

Within family differences in
preschool children's school
readiness: the role of shared and
non-shared family dynamics

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A birth cohort study of newborns, older siblings and their families:

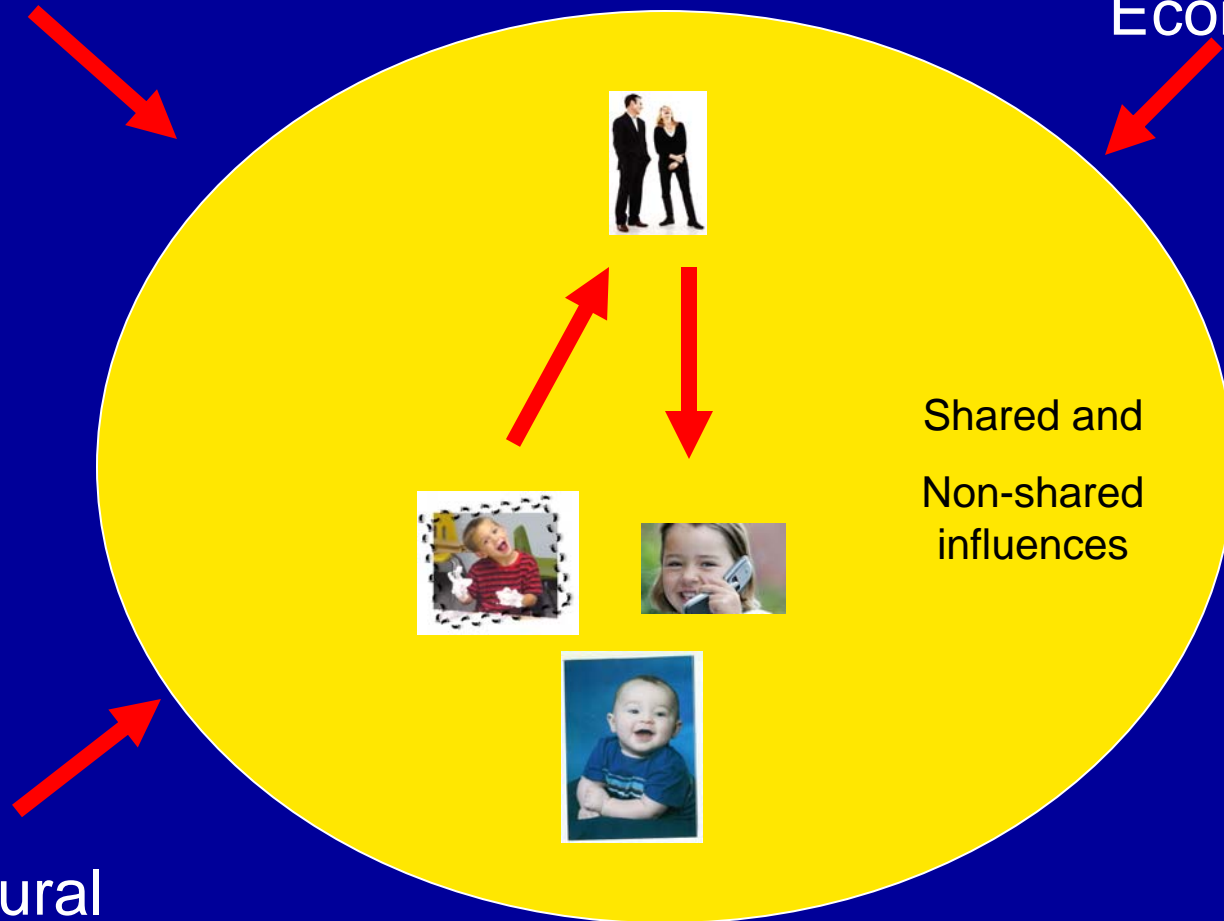
Kids, Families, Places

The impact of macrolevel influences (e.g. neighbourhood, poverty) on parenting and family dynamics and the impact of these dynamics on children's early development.

Nested structure of Risky Environments

Neighbourhood

Economic



Cultural

Sample

- 1579 children in 668 families, 499 with 2 children < 4 years
- Contacted through Toronto and Hamilton Public Health
- 473 two child families, 147 three child families and 48 four child families.
- 801 boys, 788 girls
- 668 mothers, 49% born in Canada
- 66% eligible fathers
- 51% eligible teachers/childcare workers
- Comparing to census data our families representative on income, lone parenthood, immigration (49%) but are a little bit higher on education.

	Sibling 1	Sibling 2	Sibling 3	Sibling 4
Age at Time 1	2 months	3.4 years	7 years	9 years
Age at Time 2	18 months	4.10 years	8.6 years	10.6 years
Age at Time 3	3 years old	6.4 years	10 years	12 years

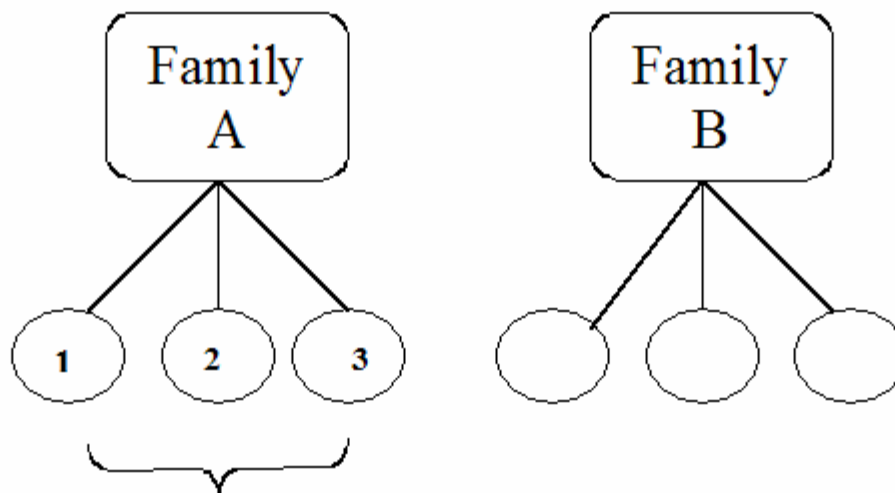
Focus of findings

- Very preliminary as data collection not yet complete.
- Risky environments and how they influence processes *within* families that have an impact on children's early development
- Sibling design versus the single-child-per-family design to investigate dynamics in families
- Biological and cognitive vulnerabilities of individual children

Unconfounding child and family risk using the sibling design

Shared Risk

Child specific Risk

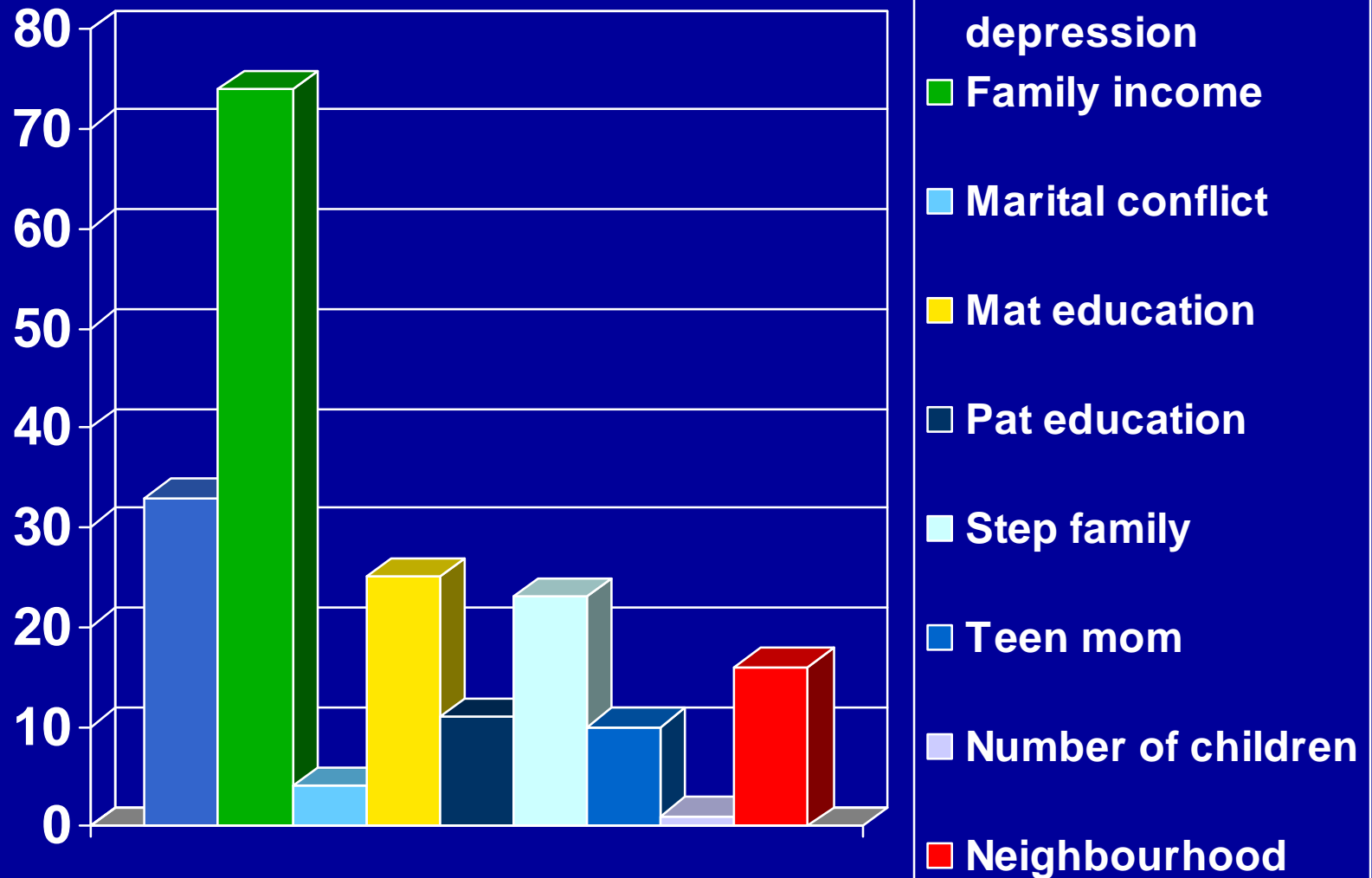


Within family comparisons

Between family comparisons

Cross-level interactions

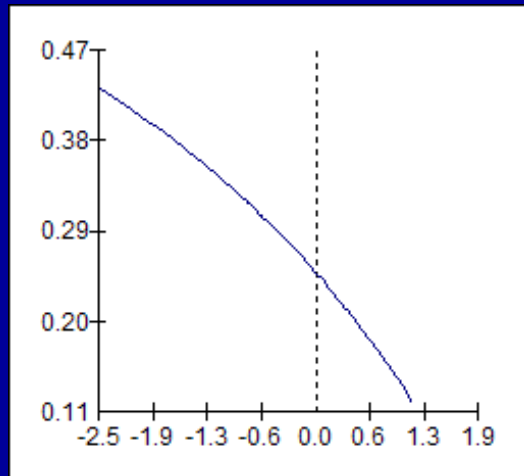
Magnitude of association between children's developmental health and environmental risk



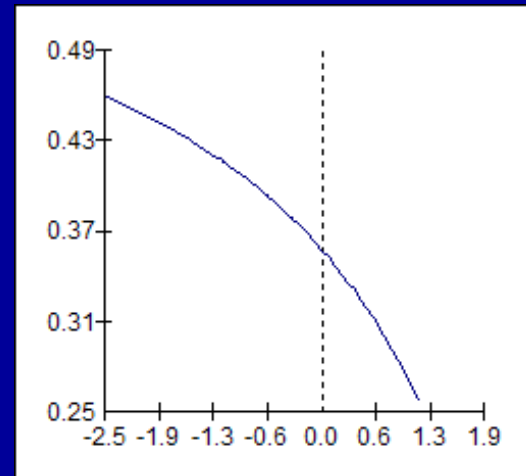
Sibling similarity: at low income siblings show greater similarity to one another on emotional problems

Sibling correlation on emotional problems

Mother rated problems



Father rated problems



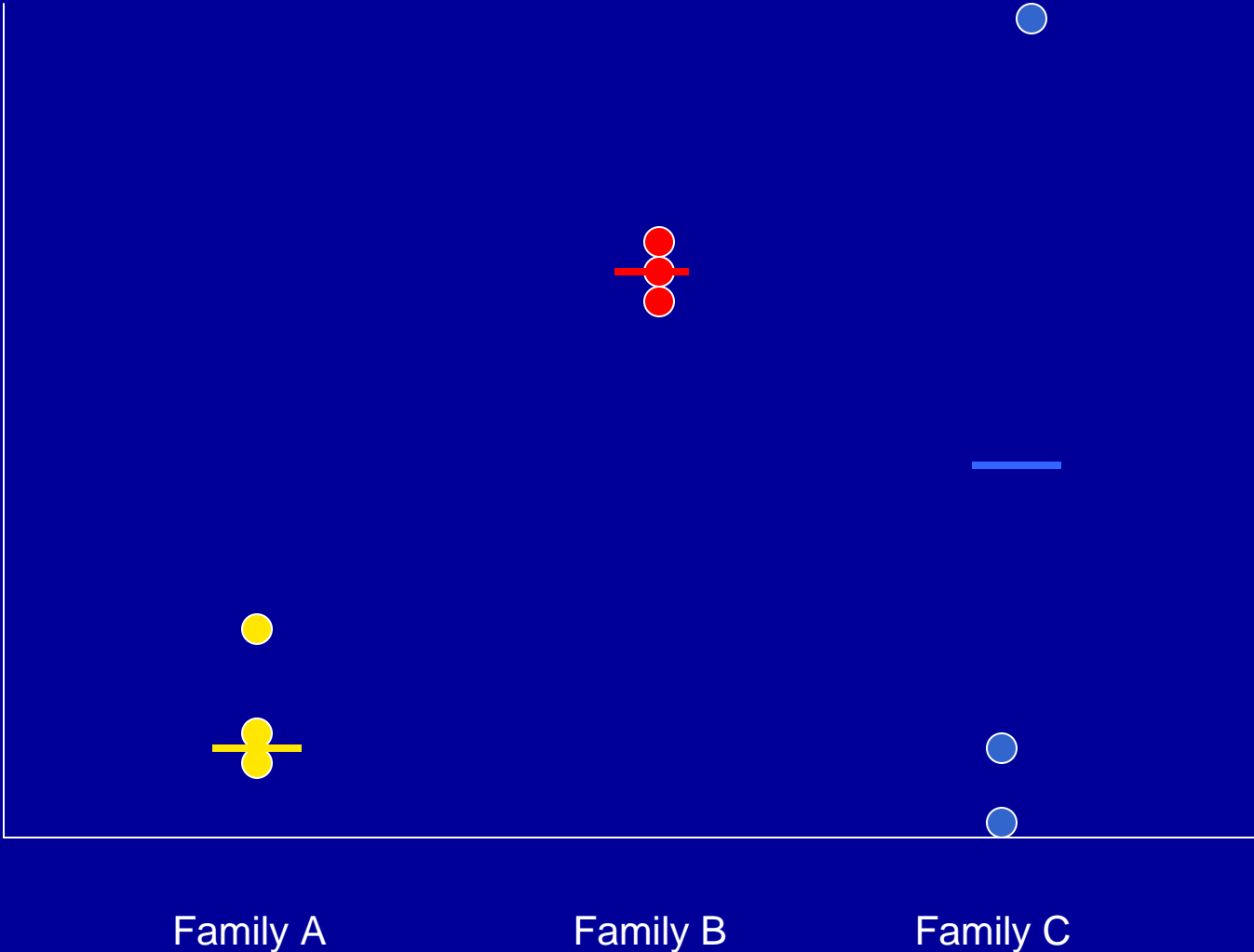
Family income: low to high

Differential parenting

- Differential affection and negativity: parental behaviors children see as unfair
- Unequal resource allocation in the family

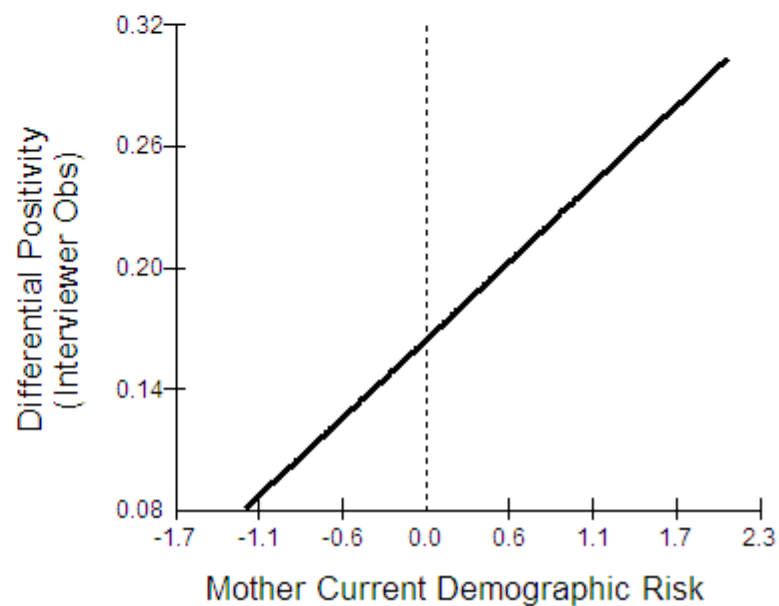
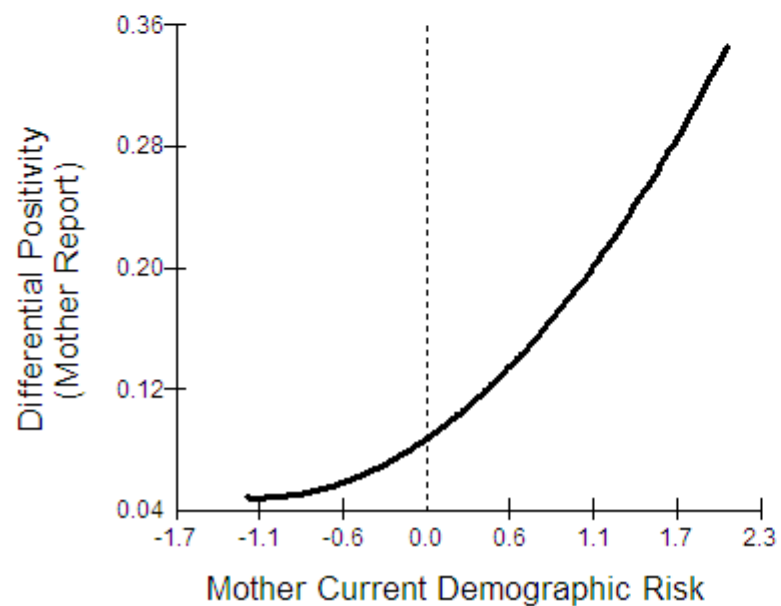
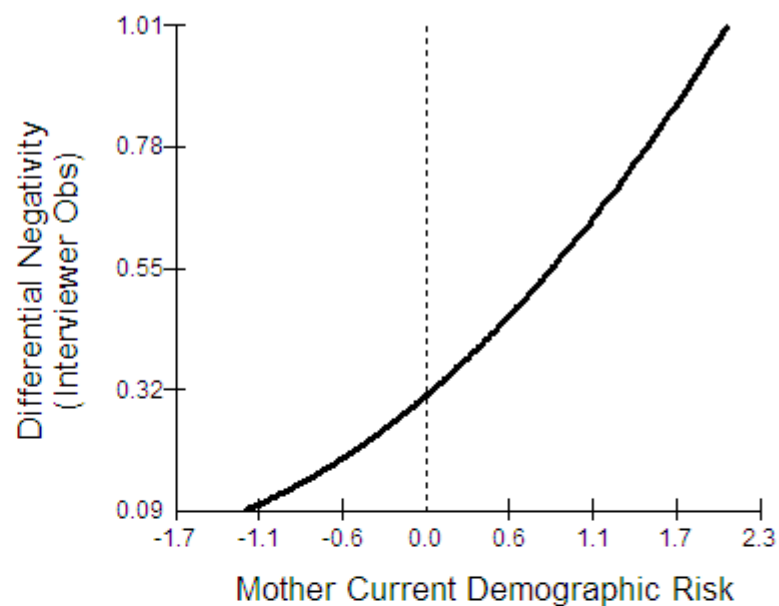
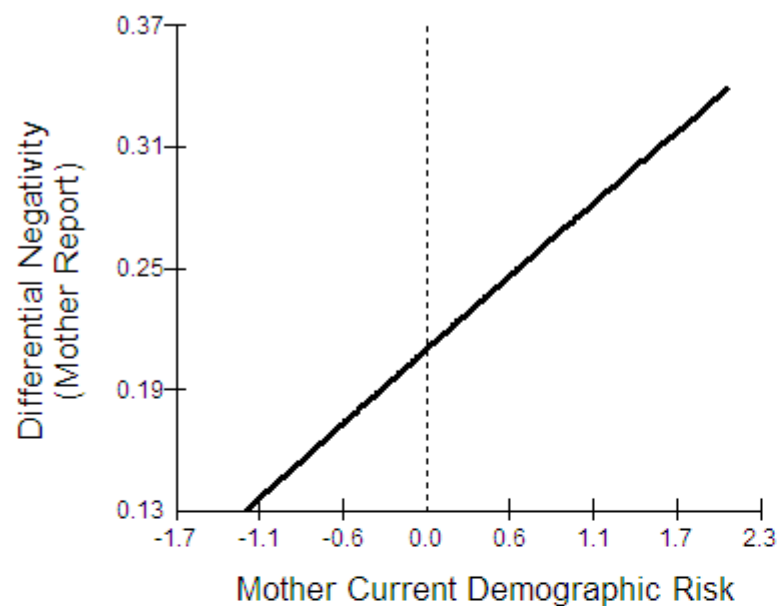
Illustration of shared and non-shared parenting

Parental Harshness



Hypothesis

- Macro level stresses will be associated with greater differential parenting

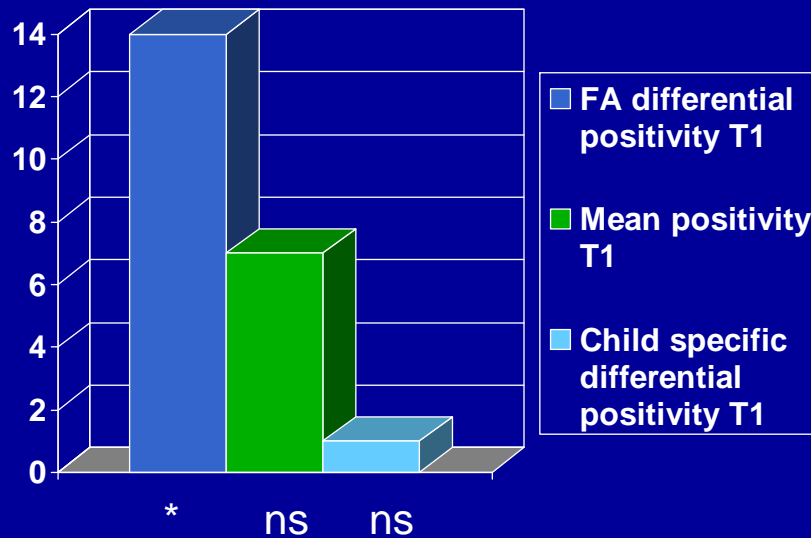


Does differential parenting predict changes in preschool children's behavior over time: prosocial development?

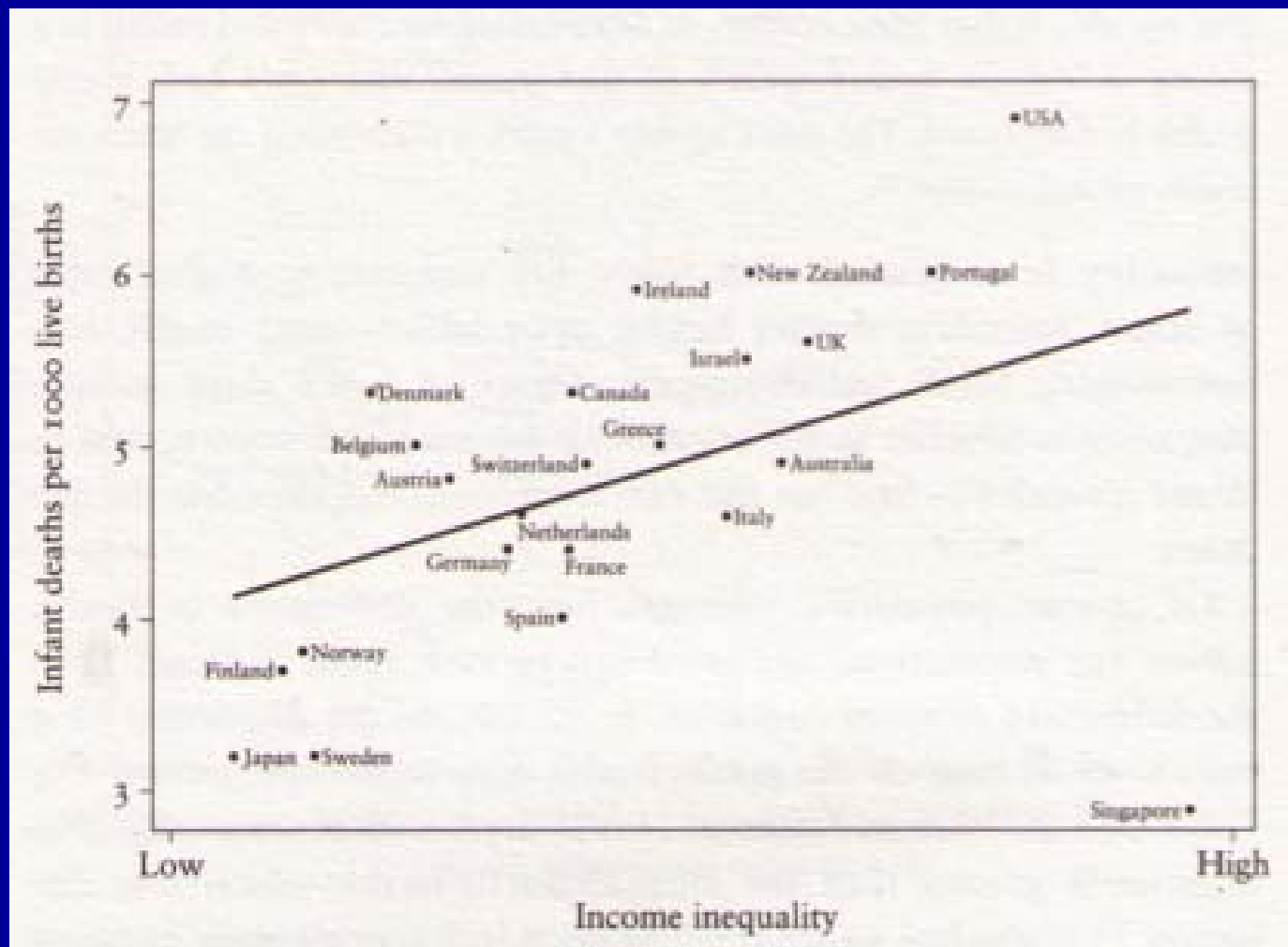
Being the disfavoured child has been found to be associated with an increase in children's behavior problems over time. McGuire et al, 1995

Boyle et al 2004: Unequal resource allocation in the family as a whole is associated with a higher family average of developmental problems in children.

Predicting change in child prosocial behavior over time in families: variance accounted for

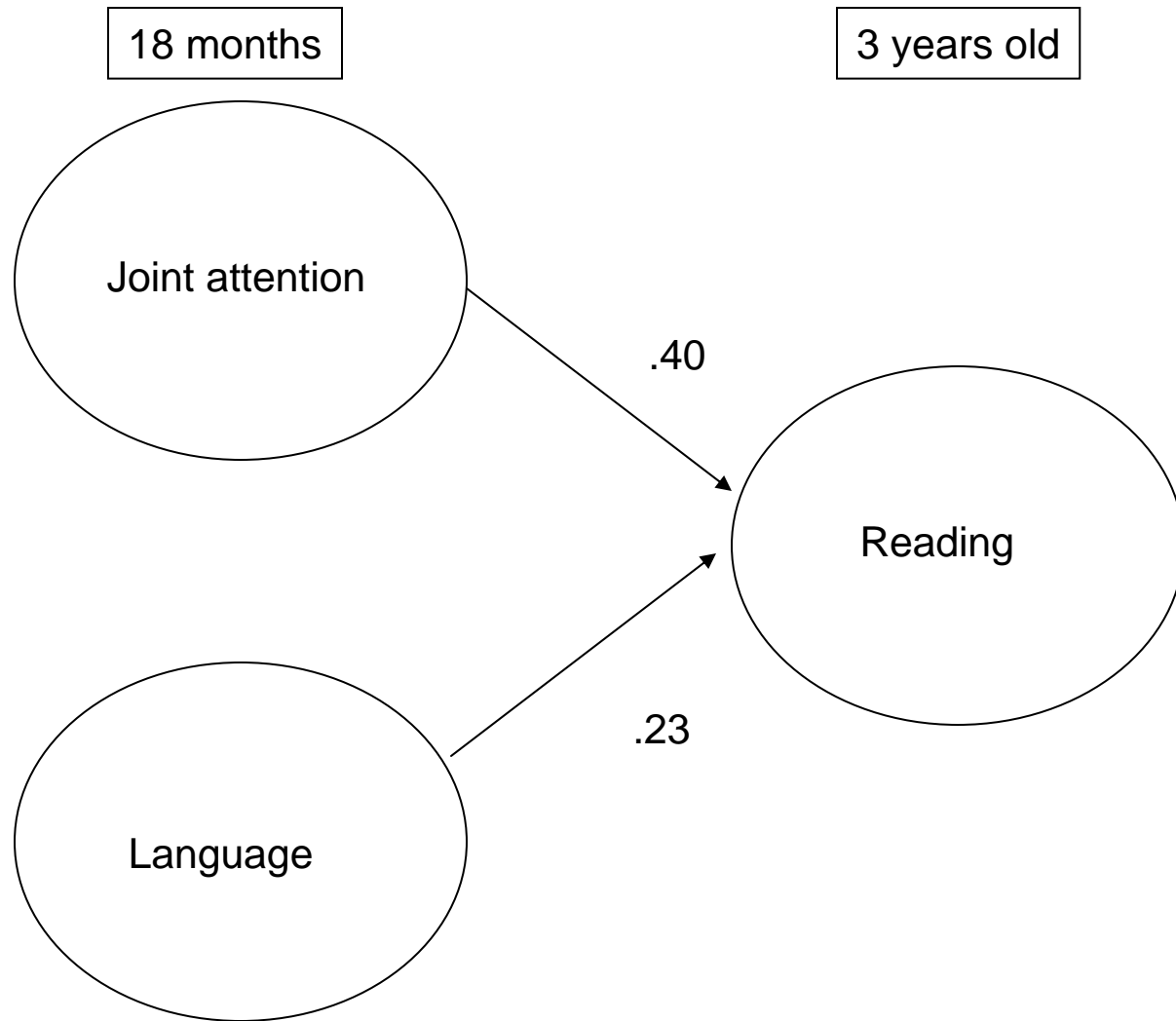


Societal resource inequalities and health



Social Cognition and Reading: Contextual influences

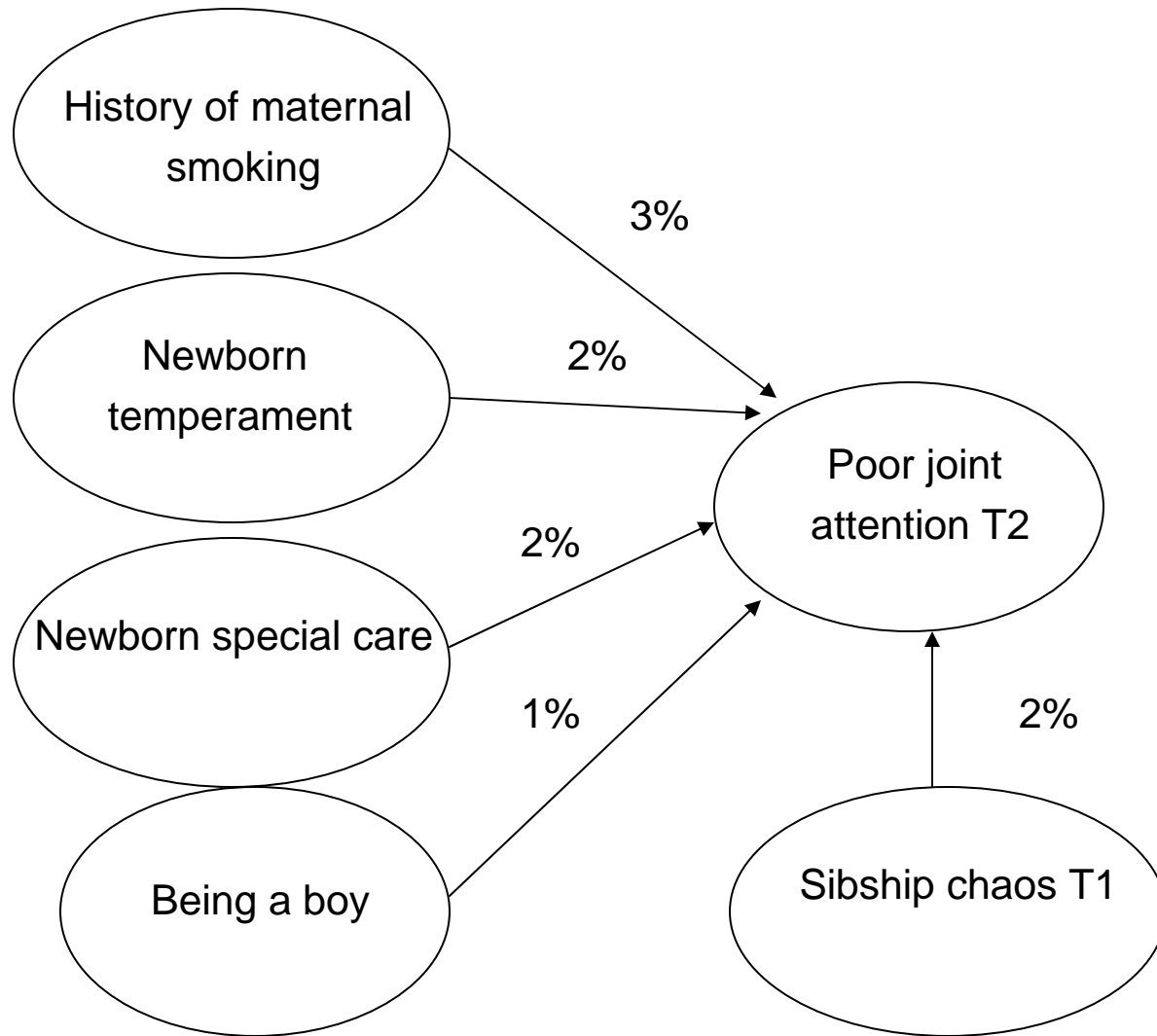
Predictors of Getting Ready to Read



Joint attention and siblings

- Literature suggests both biological and parental effects on development of joint attention in babies.
- Older siblings have been found to be more important than parents for development of some aspects of preschoolers' social cognition: theory of mind, mental state talk
- Interest was in whether older sibling behavior at T1 will contribute to development of joint attention at T2 over and above biological and parental influences
- 'Chaos' in the sibship: difficult behavior of older siblings rated during T1 home visit (e.g. overactivity, moodiness, non-compliance, concentration).

Sibship effect on the development of joint attention after accounting for biological risk



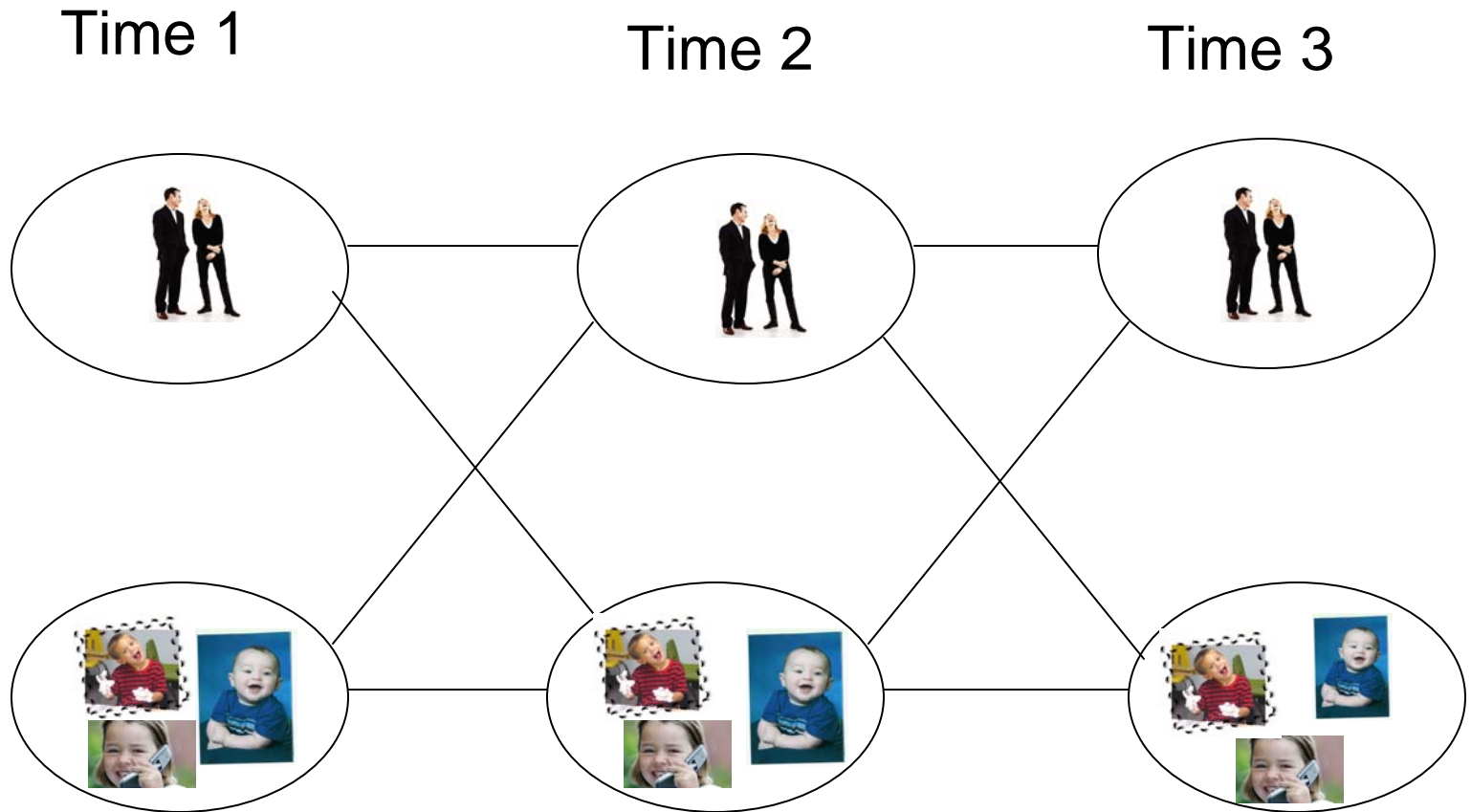
Conclusions

- Differential parenting increases as Environmental stress increases
- Unequal resource allocation of parental warmth across the sibship at T1 predicts less prosocial behavior at T2
- Joint attention is an important precursor to early reading. Over and above biological and parental influences, siblings play a role in the development of this skill.

Once T3 is completed

- Do biological (genetic, HPA) and social cognitive factors (e.g JA) moderate children's vulnerability to the contextual risks of family life and adverse economic circumstances.

Reciprocal effects in families



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Collaborators

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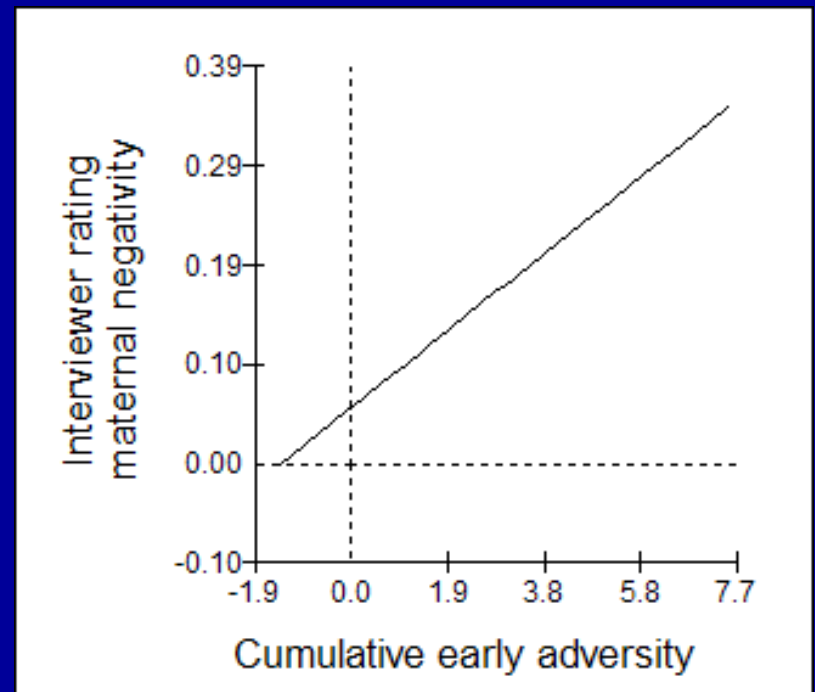
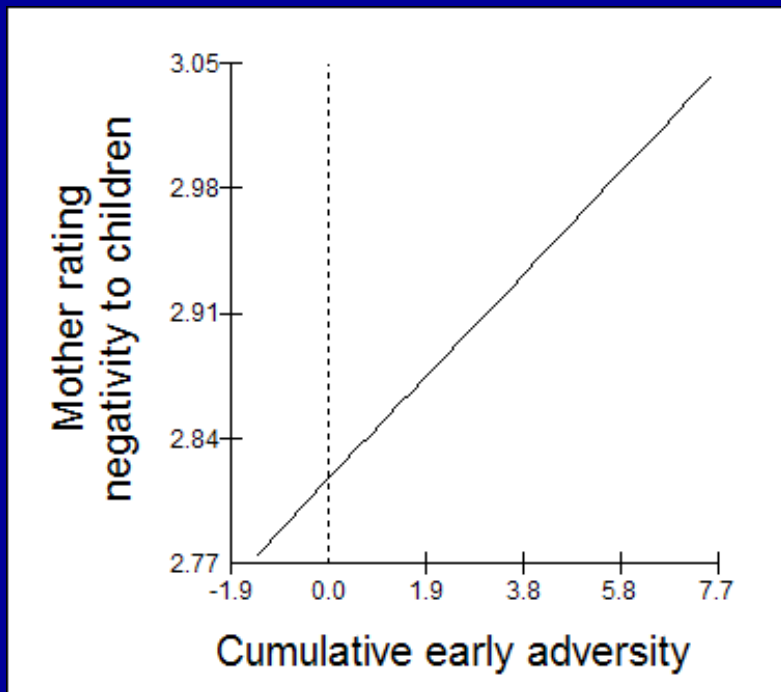
Measures

- Cumulative risk of maternal early adversity:

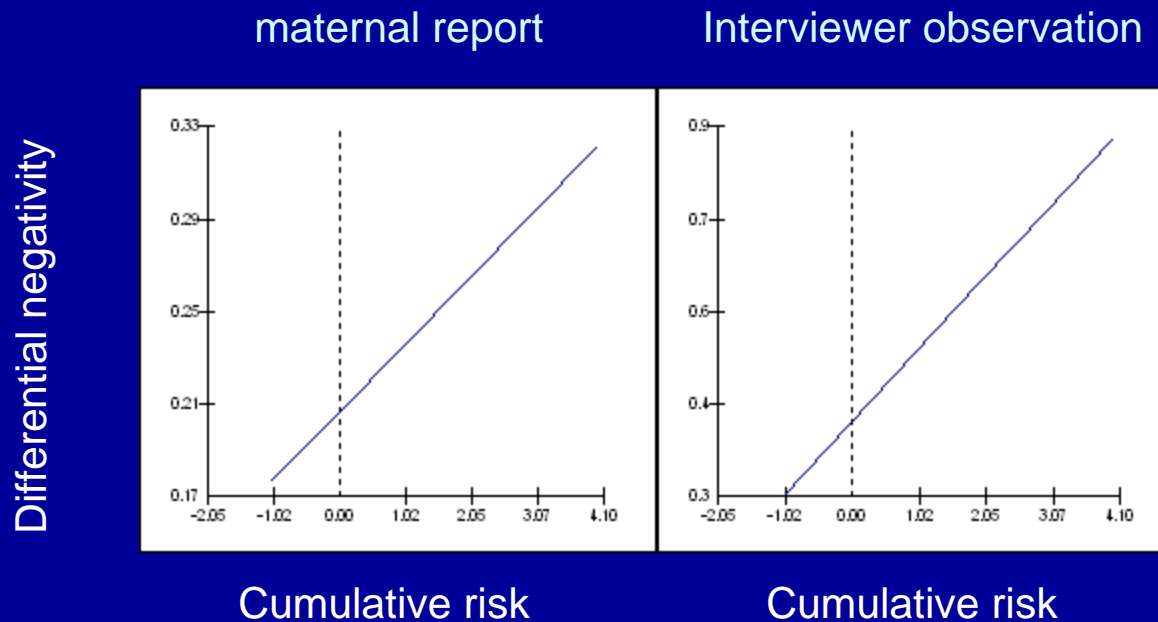
All risks in family of origin: Mother was a teen when had 1st child, one or both parents mental illness, one or both parents alcohol or drug abuse, experience of sexual abuse, experience of physical abuse, witnessing verbal abuse, witnessing physical abuse, low education (< gr 8

- Range 0-10 risks: clustering evident

Cumulative early adversity significantly associated with 1) mothers' report of her negativity to each child and 2) interviewer's observation of maternal negativity to each child



Maternal differential treatment as a function of cumulative early adversity



Roles of difficult child behavior and cumulative early adversity

