

Breakout sessions:
Families and parenting
Bronte

15:50-17:10

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Prospective associations between maternal support and children's psychosocial adjustment and health in the Growing Up in Scotland Study

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Background

Benefits of social (“informal”) support received by parents of young children, from family and friends

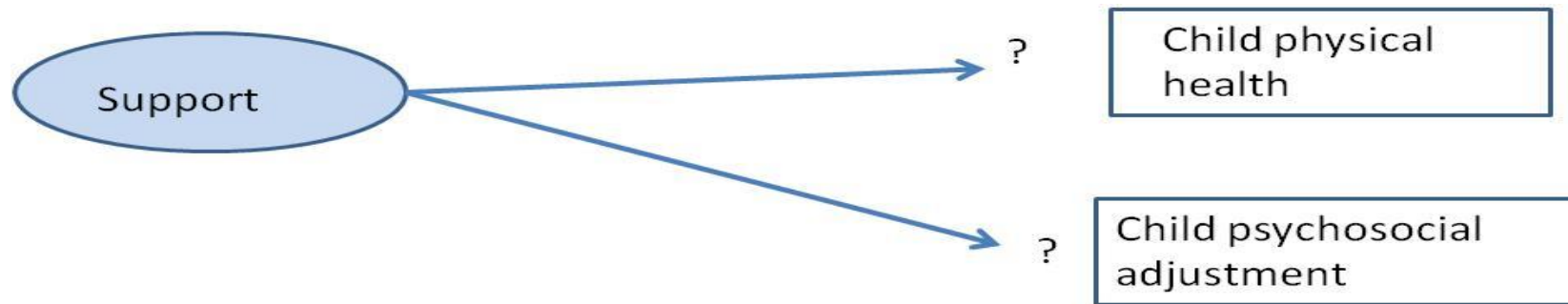
- Mental and physical health benefits for **mothers** well-established
- Few US studies: also benefits **children’s** psychosocial adjustment and health (Ryan et al 2009, Leininger et al 2009, Turney 2013)

Research gaps

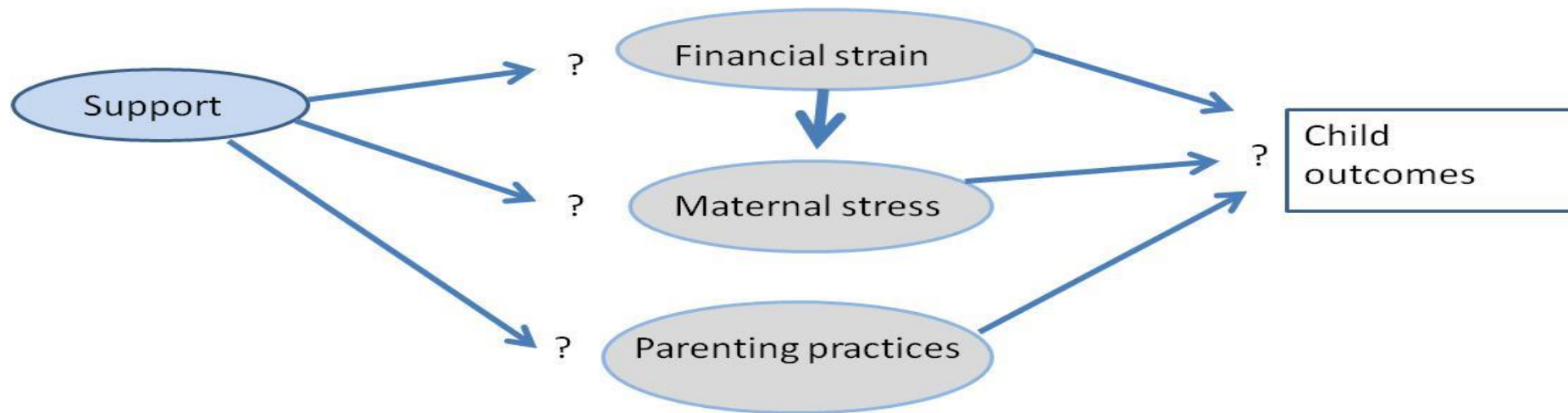
- ? benefits of maternal support for children **outside the US**
- ? benefits of **formal support** (from health and social work professionals), as well as **informal support**
- ? **Pathways** from support to child outcomes

Research questions

1. Is support (informal, and formal) associated with child health in a UK sample?



2. What are the pathways from support to child outcomes?



Data set and design

- Growing Up in Scotland first birth cohort, born 2004-5
- Analysis sample N=2903

10-22 months

Confounders
Maternal :
Ethnic minority
Smoking
Distress
Partner support
Attitudes to smacking
Family :
Poverty
Lone parent
Large family size
Child:
Long-term illness
Developmental delay

10-22 months

Perceived maternal support
Informal (Family + friends)
Formal (Health and social work professionals)

34 – 94 months

Child outcomes
General health: fair/poor
Feeding problem
Sleep problem
Common infections: 3+ past year
Accidents/injuries: 1+ past yr
Overweight (including obese)
High total difficulties score (behavioural/emotional problems)

Measures: Informal support – family and friends

4 items, $\alpha=0.65$:

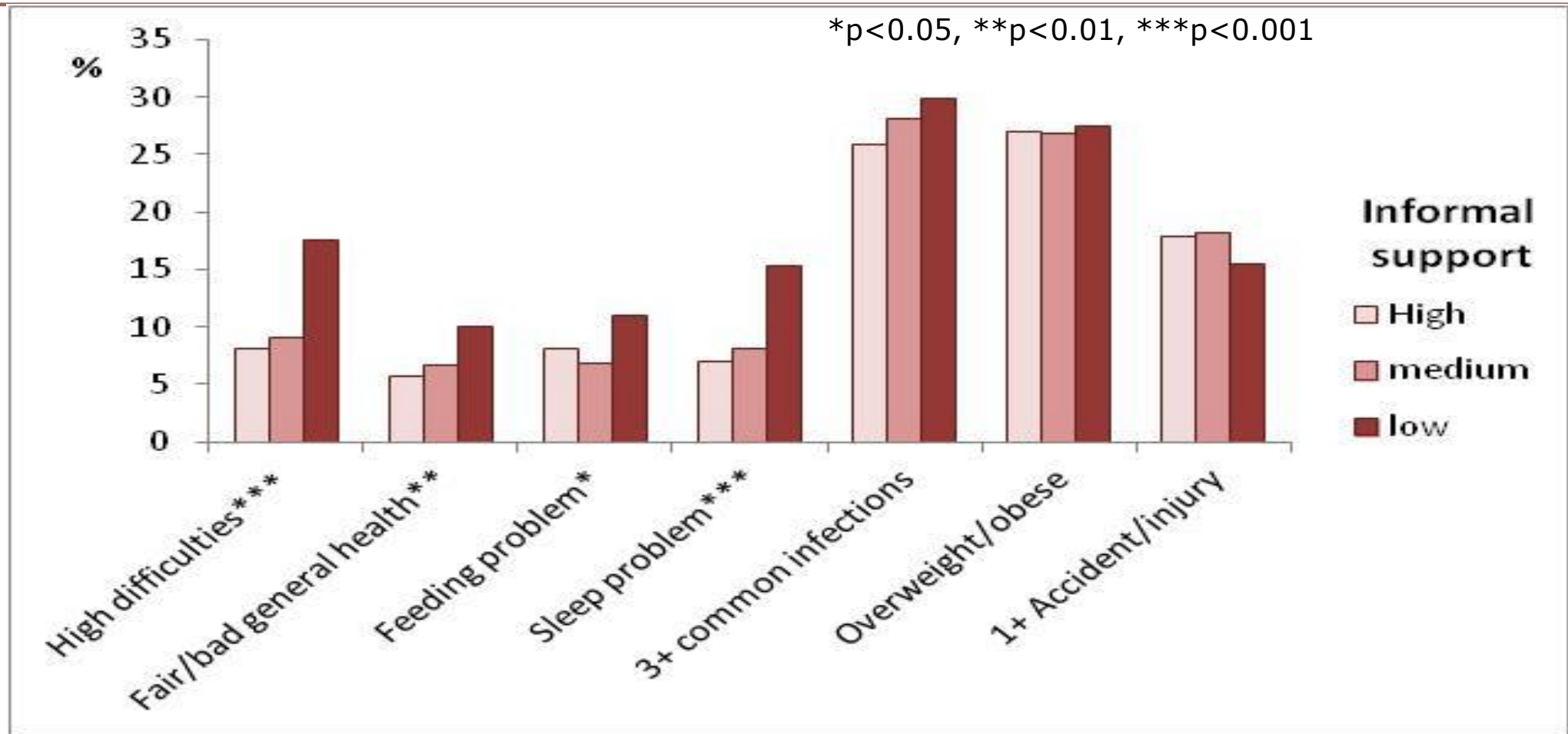
- Number of **close relationships** (4-point scale, “lots of people” to “none”)
- Agreement with “I feel **close** to my immediate **family**” (parents, sibs) (5-point scale)
- Agreement with “My **friends take notice of my opinions**” (5-point scale)
- Perceptions of **help from family and friends** (3-point scale)

Measures: Formal support –health and social work professionals

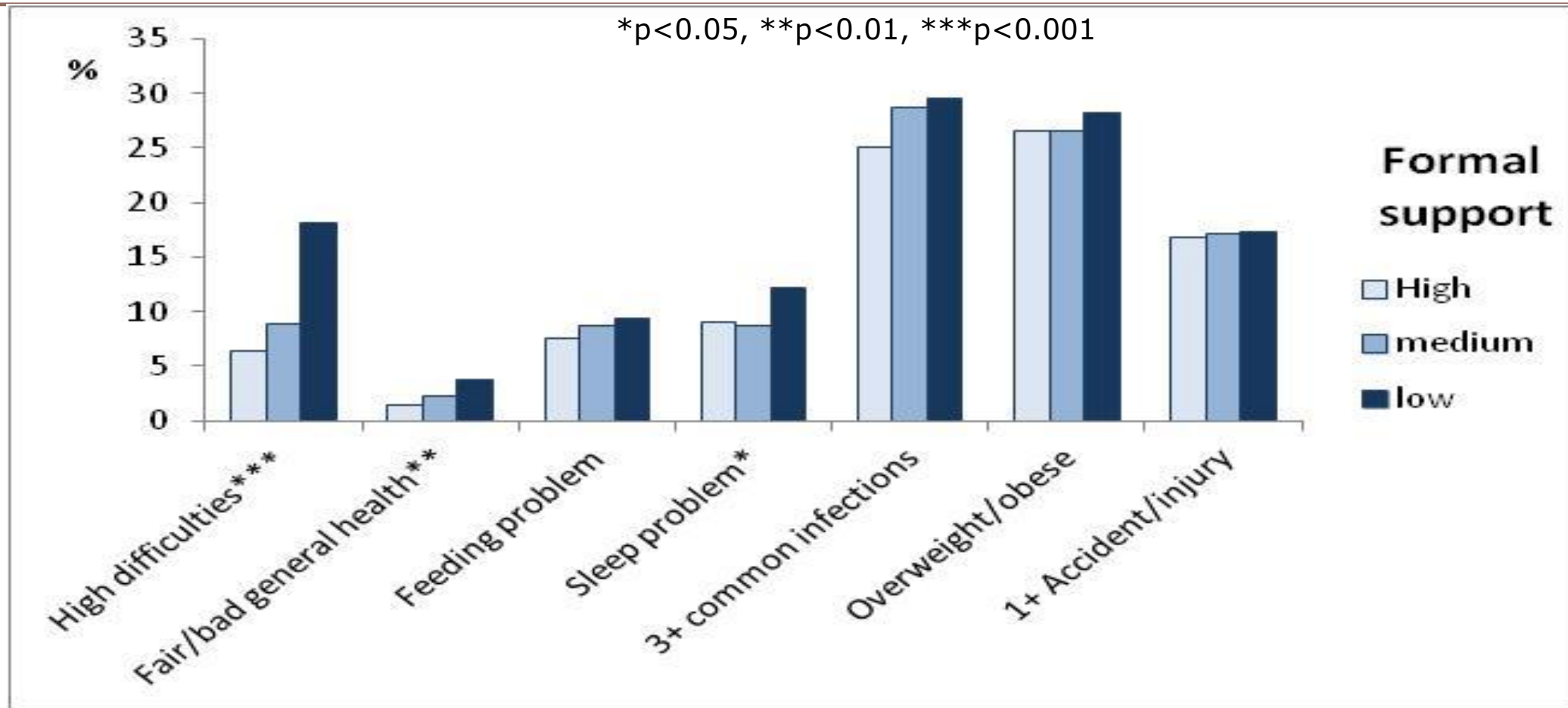
5 items, 5-point scale (standardised alpha=0.64)

- “If you ask for help or advice on parenting from professionals like doctors or social workers, they start **interfering or trying to take over.**”
- “It's **difficult to ask people** for help or advice about parenting **unless you know them really well.**”
- “It's **hard to know who to ask** for help or advice about being a parent”
- “Professionals like health visitors and social workers **do not offer parents enough advice and support** with bringing up their children”
- “If other people knew you were getting professional advice or support with parenting, they would **probably think you were a bad parent**”

Part 1: associations between early **informal** support and child outcomes at 46 months



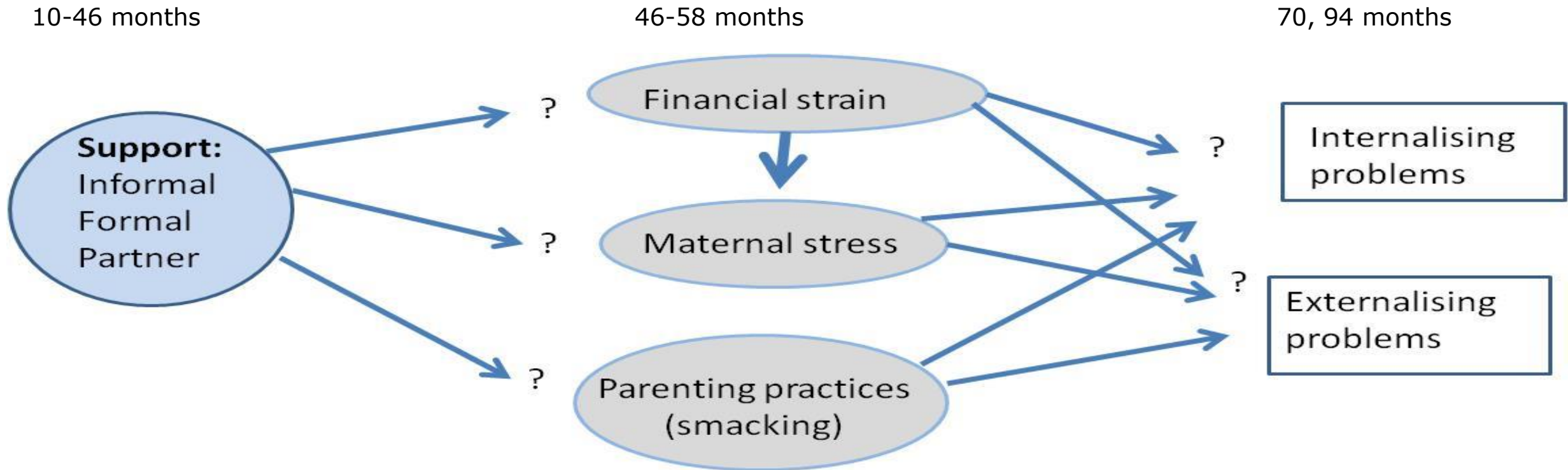
Part 1: associations between early **formal** support and child outcomes at 46 months



Associations between early maternal support and child outcomes

Age at outcome	Support	Health fair/bad		Feeding problem		Sleep problem		High difficulties score	
		Unadjusted OR	Adjusted OR	Unadjusted OR	Adjusted OR	Unadjusted OR	Adjusted OR	Unadjusted OR	Adjusted OR
34 months	Informal	1.37 **	1.09	1.28 *	1.03	1.48 ***	1.24 *		
	Formal	1.65 ***	1.22	1.47 **	1.11	1.35 **	0.97		
	Total	1.38 ***	1.14	1.29 ***	1.06	1.34 **	1.12		
46 months	Informal	1.32 **	1.05	1.30 *	1.06	1.59 ***	1.34 **	1.86 ***	1.32 **
	Formal	1.63 ***	1.16	1.32 †	0.98	1.32 *	0.97	2.16 ***	1.37 **
	Total	1.36 ***	1.09	1.25 **	1.03	1.38 ***	1.17	1.78 ***	1.34 ***
58 months	Informal	1.23	0.89	1.23 *	1.10	1.37 *	1.04	1.85 ***	1.41 **
	Formal	1.76 ***	1.21	1.42 ***	1.12	1.98 ***	1.40 *	2.00 ***	1.25 †
	Total	1.35 ***	1.02	1.25 ***	1.11	1.47 ***	1.18	1.73 ***	1.34 ***
70 months	Informal	1.46 **	1.11			0.96	0.89	1.57 ***	1.10
	Formal	1.72 ***	1.08			1.22 *	1.09	2.09 ***	1.29 †
	Total	1.45 ***	1.09			1.06	0.97	1.61 ***	1.18 *
94 months	Informal	1.68 ***	1.44 *			1.27 *	1.12	1.61 ***	1.15
	Formal	1.47 *	0.80			1.45 **	1.17	2.08 ***	1.29 *
	Total	1.47 ***	1.13			1.28 ***	1.14	1.64 ***	1.20 *

Part 2 : pathways from support to child psychosocial adjustment



Measures: Partner support

For mothers with resident partners, 4 items using 5-point scale (alpha=0.76):

- My (partner) is usually sensitive to and aware of my needs
- My (partner) doesn't seem to listen to me
- I sometimes feel lonely even when I am with my (partner)
- I suspect we may be on the brink of separation

For mothers with no resident partner, 1 item:

- How would you describe your relationship with (child's) natural father? (1 "very good" to 5 "very bad")

Mediator measures

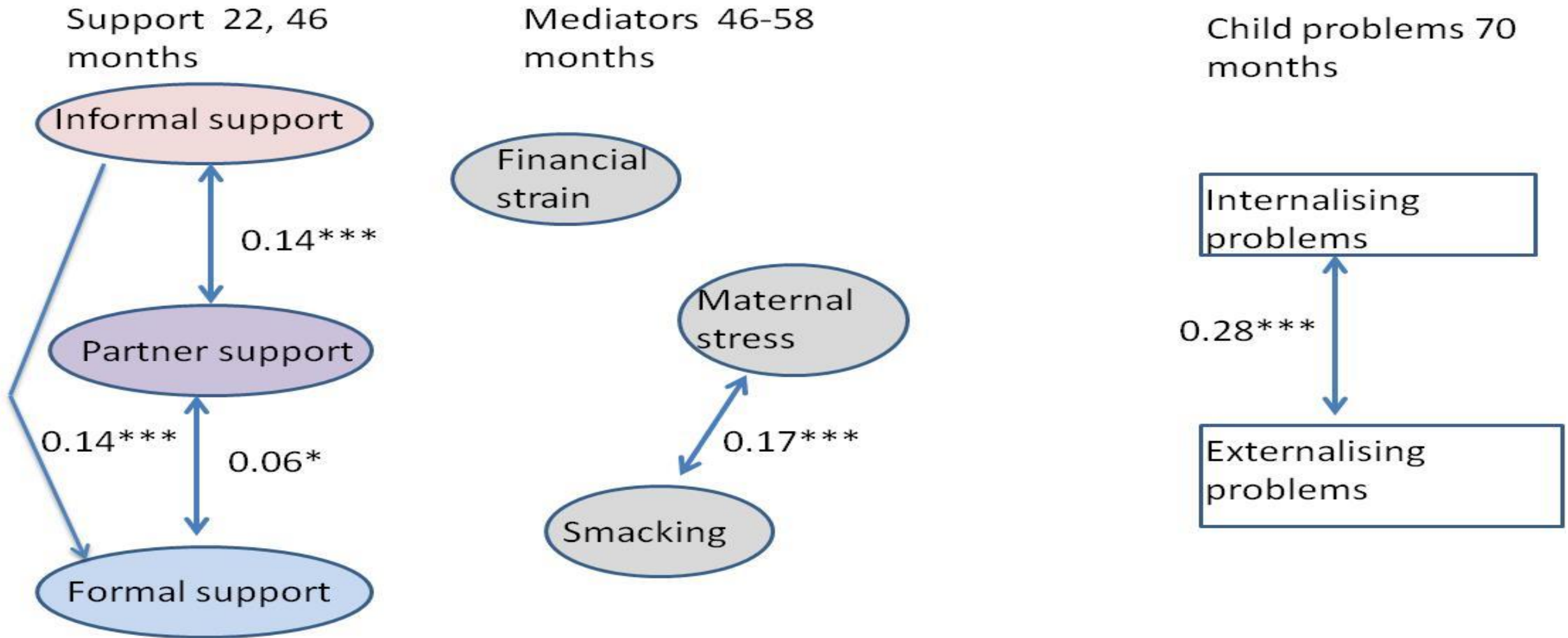
- **Financial strain** – 46 / 58 months
 - Can't afford household items
 - Behind with bills
 - Difficulty repaying debts
 - How well household copes financially
- **Maternal stress**– 46 / 58 months
 - Low mental health
 - High depression/anxiety
 - Parenting stress
 - Home disorganisation
- **Smacking**– 46 months
 - Use of smacking during the past year
 - Extent feels smacking is useful
 - Agree with "It may not be a good thing to smack, but sometimes it's the only thing that will work."

Multivariable models of child externalising and internalising problems ($N=2903$)

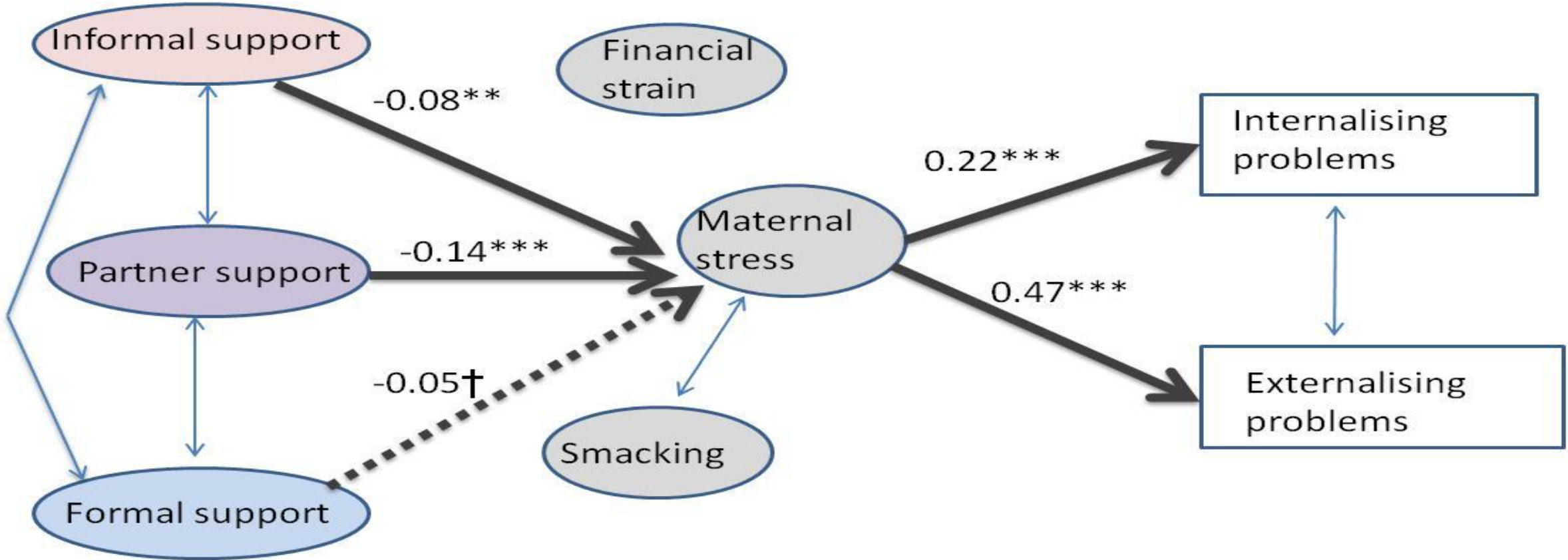
Predictors	Child problems							
	Age 70 months		Age 94 months					
	Externalising		Internalising					
	β	p	β	p	β	p	β	p
Informal support	-0.08	***	-0.13	***	-0.07	***	-0.11	***
Formal support	-0.10	***	-0.14	***	-0.10	***	-0.14	***
Partner support	-0.18	***	-0.13	***	-0.18	***	-0.17	***
Maternal minority ethnic group	0.03		0.03		0.03	*	0.06	*
Lower maternal mental health	0.11	***	0.16	***	0.06	*	0.11	***
Maternal smoking	0.06	*	-0.07	*	0.09	***	0.00	
Anti-smacking attitude	-0.07	***	0.00		-0.04	*	0.01	
Family poverty	0.13	***	0.20	***	0.09	***	0.14	***
Lone parent	0.13	***	0.06	**	0.15	***	0.11	***
Large family size	-0.06	**	0.00		-0.04	*	-0.03	
Child female	-0.16	***	-0.03		-0.19	***	-0.06	**
Child LT illness	0.03		0.04	*	0.03		0.01	
Child developmental delay	0.12	***	0.15	***	0.09	***	0.10	***

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Path model (1)

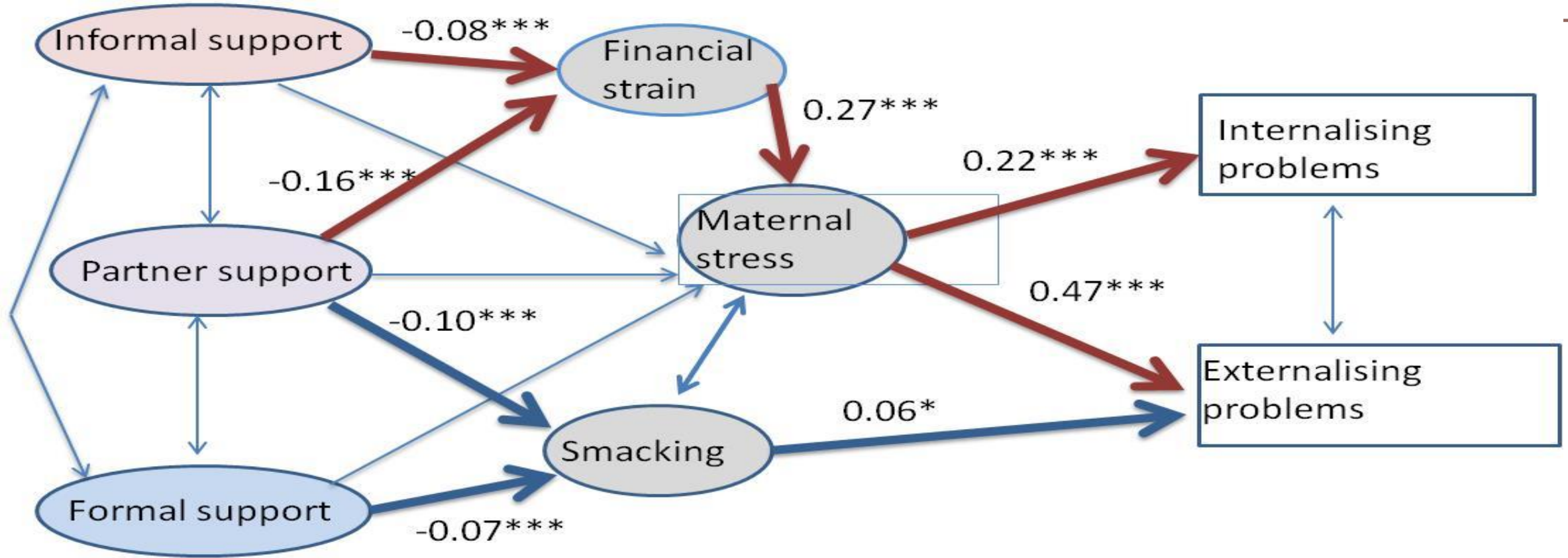


Path model (2)

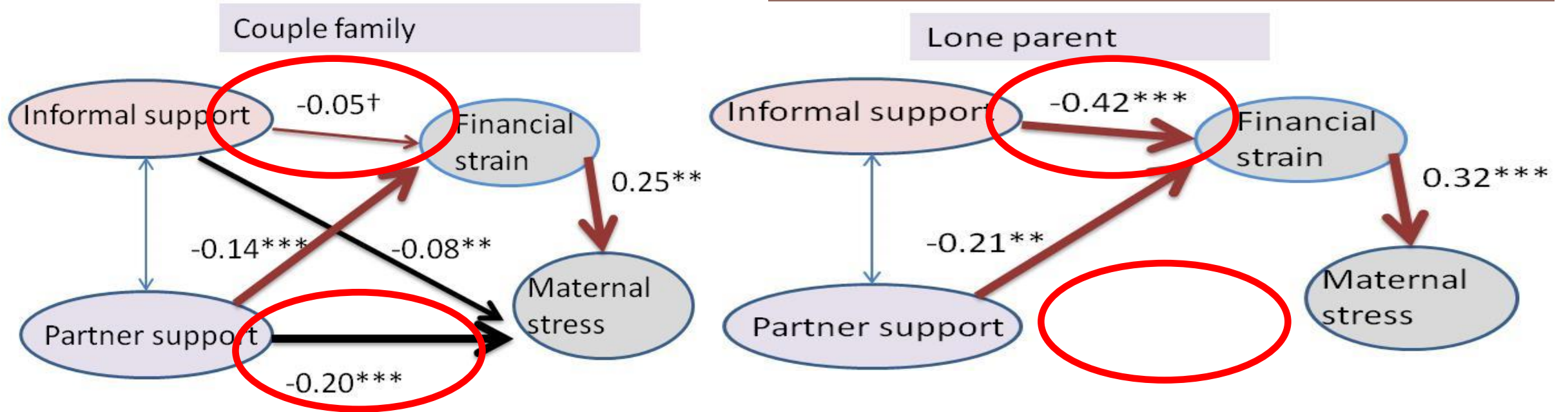


$^{\dagger}p < 0.1$, $*p < 0.05$, $**p < 0.01$, $***p < 0.001$

Path model (3)

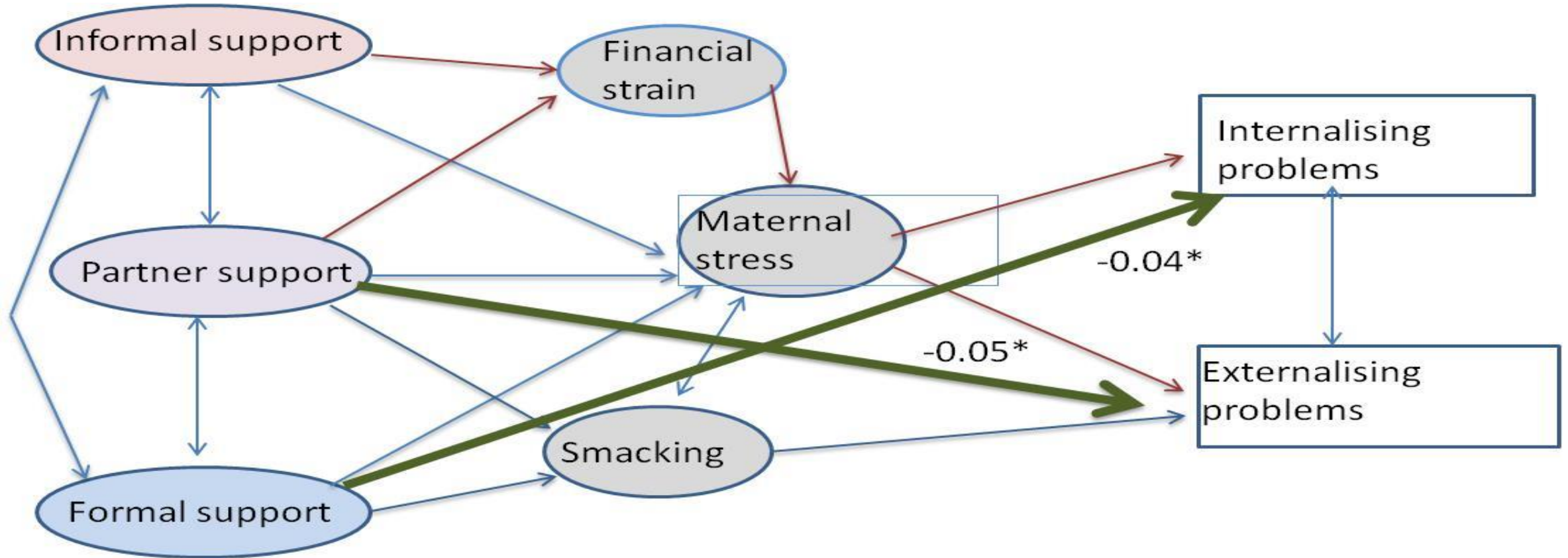


Pathways by family structure



[†] $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Path model (direct effects)



Summary

- Maternal support predicted child adjustment, but not physical health
- Different sources of support (informal, formal, partner) have independent effects on child adjustment
 - Informal and formal support did not moderate effects of family disadvantage
- Pathways differed
 - Informal support (and partner support) – via lower financial strain and reduced maternal stress
 - Formal support (and partner support) – via lower smacking

Closing plenary session

Auditorium

17:10-17:40

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