



How do Low-SES Parents Support their Young Children's Academic Achievement?

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Abstract

Although low-SES parents on average engage in lower levels of home enrichment with their young children compared to their higher-SES peers, substantial within-group heterogeneity has been overlooked in past research. I examine how contextual characteristics predict low-income parents' provision of enrichment activities over and above income and education among disadvantaged families.

Background

- Enrichment activities in the home mediate links between SES and achievement at school entry (e.g., Guo & Harris, 2012).
- SES typically explains only around one quarter of the variance in enrichment (Davis-Kean, 2005; Linver et al., 2002).

Why might some low-SES parents engage in high levels of home enrichment?

Disrupted Mechanisms: Factors that usually transmit effects of SES on parenting are not present

Broader Context: Risks tend to accumulate, so low-SES families may also experience other protective factors

Research Questions

What factors explain variability in home enrichment among low-SES families?

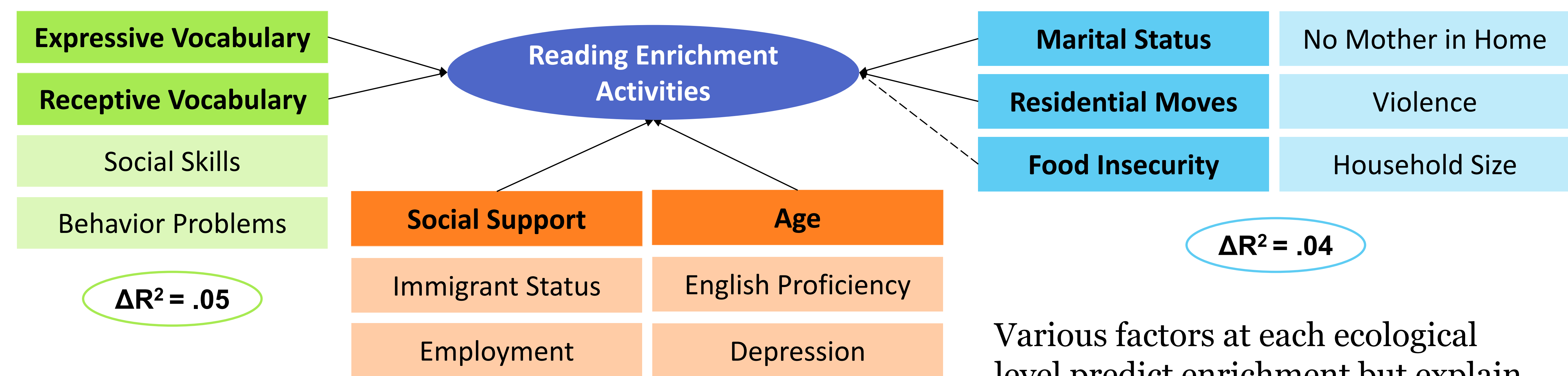
Do constellations of characteristics co-occur to protect families from adverse outcomes or place them at greater risk?

Methods

Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey: 2009

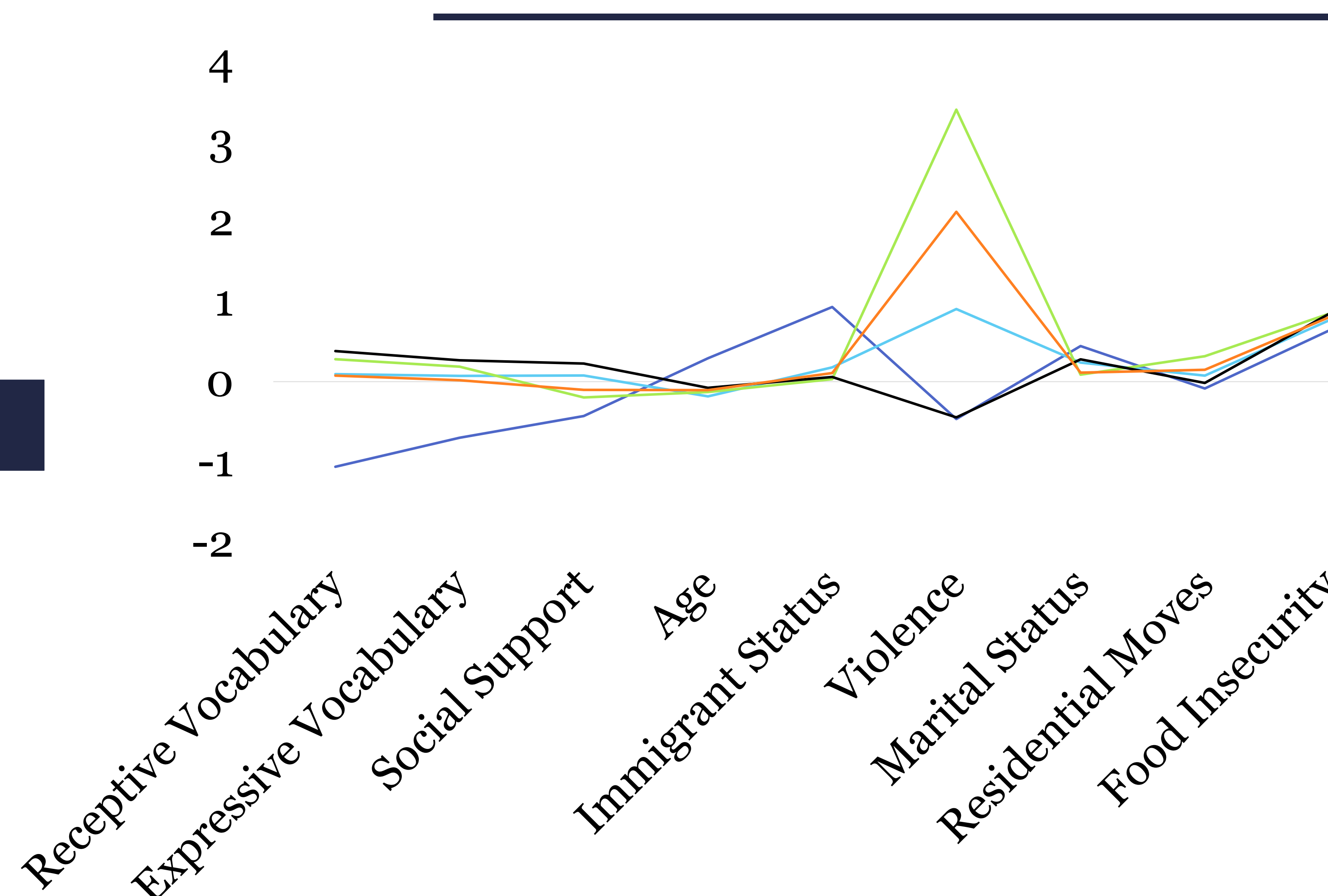
- Nationally representative of children in their first year of Head Start
- Parent surveys addressed income, educational attainment, various aspects of home enrichment, and characteristics of the child, parent, and family that could promote or constrain practices
- N = 3,111

Results and Conclusions

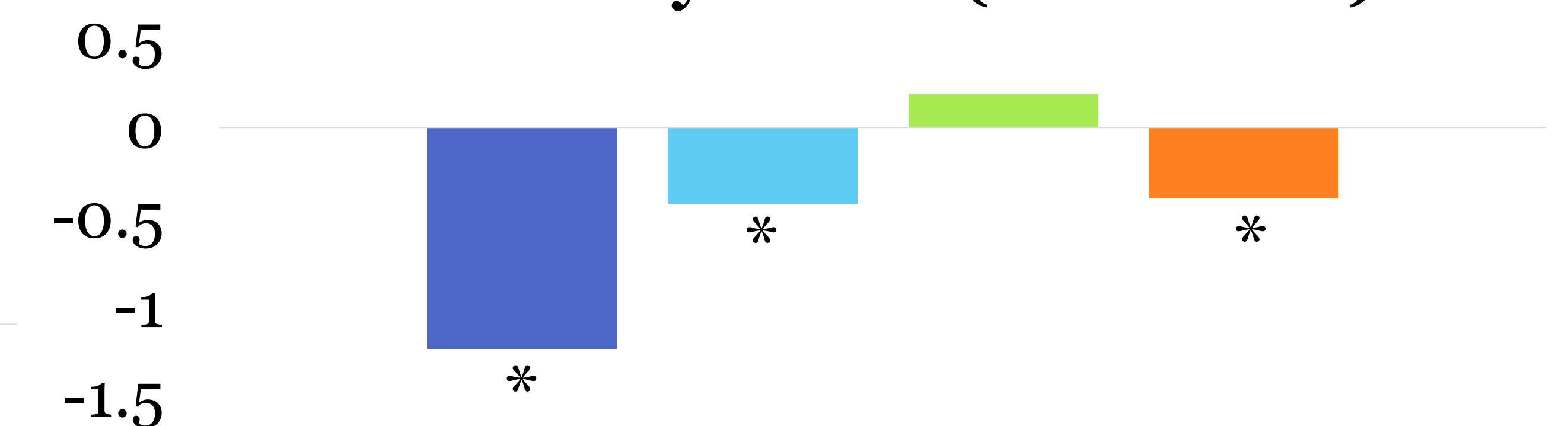


Variables shown in shaded boxes were included in models but not significantly related to enrichment.

Various factors at each ecological level predict enrichment but explain minimal additional variance



Mean Reading Enrichment Activities by Profile (in SD units)



Profiles of families were primarily differentiated by single factors, including age and exposure to violence.

Over half of the variance in parental enrichment remained unaccounted for, calling for more qualitative research to address these processes.