

# A Family-Centered Approach to Understanding Family-School Relationships

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## Overview

- Illustrate the manner in which professional practices, parent self-efficacy beliefs, and practitioner responsiveness to parents' requests are related to family involvement in their children's learning and parenting confidence and confidence studies
- Summarize findings from both primary studies and meta-analyses of the relationships between family-centered practices and parent and child behavior and functioning
- Share lessons learned from both practice and research on family-school relationships

## Types of Child and Parenting Programs

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Program/Project	Setting
Family, Infant and Preschool Program	Home-Based
Family Resource Programs	Center-Based
Parent Involvement in their Children's Special Education	Elementary Schools
Early Childhood Follow-Through Institute	Elementary Schools

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## Family-Centered Practice and Research

Assess the extent to and manner in which the use of family-centered (help giving) practices are directly and indirectly related to parent involvement in their children's learning and early education, parenting confidence and competence, and child behavior and development mediated by parents' self-efficacy beliefs

## Major Practice and Research Measures

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Measures	Constructs
Family-Centered Practices	Relational and participatory practices
Parent/Family Informational and Support Needs	Practitioner helpfulness and responsiveness to parents' requests for information and support
Self-Efficacy Beliefs	Parents' judgments of their likelihood of success to obtaining needed supports and resources
Parenting Capabilities	Parenting confidence and confidence

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## Definition of Family-Centered Help-giving Practices

Family-centered help-giving practices treat families with dignity and respect; provide family members with information needed to make informed decisions and choices; involve active family involvement in obtaining resources and supports; and practitioner responsiveness and flexibility to family requests and desires

## Two Types of Family-Centered Help-giving Practices

Our research has consistently found that there are two clear discernable kinds of practices that “fall into” distinct subcategories of help-giving practices:

- Relational help-giving practices
- Participatory help-giving practices

## Relational Family-Centered Practices

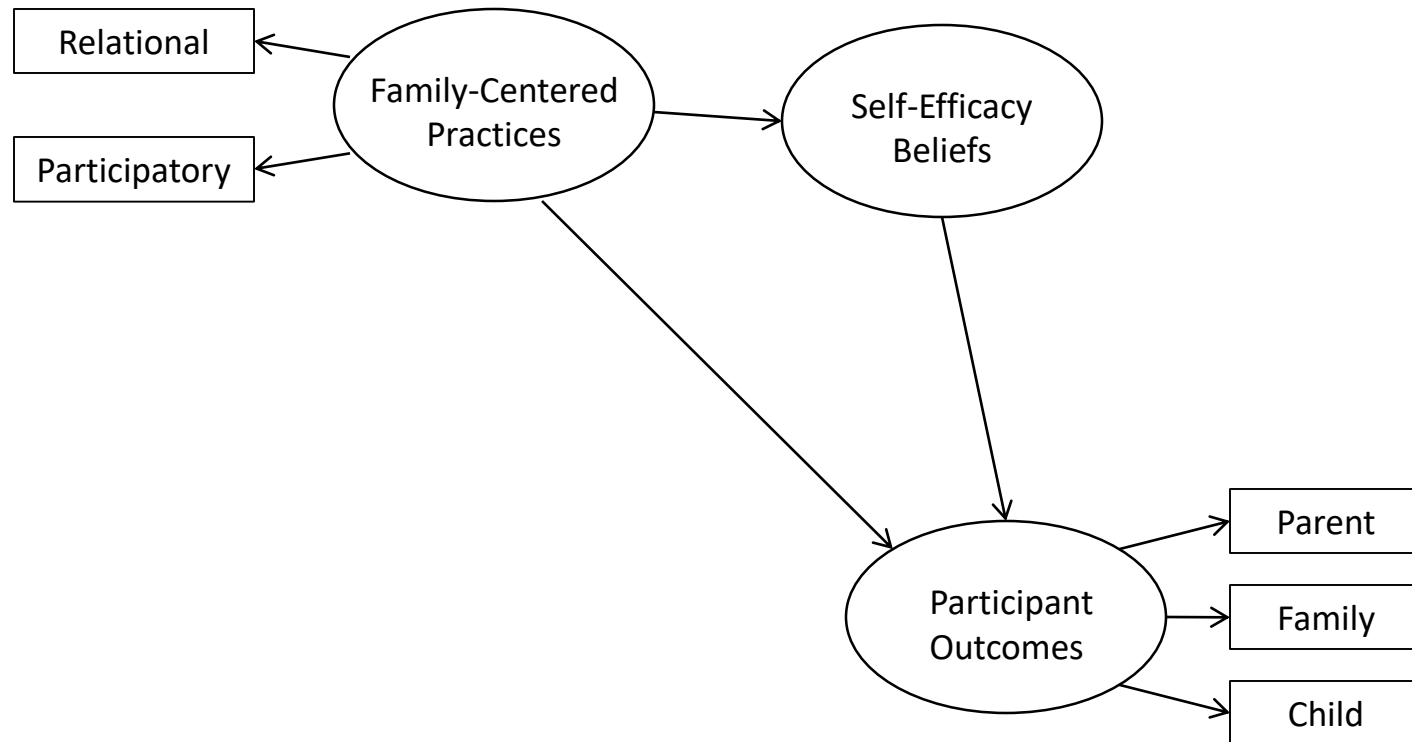
- Relational practices include behavior typically associated with effective clinical practice, including, but not limited to, compassion, active and reflective listening, empathy, and effective communication
- Relational practices also include practitioner beliefs and attitudes about family and cultural strengths, values, and attitudes, and practitioner sensitivity to these beliefs and values as part of intervention practices



## Participatory Family-Centered Practices

- Participatory practices include behavior that actively involve family members in (a) informed choice and decision making and (b) using existing strengths and abilities as well as developing new capabilities needed to obtain resources, supports, advice, etc.
- Participatory practices also include practitioner responsiveness to and flexibility in how help is provided to children and their families

# Practice-Based Framework for Investigating the Influences of Family-Centered Practices



# Practice-Based Research Syntheses of Family-Centered Help-giving Practices

- Meta-analysis of 52 studies conducted by more than 20 researchers and research teams in seven countries<sup>a,b</sup>
- Meta-analysis of 18 studies conducted by Dunst, Trivette, and colleagues in one early childhood intervention and family support program<sup>c</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> Dunst et al. (2007). Meta-analysis of family-centered help-giving practices research. *Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Research Reviews*, 13, 370-378.

<sup>b</sup> Dunst et al. (2008). *Research synthesis and meta-analysis of studies of family centered practices*. Winterberry Press Monograph Series. Asheville, NC: Winterberry Press.

<sup>c</sup> Dunst et al. (2006). *Family support program quality and parent, family and child benefits*. Winterberry Press Monograph Series. Asheville, NC: Winterberry Press.

## Selected Characteristics of the Study Participants

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	Number of Participants	Percent Mothers	Age Range (Years)	Formal Education (Years)
Synthesis 1	11,500+	63-100	15-60+	3-20+
Synthesis 2	1,100	95	16-50+	5-20+

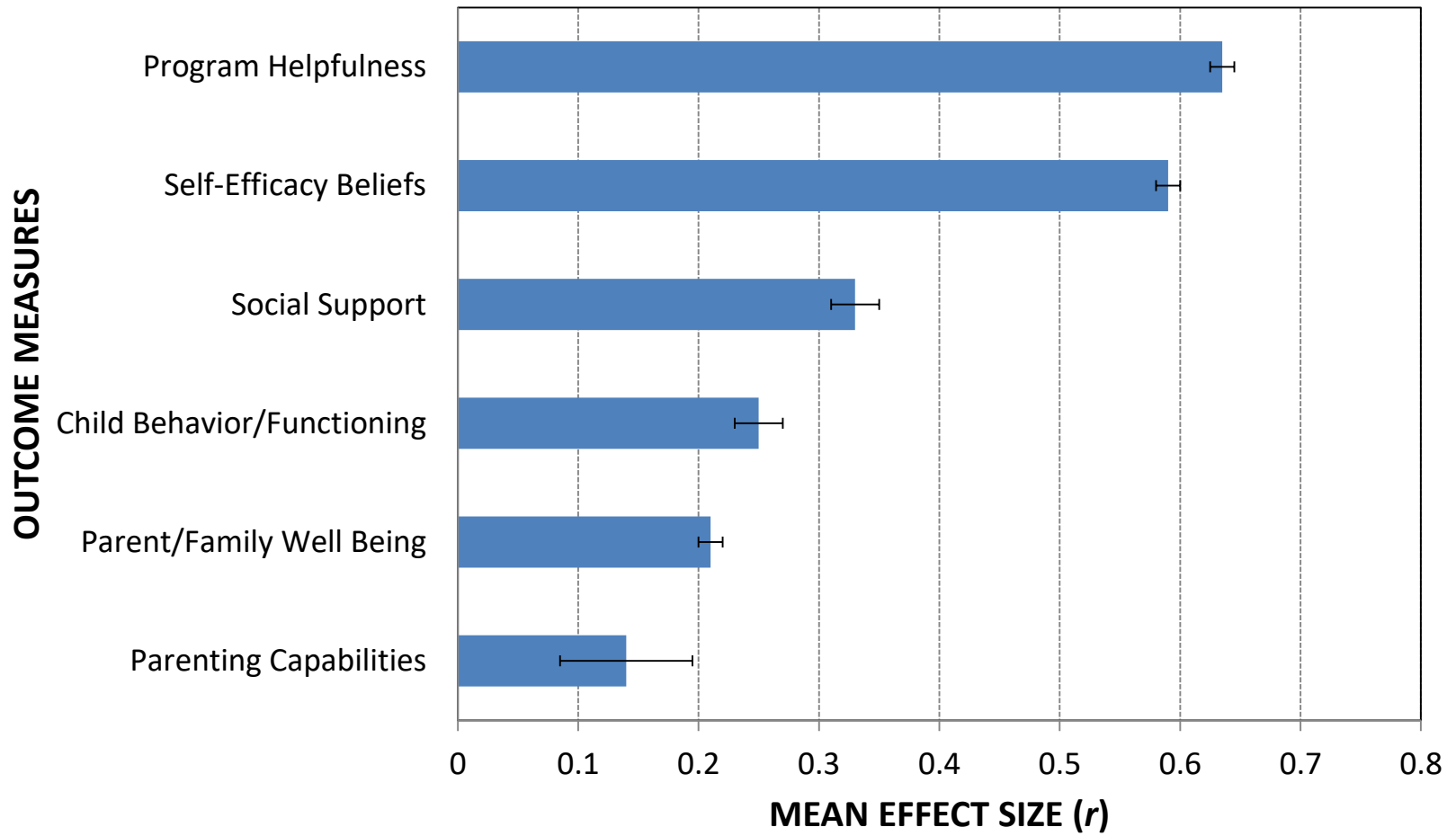
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## Meta-Analysis Study Measures and Constructs

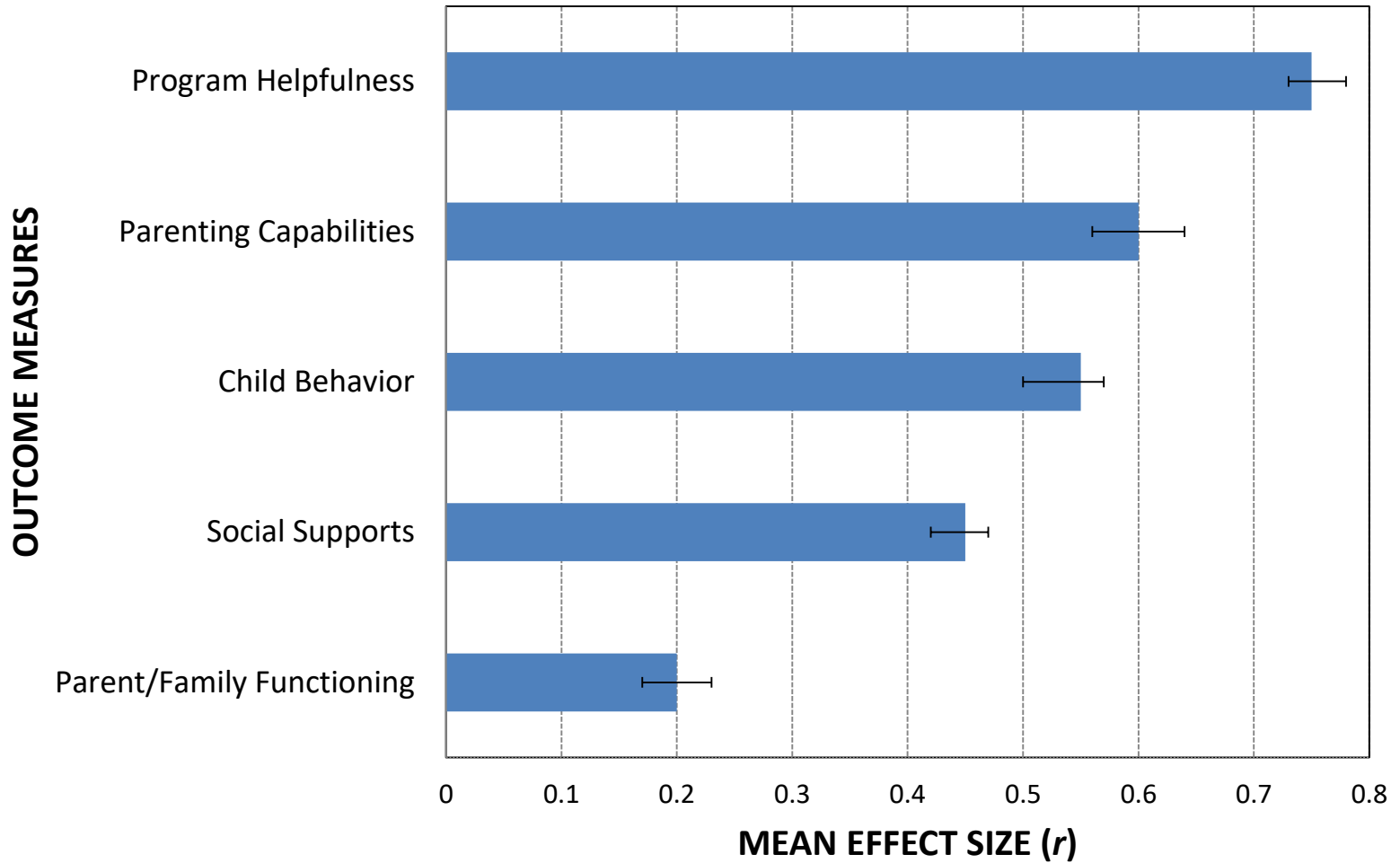
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Study Measures	Instruments/Constructs
Family-Centered Practices	Family-Centered Behavior Scale, Family/Professional Collaboration Scale, Enabling Practices Scale, Help-giving Practices Scale, Brass Tacks, FOCAS, Measure of Process of Care, Family/Provider Relationship Instrument, Family-Focused Intervention Scale
Outcome Measures	Program participant satisfaction, staff helpfulness, self-efficacy beliefs, parent empowerment, parenting capabilities, personal well-being, family functioning, social support, child functioning, child health

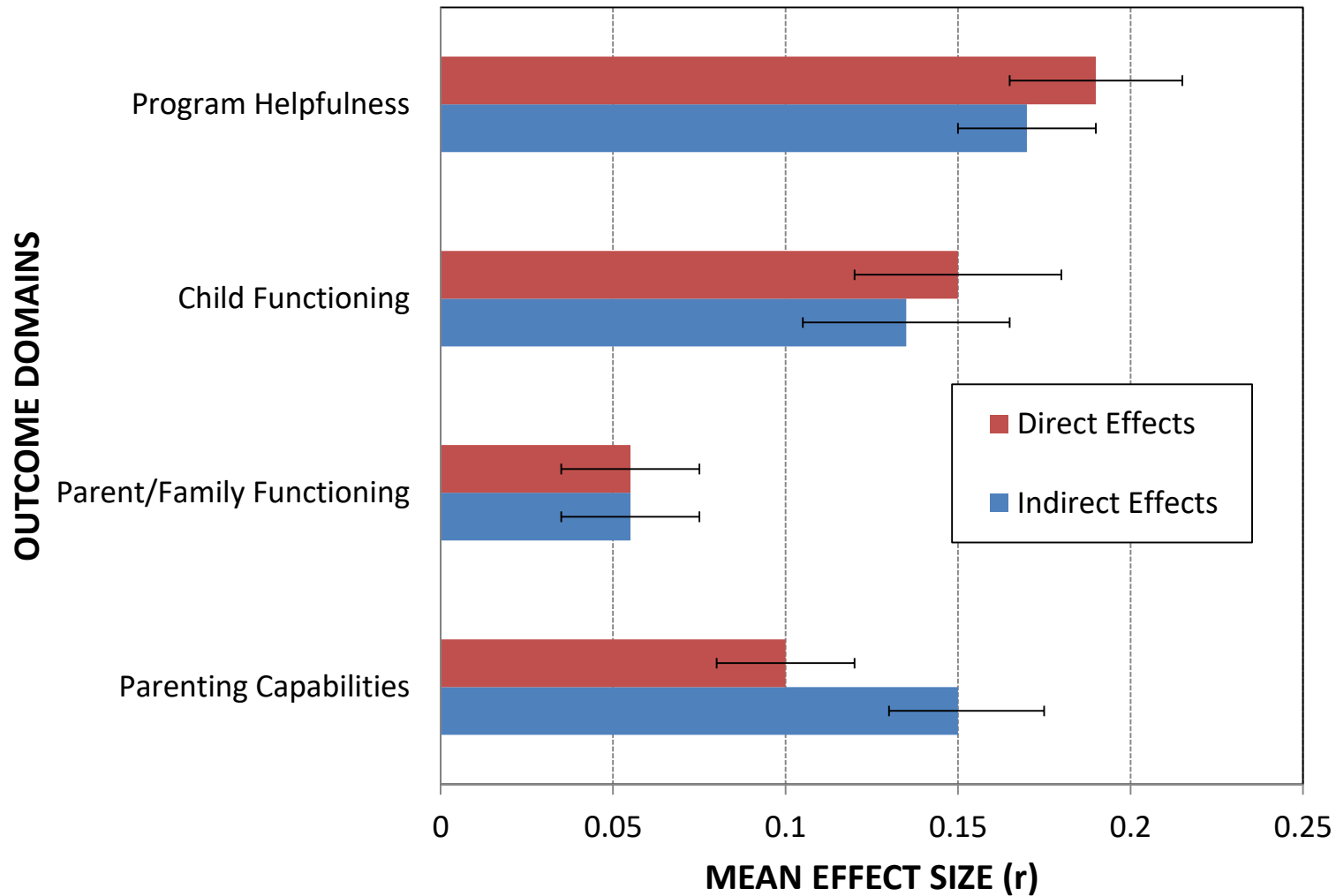
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Direct Effects of Family-Centered Help-giving Practices on Parent, Family, and Child Behavior and Functioning



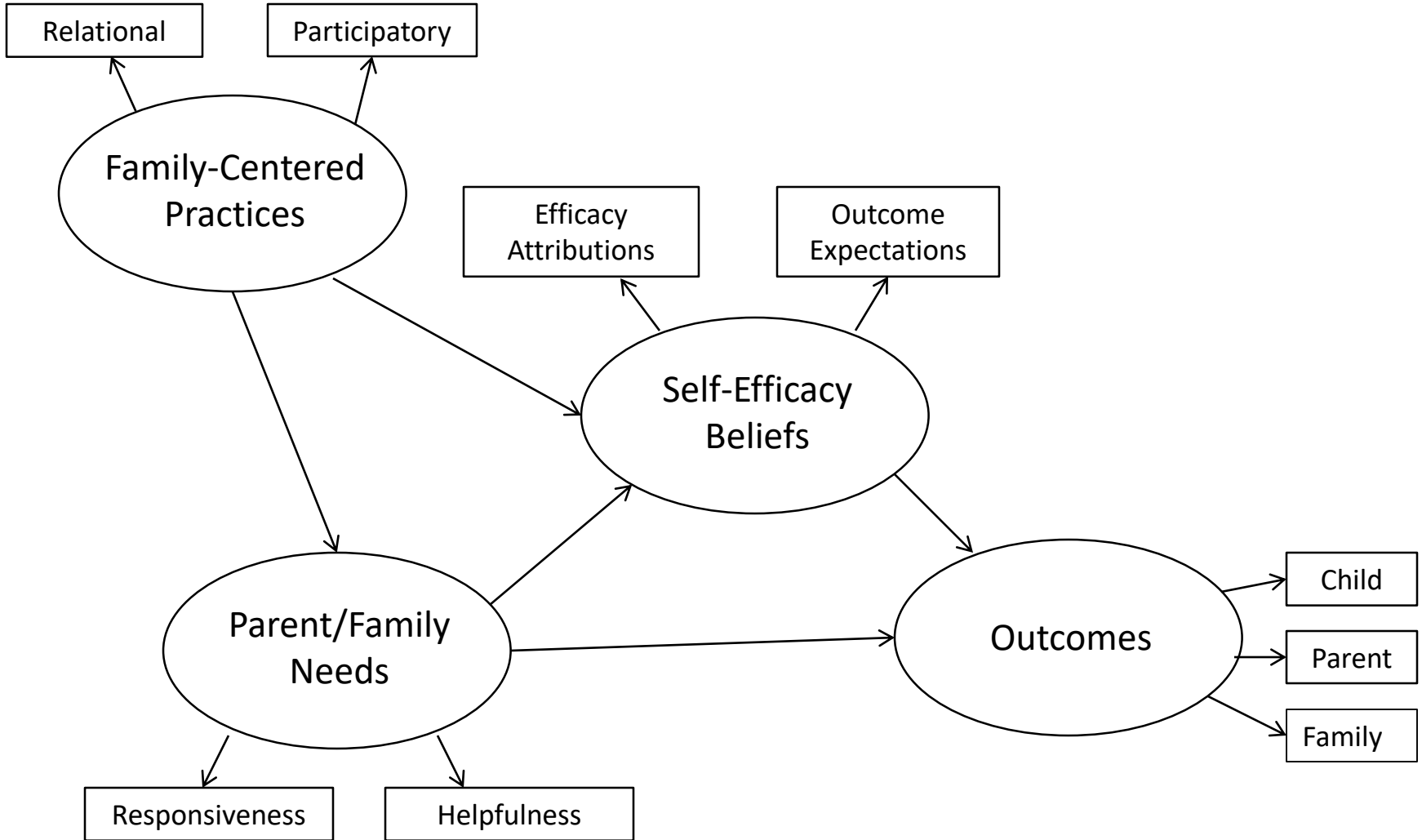
Direct Effects of Self-Efficacy Beliefs on  
Parent, Family, and Child Behavior and Functioning



Direct and Indirect Effects of Family-Centered Help-giving Practices on the Study Outcomes Mediated by Self-Efficacy Beliefs



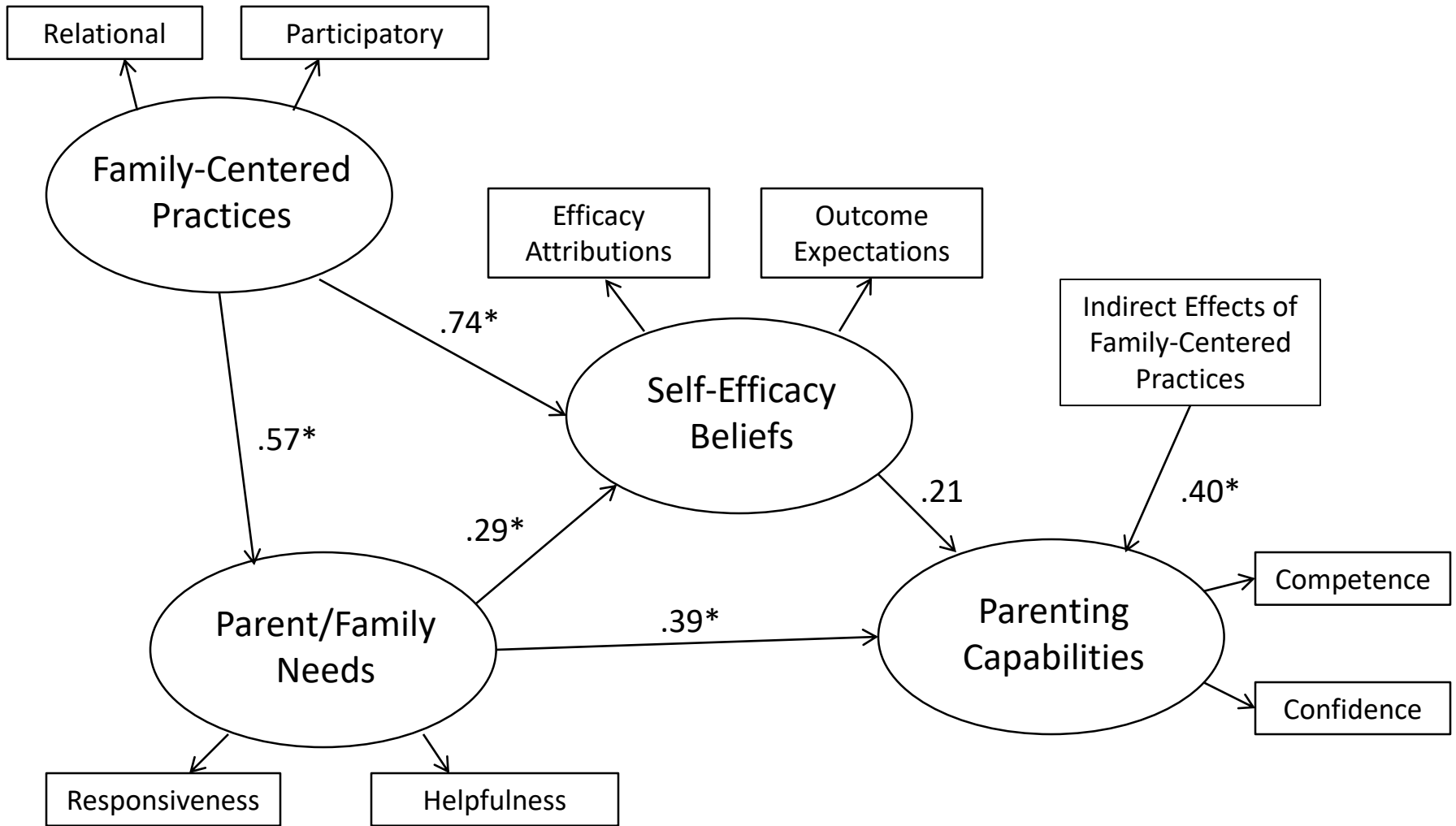
# Expanded Practice-Based Framework



## Relationships Between Family-Centered Practices, Practitioner Responsiveness, Parenting Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Parenting Confidence and Confidence

- Parents of preschool aged children involved in five different family resource centers (N = 100+)
- Structural equation modeling of the relationships among measures
- Focus on the extent to which family-centered practices is indirectly related to parenting capabilities mediated by practitioner responsiveness and self-efficacy beliefs

## Standardized Parameter Estimates for the Expanded Practice-Based Framework Analysis



\*  $p < .001$ .

## Lessons Learned from Family-Centered Research and Practice

- Use of family-centered practice provide a foundation for strengthening parent-professional relationships
- Family involvement in their children's learning and education needs to be judged as meaningful (worthwhile) by the children's parents to sustain engagement
- Responsiveness to parents' informational, instrumental, and other types of supports is one factor contributing to parents' judgments of meaningful involvement
- Self-efficacy appraisals are one determinant of the likelihood of parent involvement having positive parent and child benefits