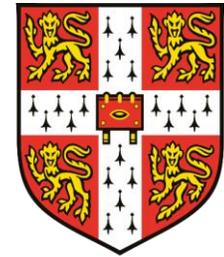


# Relations of Self-Control and Parental Involvement with Internalizing Problems and Prosociality from Early to Late Adolescence: A Risk-and-Resilience and Positive Development Perspective

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Introduction



Aims of the Study



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Strengths, Limitations & Future Directions

# Overview



# Introduction

# Early Adolescence

- Pivotal period in human development marked by the confluence of **biological, psychological, and social challenges**
- **Turning point** in children's journey towards young adult life since it serves both as
  1. a backdrop for the insurgence of negative outcomes, such as **internalizing problems** (Gunnar et al., 2009),
  2. a window to improve youths' social competencies, such as **prosocial behavior** (Blankenstein et al., 2020), across adolescence



What **factors** might **favor** and **contrast** these developmental paths is still an unsolved question



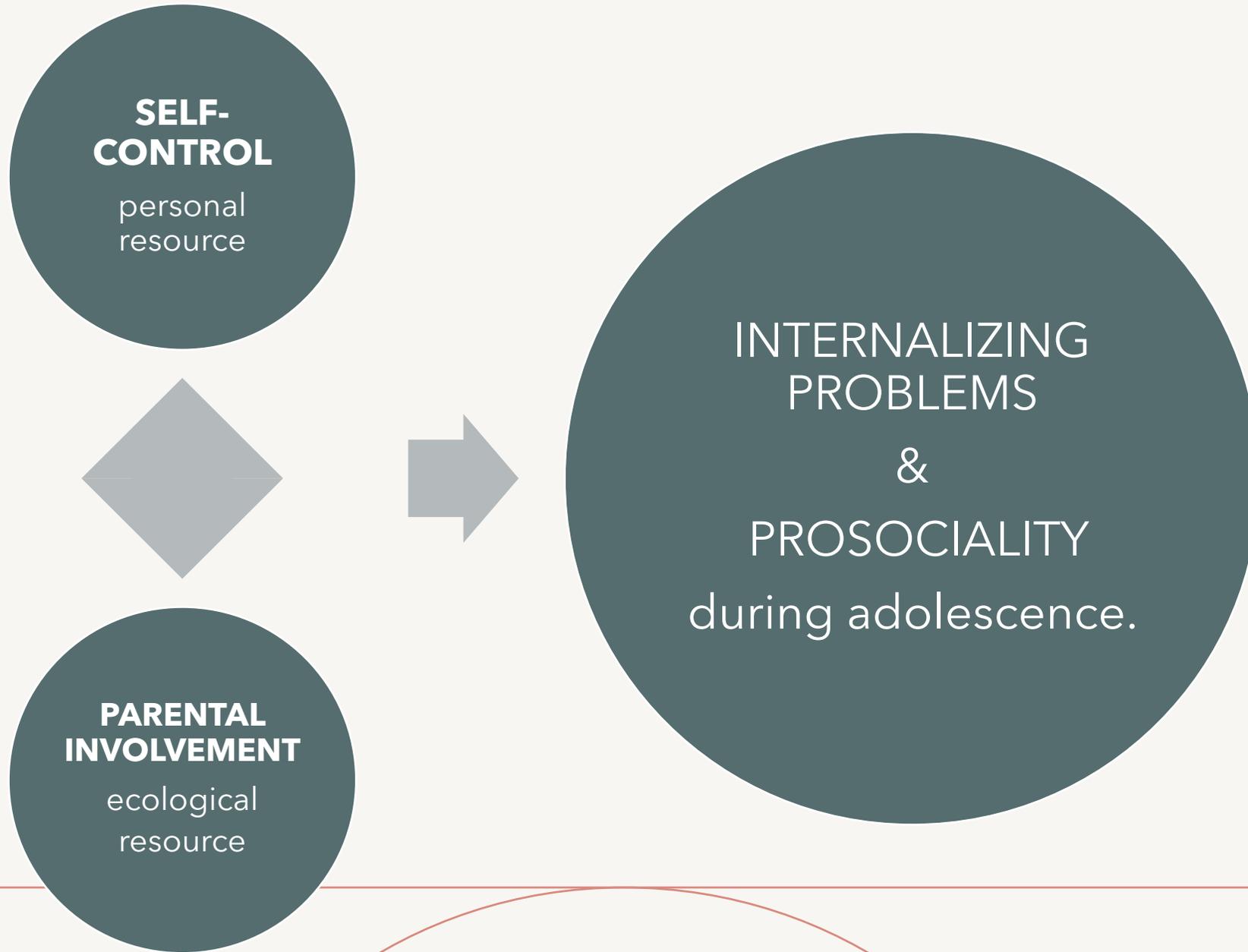
# Risk-and-Resilience Framework

- ❖ The branch of research
  - which focuses on risk factors
  - has recently been enriched with new and interesting theoretical frameworks:

## **Positive-Youth-Development** (PYD; Lerner et al., 2019)

- Emphasizes the relevant role of both youth's personal and ecological resources in favoring their optimal growth.
- Suggests that when adolescents' individual resources and their ecological assets are aligned, thriving is more likely to occur.

# Positive~Youth~Development Framework



# Risk-and-Resilience & Positive-Youth-Development Integration

An integration of risk-and-resilience and  
Positive Development perspectives is  
particularly relevant when studying the  
transition years across adolescence  
(Masten et al., 2014).



# Aims of the Study

# Limitations of previous research

## 1. Small samples

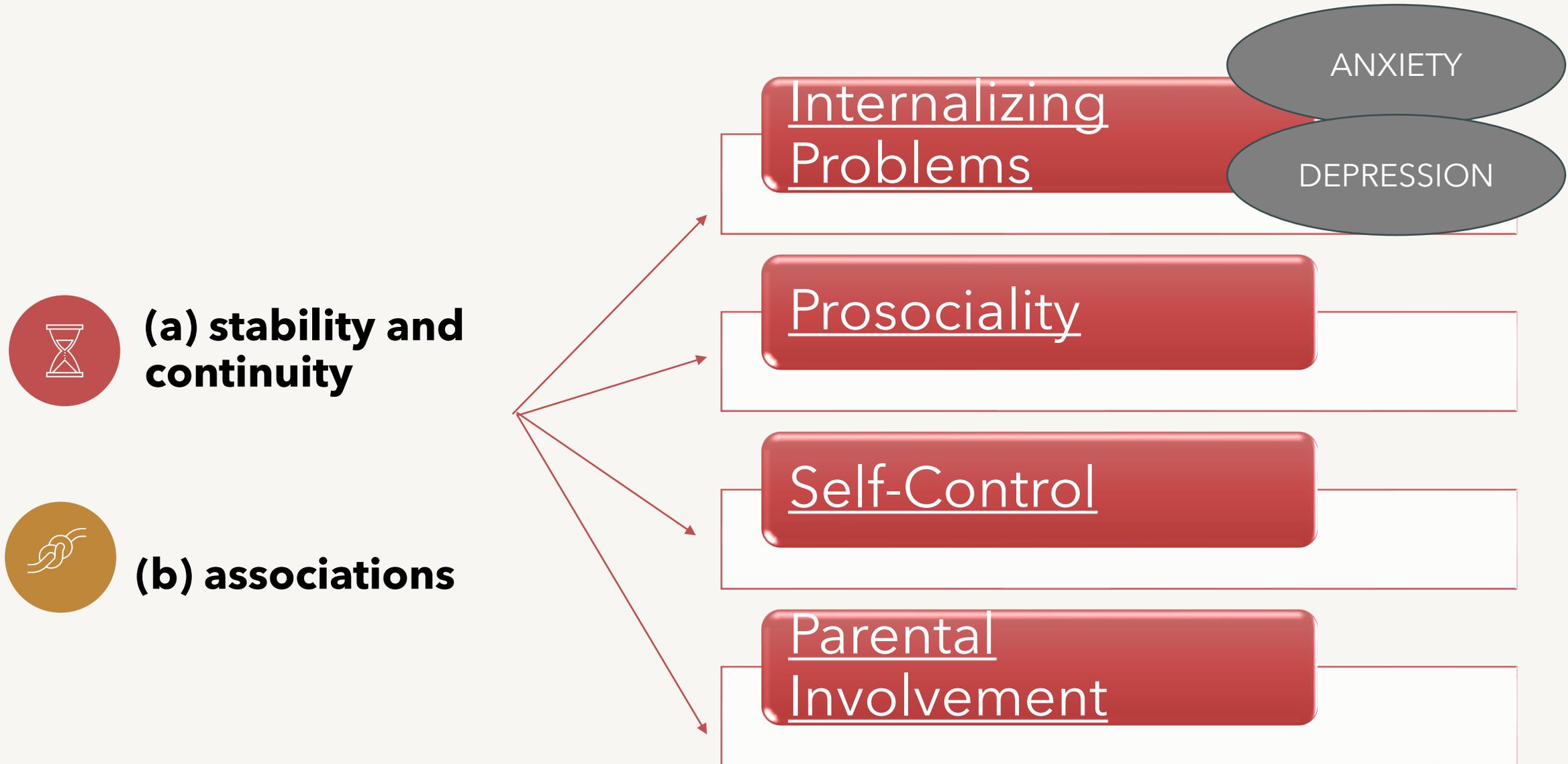
**2. Inconclusive findings** concerning the stability and changes of internalizing problems, prosociality, self-control, and parental involvement during adolescence (stability vs changes; decrease vs increase; gender vs no gender differences)

**3. Few** studies have considered **both individual** (i.e., self-control skills) **and ecological** (i.e., parental involvement) **resources**

**4.** Extremely exiguous work focused on **early adolescence**

**5. No** studies have **simultaneously and longitudinally focused** on the four constructs here considered

# Major Goals ~ Investigate from early to later adolescence:

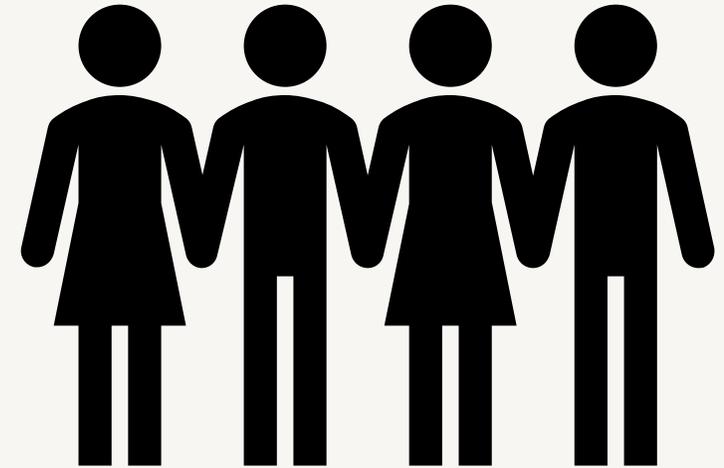




# Method

# Participants and Procedure

- $N = 1522$  ( $F = 738$ );
- 4 waves: 11, 13, 15, 17 years;
- Participants and procedure drawn from the Zurich Project on the Social Development from Childhood to Adulthood (z-proso)



**(Self-reported)  
Measures:**

**SELF-CONTROL:**

self-control scale  
(Grasmick et al., 1993)

**PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT:**

Alabama Parenting  
Questionnaire  
(APQ; Shelton et al., 1996)

**INTERNALIZING  
PROBLEMS:**

Social Behavior Questionnaire  
(SBQ; Tremblay et al., 1991)  
adapted for adolescents  
(Murray et al. 2019).

**PROSOCIALITY:**

Social Behavior Questionnaire  
(SBQ; Tremblay et al., 1991)  
adapted for adolescents  
(Murray et al. 2019).

## SELF-CONTROL:

self-control scale (Grasick et al., 1993)

- Included 10 items, two for each of the 5 interrelated sub-domains:
  1. **impulsivity** (e.g., "I often do whatever brings me pleasure here and now, even at the cost of some distant goal"),
  2. **self-centredness** (e.g., "If the things I do upset people, it's their problem, not mine"),
  3. **risk-seeking** (e.g., "Excitement and adventure are more important to me than security"),
  4. **volatile temper** (e.g., "I lose my temper pretty easily"),
  5. **preference for physical activities** (e.g., "I like to get out and do things more than I like to read or contemplate ideas").
- Items were rated on a **4-point Likert-type scale** from false (1) to true (4). High scores indicated higher self-control.
- Cronbach alphas for the overall self-control scale were .75 for Time 1, .78 for Time 2, .75 for Time 3, and .73 for Time 4.

## **PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT:** Alabama Parenting Questionnaire (APQ; Shelton et al., 1996)

- The scale includes **six items** (e.g., “When you have a problem you can talk to your parents about it”)
- Items were rated on a **4-point Likert-type scale** from never (1) to often/always (4). Higher scores were indicative of higher parental involvement.
- Cronbach alphas for the parental involvement measure were .66 for Time 1, .75 for Time 2, .77 for Time 3, and .77 for Time 4.

## INTERNALIZING PROBLEMS:

Social Behavior Questionnaire (SBQ; Tremblay et al., 1991)  
adapted for adolescents (Murray et al. 2019).

- Respondents were asked to indicate how they had felt over the past month using two **sub-domains**:
  - ❖ **anxiety** (three items, e.g., "I was scared, fearful, or anxious")
  - ❖ **depression** (two items, e.g., "I was sad without knowing why").
- Items were rated on a **5-point Likert-type scale** from never (1) to very often (5).
- Cronbach alphas for the internalizing problems measure were .74 for Time 1, .80 for Time 2, .82 for Time 3, and .83 for Time 4.

## PROSOCIALITY:

Social Behavior Questionnaire (SBQ; Tremblay et al., 1991)  
adapted for adolescents (Murray et al. 2019).

- Respondents were asked to indicate which things they had done over the past 12 months using 8 items, such as:
  - “You tried to comfort someone who was crying or was upset” indicative of altruism/pacification,
  - “You were good at understanding another person’s feelings” indicative of empathy/sympathy.
- Items were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale from never (1) to very often (5).
- Cronbach alphas for the prosociality measure were .79 for Time 1, .82 for Time 2, .80 for Time 3, and .82 for Time 4.

# Analytical Strategy

- Continuity: ANOVA;
- Stability: Pearson Correlations;
- Associations between variables:  
Latent Growth Curve Modeling  
(Muthén & Muthén, 2012).

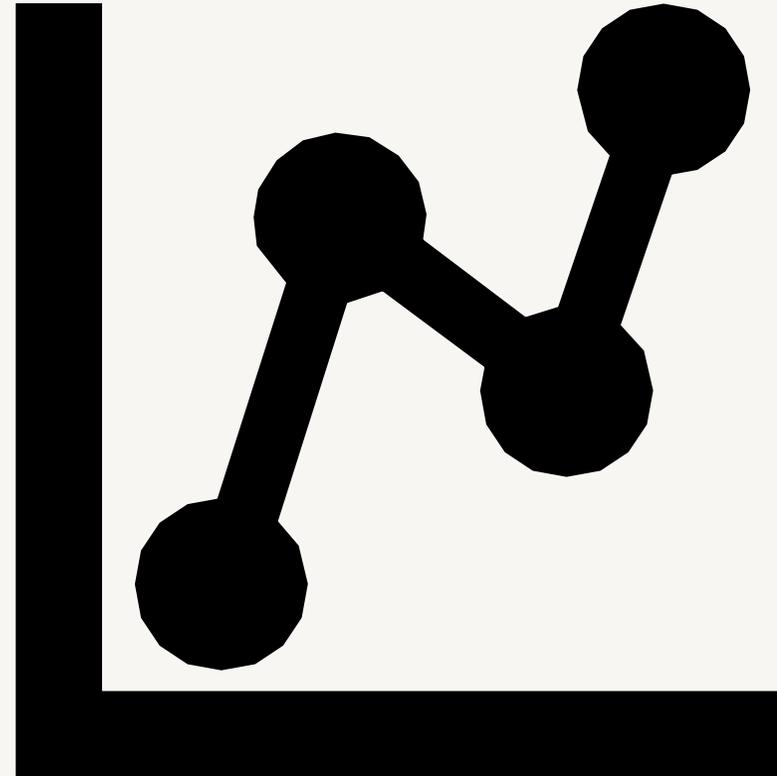
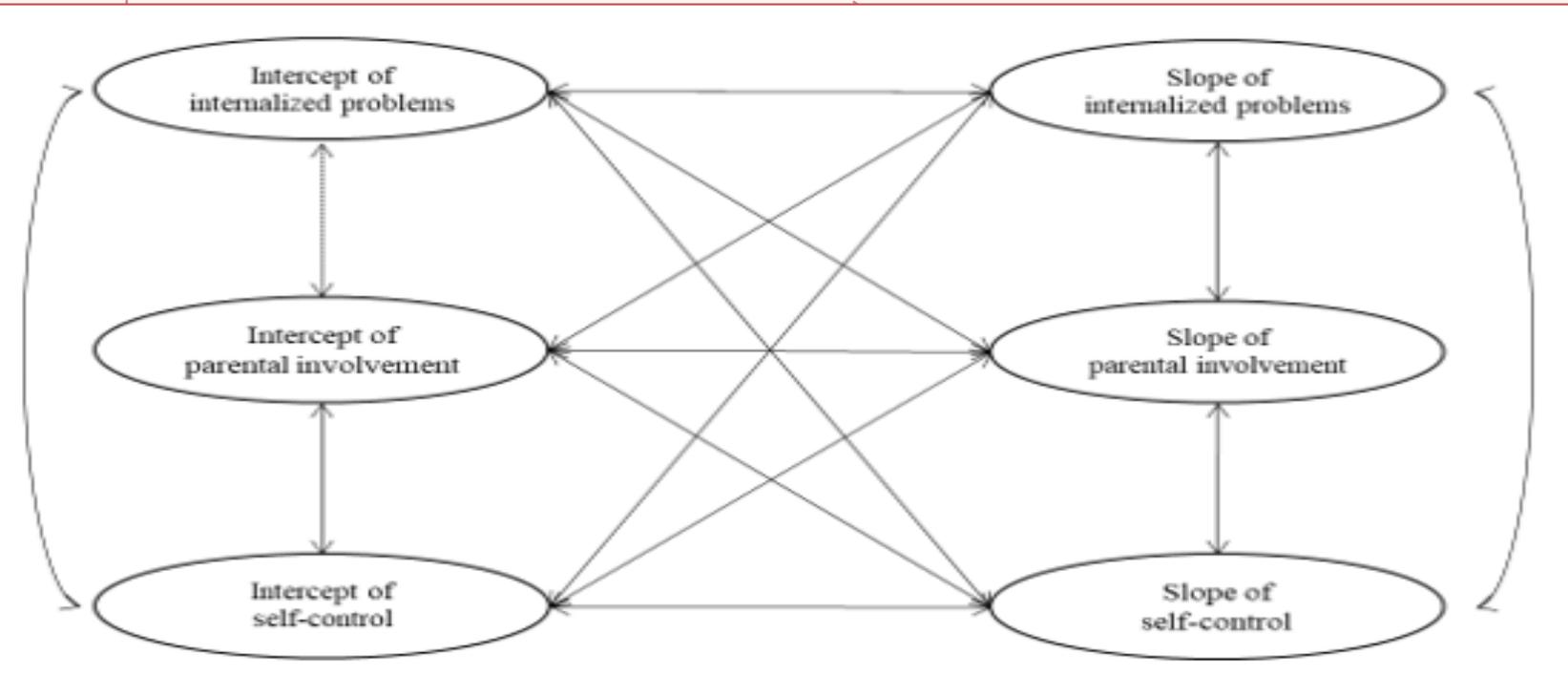


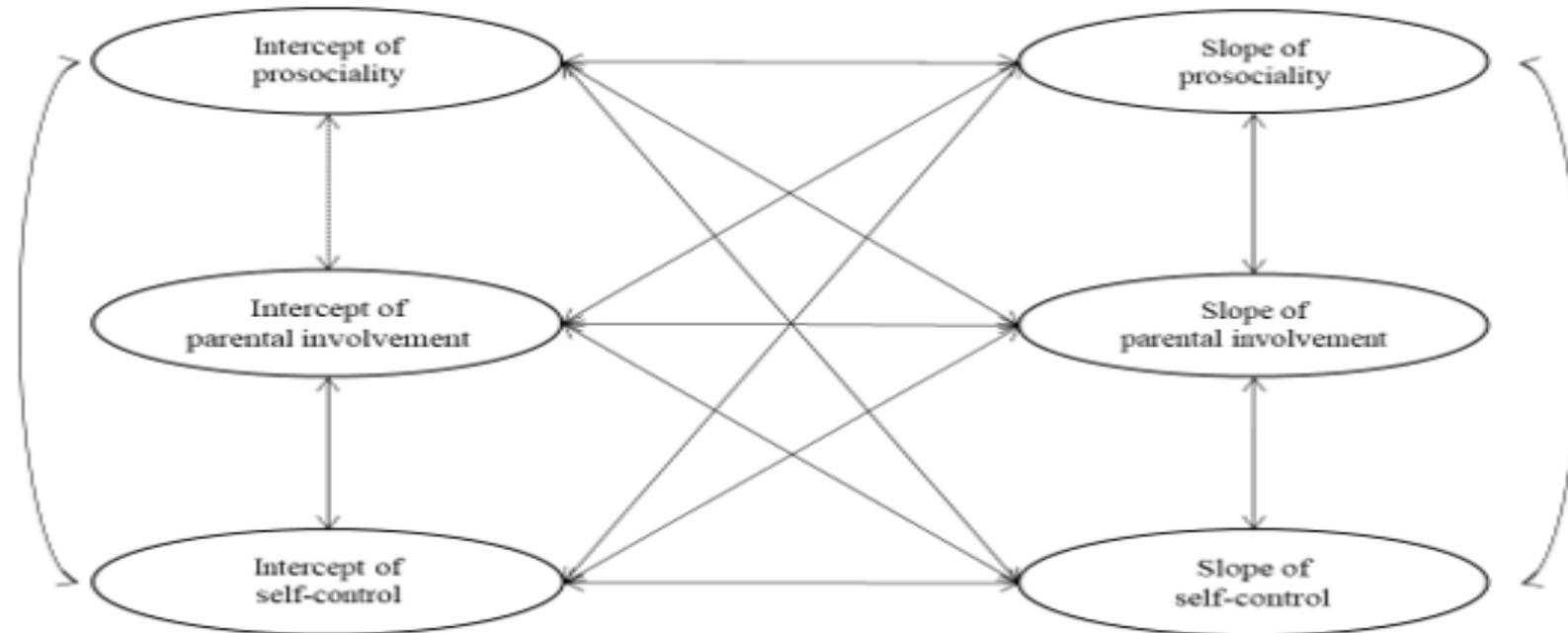
Figure 1.

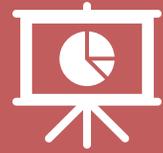
Hypothesized multivariate model for **internalizing problems**



Hypothesized multivariate model for **prosociality**

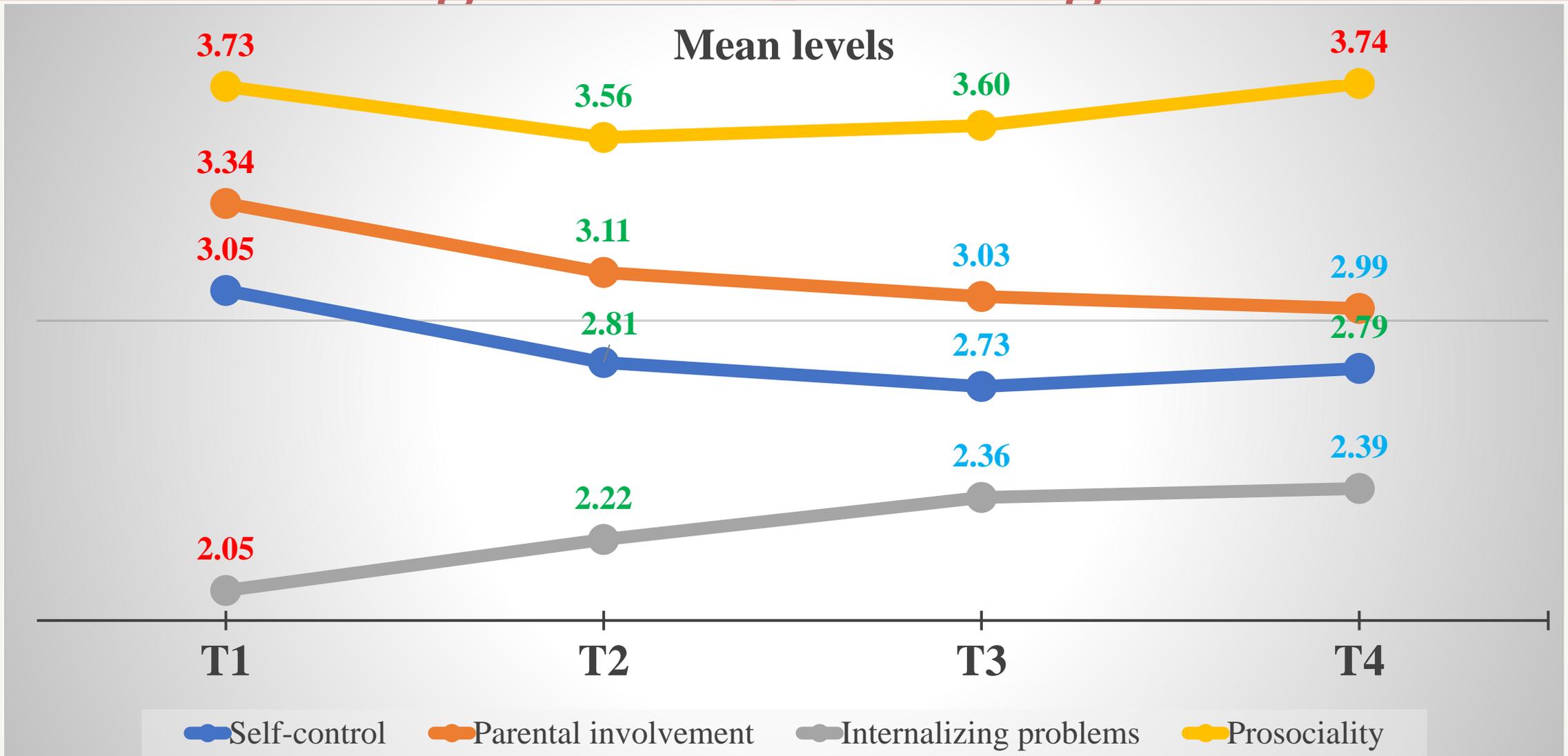
Figure 2.





# Results

# ANOVA – Age-related trends of single constructs

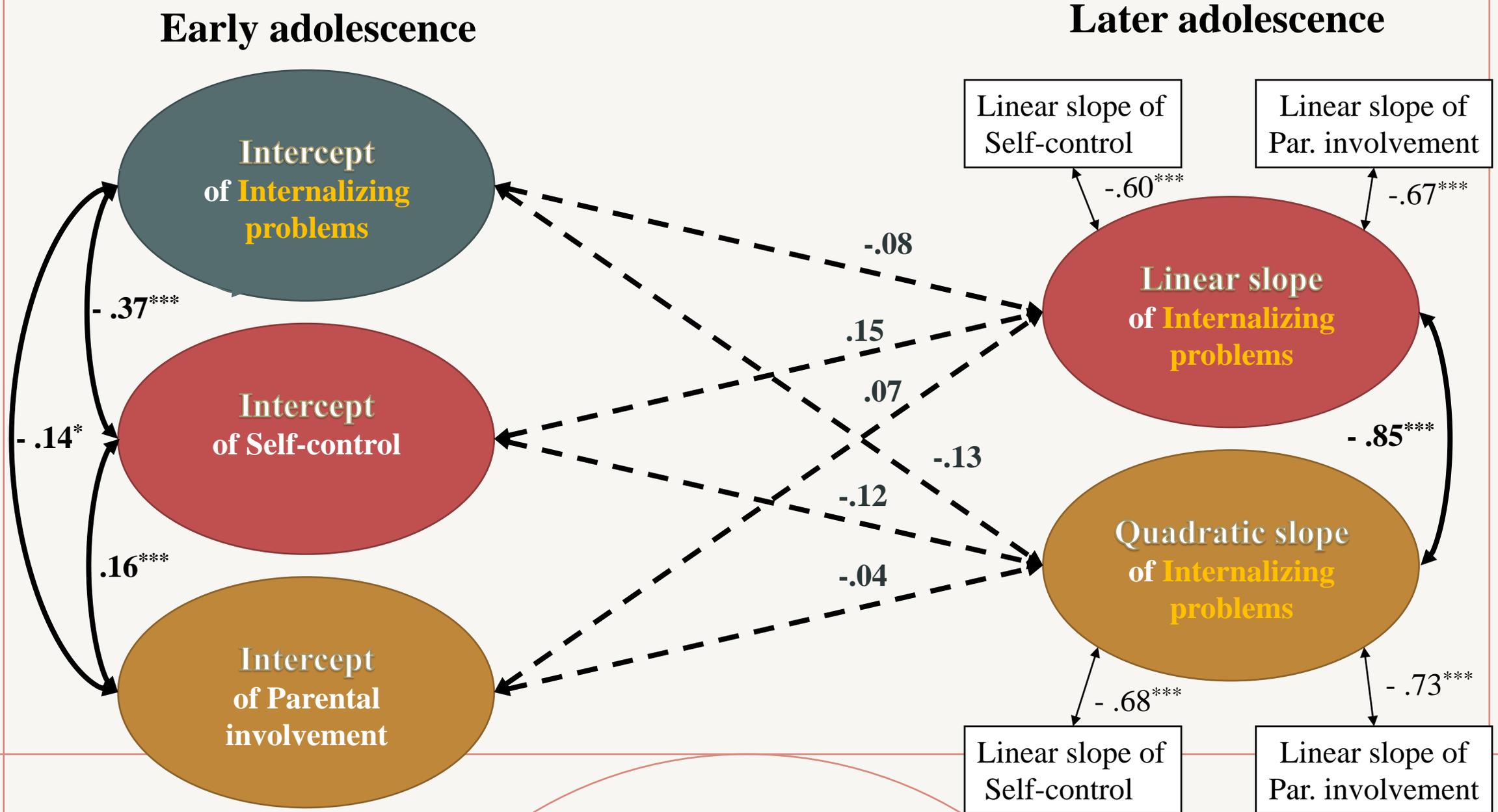


Dimension	ANOVA		
	F	df	$\eta^2$
Self-control	165.16***	3,2730	.15
Parental involvement	151.54***	3,2754	.14
Internalizing problems	75.61***	3,2763	.08
Prosociality	35.22***	3,2763	.04

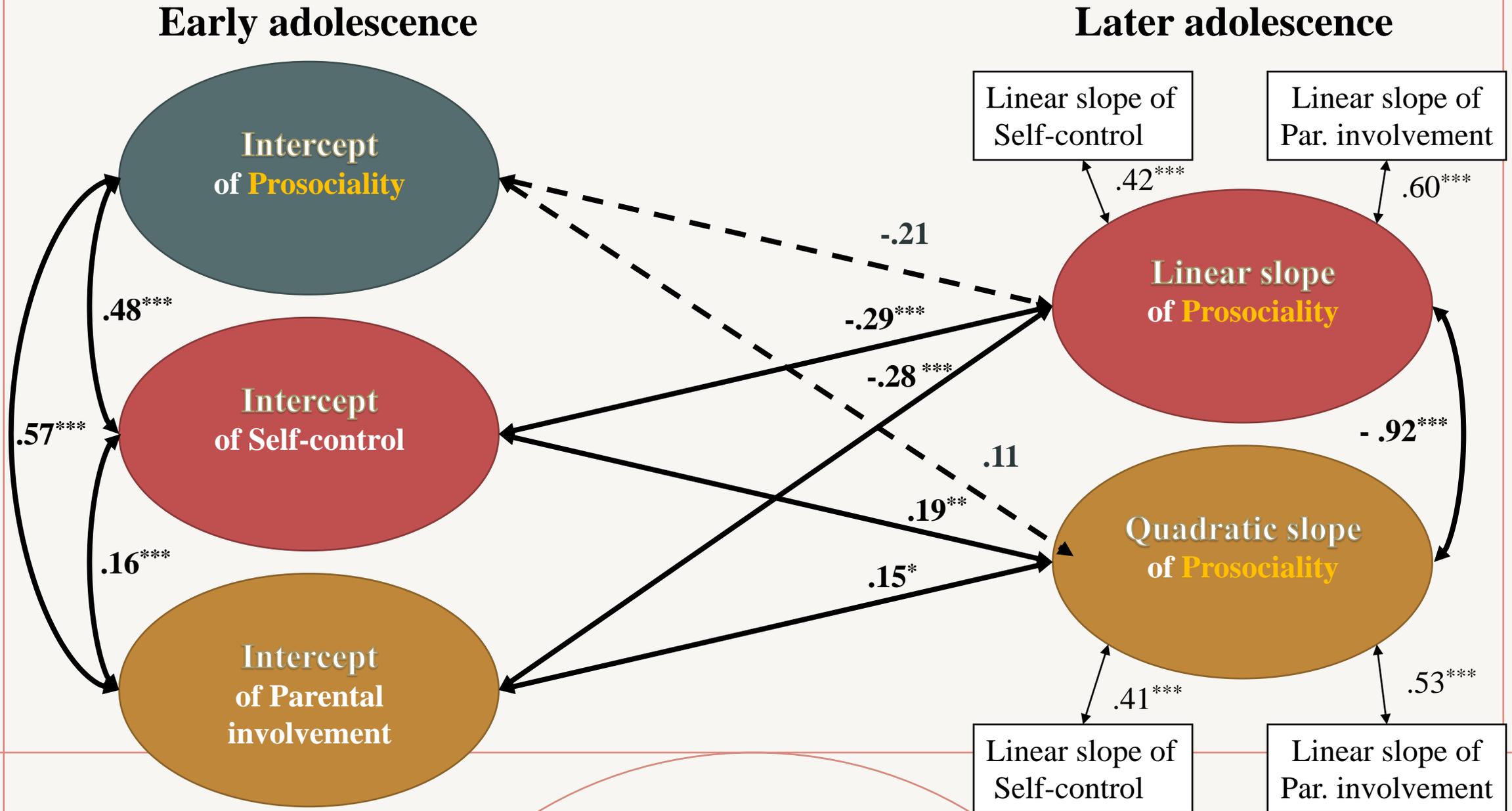
# Temporal stability

At each measurement time, **internalizing problems were negatively correlated with self-control** (but the correlation was  $< .10$  at Time 4) **and parental involvement** (but the correlation was not significant at Time 1 and  $< .10$  and Time 2).  
At each measurement time, **prosociality was positively correlated with self-control and parental involvement.**

# Multivariate Latent Growth Curve – Longitudinal relations between the constructs



# Multivariate Latent Growth Curve – Longitudinal relations between the constructs





# Discussion

## Discussion

The results gave some support to the idea that early adolescence may represent a turning point in terms of future sociopsychological functioning in later adolescence.

- Youth in early adolescence seem to have higher levels of self-control, parental involvement, and prosocial behavior, as well as lower levels of internalizing problems, compared to older adolescents.
- Moreover, higher self-control and parental involvement in early adolescence may be resilience factors supporting adolescents' better social adjustment in later years of adolescence: the higher they are, the less room remains for the potential general decreases in prosociality.

## Age-related trends of single constructs

Our findings revealed a decline in parental involvement, self-control, and prosociality, and an increase in internalizing problems from early to later adolescence. Such trends of change tend to decelerate as time went by.

- **Increase in internalizing problems:** when the youth are to move into middle and late adolescence, they begin to make more autonomous choices and engage in a variety of activities (e.g., decisions about education and new relations with family members) that could make older adolescents more stressed and vulnerable.
- **Decrease in prosociality:** youth learn to regulate their prosocial inclinations and combine them with their self-interests (Nantel-Vivier et al., 2009). Also, younger adolescents are more concerned with group membership than their older counterparts, which might lead them to enact more prosocial performances to obtain higher social preferences (Li & Wright, 2014).

## Age-related trends of single constructs

- **Decrease in self-control:** hormonal and cerebral changes characterizing puberty. Such changes might impair the balance between brain circuits triggering impulses and those trying to control them. The slowdown in the decrease during advanced adolescence is explained by new connections between the prefrontal cortex and other emotional information-processing areas (Oliva et al., 2019).
- **Decrease in parental involvement:** as individuals progress through adolescence, parents might grant them more autonomy and independence, producing for them a higher sense of separation (Branje et al., 2013). On the other hand, parents might have difficulties in meeting the new requests and needs of their developing children, undermining their perception of parental involvement.

## Longitudinal relations between the constructs

Findings evidenced that the associations between the study variables were relatively stable from early to late adolescence.

- This trend is even more characterized by LGC analyses, showing similar relations between the rates of change.
- **Internalizing problems** were negatively associated with both self-control and parental involvement, whereas **prosociality** was positively related to.
- In line with the PYD perspective, this stresses the relevant role that both individual (self-control) and ecological (parental involvement) assets might play in fostering the youth's others-oriented behaviors and in disfavoring internalizing problems during adolescence.

## Longitudinal relations between the constructs

Nevertheless, results indicated that the **level of self-control and parental involvement in early adolescence were not related to rates of change of internalizing problems in later adolescence**

- The protective factors represented by the initial levels of self-control in early adolescence could be counteracted by the risk factors represented by the growing internalizing problems. This two-way process would produce a zero-sum path with non-significant results.
- In early adolescence individuals begin to feel a strong need for autonomy and independence. This could make the perception of parental involvement a less crucial factor for emotional wellbeing in later adolescence.

## Longitudinal relations between the constructs

**Our expectations were supported with regard to the relations of prosociality with self-control and parental involvement.**

- The youth who are not well self-controlled are less effective in suppressing their self-centered tendencies and less willing to aid.
- When adolescents do not perceive warmth, closeness, and support from parents, they are less likely to internalize prosocial values and replicate them in different social situations (Wong et al., 2021)
- Despite a prosociality decrease across adolescence, greater self-control and parental involvement in early adolescence slow down such a decline. Both accumulating the necessary abilities to regulate oneself and being exposed to involved parents limit the youth's progressive disengagement from helping, caring, and benefitting others

!

**Strengths,  
Limitations &  
Future Direction**

# Strengths

- ✓ the **large sample** of adolescents
- ✓ the **concurrent associations** between self-control, internalizing problems, prosociality, and parental involvement from early to late adolescence **across four-time points**
- ✓ the **longitudinal nature** and the **use of repeated measures**
- ✓ the several **implications** for
  - theory
  - research
  - practice

# Implications

- **theory**: our study adds to the corpus of knowledge
  - by focusing on a period, i.e., **early adolescence**, which is **too often overlooked**, yet full of changes and challenges that make this period particularly worthy of further investigations,
  - by targeting **personal and ecological resources**, rather than merely adolescents' difficulties.
- **research**: this study demonstrated the utility of taking an **LGC approach**, which allowed us to capture change dynamics from early to late adolescence.

# Implications

- o practice:

- Our conclusions may **inform parents, youth workers, and practitioners.**
- The key message is that parental involvement and self-control observed in early adolescence are resources that tend to protect young persons from a decrease in prosociality (which positively impacts the youth's socio-emotional development) during adolescence.
- Considering not all adolescents present both personal (self-control) and ecological (parental involvement) assets in early adolescence, and thus may flounder in the subsequent years, it is particularly relevant to **implement programs and practices that both facilitate the development of adolescents' self-regulatory skills and endorse their parents' involvement.**

## Limitations & Future Directions

Caution is needed in interpreting and generalizing the study findings:

1. the dataset had a significant number of **missing values** that might have reduced the effectiveness of some data analysis.
2. the study included a sample of young people growing up in one of the most affluent cities in the world (i.e., Zurich) and, therefore, it was **not representative of the general adolescent population**. Hence, future research needs to consider other different socio-economic and cultural contexts.

## Limitations & Future Directions

3. the study was based on **self-report measures**, subject to response bias. Future research considering multiple measurement approaches is recommended.

4. the prosociality measure. Some researchers have noted that helping might differ as a function of the target and the type of prosocial behavior (e.g., Carlo & Randall, 2002).

Future work is required on this aspect and appears very intriguing.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR  
ATTENTION