

Father Involvement among Men in Couples with Non-Overlapping Employment Hours

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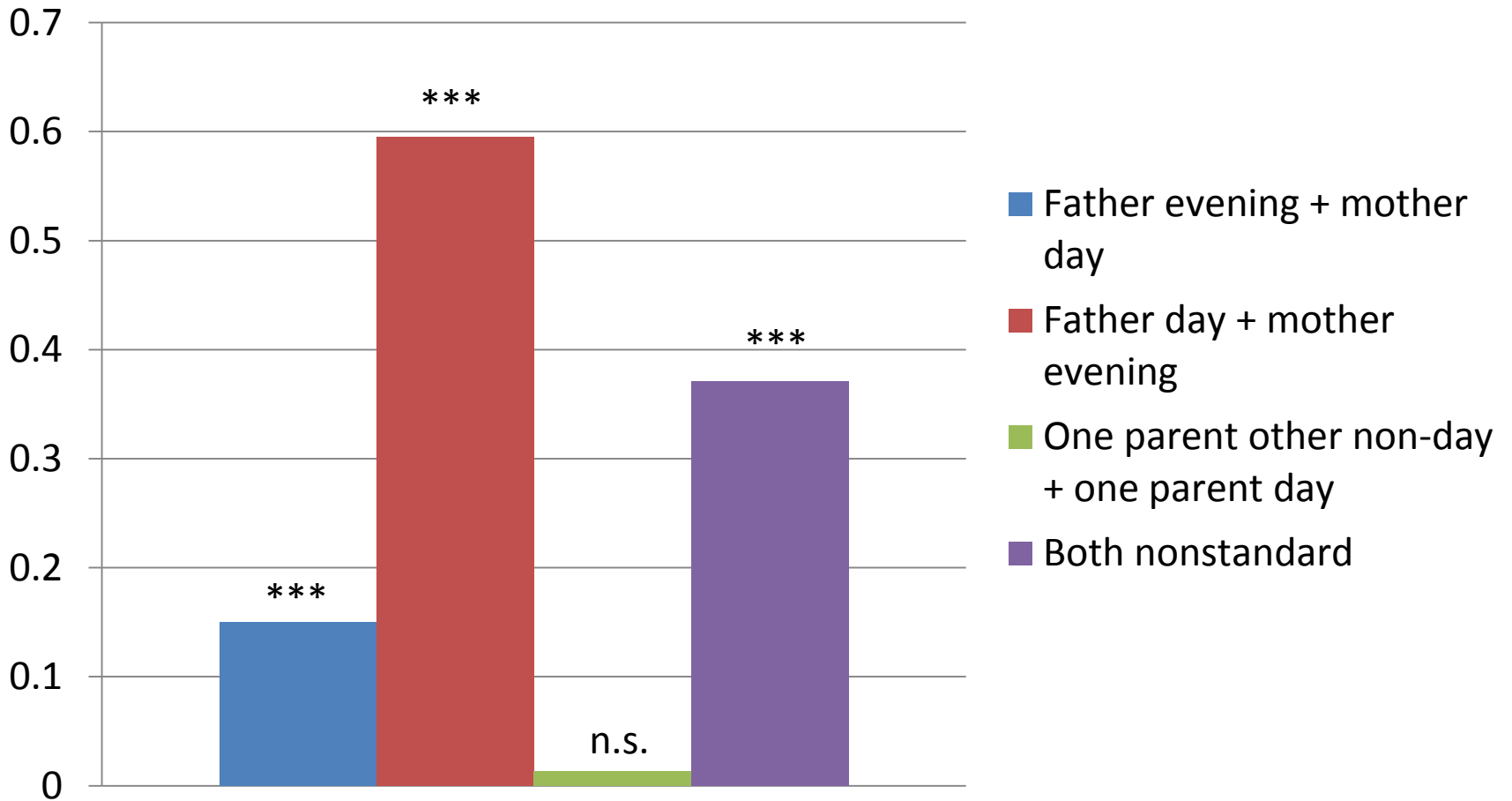
Research question

- What is the impact of nonstandard employment schedules (shift work) on the parental behavior of fathers in dual-earner couples with young children?
- Measures of fathering
 - Care giving
 - The elements of father involvement proposed by Pleck: positive engagement, warmth and responsiveness, and control.

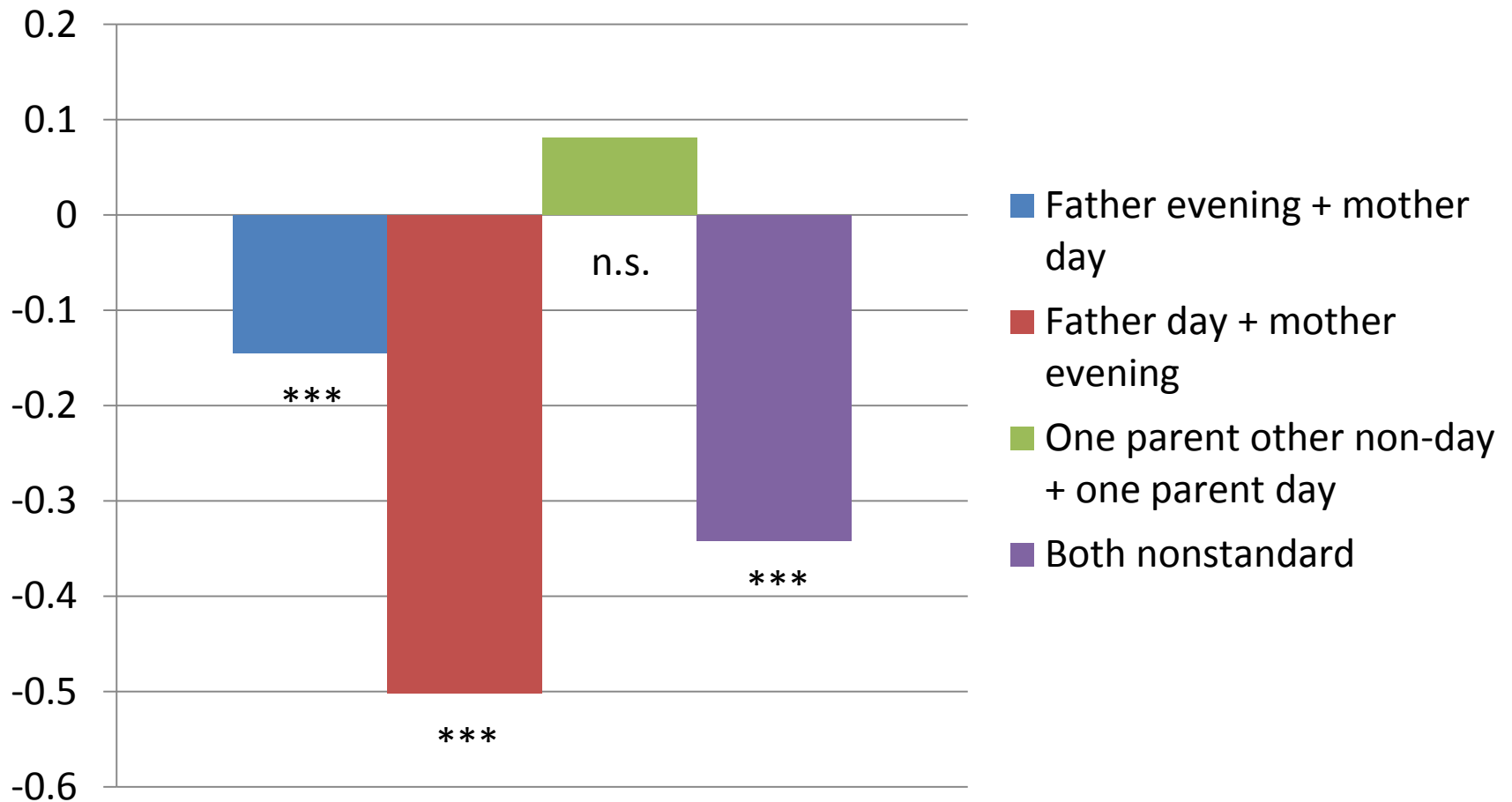
Methods

- Structural equation modelling with latent variables is used to fit models to three waves of nationally-representative data from the Early Child Longitudinal Survey – Birth Cohort (ECLS-B).
- The sample is restricted to couples who remain together from the target child's birth until the third interview (when the child is about four years old). $N = 3450$.
- To reduce bias caused by selection into nonstandard hours, parents' schedules are modelled as endogenous functions of known covariates.
- The graphs below show the standardized (beta) effects of nonstandard scheduling on fathers' care giving in dual-earner couples at nine and 24 months, in comparison to couples who are both employed during the day.

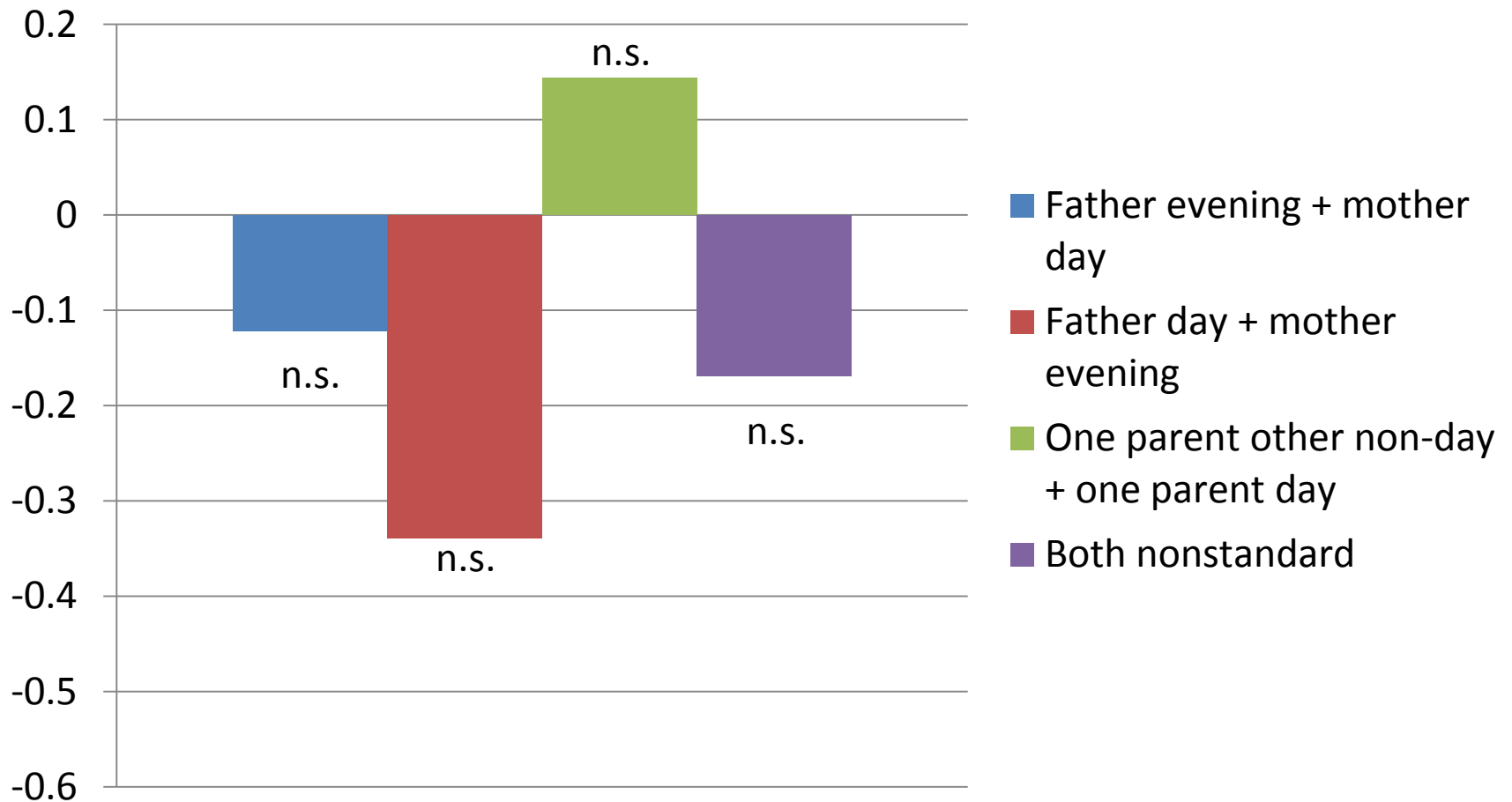
Nine months



Twenty-four months (different schedules at nine months)



Twenty-four months (same schedules at nine months)



About these results

- In a cross-sectional model, nonstandard scheduling has *no effects* on fathers' care giving at 24 months.
 - This finding is reproduced here when men and their partners have had the same employment schedule since the prior observation.
- This longitudinal model reveals that nonstandard scheduling reduces care giving among men when they and/or their partners have changed work schedules since the previous observation.
- Results for other measures of parenting available at both nine and 24 months are comparable.

Discussion

- Why does nonstandard employment increase father involvement at nine months, but reduce it at 24 months unless couples have maintained the same work schedules?
 - The “magic” of early involvement? The experience of being home with a baby while one’s partner is on the job may dispose one to current and future involvement.
 - Although the effect of selection is reduced through a treatment effects model that controls for known socioeconomic and other correlates of nonstandard employment, there may be additional unmeasured differences between men in couples in which one partner has a nonstandard schedule and those in which neither partner does.

Policy/practice implications

- The results of this analysis underscore the need to support fathers of young children who work different shifts than their partners.
 - This is particularly true of those who begin such arrangements after the first year.
 - Efforts should be made to support involvement among men who are home alone with their young children, perhaps by teaching skills and by communicating the value of engagement.