



Father Involvement and Children's Well Being: A Focus on Language Development

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Today's Talk

- Multiple aspects of father involvement in children's first years of life in relation to children's language and cognitive skills

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Fathers?



Language?

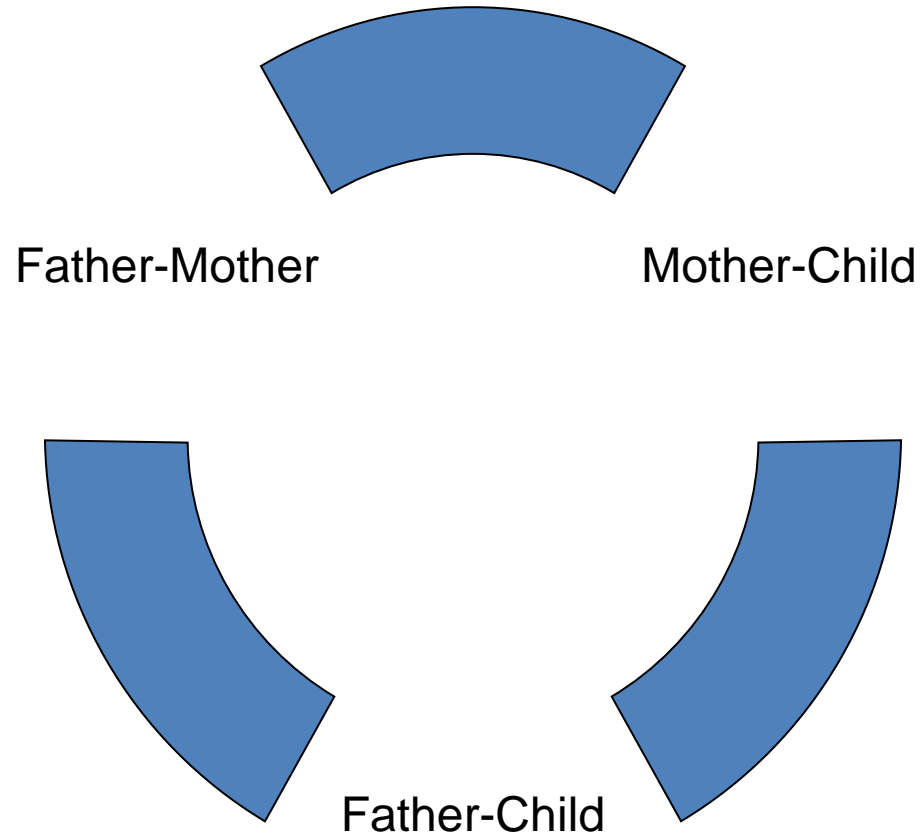


Young Children?

Why Father Involvement?

- Why focus on fathers?
 - Critics: Mothers are primary caregivers to children. What's the added value to studying fathers?

Fathers & Family Systems



Why Language Development?

- Language is a tool that enables children to:
 - share experiences with others
 - participate in cultural routines
 - regulate emotions and behaviors
 - and meet the learning requirements of school

Why Language Development?

- Language is a tool that enables children to:
 - share experiences with others
 - participate in cultural routines
 - regulate emotions and behaviors
 - and meet the learning requirements of school
- Language and cognitive skills develop through social interactions (Vygotsky, Bruner), and fathers are a key source of the language children hear

Why the First Years of Life?

- Why focus on infancy and early childhood?
 - Critics: Policy and educational concerns revolve around school performance and disparities
 - Critics: Skills from infancy to childhood are unstable or unreliable? Children will catch up

Attachment Theory & Developmental Cascades

- Infancy is a time when parents establish close relationships with the baby that form the foundation for child well being

Why the First Years of Life?

- Infancy is a time when language and cognitive skills rapidly develop as the building blocks to school success
 - Children with strong language skills early on show an advantage in later reading, grammatical development, phonological awareness and cognitive skills years later.

Today's Talk: Research Foci

- RQ1: Which aspects of father involvement are important to children's language and cognitive development?
- RQ2: How and why?

Data Sources



Early Head Start

- 3001 families in randomized experimental-control design
- Mother interviews and videorecorded with children ages 14, 24, 36 mos & Pre-K
- Father interviews and videorecorded with children ages at 24, 36 mos & Pre-K
- Nested study of fathers and mothers of newborns at 1, 3, 6, 14, 24, 36 mos & Pre-K

MetroBaby Project

- 380 families recruited from 3 public hospitals (Mexicans, Dominicans, African American & Chinese)
 - Large immigrant and minority groups in the U.S.; growing populations in NYC and other urban communities
 - Urban poor neighborhoods with high crime rates, language barriers
- Data collection at birth, 1, 6, 14, 24, 36, 52 months, Kindergarten & 1st grade

RQ1: Which aspects of father involvement are important to children's language and cognitive development?

Direct Pathways

- Two clear influences:
 - The **quality of father-child interactions** (verbal responsiveness, support, use of rich language)
 - Fathers' engagement of children in **learning activities**

Influence #1: The Quality of the Father-Child Relationship

Father-Toddler Interactions



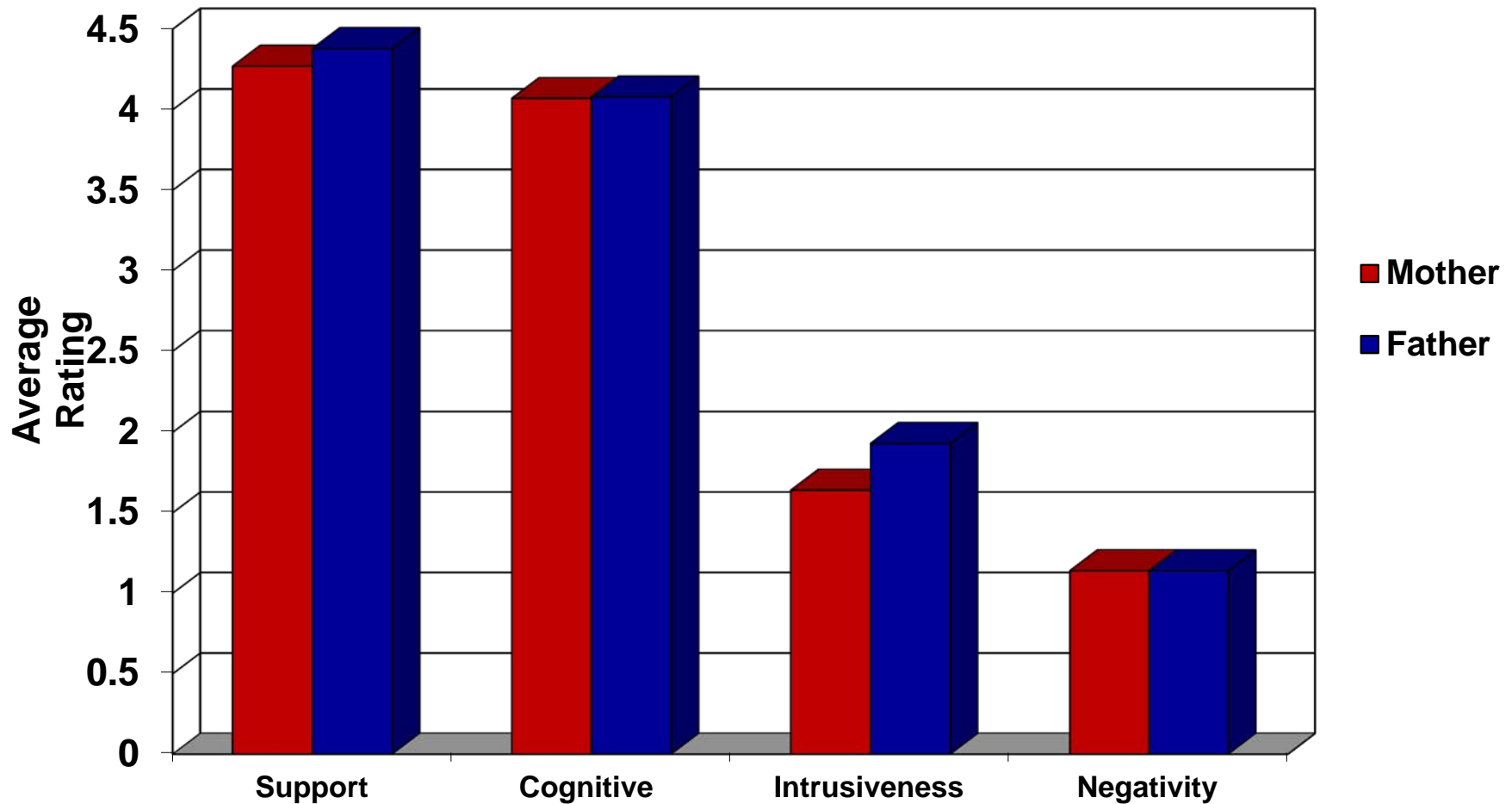
The Quality of Father-Child Interactions

- Global coding (1-7) of fathers' supportiveness (sensitivity, responsiveness, positive regard), intrusiveness, negativity
- Micro-coding of fathers' language use (different word types, different language functions) from transcriptions of f-c interactions
 - “See the ball” (3 word types)
 - “Look there” (directive); “What is that?” (open ended question); “That’s a blue ball” (descriptive) (3 functions)

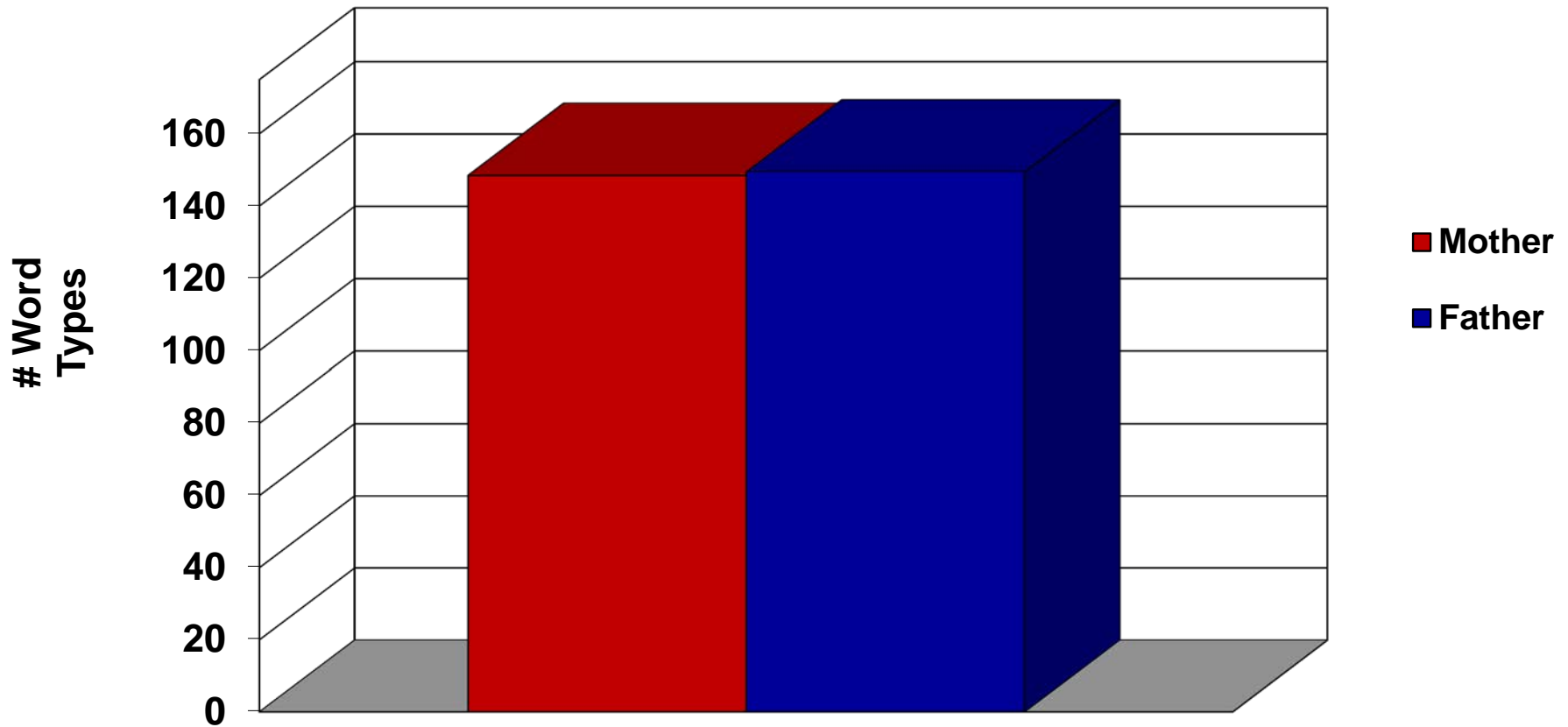
The Quality of Father-Child Interactions

- How does the quality of fathers' interactions compare to those of mothers on global measures and micro measures of language?

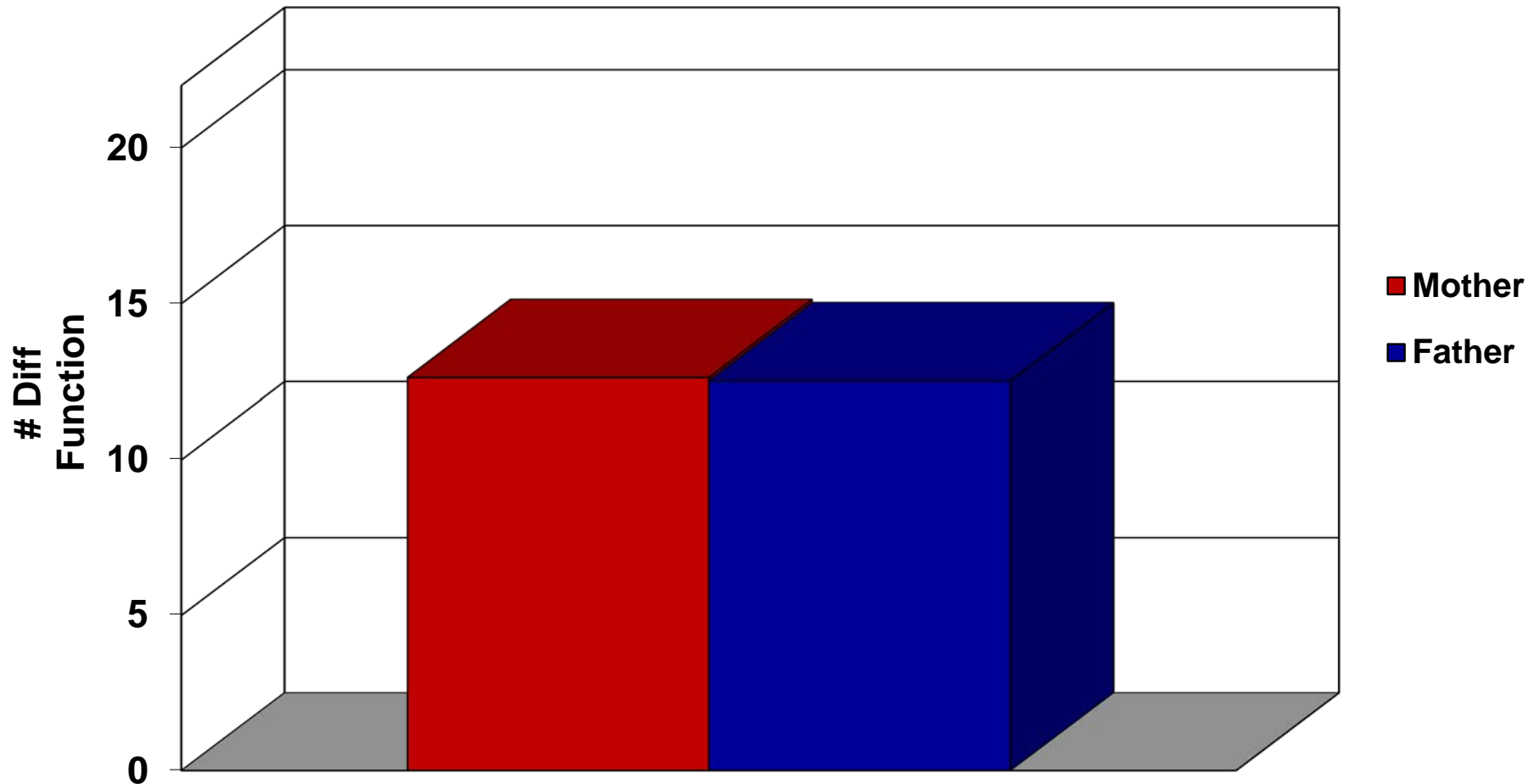
Fathers' and Mothers' Supportiveness and Negativity with 2- and 3-Year olds



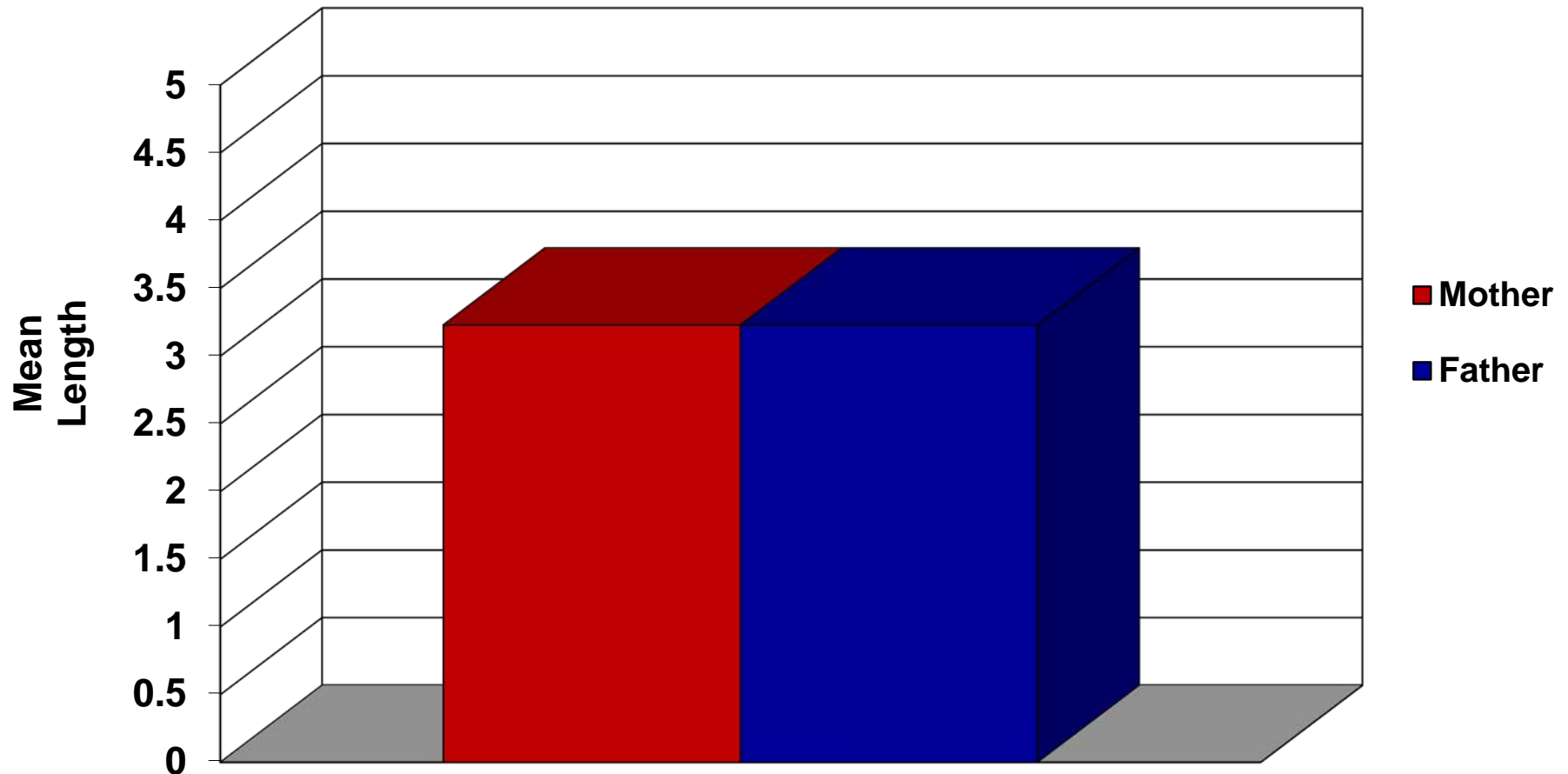
Fathers and Mothers at Play with 2-Year olds: # Word Types



Fathers and Mothers at Play with 2-Year olds: Communicative Diversity



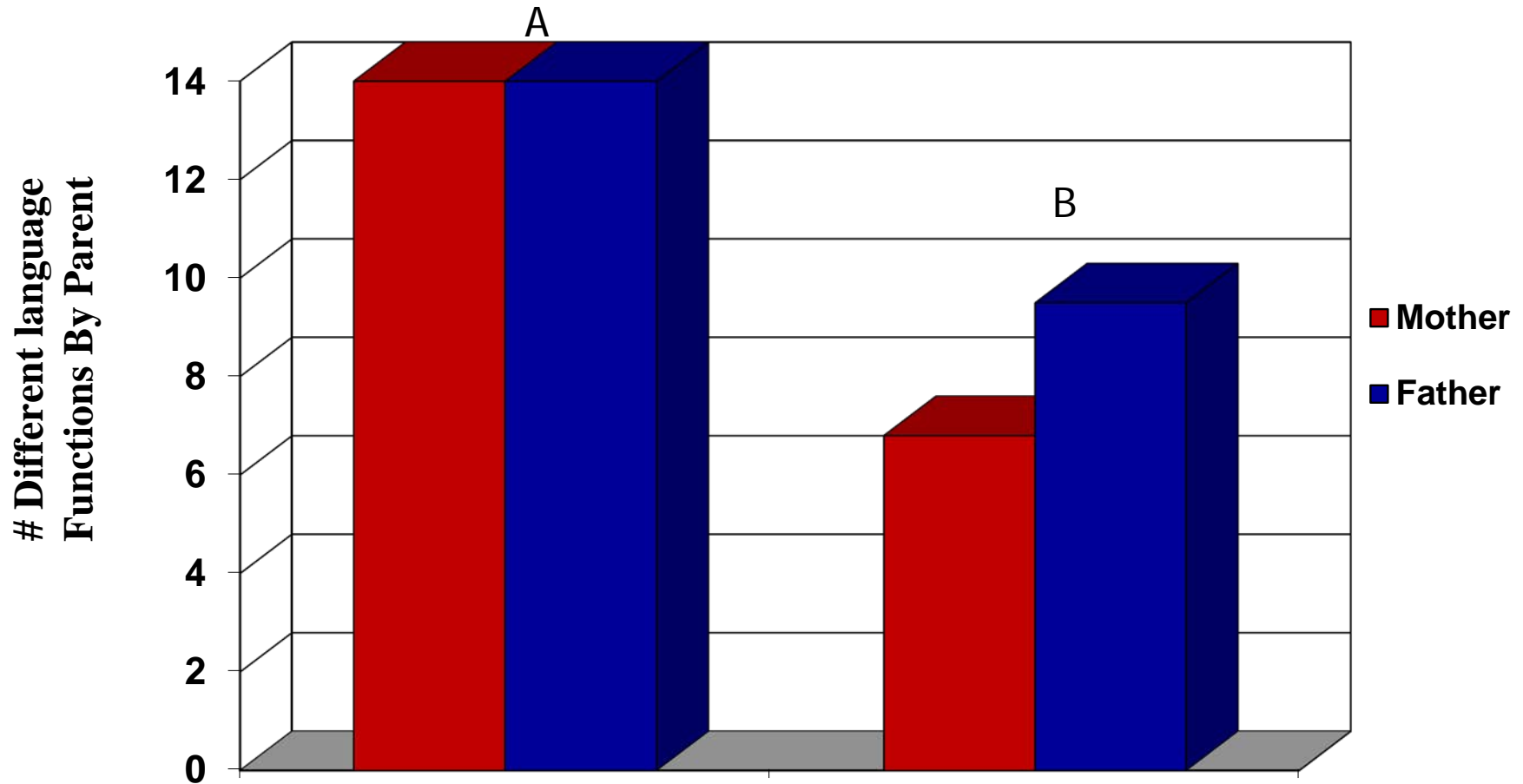
Fathers and Mothers at Play with 2-Year olds: Mean Length Utterances



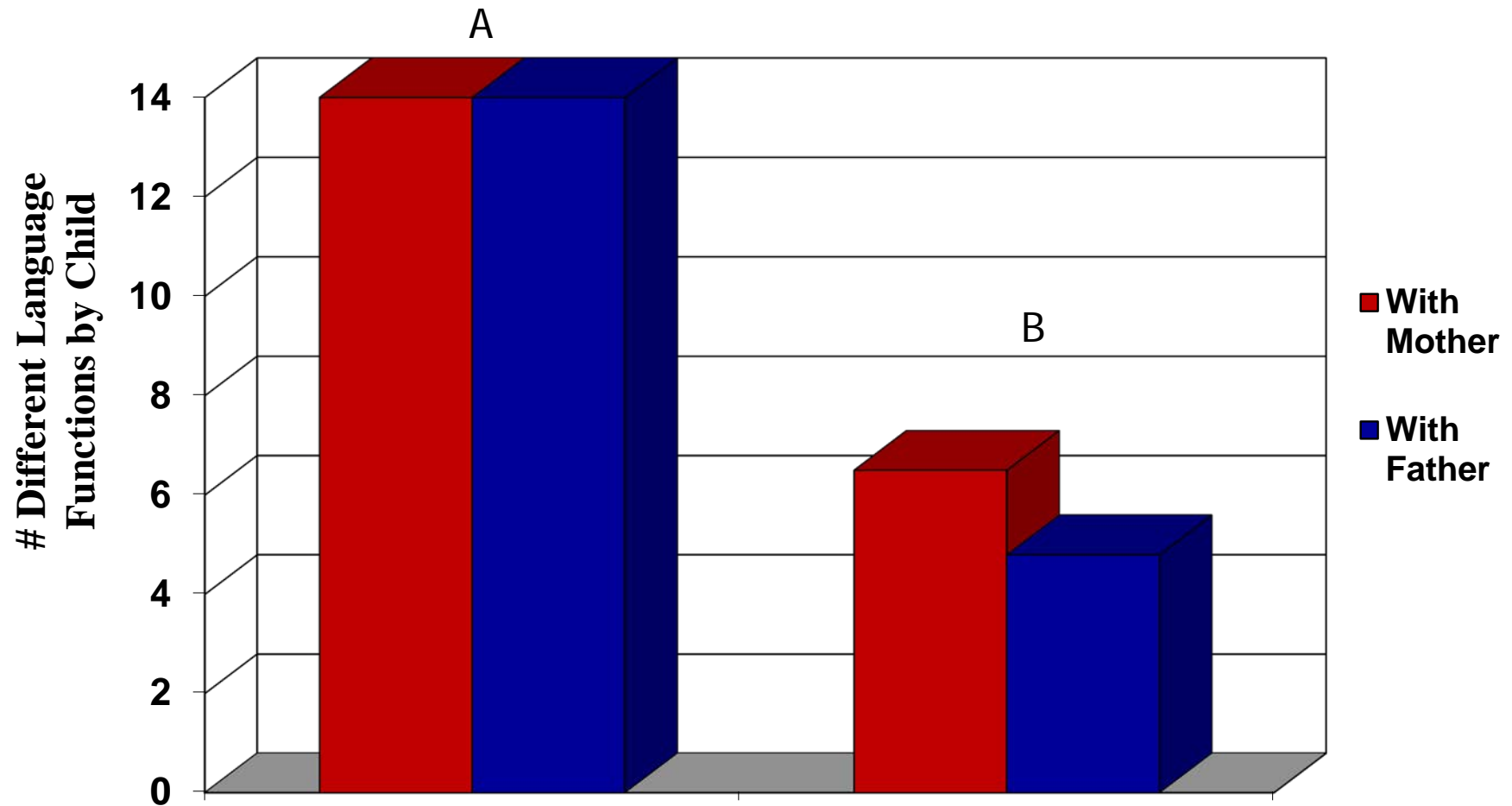
How do Fathers and Mothers of the Same Child Compare in Language?

- Children experience uniform language environments
 - Inter-parent correlations from .40 to .60 on all measures
- The “rich get richer”
 - Assortive mating
 - Or living together makes parents similar
 - Residency moderates mother-father correlation in word types (relation there for resident, not non-resident)

Language Heard by Two Children: Parents' Communicative Diversity



The Language Expressed by Two Children with Mother and with Father



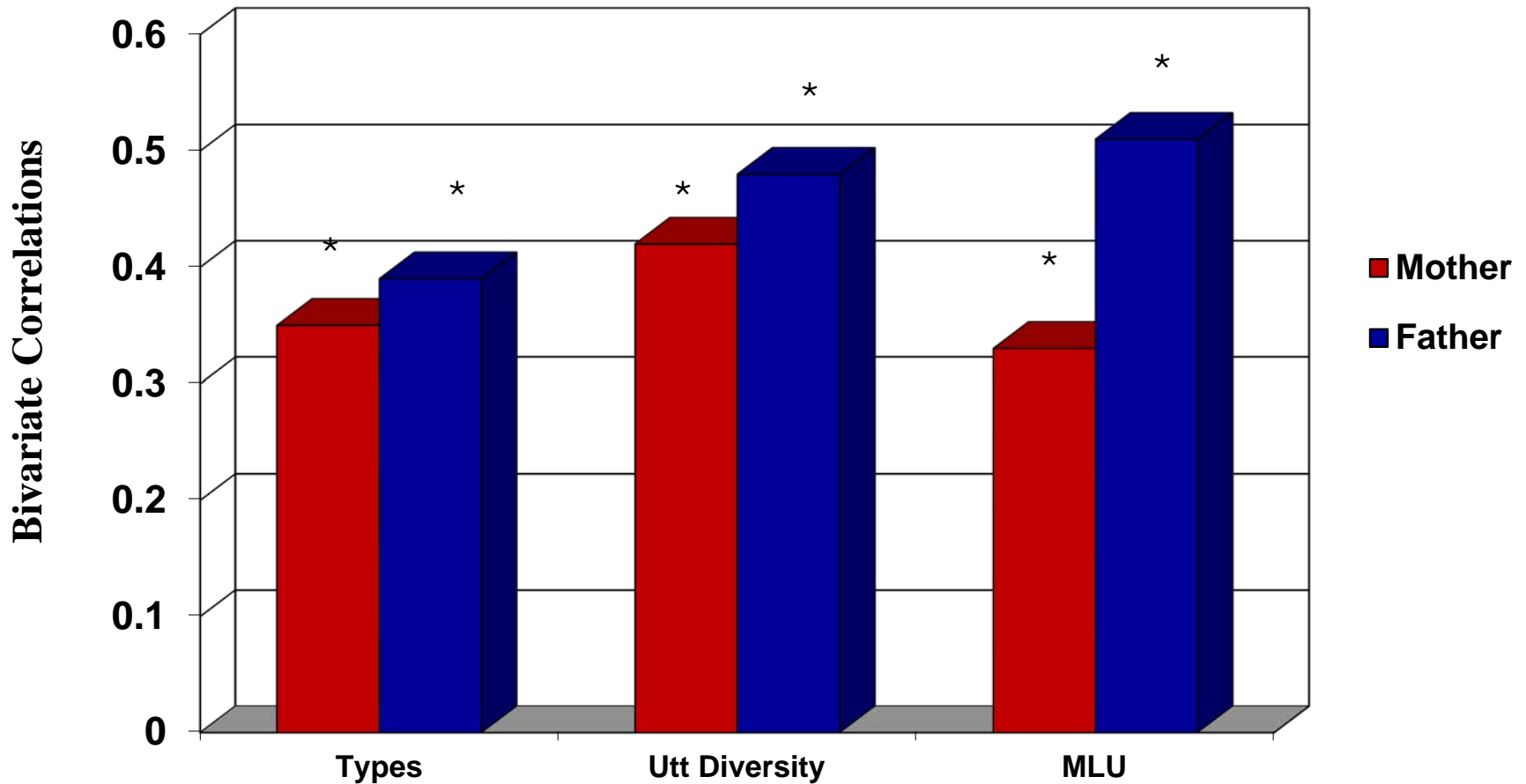
Father Involvement Matters above Mothers' Involvement

Fathers and Mothers at Play with 2- and 3-Year olds

	36 MDI		36 PPVT	
	Beta	R^2 <i>change</i>	Beta	R^2 <i>change</i>
Mother's Supportive Parenting	.20*	.13***	.14 ⁺	.10***
Father's Supportive Parenting	.25**	.07***	.25**	.08***
Significant Demographics (Parental Education, Income)		.08**		.10***

⁺ $p < .10$. * $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .001$

Fathers and Mothers Language: Associations with Children's Language at 2 Years



Father Involvement Matters for School Readiness

Father Involvement and Children's School Readiness

- Participants & Procedures
 - Approximately 1200 resident low-income fathers of young children from a nationally representative sample (ECLS-B)
 - Fathers reported on parenting behaviors when children were 9 months and 2 years of age
 - Children's school readiness at preschool age

Father Involvement and Children's School Readiness

- Which set of fathering behaviors predict children's school readiness skills?
 - Childcare ($\alpha = .86$)
 - **Learning Activities ($\alpha = .78$)**
 - Outings ($\alpha = .77$)
 - Time with Child ($\alpha = .77$)
 - **Financial Provisioning ($\alpha = .79$)**

Fathers' Learning Activities and Children's PreKindergarten Skills

	PPVT	Reading	Math
Financial provisioning	.09**	.12**	.15**
Engagement in childcare	.05	-.05	-.07*
Engagement in play activities	-.06*	.00	-.02
Engagement in learning activities	.11**	.14***	.08*

*p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001, controlling for father race/ethnicity and time spent with child

Father Involvement Matters for Academic Skills in Early Adolescence

Fathers' Learning Activities and Children's 5th Grade Academic Skills

- Participants & Procedures
 - Approximately 602 low-income fathers of young children participating in the Early Head Start National Evaluation Study
 - Fathers' participation in learning activities when children 2, 3 years and in pre-school
 - Children assessed on receptive language (PPVT), literacy and math skills in 5th grade

Fathers' Learning Activities and Children's 5th Grade Academic Skills

	PPVT	Reading	Math
Father Engagement in Early Learning Activities	.14***	.15**	.09*
Child Positive Relationship with Biological Father	.16**	.17**	.10
Child Positive Relationship with Father-Figure	.09*	.15***	.14**
<i>R</i> ²	.04***	.05***	.03**

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, controlling for father race/ethnicity and time spent with child

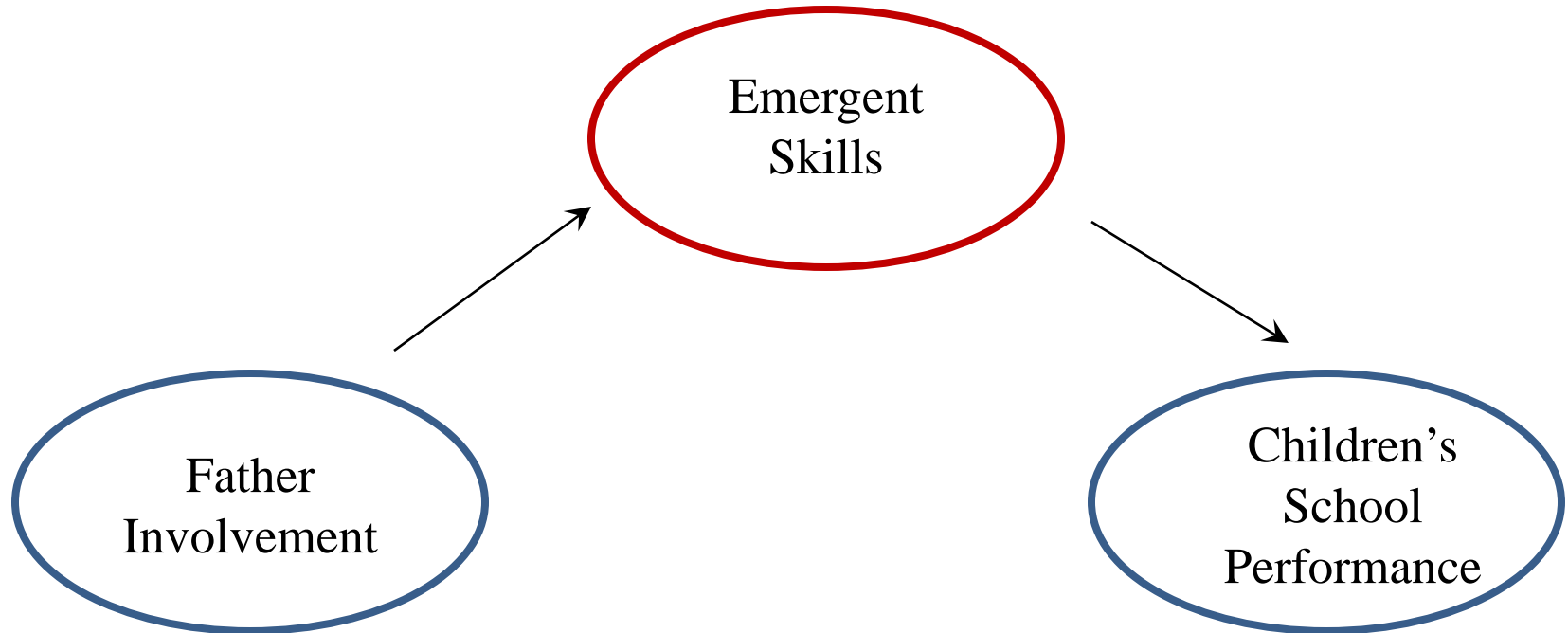
RQ2: Why do these aspects of father involvement matter?

Pathways of Influence

- Skill promotion:
 - Support of early skills in infants and young children, which snowball to later skills (language examples)



Father Pathways of Influence

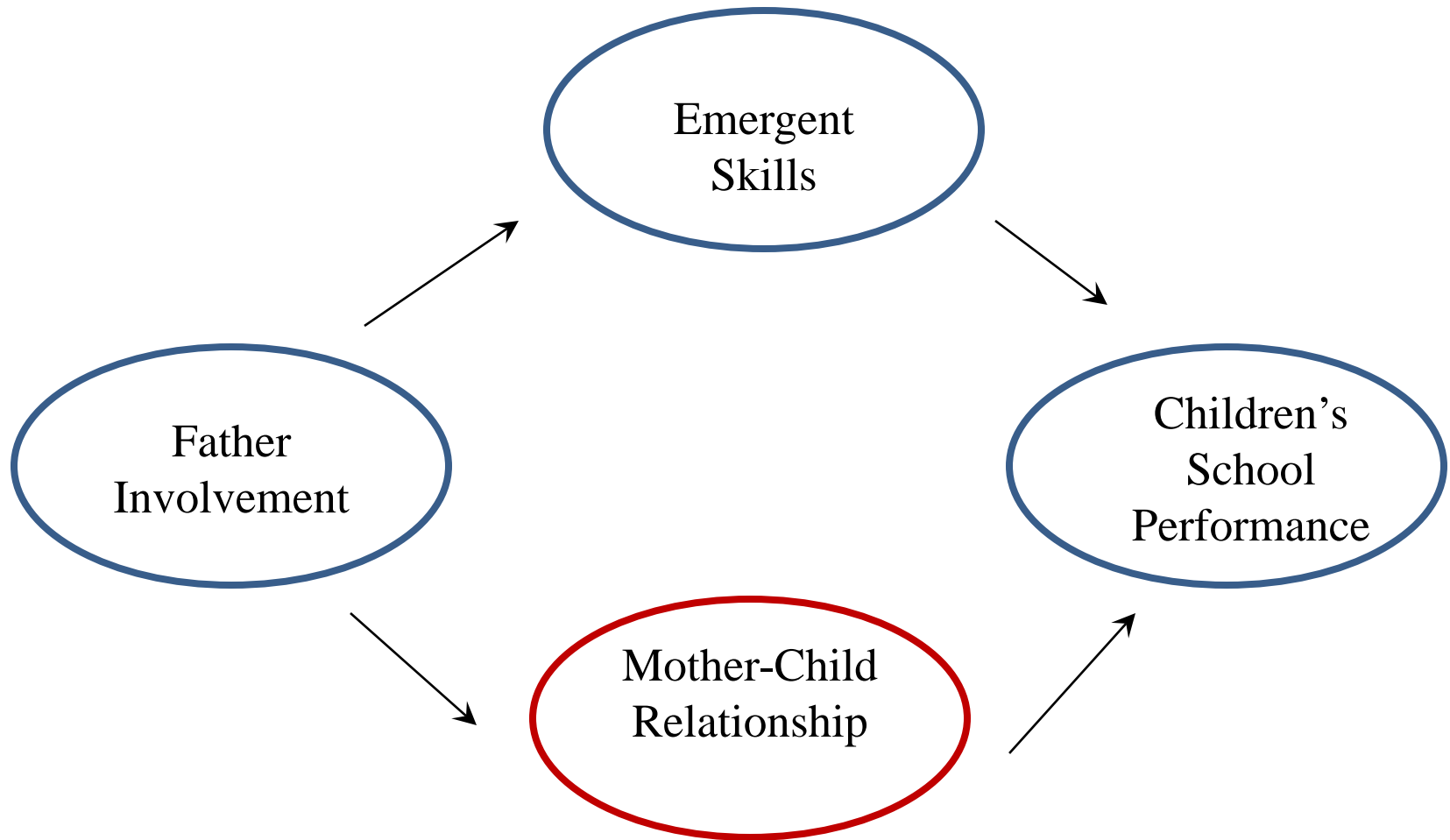


Pathways of Influence

- Family systems:
 - Fathering affects the mother-child relationship, which feeds into children's skills

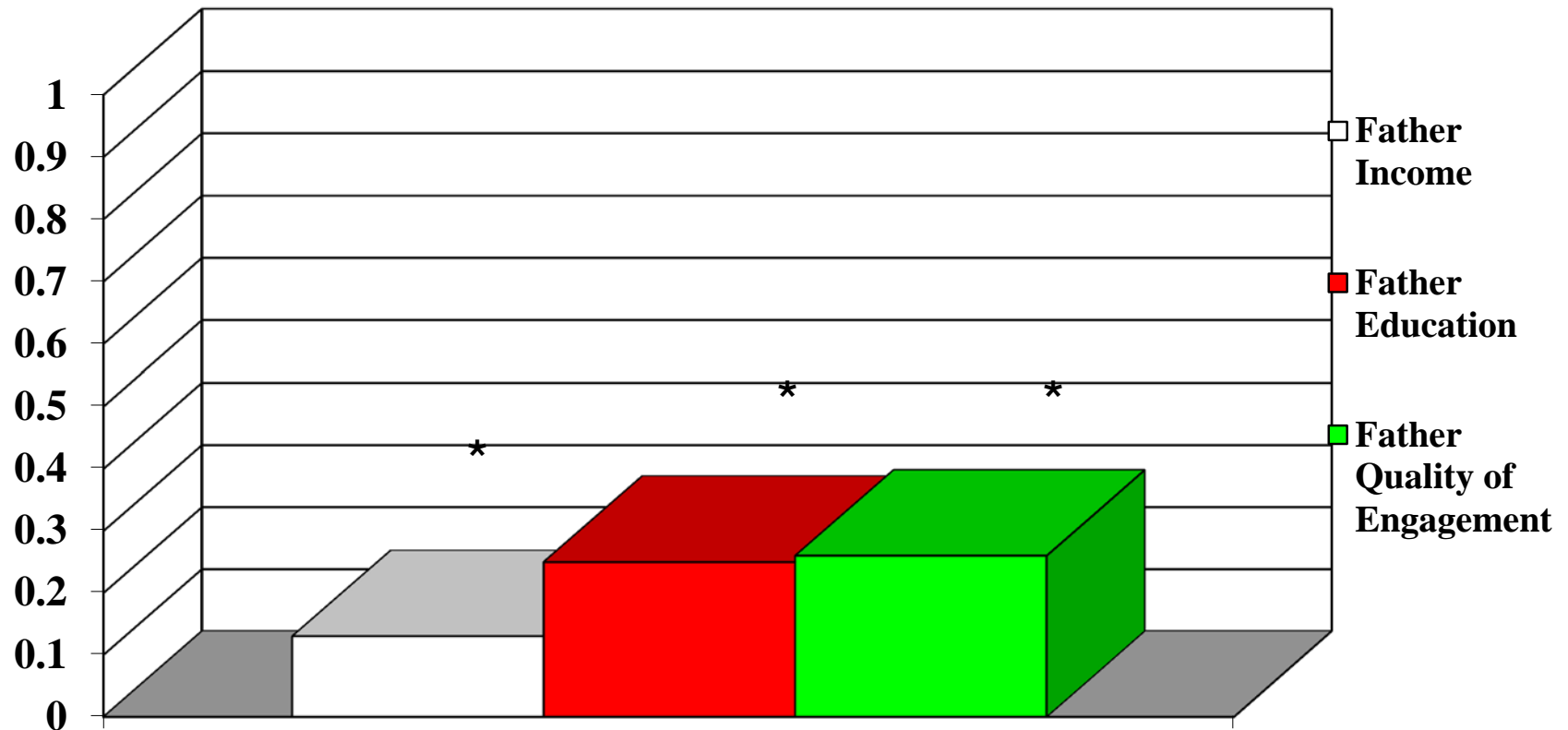


Father Pathways of Influence



Fathers' Influence on Mothers' Sensitivity

- Father supportiveness 2 years to mom 3 years (N=330)



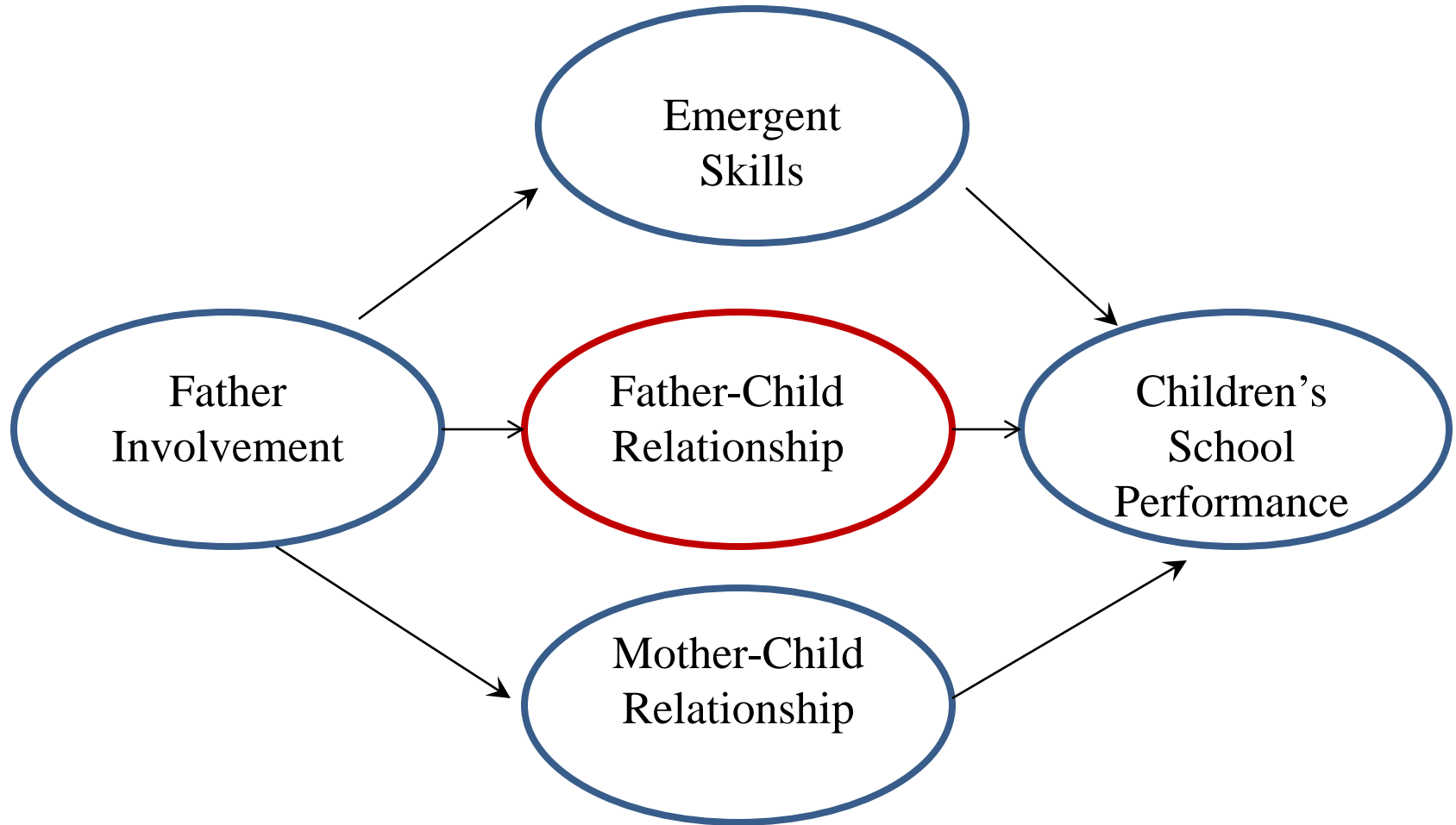
All Influences Significant at $p < .05$, $.01$ or $.001$ levels.

Pathways of Influence

- Cycle of involvement:
 - Early father involvement feeds into continued involvement, which then directly affects children



Father Pathways of Influence



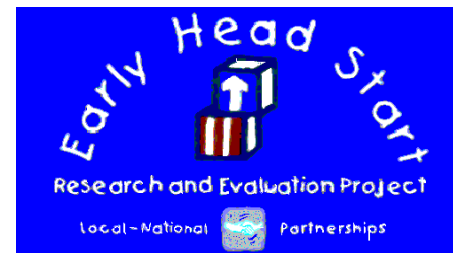
Example of Pathways: Fathers' Prenatal Involvement

Fathers' Prenatal Involvement

- Family system
- Cycles of involvement

Fathers' Prenatal Involvement and Involvement across 5 years of Life

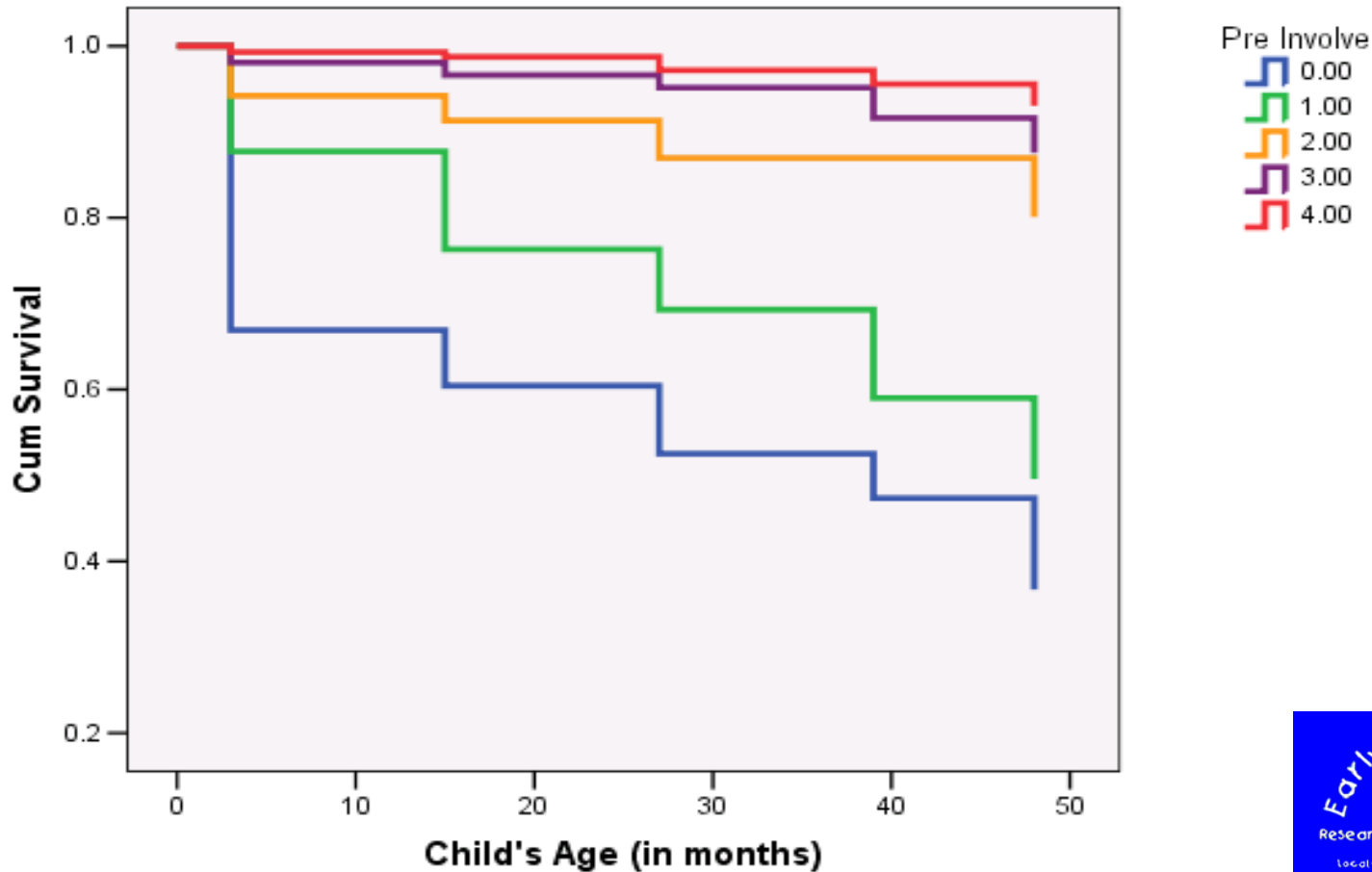
- Does father see child at least a few times per month or more, modeled at successive ages:
 - Birth
 - 1 mo.
 - 14 mos.
 - 24 mos.
 - 36 mos.
 - Pre-K



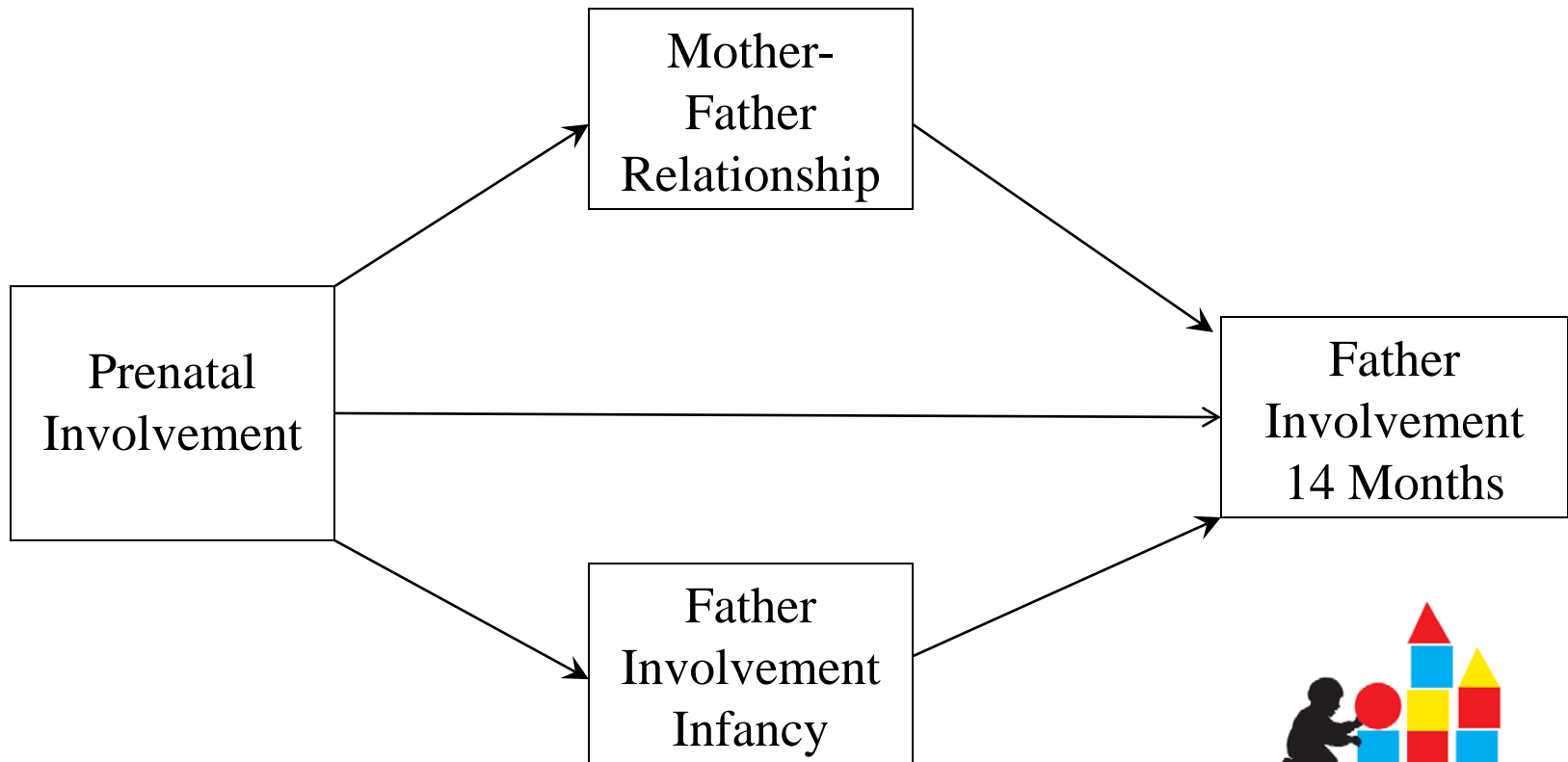
Shannon, Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, & Lamb (2009),
Parenting: Science & Practice

Closer Look at Prenatal Involvement

Survival Function



Fathers' Prenatal Involvement and Involvement with 14-Month Olds



Fathers' Prenatal Involvement and Involvement with 14-Month Olds

- 380 immigrant and low-income families
- Interviews on father prenatal involvement at birth of baby
- Visiting the hospital
- Visiting the doctor
- Seeing an ultrasound
- Speaking to mother about the pregnancy
- Giving money to buy things for the baby
- Feeling the baby move
- Attending Lamaze or other birth classes
- Listening to baby's heartbeat



Fathers' Prenatal Involvement and Involvement with 14-Month Olds

- Father involvement in infancy (mediator)
 - Daily diaries of 24-hour period in the life of the baby at 1 month & 6 months
 - Offered data on fathers' time with infant and activities he engaged in with baby the prior day
 - Survey items asked about fathers' engagement in childcare and play with infants

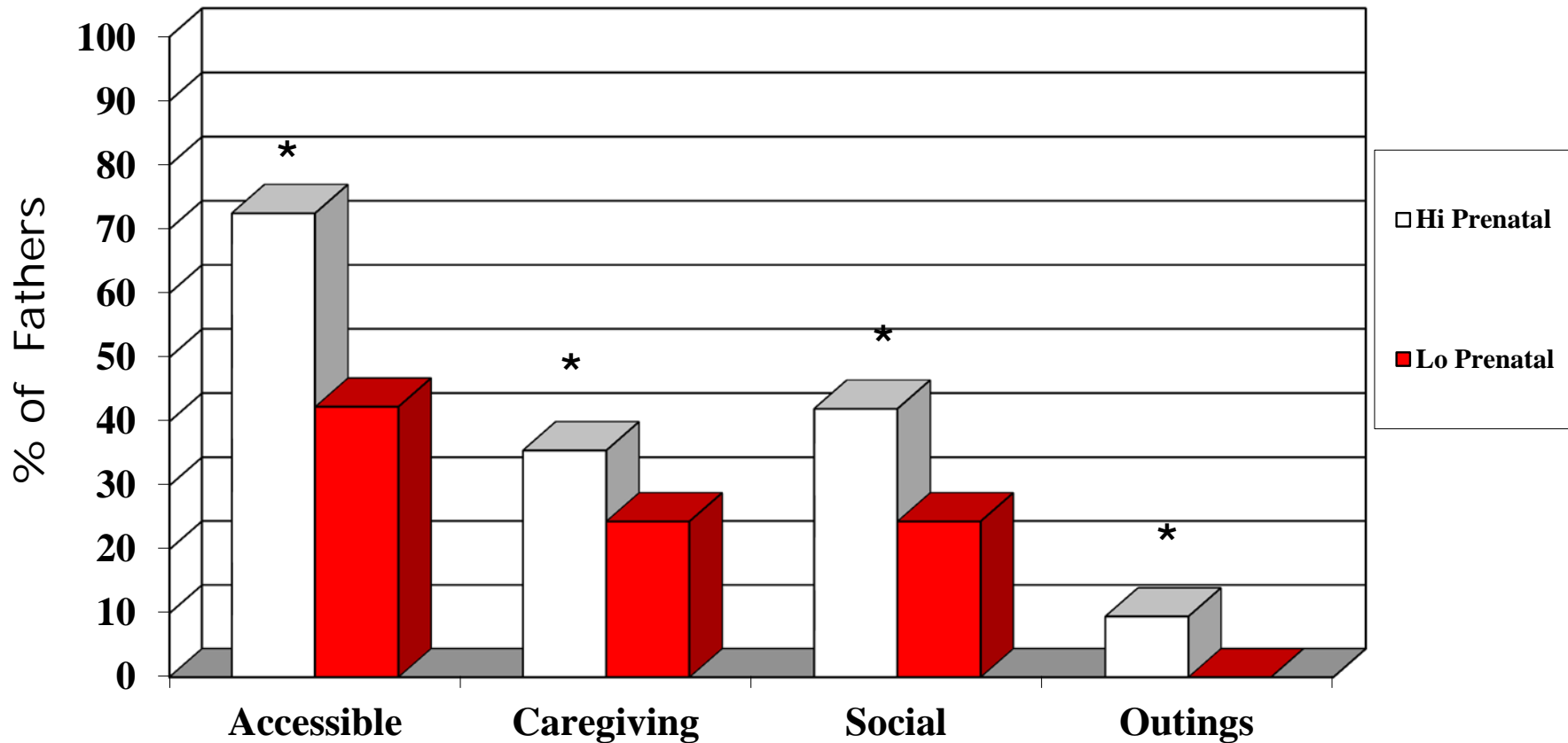
Fathers' Prenatal Involvement and Involvement with 14-Month Olds

• Father involvement at 14 months (outcomes) = time spent engaged in activities with toddler

- Sing songs
- Watch TV
- Watch videos
- Read books
- Tell stories
- Listen to music
- Play games without toys
- Play rough-tumble games
- Build things with child
- Play with ball

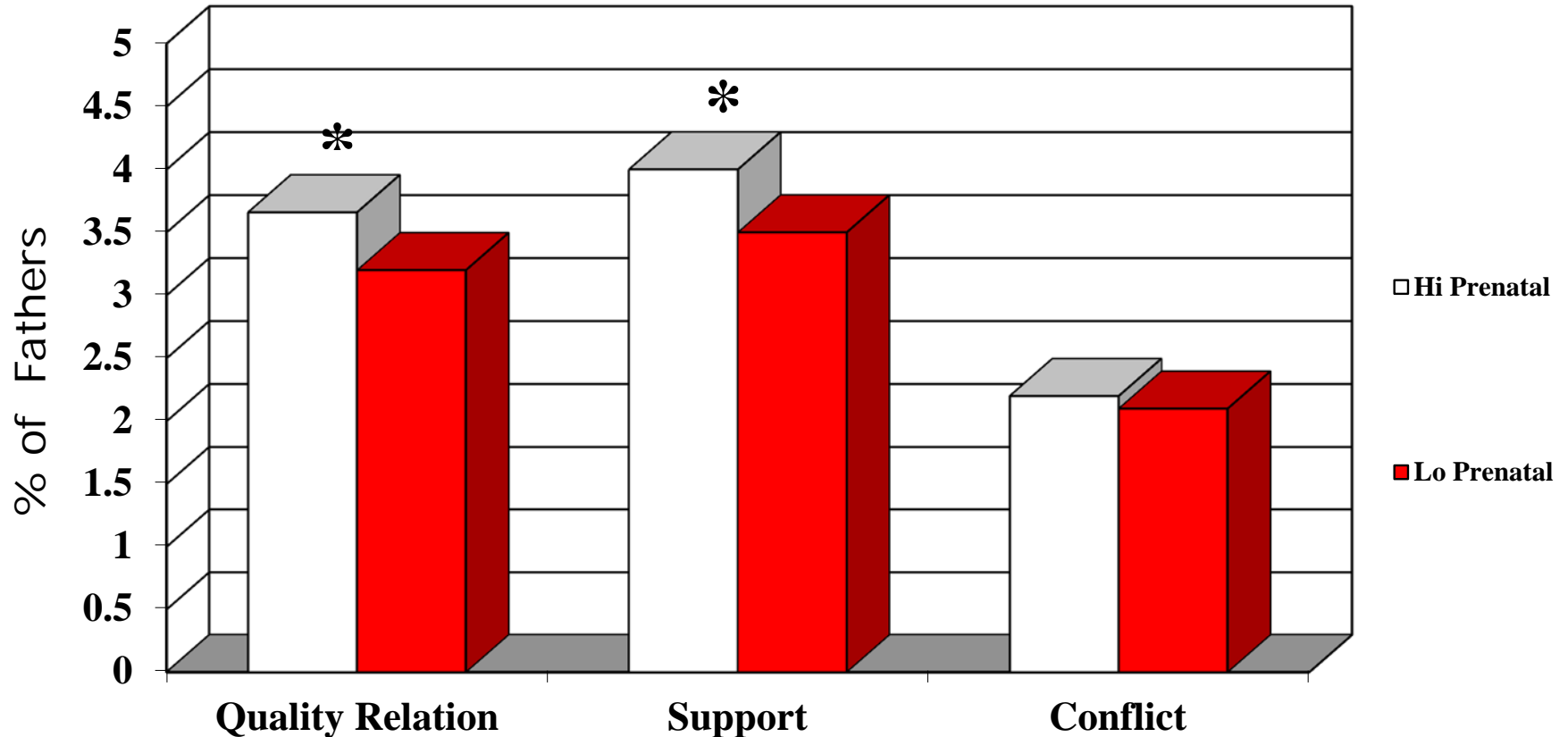


Fathers' Prenatal Involvement and Involvement in Infancy

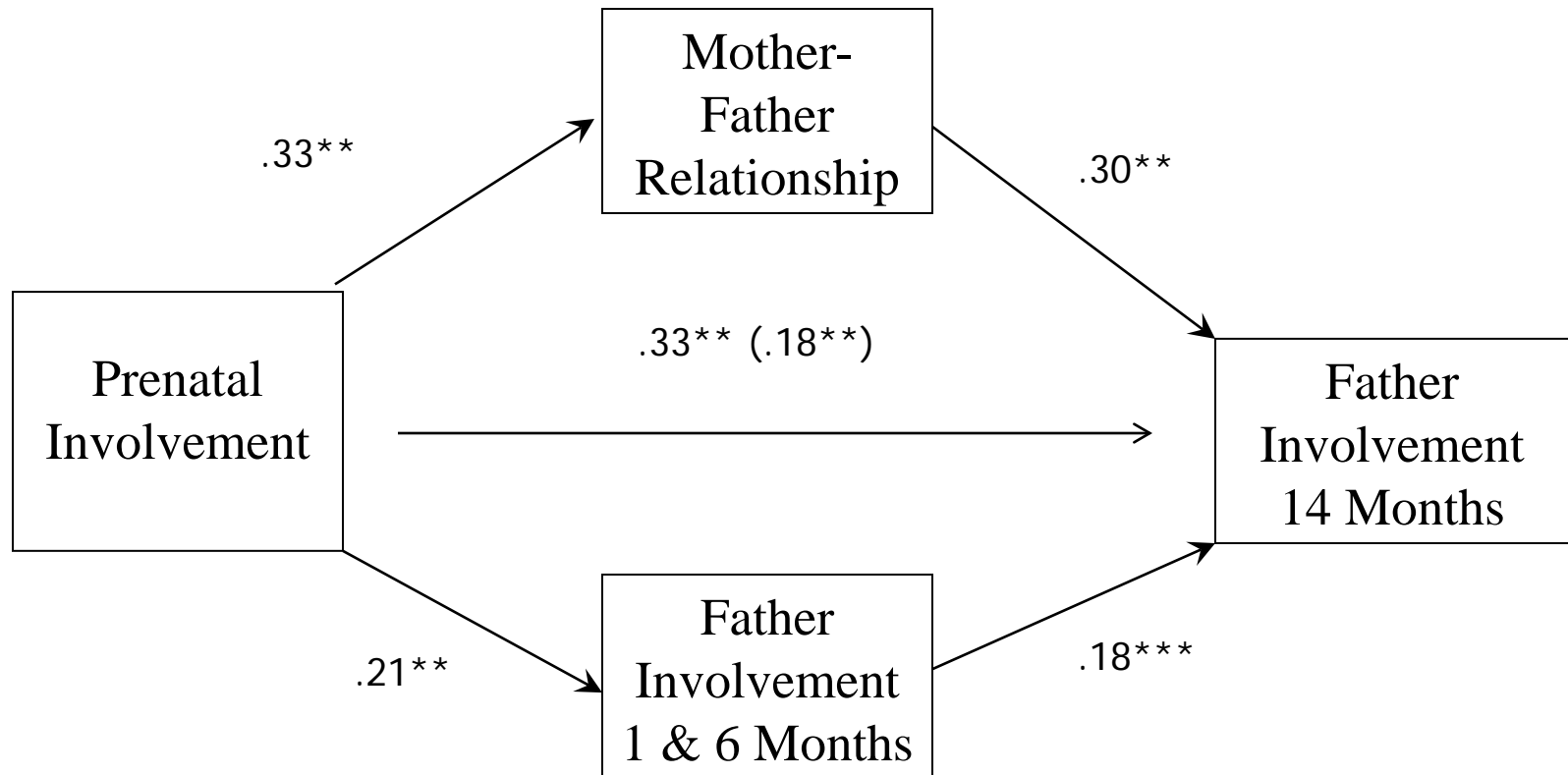


N=278, n=200 high involvement; n=78 low involvement based on distribution cut < 6

Father Prenatal Involvement and the M-F Relationship at 1 Month



Fathers' Prenatal Involvement and Involvement with 14-Month Olds



Prediction to 14-Month Involvement

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Father Education	.079	.116	.051
Father Employment	.227	.158	.113
Father Marital Status	.008	.126	.005
Father Residency	.058	.143	.035
Mexican Contrast	-.165	.155	.105
Dominican Contrast	-.038	.150	-.024
Prenatal Involvement	.771	.342	.178**
Involvement 1 & 6 Months	.532	.241	.184***
Mother-Father Relationship	.228	.062	.303**
<i>R</i> ² Total= .27			
<i>F</i> (9, 143) = 5.93,			
<i>p</i> = .000			

p* < .01, *p* < .001, two-tailed.

Conclusions

- Early father-child interactions and engagement in learning activities predict children's emerging language skills and later academic skills
- Effect sizes for father-to-child associations are as strong as those seen for mother-to-child associations
- Pathways of influence include promotion of early child skills, effects on mother-child interactions, and snowball effects of involvement over time

Special Thanks to....

- Administration for Children and Families
- NICHD
- Ford Foundation
- National Science Foundation
- And the fathers and families in our studies



Fathers' Income and Work Continue to Matter for father engagement at 2 and 3 Years and at PreK (Ns = 290; 500)

- Tamis-LeMonda, C. S., Shannon, J. D., Cabrera, N. J., & Lamb, M. E. (2004). "Fathers and Mothers at Play with their 2- and 3-Year-Olds: Contributions to Language and Cognitive Development", *Child Development*.
- Cabrera, N., Shannon, J. D., & Tamis-LeMonda, C. S. (under review).



Fathers' Time and Financial Investments

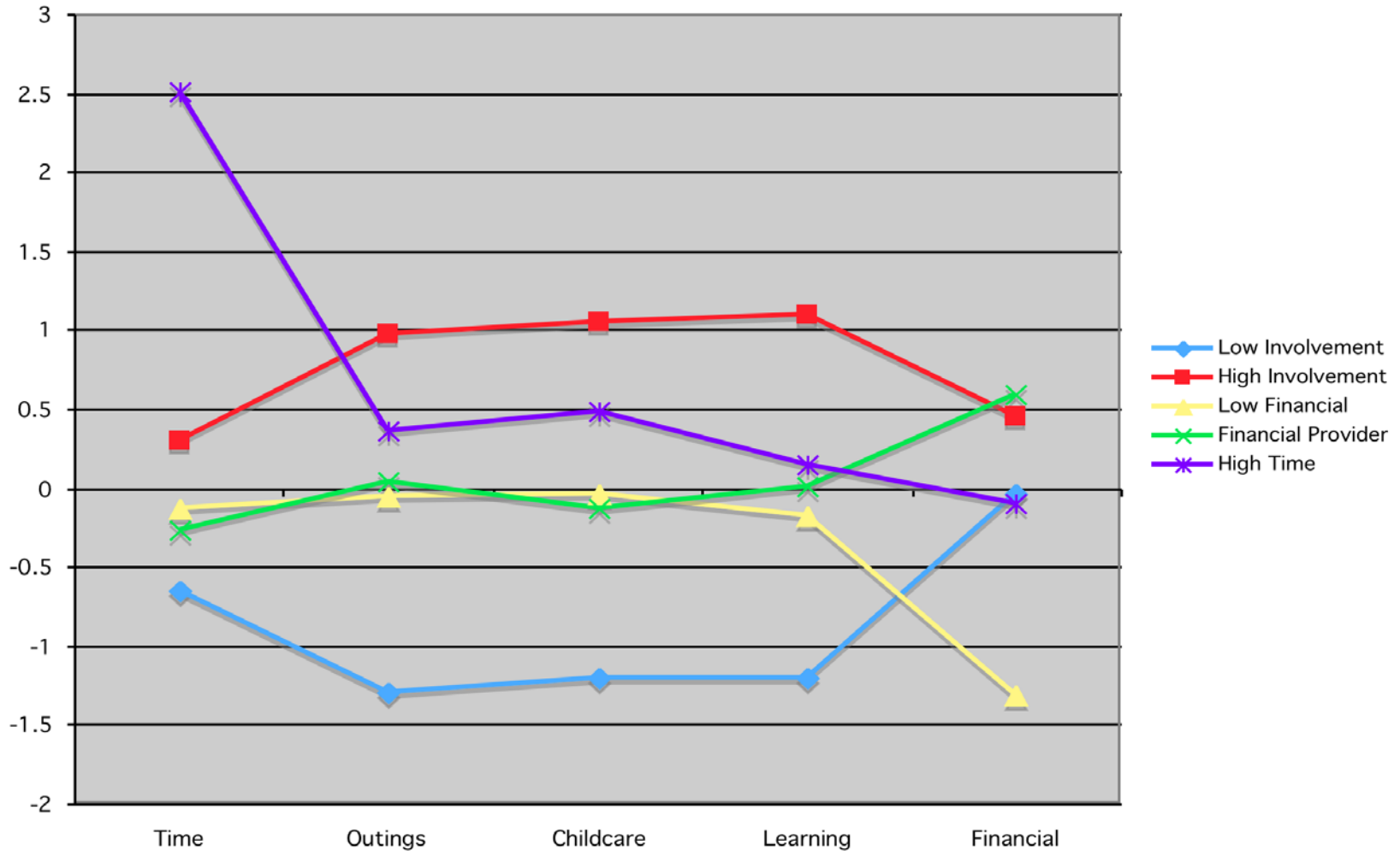
- 799 Fathers of 24-month-old children
- Face-to-face interviews with Fathers
- Fathers reported on their child-related behaviors on 31 items
 - included accessibility, financial responsibility, and direct engagement



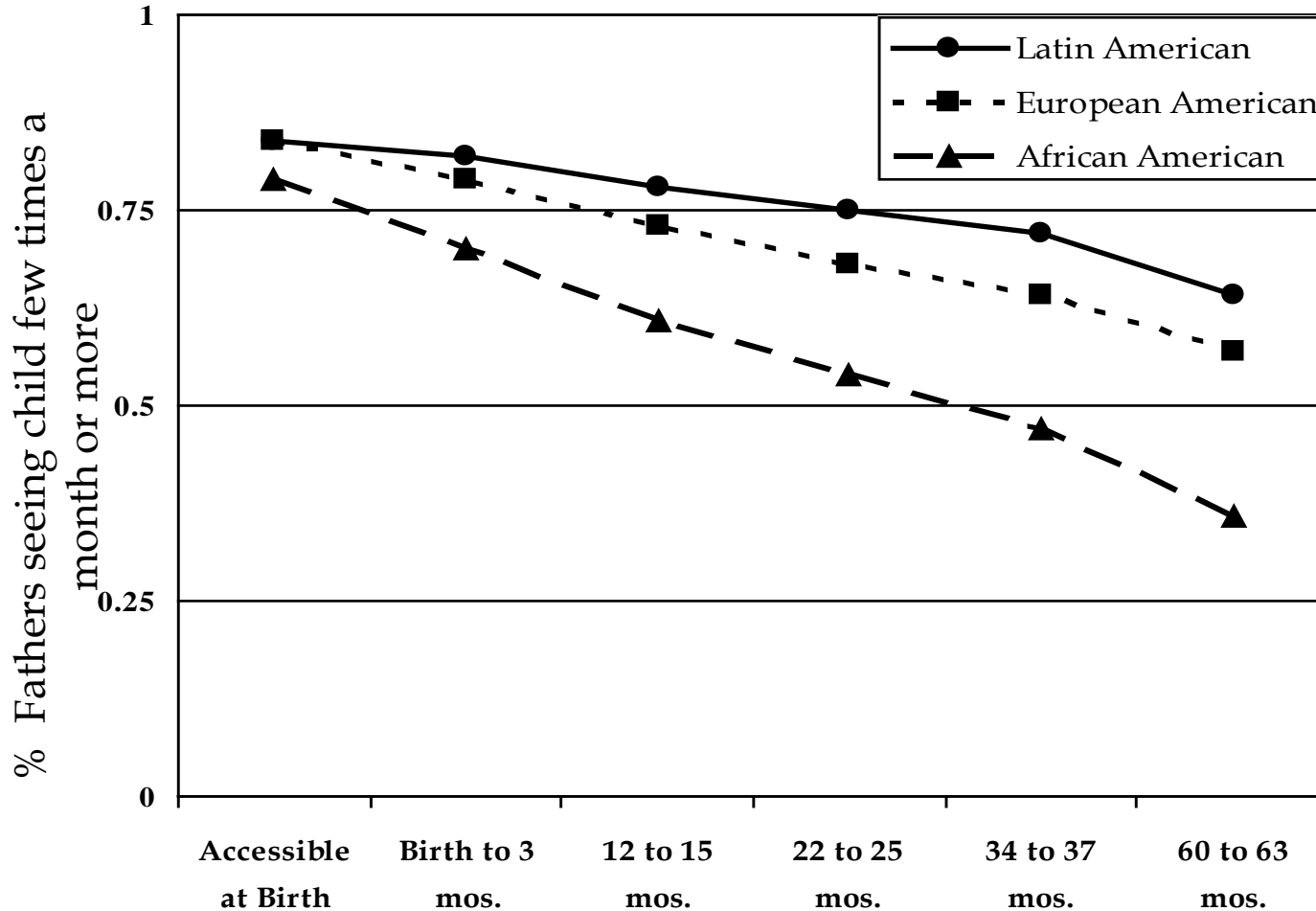
Fathers' Time and Financial Investments

- Factor analysis of 31 father behaviors resulted in 5 factors:
 - Childcare ($\alpha = .86$)
 - Learning Activities ($\alpha = .78$)
 - Outings ($\alpha = .77$)
 - Time with Child ($\alpha = .77$)
 - Financial ($\alpha = .79$)

Fathers' Time and Financial Investments

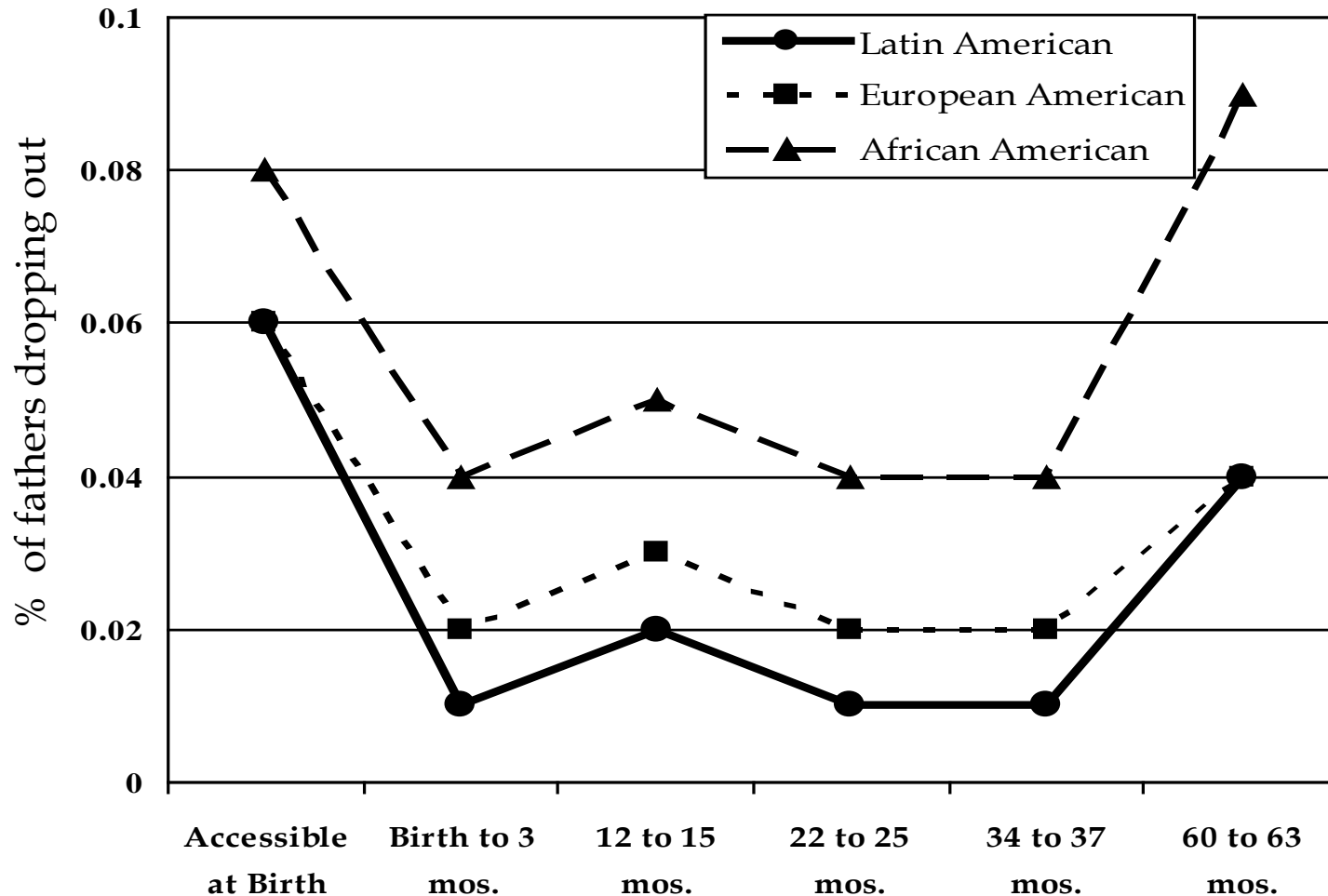


Survivor Function: Father Accessibility



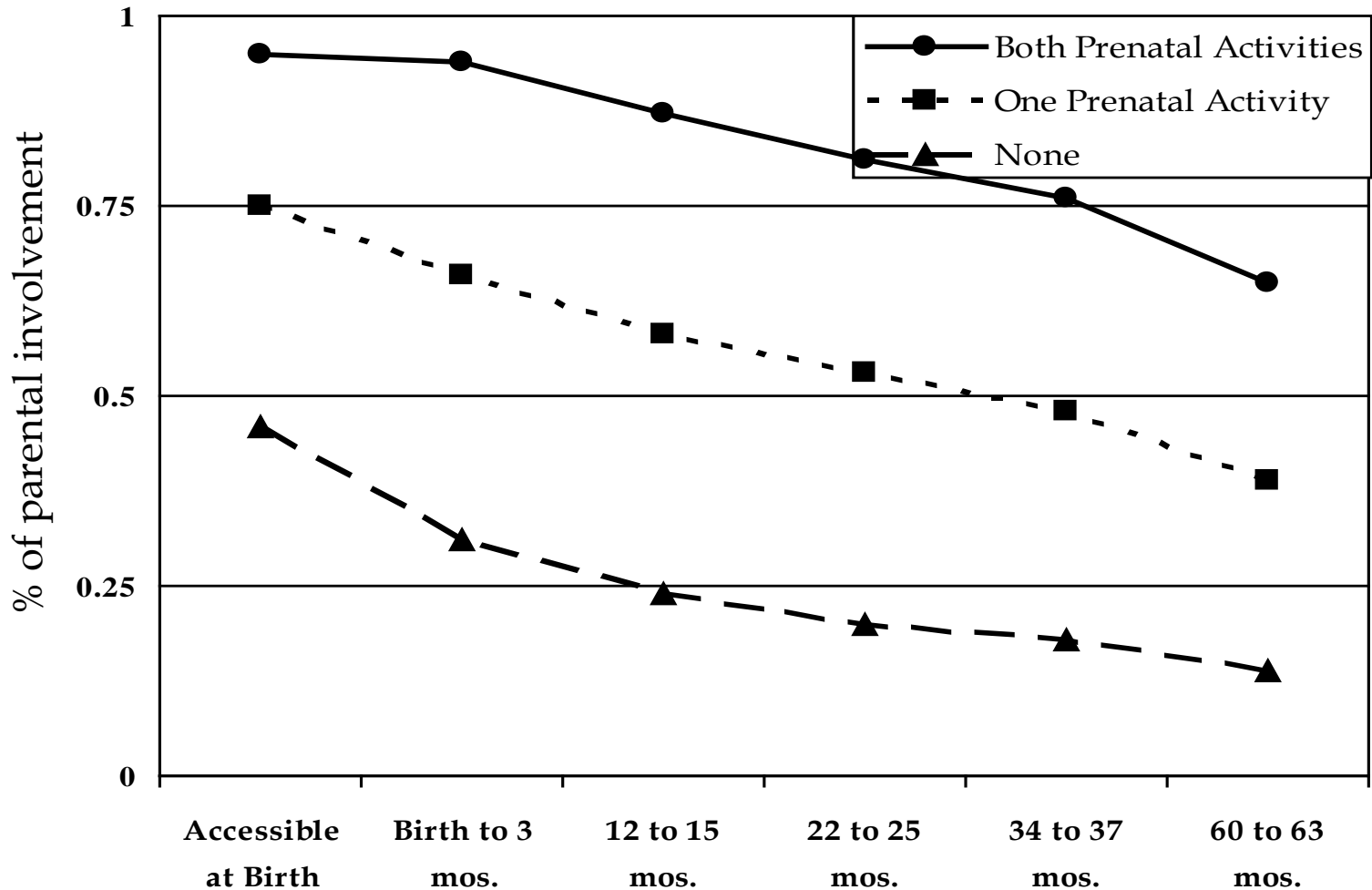
Shannon, Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, & Lamb, M. E. (2009). *Parenting: Science & Practice*.

Survivor Function: Father Accessibility



Shannon, Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, & Lamb, M. E. (2009). *Parenting: Science & Practice*.

Prenatal Involvement and Risk



Shannon, Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, & Lamb, M. E. (2009). *Parenting: Science & Practice*.