A stylized, light-colored illustration of a plant with several leaves and a cluster of small, round fruits or berries, positioned on the left side of the slide.

# COPARENTING, MATERNAL GATEKEEPING, AND FATHER INVOLVEMENT IN FAMILIES WITH RESIDENT FATHERS

Sarah J. Schoppe-Sullivan

Associate Professor

Human Development & Family Science

The Ohio State University



# INTERPARENTAL RELATIONSHIP & FATHERING

- Mother-father relationship plays an integral role in father-child relationship
- Doherty et al. (1998) model of responsible fathering
- Cummings et al. (2004) “fathering vulnerability hypothesis”
- Townsend’s (2002) “package deal”



# MATERNAL GATEKEEPING

- BELIEFS AND BEHAVIORS THAT INHIBIT COLLABORATION BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN IN FAMILY WORK

ALLEN & HAWKINS (1999)

- BEHAVIOR ENGAGED IN BY MOTHERS WITH THE INTENT OR EFFECT OF ENCOURAGING OR DISCOURAGING FATHERS' INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREARING

- **GATE CLOSING**

- **GATE OPENING**



# GATEKEEPING AND FATHERING

- GATEKEEPING AS A MEDIATOR

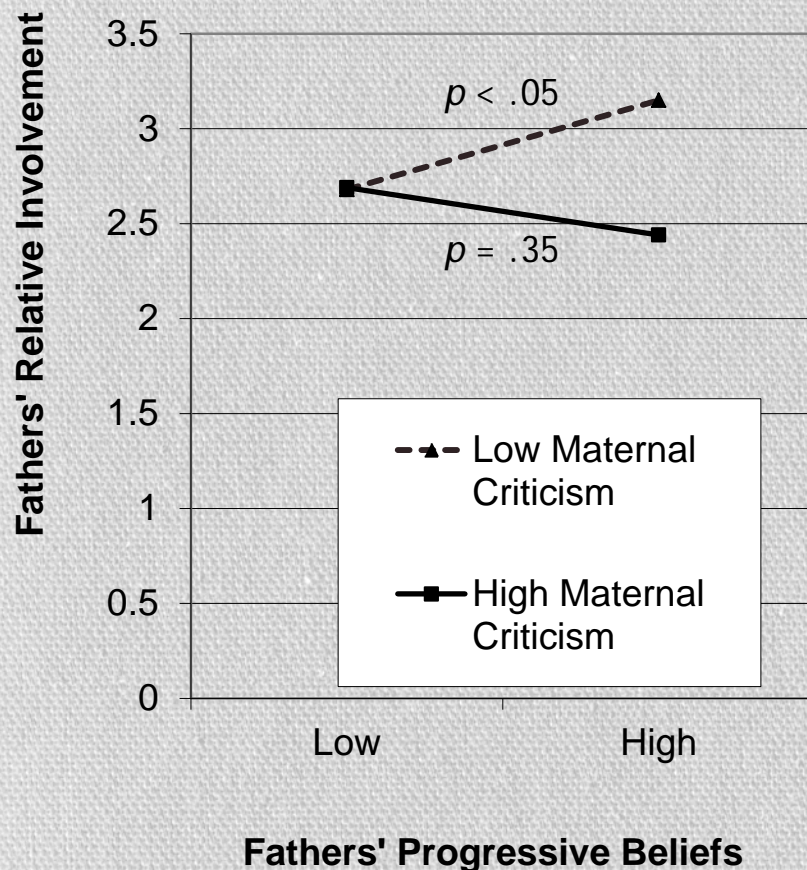


Schoppe-Sullivan, Brown, Cannon, Mangelsdorf, & Sokolowski, 2008, *Journal of Family Psychology*



# GATEKEEPING AND FATHERING

- GATEKEEPING AS A MODERATOR



- Fathers' beliefs about fathers' roles only predict their observed involvement in family interaction if mothers don't close the gate

Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2008,  
*Journal of Family Psychology*



# GATEKEEPING AND COPARENTING

## **SAME** CONSTRUCT

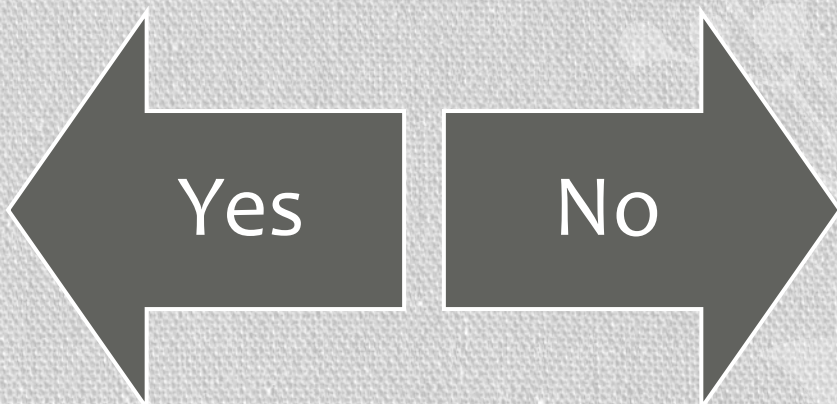
- GATEKEEPING DEFINED BY ITS EFFECTS: FOCUS ON BEHAVIOR
- GATEKEEPING IS DISTINCT FROM ITS PREDICTORS
- GATE OPENING AND GATE CLOSING A LOT LIKE SUPPORT/UNDERMINING
- FAVOR OBSERVATIONS

## **DIFFERENT** CONSTRUCTS

- GATEKEEPING DEFINED BY ITS ORIGINS: INCLUDES BELIEFS
- GENDER PLAYS A CENTRAL ROLE IN GATEKEEPING
- FATHERS CANNOT GATEKEEP
- FAVOR SELF-REPORTS



# ISSUES WITH THE GATEKEEPING CONSTRUCT

- Is gate opening “good” gatekeeping?
- 

Yes

No
- If mothers can close the gate, they can also open it
  - When reported, associated with greater father involvement
  - Still controlling
  - When observed, associated with lower father involvement
  - Observations and self-reports do not match

Cannon, Schoppe-Sullivan, Mangelsdorf, Brown & Sokolowski, 2008, *Family Process*; Altenburger, 2012



# ISSUES WITH THE GATEKEEPING CONSTRUCT

- Are the most involved fathers those who experience both low levels of gate closing AND low levels of gate opening?
- Does gate opening promote father involvement, but in limited ways?
- Are fathers' perceptions of gate opening key to its effects?



# KEY QUESTIONS ABOUT GATEKEEPING

- New Parents Project
  - To examine correlates and consequences of maternal gatekeeping behavior
  - 182 dual-earner primiparous different-gender couples followed over the transition to parenthood (2008-2010)
  - Assessed at third trimester of pregnancy, 3, 6, & 9 months postpartum
  - Self-report, time diary, and observational methods





# KEY QUESTIONS ABOUT GATEKEEPING

- Does gatekeeping stem primarily from beliefs about parent and gender roles?
  - In the New Parents Project:

## Gate Closers

- Poor psychological functioning
- Unrealistic expectations for partners' parenting
- Couple relationship less stable

## Gate Openers

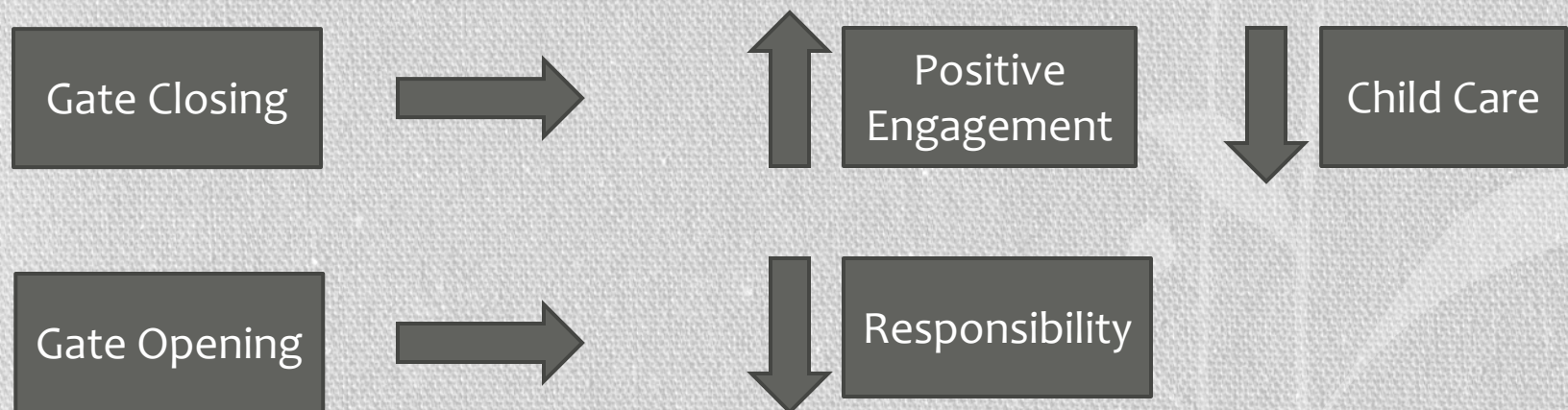
- More religious
- Couple relationship more stable

- Beliefs about parent and gender roles **NOT** associated with maternal gatekeeping



# KEY QUESTIONS ABOUT GATEKEEPING

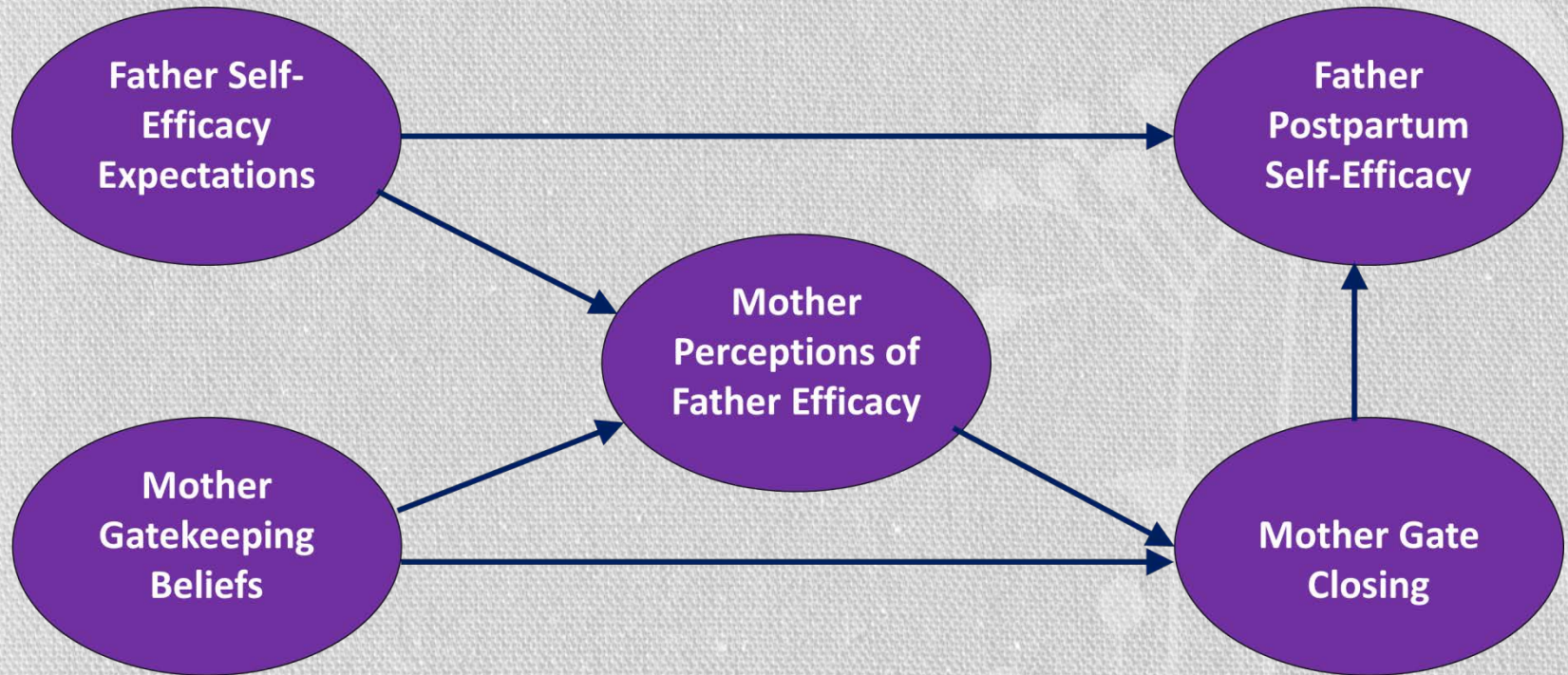
- Is gatekeeping associated with father involvement?
  - In the New Parents Project, at 9 months postpartum:
    - Observations of maternal gatekeeping behavior
    - Time diaries to assess father involvement





# KEY QUESTIONS ABOUT GATEKEEPING

- Do fathers play a role in gatekeeping?



Mother perceptions of partner parenting efficacy are rooted in general beliefs **AND** fathers' own parenting self-efficacy expectations



# KEY QUESTIONS: SUMMARY

- Does gatekeeping stem primarily from beliefs about parent and gender roles?
  - **NO**, other factors are just as if not more important
- Is gatekeeping associated with father involvement?
  - **YES**, but... it's not always how we assume
- Do fathers play a role in gatekeeping?
  - **ABSOLUTELY**, this is not all “in the mother's head”



# GATEKEEPING: HOW DOES IT MATTER?

- Programs designed to encourage father involvement can only go so far without consideration of mothers
- But, increasing skill and competence of fathers may be useful
- Programs focusing on coparenting should affect gatekeeping as well
- But, strategies for avoiding and handling gatekeeping could be emphasized



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