caregivers and family routines are two resilience factors that demonstrate promotive influences on youth mental health in contexts of risk^{4,5}.
- We examined changes in parent depressive symptoms and youth perception of economic stress in relation to changes in financial hardship during the Great Recession and its implications for youth's depressive symptoms during and two years after the crisis.
- Further, we explored concurrent and prospective promotive effects of family routines and parent-youth relationship quality during and after the recession.

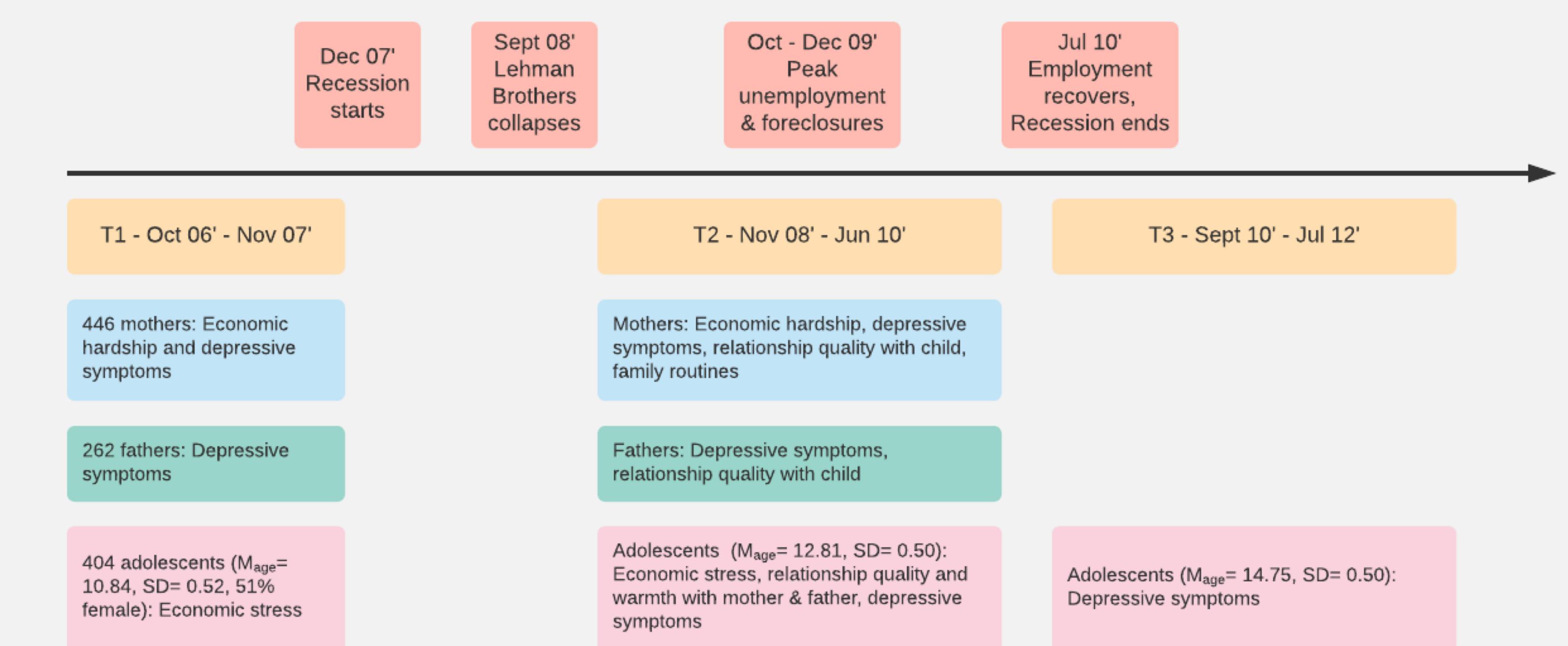
H1. Higher financial hardship initiated by the recession would be related to increases in parents' depressive symptoms and adolescents' perception of economic stress.

H2. These acute changes in economics and parental depression would be concurrently related to higher depression in youth, lower relationship quality and family routines during the recession.

H3. Acute economical and parental depression changes would prospectively predict increases in youth depression, whereas higher relationship quality and family routines would predict decreases in depression after the recession.

Methods

Mexican-origin families living in Northern California. 43% lived below the FPL.



Measures

- Economic hardship: Economic Hardship Questionnaire⁶.
- Maternal & paternal depression: Mini Mood and Anxiety Symptom Questionnaire⁷.
- Youth perception of economic stress: Multicultural Events Scale for Adolescents⁸, Economic Stress subscale.
- Parent-Child relationship quality: Two composites of child- and parent reported relationship quality⁹, and child-reported warmth using the Behavioral Affect Rating Scale¹⁰
- Family routines: Family Routines Questionnaire.
- Youth depressive mood: Early Adolescent Temperament Questionnaire – Revised¹¹, depressive mood subscale.

Results

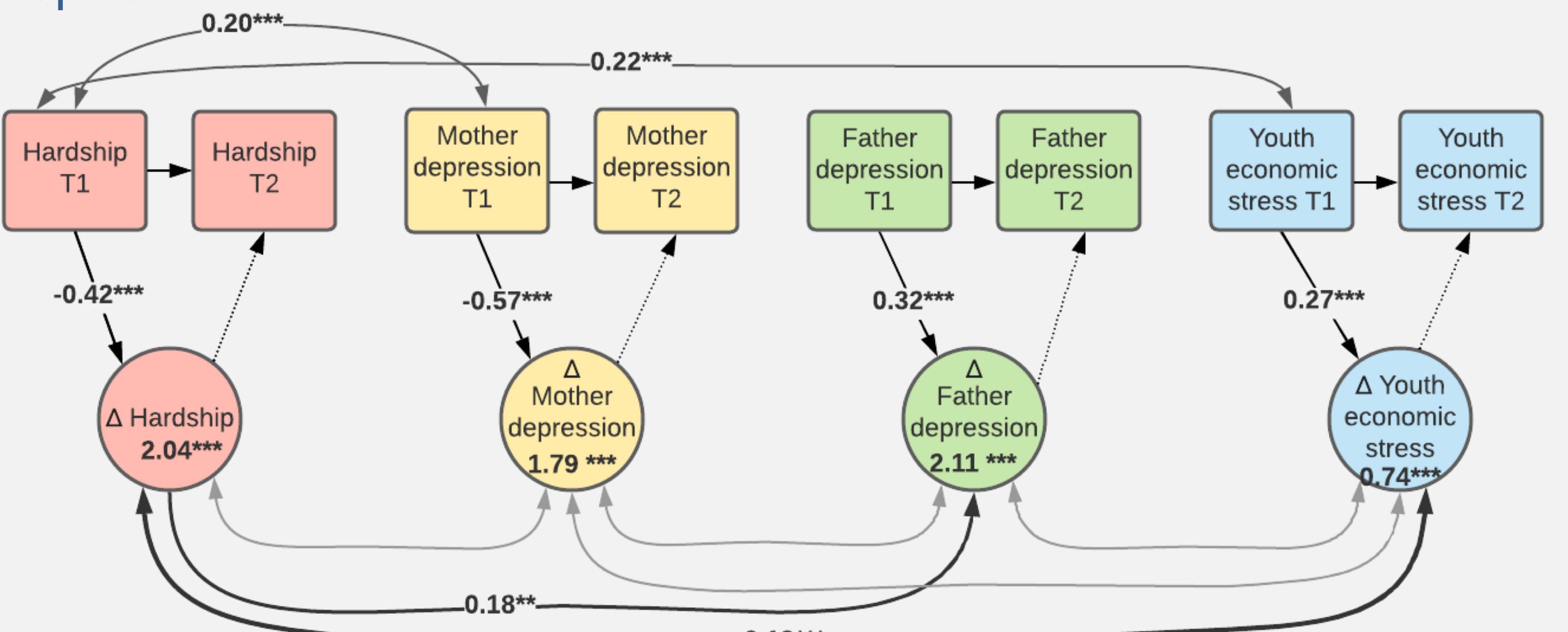
Multivariate SEM includes: (1) Latent changes from T1-T2 and covariances between hardship, economic stress, and parent depression. (2) Covariances between latent changes, resilience factors and youth depressive mood at T2. (3) Regression of T3 depressive mood on these predictors.

Covariates: Youth age, sex, and study cohort

Good model fit $\chi^2(78) = 122.739$, $p = .001$, $CFI = 0.94$, $TLI = 0.90$, $RMSEA = .036$ 90% CI [.023, .048], $SRMR = .058$

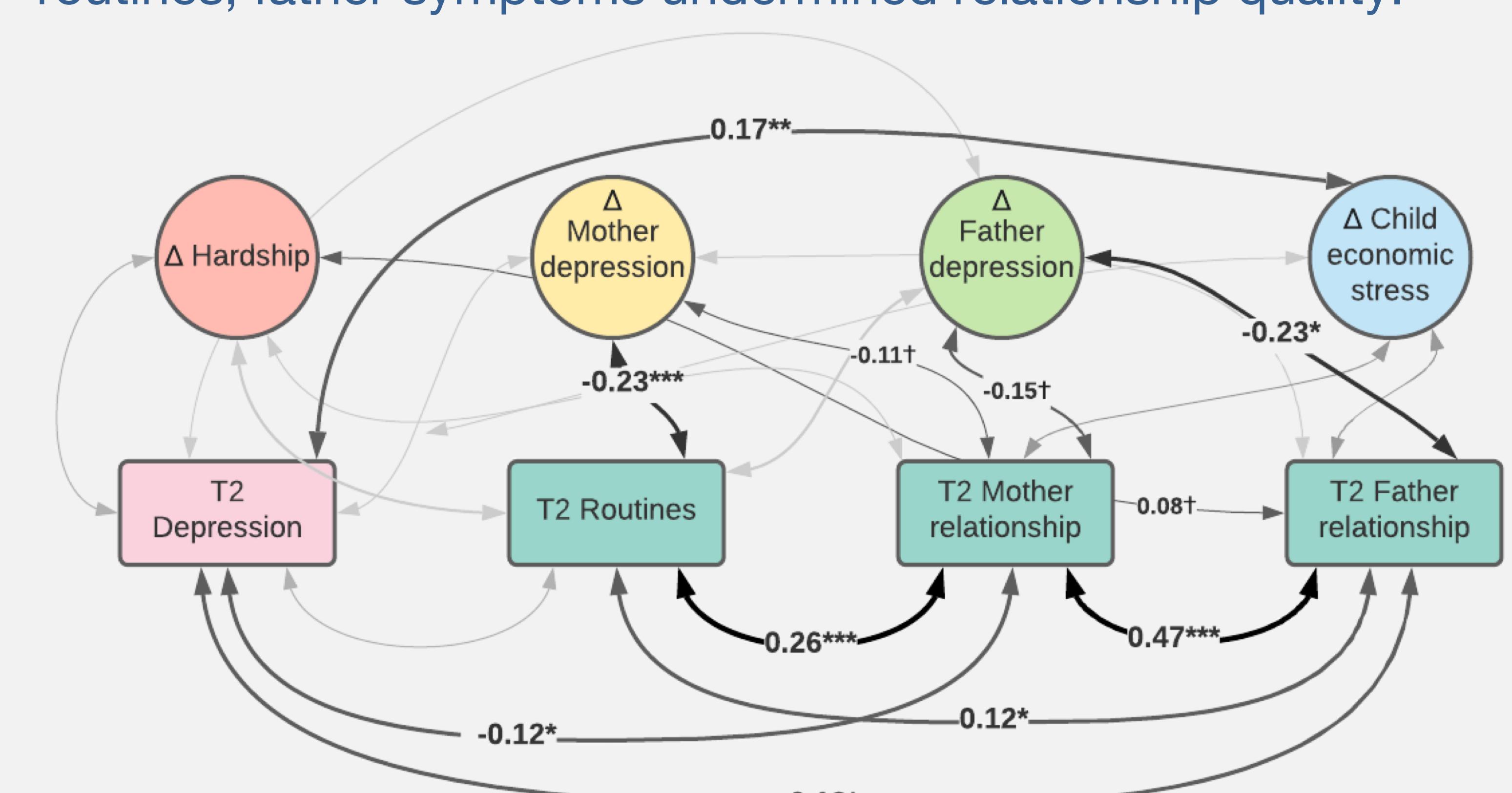
H1 | There were significant increases in financial hardship, parents depressive symptoms, and youth perception of economic stress during the Great Recession

Figure 2a. Greater increases in hardship were only associated with increases in father depressive symptoms and youth perceptions.



H2 | Increases in youth perception of economic stress were concurrently associated with depressive symptoms during the recession

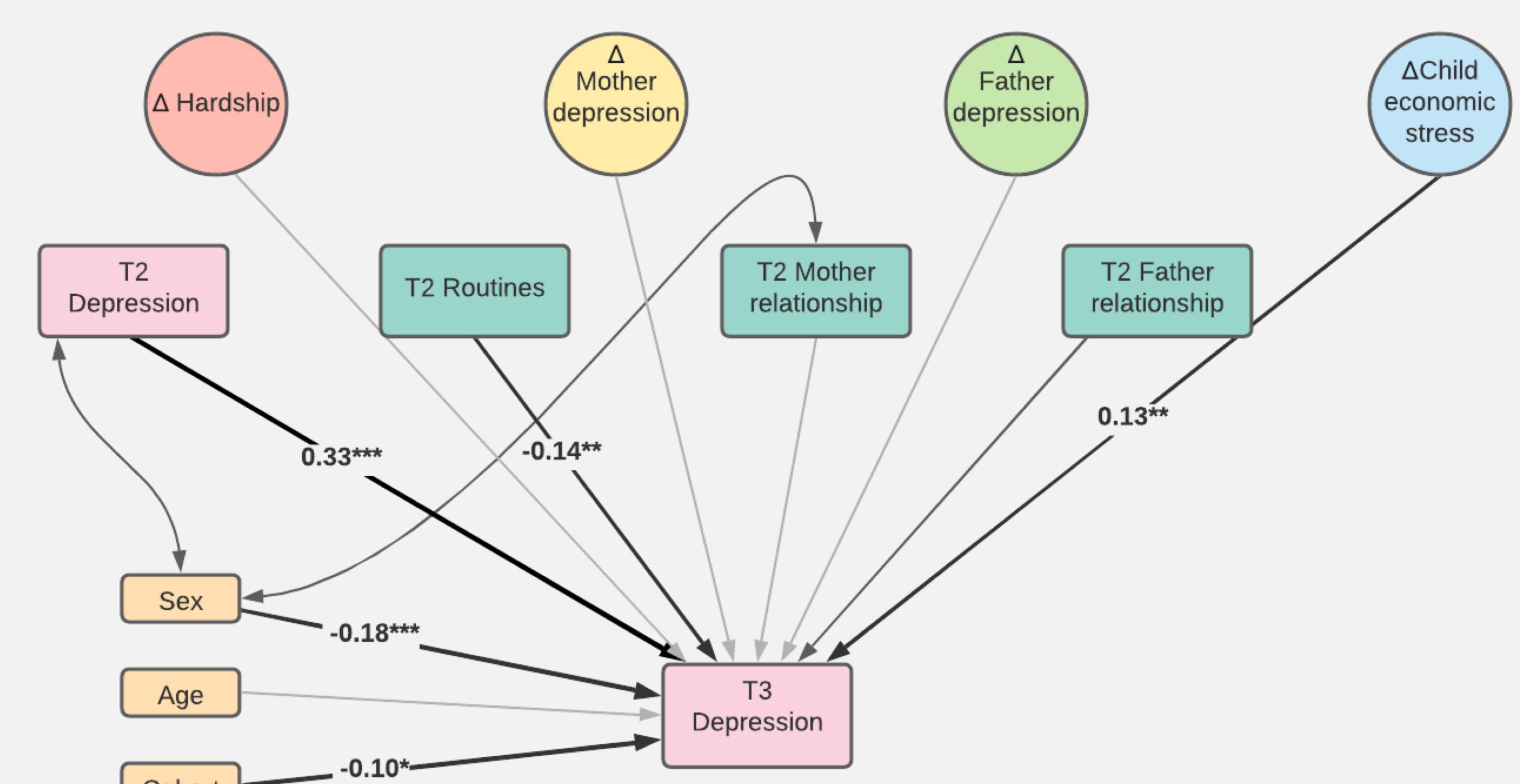
Figure 2b. Increases in hardship and parent depressive symptoms were not associated to youth depression at T2. Whereas increases in mother depressive symptoms undermined household routines, father symptoms undermined relationship quality.



Concurrently, only parent relationship quality was related to lower youth depression.

H3 | Whereas changes in youth perceptions were related to increases in depressive mood after the recession, family routines during the recession were related to decreases in depressive mood

Figure 2c. Increases in hardship and depressive symptoms were not associated to T3 depressive mood in youth.



Prospectively, only family routines were related to lower depressive mood.

Discussion

- Increases in economic hardship experienced by Mexican-American households initiated by the great recession influenced the family system as a whole, increasing father depressive symptoms and youth perceptions of economic stress.
- In accordance with current frameworks of childhood adversity^{2,3}, changes in youth's perceptions were uniquely associated with depressive symptoms after the recession, suggesting that event perception is important in linking acute economic change with later adjustment.
- We found differential effects of relationship quality and family routines depending on timing, suggesting resilience is a multisystem, dynamic process⁴. Youth felt less depressed during the recession when they felt they were in warm and supportive relationship with their parents. Yet, it was the establishment of family routines and structure that prospectively predicted less depression following the recession, pointing to the importance of organization and predictability during early adolescence⁵.
- Emerging research on family functioning during the COVID-19 pandemic converges with the promotive effects of family routines^{12,13}. Understanding mechanisms through which routines exert this effect might contribute to interventions seeking to increase stability in children's lives, especially in contexts of crises.

Take a picture of this QR code to check study references, R Code and full output. Please contact me for questions or suggestions: eugarte@ucdavis.edu

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