



How do Parenting Behaviors Mediate the Link between Maternal Depressive Symptoms and Child Well-being?

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Gaps in the Research

Few studies have examined:

- The multiple predictors of depressive symptoms in one model
- How maternal depressive symptoms mediate the effect of these antecedents on child outcomes
- How parenting practices may mediate the influence of maternal depressive symptoms
- Mediators of maternal depression in low-income subgroups

Research Questions

- What are the **consequences** of maternal depressive symptoms on parenting practices?
- How do **parenting practices** mediate the influence of maternal depressive symptoms on children's well-being?
- Do the parenting mediators differ for a **low-income** subgroup?

Early Childhood Longitudinal Study Kindergarten Class of 1998-99 (ECLS-K)

- Nationally representative sample
- Over 22,000 kindergartners
- Longitudinal study
 - Kindergarten entry in fall 1998 - 5th grade
- Information gathered from
 - Parents
 - Teachers
 - School administrators
 - Direct assessments of children

ECLS-K Sample

- Children whose mothers answered questions about depressive symptoms in spring of kindergarten and spring of 3rd grade
- Observations with data across waves
 - Fall of kindergarten for the antecedents
 - Spring of kindergarten and 3rd grade for depressive symptoms
 - Spring 1st grade for parenting measures
 - Spring 3rd grade for child well-being measures

Measure of Depressive Symptoms

- CES-D: 12 items, on scale of 0-3
- Yields 0-36 scale
- E.g., how often have you ...
 - 1) Felt that you were bothered by things that don't usually bother you?
 - 2) Felt that you did not feel like eating?
 - 3) Felt that you could not shake off the blues ...?

Policy-Relevant Antecedents

- Maternal work
 - Hours worked per week
 - Working between child's birth and Fall of K
- TANF receipt
- Income-to-poverty Ratio
- Financial problems
- Marital status
- Relationship happiness
- Mother's education

Measures of Parenting

- Cognitive stimulation
 - Asked mothers how often they participated in various activities with their children
- Positive communication
 - Asked mothers if they encouraged the child to discuss her feelings or troubles
- Disengaged parenting
 - Asked mothers about rules they had for children and if they took children on outings
- Positive discipline
 - Asked mothers if they engaged in various forms of punishment

Measures of Child Well-being

- Externalizing behaviors
 - Teacher & Child Reports
 - 6 questions, 4-item response scale
 - Questions asked how often the child argued, fought, disturbed class or was angry

- Internalizing behaviors
 - Teacher & Child Reports
 - 7 question, 4-item response scale
 - Questions asked how often the child seemed sad, lonely, or anxious

Measures of Child Well-being

■ Self Control

- Teacher responses
- Measured respect for property rights, temper control, and appropriate peer reactions

■ Reading

- IRT assessment
- Measured vocabulary, letter & word recognition

■ Mathematics

- IRT assessment
- Measured problem-solving skills, and conceptual and procedural knowledge

Controls

■ Parent-Level

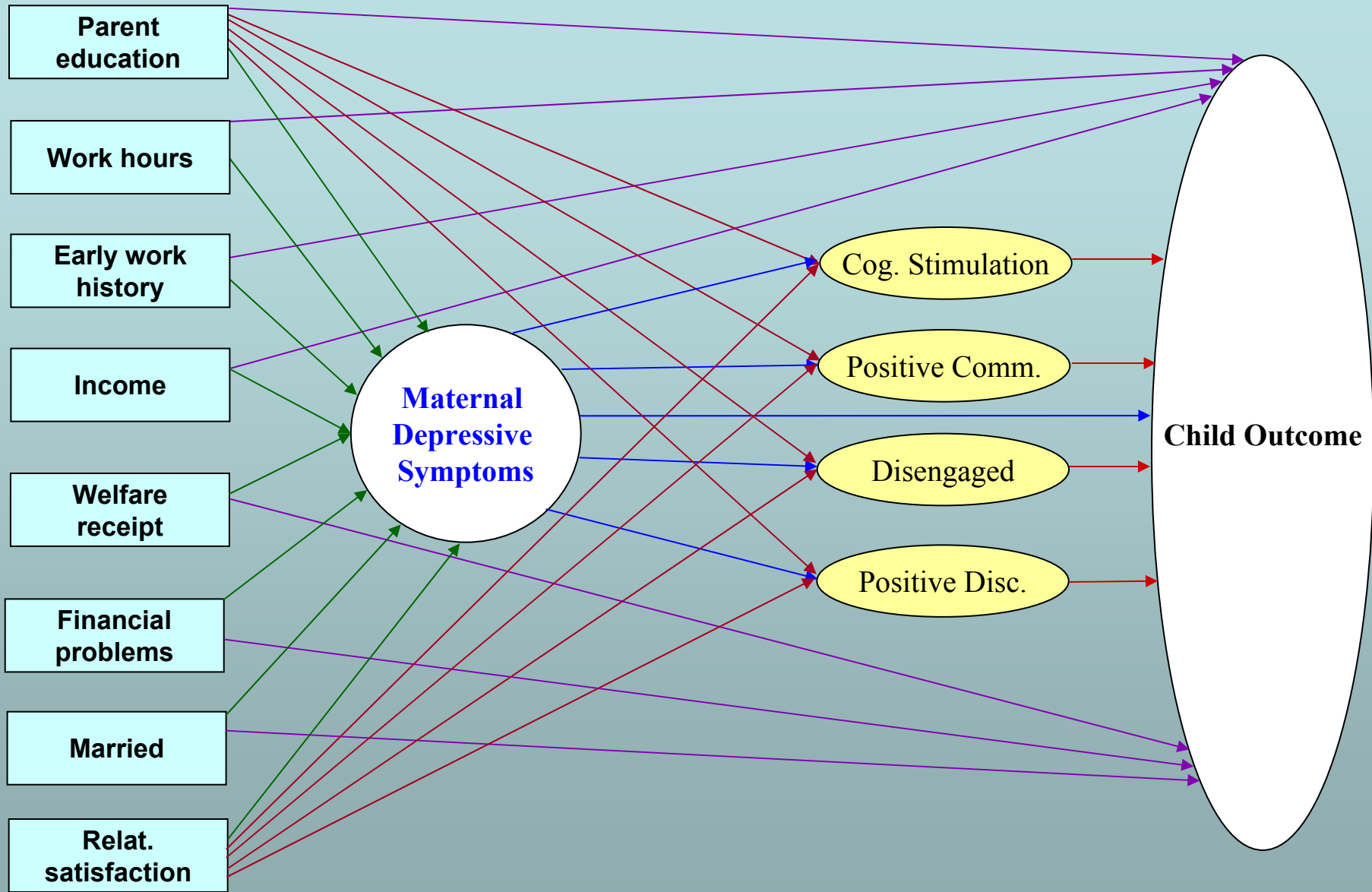
- Mother's health
- Older siblings
- Younger siblings
- Language other than English spoken at home

■ Child-Level

- Child age
- Child gender
- Low birth-weight
- Child disability
- Child race/ethnicity

Policy-Relevant Antecedents

Parenting



Fall K

Spring K

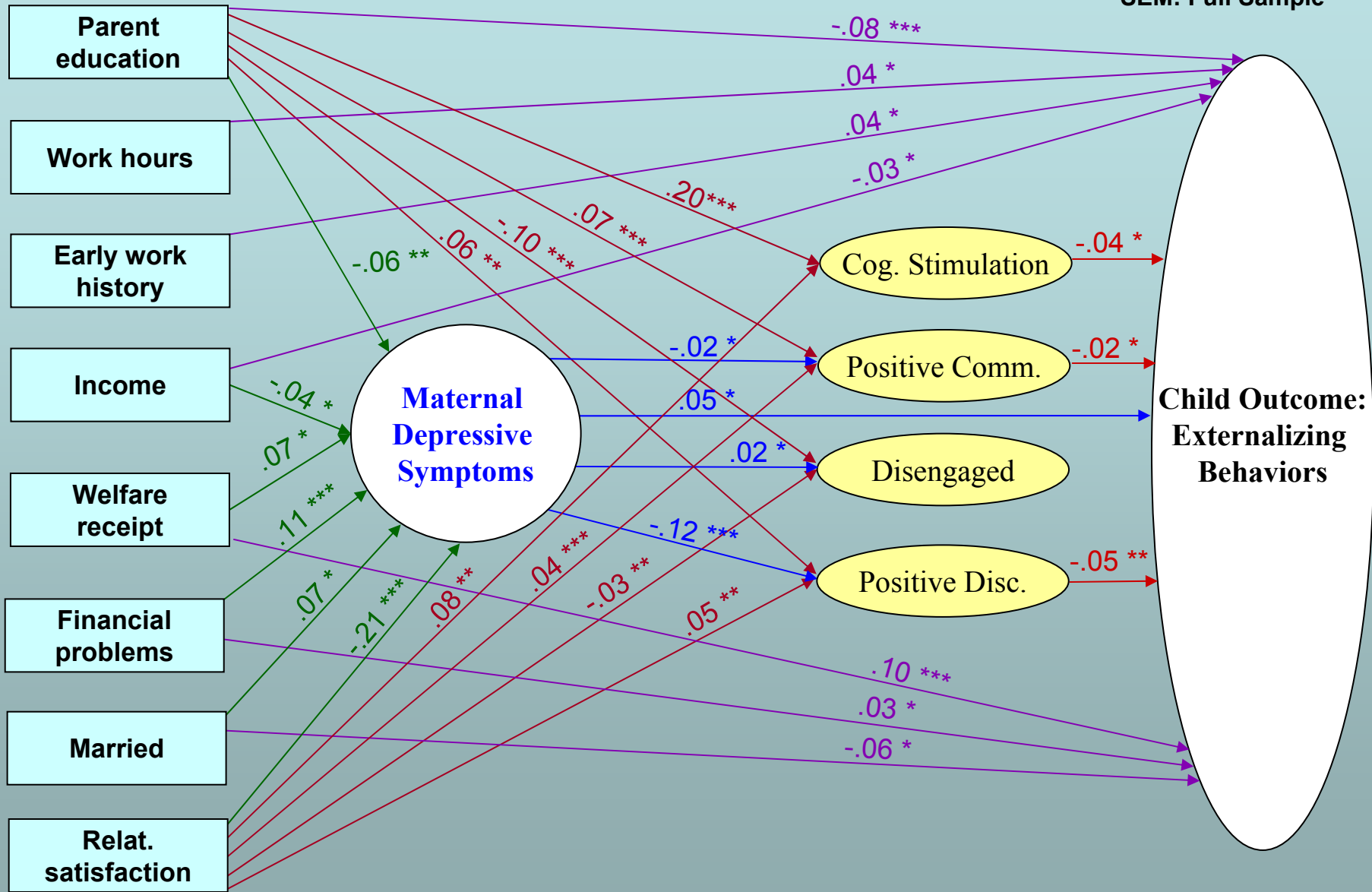
Spring 1st Grade

Spring 3rd Grade

Policy-Relevant Antecedents

Parenting

Figure 1a.
Externalizing Behaviors
SEM: Full Sample



Fall K

Spring K

Spring 1st Grade

Spring 3rd Grade

Policy-Relevant Antecedents

Parenting

Figure 1a.
Externalizing Behaviors
SEM: Full Sample

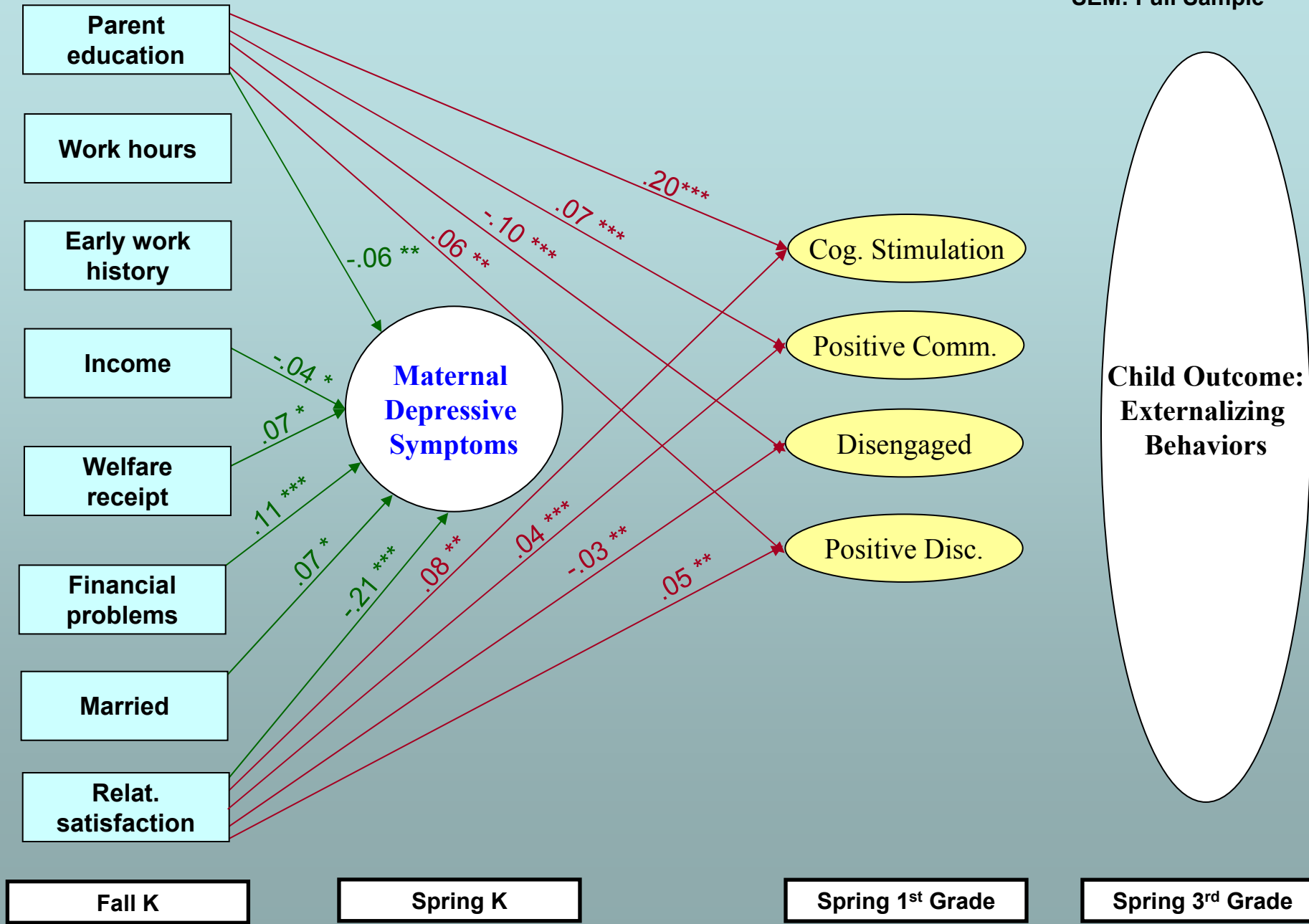
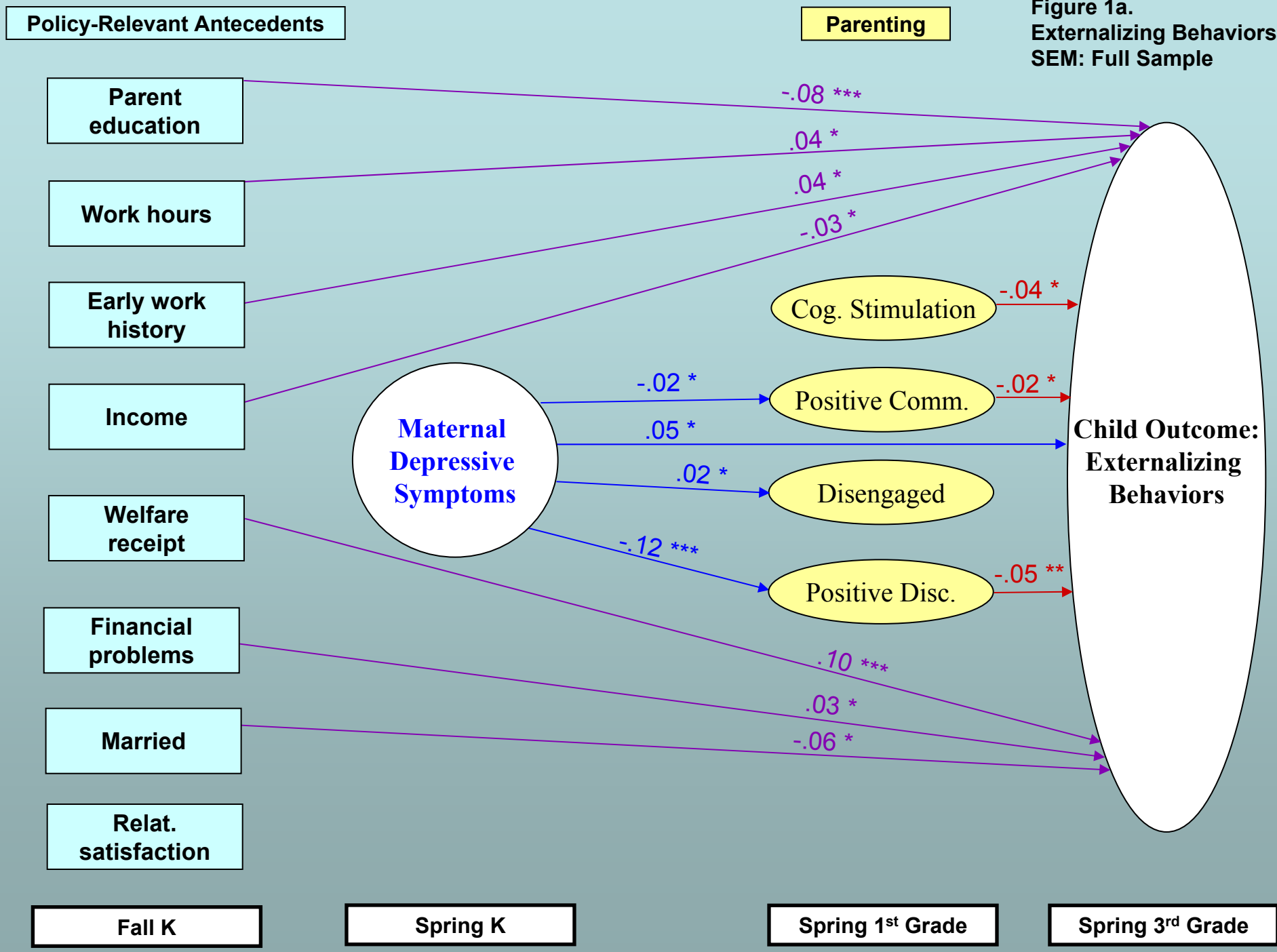


Figure 1a.
Externalizing Behaviors
SEM: Full Sample



Policy-Relevant Antecedents

Parenting

Math Scores 2a
SEM: Full Sample

Parent education

Work hours

Early work history

Income

Welfare receipt

Financial problems

Married

Relat. satisfaction

Maternal Depressive Symptoms

Cog. Stimulation

Positive Comm.

Disengaged

Positive Disc.

Child Outcome: Math Scores

Fall K

Spring K

Spring 1st Grade

Spring 3rd Grade

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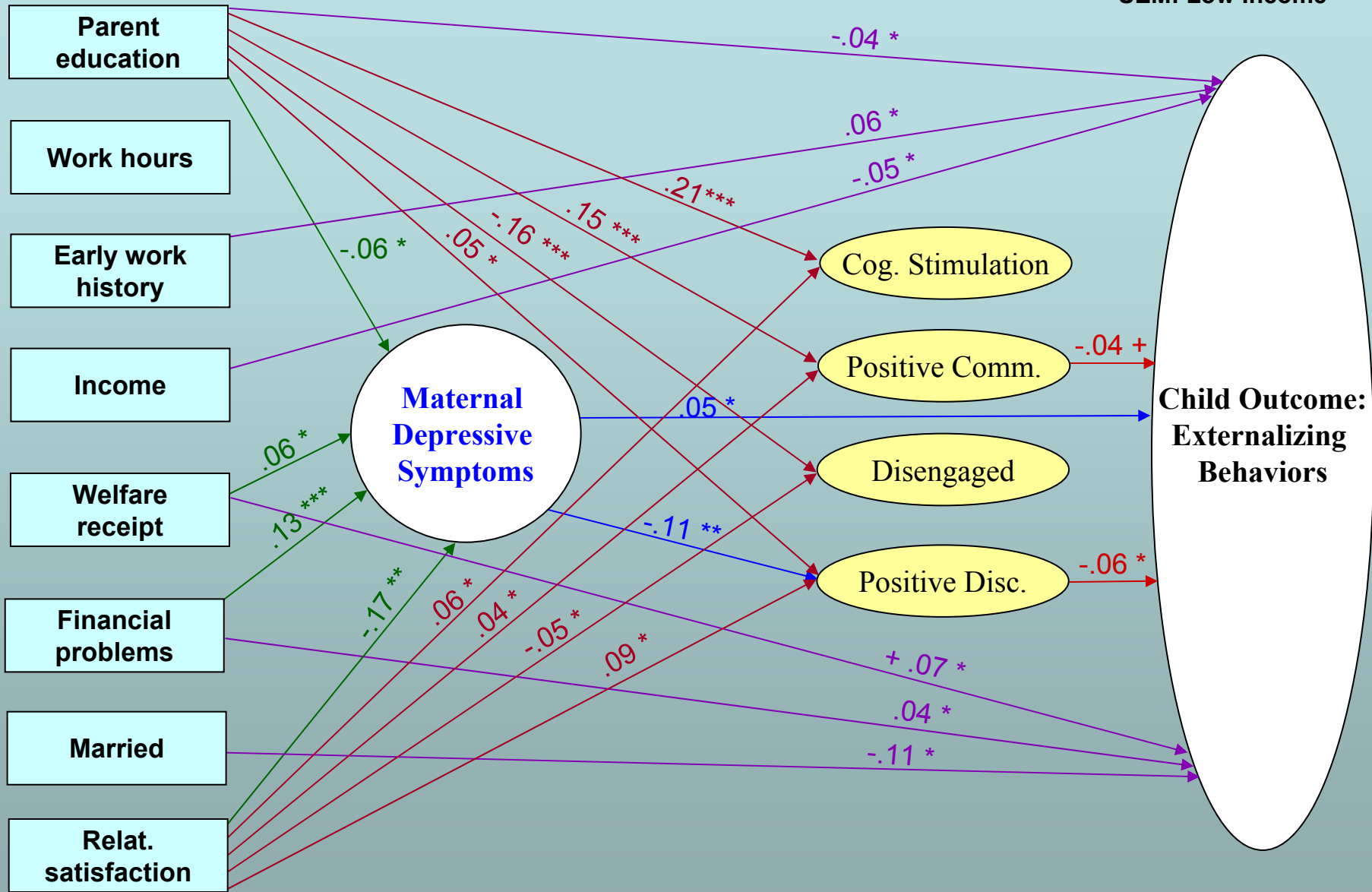
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Policy-Relevant Antecedents

Parenting

Figure 1b.
Externalizing Behaviors
SEM: Low Income



Fall K

Spring K

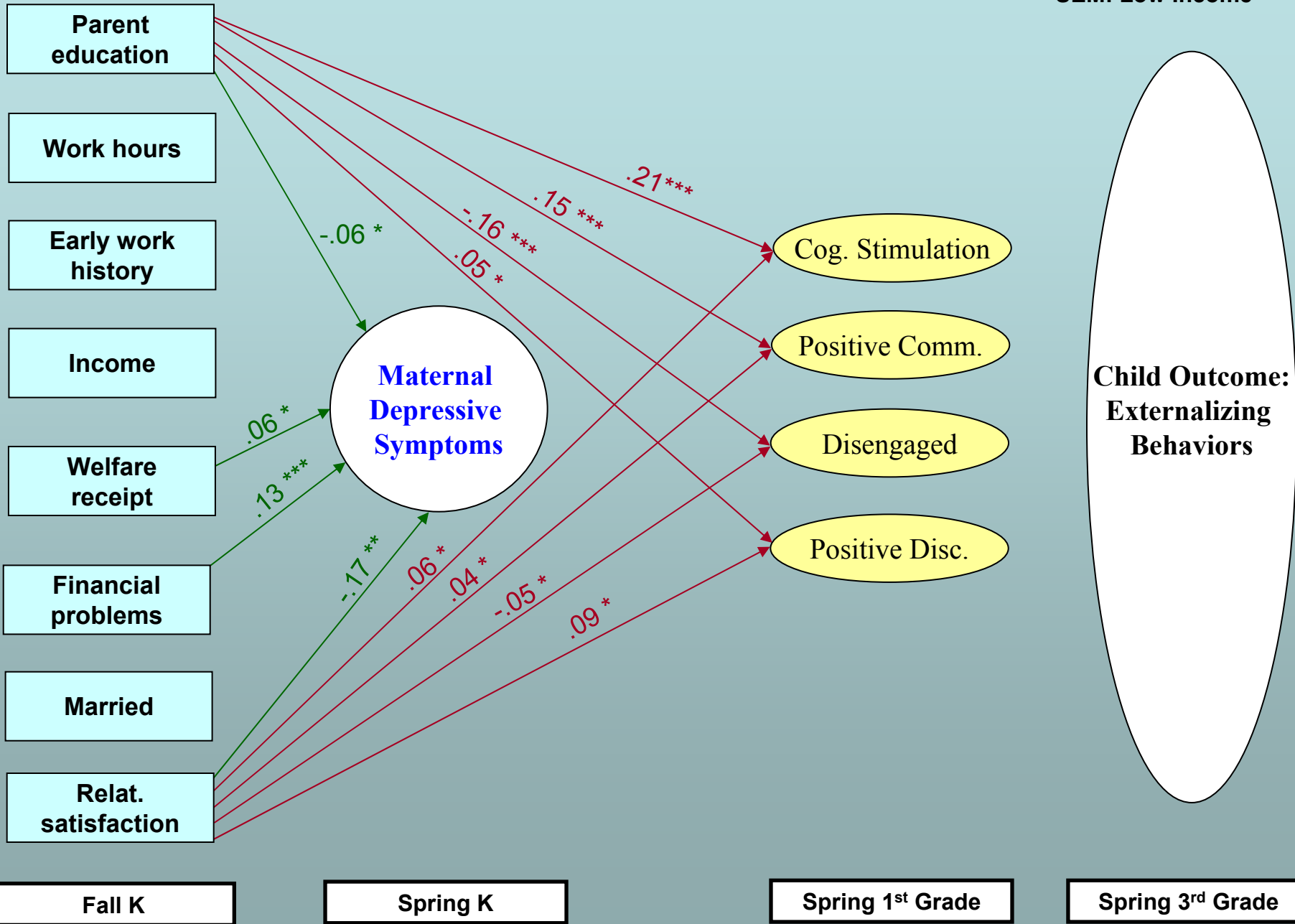
Spring 1st Grade

Spring 3rd Grade

Policy-Relevant Antecedents

Parenting

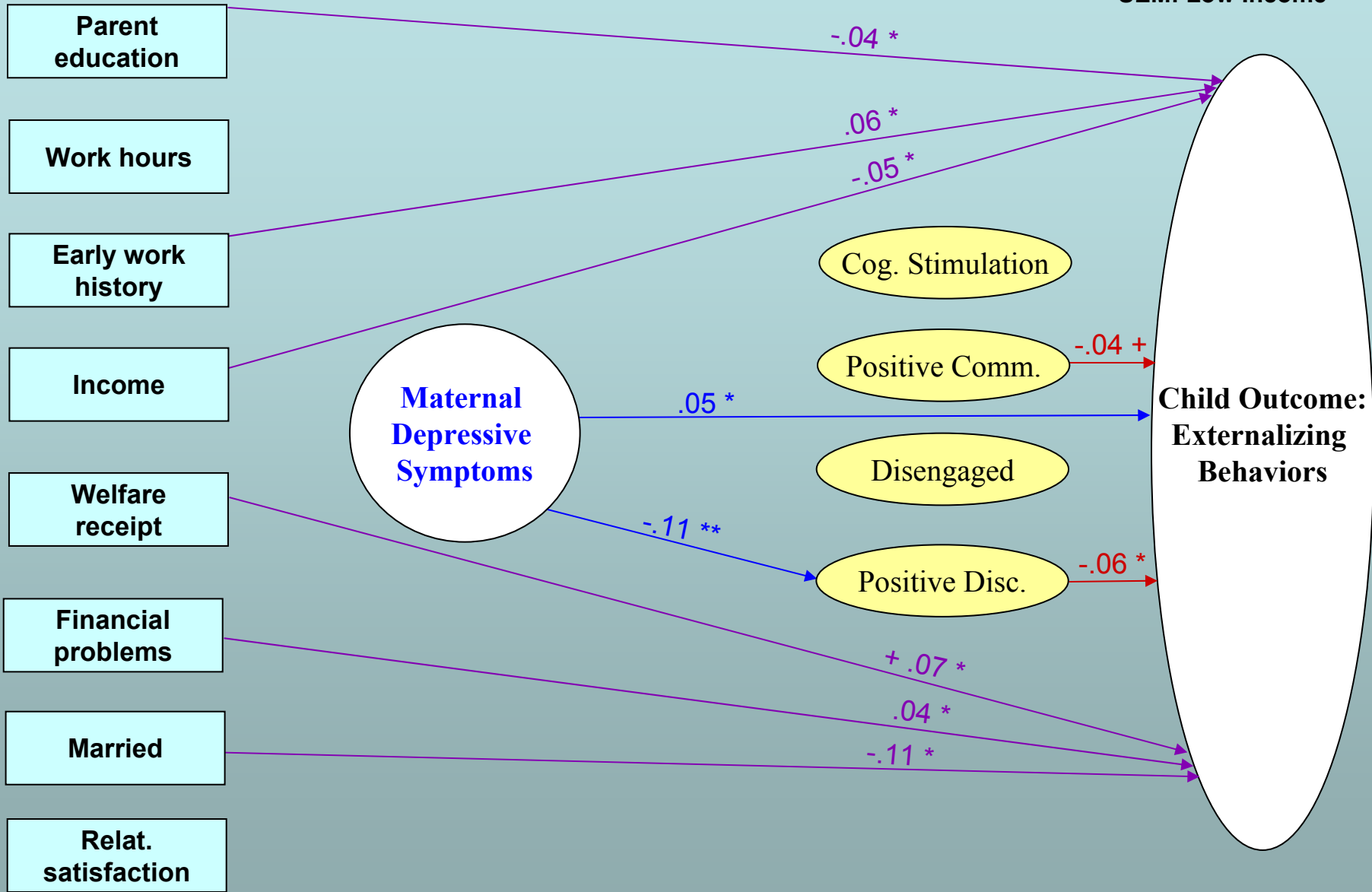
Figure 1b.
Externalizing Behaviors
SEM: Low Income



Policy-Relevant Antecedents

Parenting

Figure 1b.
Externalizing Behaviors
SEM: Low Income



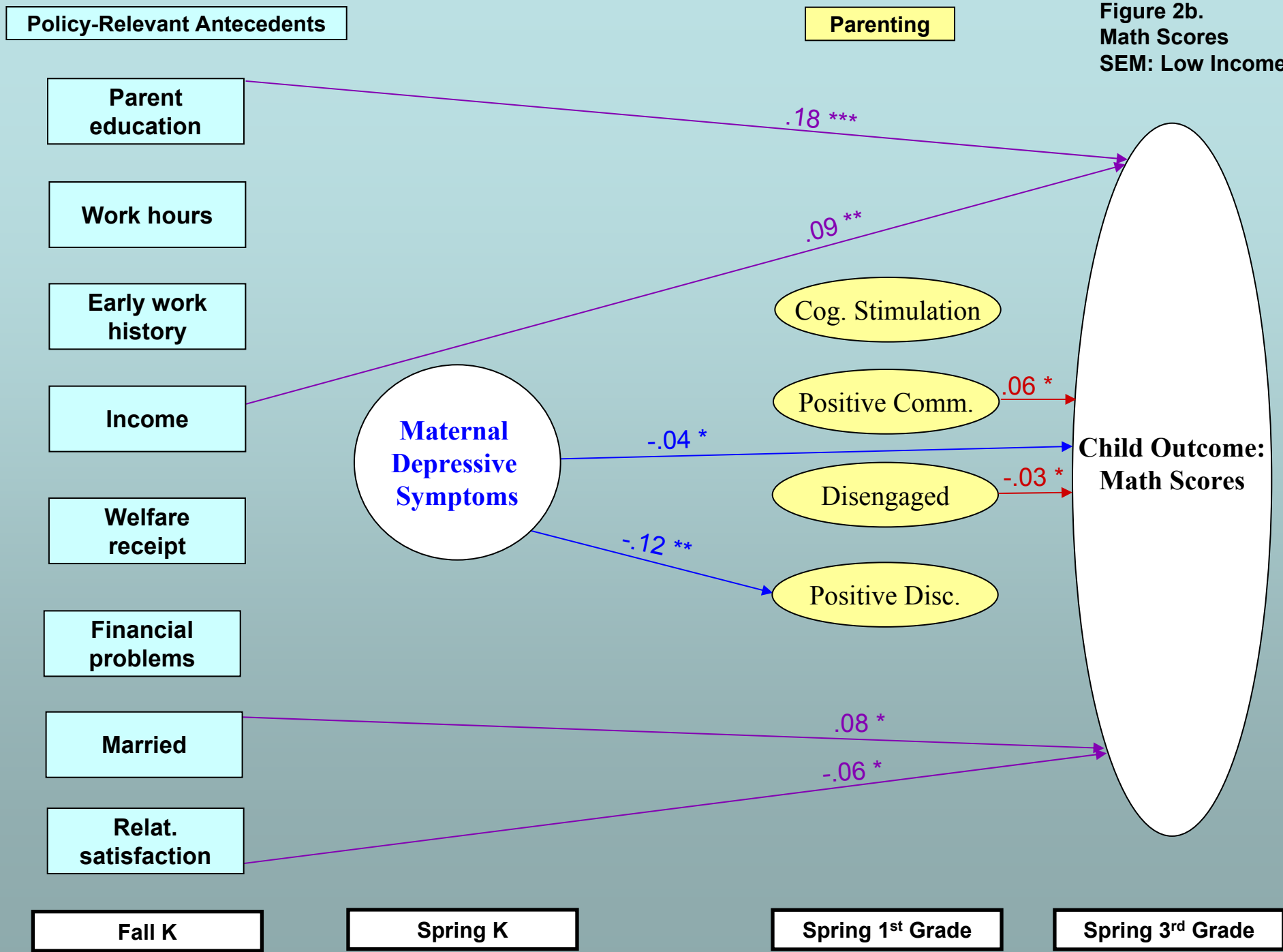
Fall K

Spring K

Spring 1st Grade

Spring 3rd Grade

Figure 2b.
Math Scores
SEM: Low Income



Summary

- Maternal depressive symptoms do matter for children's outcomes.
- Socioeconomic and demographic variables affect maternal depressive symptoms.

Summary

- Generally, maternal depressive symptoms results in less positive parenting behaviors.
- Positive discipline, disengaged parenting and communication mediate depressive symptoms for different outcomes.
- Parenting was also important for the low-income sample, though maternal depressive symptoms were found to link only to discipline.

Implications

- These results clearly indicate that maternal depressive symptoms represent a two-generation problem and that depressive symptoms needs to be identified and treated to enhance the well-being of both mothers and children.

Research in the service of children



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For questions on this presentation, please contact Dr. Elizabeth Hair
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