

When Protection Becomes Control: Parental Fear and the Reorganization of Familial Intimacy in *Hold Tight*

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Abstrak

Studi ini mengkaji bagaimana kecemasan orang tua membentuk perilaku dan persepsi dalam novel *Hold Tight*, khususnya dalam hubungan orang tua-anak. Menggunakan pendekatan psikoanalitik teori Melanie Klein dan Psikologi kontemporer, analisis berfokus pada pengawasan digital sebagai respons kecemasan serta proyeksi ketakutan kepada anak seiring menurunnya rasa percaya diri orang tua. Hasil menunjukkan pengawasan tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai perlindungan, melainkan juga cara mempertahankan kontrol yang secara bertahap mengganggu kepercayaan dan batasan rasional. Secara bersamaan, kecemasan memengaruhi persepsi yang menyebabkan bias interpretatif, proyeksi, identifikasi proyektif. Di sini, anak tidak lagi dilihat sebagaimana adanya, melainkan sebagai cerminan ketakutan orang tua. Maka, studi ini menyoroti bahwa kecemasan beroperasi pada tingkat perilaku dan psikologis yang mempengaruhi persepsi, mengubah kasih sayang menjadi kontrol serta menciptakan jarak relasional.

Kata kunci: ketakutan orang tua; kecemasan; remaja; kecemasan orang tua

Abstract

This study explores how parental anxiety shapes behavior and perception within the parent-child relationship in *Hold Tight*. Utilizing Melanie Klein's psychoanalytic theory alongside contemporary psychology, the analysis focuses on digital surveillance as an anxious response and the projection of fear stemming from declining parental confidence. Findings indicate that surveillance functions not only as protection but as a mechanism for control, gradually eroding trust and relational boundaries. Simultaneously, anxiety distorts perception, triggering interpretive bias, projection, and projective identification. Consequently, the child is no longer perceived authentically, but as a mere reflection of parental fears. This study highlights that anxiety operates behaviorally and psychologically, altering perception, transforming care into control, and establishing severe relational distance.

Keywords: parental fear; anxiety; adolescents; parental anxiety

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary family life is increasingly shaped by heightened perceptions of risk, vulnerability, and uncertainty. Within this climate, parental fear has emerged as a central emotional structure in modern parenting. Although psychological scholarship more frequently employs the term parental anxiety, parental fear is regarded as the affective manifestation of deeper parental anxiety structures, emerging when diffuse anticipatory anxiety

becomes attached to specific perceived threat. Psychological research consistently demonstrated that parental anxiety significantly shapes parenting behaviors, especially in the form of overprotection and psychological control. McLeod, Wood, and Weisz (2007) meta-analysis demonstrated a significant connection between parenting behaviors and childhood anxiety, and revealed that anxious parenting practices tend to contribute to children's emotional difficulties. Parenting behaviors are conceptualized here as overcontrol and rejection.

This perspective is consistent with Van der Bruggen, Stams, and Bögels (2008), in their meta-analysis review, concluding that parental anxiety is positively related to controlling parenting strategies, perpetuating patterns of dependency and heightened fear responses in children. Rather than being merely a reaction to external danger, parental fear appears to function as an underlying psychological dynamic that structures family relationships.

This tension is particularly visible in Harlan Coben's novel *Hold Tight* (2008), a contemporary American Thriller that situates parental fear within the technological landscape of digital surveillance. The narrative center on Mike and Tia Baye, who secretly install surveillance software on their teenage son, Adam's computer after the suicide of his friend. Their decision, driven by fear of losing their son to hidden dangers, triggers escalating consequences that blur boundaries between protection and violation. Rather than treating parental fear as care, the narrative constructs it as a catalyst for secrecy, intrusion, and moral compromise. This research aims to investigate how parental fear in *Hold Tight* transforms attachment into control and how the fear of loss restructures family relationships.

This research employs object relations theory, particularly Melanie Klein's formulation of anxiety and object attachment. In *Love, Guilt and Reparation*, Klein argues that fear of losing the loved object generates anxiety and reparative impulses directed toward preservation. The child, as a central internalized object, becomes fundamental to psychic organization, and perceived threats to that object activate defensive strategies. As further elaborated in *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory* (Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983), object relations theory emphasizes relational configurations rather than instinctual drives. Through this perspective, the surveillance practices in *Hold Tight* can be interpreted as defensive attempts to secure the internal object through external control. Parental fear thus operates as a psychic structure that reshapes relational boundaries.

Existing scholarship provides relevant foundations but reveals a conceptual gap. Sara Ahmed (2004) in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* conceptualizes fear as circulating between bodies and structuring collective spaces, while Ann Cvetkovich ((2003) in *An Archive of Feelings*

examines how trauma organizes intimate life. However, these discussions address fear broadly rather than specifically as parental attachment under threat. Studies on Coben's work and domestic thrillers more generally tend to emphasize suspense, secrecy, and moral ambiguity as genre conventions, rarely situating parental fear within a psychoanalytic relational framework. This study therefore positions parental fear as a relational-psychoanalytic structure rather than merely a thematic or generic element.

Accordingly, this study aims to examine the representation of parental fear in *Hold Tight*, particularly through the relationship between Mike and Tia Baye and their son Adam. By applying Melanie Klein's object relations theory, the research explores how parental anxiety emerges from the perceived vulnerability of a loved object and how this anxiety reshapes the emotional dynamics within the family. More broadly, the study seeks to illuminate how literary narratives portray the psychological tension between parental protection, uncertainty, and the fear of losing a loved one. Within this context, the paper argues that in *Hold Tight*, parental fear functions as an underlying psychological dynamic that gradually transforms protection into intrusion and attachment into control.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method within the framework of psychoanalytic literary criticism. Qualitative research emphasizes interpretive depth, contextual meaning-making, and analytic rigor rather than statistical generalization (Tracy, 2010; Creswell, 2014). In qualitative inquiry, meaning is constructed through systematic engagement with textual data and theoretical frameworks. The primary data source is *Hold Tight* by Harlan Coben. The analysis is grounded in object relations theory, particularly the work of Melanie Klein. In *Love, Guilt and Reparation*, Klein (1937/1975) conceptualizes anxiety as emerging from the fear of losing the loved object, which generates defensive and preservative impulses. This theory is further explored by Jay R. Greenberg and Stephen A. Mitchell in *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory*, which emphasizes internalized object relations as the central structure of psychic life. These theoretical foundations guide the analytical framework for interpreting parental fear as anxiety rooted in the threat of object loss.

The analysis follows a close reading method that involves detailed examination of narrative structure, characterization, and dialogic interaction to uncover underlying psychological dynamics (Barry, 2017). First, the novel is read thoroughly to identify passages representing parental fear, surveillance practices, secrecy, and moral conflict. These passages are then categorized according to key object relations concepts, including anxiety, internalized object, defense mechanisms, and control. Second, the selected textual data are interpreted psychoanalytically to examine how characters' actions reflect defensive responses to the perceived threat of losing the loved object. Finally, the findings are synthesized to demonstrate how parental fear functions not merely as an emotional reaction but as a structuring psychological dynamic that reorganizes authority, intimacy, and relational boundaries within the narrative.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section examines how parental fear is represented in *Hold Tight* through the relational dynamics between Mike and Tia Baye and their son, Adam. Drawing on a psychoanalytic perspective, particularly Melanie Klein's object relations theory, the analysis focuses on how parental anxiety emerges from the perceived possibility of losing the loved object and how this anxiety subsequently shapes parental responses toward their child's behavior. Within the narrative, the suicide of Spencer Hill functions as a pivotal event that reshapes the ways Mike and Tia understand their relationship with Adam. The incident not only heightens their awareness of emotional vulnerability of adolescence but also introduces a deeper sense of uncertainty regarding the limits of parental knowledge about their child's internal world.

To examine these dynamics more systematically, the discussion is organized into three main sections. First, the analysis explores how parental fear begins to emerge following Spencer Hill's death and how this event initiates a new form of anxiety within the Baye family relationship. Second, the discussion on how this anxiety develops into a practice of digital surveillance, carried out by Mike and Tia as a defensive response to the uncertainty surrounding their son's behavior. Third, the discussion analyzes how these surveillance practices reflect a gradual loss of parental confidence, leading the parents to project their fear

onto Adam and to reinterpret his behavior through an anxiety-driven perspective. Finally, the conclusion synthesizes these findings to demonstrate how parental fear functions as an underlying psychological dynamic that transforms protection into control and reshapes familial intimacy throughout the narrative.

From Tragedy to Fear: the Awakening of Parental Anxiety After Spencer Hill's Death

The emergence of parental fear in *Hold Tight* begins with a traumatic event that disrupts the emotional stability of the social environment surrounding Adam Baye, namely the suicide of Spencer Hill. This incident functions as a narrative turning point that reshapes how Mike and Tia Baye understand their relationship with their son. Prior to this tragedy, the Baye family life appears relatively stable and ordinary. However, Spencer's death exposes a troubling reality: the emotional struggles of adolescents may remain concealed even within seemingly functional families. For Mike and Tia, this realization introduces a new awareness of vulnerability in their own parental relationship with Adam. The possibility that their child might also be experiencing hidden difficulties begins to challenge their previous sense of security.

This growing unease becomes visible through the changes in Adam's behavior following his friend's death. After Spencer's suicide, Adam becomes increasingly withdrawn and emotionally distant from his parents. Communication within the Baye household gradually weakens as Adam spends more time alone in his room and becomes reluctant to engage in conversations about his feelings. When his parents attempt to ask about his condition, Adam responds with brief reassurances. At one point he simply says, "I'm fine" (Coben, 2008).

Although the statement appears calm and reassuring, the brevity of the response carries a different implication within the family interaction. Adam's insistence that he is "fine" closes the possibility of further conversation and prevents his parents from gaining access to his emotional state. Rather than resolving their concern, the statement functions as a conversational barrier that deepens their uncertainty. In this moment, language does not operate as a medium of communication but as a protective boundary that shields Adam's internal world from parental inquiry.

Adam's withdrawal is also emphasized through his physical movement within the domestic space. The narrative repeatedly describes him retreating to his room, distancing himself from shared family environments. When his parents try to continue the conversation, Adam withdraws with another brief response, telling them, "I just want to be alone" (Coben, 2008). Such moments reinforce the sense that Adam's emotional world is becoming increasingly inaccessible to his parents. The bedroom gradually transforms into a private territory that lies beyond parental observation. In this context, the space of Adam's room becomes a symbolic boundary separating the internal life of the teenager from the external gaze of his parents.

These small interactions gradually accumulate into a deeper sense of uncertainty within the Baye household. Mike begins to question whether he truly understands his son's inner life. In one moment of reflection, he admits the unsettling realization that parents often assume they know their children, yet crucial parts of their lives may remain hidden (Coben, 2008). This recognition destabilizes Mike's previous confidence as a parent. What once appeared as a stable relationship now becomes marked by doubt and interpretive ambiguity.

Within this context, uncertainty becomes the central condition that allows parental fear to emerge. When parents feel that they no longer have access to their child's emotional world, concern about potential harm tends to intensify. Research on parent-child interaction indicates that patterns of communication within families significantly influence emotional dynamics during adolescence. Interactions characterized by ambiguity and increasing parental concern are often associated with heightened tension within family relationships (Psychopathology Review, 2014).

Thus, the emotional distance that emerges between Adam and his parents does not merely function as a narrative detail but becomes a structural condition that enables parental fear to take shape. This dynamic is further reinforced by findings from longitudinal studies examining emotional interaction within families. Such research suggests that distress between parents and children often develops reciprocally: the emotional condition of the child may heighten parental concern, while parental concern can in turn intensify the child's emotional withdrawal (Zhang, Liu, & Wang, 2025). Within the context of *Hold Tight*, Adam's silence

and distance following Spencer's death can therefore be understood as a catalyst that amplifies Mike and Tia's apprehension. His behavior gradually becomes interpreted not simply as ordinary adolescent privacy but as a potential sign of hidden distress or danger.

Spencer Hill's suicide intensifies this uncertainty because it demonstrates that severe psychological suffering can remain invisible even to parents. This realization leads Mike and Tia to question their own capacity to protect their child. Previous research indicates that parental anxiety tends to increase when parents perceive a loss of understanding or predictive control over their child's emotional state (McLeod, Wood, & Weisz, 2007). Within this framework, the emotional response experienced by Mike and Tia can be understood as anticipatory anxiety rooted in the imagined possibility of losing the child they love. From a psychoanalytic perspective, these emotional dynamics can be interpreted through Melanie Klein's object relations theory.

Klein argues that anxiety frequently emerges when individuals confront the potential loss of the loved object, a figure that occupies a central place in psychic attachment (Klein, 1975). Within family relationships, the child often functions as a primary object of attachment for parents. Because this object becomes integrated into the individual's internal emotional structure, any perceived threat to its safety can produce intense psychological disturbance.

In *Hold Tight*, Adam functions as the loved object for Mike and Tia Baye. Their identities as parents and the emotional stability of their family life are closely tied to their relationship with him. When Adam begins to exhibit behavior that appears increasingly difficult to interpret following Spencer's death, the stability of that attachment becomes uncertain. As Greenberg and Mitchell (1983) explain, threats to the relationship with the loved object can disturb psychological equilibrium because the object has already been internalized as part of the subject's emotional world.

Klein further elaborates this condition through the concept of depressive anxiety, which emerges when individuals recognize the possibility of damaging or losing the object they love (Klein, 1946). In this state, individuals not only fear losing the object but may also experience guilt arising from the perception that they have failed to adequately

protect or care for it. Within the narrative, Mike and Tia begin to experience a subtle sense of guilt as they suspect that they may have overlooked signs of Adam's emotional distress before his behavioral changes became visible.

According to Klein, such feelings of guilt often generate a reparative impulse, or reparation, which refers to attempts to restore or safeguard the relationship with the loved object (Klein, 1937). This reparative drive may manifest through behaviors aimed at protecting the object from perceived threats. Within parent-child relationships, such impulses frequently appear in the form of intensified supervision or attempts to regain control over the child's life.

Thus, the emergence of parental fear in *Hold Tight* cannot be understood solely as a reaction to external danger. Rather, it reflects a deeper psychological dynamic rooted in the fear of losing a central object of emotional attachment. Spencer Hill's suicide functions as the catalyst that forces Mike and Tia to confront the fragility of their relationship with Adam. The subsequent changes in Adam's behavior intensify their apprehension and generate feelings of guilt, gradually reshaping their understanding of parental responsibility.

At this stage of the narrative, the tension experienced by Mike and Tia remains largely internal and psychological. However, the fear of losing the loved object, combined with the reparative impulse to protect it, begins to reorganize the way they interpret their role as parents. This emotional dynamic ultimately prepares the ground for the next development in the narrative, in which their attempt to regain certainty and control leads to the implementation of digital surveillance over Adam's online life.

Watching to Protect or Watching to Control: Digital Surveillance as a Response to Parental Anxiety

Parental anxiety has been consistently associated with the emergence of controlling parenting behaviors, particularly in contexts marked by uncertainty and perceived risk. A systematic review by Waite et al. (2014) demonstrates that increased parental control is linked to heightened anxiety responses in children, especially among those who are already emotionally vulnerable (de Wilde & Rapee, 2008, as cited in Waite et al., 2014). Similarly, research by Keizer (2012) indicates that adolescents with higher levels of parental anxiety

tend to exhibit greater anxiety when their parents engage in controlling behaviors. These findings suggest that parental control does not merely function as a protective strategy, but as a behavioral manifestation of underlying anxiety.

This dynamic is further reinforced by studies on overcontrolling parenting, which indicate that excessive parental control may inadvertently communicate to children that the world is unsafe, unpredictable, and filled with potential threats (Borelli, Margolin, & Rasmussen, 2014). In such conditions, control does not reduce anxiety but instead reproduces it, shaping the child's perception of both the external environment and interpersonal relationships. Rather than fostering trust and autonomy, overcontrol constructs a framework in which uncertainty is interpreted as danger, thereby intensifying the very fear it seeks to prevent.

This pattern is clearly reflected in *Hold Tight*, where Mike and Tia's growing anxiety following Spencer Hill's death leads them to adopt increasingly intrusive strategies toward their son. The shift from relational communication to technological control becomes evident when they secretly install monitoring software on Adam's computer, allowing them to observe his online activities without his knowledge. As Tia insists, "We're not spying on him. We're protecting him" (Coben, 2008), the act of surveillance is discursively reframed as care, masking its intrusive nature. This rationalization is further reinforced when Mike minimizes the act by stating, "It's just a program... That's all" (Coben, 2008), suggesting an attempt to normalize and reduce the perceived severity of their actions.

Beyond these explicit justifications, the narrative also emphasizes how surveillance restructures the boundaries of privacy within the family. As the parents begin to read Adam's messages and monitor his digital interactions, his private space is no longer defined by autonomy but becomes subject to continuous observation. In this sense, knowledge about the child is no longer obtained through mutual trust or communication, but through covert access and technological mediation. The child's internal world, once inaccessible, is transformed into data to be monitored and interpreted.

From a theoretical perspective, this shift can be understood through broader conceptions of surveillance. Lyon (2006, as cited in Galič et al., 2017) argues that surveillance operates

simultaneously as a form of care and control, in which the act of watching is justified as a means of protection while also functioning as a mechanism of regulation. Within this framework, Mike and Tia's actions reflect a dual impulse: to safeguard their child while simultaneously disciplining his behavior. Surveillance thus becomes a strategy for managing uncertainty by transforming the unknown into something visible, measurable, and controllable.

From a psychoanalytic standpoint, these behaviors can be further explained through Melanie Klein's concept of anxiety. Klein (1952, as cited in Likierman, 1995) emphasizes that anxiety, particularly depressive anxiety, emerges from the fear of losing the loved object and becomes intensified when that object is perceived to be under threat. In *Hold Tight*, Adam functions as this loved object, and the parents' fear, triggered by the traumatic loss of Spencer, generates a profound sense of vulnerability. This anxiety does not remain internal but produces defensive strategies aimed at preserving the object.

In this context, digital surveillance can be interpreted as a defensive response to such anxiety. According to Klein (1975), anxiety over the potential loss of the loved object often gives rise to defensive mechanisms designed to secure and protect that object. Furthermore, this response reflects what Klein (1937) describes as a reparative impulse, in which individuals attempt to restore or safeguard the loved object when it is perceived to be at risk. However, rather than repairing the emotional distance between themselves and their son through communication, Mike and Tia express this reparative drive through control and observation. As a result, care is transformed into surveillance, and protection into intrusion.

Thus, digital surveillance in *Hold Tight* does not simply function as a rational or preventative parenting strategy, but as a psychological mechanism through which parental anxiety is managed. By attempting to eliminate uncertainty and secure the loved object, the parents ultimately undermine trust and autonomy, revealing how fear can reorganize familial relationships and blur the boundary between protection and control.

From Trust to Suspicion: The Loss of Parental Confidence and the Projection of Fear onto the Child

The erosion of parental confidence marks a critical turning point in *Hold Tight*, as certainty regarding the child is gradually replaced by doubt and interpretive instability. This shift is captured in the parents' question, "How well did we ever really know him?" (Coben, 2008), which signals not only uncertainty but a rupture in parental epistemological authority. The assumption that parents possess an inherent understanding of their child collapses, leaving behind a space defined by ambiguity and vulnerability.

This erosion is closely linked to a decline in parental self-efficacy, which has been associated with increased stress and difficulty in managing child-related challenges (Hastings & Brown, 2002). As confidence diminishes, parents become more vulnerable to anxiety-driven interpretations, relying less on understanding and more on assumption. This uncertainty is further intensified by Adam's increasing withdrawal from familial interaction. As he becomes more distant, spending more time alone and avoiding meaningful communication, his internal world becomes progressively inaccessible. In the absence of dialogue, silence is no longer neutral but becomes a site of interpretation. Parent-child communication during adolescence functions as a central mechanism for maintaining mutual understanding, and its disruption often results in emotional distance and misinterpretation (Branje, Laursen, & Collins, forthcoming). Adam's withdrawal thus does not merely reflect distance but actively contributes to the parents' growing uncertainty and anxiety.

Moreover, the emotional condition of the parents themselves plays a crucial role in shaping the quality of the relationship. Heightened emotional distress may weaken relational stability and reduce the capacity for empathetic understanding, thereby intensifying conflict and misunderstanding (Vig & Jaswal, 2010). As relational intimacy deteriorates, the interpretive space between parent and child expands, allowing anxiety to increasingly structure perception. Empirical and cognitive research further demonstrates that parental anxiety significantly shapes how children's behavior is processed and interpreted.

Anxious individuals tend to exhibit cognitive biases, particularly an attentional bias toward threat, in which ambiguous stimuli are more likely to be interpreted as dangerous (Mathews, Mackintosh, & Fulcher, 1997). Similarly, parental anxiety has been

shown to contribute to interpretive bias in children, reinforcing threat-oriented interpretations of ambiguous situations (Affrunti & Ginsburg, 2012; Cobham & Dadds, 1999). This dynamic is clearly reflected in *Hold Tight*, where “every little thing suddenly seemed like a sign” (Coben, 2008), indicating a shift from observation to overinterpretation. Likewise, the assertion “He’s hiding something” (Coben, 2008) reveals how suspicion replaces trust, as the parents interpret Adam’s behavior through an anxiety-driven framework rather than through direct understanding.

This distortion of perception is further reinforced by patterns of anxious parenting behavior. Parents experiencing elevated levels of anxiety tend to engage in more controlling and overprotective behaviors, driven by heightened sensitivity to perceived threat (Behaviour Research and Therapy, 2003). Such responses create a cyclical dynamic in which anxiety produces control, and control in turn reinforces anxiety and interpretive distortion.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, this transformation in perception can be understood through the concept of projection. In social-psychological terms, projection refers to a defense mechanism through which individuals attribute their own unacceptable thoughts or emotions to others, thereby externalizing internal conflict (Baumeister, Dale, & Sommer, 1998). Klein (1952) extends this understanding by emphasizing that unconscious phantasy structures relational experience, as internal anxieties are projected onto external objects. This idea is further grounded in Klein’s earlier work, which links such processes to depressive anxiety, the fear of losing the loved object, which generates a heightened need to protect, control, and interpret the object (Klein, 1935).

This dynamic can be further understood through the relationship between the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions. Steiner (1990) suggests that psychological equilibrium depends on the balance between these positions, where the paranoid-schizoid position is associated with splitting, fear, and the projection of danger, while the depressive position involves integration, guilt, and concern for the loved object. In *Hold Tight*, the parents’ anxiety reflects a regression toward a paranoid-schizoid mode of functioning, in which fear dominates perception and the child is experienced as a potential source of threat rather than as a whole, integrated subject. The process becomes even more complex

when examined through the concept of projective identification.

As theorized by Kernberg (1987), projection and projective identification function not only as internal defenses but also as relational mechanisms that actively shape interpersonal dynamics. Similarly, Seligman (1993, as cited in Silverman & Lieberman, 1999) conceptualizes projective identification as an asymmetrical interaction in which one individual induces another to experience disowned feelings.

Within parent-child relationships, this asymmetry is intensified by parental authority, allowing parental attributions to exert a powerful influence on the child’s developing subjectivity (Silverman & Lieberman, 1999). Adam thus becomes not only the object of concern but also the site onto which parental anxiety is projected and reproduced. Furthermore, object relations theory provides a broader framework for understanding this transformation. Mitchell (1981) emphasizes that the “object” in relational experience is not simply encountered as it is, but is shaped by internal psychic structures and relational expectations. In this sense, Adam is no longer perceived as an autonomous subject but as an object constituted through parental anxiety, interpreted within a framework of fear, expectation, and unconscious phantasy.

This escalation is further reflected in the statement, “We can’t just sit back and do nothing” (Coben, 2008), which reveals how anxiety transforms into urgency. Inaction becomes equated with failure, and intervention becomes a psychological necessity. However, such intervention is no longer grounded in understanding but in projection, as the child is approached not as an autonomous subject, but as a reflection of parental fear.

Thus, the loss of parental confidence in *Hold Tight* does not merely produce uncertainty but initiates a process in which anxiety reshapes perception and reorganizes the parent-child relationship. In addition, Safitri et al. (2023) concluded that the long-term impact of maladaptive parental responses has been recognized, showing that patterns of misunderstanding and emotional dissonance in parent-child relationships can have long-lasting psychological impacts.

Through projection, projective identification, and cognitive bias, internal fear is externalized and imposed upon the child, transforming him into a perceived source of threat. In this way, the

relationship shifts from one grounded in trust and mutual understanding to one structured by suspicion, anxiety, and interpretive distortion, revealing how parental fear ultimately disrupts both perception and intimacy.

CONCLUSION

Hold Tight's parental reactions are not solely reasonable or careful actions, as demonstrated by this study. Rather than having these responses, it's better to consider them as intricate psychological reactions that stem from anxiety, fear, and unstable connections. This paper suggests that parents' actions are often motivated by a desire to handle uncertainty and ensure the safety of their child, even if these efforts fail to improve the bond between parent and child.

The second part of the discussion focuses on digital surveillance, where parents attempt to manage their concerns by taking control and using it as a means of instilling confidence. When presented with care, surveillance can act as an invasion without necessarily changing people's perception of each other. This highlights how anxiety can transform caring actions into controlling ones that undermine the safety of those actions. The third part concludes that losing confidence leads to broader psychological changes for parents who are no longer confident in their identity. The alteration in perception results from worrying and fear-influenced thinking. Through projection, projective identification, and interpretive bias, individuals' inner fears are presented as originating from children, making them appear wrong or harmful in a way that is not true. This can lead to the perception of potential danger and damage of loved ones.

Taking all the results in one go, it is clear that parental anxiety affects not only their behavior but also their thinking. It alters not only the behaviors of parents but also the way they perceive and understand their child. The relationship between parent and child changes due to a combination of control, fear, and projecting emotions, where the need for protection is closely linked to the desire to control and comprehend. Instead of defending their child, anxiety-based responses can lead to a relationship filled with distrust and separation. This highlights the importance of viewing parents' behavior as indicators of deeper thoughts and

emotions that impact family members who view them as similar or alike.

SUGGESTIONS

This study is limited to the analysis of parental fear through the perspective of object relations theory in Harlan Coben's *Hold Tight*. Future research may explore the novel through other psychoanalytic perspectives, such as attachment theory, Lacanian psychoanalysis, or trauma theory, and extend the analysis to other contemporary domestic thrillers. Further studies may also integrate object relations theory with cultural or media studies to examine how surveillance culture and digital technology shape contemporary representations of parent-child relationships.

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