

Economic Inequality and the Changing Nature of Parenting

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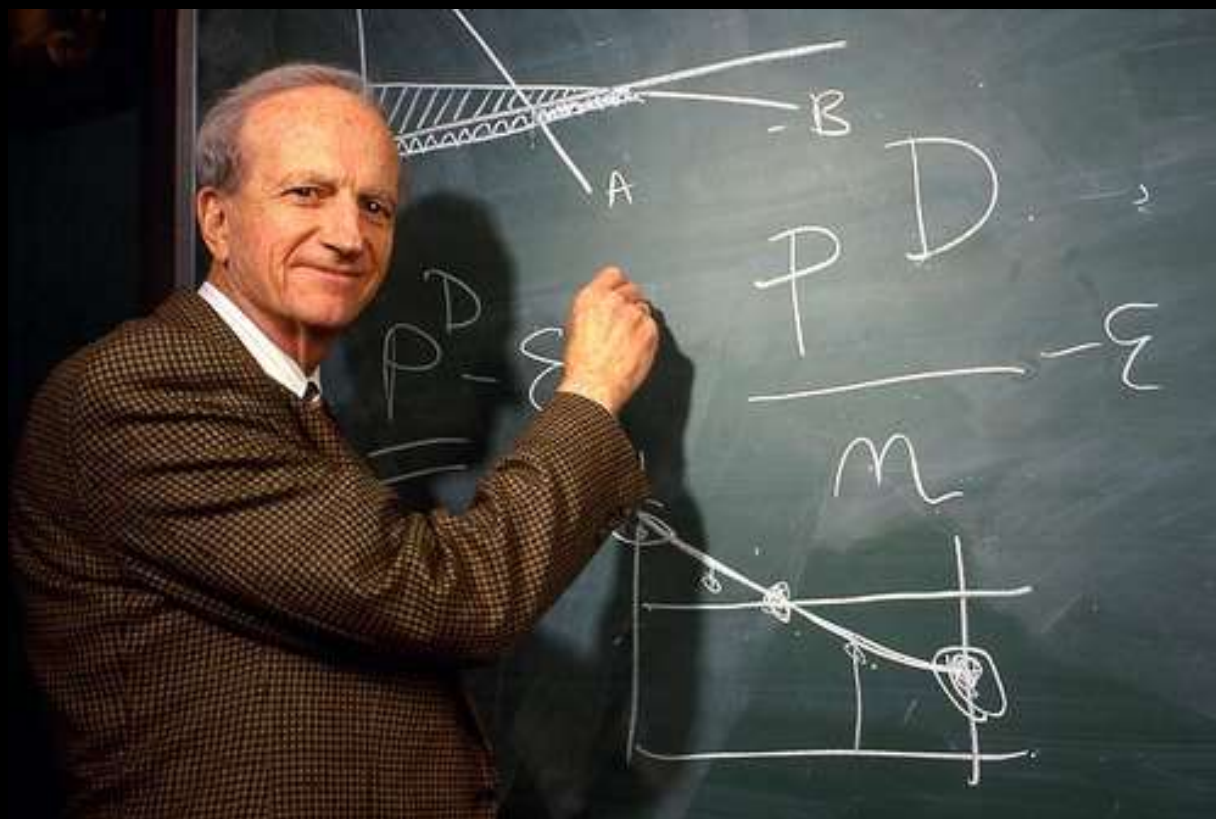


Love, Money & Parenting

HOW ECONOMICS EXPLAINS
THE WAY WE RAISE OUR KIDS

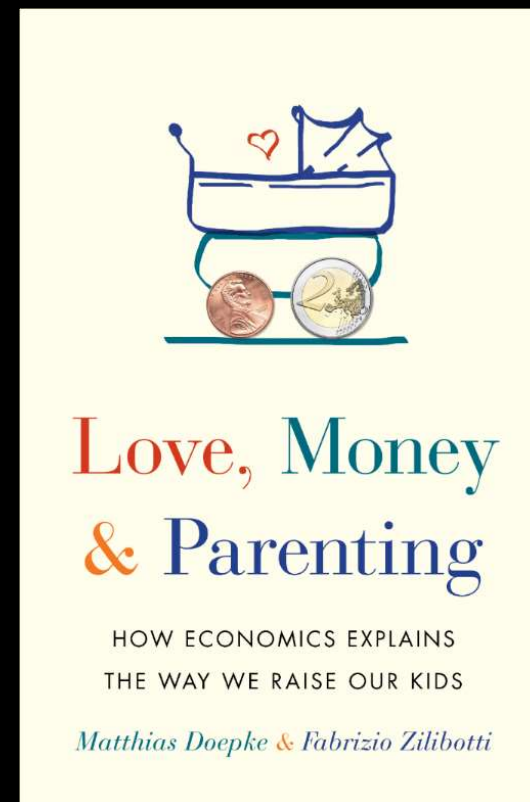
Matthias Doepke & Fabrizio Zilibotti

Gary Becker



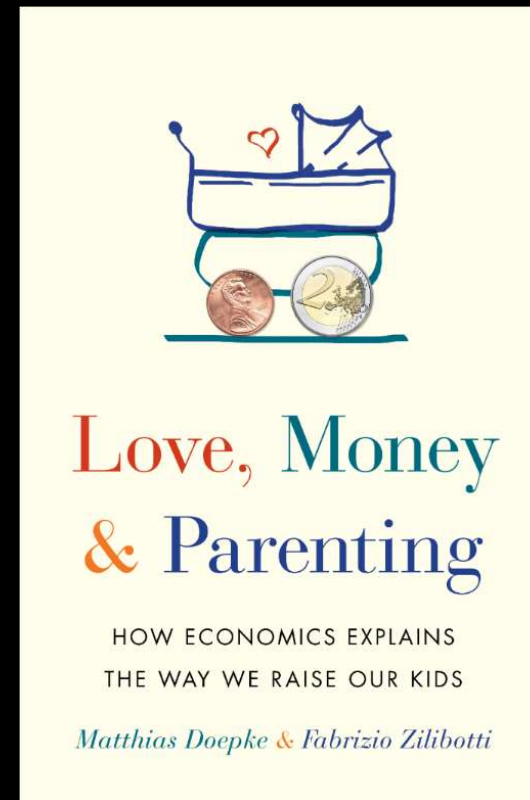
The Economics of Parenting

- How economists think about what people do:
 - People pursue specific objectives, such as an entrepreneur aiming to maximize profits
 - They do the best they can to achieve these objectives, subject to the constraints they face
 - If the constraints change, so does behavior



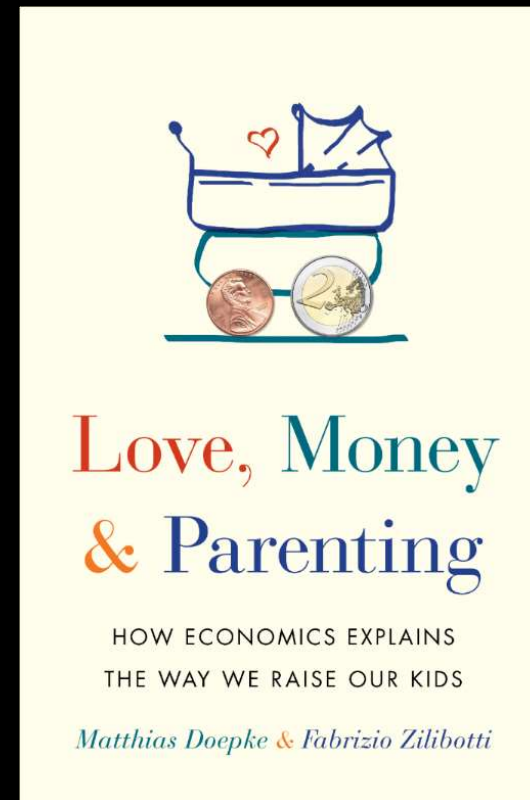
The Economics of Parenting

- Applying these ideas to parents:
 - Parents love their children and want them to do well
 - Aim to equip children with the skills, values, and attitudes that will lead to success
 - Constrained by limited money, time, knowledge, and the economic environment
- We argue that this perspective explains a lot about parenting



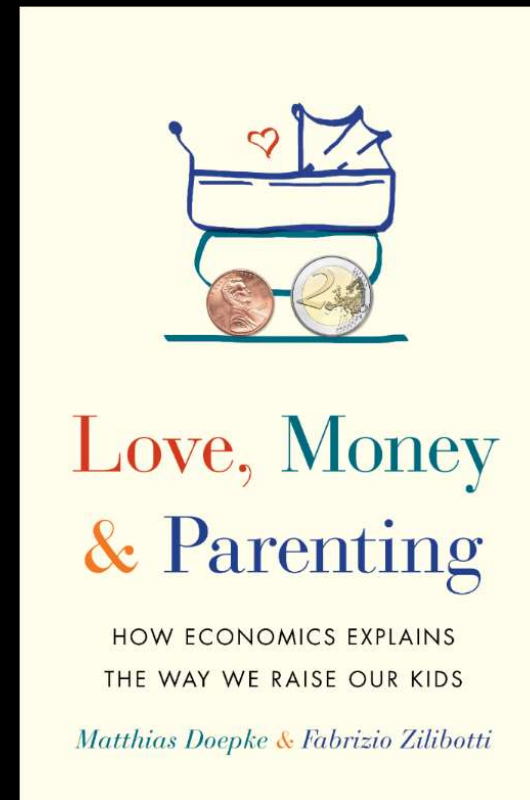
What the Book Doesn't Do

- No Judgement and Parenting Advice!
 - Our view: (Most) parents know what they are doing
 - Just try to understand why they are doing it



What Turns Out to Matter Most

- Macroeconomic inequality/
return to education
- Social and occupational
mobility



The History of Parenting

- Early Days: Authoritarian parenting, including corporal punishment
- The Bible: *"He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him"* (Proverbs 13:24)
- Plumb (1975): *"of two hundred counsels of advice on child-rearing prior to 1770, only three failed to recommend that fathers beat their children"*



Large Changes in 20th and 21st Centuries

- 1960s and 1970s: Permissive parenting, anti-authoritarian wave



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- 1960s and 1970s: Permissive parenting, anti-authoritarian wave
- 1980s to present: More intensive parenting, "helicopter parents," "tiger moms"

Here are some things my daughters, Sophia and Louisa, were never allowed to do: attend a sleepover; have a playdate; ... get any grade less than an A; not be the No. 1 student in every subject except gym and drama; play any instrument other than the piano or violin; not play the piano or violin.



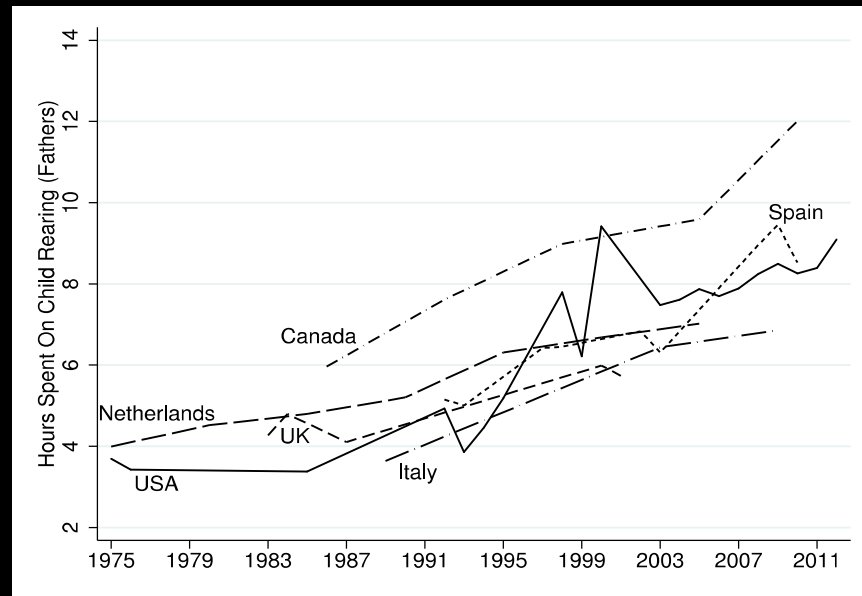
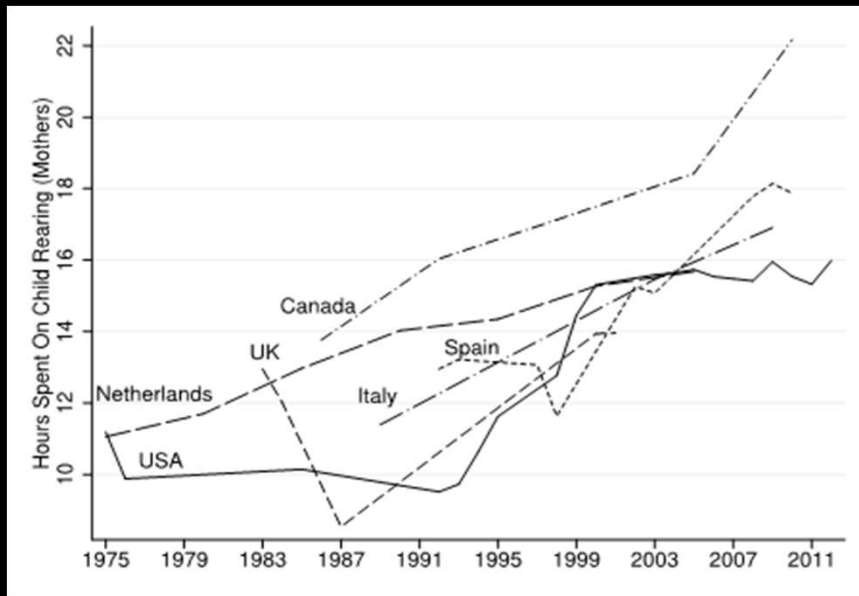
Large Changes in 20th and 21st Centuries

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« What Chinese parents understand is that nothing is fun until you're good at it. To get good at anything you have to work, and children on their own never want to work, which is why it is crucial to override their preferences .»

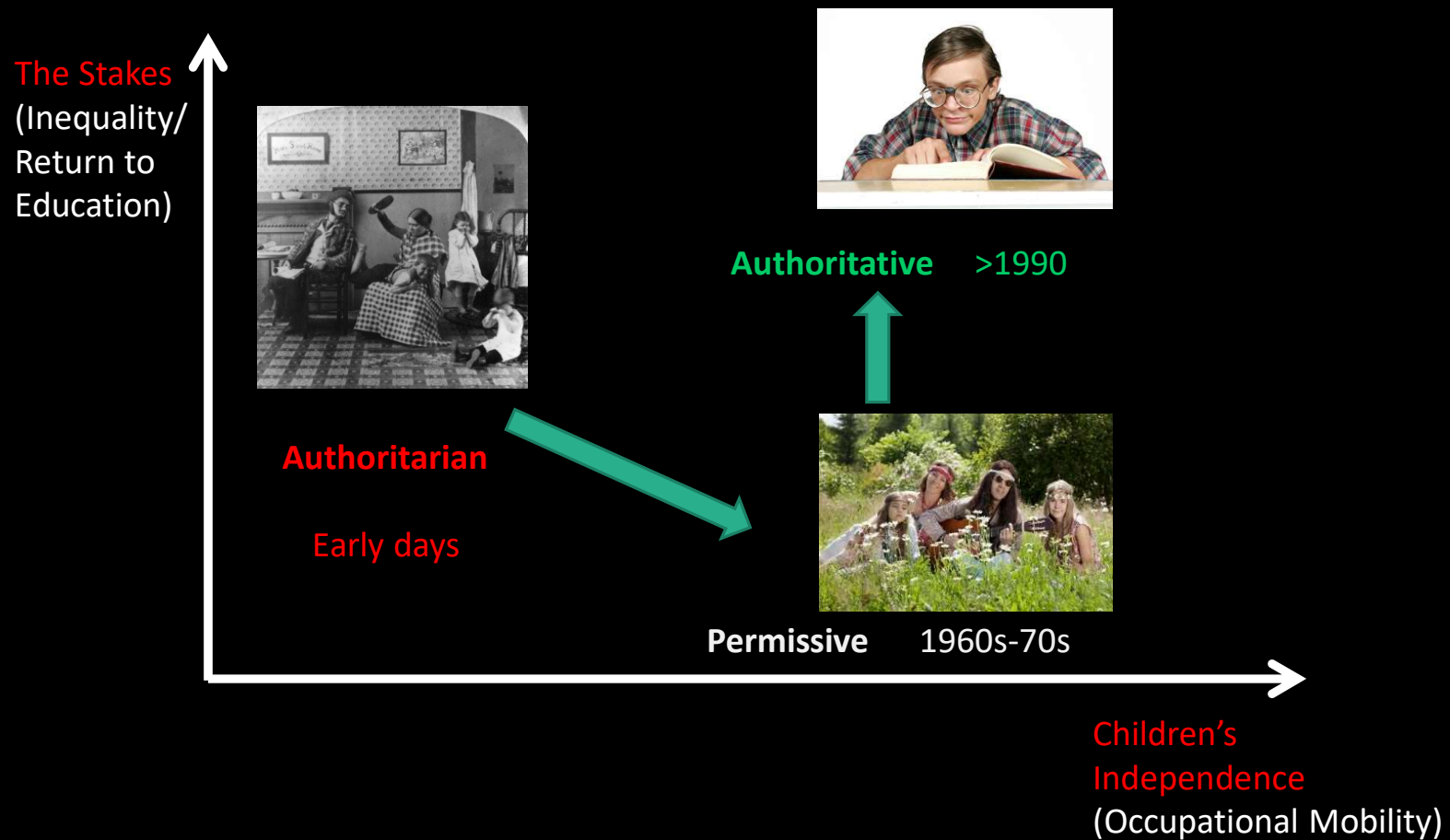


Hours Spent on Child Rearing

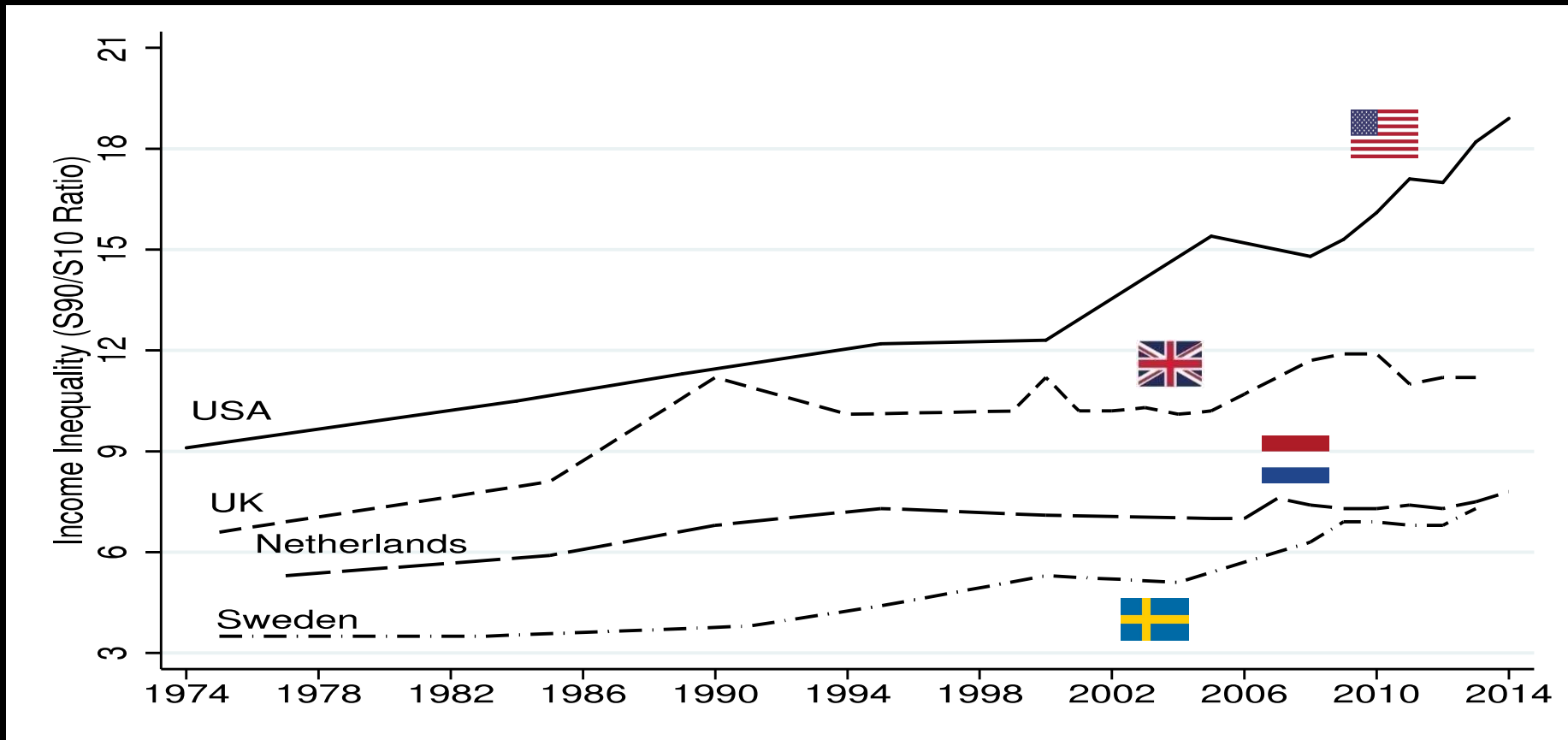


In 2012, the average US couple spent eight and a half hours per week on **playing, reading, talking to their children, and helping them with homework**. Up by a factor of 3.5 relative to 1976.

The Economics Behind Changed Parenting

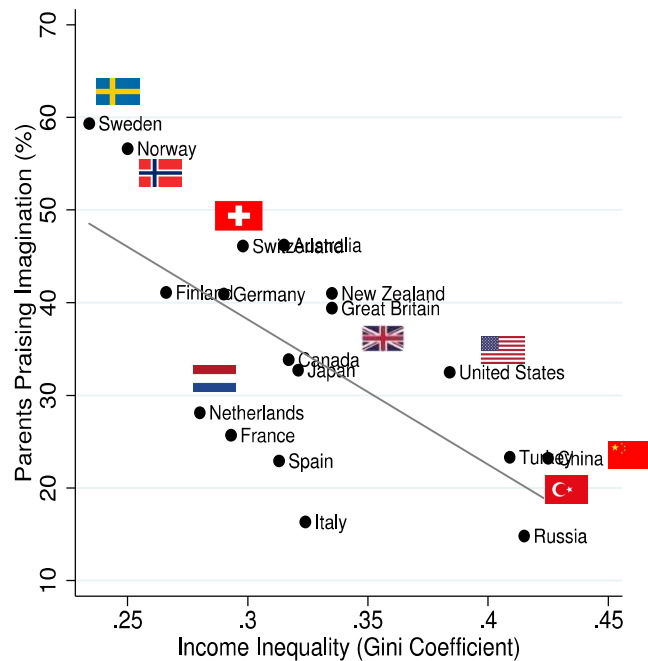


Rising Inequality

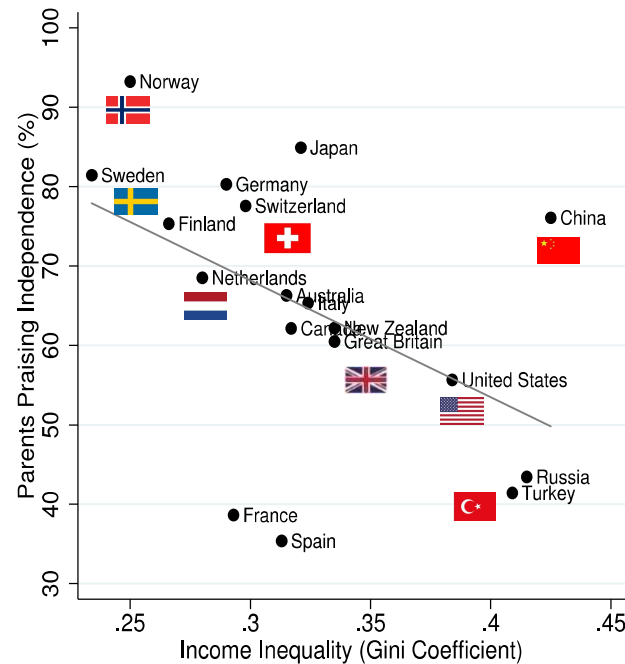


Inequality and Parenting across Countries

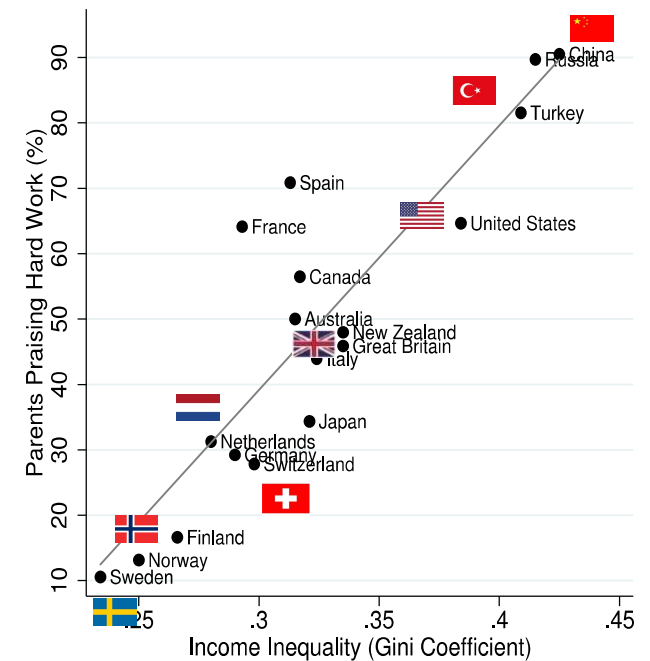
Imagination



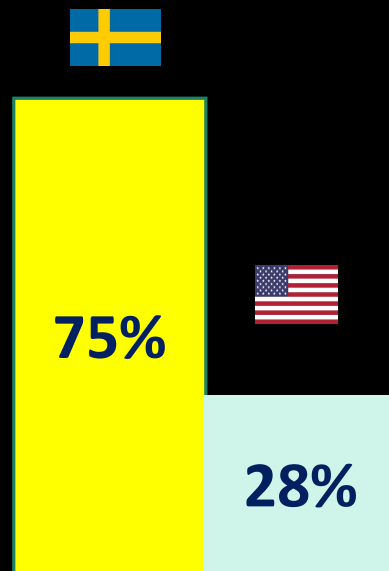
Independence



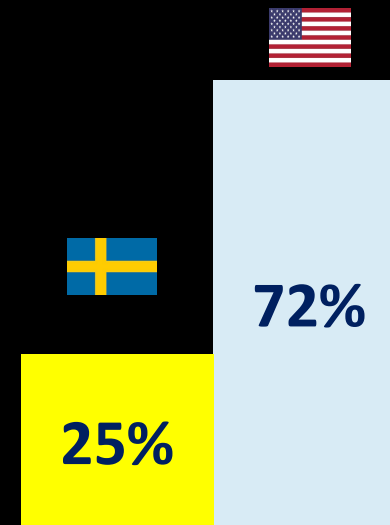
Hard Work



Moving a Swedish Parent to the US



PERMISSIVE



AUTHORITATIVE
& AUTHORITARIAN

Downsides to Intensive Parenting?

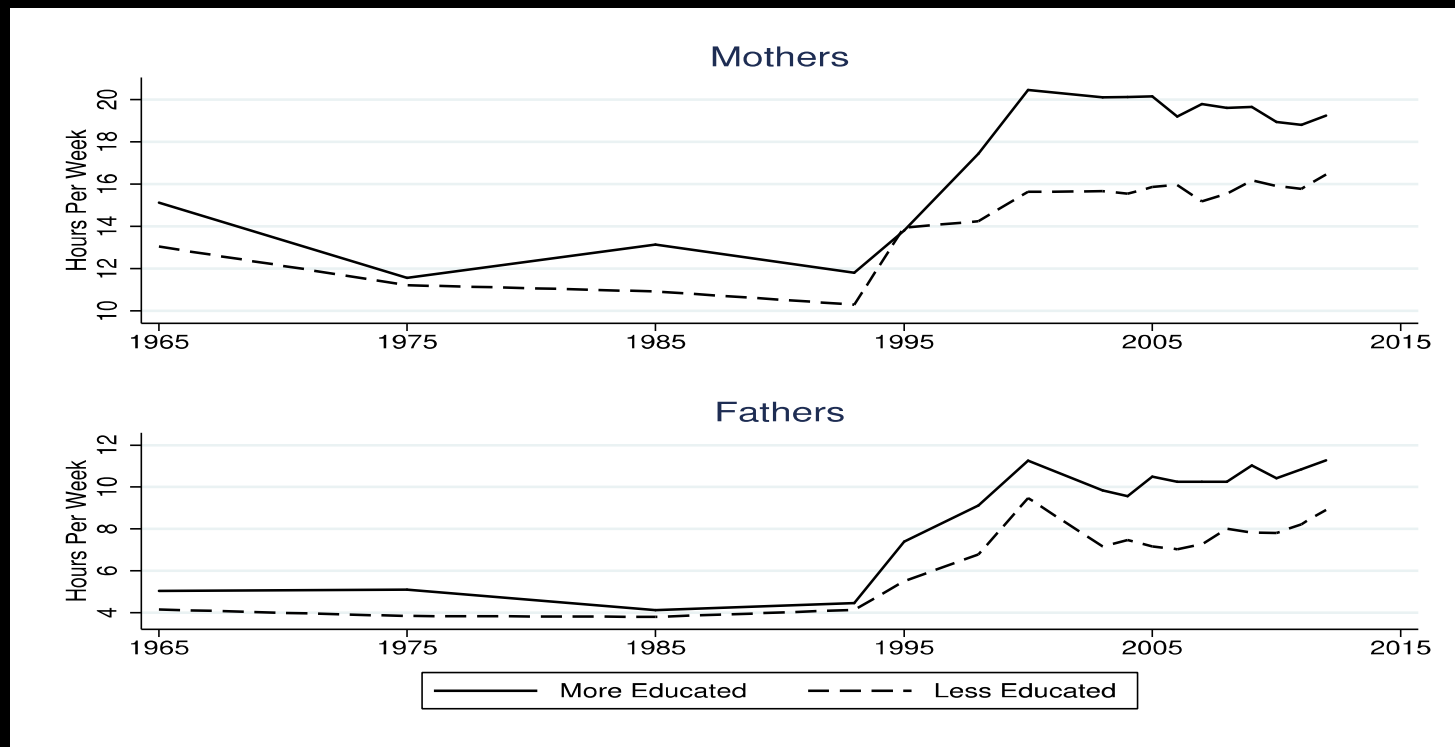


The Parenting Gap

- Rising inequality leads to unequal parenting:
 - Low-income parents less able to afford expensive child care, schools, and extra-curriculars
 - Low-income parents less able to buy services to free up time for child care
 - Residential segregation increases inequality in school quality and peer groups

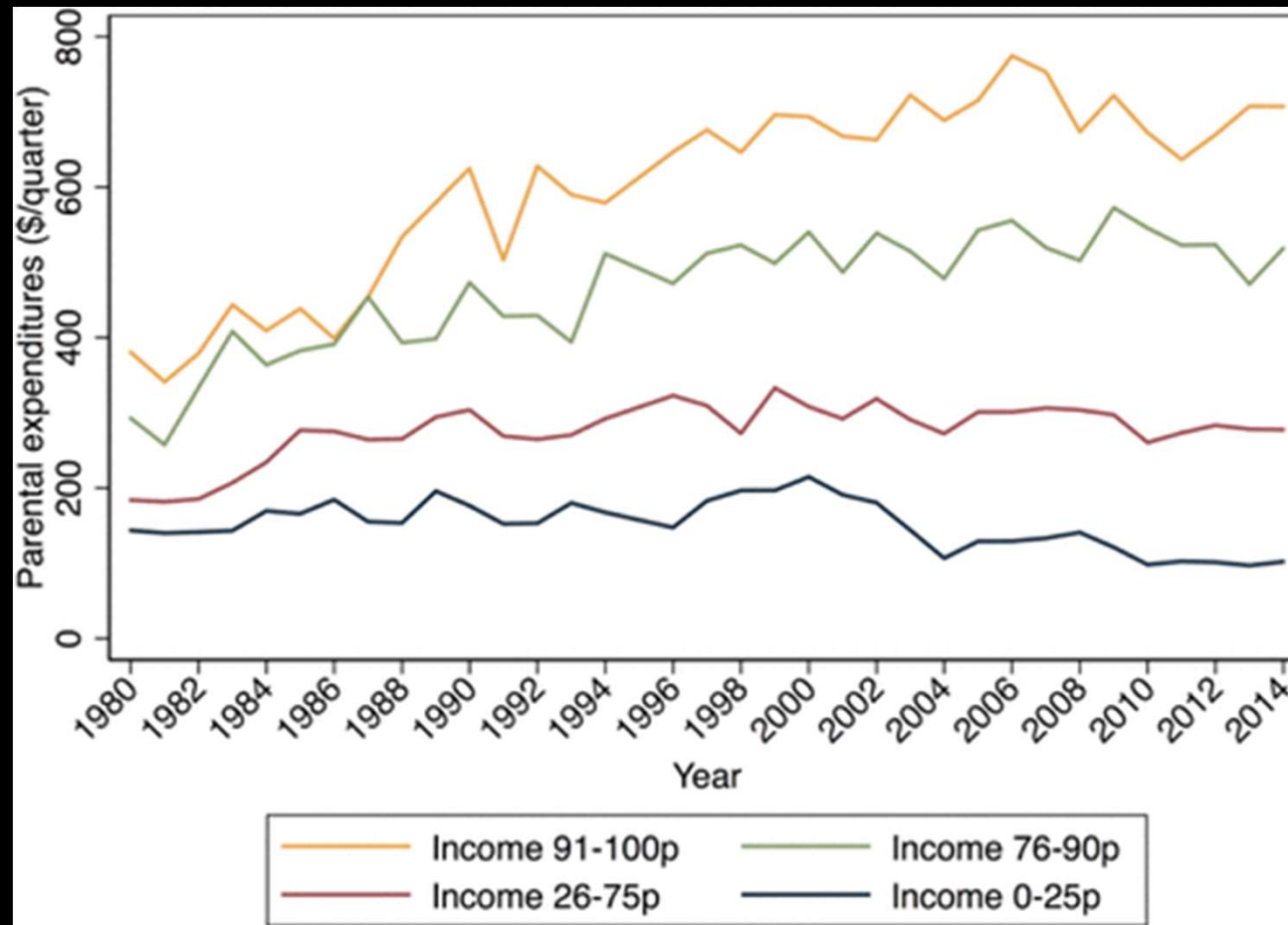


Parenting Gaps: Time Spent with Children

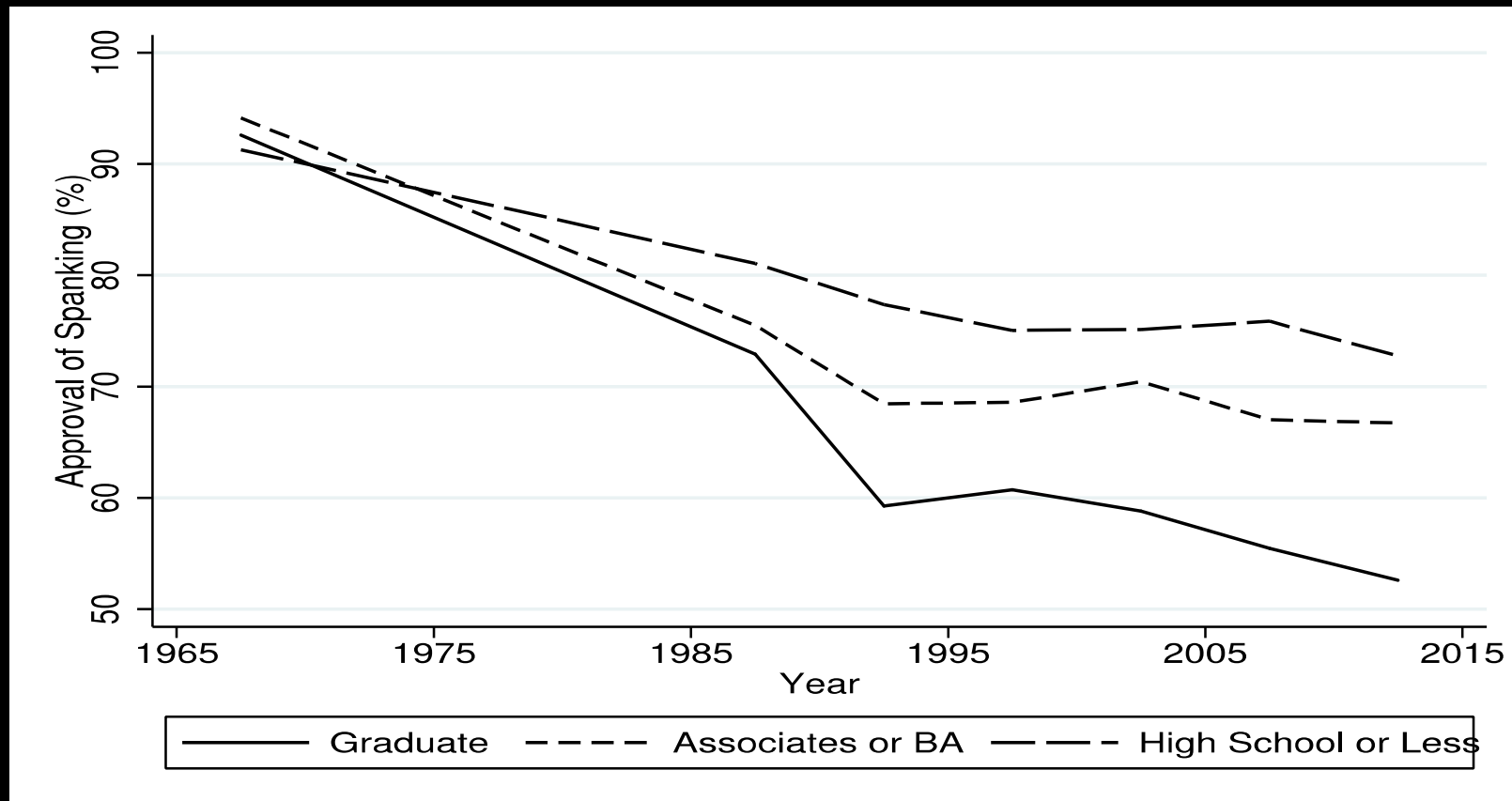


2012: More Educated Parents spend 1 hour per day more on child-adult contact!
In 1975, the gap was only 10 minutes

Parenting Gaps: Money Spent on Children



Parenting Gaps: Approval of Spanking



Worries and Opportunities

- On current economic trends, parenting gap will keep growing
 - Social mobility and equality of opportunity at risk
- But also: parenting gap can be shrunk by changing constraints that parents respond to!
 - Learn from countries where parenting gaps are low today



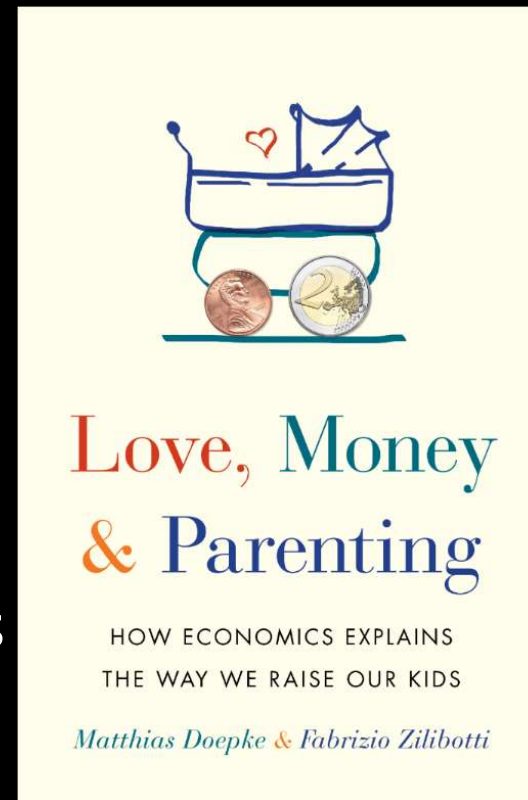
Policies that Matter for the Parenting Gap

- Early childhood education
- Support for families with children
- Tracking and testing in schools, school funding
- Vocational training
- College admissions
- Taxation



What Else is in the Book?

- Our own experiences
- Religiosity and parenting
- Civil rights and human rights
- Boys versus girls
- The role of child labor
- How many kids to have?
- Parenting in a class-based society
- The education system across countries
- The future of parenting
- ...



Thank you!



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