

# Research Supporting Inclusion of Young Children with Disabilities in Community Activities

Carl J. Dunst, Ph.D.    Carol M. Trivette, Ph.D.

Orelena Hawks Puckett Institute

Asheville and Morganton, North Carolina

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# Introduction

- A universal aspect of young children's daily lives throughout the world is participation in everyday activities that are contexts for learning socially situated and culturally meaningful behavior.
- The everyday activity that young children with or without disabilities or delays experience can have either development-enhancing or development-impeding characteristics and therefore differential consequences.
- Participation of young children with disabilities or delays in everyday activity can function as a form of early intervention promoting and enhancing child learning and development.

# Purposes

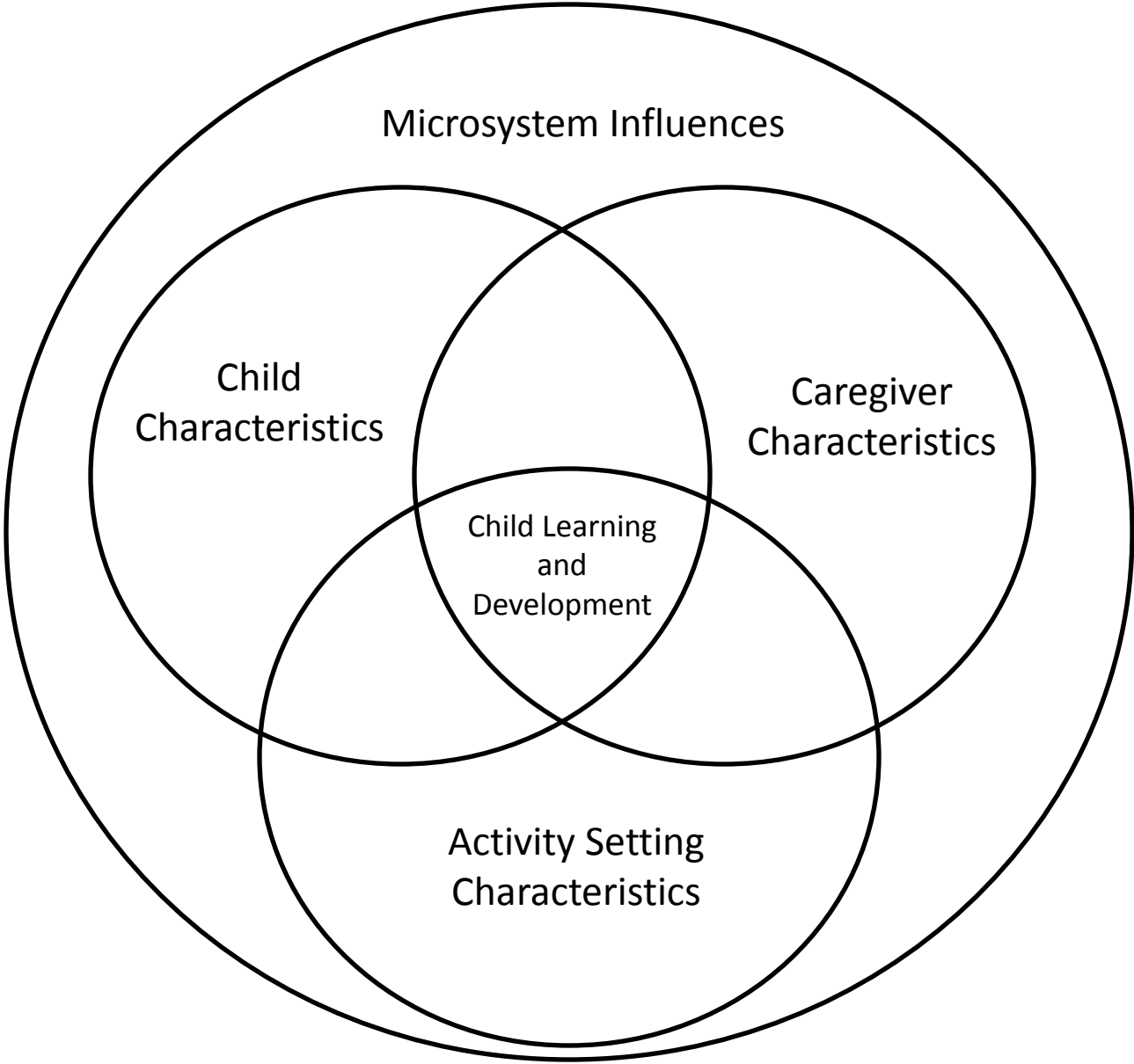
- Describe a number of the factors that shape and influence child learning and development in the contexts of everyday activities.
- Illustrate that the participation of young children with or without disabilities or delays in everyday family and community activities is more similar than different.
- Describe some of the activity setting, child, and caregiver characteristics that “stand out” as particularly important in terms of influencing child learning and development in everyday activity.
- Describe findings from an activity-setting approach to early intervention using everyday activities as sources of interest-based development-enhancing child learning opportunities.

## Urie Bronfenbrenner's Microsystem Framework of Learning and Development

According to Bronfenbrenner (1993), “The ***personal characteristics*** likely to be most potent in affecting the course...of development...(include) those that set in motion, sustain, and encourage processes of interaction between the [developing] person and two aspects of the ***proximal environment***: first, the ***people present*** in the setting; and second, the ***physical and symbolic features*** of the setting that invite, permit, or inhibit engagement in sustained, progressively more complex interaction with an activity in the immediate environment.” (p. 11, emphasis added)

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Bronfenbrenner, U. (1993). The ecology of cognitive development: Research models and fugitive findings. In R. H. Wozniak & K. W. Fisher (Eds.), *Development in context: Acting and thinking in specific environments* (pp.3-44). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.



## Factors Influencing Child Learning and Development

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Microsystem Influences

Development-Enhancing Characteristics

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Child Characteristics

Child temperament, **child personal interests**, severity of child delay, type of child disability

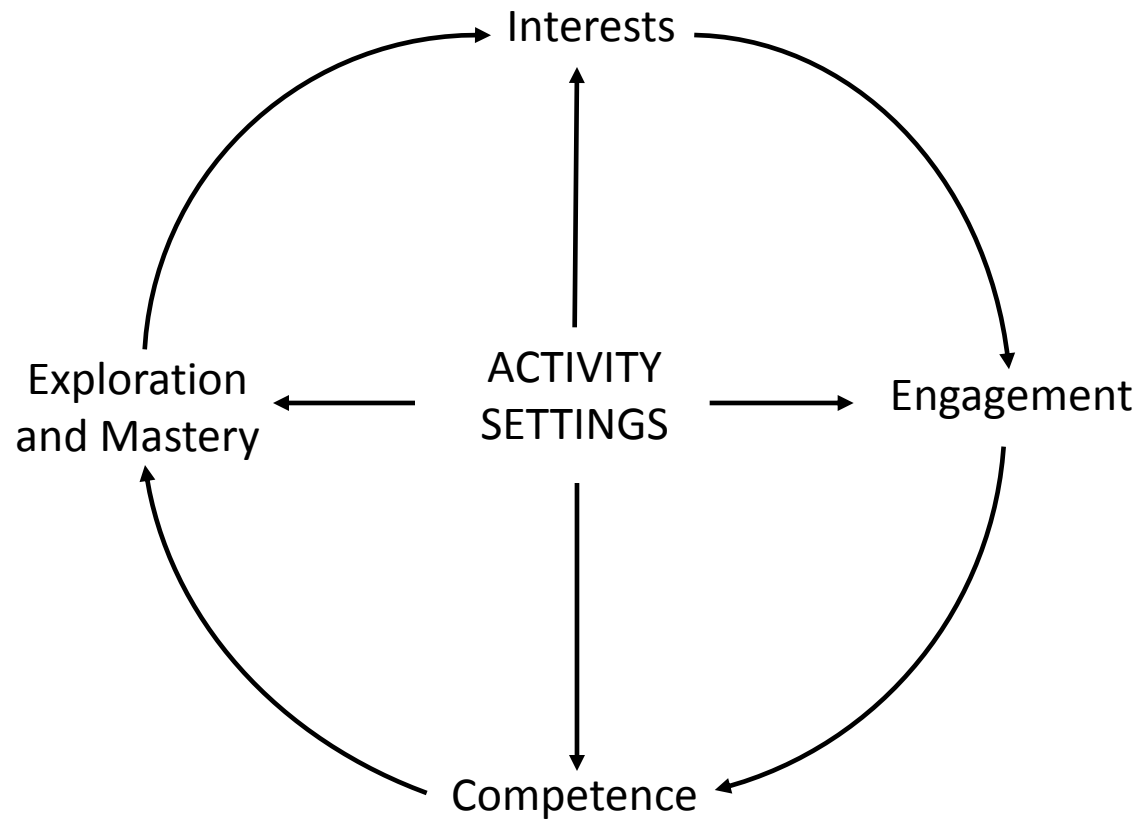
Activity Setting Characteristics

Geography (activity locations), **type of everyday activity, situationally interesting activity**, material availability, activity setting features

Caregiver Characteristics

Cultural beliefs and values, parenting attitudes, **caregiver interactional styles**, acculturation and enculturation

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## Definitions of Everyday Activity Settings

- “Contexts in which collaborative interaction, intersubjectivity, assisted performance, and learning occur.” (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988)
- “Activity settings are made up of everyday experiences...that contain ordinary settings in which children’s social interaction and behavior occur.” (Farver, 1999)
- “Situation-specific experiences, opportunities or events that involve a child’s interaction with people, the physical environment, or both, and which provide contexts for a child to learn about his or her own behavior capabilities as well as the behavioral propensities of others.” (Dunst et al., 2002).

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Dunst, C. J., Bruder, M. B., Trivette, C. M., Hamby, D., Raab, M., & McLean, M. (2001). Characteristics and consequences of everyday natural learning opportunities. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 21*, 68-92.

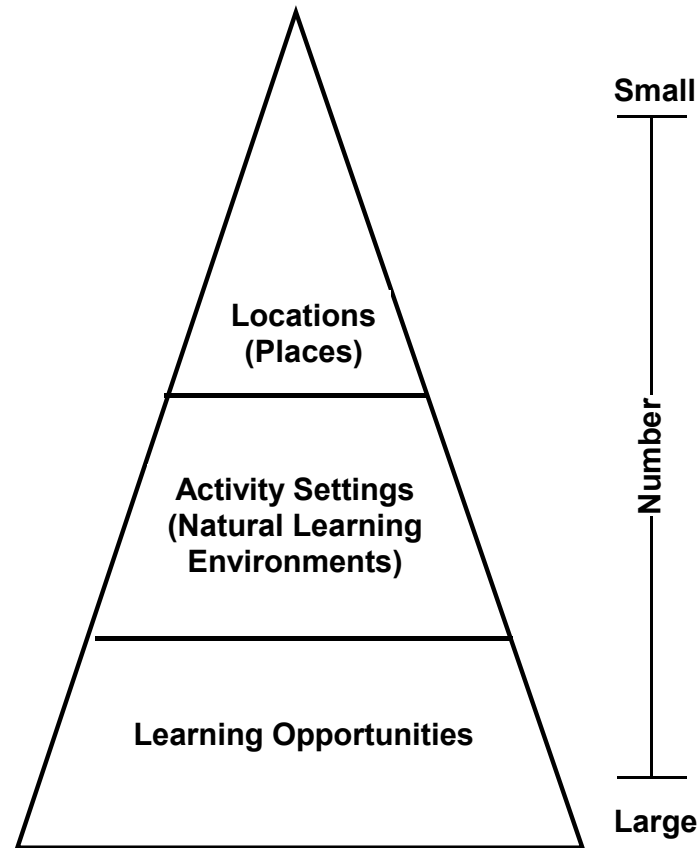
Farver, J. A. M. (1999). Activity setting analysis: A model for examining the role of culture in development. In A. Göncü (Ed.), *Children's engagement in the world: Sociocultural perspectives* (pp. 99-127). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Tharp, R., & Gallimore, R. (1988). *Rousing minds to life: Teaching, learning, and schooling in social context*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.



# Increasing Children's Learning Opportunities

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**Relationship Between Locations, Activity Settings,  
and Children's Learning Opportunities**

# Increasing Children's Learning Opportunities

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MACROLOCATIONS

Home

Community

MICROLOCATIONS

Kitchen

Playground

MACRO ACTIVITY  
SETTINGS

Table

Sink

Cabinets

Slide

Swings

Teeter-  
Totter

MICRO ACTIVITY  
SETTINGS

Meals

Games

Dinner  
Talk

Steps

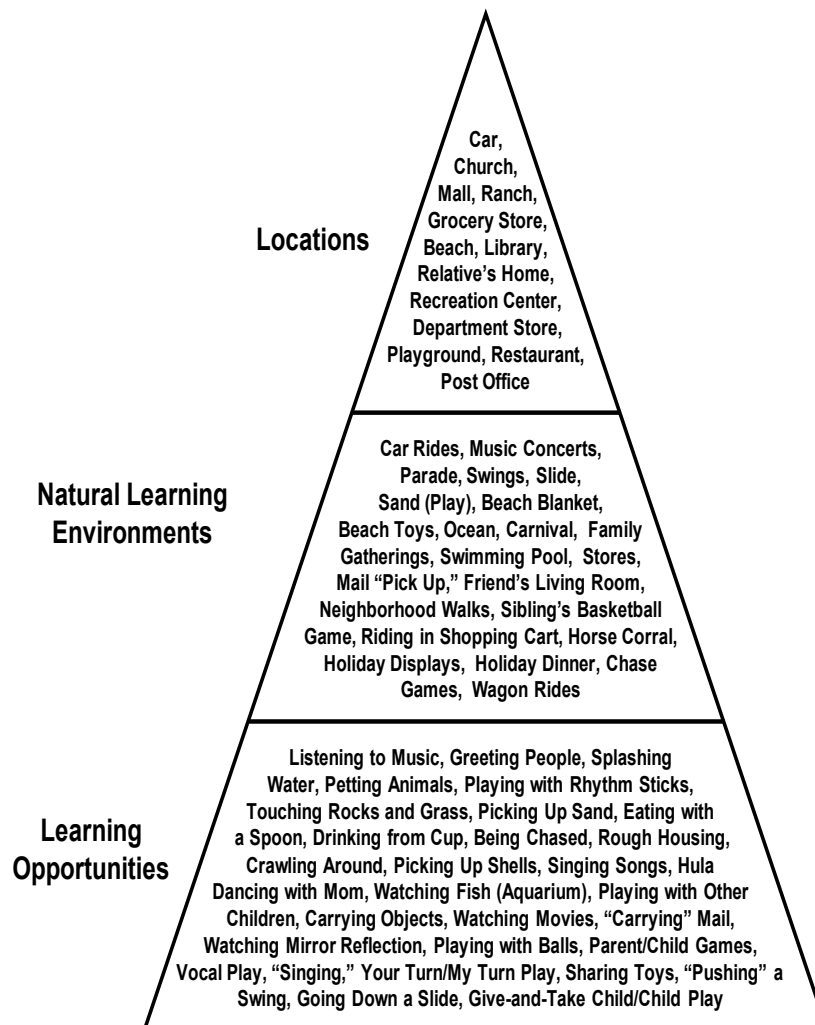
Platform

Sliding  
Trough

Examples of Locations and Activity Settings Serving as the Contexts for Children's Learning Opportunities

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**NOTE.** The locations, natural learning environments, and learning opportunities are only a small sampling of the make-up of a child's community life.

## Examples of Child Participation in the Everyday Community Activities

















































## Everyday Children's Learning Opportunities Institute

- Case studies of infant, toddler and preschooler participation in everyday family and community activities
- National surveys of the types of child participation in everyday family and community activities and their consequences
- Intervention studies investigating the consequences of increasing child participation in everyday family or community activities
- Research syntheses of studies of child participation in everyday family and community activities and the consequences on child learning and development

## Case Studies of Young Children's Participation and Learning in Everyday Family and Community Activities

- Families of children with or without disabilities were visited on 6 occasions over a 5 to 6 month period of time to identify either the family or community activities that “made up” each child’s life.
- The case studies were conducted with families in Alaska, California, Connecticut, Hawaii, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, and Wisconsin. Children and families were selected as participants based on different background characteristics.
- Observations, interviews, artifactual evidence (e.g., photographs, physical objects) and other information were used to identify the children’s everyday activities.
- Parents or other primary caregivers were then asked to report for each activity whether the child learned or engaged in context-specific functional behavior in the settings.

## Number of Case Study Participants

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Child Condition	Family Activities	Community Activities
Children with Disabilities	57	58
Children without Disabilities	46	45

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## Distribution of the Children's Ages

Child Age (months)	Children with Disabilities		Children without Disabilities	
	Family Activity	Community Activity	Family Activity	Community Activity
0 – 12	8	4	5	9
13 – 24	8	13	9	11
25 – 36	13	14	11	5
37 – 48	9	10	8	4
49 – 60	13	8	9	11
61 – 72	6	9	4	5

## Children's Diagnoses and Etiologies<sup>a</sup>

Typically developing .....	91
Developmentally at-risk .....	19
Motor impairments .....	19
Language impairments .....	15
Developmental delays .....	11
Autism spectrum disorders .....	9
Chromosomal abberations .....	9
Medically-related disabilities .....	9
Sensory impairments .....	8
Multiple disabilities .....	8
Intellectual disabilities .....	4
Cranial disorders .....	4

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<sup>a</sup> All the children with identified disabilities or developmental delays were enrolled in U.S. Department of Education, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Early Intervention or Preschool Special Education Programs.



## Distributions of Family Ethnicity

Family Ethnicity	Family Activities	Community Activities
African American	19	17
Asian American	11	8
Caucasian/White	22	27
Latino or Hispanic	25	23
Middle Eastern	7	2
Native American/Inuit	12	18
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	7	8

## Case Study Findings

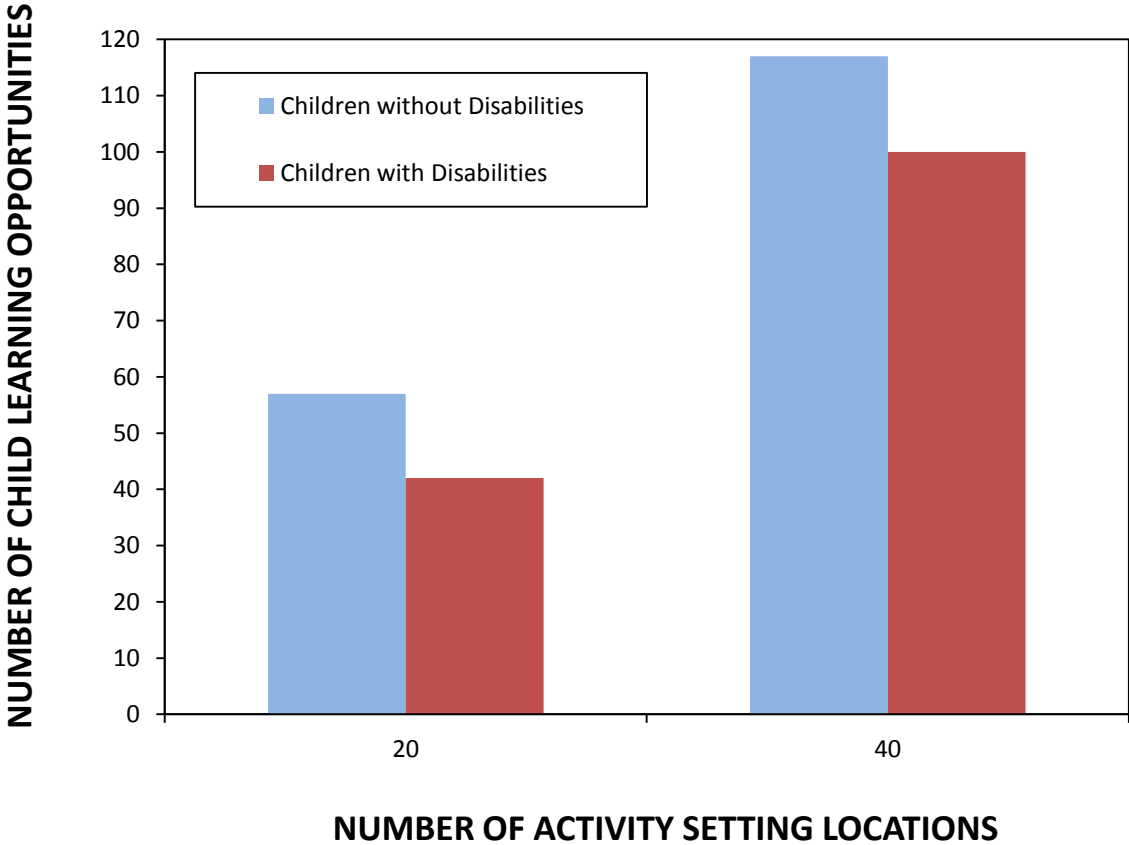
## Community Activity Setting Case Study Results

Measures	Community Activity Samples	
	Children with Disabilities	Children without Disabilities
<i>Number of Activity Setting Locations</i>		
Mean	30.59	32.91
Standard Deviation	12.98	10.91
Range	13-75	13-67
<i>Number of Child Learning Opportunities</i>		
Mean	70.21	86.49
Standard Deviation	31.64	32.31
Range	23-154	33-177

## Relationship Between Everyday Activity Setting Locations and Number of Child Learning Opportunities

- The extent to which the number of activity setting locations was related to contextually-specific child learning opportunities was determined by regressing child learning opportunities on number of activity setting locations.
- One purpose of the analyses was to determine if the ecology of everyday child learning was similar or different for children with or without disabilities or delays.

# Community Activity Settings

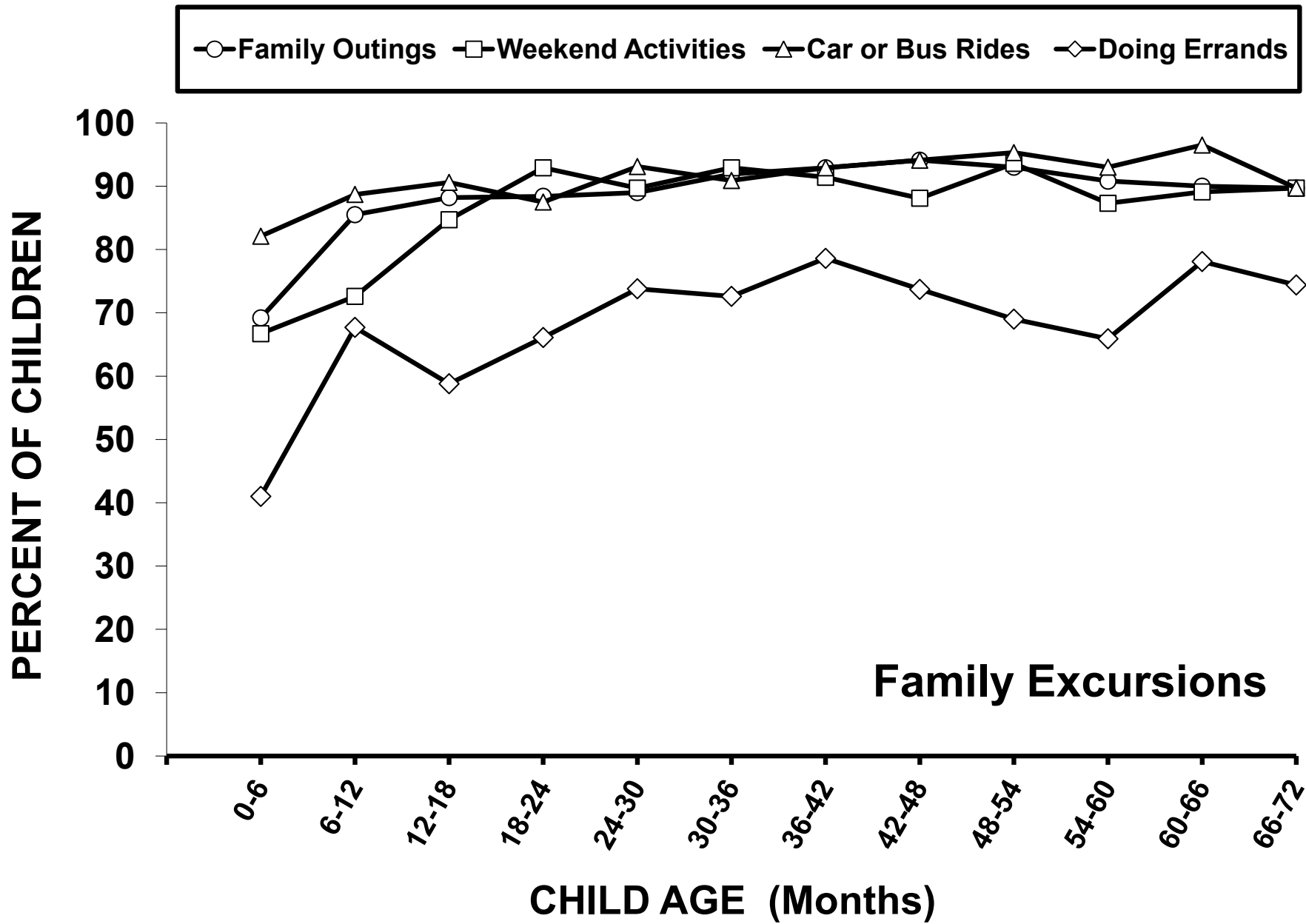


# National Survey of Young Children's Participation in Everyday Community Activities

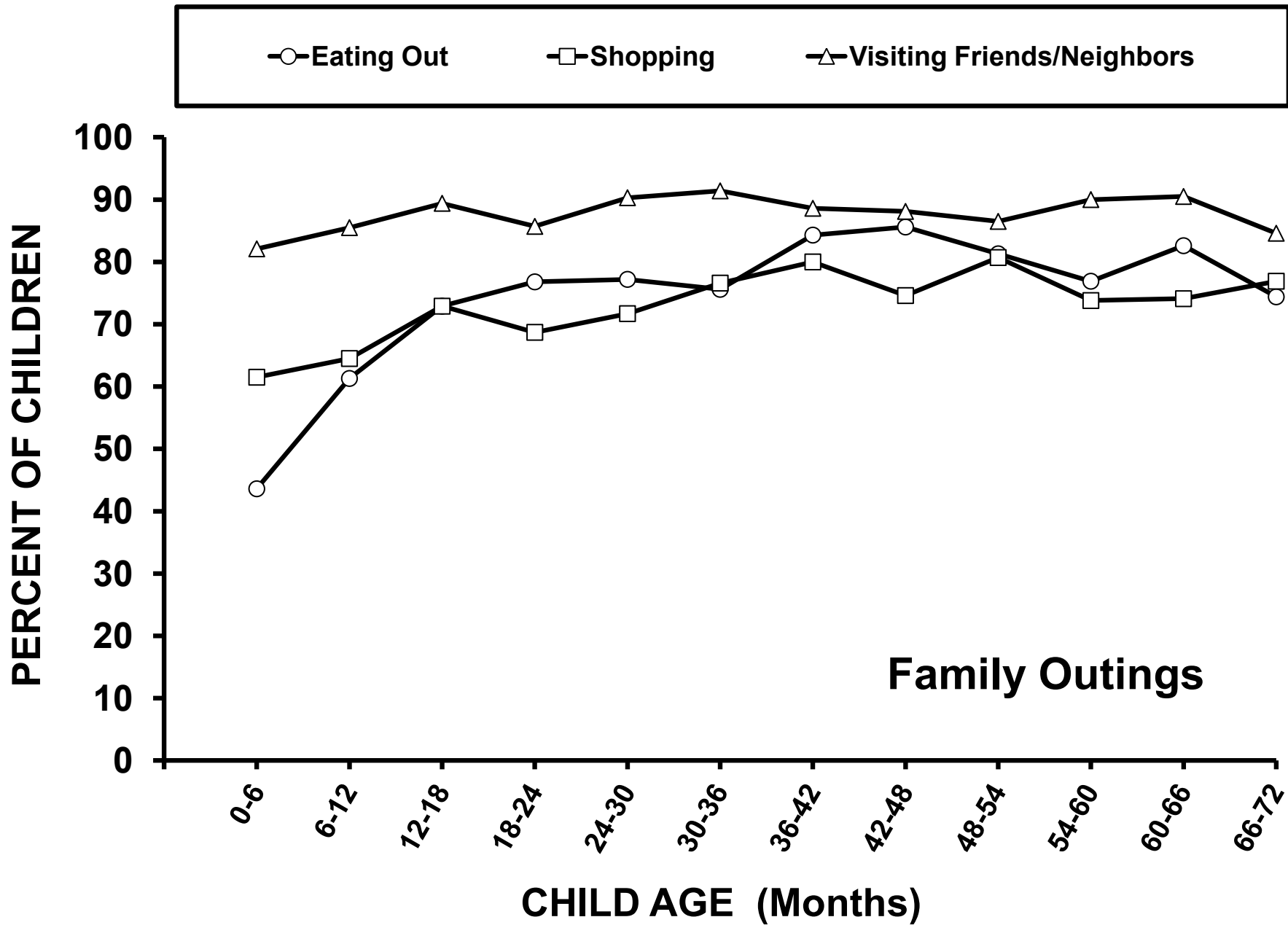
- 1,468 parents and other primary caregivers of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers with or at-risk for disabilities or delays completed a survey of child participation in 50 different community activities
- Participants were from 48 states and Puerto Rico
- Survey included items (activity settings) organized into 11 categories (based on factor analysis results) and multiple questions on child behavior and family functioning
- One focus of analysis was children's emerging participation in different types of community (and family) activities

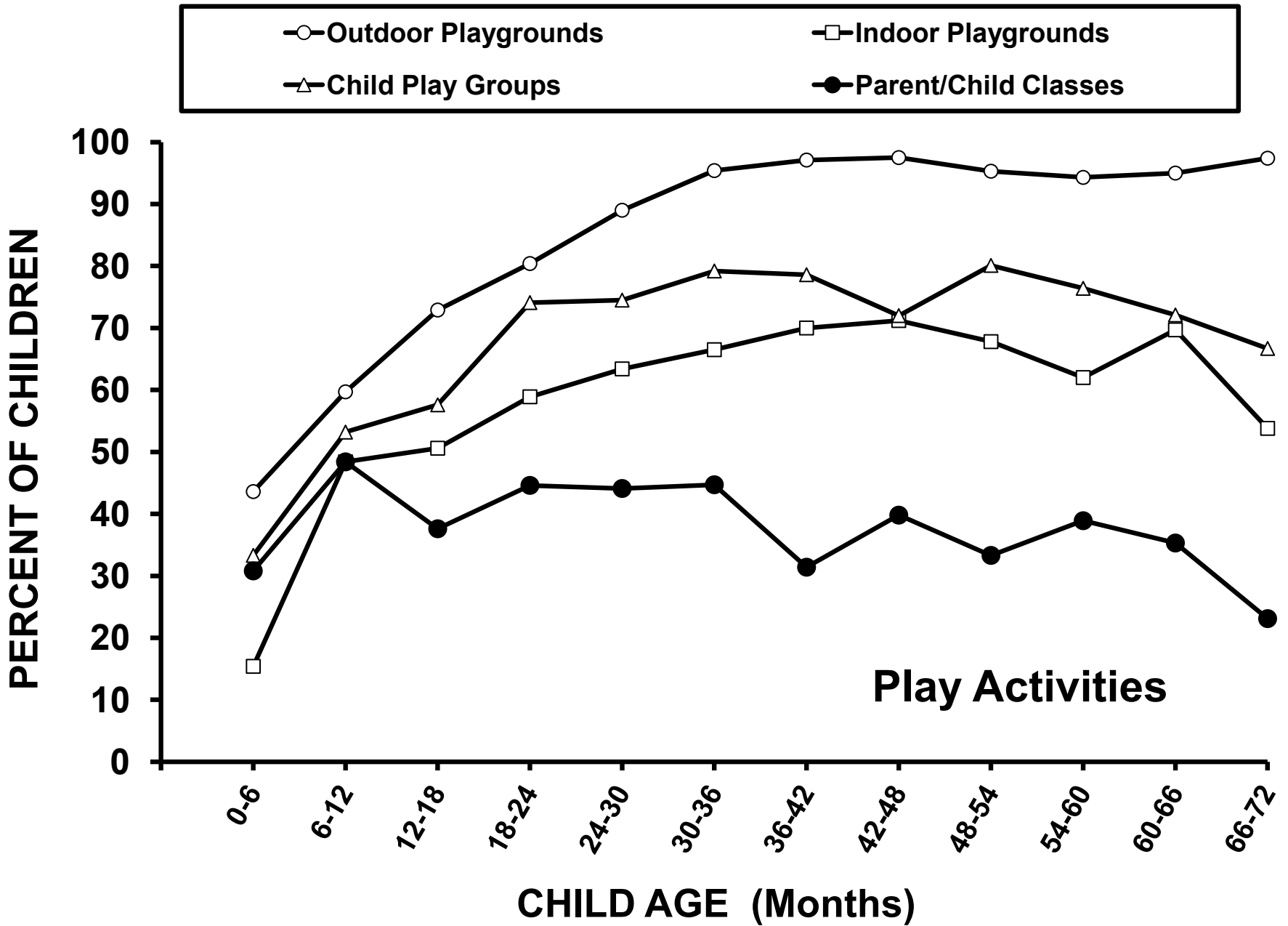
Types of Community Activities That Constituted Sources of Inclusion Experiences

Category/Activities	Category/Activities	Category/Activities
<i>Family Excursions</i>	<i>Festive Activities</i>	<i>Recreation Activities</i>
Family activities	Community celebrations	Fishing
Weekend activities	Children’s festivals	Community centers
Car rides/bus rides	Community fairs	Swimming
Doing errands	Parades	Sledding
<i>Family Outings</i>	<i>Outdoor activities</i>	<i>Children’s Attractions</i>
Eating out	Hiking	Petting zoos
Going shopping/mall	Nature trail walks	Nature reserves
Visiting friends/neighbors	Boating	Animal reserves
Family reunions	Camping	Pet stores
	Community gardens	
<i>Play Activities</i>		<i>Art/Entertainment Activities</i>
Outdoor playgrounds		Children’s museums
Indoor playgrounds		Children’s Theatre
Child play group		Library visits
Playing arcade games		Storytellers
Parent/child classes		Music activities/concerts



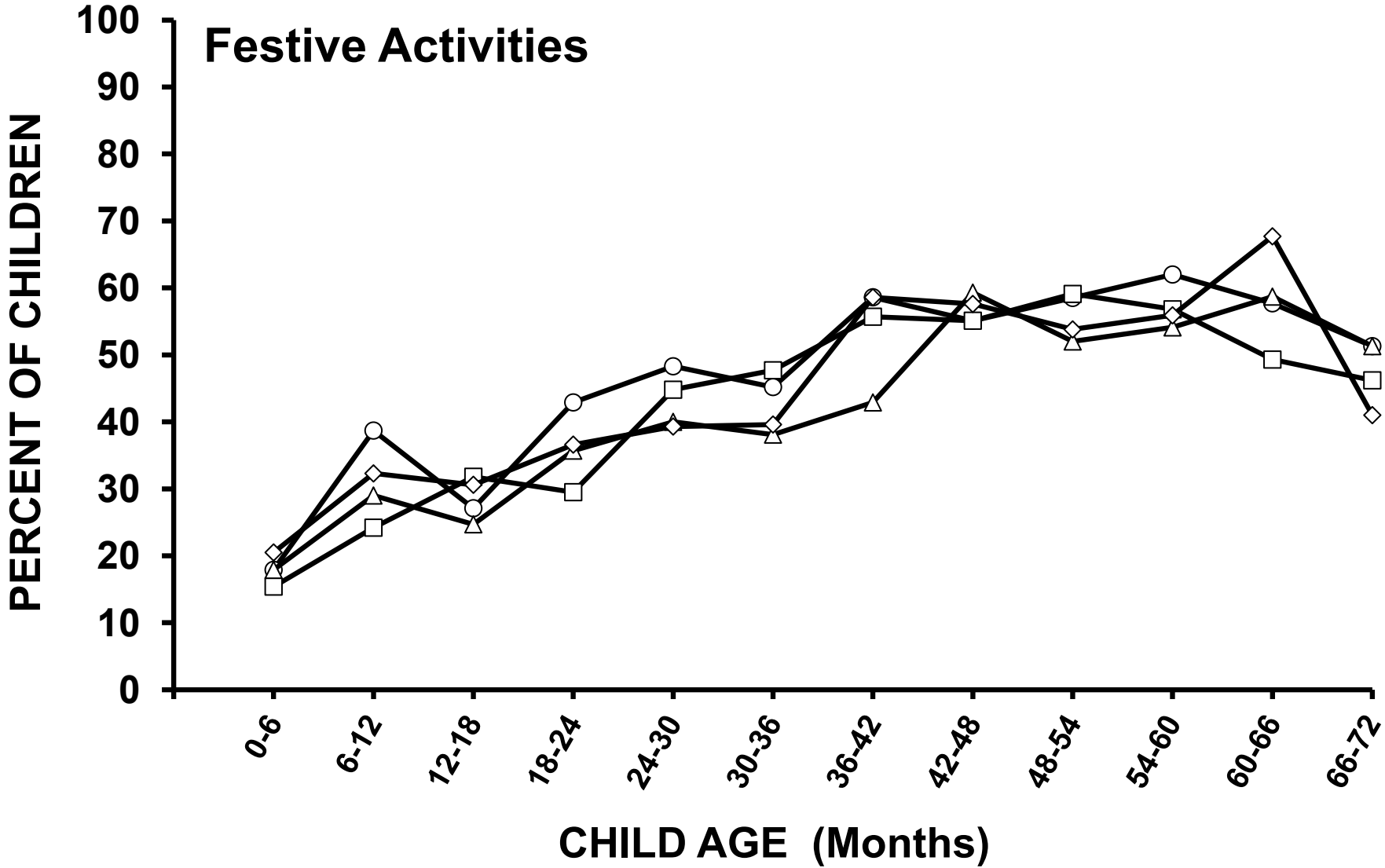


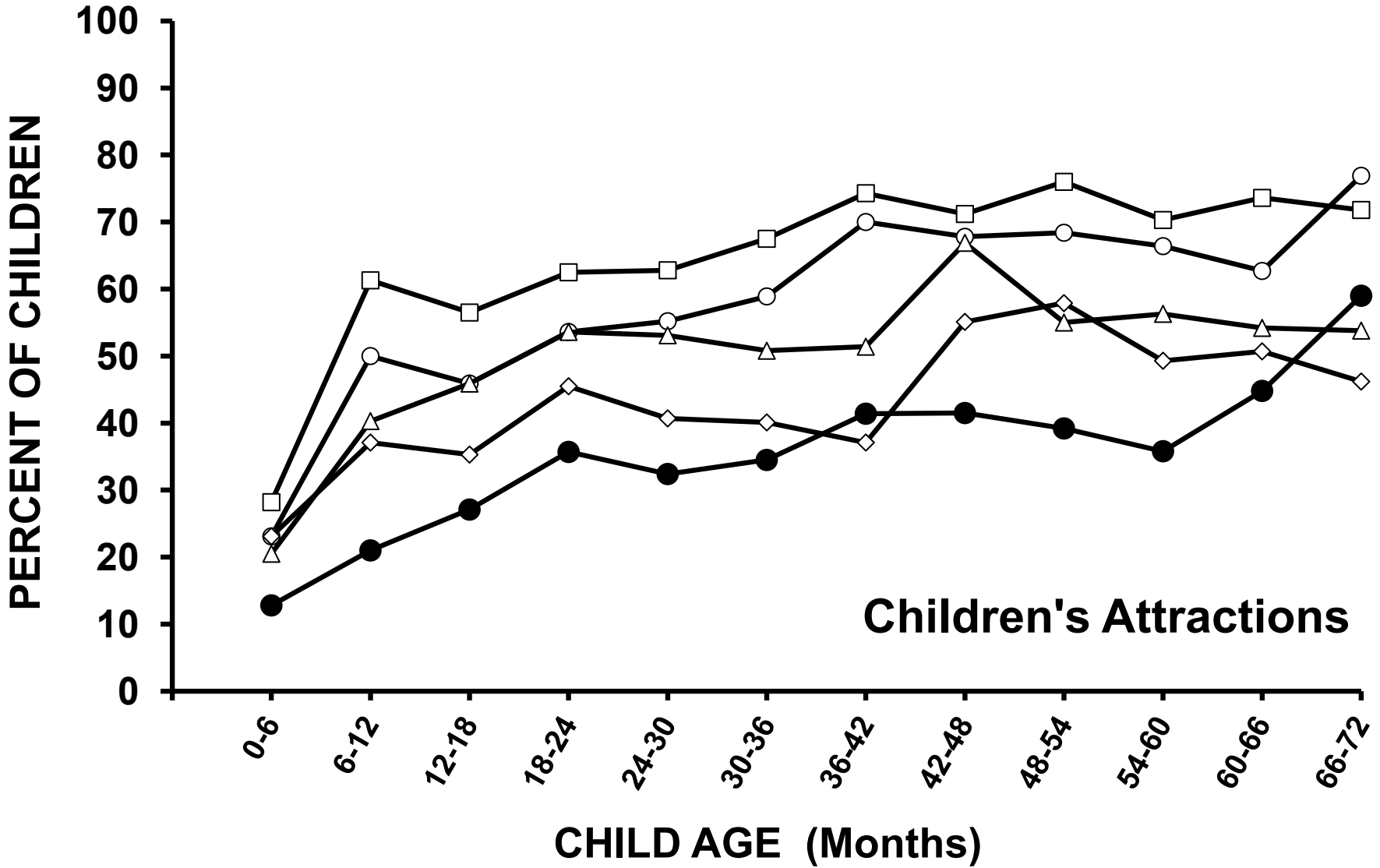




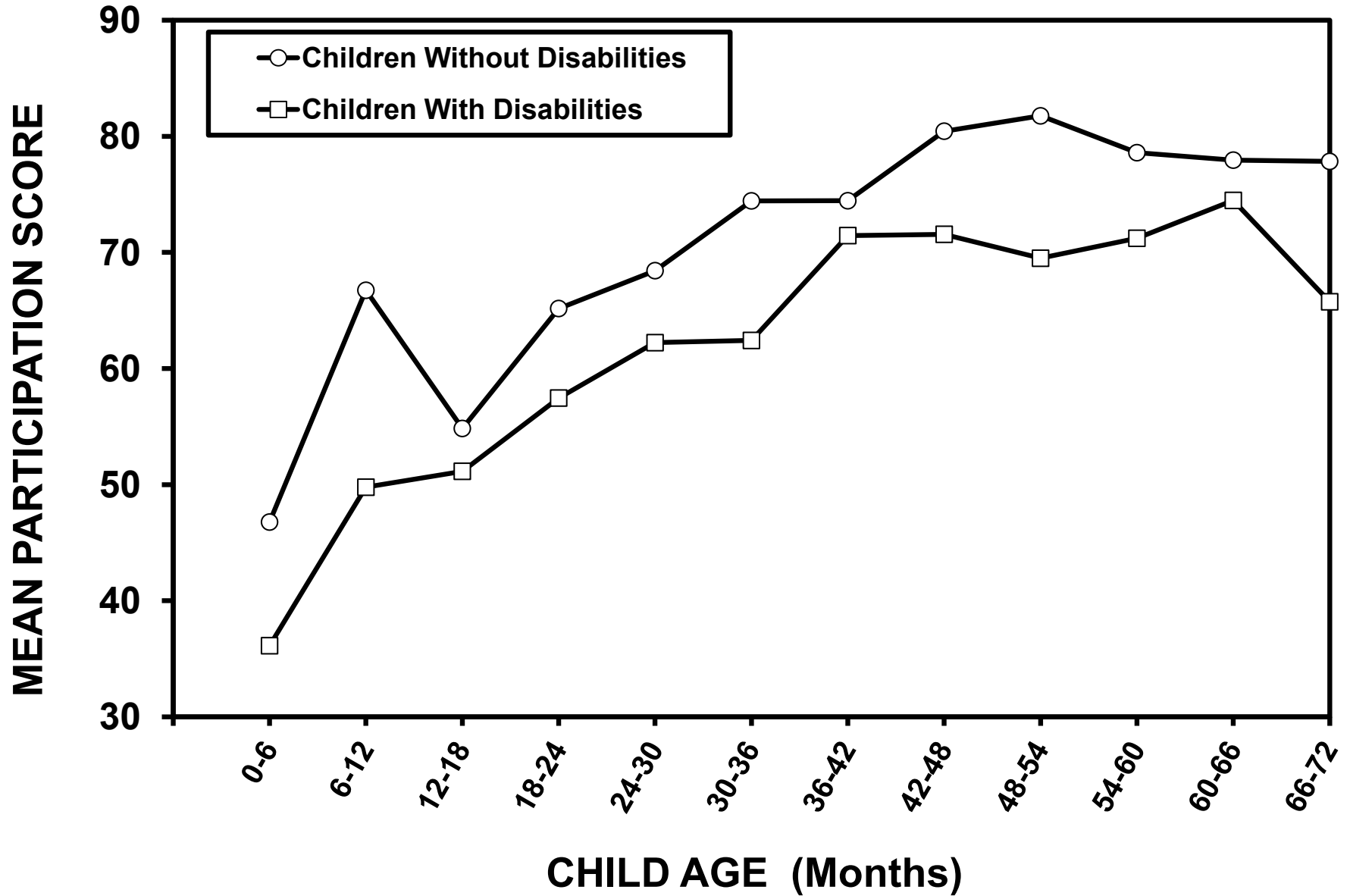


# Festive Activities





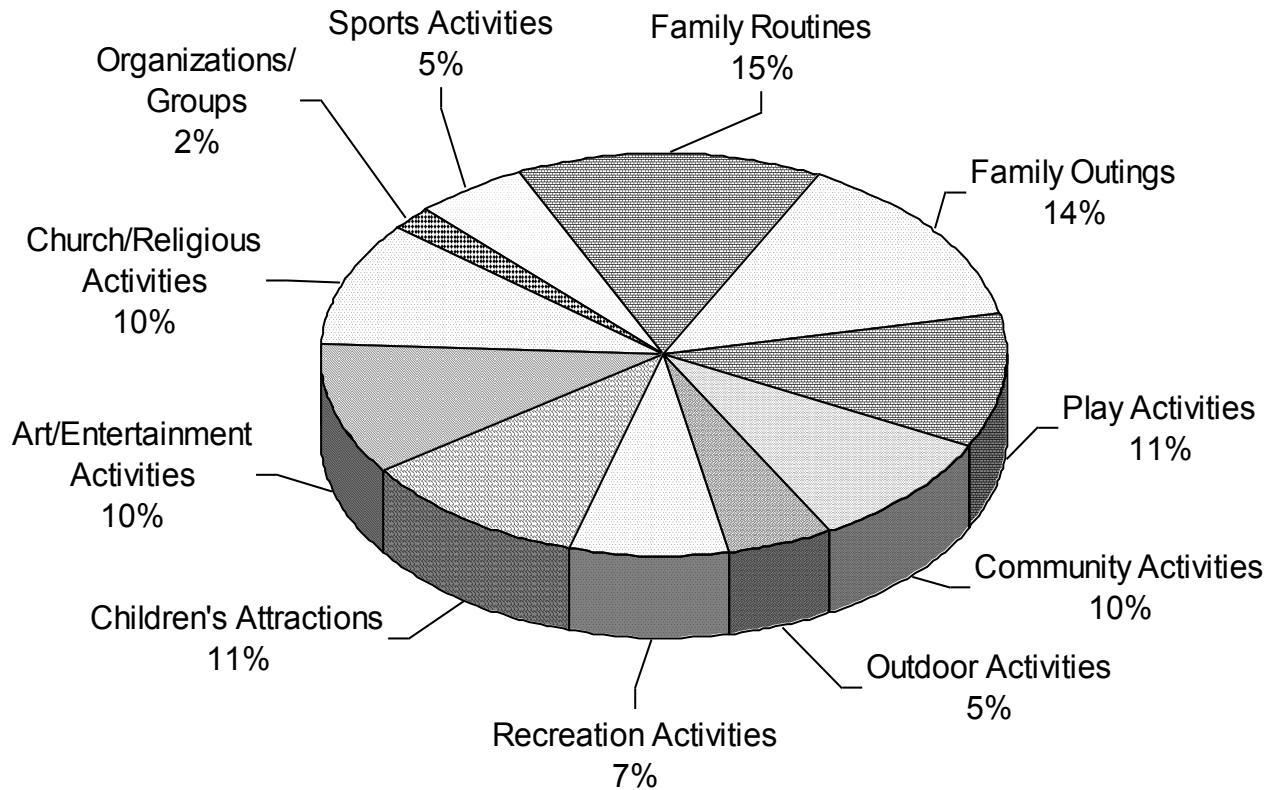
# Community Activities



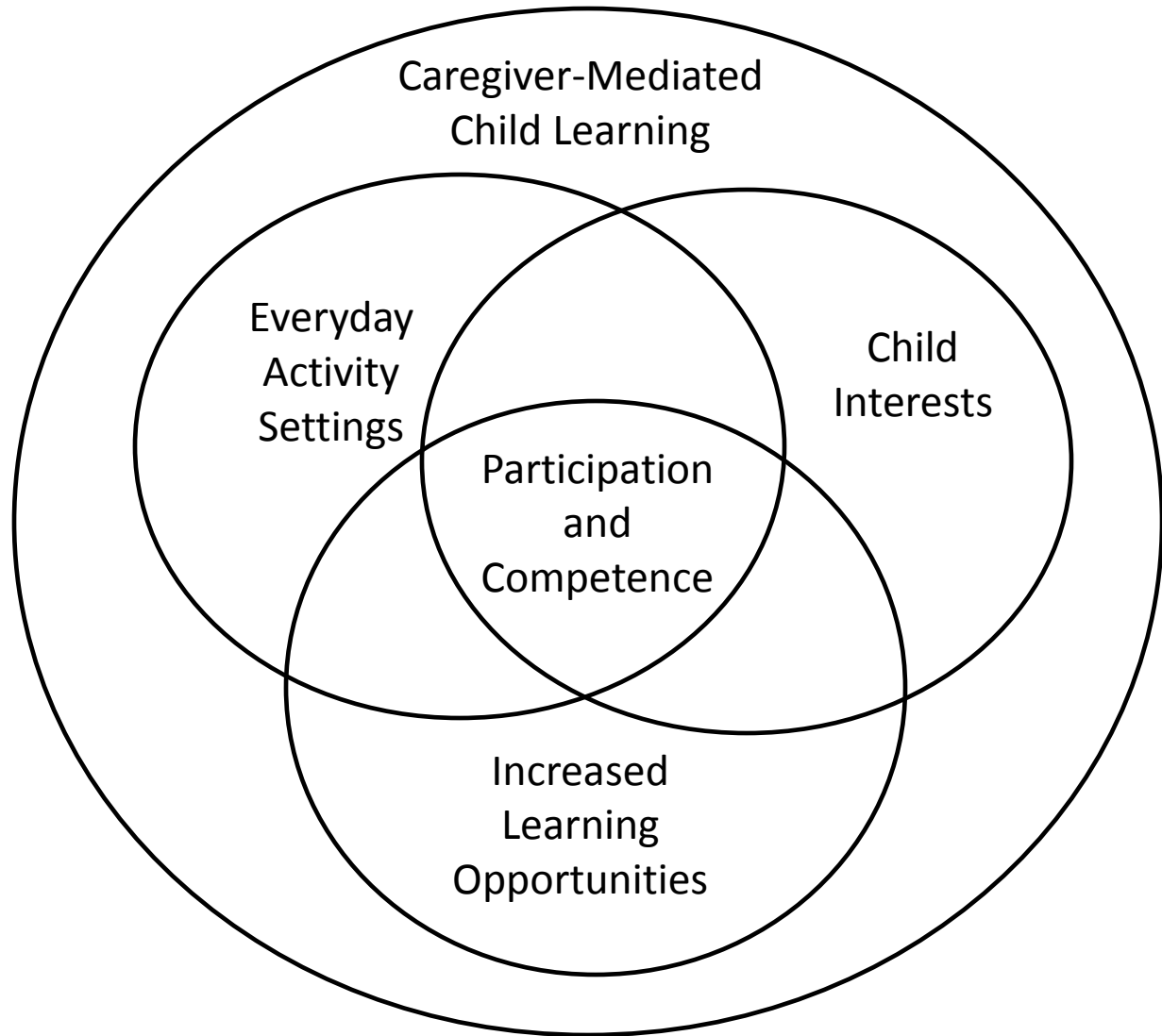
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### *National Survey Items*



Distribution of Sources of Children's Learning Opportunities  
in the Context of Community Life



Contextually-Mediated Early Childhood  
Intervention Practices Model

# Interest-Based Learning Participation in Everyday Activities and Child Development

Purpose: Compare the relative effectiveness of interest-based learning vs. noninterest-based everyday child learning

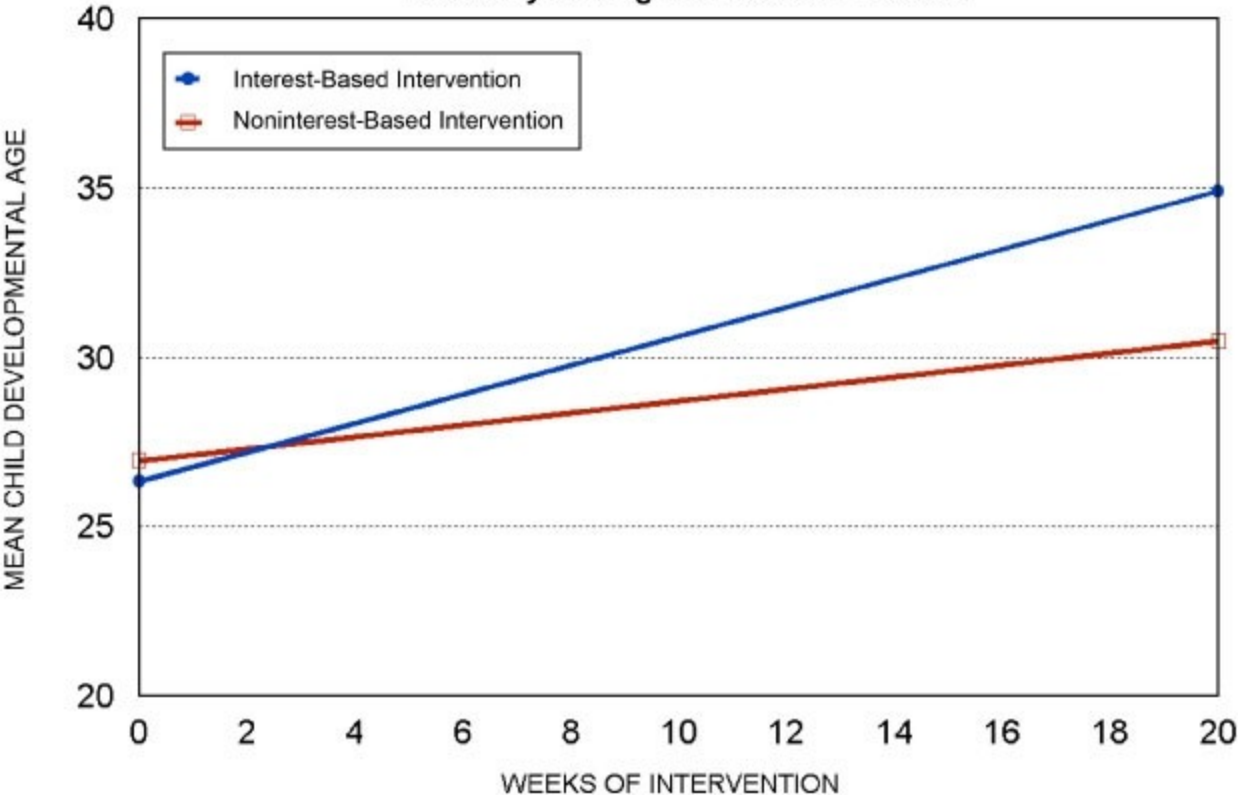
Study Participants: 50 infants, toddlers, and preschoolers with identified disabilities living in six United States

Outcome Measure: Developmental Observation Checklist Scales (Language, Cognitive, Motor, Social)

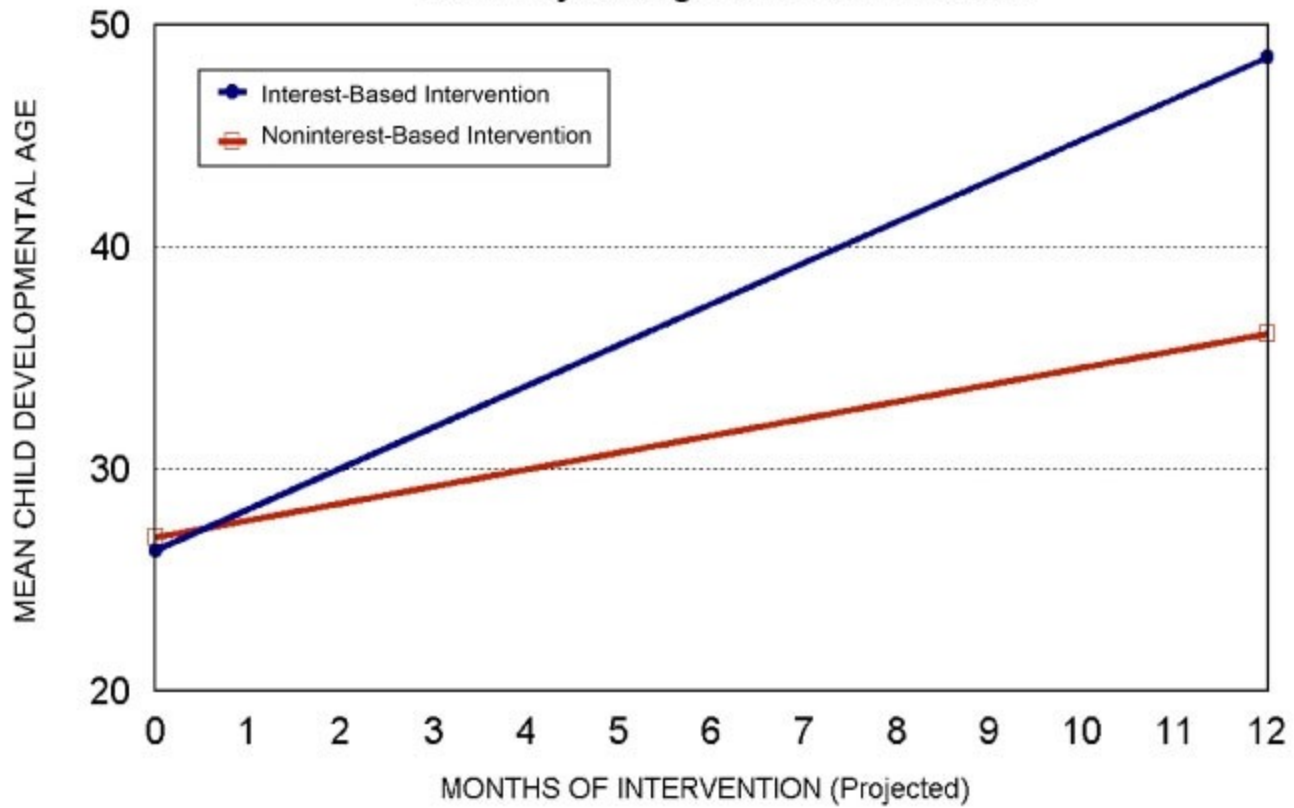
Methodology: Linear growth curve modeling



**Relative Effectiveness of Two Contrasting Approaches to Activity Setting Intervention Practices**



### Projected Benefits of Two Contrasting Approaches to Activity Setting Intervention Practices



## Implications for Practice

- The learning opportunities afforded young children with disabilities could be significantly increased if community activities were incorporated into IFSPs and IEPs to reinforce more formal early intervention and preschool special education objectives and goals
- An activity setting or microsystem framework can provide guidance about the person and environmental characteristics that need to be considered to promote child learning in the context of everyday activities
- Children's interests and other personal characteristics are generally not taken into consideration as part of developing IFSPs or IEPs but could significantly increase the likelihood that early intervention and preschool special education would be more effective with young children with disabilities

PowerPoint available at:  
[www.puckett.org](http://www.puckett.org)