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There is conflicting evidence as to whether or not child temperament influences the manner in which couples coparent their children. The mixed results suggest that families with certain characteristics may be at risk for exhibiting low quality coparenting when they have a child who displays more negative affect. The purpose of the current study was to examine the association between child negative affect and coparenting in a sample of mothers of preschoolers. Drawing from family systems theory and Crockenberg's proposition of multiple risk, both main and interactive effects of child negative affect on mothers' perceptions of coparenting were examined. Child effortful control, maternal depressive symptoms, home chaos, and child sex was examined as moderators. A secondary goal was to examine the psychometric properties of the Coparenting Questionnaire which was designed to measure multiple dimensions of coparenting (i.e., coparenting solidarity, coparenting support, shared parenting, and undermining coparenting).

Results of an exploratory factor analysis suggested that the Coparenting Questionnaire consisted of two dimensions of coparenting (i.e., positive and negative coparenting). The primary results demonstrated that child negative affect was negatively associated with mothers' perceptions of positive coparenting and positively associated with mothers' perceptions of negative coparenting. Child effortful control was positively associated with positive coparenting and negatively associated with negative coparenting. There was a negative relationship between child negative affect and positive coparenting

when maternal depressive symptoms were high, but not when depressive symptoms were low. Child effortful control, home chaos, and child sex did not moderate the relationship between child negative affect and mothers' perceptions of positive coparenting. No moderation effects were found for mothers' perceptions of negative coparenting. For negative coparenting only, home chaos was positively associated with negative coparenting.

LINKS BETWEEN TEMPERAMENT AND COPARENTING: THE MODERATING

ROLE OF FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS

by

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To Burney. Thank you for believing in me and supporting me through this journey.

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background and Significance

Coparenting can be conceptualized as how two individuals work together to raise

a child (Talbot & McHale, 2004). The coparenting relationship is a very significant and at

times, overwhelming relationship that two adults share. Parents must negotiate their roles,

responsibilities, beliefs about parenting practices, and shared relationship with their child

and these negotiations are ongoing as the family goes through multiple transitions over

the years. Research indicates that when parents exhibit hostile coparenting, there is more

marital conflict, less father involvement, and children exhibit higher levels of

externalizing behavior problems (McBride & Rane, 1998; Katz & Low, 2004; Schoppe-

Sullivan, Brown, Cannon, Mangelsdorf, & Sokolowski, 2008; Schoppe-Sullivan, Frosch,

Mangelsdorf, & McHale, 2004). In contrast, more supportive coparenting is related to

children's positive peer behavior, higher academic competence, and more harmonious

sibling relationships (Brody, Stoneman, Smith, & Gibson, 1999; McHale, Johnson, &

Sinclair, 1999; McHale, Rao, & Krasnow, 2000). Given the links between coparenting,

marital functioning, parenting quality, and child outcomes, identifying factors that predict

the quality of coparenting is of interest. Recent research regarding an intervention

targeting first-time parents suggests that coparenting is a potentially malleable

relationship and that it is possible to foster positive coparenting using a universal

psychosocial program (Feinberg & Kan, 2008). Understanding what predicts the quality of coparenting would inform practitioners about potential risk factors or buffers within the family context that could be modified to improve coparenting quality (Feinberg, 2003).

As children exert an influence on the lives of their parents and families from the time they are born, it is imperative to consider the effects they have on the coparenting relationship. Children have many characteristics that influence the family system; one that is most often researched in relation to the parent-child relationship is temperament (Crockenberg, 1981; Putnam, Sanson, & Rothbart, 2002). Yet few researchers have examined the role of children's temperament in interparental relationships (Belsky & Rovine, 1990; Schermerhorn, Cummings, DeCarlo, & Davies, 2007), specifically, the coparenting relationship. Given evidence that temperament predicts the quality of individual parenting (Putnam et al.), it is likely that temperament also predicts the quality with which partners coparent their children. Given conflicting results in the parenting literature regarding the relationship between temperament and coparenting (Crockenberg & Leerkes, 2003; Morris et al., 2002) and Crockenberg's (1986) proposition that the links between temperament and parenting may be moderated by individual characteristics and social contexts it is possible that the relationship between temperament and coparenting may also be moderated by buffers (e.g., child effortful control) or stressors (e.g., maternal depressive symptoms).

Drawing from family systems theory (Minuchin, 1974; Minuchin, 1985) I examined the association between child temperament and the coparenting relationship. I

specifically focused on the aspect of negative affect, or temperamental reactivity, (Rothbart & Putnam, 2002), which may be particularly challenging for coparents. Further, given Crockenberg's (1986) proposition I examined child effortful control, child sex, maternal depressive symptoms, and home chaos as potential moderators of the association between child negative affect and the coparenting relationship when children were in preschool. By examining the role of these buffers (i.e., child effortful control) and stressors (i.e., child sex, maternal depressive symptoms, and home chaos) on the relationship between temperament and coparenting rather than focusing exclusively on main effects, the current study has the potential to make an important contribution to the coparenting literature.

Researchers who have examined the relationship between temperament and coparenting have tended to focus on the infant/toddler period (Lindsey, Caldera, & Colwell, 2005; McHale et al., 2004; Schoppe-Sullivan, Mangelsdorf, Brown, & Sokolowski, 2007; Van Egeren, 2004). As children reach preschool-age, families are going through numerous changes that may make the coparenting relationship more susceptible to the influence of children's behavior. For example, fathers are becoming more involved in children's daily routines (Lamb, 1997; Parke, 2002) which may influence mothers' and fathers' individual parental roles and how they parent jointly. Fathers may develop more opinions about the raising of their children and voice those opinions more frequently as their time investment increases. As fathers become more involved with their children, parents may feel like there are working together more collaboratively. Alternatively, to the extent that mothers and fathers approach parenting

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differently, they may feel more at odds with one another in their efforts to coparent. During this time, preschoolers are gaining more independence and autonomy within the family and they are better able to express their needs and wants verbally (Erikson, 1959) which may result in more discussions on limit setting including specific strategies and whose responsibility it is to enact these strategies. Furthermore, by this period the internalization of rules, morals, and values becomes a salient goal of parenting and parents may disagree on how best to achieve these goals (Sroufe, 2002). Thus, understanding what influences how parents coparent would be especially salient during this time period.

Across this body of literature, coparenting has often been described as multidimensional (Feinberg, 2003; Margolin, Gordis, & John, 2001; McHale, 1995), but most existing self-report measures of coparenting do not capture these multiple dimensions of coparenting adequately. Drawing from Van Egeren's and Hawkins' (2004) framework of coparenting I conceptualized coparenting as consisting of four specific dimensions and created a self-report measure of coparenting designed to assess these four dimensions. Thus, a preliminary goal of this study was to evaluate the psychometric properties of this measure by examining the factor structure, reliability, and validity of the questionnaire.

Conceptualization of Constructs

The primary predictor variable, child negative affect, is a dimension of temperament that reflects the degree to which children become easily frustrated and frightened, exhibit more negative mood and sadness, are more irritable, and are difficult

to soothe (Rothbart & Putnam, 2002). The moderating variables, defined below are viewed as buffers or stressors that alter the relation between child negative affect and coparenting. Child effortful control, a positive dimension of child temperament, is conceptualized as the degree to which children have the ability to suppress the dominant impulsive response and carry out a subdominant response (Rothbart, Derryberry, & Posner, 1994). Children with high effortful control are able to focus their attention, tend to be persistent, are able to regulate their emotions, and have good self-control (Derryberry & Rothbart, 1997), thus this child characteristic is viewed as a buffer. Child sex is conceptualized as biological sex, and having a female child is considered a stressor. Maternal depressive symptoms are conceptualized as the degree to which mothers experience feelings of sadness, despair, and discouragement and is viewed as astressor. Finally, home chaos, an additional stressor, is the degree to which homes are characterized as being high in background noise, crowding, confusion, and having a lack of routine and structure.

Researchers have defined coparenting in a variety of ways. Generally speaking, coparenting is the relationship between two adults as parenting figures responsible for the care of a child (Feinberg, 2003; McHale et al., 2002). In this study, I examined four specific dimensions of coparenting: coparenting solidarity, coparenting support, shared parenting, and undermining coparenting (Van Egeren & Hawkins, 2004). Coparenting solidarity is conceptualized as the affective, enduring, and unified relationship that grows between individuals raising a child. Coparenting solidarity is conceptualized as different strategies that support each partner's efforts to accomplish parenting goals or the parent's

perceptions of support in his/her efforts to accomplish parenting goals. Shared parenting is conceptualized as the extent to which each partner interacts with the child relative to the other partner and the degree to which they interact with their child together. Finally, undermining coparenting is conceptualized as the strategies that partners employ to prevent the other partner from accomplishing their parenting goals.

Limitations of Previous Research

The current study has the potential to contribute to the coparenting literature in several ways. First, family systems theory proposes that systems are interdependent; suggesting that it is important to examine the potential link between child temperament and coparenting (Minuchin, 1985). Research shows that there is conflicting evidence on how temperament influences the coparenting relationship, where some studies have found no associations between temperament and coparenting and others have found that when children demonstrate more negative affect, parents report more negative coparenting (Cook, Schoppe-Sullivan, Buckley, & Davis, 2009; Lindsey, Caldera, & Colwell, 2005; Stright & Bales, 2003). The current study contributes to this research by also examining the direct relationship between child negative affect and coparenting.

Second, family systems theory suggests that subsystems mutually influence one another and to better understand what influences coparenting it is important to understand the interplay among the different subsystems. Similarly, Crockenberg's (1986) proposition suggests that parenting may be less sensitive when children have high negative affect when other risks are present or parenting may be more sensitive when buffers are present and stressors are absent. Likewise, child negative affect may

undermine positive coparenting or exacerbate negative coparenting when risks are present and/or buffers are absent. Although there is some evidence that supports this hypothesis in the coparenting literature (Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2007, McHale et al., 2004), these studies have focused on marital quality as a stressor. The current study builds on this research by examining how other stressors and buffers (i.e., child effortful control, child sex, maternal depressive symptoms, and home chaos) in the family context influence the coparenting relationship.

Third, most of the studies that have examined these direct and moderating relationships have done so during the infant/toddler period (Lindsey et al., 2005; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2007, Van Egeren, 2004). Thus, this study will build upon previous research by examining this relationship during the preschool period, a time when fathers may be more involved in child rearing (Parke, 2002), effortful control is more fully developed in children (Rothbart, 1989), and when children are becoming more autonomous (Erikson, 1959).

Finally, although there are a few self-report measures of coparenting that have been used previously, they are limited in a number of ways. Many focus on coparenting as being unidimensional and do not measure overt or covert conflict (e.g., positive/negative; Abidin & Brunner, 1995; Frank, Jacobson, & Avery, 1988), while a few examine limited dimensions of coparenting (e.g., coparenting support and coparenting conflict; Margolin et al., 2001; McHale, 1997). Some were designed for use by parents of older children (age 5 to 12 years old) (Margolin et al.) and others report coparenting indirectly through spousal similarity versus discrepancy scores on child

rearing practices and attitudes (e.g., Russell & Russell, 1994). Finally, others have

parents report only on their partners' coparenting behaviors (Frank, Hole, Jacobson,

Justkowski, & Huyck, 1986; Margolin et al.) or only on their own coparenting behaviors

(McHale, 1997). A strength of the current study is that it employs a questionnaire that

measures multiple dimensions of coparenting (i.e., coparenting solidarity, coparenting

support, shared parenting, and undermining coparenting). Additionally, it asks mothers to

report on their own behaviors, their partner's behaviors, and how unified they are as a

dyad and a triad.

In sum, the current study has the potential to significantly contribute to the

coparenting literature by (a) examining the direct associations between child negative

affect and coparenting, (b) examining buffers and stressors in the family context that may

affect the relationship between child negative affect and coparenting, (c) examining these

relationships during the preschool period, and (d) examining the multiple dimensions of

coparenting through the Coparenting Questionnaire and evaluating the dimensions of the

Coparenting Questionnaire.

<div align="center">Conceptual Model</div>

There are two main goals of the current study to further contribute to the

coparenting knowledge base. The primary goal of this study is to explore the direct

association between child negative affect and coparenting and to consider child effortful

control, child sex, maternal depressive symptoms, and home chaos, as moderators of the

relationship between child negative affect and coparenting. I hypothesized that perceived

child negative affect would only be negatively associated with coparenting quality if

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mothers had children low on effortful control, had children who are female, elevated

depressive symptoms, and/or high levels of household chaos. The preliminary goal of this

study is to examine the psychometric properties of a questionnaire designed to assess the

multiple dimensions of coparenting (i.e., coparenting solidarity, coparenting support,

shared parenting, and undermining coparenting). The conceptual model is displayed in

Figure 1.

Figure 1. *Conceptual Model*
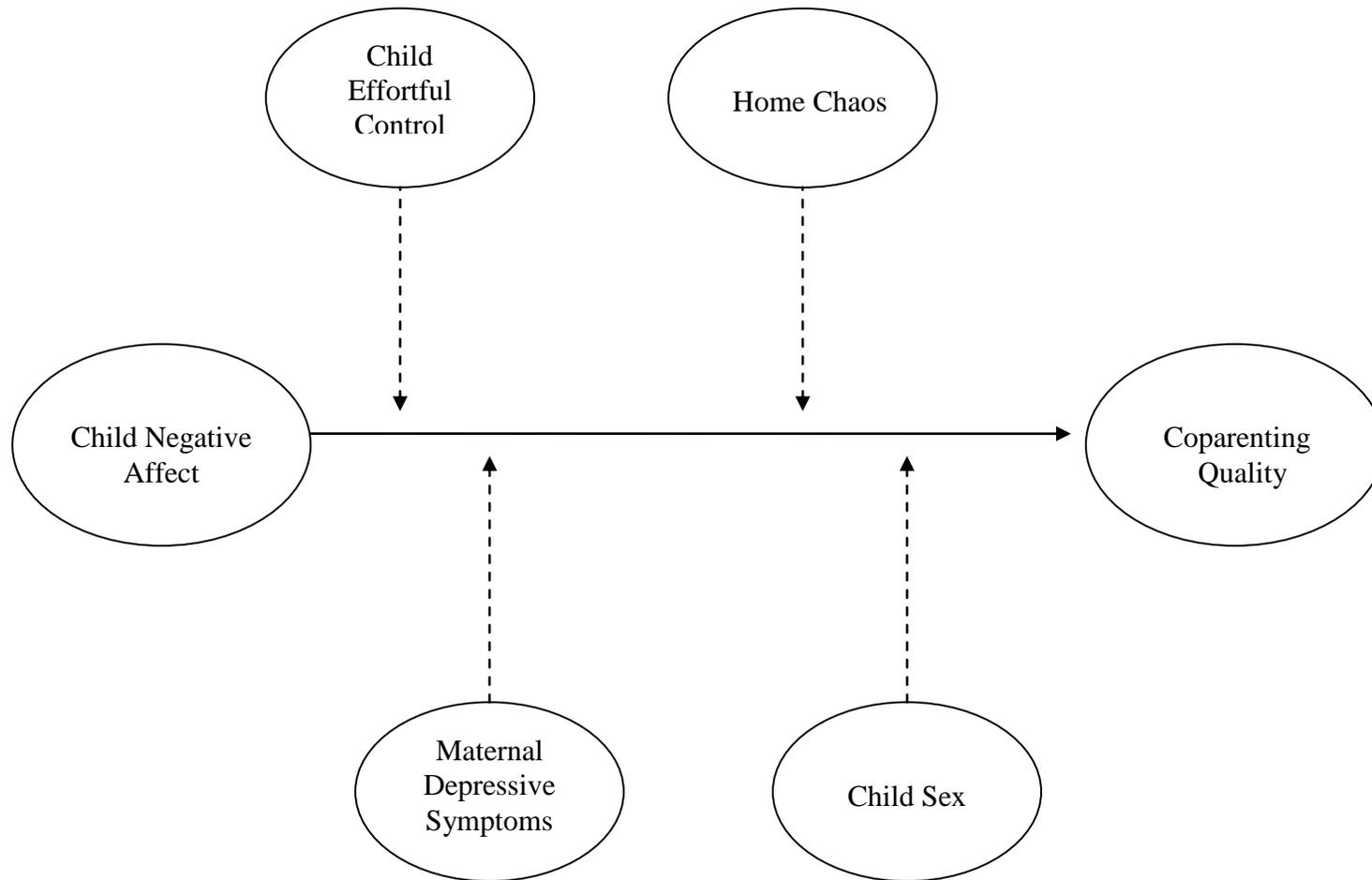
Note: Dashed lines indicate moderated pathways

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Theoretical Foundations

Family systems theory (Minuchin, 1974) and Crockenberg's (1986) proposition that the links between temperament and parenting may be moderated by individual characteristics and social contexts informed the current study. Family systems theory was used to inform the associations between child negative affect and the coparenting relationship, as well as, the interplay among characteristics of the child, mother, and the home environment and how they influence the association between child negative affect and coparenting. Additionally, it highlights the importance of examining coparenting during the preschool period. Crockenberg's proposition was used to further inform the process of how child effortful control, child sex, maternal depressive symptoms, and home chaos affect the relationship between child negative affect and coparenting.

Family Systems Theory

Minuchin (1985) suggested six basic principles to family systems theory and Cox and Paley (2003) suggested that several of these principles could be applied to studying the family as an organized system. Several of these principles also have implications for the coparenting relationship. First, a system (e.g., a family) is an organized whole, composed of several subsystems. A subsystem can be an individual (e.g., parent, child) or it can be larger units of the family (e.g., parent-child, coparent [mother-father-child])

(Cox & Paley, 1997). This suggests that coparenting is just one subsystem nested within the larger family system and can only be understood in the context of the other subsystems.

Another principle is that these different systems and subsystems work interdependently. This perspective emphasizes the importance of examining characteristics of each system that may affect the patterns of the coparenting subsystem. For example, the extent that parenting a child high on negative affect is stressful, may arouse negative feelings which prompt parents to be more critical and undermining of one another. The current study specifically examined how characteristics of the child subsystem (i.e., negative affect, effortful control, sex), of the parent subsystem (i.e., depressive symptoms), and of the family system (i.e., home chaos) influence the coparenting subsystem.

An additional principle is that patterns in a system are circular rather than linear. Prior research has tended to focus on the effects that coparenting has on children (e.g., behavior problems), rather than on how children affect coparenting. Thus, closer examination of child effects on coparenting quality is needed and is consistent with a family systems perspective.

Another principle is that all of these subsystems are separated by boundaries, but each subsystem mutually influences the other subsystems (Cox & Paley, 2003). Thus, in order to understand what influences the coparenting subsystem it is important to understand the interplay among the subsystems and what may weaken or strengthen the boundaries between subsystems. It may be that the boundaries between the child and

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coparenting subsystems are weakened or strengthened by characteristics of other subsystems. Such that, the coparenting subsystem may be more susceptible to the negative effects of child negative affect when other stressors are present or buffers are absent. For example, if one partner is depressed and gives little support to the other partner, it may make it more challenging for coparents to cope with a child exhibiting negative affect, than when neither partner is depressed. Nondepressed parents may be able to work together to care for a child who is high on negative affect. Similarly, in a chaotic home, a parent may become more stressed and irritated with their partner when a child is also exhibiting negative affect making it more challenging for parents to work together than when the home is not chaotic.

A final principle is that evolution and change are inherent in open systems and are likely to occur during developmental transitions. As families attempt to adapt to transitions, multiple subsystems are affected and each subsystem affects one another causing new patterns to emerge within the family (Cox & Paley, 2003). Consistent with this view, Fivaz-Depeursinge and Corboz-Warnery (1999) reported that there was stability in triadic family patterns during infancy. However, families with preschool children are going through many changes and family patterns may be disrupted thus, making the coparenting relationship more susceptible to influence from child behavior. Preschoolers are gaining more autonomy and fathers are becoming more involved with their children and coparenting (McHale, Lauretti, Talbot, & Pouquette, 2002). Given these potential changes within the family, parents will likely need to renegotiate their roles and responsibilities of raising their child. These shifts in children's needs and

parenting patterns make the preschool period an appealing time to study the coparenting relationship.

Crockenberg's Proposition

Although family systems theory presents a useful way to examine what influences the coparenting relationship, it does not specify how stressors and buffers may alter the relationship between child negative affect and coparenting. Previous research in the parenting literature suggests conflicting results regarding the relationship between child negative affect and parenting behaviors. Some studies have found evidence that when children exhibit more negative affect, mothers are less sensitive and more harsh and hostile toward their children (Morris et al., 2002; van den Boom & Hoeksma, 1994), while others have found that parents are more sensitive and positive in their parenting of children who are high in negative affect (Washington, Minde, & Goldberg, 1986; Crockenberg & Leerkes, 2003). Crockenberg's (1986) proposition suggests that the links between temperament and parenting may be moderated by individual characteristics and social contexts. That is, parents may be less sensitive to children high in negative affect when other risks are present (i.e., maternal depression); however, when risks are absent or buffers (i.e., child effortful control) are present, parents may be more sensitive to children who are high on negative affect (Crockenberg & Leerkes, 2003). It is probable that the association between temperament and coparenting is equally complex. In the current study I build upon Crockenberg's proposition by suggesting that parents of children high in negative affect may come together and work as a team and demonstrate positive coparenting in order to cope with this stress when additional stressors are not

present or buffers are available. Additionally, mothers who perceive their children as being high on negative affect may be more likely to undermine their partner and feel undermined if additional stressors are present or buffers are absent in the family. Therefore, child effortful control, child sex, maternal depressive symptoms, and home chaos are considered as potential moderators.

<div align="center">Review of the Literature</div>

Defining Coparenting

Researchers have defined coparenting in a variety of ways. The initiation of coparenting is broadly defined with the birth of the first child in a family; although, some researchers suggest that expectant parents are able to develop mental representations of themselves as parents and coparents (Feinberg, 2003; McHale et al., 2004; Van Egeren & Hawkins, 2004). A number of researchers have defined coparenting differently and identified various characteristics of the coparenting relationship (Feinberg; McHale, 1995; Van Egeren, 2004; Van Egeren & Hawkins). Recently, Van Egeren and Hawkins proposed a framework of four distinct coparenting dimensions that are inclusive of all these disparate definitions and are the basis of the current study. The dimensions are coparenting solidarity, coparenting support, shared parenting, and undermining coparenting, each of which are described below and integrated with the dimensions other researchers have identified.

Coparenting solidarity. Coparenting solidarity is characterized by an affective, enduring, and unified relationship that grows between individuals raising a child. This dimension is demonstrated by warm and positive emotions that are expressed between

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partners while interacting with or about the child. Even when one partner is absent, the

present partner talks of the absent partner in a positive manner. Parents who experience

coparenting solidarity often report that as they parent together they grow together and

become closer (Van Egeren & Hawkins, 2004). This theme is reflected in Weissman and

Cohen's (1985) view that in a sound parenting alliance parents take pleasure in

communicating with each other about their child. Solidarity is similar also to family

warmth which is described by McHale et al. (2004) as high levels of warmth, positive

affect, and positive connection while interacting with one another and the child. In

contrast, solidarity is the opposite of triangulation in which one parent attempts to form a

coalition with their child in order to exclude the other parent (Margolinet al., 2001).

  Coparenting support. Coparenting support is defined as different strategies that

support each partner's efforts to accomplish parenting goals or the parent's perceptions of

support in his/her efforts to accomplish parenting goals. The most critical feature of this

dimension is that each partner reinforces the others' parenting goals (Belsky, Crnic, &

Gable, 1995; Van Egeren & Hawkins, 2004). In a triadic context, the parents' cooperative

interchanges build upon one another. For example, one parent may suggest that it is the

child's bedtime, if the child puts up a fuss, the partner may be build on that lead and

support their partner by saying that he/she is right and that it is time for bed and help put

the child to sleep. Supportive coparents are able to identify the strategies that they utilize

to support their partners (Van Egeren & Hawkins). The parenting alliance factor,

communication and teamwork, or the idea that parents value each other's role and respect

each other's opinions, is consistent with coparenting support (Konold & Abidin, 2001;

Weissman & Cohen, 1985). Similarly, McHale et al. (2004) refer to this dimension as coparenting cooperation, where parents accommodate and support one another's interactions with the infant.

Shared parenting. Shared parenting "is characterized by the degree to which one or the other parent is responsible for limit-setting and each partner's sense of fairness about the way responsibilities are divided" (Van Egeren & Hawkins, 2004, p. 169) and may be conceptualized in two ways; balance of involvement and mutual involvement. Balance of involvement is the extent to which each partner interacts with the child relative to the other partner and his highly consistent with Feinberg's (2003) notion of division of labor and Weissman and Cohen's (1985) view that the parenting alliance reflects both parents' investment in the child. For example, one partner may feel like there are too many demands on them as a parent in comparison to the other partner. Mutual involvement is the degree to which both partners are engaged with the child at the same time (Van Egeren & Hawkins). This is similar to the balance aspect of Feinberg's family management dimension, where the issue is the relative proportion of time parents engage with their child in triadic situations. For example, parents spend special time going to the zoo or setting aside time play with their child together as a family. This is less about the actual actions going on during the interaction and more about each partner being involved.

Undermining coparenting. In undermining coparenting, partners employ strategies that prevent the other partner from accomplishing parenting goals. This component is evidenced by criticism and lack of respect for a partner's parenting

decisions (Van Egeren & Hawkins, 2004). Undermining actions can be overt (e.g., name calling or criticism aimed at the partner) or covert (e.g., one parent makes comments about the other to the child or excludes partner from a desired activity) (McHale, 1997; Van Egeren & Hawkins). Similarly, McHale et al. (2004) described competitive coparents as those who intruded upon one another's interactions with the infant.

Upon first read supportive and undermining coparenting seem to be the opposite ends of one dimension, but I argue that although they may be related, they are distinct from one another. For example, in one family, the mother tells her child that she cannot have any ice cream right now and the father supports her in saying "it's too close to dinner for ice cream." In another family, facing the same situation, the father does not do anything; therefore neither supporting nor undermining the mother. And yet, in another family, the father undermines the mother and gives the child ice cream. A parent can be unsupportive by taking no action whereas undermining consists of specific strategies to criticize and intrude upon the other parents' decisions, goals, and relationship with the child. Empirical research has also suggested that supportive and undermining coparenting may be distinct dimensions. Margolin et al. (2001) present factor analytic evidence that their coparenting factors labeled "cooperation" and "conflict" form separate dimensions in a sample of children 5-12 years old. Additionally, often when coparenting is observed it is coded for positive/supportive or negative/undermining coparenting behaviors (e.g., Cook et al., 2009; Lindsey et al., 2005; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2007). Furthermore, previous research has found that hostile-competitive coparenting was linked to externalizing and internalizing behavior problems in young children, but supportive

coparenting was not (McConnell & Kerig, 2002; McHale & Rasmussen, 1998) providing further evidence that these two dimensions are distinct from one another.

Although these four dimensions are likely related, as they make up the coparenting relationship, they are thought to be distinct features. Van Egeren and Hawkins (2004) found that distinct aspects of coparenting were associated differentially with marital adjustment and behavior. Specifically, they found that aspects of coparenting solidarity and shared parenting were more predictive of marital adjustment and behavior than aspects of coparenting support and undermining coparenting for mothers. Further research is needed to understand how distinct these four dimensions of coparenting are and if they are influenced by similar or different factors. These dimensions of coparenting, each of which involves parenting issues, are part of what makes the coparenting relationship distinct from the marital relationship.

Coparenting and marital relationships differ in that the two relationships are based on different family subsystems (mother-father-child versus husband-wife); therefore, differences between the two would be expected. The unit of analysis in coparenting is a triad, whereas, in the marital relationship it is a dyad. Thus, these two relationships appear to exist on different levels within the family system (McHale & Fivaz-Depeursinge, 1999; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2004). Further, most often, the marital relationship predates the coparenting relationship and each follows its own trajectory of development. In the coparenting relationship, partners develop their bond as parents and are able to continue this relationship even if the marriage dissolves (Schoppe-Sullivan et al.). Additionally, research has shown that married and divorced parents are able to

differentiate their general marital interactions from interactions regarding their children (Gable, Belsky, & Crnic, 1992).

However, the coparenting relationship and the marital relationship are thought to be related. For example, couples who engage in a high degree of marital conflict in general may demonstrate more coparenting conflict and less support for one another, because of an underlying relationship style. The critical difference lies in the focus; the coparenting relationship centers around raising the child; whereas the marital relationship focuses on a range of other issues (e.g. finances, emotional intimacy, etc.). Consistent with this view, measures of coparenting and marital functioning correlate significantly, but only mildly to moderately (correlations ranged from .01-.60 with an average of .29; Abidin & Brunner, 1995; Cook et al., 2009; McConnell & Kerig, 2002; McHale, 1995; McHale et al., 2004; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2004; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2007; Van Egeren, 2004). Consistent with this view, there is accumulating evidence that the quality of coparenting within the family has been found to be more strongly related to numerous child outcomes than the marital relationship alone (Bearss & Eyberg, 1998; Jouriles, et al., 1991; Katz & Woodin, 2002; McHale & Rasmussen, 1998; Schoppe, Mangelsdorf, &Frosch, 2001). Similarly, positive coparenting and marital intimacy have been found to contribute differently to individual parents' adaptive parenting (Gable et al., 1992; Frank, Hole, Jacobson, Justkowski, & Huyck, 1992). Specifically, Frank et al., found that the marital relationship was more strongly associated with parenting confidence and control, but a strong parenting alliance predicted child-focused parenting beliefs over and above the marital relationship. Thus, the coparenting relationship appears to offer a window into

family functioning that cannot be obtained from assessments of the couple relationship. Given coparenting is linked to both parent and child functioning; further research is needed to identify factors that predict the quality of coparenting. Such information would be useful for parents and practitioners. Specifically, they could be made aware of the role children play in the coparenting relationship. Practitioners could provide parents with strategies to work together when their child has a temperament characterized by negative affect or to support one another by providing positive feedback and emotional support. Additionally, understanding that the negative effect of temperament may be magnified when parental well-being is compromised or family life is chaotic, may help practitioners identify who needs the most help and focus on what specifically they can do to help parents as they coparent their children.

Measuring Coparenting

By understanding what constitutes the coparenting relationship it can be more accurately measured. In the coparenting literature the coparenting relationship is measured either through observation of the triad (i.e., mother-father-child) or through self-report. Observational research was not feasible in this study and observations are time-limited and often just assess behaviors that occur in the triadic context. Therefore, coparenting behaviors that occur between only one parent and the child and coparenting interactions that take place just between the two parents, not in the presence of the child are missed by observers. For example, the mother may tell the father that he is doing a good job as a parent when they are by themselves. Similarly, individuals' attitudes about the coparenting relationship are also missing when only behavior in the triadic context is

observed. Depending on the instrument, self-report may allow researchers to capture individuals' perceptions of the different coparenting behaviors that occur, as well as individual's attitudes about the coparenting relationship. Given that many researchers often observe coparenting behavior, less is known about parents' perceptions of the coparenting relationship.

There are several available self-report measures of coparenting that can provide this "insider" view of the coparenting relationship and I have presented the most commonly used ones below. These self-report measures while useful are limited in a number of ways. Early self-report measures of coparenting used indirect reports of coparenting, measuring similarity and discrepancy scores on spouses' reports of child rearing practices and attitudes (Block, Block, & Morrison, 1981, Floyd & Zmich, 1991; Russell & Russell, 1994). These early measures did not take into account the multiple dimensions of coparenting. The Parenting Alliance Inventory (PAI; Abidin & Brunner, 1995) is commonly used to measure the coparenting relationship. It consists of two dimensions, teamwork and communication and respect, but it is measured and defined as unidimensionally. A strength of the PAI is that it does have questions asking parents to report on their coparenting as well as their partners. Although the items reflect coparenting solidarity (e.g., My spouse/partner and I have the same goals for our child) and coparenting support (e.g., My spouse/partner makes my job of being a parent easier), a weakness is that the items do not reflect undermining coparenting or shared parenting dimensions of coparenting. In 1997 McHale published an article using the Coparenting Scale, which has four dimensions, Family Integrity, Conflict, Disparagement, and

Reprimand. Similar to the PAI, the Coparenting Scale only measures aspects of coparenting support, the balance aspect of Shared Parenting, and undermining; however it does not assess aspects of coparenting solidarity or the mutual involvement aspect of shared parenting. Additionally, it only asks parents to report on their own coparenting behaviors when they are interacting as a triad or just with their child. It also does not assess parents' attitudes about the coparenting relationship. By not asking parents to report on their partners' behaviors or their attitudes about coparenting, the scale does not accurately reflect the coparenting climate. Finally, Margolin et al. (2001) also created a coparenting questionnaire. It consists of three dimensions: Cooperation, Conflict, and Triangulation. However, these dimensions do not incorporate coparenting solidarity or shared parenting aspects of the coparenting relationship. Additionally, similar to the Coparenting Scale, it only asks parents to report on their own coparenting behavior. Given the weaknesses of these questionnaires a more comprehensive measure of coparenting is needed. The Coparenting Questionnaire I designed more thoroughly assesses the multiple dimensions of coparenting (i.e., coparenting solidarity, coparenting support, shared parenting, and undermining coparenting) and asks parents to report not only on their behaviors but also on the behaviors of their partner and on their attitudes about coparenting, providing a more complete view of the coparenting relationship.

Child Negative Affect and Coparenting

Children are active agents in their own development. Bell (1968) was one of the first researchers to present the idea that the infant and child play an active role in parent-child relationships. Children have many characteristics that influence the family system;

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one that is most often researched in relation to the parent-child relationship is temperament (Crockenberg, 1981; Putnam et al., 2002). In keeping with the family systems view that systems and subsystems are interdependent (Minuchin, 1985) it is important to examine the potential link between child temperament and coparenting. Yet few researchers have examined the active participation of children's temperament in the coparenting relationship (for exceptions see Cook et al., 2009; Lindsey et al., 2005; McHale et al., 2004; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2007).

Temperament can be defined as biologically based individual differences in patterns of reactivity and self-regulation. Specifically, reactivity is the degree to which an individual's motor, affective, and response system is stimulated by the environment. Self-regulation refers to an individual's process of adjusting to reactivity (Rothbart, 1989; Rothbart & Derryberry, 1981). Temperament is stable, but it is influenced over time by maturation and experience (Rothbart; Rothbart & Derryberry). Although there are multiple ways to rate or categorize children's temperament, Rothbart and Putnam's (2002) temperamental dimensions have been used in numerous empirical studies, and for this study, two of these dimensions of temperament were examined: negative affect and effortful control.

Children high on the negative affect dimension of temperament become easily frustrated and frightened, exhibit more negative mood and sadness, tend to be more irritable, and are more difficult to soothe (Rothbart & Putnam, 2002; Sanson, Hemphill, & Smart, 2004). Negative affect has been linked with both internalizing and externalizing behavior problems (Eisenberg et al., 2005; Rothbart & Bates, 1998). This temperamental

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trait likely affects parents' emotional well-being and how they parent and coparent their children. Children who exhibit high levels of negative affect may contribute to a stressful coparenting environment. In the coparenting literature, the negative affect aspect of temperament has mainly been researched during infancy (Lindsey et al., 2005; McHale et al., 2004; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2007), thus this study has the potential to fill a gap in the literature by examining the influence of negative affect on coparenting during the preschool period. Although rarely examined in the coparenting literature, numerous studies in the parenting literature have found that when children are more emotionally negative mothers have less confidence in their parenting, display more depressive symptoms, and display more negative affect themselves (Levitt, Weber, & Clark, 1986; Murray, Stanley, Hooper, & King, 1996; Teti & Gelfand, 1991). Additionally, some researchers have found that mothers are less sensitive and more harsh and hostile toward their children when they perceive them as high in negative emotionality (Morris et al., 2002; van den Boom & Hoeksma, 1994). Similarly, Belsky and Rovine (1990) found that when infants were more unpredictable and unadaptable mothers reported increases in marital conflict. It is likely that child negative affect has a similar effect on coparenting. The stress and lack of confidence associated with rearing a child who is more easily frustrated and harder to soothe may make parents feel less unified and mutually involved in parenting their child. For example, the stress may result in parents becoming more irritable with one another and parents may become more critical of each others' parenting or engage in more undermining strategies and feel less like a solid team. Additionally, if a child exhibits negative affect parents may choose to divide up responsibilities and

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perform them separately in order to provide one another with respite; however, this may also result in less time engaging in mutual tasks together with the child. Consistent with this view, Lindsey et al. (2005) found that when infants were perceived as high on negative emotionality, fathers were more likely to exhibit intrusive coparenting behavior. The same relationship was not found for observed father supportive coparenting behavior or for mothers' supportive or intrusive coparenting behavior.

Alternatively, previous research in the parenting literature has also shown that some parents may be more sensitive and positive in their parenting of children who are high in negative affect (Washington, Minde, & Goldberg, 1986; Crockenberg & Leerkes, 2003). This hypothesis also seems feasible when thinking about child negative affect and coparenting. For example, parents who have a child high on negative affect may be provided with more opportunities to provide each other with support and to talk about their child with one another, creating a climate of solidarity. These conflicting results prompted Crockenberg's (1986) proposition that the links between temperament and parenting may be moderated by individual characteristics and social contexts. That is, parents may be less sensitive to children high in negative affect when other risks are present (i.e., maternal depressive symptoms); however, when risks are absent or buffers are present (i.e., child effortful control), parents may be more sensitive to their children high in negative affect (Crockenberg & Leerkes). It is probable that the association between temperament and coparenting is equally complex. That is, parents of children high in negative affect may come together and also work as a team and demonstrate positive coparenting in order to cope with this stress when additional stressors are not

present or they may demonstrate negative coparenting when additional stressors are present, because dealing with a child who is more easily frustrated and more difficult to soothe is an added difficulty.

Given this moderating hypothesis, it is not surprising that results from studies that have examined main effects of child temperament on coparenting are mixed. Stright and Bales (2003) and McHale et al. (2004) report that there were no main effect associations between reports of temperament and quality of coparenting. However, Cook et al. (2009) found that when parents perceived their preschoolers as being high on negative affect they engaged in more undermining behavior. Additionally, Van Egeren (2004) found that when fathers' perceived their infants as high on negative affect they reported less supportive coparenting. Similarly, Lindsey et al. (2005) found that fathers demonstrate more undermining coparenting when infants were reported to be high on negative affect. More relevant to the current conceptualization, Schoppe-Sullivan et al. (2007) examined the moderating effect of the marital relationship on the link between infant fussiness and unadaptabililty on coparenting at 3 ½ months postpartum. They found that mothers who perceived their infants as unadaptable exhibited higher levels of undermining coparenting behavior, only when couples also had lower marital quality. Other risks and buffers of the family context may influence how negative affect affects the coparenting relationship and need to be further investigated.

Effortful control as a moderating variable. A buffer that could ameliorate the potential negative effects of child negative affect on the coparenting relationship is child effortful control. Effortful control is the self regulatory dimension of temperament that

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emerges in late infancy and continues to develop during the early years and appears to be relatively stable throughout the preschool period and childhood (Rothbart, Ellis, & Posner, 2003; Rothbart & Putnam, 2002). Children high in effortful control have the ability to suppress a dominant impulsive response and carry out a subdominant response (Rothbart & Putnam). For example, if parent and child are playing Simon Says, the child must resist the urge to touch his or her head if parent says "touch your head" instead of "Simon says touch your head." Children high in effortful control tend to be persistent and responsive, have good self-control, and are able to focus their attention and regulate the more reactive aspects of temperament (Derryberry & Rothbart, 1997). It is likely that effortful control also influences parents' emotional well-being and how they parent and coparent their children. Children who exhibit higher levels of effortful control may make coparenting an easier task. Research suggests that children who have higher levels of effortful control are more adaptive, positive in affect, elicit more parental guidance and responsiveness, and are less demanding of their parents (Putnam et al., 2002). Consistent with this view, Karreman, van Tuijil, van Aken, and Dekovik (2008) found that when preschoolers had higher levels of effortful control parents exhibited more positive parenting and less negative parenting when interacting with their children. Thus, children who regulate well may be easier for parents to care for facilitating a sense of teamwork and supportiveness among coparents.

Given that infant regulatory abilities modulate the duration and intensity of infant distress (Rothbart & Derryberry, 1981), and hence the extent to which parents experience their infant as emotionally negative, it may be that effortful control buffers parents from

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the negative effects of negative affect on coparenting. For example, children may react to stimuli negatively initially, but recover quickly from their negative feelings and be able to control their reactions, making it easier for parents to be mutually involved with their child and work as a unified team. Additionally, working as a team with their child may make them feel more successful in their abilities as coparents resulting in them perceiving their coparenting relationship more positively. Previous research has found that highly negative children are less likely to show behavior problems when they are also high in effortful control (Rothbart & Posner, 2006). Similarly, when children are more adaptable and positive in affect, parents are more responsive and positive (Karreman et al., 2008; Putnam et al., 2002) lending some support to this view. To my knowledge, the interactive effect of effortful control on coparenting has only been examined in one study. Burney and Leerkes (2010) found that mothers who perceived their infants as highly fearful only reported more negative coparenting if their infants were not easily soothed, an element of poor effortful control. Thus, it is predicted that the association between negative affect and coparenting will be moderated by effortful control. That is, child negative affect will correlate negatively with coparenting quality only when effortful control is low.

Child sex as a moderating variable. Parents may have different beliefs about the acceptability of certain temperamental attributes for girls and boys. Generally, research suggests that parents are more accepting of irritability and negative affect from male children than female children (Putnam et al., 2002) which may reduce the negative effect of child negative affect on coparenting among mothers of male children. In fact, child sex

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is a child characteristic that has been shown to moderate the relationship between child temperament and parenting behavior (Gordon, 1983; Klein, 1984; Rubin, Hastings, Chen, Stewart, & McNichol 1998). Consistent with this idea, Rubin et al. found that children's temperamental reactivity was unrelated to maternal warmth in girls, but positively related with maternal warmth for boys. Additionally, Lamb, Frodi, Hwang, Forstromm, and Corry (1982) found that fathers were more involved with difficult sons than difficult daughters and less involved with easy sons. Parents of girls who are more reactive may experience more stress than parents of boys, because their expectations are violated, which may spill over into the coparenting relationship, making it more difficult for parents to work together. Or parents may be more likely to be drawn together as a unified team when boys are more reactive than when girls are, because fathers are more likely to be involved, giving respite to mothers when their boys are more reactive. Thus, I predict that child negative affect will be negatively related to coparenting for mothers of girls, but not for mothers of boys.

Maternal depressive symptoms as a moderating variable. Depression is a pervasive mental state characterized by feelings of sadness, despair and discouragement (Downey & Coyne, 1990) and a parental characteristic likely to influence the quality of the coparenting relationship. Depressed persons display two behavioral patterns: negativity/intrusiveness and withdrawal. These behavioral patterns likely affect close relationships such as the coparenting relationship (Downey & Coyne). Individuals with depressive symptoms often have higher levels of parenting stress and display an excessive amount of negativity in their communications and in their appraisals of their

spouses' behaviors (Ruscher & Gotlib, 1988). These difficulties may hinder how emotionally available one partner is for the other and increase how critical one partner is of the other, which may affect the quality of the coparenting relationship, especially if a child exhibits more negative affect. For example, if a depressed mother does not respond to her child's bids for help, her partner may feel he bears the brunt of parenting a more challenging child and gets no respite or support from her. When they talk about it, she likely becomes irritated with him for bringing up the subject.

To my knowledge, no studies have examined this moderating effect of depressive symptoms on links between negative affect and coparenting, but a number of studies have reported such an effect in relation to parenting (Campbell, Cohn, & Meyers, 1995; Teti & Gelfand, 1991). For example, Pauli-Pott, Mertesacker, Bade, Bauer, and Beckmann (2000) examined mothers and their 4-month-old infants and found that infant negative emotionality interacted with depression to predict maternal sensitivity, such that mothers who perceived their infants as high on negative emotionality and who described themselves as depressed were observed as being less sensitive and responsive to their infants. Similarly, coparenting may be most undermined when multiple risks are present, thus, I predict that that negative affect will correlate negatively with coparenting quality only when depressive symptoms are high because the negative moods, attributions, and interpersonal styles affiliated with depressive symptoms will make it challenging for coparents to support one another and work together as a team as they also cope with a child high on negative affect.

Household chaos as a moderating variable. Chaotic home environments are high in background noise, crowding, confusion, and have a lack of routine and structure, which can contribute to levels of stress in the household. Continued exposure to noise, crowding and a lack of organization can increase parents' fatigue and has been linked to increased levels of anxiety, irritability, and conflict for parents (Evans, Palsane, Lepore, & Martin, 1989; Lepore, Evans, & Palsane, 1991). Additionally, household chaos has been associated with more negative parenting behaviors and fewer positive parental interactions (Evans & Lepore, 1992; Evans, Maxwell, & Hart, 1999; Valiente, Lemery-Chalfant, & Reiser, 2007). The interaction between temperament and home chaos has rarely been examined. One exception is a study done by Jenkins, Rasbash, and O'Connor (2003) where they found that children's negative affect had a stronger positive effect on parental negativity when there was more stress in the home environment than when there was less stress.

To my knowledge, there are no studies examining how home chaos moderates the relationship between negative affect and coparenting. Similarly though, the negative relationship between child negative affect and coparenting may be exacerbated when the home environment is also chaotic. For example, a parent who feels irritated by the chaotic nature of the household may be more likely to argue about how to handle their more reactive child or may withdraw from the situation than a parent who is not faced with a chaotic home environment. Thus, I predict that negative affect will correlate negatively with coparenting quality only when home chaos is high, because the fatigue, anxiety, and irritability associated with a chaotic home environment will make it

challenging for coparents to support one another and be mutually engaged with their more reactive child.

Summary of Study

In sum, there were two main goals to this study. The primary goal of this study was to examine the extent to which mothers' perceptions of child negative affect predicts mothers' perceptions of their coparenting relationship. Consistent with the view that child negative affect may be particularly problematic for parents dealing with other stressors or with limited support, I examined the extent to which effortful control, child sex, maternal depressive symptoms, and household chaos moderate associations between negative affect and coparenting. Relatively few researchers have examined the effects of temperament on coparenting, most have focused on this relationship during the infancy period, and to my knowledge there have been no studies examining the potential moderating effects of child effortful control, child sex maternal depressive symptoms, and household chaos on the association between child negative affect and coparenting. Thus, this research has the potential to fill several important gaps in the literature. In order to achieve this goal, I used a newly developed measure of coparenting. Thus, a preliminary goal was to examine the psychometric properties of the newly developed Coparenting Questionnaire (Burney, 2007) with particular attention to the number of dimensions needed to thoroughly assess the coparenting relationship.

I hypothesized that perceived child negative affect will only be negatively associated with coparenting quality if mothers have children low on effortful control, children who are female, elevated depressive symptoms, and/or high levels of household

chaos. Additionally, controlling for maternal depressive symptoms was important in order to reduce potential bias that could influence the hypothesized relationships. That is, as all measures are based on maternal report, controlling for depression somewhat offsets the concern that a negative appraisal bias may account for observed relations.

Given the view that there are four distinct dimensions of coparenting, it is important to consider the possibility that the effects of child negative affect and the proposed interactions may vary across dimensions of coparenting. As there is limited prior literature that assesses multiple dimensions of coparenting to draw upon, the subsequent statements are speculative. The literature that is available suggests that child negative affect may be related to undermining coparenting more strongly than the other dimensions. Several researchers have found that child negative affect was associated with undermining/negative coparenting, but not with supportive/positive coparenting (Cook et al., 2009; Lindsey et al., 2005; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2007). It could be that the stress of parenting a child who is more irritable, fearful, and more difficult to soothe may result in parents becoming more irritable with one another leading to the use of undermining strategies. However, a dimensional approach to coparenting suggests that heightened undermining does not necessarily mean there is an absence of positive coparenting. It may be that parents of children high in negative affect are able to maintain positive coparenting much of the time. Thus, I speculate that child negative affect is more strongly related to undermining coparenting than to the positive dimensions of coparenting.

Specific moderators may also operate more in relation to some of the dimensions of coparenting than others. Children who have high levels of negative affect, but are also

high on effortful control may challenge parents but make them feel like they are effective as these children are better regulated. This pattern may enhance mothers' feelings of coparenting solidarity and may enhance mutual involvement among coparents. Thus, I speculate that the interactive effect between child negative affect and child effortful control will be more strongly related to coparenting solidarity and shared parenting than with coparenting support and undermining coparenting.

Given prior evidence that fathers are more involved in caring for highly negative boys than highly negative girls (Lamb et al., 1982) I speculate that the interactive effect of child negative affect and child sex may be more strongly related with coparenting solidarity and shared parenting than with coparenting support and undermining coparenting.

Depression is characterized by two behavioral patterns: negativity/intrusiveness and withdrawal. Thus, depressed mothers of children high in negative affect seem most likely to either engage in negative behaviors toward their coparent or to withdraw from their partner. If this is the case, the interaction between child negative affect and maternal depressive symptoms may be apparent for coparenting support and undermining coparenting, but not for coparenting solidarity and shared parenting.

Finally, chaotic homes, where there are high levels of confusion and noise and limited structure, may make the job of coparenting a child high on negative affect more difficult both because it increases parental irritation and magnifies child distress as there are more stressful stimuli in the home to which such a child reacts negatively. As such, I

speculate that the interaction between child negative affect and home chaos will be

apparent for all four dimensions of coparenting.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Participants

Two-hundred and eighty-two participants from a county surrounding a moderate sized city in the southeastern United States were recruited to participate in a longitudinal study examining emotional and cognitive precursors to early school success when children were 3 years old. Of these, 261 mothers, approximately 92% of the original sample, participated when children were 4 to 5 years old. Demographics (age, income-to-needs ratio, race, number of children in household, and child gender) and key constructs assessed at the original data collection period (child temperament, depressive symptomology and household chaos) were compared between those who dropped out of the study and those who remained in the study. Of these comparisons, only 3 significant differences emerged. Mothers who remained in the study were more likely to be White, $X^2(1, 282) = 6.01$, $p < .05$, older, $t(279) = -2.81$; $p < .05$, and have higher income-to-needs ratios, $t(279) = -1.99$; $p < .05$, than mothers who no longer participated in the study.

To be included in this study, mothers had to be the focal child's biological or adoptive parent and either be married or in a marriage like relationship (i.e., living together, but not married) to the focal child's biological parent, or be married to a partner whom they had been in a relationship with since the birth of the focal child (i.e.,

child's stepparent). Of the 261 mothers who participated in this follow-up, 51 were

excluded from this study because they were either a single parent (28), widowed (1),

divorced (8), married, but separated (8), married, but child's stepfather had not been with

child's mother since child's birth (2), not married, but living with a partner who had not

been with child's mother since child's birth (3), or the participant was the child's

grandmother (1). Additionally, 13 mothers who met eligibility criteria and 7 who did not

meet eligibility criteria chose not to participate in this part of the study. Thus, the analytic

sample for this study was 190 mothers, 125 who participated when their children were 4

years old and 65 who participated when their children were 5 years old. Demographics

(age, income-to-needs ratio, race, number of children in household, and child sex) and

key constructs assessed (child temperament, depressive symptomology and household

chaos) were compared between the analytic sample and the 13 mothers who were

eligible, but did not participate. No differences were apparent.

A majority of the analytical sample (98.5%) were biological mothers to the

children in the study and 1.5% were adoptive mothers to the children. Ninety-eight

percent of mothers were married or in a marriage like relationship and coparenting with

the focal child's biological parent and 2% were married and coparenting with the focal

child's stepparent. Mothers had been in a relationship with their spouse/partner between 4

and 24 years (M = 11.8). Mothers ranged in age from 23 to 47 (M = 35.6), the majority

(64%) had a college degree or higher, 10% had a 2 year degree, 16% had some college,

and 10% had a high school education or less, and the majority (74%) were White, 20%

were Black, 1.5% were Hispanic, 0.5% were Asian, and 4% were Biracial or were from

other ethnic groups. The number of children in the household ranged from 1 to 5 (M = 2.1), 21% of the focal children were only children and 51% had 1 additional sibling, and 55% of those with siblings were the first born. The income-to-needs ratio (i.e., the ratio of family income relative to the poverty level based on family size, where families with income-to needs-ratios under 1 are considered to be living in poverty and families with ratios between 1.0-1.99 are considered to be living near-poverty) ranged from .19 to 7.4 (M = 3.2). Fifty percent of the focal children were male.

Demographics (age, income-to-needs ratio, race, number of children in household, and child sex) and key constructs (child temperament, depressive symptomology and household chaos) were compared between those who participated when children were 4 years old and those who participated when children were 5 years old. Of these comparisons, 3 were significant. Mothers who participated when their children were 4 years old reported that their children had higher levels of negative affect, $t(188) = 2.31$; $p < .05$, than mothers who participated when their children were 5 years old. Additionally, mothers who participated when their children were 5 years old had higher income-to needs-ratios, $t(188) = -3.20$; $p < .01$, than mothers who participated when their children were 4 years old.

Procedure

Participants were recruited through nearby preschool programs for a larger project examining the emotional and cognitive precursors to early school success. Centers were contacted for permission to provide recruitment materials to families of 3-year old children. Interested parents returned a brief reply card to the researchers with their

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contact information and basic demographics. Participating families came to the Family

Research Center on campus when their children were between 40 to 44 months of age.

This visit involved a single two-hour session where comprehensive assessments of

emotional and cognitive understanding were conducted. Mothers also completed a set of

questionnaires at the Family Research Center. Mothers received $40 for completing the

visit and children received a small gift. Mothers were also reimbursed for transportation

and child care for siblings of the study child as needed. Parents and children who

continued with the study returned when the children were about 4 years old and again

when children were 5 years old for a similar two-hour visit. Mothers completed a set of

questionnaires at the Family Research Center during each of these visits, including

measures of demographics, child temperament, depressive symptoms, and home chaos.

This project was initiated after some mothers had already completed the 4 year visit, and

those mothers were invited to participate in this project when they completed the age 5

visit. During these visits a separate packet of questionnaires and a consent form specific

to this study were also included for mothers to complete during their child's visit. The

questionnaire packet included the Coparenting Questionnaire, Parenting Alliance

Inventory, and the adapted Aspects of Married Life Questionnaire. Mothers received $60

for completing each visit and children received a small gift. Mothers were also

reimbursed for transportation and child care for siblings of the study child as needed. No

additional incentive was provided for completing the additional measures for this study.

Measures

  Coparenting. I created the 68-item Coparenting Questionnaire (CQ; Burney,

2007) drawing from several other questionnaires (Family Experiences Questionnaire;

FEQ; Frank et al., 1988; Coparenting Questionnaire; Margolin et al., 2001; Coparenting

Scale; McHale, 1997). The CQ was administered to mothers when their children were 4

or 5 years old. The CQ was designed to consist of four subscales that tap the four

dimensions of coparenting defined by Van Egeren and Hawkins (2004). Coparenting

solidarity consisted of 15 items (e.g., Parenting has brought my partner and me closer

together), coparenting support consisted of 19 items (e.g., My partner tells me I'm doing

a good job as a parent), shared parenting consisted of 17 items (e.g., My partner and I

share parenting responsibilities fairly), and undermining coparenting consisted of 17

items (e.g., My partner says bad things about me in front of our child). Parents were

instructed to rate how much they agree or disagree with each item using a scale from 1

(strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). Properties of this measure are described in the

Results section.

  Parenting Alliance Inventory. The 20-item Parenting Alliance Inventory (PAI;

Abidin & Brunner, 1995) was administered when children were 4 or 5 years old to assess

mothers' perceptions of their working relationship with their child's other parent in order

to examine convergent validity with the CQ. Parents were instructed to respond to items

using a 5 point scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). The PAI is

a frequently used instrument that has excellent internal reliability and good convergent

validity with measures of marital satisfaction, parenting stress, parenting style, and child

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adjustment (Abidin & Brunner). Items were averaged to create a total score for the parenting alliance, such that higher scores indicate more positive parenting relationships, characterized by good communication and teamwork, and respect between parents. Cronbach's alpha was .97.

    Marital satisfaction. An adaptation of the Aspects of Married Life Questionnaire (MSQ; Huston, McHale, & Crouter, 1986; Proulx, Helms, & Payne, 2004) was administered to mothers when children were 4 or 5 years old to assess mothers' marital satisfaction. Mothers rated their satisfaction on several domains of marriage work using a 7-point scale, where 1= extremely dissatisfied and 7 = extremely satisfied on 10 items. There were 3 items relevant to satisfaction with parenting and they were used to examine convergent validity (i.e., How satisfied are you with the extent to which your spouse/partner makes you feel good about the kind of parent you are, supports your decisions about feeding and naps, etc? How satisfied are you with your spouse/partner's fundamental principles or beliefs about how to bring up children (e.g., values, ideas about discipline, etc.)? How satisfied are you with how the two of you divide the tasks of taking care of your child including bathing, feeding, and dressing, etc.?).The other 7 items related to satisfaction with other aspects of marriage (e.g., how satisfied are you with your family's total financial situation?) and were used to examine discriminant validity with the CQ. Appropriate items were averaged, such that higher scores indicated high marital satisfaction in parenting for the 3 parenting items and high marital satisfaction in general for the remaining 7 items. Cronbach's alphas were .75 and .85 respectively.

Child temperament. The Child Behavior Questionnaire-Short (CBQ-Short;

Putnam & Rothbart, 2006) is a 94 item scale used to assess children's temperament

among 3-8 year olds and was administered to mothers when their children were 4 or 5

years old. Two broad scales, Negative Affect (12 items; e.g. gets angry when called in

from play, is afraid of loud noises) and Effortful Control (12 items; e.g., can wait before

entering into new activities, can easily stop an activity when told "no") were used. Items

asked parents to rate their child's typical reactions to various situations on a 7 point

Likert scale ranging from 1 (extremely untrue of your child) to 7 (extremely true of your

child). Parents were also provided with a *not applicable* response option when the child

had not been observed in the situation described. The broad scales demonstrate adequate

internal consistency, with alphas above .72, and good cross informant reliability (Putnam

& Rothbart). The scales also have demonstrated acceptable longitudinal stability and

have been shown to be valid for use with ethnically and financially diverse samples

(Putnam & Rothbart). Appropriate items were reverse scored to create each broadband

scale, then broadband scale items were averaged. High scores on the negative affect

broadband indicate that the child is easily frustrated, frustrated, and irritated, exhibits

negative mood, and is more difficult to soothe. High scores on the effortful control

broadband show that the child is responsive and well-regulated. Cronbach's alphas were

.67 and .75 for negative affect and effortful control respectively.

Depressive symptomology. The Center for Epidemiologic Studies-Depression

Scale (CES-D; Radloff, 1977) is a 20-item measure used to assess depressive symptoms

and was administered to mothers when their children were 4 or 5 years old. Mothers

indicated how often they felt a particular way (e.g. "I felt lonely"; "I thought my life had been a failure") during the previous week on a 4-point scale ranging from never to always. The CES-D demonstrates high internal consistency, acceptable test-retest reliability, and adequate concurrent validity based upon clinical and self-report criteria (Radloff) and has correlated with perceptions of coparenting (Brody, Stoneman & McCoy, 1994; Hughes, Gordon, & Gaertner, 2004) and parenting behavior in other studies (Crockenberg & Leerkes, 2003). A total score was derived by summing the items, after reverse scoring appropriate items, such that higher scores indicate greater and more persistent depressive symptomology. Observed scores ranged from 0-33; Cronbach's alpha was .82.

Household chaos. The level of routine and structure in the home was assessed through the Confusion, Hubbub, and Order Scale (CHAOS; Matheny, Wachs, Ludwig, & Phillips, 1995) and was administered to mothers when their children were 4 or 5 years old. Participants either marked True (1) or False (2) as to whether 15 statements accurately described life in their home, such as, "We can usually find things when we need them" or "We almost always seem to be rushed". Previous research has demonstrated the reliability and validity of the CHAOS measure (Matheny & Phillips, 2001; Matheny et al.). After reversing the items describing orderliness, a total sum score (range 15-29) was calculated, such that higher scores indicate more chaotic home settings. Cronbach's alpha was .81.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS: PART I

Results are presented in two sections. The first section focuses on the

psychometric properties of the Coparenting Questionnaire, including preliminary

screening of CQ items, factor analysis of the CQ items, and correlations with other

constructs to evaluate the construct validity of the CQ factors. The second section

includes the primary analyses related to hypothesis testing. Before data analyses,

variables were examined for accuracy of data entry and missing values for all measures.

Since the proportion of missing values was so small for all measures (i.e., less than 1%),

single imputation was reasonable (Acock, 2005). Missing data were imputed for all

measures using the NORM software (Schafer, 1999b), which uses an Expectation-

Maximization (EM) algorithm to replace missing values.

Evaluating the Coparenting Questionnaire

Preliminary Screening

Descriptive statistics and internal reliability for the four proposed scales;

coparenting solidarity, coparenting support, shared parenting, and undermining

coparenting can be seen in Table 1. Reliability is the consistency of scores obtained

across persons, sets of items, or under other conditions (Allen & Yen, 1979). Cronbach's

alpha for all scales was above .70 (Nunally, 1978), indicating acceptable internal

consistency reliability. Because reliability was acceptable the hypothesized factor structure of the CQ was further examined.

Intrasubscale (i.e., among the items that make up each scale) and intersubscale correlations (i.e., between the items of different scales) were examined as a preliminary screen of the four coparenting scales. Generally, correlations among items that make up each scale were higher than correlations of items between scales. The average correlations among items within each scale were: .43 for Coparenting Solidarity, .54 for Coparenting Support, .39 for Shared Parenting and .58 for Undermining Coparenting. Correlations between items in different scales ranged from .06 to .70 for Coparenting Solidarity, from .03 to .70 for Coparenting Support, from .03 to .60 for Shared Parenting, and from .10 to .57 for Undermining Coparenting. Additionally, items generally had higher correlations with the total score of their assigned scale than the total scores of the other scales (see Table 2; this was the case for 59 out of 68 items). Correlations among scales ranged from -.73 to .87 (see Table 3). Since most of these correlations were under .85, they indicated some initial evidence that the different scales were measuring distinct dimensions (Clark & Watson, 1995; Kline, 2005).

When participants respond to items in mostly the same way, so mostly 1's or 4's given the CQ's 1-4 scale, these items are unlikely to convey much information, they may produce unstable correlational results, and they indicate limited variability (Clark & Watson, 1995). To examine this, item-level averages and standard deviations were inspected (see Table 4). There were 11 items with averages of 3.50 or higher and with standard deviations between .46-.65. Additionally, there were 12 items with averages of

1.50 or lower and with standard deviations between .40-.69. These items were bolded in

Table 4 and flagged as potentially problematic and noted for further scrutiny depending

on the results of subsequent analyses. That is, if in subsequent analyses these items had

low loadings ($< .30$) on their respective factors or if they loaded similarly on multiple

factors they would be dropped. However, if loadings were above .30, items would be

retained unless there was theoretical reason for them to be dropped.

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics of the 4 Coparenting Scales*

	Scale Average	Standard Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha
Coparenting Solidarity	3.43	0.40	.89
Coparenting Support	3.40	0.44	.94
Shared Parenting	3.38	0.38	.88
Undermining Coparenting	1.54	0.41	.92

Table 2. *Items to CQ Scales Correlations*

Coparenting Solidarity Items	Coparenting Solidarity	Coparenting Support	Shared Parenting	Undermining Coparenting
1. Parenting has made me feel closer to my partner	**.72****	.61**	.50**	-.42**
9. I resent that my partner has to give so much of my time to our child (-)	**.45****	.37**	.41**	-.44**
17. I feel closer to my child than to my partner (-)	**.68****	.51**	.50**	-.51**
20. Parenting has given my partner and me a focus for the future	**.66****	.60**	.52**	-.36**
24. When my partner is gone, I fill him/her on what happens with our child	**.56****	.51**	.51**	-.30
27. I often feel torn between my loyalties to my partner and my loyalties to my child (-)	**.47****	.34**	.44**	-.41**
35. My partner and I are growing and maturing together through our experiences as parents	**.80****	.68**	.61**	-.53**
38. My partner and I work closely together as parents	**.82****	**.82****	.74**	-.63**
44. Having a child has helped me to see positive qualities in my partner that I never noticed before	**.70****	.63**	.55**	-.40**
52. My partner and I like to talk together about what our child will be like when he/she grows up	**.58****	.53**	.47**	-.44**
54. I do not feel that parenting is as much of a close/intimate experience with my partner as I hoped it would be (-)	**.81****	.67**	.70**	-.65**
58. My partner loves our child more than me (-)	**.48****	.37**	.37**	-.45**
61. My partner fills me in on what happens with our child when I am gone	**.64****	.60**	.59**	-.50**

64. Seeing my partner with our child makes me happy	**.67****	.61**	.59**	-.51**
68. My partner and I often spend special time with our child as a family	.47**	.44**	**.58****	-.38**
Coparenting Support Items				
2. My partner tells me I'm doing a good job as a parent	.57**	**.71****	.54**	-.51**
6. My partner appreciates how hard I work at being a good parent	.61**	**.75****	.59**	-.55**
8. I support my partner as a parent	.62**	**.66****	.56**	-.53**
14. My partner and I often talk together about what is best for our child	.59**	**.67****	.53**	-.48**
15. My partner supports my discipline decisions	.61**	**.71****	.53**	-.56**
16. I encourage my partner and child to have special time together	.32**	**.37****	.30**	-.27**
18. My partner backs me up as a parent	.61**	**.71****	.55**	-.55**
26. My partner often asks my opinion on issues related to parenting	.57**	**.70****	.58**	-.49**
32. My partner and I argue about parenting (for example, how and when to punish our child) (-)	.46**	.56**	.46**	**-.60****
36. When I feel at my wits end as a parent, my partner gives me the extra support I need	.72**	**.80****	.67**	-.55**
37. I often ask my partner his/her opinion about parenting issues	.65**	**.77****	.65**	-.50**
39. After my partner or I have handled a difficult situation with our child, we discuss it and try to figure out what we could have done better	.59**	**.68****	.49**	-.35**
40. I let my partner he/she is doing a good job as a parent	.69**	**.77****	.60**	-.54**

43. My partner makes me feel that I am the best possible parent for our child	.58**	**.74****	.57**	-.49**
49. When my partner and I disagree about parenting issues, we try to reach a compromise	.66**	**.72****	.62**	-.50**
50. I appreciate the hard work my partner puts into being a good parent	**.65****	**.65****	**.65****	-.43**
55. My partner often encourages positive interactions between me and my child (for example, "Show mom" or "Let dad play too")	.57**	**.65****	.64**	-.43**
56. I back up my partner's discipline decisions	.56**	**.68****	.52**	-.55**
65. When I feel I may have made a mistake with our child, I can talk it over with my partner	.69**	**.76****	.64**	-.54**
Shared Parenting Items				
3. When there is a crisis with our child, my partner doesn't help me as much as I would like (-)	.58**	.58**	**.68****	-.55**
7. I help discipline our child often	.42**	**.43****	.39**	-.38**
10. I demand too much of my partner as a parent (-)	.38**	.31**	.36**	**-.44****
13. My partner is often too involved with other things to carry a fair share of the parenting load (-)	.54**	.50**	**.72****	-.49**
19. My partner likes to play with our child, but then leaves the hard work to me (-)	-.44**	-.47**	**-.64****	.47**
21. I am willing to make some personal sacrifices in order to help with parenting	.34**	**.44****	.41**	-.34**
23. My partner pays too little attention to our child (-)	-.61**	-.54**	**-.70****	.49**
25. My partner often helps	.69**	.71**	**.77****	-.53**

discipline our child				
28. My partner plays with our child often	.52**	.55**	**.70****	-.49**
29. I do more than my fair share when it comes to parenting (-)	-.31**	-.28**	**-.51****	.28**
46. My partner makes too many demands on me as a parent (-)	-.51**	-.51**	**-.63****	.61**
47. My partner and I share parenting responsibilities fairly	.61**	.58**	**.74****	-.45**
48. I feel like I don't pay enough attention to our child (-)	.28**	.29**	**.43****	-.32**
59. I have learned that if our child needs something important, I can rely on my partner to help provide it	**.55****	.53**	.52**	-.46**
62. I don't carry a fair share of the parenting load, because I am involved with other things (-)	.51**	.42**	.49**	**-.52****
63. My partner is willing to make some personal sacrifices in order to help with parenting	.66**	.64**	**.69****	-.43**
67. I often play with our child	.25**	.30**	**.36****	-.31**
Undermining Coparenting Items				
4. I still do things my own we, even if my partner I have talked parenting issues over	-.41**	-.41**	-.48**	**.58****
5. I criticize the way my partner parents our child.	-.43**	-.44**	-.43**	**.59****
11. My partner ignores rules we have set for our child	-.49**	-.49**	-.54**	**.71****
12. My partner says bad things about me in front of our child	-.46**	-.50**	-.49**	**.68****
22. My partner makes me feel like I am a bad influence on our child	-.53**	-55**	-.54**	**.62****
30. I exclude my partner from special time with our child	-.43**	-.37**	-.39**	**.56****
31. My partner tries to have the	-.46**	-50**	-.49**	**.69****

last word on how we raise our child			
33. My partner does things I don't like with our child when I am not around	-.40**	-.42**	-.45**	**.67**
34. I give into our child after my partner has said no	-.40**	-.39**	-.45**	**.65**
41. When my child and I are playing, my partner interrupts us and takes over	-.49**	-.45**	-.48**	**.65**
42. I ignore rules that we have been set for our child	-.57**	-.52**	-.52**	**.76**
45. Even if we have talked parenting ideas over, my partner does things his/her way	-.53**	-.55**	-.54**	**.77**
51. I try to have the last word in how our child is brought up	-.47**	-.42**	-.47**	**.57**
53. My partner gives in to our child after I have said no	-.44**	-.48**	-.48**	**.67**
57. My partner criticizes the way I parent	-.57**	-.64**	-.59**	**.75**
60. My partner excludes me from his/her special time with our child	-.56**	-.50**	-.58**	**.68**
66. I say bad things about my partner in front of our child	-.57**	-.59**	-.56**	**.65**

Note: The highest correlation between an item and the 4 factors is bolded; $p < .01$.

Table 3. *Coparenting Scale Correlations*

	Coparenting Solidarity	Coparenting Support	Shared Parenting	Undermining Coparenting
Coparenting Solidarity	--	--	--	--
Coparenting Support	.87**	--	--	--
Shared Parenting	.83**	.81**	--	--
Undermining Coparenting	-.73**	-.73**	-.76**	--

Note: $p < .01$**

Table 4. *CQ Item-Level Averages and Standard Deviations*

Coparenting Questions	Coparenting Factor	Item Average	SD
1. Parenting has made me feel closer to my partner	Solidarity	3.39	0.64
2. My partner tells me I'm doing a good job as a parent	Supportive	3.46	0.65
3. When there is a crisis with our child, my partner doesn't help me as much as I would like	Shared Parenting	1.63	0.73
4. I still do things my own we, even if my partner I have talked parenting issues over	Undermining	1.91	0.68
5. I criticize the way my partner parents our child.	Undermining	1.94	0.75
6. My partner appreciates how hard I work at being a good parent	Supportive	3.48	0.63
7. I help discipline our child often	**Shared Parenting**	**3.59**	**0.51**
8. I support my partner as a parent	**Supportive**	**3.65**	**0.51**
9. I resent that my partner has to give so much of my time to our child	**Solidarity**	**1.19**	**0.41**
10. I demand too much of my partner as a parent	**Shared Parenting**	**1.43**	**0.63**
11. My partner ignores rules we have set for our child	Undermining	1.54	0.66
12. My partner says bad things about me in front of our child	**Undermining**	**1.36**	**0.69**
13. My partner is often too involved with other things to carry a fair share of the parenting load	Shared Parenting	1.81	0.83
14. My partner and I often talk together about what is best for our child	**Supportive**	**3.55**	**0.65**
15. My partner supports my discipline decisions	Supportive	3.37	0.64
16. I encourage my partner and child to have special time together	**Supportive**	**3.66**	**0.55**
17. I feel closer to my child than to my partner	Solidarity	2.06	0.81
18. My partner backs me up as a parent	**Supportive**	**3.54**	**0.61**
19. My partner likes to play with our child, but then leaves the hard work to	Shared Parenting	1.94	0.84

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20. Parenting has given my partner and me a focus for the future	Solidarity	3.44	0.62
21. I am willing to make some personal sacrifices in order to help with parenting.	**Shared Parenting**	**3.75**	**0.47**
22. My partner makes me feel like I am a bad influence on our child	**Undermining**	**1.16**	**0.40**
23. My partner pays too little attention to our child	**Shared Parenting**	**1.35**	**0.61**
24. When my partner is gone, I fill him/her on what happens with our child	**Solidarity**	**3.67**	**0.54**
25. My partner often helps discipline our child	Shared Parenting	3.48	0.63
26. My partner often asks my opinion on issues related to parenting	Supportive	3.19	0.73
27. I often feel torn between my loyalties to my partner and my loyalties to my child	Solidarity	1.81	0.81
28. My partner plays with our child often	Shared Parenting	3.47	0.66
29. I do more than my fair share when it comes to parenting	Shared Parenting	2.63	0.94
30. I exclude my partner from special time with our child	**Undermining**	**1.31**	**0.50**
31. My partner tries to have the last word on how we raise our child	Undermining	1.57	0.72
32. My partner and I argue about parenting (for example, how and when to punish our child)	Supportive	1.82	0.82
33. My partner does things I don't like with our child when I am not around	**Undermining**	**1.49**	**0.62**
34. I give into our child after my partner has said no	Undermining	1.61	0.66
35. My partner and I are growing and maturing together through our experiences as parents	**Solidarity**	**3.54**	**0.59**
36. When I feel at my wits end as a parent, my partner gives me the extra support I need	Supportive	3.43	0.66
37. I often ask my partner his/her	Supportive	3.26	0.69

opinion about parenting issues			
38. My partner and I work closely together as parents	Solidarity	3.47	0.63
39. After my partner or I have handled a difficult situation with our child, we discuss it and try to figure out what we could have done better	Supportive	3.21	0.72
40. I let my partner he/she is doing a good job as a parent	Supportive	3.34	0.60
41. When my child and I are playing, my partner interrupts us and takes over	**Undermining**	**1.50**	**0.55**
42. I ignore rules that we have been set for our child	**Undermining**	**1.42**	**0.56**
43. My partner makes me feel that I am the best possible parent for our child	Supportive	3.38	0.69
44. Having a child has helped me to see positive qualities in my partner that I never noticed before	Solidarity	3.36	0.67
45. Even if we have talked parenting ideas over, my partner does things his/her way	Undermining	1.72	0.71
46. My partner makes too many demands on me as a parent	Shared Parenting	1.71	0.66
47. My partner and I share parenting responsibilities fairly	Shared Parenting	3.08	0.77
48. I feel like I don't pay enough attention to our child	Shared Parenting	1.66	0.68
49. When my partner and I disagree about parenting issues, we try to reach a compromise	Supportive	3.23	0.58
50. I appreciate the hard work my partner puts into being a good parent	Supportive	3.44	0.60
51. I try to have the last word in how our child is brought up	Undermining	1.86	0.79
52. My partner and I like to talk together about what our child will be like when he/she grows up	Solidarity	3.38	0.58
53. My partner gives in to our child after I have said no	Undermining	1.64	0.70
54. I do not feel that parenting is as much of a close/intimate experience	Solidarity	1.70	0.78

with my partner as I hoped it would be			
55. My partner often encourages positive interactions between me and my child (for example, "Show mom" or "Let dad play too")	**Supportive**	**3.53**	**0.59**
56. I back up my partner's discipline decisions	Supportive	3.34	0.58
57. My partner criticizes the way I parent	Undermining	1.53	0.66
58. My partner loves our child more than me	Solidarity	1.55	0.58
59. I have learned that if our child needs something important, I can rely on my partner to help provide it	Shared Parenting	3.49	0.61
60. My partner excludes me from his/her special time with our child	**Undermining**	**1.32**	**0.47**
61. My partner fills me in on what happens with our child when I am gone	Solidarity	3.44	0.62
62. I don't carry a fair share of the parenting load, because I am involved with other things	**Shared Parenting**	**1.35**	**0.51**
63. My partner is willing to make some personal sacrifices in order to help with parenting	Shared Parenting	3.34	0.66
64. Seeing my partner with our child makes me happy	**Solidarity**	**3.72**	**0.46**
65. When I feel I may have made a mistake with our child, I can talk it over with my partner	Supportive	3.45	0.61
66. I say bad things about my partner in front of our child	**Undermining**	**1.34**	**0.58**
67. I often play with our child	**Shared Parenting**	**3.54**	**0.58**
68. My partner and I often spend special time with our child as a family	**Shared Parenting**	**3.65**	**0.55**

Note: Bolded items were flagged for potential problems

Factor Structure of the CQ

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to test the hypothesized factor

structure of the CQ. Specifically, LISREL (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 2003), was used to

obtain a maximum likelihood estimate of the factor model. A strength of using CFA is

that various models can be tested and the model of best fit can be retained (Noar, 2003).

An initial correlated factors model was tested in order to confirm the theoretical four

factor structure, coparenting solidarity, coparenting support, shared parenting, and

undermining coparenting, of the CQ. Specific items for each subscale (see Appendix)

were set to load only on their proposed subscale. It is recommended that multiple

measures of model fit be considered to highlight different components of fit (Tanaka,

1993), thus, the traditional chi square goodness-of-fit test, root mean square error of

approximation (RMSEA; Steiger, 1990), and the comparative fit index (CFI; Bentler,

1990) were relied on for model evaluation. Generally, the traditional chi square

goodness-of-fit test should be significant at .05 or below, smaller RMSEA values suggest

a better fit, where values under .08 suggest an adequate fit, and better fitting models

produce values for CFI around .95 or higher (Browne & Cudeck, 1993; Hu & Bentler,

1999). Given this, the goodness fit statistics presented in Table 5 suggest that the 4-factor

model adequately fit the structure of the data. However, the correlations between several

of the factors were higher than expected (see Table 6). The magnitude of the correlations

between several of the factors were higher than anticipated (e.g., > .92) and Kline (2005)

suggests that factor correlations greater than .85 do not suggest good model fit.

Additionally, the high correlations suggest that some of the factors reflect the same

construct and further testing is needed. Thus, 3 additional models were analyzed for fit to

test the 4-factor model's validity. First, a 1-factor model where all items were examined

as one coparenting factor was tested to examine if the CQ measured coparenting as 1

factor better than the previously tested 4-factor model. Then a 2-factor model was

analyzed to examine if 2 factors explain the data better than 4 factors. Much of the

coparenting literature has primarily included supportive or positive and undermining or

negative dimensions of coparenting (McConnell & Kerig, 2002; McHale, 1995; McHale,

Kuersten, & Lauretti, 1996), thus a 2-factor model, where coparenting solidarity,

coparenting support, and shared parenting were examined as one positive coparenting

factor and undermining coparenting was retained as a separate factor, was tested. Finally,

a 3-factor CFA model was analyzed to examine if the CQ was better explained using 3

factors. Given the higher correlation between coparenting solidarity and coparenting

support ($r(188) = .94$, $p < .01$), relative to the other correlations, they were combined and

shared parenting and undermining coparenting were retained as separate factors. For all

additional models, the chi square goodness-of-fit difference and the model AIC were

examined between the 4-factor model and each additional model. These statistics and the

goodness-of-fit indices for each factor model are presented in Table 5. None of the

additional factor models were a better fit than the proposed 4-factor model.

Although the 4-factor model continued to be the better fitting model, the high

correlations between the factors suggested problems within the model. Thus, an

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) using maximum likelihood extraction and an oblimin

rotation was analyzed to see if items loaded on more than one factor or if items loaded

better on a different factor not previously hypothesized, and to see how many factors adequately explained the data. Thus, an EFA was run using maximum likelihood extraction with oblimin rotation. The percent of total variance explained by 1 factor was 36%, for 2 factors was 42%, for 3 factors was 45%, and for 4 factors was 48%, the eigenvalues dropped below 2.0 after 3 factors, and similarly, the scree plot (Figure 2) suggested that the data was best explained by 2 or 3 factors (Cattell, 1966). Thus, 2 EFAs, using maximum likelihood extraction and oblimin rotation, were run, one where 3-factors were specified and one where 2 factors were specified. The three factor EFA yielded uninterpretable results. Two of the factors could be interpreted as positive and negative parenting; however, the third factor only consisted of 5 items, 2 of which had factor loadings under .30 and would therefore be dropped from the factor (items 16 and 19; Kline, 2005). The remaining three items were: "My partner is often too involved with other things to carry a fair share of the parenting load," "I don't carry a fair share of the parenting load, because I am involved with other things," and "I often feel torn between my loyalties to my partner and my loyalties to my child." The second item was previously flagged during preliminary screening as a potentially problematic item with limited variability. Additionally, although the first two items were related to one another based on fairness of the shared parenting load, the third item measured a different aspect of the coparenting relationship and was unrelated to the first two items, thus the 3 factor EFA solution was not used.

The 2-factor EFA did result in two interpretable factors, a positive factor and a negative factor, consistent with much of the prior coparenting literature, which has

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primarily included supportive or positive and undermining or negative dimensions of coparenting (McConnell & Kerig, 2002; McHale, 1995; McHale, Kuersten, & Lauretti, 1996). See Table 7 for factor loadings of each question; bolded loadings indicated that that question was retained for that factor. Question 21 was dropped from Factor 1 and questions 5, 16, 27, and 48, were dropped from Factor 2 because they did not load .30 or higher (Kline, 2005). Additionally, question 66 was dropped because it loaded the same (.36) on each factor. The positive coparenting factor consisted of 39 items with a Cronbach's alpha of .88. Positive coparenting is characterized by partners engaging in supportive strategies, feeling like a unified team, and feeling like they are engaging with their child together and individually. The negative coparenting factor consisted of 22 items and had a Cronbach's alpha of .90. Negative coparenting is characterized by partners engaging in undermining strategies, arguing about parenting, and feeling like neither partner spends enough time engaging with their child or helping with child care activities. Positive coparenting and negative coparenting correlated, $r(188) = -.73, p < .01$.

Finally, a 2-factor CFA was analyzed using the results of the 2-factor EFA, because as described above, some items were deleted based on statistical reasons. Additionally, exploratory factor analysis does not provide information regarding how well the model fits the data. The 2-factor CFA indicated that the final 2-factor EFA solution was a good fitting model. The traditional chi square goodness-of-fit test was 8551.08, $p < .01$, the RMSEA was .07, and the CFI was .96. It is important to note that this 2-factor CFA was tested to examine the goodness-of-fit indices for model fit only.

Given the good model fit of the final 2-factor EFA solution the validity of the two

factors, positive coparenting and negative coparenting, was examined further.

Table 5. *Initial Confirmatory Factor Analyses Results*

CFA Models	Chi Square	RMSEA	CFI	Difference in chi square (degrees of freedom difference)	AIC
4-factor	4682.11**	.07	.96	--	4966.11
1-factor	6202.12**	.10	.95	1520.01 (6)	6474.12
2-factor	4862.55**	.08	.96	180.44 (5)	5136.55
3-factor	4732.16**	.08	.96	50.05 (3)	5010.16

Note: $**p < .01$

Table 6. *CFA Four-Factor Correlations*

	Coparenting Solidarity	Coparenting Support	Shared Parenting	Undermining Coparenting
Coparenting Solidarity	--	--	--	--
Coparenting Support	.94**	--	--	--
Shared Parenting	.92**	.89**	--	--
Undermining Coparenting	-.76**	-.77**	-.78**	--

Note: **$p < .01$

Figure 2. *Exploratory Factor Analysis Using Maximum Likelihood Extraction and an Oblimin Rotation*

Scree Plot
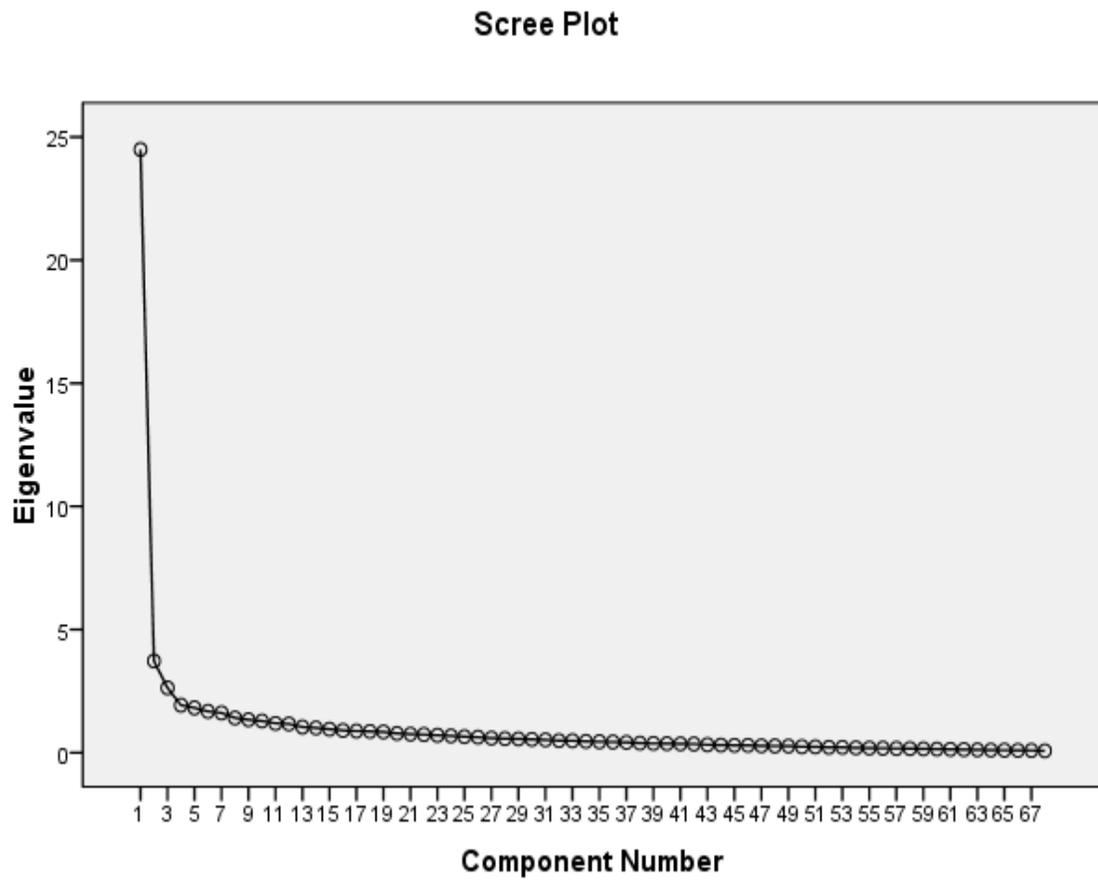
Table 7. *2-Factor Exploratory Factor Analysis*

Coparenting Questions	Original Coparenting Factor	Factor 1	Factor 2
38. My partner and I work closely together as parents	Solidarity	**0.88**	0.01
36. When I feel at my wits end as a parent, my partner gives me the extra support I need	Supportive	**0.84**	0.04
37. I often ask my partner his/her opinion about parenting issues	Supportive	**0.83**	0.10
63. My partner is willing to make some personal sacrifices in order to help with parenting	Shared Parenting	**0.79**	0.11
50. I appreciate the hard work my partner puts into being a good parent	Supportive	**0.78**	0.12
39. After my partner or I have handled a difficult situation with our child, we discuss it and try to figure out what we could have done better	Supportive	**0.77**	0.17
44. Having a child has helped me to see positive qualities in my partner that I never noticed before	Solidarity	**0.76**	0.13
49. When my partner and I disagree about parenting issues, we try to reach a compromise	Supportive	**0.76**	0.04
20. Parenting has given my partner and me a focus for the future	Solidarity	**0.75**	0.15
25. My partner often helps discipline our child	Shared Parenting	**0.75**	-0.02
35. My partner and I are growing and maturing together through our experiences as parents	Solidarity	**0.74**	-0.02
47. My partner and I share parenting responsibilities fairly	Shared Parenting	**0.72**	0.06
65. When I feel I may have made a mistake with our child, I can talk it over with my partner	Supportive	**0.71**	-0.05
40. I let my partner he/she is doing a good job as a parent	Supportive	**0.71**	-0.05
1. Parenting has made me feel closer to my partner	Solidarity	**0.69**	0.05

23. My partner pays too little attention to our child	Shared Parenting	**-0.63**	0.02
43. My partner makes me feel that I am the best possible parent for our child	Supportive	**0.60**	-0.10
26. My partner often asks my opinion on issues related to parenting	Supportive	**0.59**	-0.09
28. My partner plays with our child often	Shared Parenting	**0.58**	-0.02
54. I do not feel that parenting is as much of a close/intimate experience with my partner as I hoped it would be	Solidarity	**-0.57**	0.26
3. When there is a crisis with our child, my partner doesn't help me as much as I would like	Shared Parenting	**-0.56**	0.12
6. My partner appreciates how hard I work at being a good parent	Supportive	**0.56**	-0.20
8. I support my partner as a parent	Supportive	**0.54**	-0.16
13. My partner is often too involved with other things to carry a fair share of the parenting load	Shared Parenting	**-0.53**	0.09
14. My partner and I often talk together about what is best for our child	Supportive	**0.53**	-0.14
24. When my partner is gone, I fill him/her on what happens with our child	Solidarity	**0.53**	-0.01
2. My partner tells me I'm doing a good job as a parent	Supportive	**0.52**	-0.18
68. My partner and I often spend special time with our child as a family	Shared Parenting	**0.49**	-0.08
56. I back up my partner's discipline decisions	Supportive	**0.48**	-0.20
64. Seeing my partner with our child makes me happy	Solidarity	**0.48**	-0.24
61. My partner fills me in on what happens with our child when I am gone	Solidarity	**0.47**	-0.21
18. My partner backs me up as a parent	Supportive	**0.44**	-0.30
15. My partner supports my discipline decisions	Supportive	**0.43**	-0.29
55. My partner often encourages positive interactions between me and my child (for example, "Show mom" or "Let dad play too")	Supportive	**0.43**	-0.25
17. I feel closer to my child than to my partner	Solidarity	**-0.42**	0.21
52. My partner and I like to talk together	Solidarity	**0.41**	-0.18

about what our child will be like when he/she grows up			
59. I have learned that if our child needs something important, I can rely on my partner to help provide it	Shared Parenting	**0.41**	-0.20
19. My partner likes to play with our child, but then leaves the hard work to me	Shared Parenting	**-0.36**	0.22
29. I do more than my fair share when it comes to parenting	Shared Parenting	**-0.35**	-0.01
21. I am willing to make some personal sacrifices in order to help with parenting.	Shared Parenting	0.28	-0.18
42. I ignore rules that we have been set for our child	Undermining	0.01	**0.77**
60. My partner excludes me from his/her special time with our child	Undermining	0.02	**0.77**
41. When my child and I are playing, my partner interrupts us and takes over	Undermining	0.07	**0.73**
30. I exclude my partner from special time with our child	Undermining	0.13	**0.69**
33. My partner does things I don't like with our child when I am not around	Undermining	0.07	**0.69**
53. My partner gives in to our child after I have said no	Undermining	-0.02	**0.63**
31. My partner tries to have the last word on how we raise our child	Undermining	-0.04	**0.62**
57. My partner criticizes the way I parent	Undermining	-0.18	**0.62**
34. I give into our child after my partner has said no	Undermining	0.02	**0.60**
11. My partner ignores rules we have set for our child	Undermining	-0.09	**0.60**
45. Even if we have talked parenting ideas over, my partner does things his/her way	Undermining	-.0.15	**0.59**
10. I demand too much of my partner as a parent	Shared Parenting	0.10	**0.57**
62. I don't carry a fair share of the parenting load, because I am involved with other things	Shared Parenting	-0.06	**0.55**
58. My partner loves our child more than me	Solidarity	0.00	**0.52**
9. I resent that my partner has to give so much time to our child	Solidarity	0.01	**0.52**
22. My partner makes me feel like I am a bad influence on our child	Undermining	-0.20	**0.50**

12. My partner says bad things about me in front of our child	Undermining	-0.18	**0.47**
46. My partner makes too many demands on me as a parent	Shared Parenting	-0.23	**0.44**
32. My partner and I argue about parenting (for example, how and when to punish our child)	Supportive	-0.19	**0.44**
4. I still do things my own we, even if my partner I have talked parenting issues over	Undermining	-0.18	**0.37**
66. I say bad things about my partner in front of our child	Undermining	-0.36	0.36
67. I often play with our child	Shared Parenting	0.05	**-0.32**
7. I help discipline our child often	Shared Parenting	0.20	**-0.31**
51. I try to have the last word in how our child is brought up	Undermining	-0.26	0.29
5. I criticize the way my partner parents our child.	Undermining	-0.25	0.29
48. I feel like I don't pay enough attention to our child	Shared Parenting	-0.11	0.27
27. I often feel torn between my loyalties to my partner and my loyalties to my child	Solidarity	-0.21	0.25
16. I encourage my partner and child to have special time together	Supportive	0.17	-0.20

Note: Maximum Likelihood Extraction with oblimin rotation used; bold factor scores indicate that these items were retained in each factor.

Construct Validity

Construct validity is the validity of inferences about the higher order constructs (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002) and construct validation occurs when researchers believe their instrument reflects the construct they are trying to measure. Construct validity consists of two main types of validity, convergent and discriminant validity. Convergent validity is established when there is convergence between different instruments measuring the same construct and discriminant validity is established when measures intended to assess different constructs do not correlate strongly with one another (Cook & Campbell, 1979). Convergent validity of the internal structure of the CQ was examined by observing correlations between positive and negative coparenting and the PAI (Abidin & Brunner, 1995; Konold & Abidin, 2001) and positive and negative coparenting with the relevant parenting items from the adaptation of the MSQ.

The PAI was chosen because it is a frequently used instrument that has excellent internal reliability and good convergent validity with measures of marital satisfaction, parenting stress, parenting style, and child adjustment (Abidin & Brunner); however, it only measures two (solidarity and support) of the four dimensions of coparenting. The significant positive high correlation between the PAI and positive coparenting, $r(188) = .89$, $p < .01$, and the significant correlation between the PAI and negative coparenting, $r(188) = -.66$, $p < .01$ provide some evidence of convergent validity. Ideally, the correlation between negative coparenting and the PAI would have been .60 or lower (Kline, 2005), but the correlation was in the expected direction.

The correlation among the items relevant to parenting in the adaptation of the MSQ and positive and negative coparenting were examined. The parenting items correlated significantly positively with positive coparenting, $r(188) = .82$, $p < .01$, and significantly negatively with negative coparenting, $r(188) = -.64$, $p < .01$, providing additional evidence of convergent validity. Additionally these correlations were higher than the correlations between the two coparenting factors and the general marital items of the MSQ.

Discriminant validity was also examined. First, the correlation between positive and negative coparenting was examined. Ideally, the correlation between the two coparenting factors would be low to moderate to provide evidence of discriminant validity since the two factors are thought to be distinct from one another. The correlation between positive and negative coparenting, $r(188) = -.73$, $p < .01$, was in the expected direction, but was a little higher than ideal. Thus, this analysis provided limited support for discriminant validity.

The marital relationship and the coparenting relationship are thought to be two related, but distinct constructs (McHale & Fivaz-Depeursinge, 1999; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2004). Discriminant validity would be demonstrated if items related to other aspects of marriage of the adaptation of the MSQ (7 items; e.g., how satisfied are you with your family's total financial situation?) correlated low to moderate with positive and negative coparenting. The correlation between positive coparenting and the adaptation of the MSQ general marital variables, $r(188) = .74$, $p < .01$, was higher than anticipated; however the correlation between negative coparenting and the adaptation of the MSQ general marital

variables, $r(188) = -.59$, $p < .01$, was moderate, providing some evidence of discriminant

validity for the negative coparenting factor.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS: PART II

Hypothesis Testing

Analysis Plan

Data analysis proceeded in several steps. First, descriptive statistics were

calculated for all predictor and outcomes variables (see Table 8). Next, potential

covariates were examined by calculating simple correlations between income-to-needs

ratio, maternal age, number of children in household, and length of couple relationship

with positive and negative coparenting. ANOVA was used to determine if there were

mean differences in positive and negative coparenting based on race. None of these tests

were significant; thus, no covariates were identified. Third, as a preliminary test of

hypothesized associations between primary predictors and positive and negative

coparenting, simple correlations were calculated. Finally, to test the independence of all

main effects from one another and the proposed interactions, hierarchical multiple linear

regression was used to predict positive and negative coparenting. Separate regressions

were calculated for positive and negative coparenting.

Table 8. *Descriptive Statistics of Predictor and Primary Outcome Variables*

Variables	M	SD
Positive coparenting	3.38	.43
Negative coparenting	1.50	.38
Child negative affect	4.00	.82
Child effortful control	5.52	.61
Maternal depressive symptoms	6.81	5.71
Home chaos	18.2	2.87

Simple Correlations Among Predictor and Outcome Variables

Simple correlations were examined between the predictor variables and positive and negative coparenting (Table 9). Mothers who rated their children high on negative affect, reported more depressive symptoms, and more home chaos, reported less positive coparenting and more negative coparenting. Additionally, mothers who rated their children high on effortful control reported more positive coparenting and less negative coparenting. Child sex was not significantly associated with either positive or negative coparenting.

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Models

One of the aims of the study was to investigate the extent to which stressors and buffers moderate the associations between child negative affect and coparenting quality. Hierarchical regression analyses were calculated to test the independence of effects from one another and to test the proposed interaction effects between child negative affect and child effortful control, child sex, maternal depressive symptoms, and home chaos, to predict positive and negative coparenting. All main effects (i.e., child negative affect, child effortful control, child sex, maternal depressive symptoms, and home chaos) were entered into block one. The 4 proposed interactions (i.e., negative affect X effortful control, negative affect X child sex, negative affect X depressive symptoms, negative affect X home chaos) were entered in the final block using procedures outlined in Aiken and West (1991). First, any continuous variables were centered. Next, the centered variables were multiplied together and their product was entered into block two. Significant interactions were probed by calculating the simple slopes at plus and minus

one SD from the mean of the moderator variable (Aiken & West, 1991). Results of these analyses are presented in Table 10.

   Factors associated with mothers' perceptions of positive coparenting. Child negative affect and child effortful control were significant predictors of maternal perceptions of positive coparenting. Mothers who perceived their children as high on negative affect reported less positive coparenting. Also, mothers who perceived their children as exhibiting more effortful control reported more positive coparenting relationships. Additionally, there was a significant interaction between child negative affect and maternal depressive symptoms in relation to mothers' perceptions of positive coparenting. Consistent with the hypothesis, there was a negative relationship between child negative affect and positive coparenting when maternal depressive symptoms were high, $\beta = -.47$, $p < .01$, but not when depressive symptoms were low, $\beta = -.15$, *ns* (see Figure 3). Inconsistent with the hypotheses, the other buffer (high child effortful control) and stressors (i.e., having a girl, and high home chaos) did not moderate the relationship between child negative affect and positive coparenting. The full model accounted for 16% of the variability (adjusted R^2) in mothers' perceptions of positive coparenting, $F(4, 180) = 4.80$, $p < .01$.

   Factors associated with mothers' perceptions of negative coparenting. Similar to positive coparenting, child negative affect and effortful control were associated with negative coparenting. When mothers reported their children as being high in negative affect or low in effortful control they also reported more negative coparenting. Additionally, mothers who reported their homes as being more chaotic reported more

negative coparenting relationships. Inconsistent with the hypotheses neither the buffer (high child effortful control) nor the stressors (i.e., having a girl, high maternal depressive symptoms, and high home chaos) moderated the relationship between child negative affect and mothers' perceptions of negative coparenting. The full model accounted for 15% of the variability (adjusted R^2) in mothers' perceptions of negative coparenting, $F(4, 180) = 4.68$, $p < .01$.

To rule out the possibility that few interactions were detected due to multi-collinearity among the interaction terms, several additional regressions were calculated. Each included child negative affect, maternal depressive symptoms (as either the moderator of interest or as a control variable in all other analyses), the single main effect needed to construct the interaction term, and the interaction term with child negative affect. Thus, four separate regressions were run predicting both positive and negative coparenting. No additional significant interactions were identified using this approach. Thus, the complete models presented above, in which only depression operated as a moderator of child negative affect in relation to positive coparenting appear to be accurate and not the result of multi-colinearity among main effects or interaction terms. Results were consistent with previously tested regression models predicting positive coparenting and negative coparenting.

Post-hoc analyses. Next, comparable regressions were calculated to predict coparenting as assessed by the PAI. A similar pattern of prediction as what was observed for positive coparenting would be taken as further evidence of convergent validity. A different pattern from negative coparenting would be taken as further evidence of

divergent validity and provide support for assessing negative aspects of coparenting as a distinct dimension. Results presented in Table 11 suggested that using the positive coparenting and negative coparenting factors of the CQ provided additional information than exclusively using the PAI to examine mothers' perceptions of the coparenting relationship. Similar to the associations with positive and negative coparenting, child negative affect and child effortful control were significant predictors of maternal perceptions of the coparenting relationship as assessed by the PAI. Mothers who perceived their children as high on negative affect reported lower quality coparenting on the PAI. Also, mothers who perceived their children as exhibiting more effortful control reported higher quality coparenting on the PAI. However, in contrast to the prediction of positive coparenting, the child negative affect by maternal depressive symptoms interaction was a trend instead of a significant relationship. Additionally, in comparison to associations with negative coparenting, home chaos was not found as a main effect. The full model accounted for 14% of the variability (adjusted R^2) in mothers' perceptions of coparenting quality as assessed by the PAI, $F(4, 180) = 4.50$, $p < .01$; which is slightly lower than the variability accounted for mothers' perceptions of positive and negative coparenting. Additionally, the same models described above for positive and negative coparenting, where depression was controlled for and interactions were analyzed separately, were tested using the PAI as the measure of coparenting quality and results were consistent with the complete regression model predicting the PAI.

Table 9. *Correlations Among Study Variables*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Positive coparenting	--						
2. Negative coparenting	-.73**	--					
3. Child negative affect	-.31**	.30**	--				
4. Child effortful control	.20**	-.19**	-.04	--			
5. Child sex	.05	-.05	-.18*	-.37**	--		
6. Maternal depressive symptoms	-.28**	.27**	.33**	-.22**	.10	--	
7. Home chaos	-.24**	.29**	.17*	-.17*	-.05	.38**	--

Note: [t]$p < .10$, *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

Table 10. *Hierarchical Multiple Regressions Predicting Positive and Negative Coparenting*

Predictors	β entry	β final	$R^2\Delta$	β entry	β final	$R^2\Delta$
	Positive Coparenting			Negative Coparenting		
1. Parenting Context			.15**			.15*
Child negative affect	-.22**	-.31**	--	.22**	.30**	--
Child effortful control	.17*	.18*	--	-.15*	-.15*	--
Child sex	.08	.10	--	-.06	-.07	--
Maternal depressive symptoms	-.14[t]	-.11	--	.11	.12	--
Home chaos	-.11	-.08	--	.18**	.16*	--
2. Interactions			.01			.00
Negative affect X effortful control	-.03	--	--	.06	--	--
Negative affect X child sex	.10	--	--	-.12	--	--
Negative affect X depressive symptoms	-.17*	--	--	.03	--	--
Negative affect X home chaos	.03	--	--	-.00	--	--
Total Adj. R²			**.16****			**.15****

Note: β = standardized regression coefficient. [t]*p* < .10, *p < .05, **p < .01.

Figure 3. *Interaction Effect of Child Negative Affect and Maternal Depressive Symptoms on Mothers' Perceptions of Positive Coparenting*
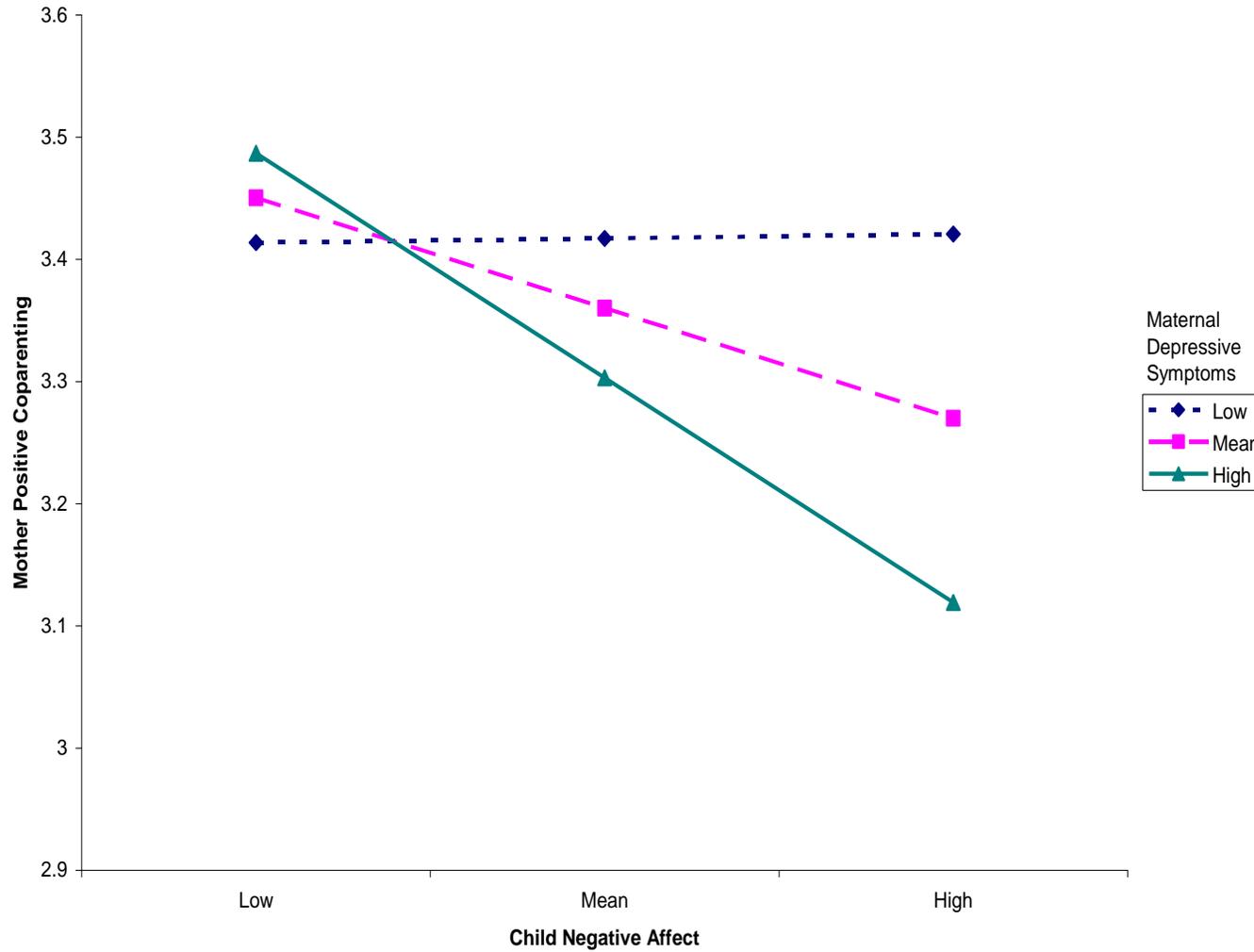
Table 11. *Hierarchical Multiple Regression Predicting Parenting Alliance Inventory*

Predictors		β entry	β final	$R^2\Delta$
			Parenting Alliance Inventory	
1.	Parenting Context			.14**
	Child negative affect	-.21**	-.28**	--
	Child effortful control	.20**	.21**	--
	Child sex	.07	.07	--
	Maternal depressive symptoms	-.14[t]	-.09	--
	Home chaos	-.09	-.06	--
2.	Interactions			.00
	Negative affect X effortful control	-.01	--	--
	Negative affect X child sex	.06	--	--
	Negative affect X depressive symptoms	-.14[t]	--	--
	Negative affect X home chaos	-.03	--	--
Total Adj. R^2				**.14**

Note: β = standardized regression coefficient. [t] $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION

Previous researchers have found that parents experience more marital conflict,
fathers are less involved, and children exhibit more externalizing and internalizing
behavior problems when parents exhibit more negative coparenting (McBride & Rane,
1998; Katz & Low, 2004; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2008; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2004).
In contrast, more supportive coparenting is related to children's positive peer behavior,
higher academic competence, and more harmonious sibling relationships (Brody et al.,
1999; McHale et al., 1999; McHale et al., 2000). Thus, identifying factors that predict
quality of coparenting is of interest. The role of child temperament, specifically the
aspect of negative affect, on coparenting quality has presented conflicting results, with
some researchers finding no associations and others finding negative associations.
Crockenberg's proposition (1986) suggests that the links between temperament and
parenting may be moderated by individual characteristics and social contexts. It is
probable that the association between temperament and coparenting is equally complex.
Coparenting has often been described as multidimensional (Feinberg, 2003, Margolin et
al., 2001, McHale, 1995), but less clear is what exactly constitutes those dimensions and
how to measure coparenting in a multidimensional way through self-report. Therefore,
there were two goals to the current study. The primary goal was to consider child
effortful control, child sex, maternal depressive symptoms, and home chaos as

moderators of the relationship between child negative affect and coparenting. The current study built upon and extended previous research that has observed the relationship between temperament and coparenting quality during the infancy/toddler period by examining it during the preschool period. In order to achieve this goal, a new measure of coparenting was used. The preliminary goal was to examine the psychometric properties of the newly developed Coparenting Questionnaire with particular attention to the number of dimensions that thoroughly assess the coparenting relationship. Although the study does contribute to the developing coparenting literature, there was only limited support for the moderation hypotheses and the proposed four factor model of coparenting was not supported by the factor structure of the Coparenting Questionnaire.

This chapter consists of four sections. In the first section, I discuss the psychometric evaluation of the Coparenting Questionnaire as the primary analyses rest on this measure. In the second section I discuss the direct associations and interactive effects between child negative affect, child effortful control, child sex, maternal depressive symptoms, and home chaos with the coparenting relationship. In the third section I discuss the limitations of the study and provide direction for future research. In the final section I summarize and conclude the study.

Evaluating the Coparenting Questionnaire

One goal of this study was to evaluate the Coparenting Questionnaire (Burney, 2007) that I designed to more thoroughly assess the proposed multiple dimensions of coparenting than existing self-report measures. Previous self-report measures of coparenting in two-parent families have been limited in numerous ways. A strength of the

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Coparenting Questionnaire is that it measures multiple dimensions of coparenting as laid out by Van Egeren and Hawkins (2004) and it asks mothers to report on their own behaviors, their partner's behaviors, and how unified they are as a dyad and a triad to obtain a comprehensive assessment of coparenting quality. The present study specifically tested if coparenting solidarity, coparenting support, shared parenting, and undermining coparenting as measured by the Coparenting Questionnaire are distinct dimensions of coparenting.

Although the proposed 4-factor model fit the data well, the high associations among the three positive factors suggested they were more redundant than unique, and subsequent analyses suggested that the Coparenting Questionnaire reflects two distinct, but related factors: positive coparenting and negative coparenting. The 2-factor model also demonstrated good internal consistency reliability and convergent validity with the PAI for the positive subscale of the CQ. Additionally, positive and negative coparenting were more highly correlated with the parenting items on adaptation of the Aspects of Married Life Questionnaire, than with the general marital items that were unrelated to parenting.

The results suggest that the positive coparenting and negative coparenting factors of the Coparenting Questionnaire are likely related, but distinct dimensions of the coparenting relationship. That a different pattern of prediction emerged for the two, as discussed below, also supports the view that they are unique features of coparenting. This highlights the importance of measuring aspects of positive and negative coparenting separately and not as opposite ends of the same spectrum. This is one of the strengths of

using the Coparenting Questionnaire over the Parenting Alliance Inventory, which is often used unidimensionally and does not measure negative aspects of the coparenting relationship. This point was apparent when examining the differences between what was associated with positive and negative coparenting and the Parenting Alliance Inventory. When the Parenting Alliance Inventory was used as the measure of coparenting, home chaos was not found to be a main effect as it was with negative coparenting. Although, a similar pattern was found when examining associations of positive coparenting and coparenting as assessed by the Parenting Alliance Inventory, the interaction between child negative affect and maternal depressive symptoms was not significant when predicting the PAI, but was for positive coparenting. This may be because the positive scale of the Coparenting Questionnaire taps into features of coparenting that the Parenting Alliance Inventory does not. Although some items of the Parenting Alliance Inventory reflect coparenting solidarity and coparenting support, the items do not reflect shared parenting dimensions of the coparenting relationship. Thus, using the Coparenting Questionnaire as a measure of coparenting may allow for more elements of the coparenting relationship to be examined than using the Parenting Alliance Inventory.

Prior research that has separately examined positive and negative dimensions of coparenting has done so through observation (McConnell & Kerig, 2002; McHale et al., 2004; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2007). Observations of coparenting often just assess behaviors that occur in the triadic context. Therefore, coparenting behaviors that occur between only one parent and the child and coparenting interactions that take place just between the two parents, not in the presence of the child are missed by observers. Thus,

another strength of using the Coparenting Questionnaire to measure coparenting is that it allows researchers to account for interactions that occur outside of the triadic context. Additionally, observations are often short (5 minutes or less) and may not always elicit negative interactions between parents, thus potentially not capturing the negative aspect of the coparenting relationship. Similar to the coding of observations of supportive/positive coparenting, the positive coparenting factor of the Coparenting Questionnaire consists of multiple positive elements of the coparenting relationship. However, a strength of the positive coparenting factor of the Coparenting Questionnaire is that it measures aspects of coparenting solidarity, or feelings of togetherness while raising a child, and shared parenting, or each partner's sense of fairness about the way responsibilities are divided. These aspects of coparenting cannot be objectively measured by observers. Thus, using the Coparenting Questionnaire is a beneficial way to examine the multiple positive and negative aspects of mothers' perceptions of the coparenting relationship.

The 4-factor structure was not supported, but the 2-factor structure still supports the notion that coparenting is multidimensional. This result could be interpreted in three ways. First, it may be that there really are not four distinct dimensions of coparenting. This may be true given that the two factors, positive and negative coparenting, are consistent with much of the prior coparenting literature, which has primarily included supportive or positive and undermining or negative dimensions of coparenting (e.g., McConnell & Kerig, 2002; McHale, 1995; McHale, Kuersten, & Lauretti, 1996). Second, it is also possible that the Coparenting Questionnaire does not adequately assess all four

dimensions of coparenting. Given that the 2-factor solution only accounted for 42% of the variance, it is likely that other factors make up the construct of coparenting. More concise items that better reflect the dimensions may need to be added and tested. Although I argue that self-reports are beneficial in measuring the coparenting relationship it may be that they only tap into the extent to which couples view their coparenting in positive and negative terms. Observations of coparenting may be able to tap more stylistic features. The use of both self-report and observation may more adequately tap all four dimensions of coparenting. Finally, it is also possible that there are more than two dimensions of coparenting, they just may not be the same dimensions that I conceptualized. Multiple researchers have defined coparenting in different ways and it may be that different conceptualized dimensions of coparenting may more accurately describe the coparenting relationship (see Feinberg, 2003).

<div align="center">Child Negative Affect and Coparenting</div>

Main Effect Associations of Positive and Negative Coparenting

Results of the hierarchical multiple regressions suggested that child negative affect was directly associated with positive and negative coparenting. For positive coparenting, this association was qualified by an interaction with maternal depressive symptoms that is described below. Although these main effect findings were not hypothesized they are consistent with the family systems theory principle that systems and subsystems are interdependent (Minuchin, 1985), emphasizing the importance of examining the influence of characteristics of the child subsystem on the coparenting subsystem. Specifically, when mothers reported their children as displaying more

negative affect they also perceived less support and unification in their coparenting

relationships. This is consistent with results from Schoppe-Sullivan et al. (2007), where

parents exhibited more supportive coparenting when observers rated infants as fussier.

Likely there is some spillover from the child subsystem into the coparenting subsystem.

There was a similar main effect relationship between child negative affect and negative

coparenting, such that when mothers perceived their infants as high on negative affect

they also reported more undermining, more arguing with their partner about parenting,

and a general feeling of lack of involvement with their child and child care activities.

This is consistent with results from Cook et al. (2009) and Lindsey et al. (2005), who

found that when mothers reported that their children exhibited more negative affect they

exhibited more undermining and negative coparenting. The stress and lack of confidence

associated with rearing a child who is more easily frustrated and frightened, and more

difficult to soothe may result in parents becoming more critical of each others' parenting

or engaging in more undermining strategies or withdrawing from involvement with the

child. These results are inconsistent with some previous research, others have not found a

significant main effect of child negative affect on coparenting (Schoppe-Sullivan et al.,

2007; McHale et al., 2004; Stright and Bales, 2003). In these studies, coparenting was

examined when children were infants and toddlers. It may be that preschoolers are more

difficult to coparent, because the focus of parenting has shifted to the internalization of

values, morals, and rules (Sroufe et al., 2002). During this time, children are gaining

more autonomy and becoming more verbally demanding and fathers are becoming more

involved with their children and coparenting. High levels of child negative affect may

have a stronger effect during this time period because it makes it more difficult for parents to achieve this goal successfully together. There may be more opportunities for parents to be less positive and more negative with one another in their coparenting during the preschool period, than when children are infants and toddlers.

Additionally, child effortful control was associated with more positive and less negative coparenting. Although this main effect was not hypothesized, it is consistent also with the family systems view that characteristics of the child subsystem influence the coparenting subsystem. It may be the case that children who exhibit higher levels of effortful control make coparenting an easier task. Children who regulate well may be easier for parents to care for facilitating a sense of teamwork and supportiveness among coparents. Additionally, as these children may be easier to care for there may be fewer overt reasons for one coparent to criticize the other's parenting. This is consistent with results of Burney and Leerkes (2010), where mothers who perceived their infants as easily soothed also reported more positive coparenting relationships. Although this study examined coparenting during infancy, similar results examining the relationship between child effortful control and parenting when children were preschoolers have been found. For example, parents of children with high effortful control have been found to exhibit more positive parenting and less negative parenting when interacting with their children (Karreman, van Tuijil, van Aken, and Dekovik, 2008). Most studies examining the effect of temperament on family functioning focus on the negative effects of negative reactive dimensions on parenting, marital well-being and coparenting. This finding, coupled with

prior research, underscores the importance of also considering positive child

characteristics that may have a positive effect on the family.

Interaction Effects for Positive and Negative Coparenting

Crockenberg's (1986) proposition highlights the importance of examining

individual characteristics and social contexts as moderators to the link between

temperament and parenting. In other words, she argued that negative aspects of

temperament would only undermine parenting quality if other risks were present or

buffers absent. Consistent with this framework, child negative affect was only negatively

associated with positive coparenting when maternal depressive symptoms were high, but

not when they were low. To my knowledge, no studies have examined this moderating

effect of depressive symptoms on links between negative affect and coparenting, but a

similar effect has been found in relation to parenting (Campbell et al., 1995; Pauli-Pott et

al., 2000; Teti & Gelfand, 1991). The negative moods, attributions, and interpersonal

styles affiliated with depressive symptoms may make it challenging for coparents to

support one another, work together as a unified team, and be involved with their child

apart and together as they also cope with a child high on negative affect. This finding

highlights the importance of taking into account family context, particularly parental

well-being, when examining the relationship between child negative affect and

coparenting.

In contrast, child effortful control, child gender and home chaos did not moderate

the effect of child negative affect on positive and negative coparenting. This is

inconsistent with Crockenberg's (1986) proposition and the family systems perspective

that systems may be better understood by examining the interplay between multiple

subsystems (Cox & Paley, 2003). By the time children reach preschool age, buffers or

stressors may not work in the same manner they do in infancy for coparenting more

reactive infants, or perhaps the specific buffers and stressors change over time. That only

one of eight tested interaction effects (4 each in relation to positive and negative

coparenting) was significant, does not lend strong support to the view that the effects of

children's temperamentally-based negative affect on coparenting is dependent on other

factors. That the one significant interaction was apparent in relation to positive

coparenting may indicate that negative affect only undermines positive features of

coparenting when other risks are present. In contrast, child negative affect appears to

contribute to negative features of coparenting regardless of the presence of other stressors

or buffers. In future research it would be useful to consider whether positive aspects of

temperament, like effortful control, operate similarly. The absence of the interaction

between effortful control and negative affect, coupled with the main effect of effortful

control in this study may indicate the positive child characteristics have comparable

effects on both positive and negative aspects of coparenting.

Finally, although child negative affect was only predicted to correlate negatively

with coparenting quality when home chaos was high, but not when it was low, there was

a significant positive association between home chaos and negative coparenting, such that

when mothers reported their homes as more chaotic they also perceived their coparenting

relationships as more negative. This relationship has not been examined in the

coparenting literature, but it is consistent with the principle of family systems theory that

systems mutually influence one another and with studies in the parenting literature where household chaos has been associated with more negative parenting behaviors (Evans & Lepore, 1992; Evans, Maxwell, & Hart, 1999; Valiente, Lemery-Chalfant, & Reiser, 2007). For coparents, it may be that continued exposure to noise, crowding and a lack of organization can increase parents' fatigue and anxiety resulting in them being more critical and negative with one another as they parent their child together. This finding illustrates the value of considering the role of family context in relation to coparenting quality.

Despite limited support for the hypotheses and the proposed 4-factor coparenting structure the current study contributes to the coparenting literature. The temperament main effects and interaction effect highlight the role that children may play in shaping the coparenting relationship and demonstrate that such effects are apparent beyond infancy and into the preschool years. Awareness of possible child effects on coparenting may be useful to practitioners. These findings suggest that parents of children high on negative affect or low on effortful control are at risk for compromised coparenting. Given evidence that such children are already at risk for subsequent behavioral problems (Degnan, Calkins, Keane, & Hill-Soderlund, 2008) and that poor coparenting has also been linked with heightened behavior problems suggest that these children may face a dual risk. That is, their temperamental characteristics put them on a developmental trajectory towards behavior problems and simultaneously elicit environmental characteristics (poor coparenting) that magnify that risk. Thus, practitioners could provide parents of children who are more temperamentally difficult with strategies to

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work together to soothe a child who exhibits more negative affect or to design activities and environments that foster better attentional, behavioral, and emotional control. Practitioners might also encourage parents of children high on negative affect or low on effortful control to support one another by providing positive feedback, emotional support, and respite to one another. Additionally, given that the negative effect of child negative affect on positive coparenting was magnified when mothers reported more depressive symptoms suggests it is important that particular attention should be given to child temperament when parental well-being is compromised.

<div align="center">Study Limitations and Future Directions</div>

The results of this study must be considered cautiously due to several limitations. First, although, the sample was diverse in socioeconomic status (i.e., 27% of families could be categorized as poor based on the income to needs ratio) and relatively diverse ethnically (i.e., 26% non-White), minority groups other than African-American were not well represented. Therefore, replication of this study is needed in samples that are more racially and ethnically diverse. Since the mothers in this study were heterosexual and either married to or cohabitating with their partners the results of this study also would not generalize to families that consist of other coparenting configurations (e.g., mothers and grandmothers, gay and lesbian parents). Additionally, fathers' perceptions of coparenting were not obtained. It is possible that fathers define and view the coparenting relationship differently than mothers and their perceptions of coparenting may be influenced by different characteristics of the family context.

The use of a novel measure of coparenting was also a limitation. The Coparenting

Questionnaire was developed to distinctly measure four dimensions of coparenting;

however, an exploratory factor analysis reflected a 2-factor structure. Although this 2-

factor structure was supported by good reliability and adequate evidence of construct

validity, additional tests of reliability such as, test-retest reliability and predictive validity,

the ability of the instrument to estimate some form of behavior that is external to the

measuring instrument itself (Nunally, 1978), would provide stronger evidence that the

Coparenting Questionnaire reflects a 2-factor structure. Even though the 2-factor solution

suggested good model fit using a confirmatory factor analysis, it is important to note that

this solution is driven by the data. Although I would have liked to have further tested the

2-factor solution, it is not recommended to test a measure on the same sample it was

validated on (John & Benet-Martinez, 2000). Replication in another sample of mothers

with preschoolers would increase confidence in the 2-factor structure.

Although a 2-factor solution was found, several items and scale scores for all four

dimensions of the Coparenting Questionnaire had low variability (i.e., standard

deviations below .50 and means close to the extremes of 1 and 4). It is possible that

limited variability in the sample restricted the four factors from being assessed well.

Alternatively, refinement of the measure may result in a different number of factors. It

may be that the four dimensions were not adequately measured by the items proposed for

them, thus an issue with content validity, the degree to which items of an instrument are

representative of the construct they are targeted to measure (Nunnally, 1978). Experts in

the coparenting literature were not conferred with in the development of the Coparenting

Questionnaire and it is possible that they would have chosen different items to represent coparenting solidarity, coparenting support, shared parenting, and undermining coparenting. In addition, there was 53% of redundancy between positive and negative coparenting, supporting the possibility of a second-order general coparenting factor. Ideally I would have explicitly tested this hypothesized hierarchical structure, where a second-order broad coparenting factor was directly influenced by the first-order positive coparenting and negative coparenting factors, but at least three first-order factors are needed to identify a model with a second-order factor (Kline, 2005). Future research may find a 3 or 4-factor solution and could directly evaluate this hierarchical structure.

Another potential limitation to this study is that associations may be inflated due to shared method variance among self-report measures. By controlling for maternal depressive symptoms this concern was somewhat reduced because it accounts for a negative reporting bias. Although a strength of the CQ is that it has mothers report on their coparenting behaviors, their partner's coparenting behaviors, and their attitudes about coparenting, it likely does not fully capture the quality of the coparenting relationship. Including multiple measures of coparenting (e.g., structured observations and questionnaire measures; McHale & Rasmussen, 1998) may provide a richer context for understanding the coparenting relationship and capture unique information about the process of coparenting. Likewise, utilizing a multi-method approach to assess child temperament based on mother report and direct observation would reduce this concern.

Only 16% of positive coparenting variance and 15% of negative coparenting variance was explained, suggesting that other aspects of the family and ecological context

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influence the coparenting relationship. Families reside in broader ecological contexts, and other factors external to the family such as parent work hours and work conditions, may moderate the relationship between child negative affect and coparenting. Specifically, work stress has been associated with individuals being less able to tolerate frustration and has a negative effect on their interpersonal relationships (Atkinson et al., 2000; Garmezy, Masten & Tellegen, 1984). Individuals with work stress may be fatigued from work and less able tolerate the frustration that can accompany parenting a more reactive child who is more irritable and more difficult to soothe. These stressors will make it challenging for coparents to support one another and work together as a team. For positive coparenting depression interacted with child negative affect. It is possible that other individual characteristics could be identified as stressors that could exacerbate the negative effect of having a child high in negative affect. Since the coparenting relationship is in part created through the interactions of both partners, it would be interesting for future research to consider the role of both partners well-being or personalities play on the relationship between child negative affect and coparenting. In this study, actor or spill-over effects were examined for mothers (e.g., mothers own depressive symptoms were examined in their relation to the association between child negative affect and coparenting); however, it is also possible that there could be cross-over or partner effects, where fathers' well-being or personality characteristics could influence the relationship between mothers perceptions of child negative affect on the coparenting relationship (Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006) and vice versa. For example, if fathers display more depressive symptoms, they may become more irritable with their partners and become more critical of their

parenting skills, this lack of support and increased undermining may create tension within

the coparenting relationship when parents are already parenting a more challenging

reactive child, even if a mother is not displaying depressive symptoms.

A final limitation is that the study is cross-sectional in nature; therefore, it is

impossible to determine the direction of effects. Although, I took the perspective that

characteristics of the child would influence mothers' perceptions of coparenting, it is

equally probable that coparenting quality experienced could have influenced the

children's temperaments, or at least their mothers' perception of temperament. Given the

design of the present study it was not possible to examine reciprocal effects between

child temperament and coparenting, but future longitudinal research could examine if

temperament has a greater influence on coparenting or if coparenting has a greater

influence on temperament by using a cross-lagged design. Additionally, longitudinal

studies would also inform how coparenting changes over time as parents and children go

through multiple transitions (e.g., the transition to parenthood, birth of a sibling) as well

as the interplay of temperament with stressors and buffers in the family context and how

they affect the coparenting relationship over time.

<div align="center">Summary and Conclusions</div>

In sum, although there was limited support for the hypotheses, the study makes

important contributions to the coparenting knowledge base. Although the proposed 4-

factor structure of the Coparenting Questionnaire was not supported, that there were 2-

distinct factors (positive and negative) and that there were differences in what predicted

positive coparenting and negative coparenting support the view that the coparenting

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relationship is multidimensional. The effects of child temperament on positive and

negative coparenting highlight the importance of examining the role of the child on the

coparenting relationship. The main effect of child effortful control on the coparenting

relationship suggests that future researcher and practitioners should consider the potential

positive effect on the family that positive child characteristics can have. Additionally, that

child negative affect was only negatively associated with positive coparenting when

maternal depressive symptoms were high, but not when they were low highlights the

importance of taking into account family context, particularly parental well-being, when

examining the relationship between child negative affect and coparenting. Thus, this

study furthers the goal of uncovering factors within the family that shape mothers'

perceptions of the coparenting relationship.

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APPENDIX A.

COPARENTING QUESTIONNAIRE

Coparenting Solidarity. This dimension is characterized by an affective, enduring, and unified relationship that grows between individuals raising a child. Coparenting solidarity is demonstrated by warm and positive emotions that are expressed between partners while interacting with or about the child. Even when one partner is absent, the present partner talks of the absent partner in a positive manner. Parents who experience coparenting solidarity often report that as they parent together, they grow together and become closer (Van Egeren & Hawkins, 2004).

- Parenting has made me feel closer to my partner. **(#1)**
- I resent that my partner has to give so much of my time to our child (-). **(#9)**
- I feel closer to my child than to my partner (-). **(#17)**
- Parenting has given my partner and me a focus for the future. **(#20)**
- When my partner is gone, I fill him/her on what happens with our child. **(#24)**
- I often feel torn between my loyalties to my partner and my loyalties to my child (-). **(#27)**
- My partner and I are growing and maturing together through our experiences as parents. **(#35)**
- My partner and I work closely together as parents. **(#38)**
- Having a child has helped me to see positive qualities in my partner that I never noticed before. **(#44)**
- My partner and I like to talk together about what our child will be like when he/she grows up. **(#52)**
- I do not feel that parenting is as much of a close/intimate experience with my partner as I hoped it would be (-). **(#54)**
- My partner loves our child more than me (-). **(#58)**
- My partner fills me in on what happens with our child when I am gone. **(#61)**
- Seeing my partner with our child makes me happy. **(#64)**
- My partner and I often spend special time with our child as a family. **(#68)**

Coparenting Support. This dimension is defined as the different strategies that support each partner's efforts to accomplish parenting goals or the parent's perceptions of support in his/her efforts to accomplish parenting goals. The most critical feature of coparenting support is that each partner reinforces the others' parenting goals. In a triadic context the parents' cooperative interchanges build upon one another. (Belsky, Crnic, & Gable, 1995; Van Egeren & Hawkins, 2004)

- My partner tells me I'm doing a good job as a parent. **(#2)**
- My partner appreciates how hard I work at being a good parent. **(#6)**
- I support my partner as a parent. **(#8)**
- My partner and I often talk together about what is best for our child. **(#14)**
- My partner supports my discipline decisions. **(#15)**
- I encourage my partner and child to have special time together. **(#16)**
- My partner backs me up as a parent. **(#18)**
- My partner often asks my opinion on issues related to parenting. **(#26)**
- My partner and I argue about parenting (for example, how and when to punish our child) (-). **(#32)**
- When I feel at my wits end as a parent, my partner gives me the extra support I need. **(#36)**
- I often ask my partner his/her opinion about parenting issues. **(#37)**
- After my partner or I have handled a difficult situation with our child, we discuss it and try to figure out what we could have done better. **(#39)**
- I let my partner he/she is doing a good job as a parent. **(#40)**
- My partner makes me feel that I am the best possible parent for our child. **(#43)**
- When my partner and I disagree about parenting issues, we try to reach a compromise. **(#49)**
- I appreciate the hard work my partner puts into being a good parent. **(#50)**
- My partner often encourages positive interactions between me and my child (for example, "Show mom" or "Let dad play too"). **(#55)**
- I back up my partner's discipline decisions. **(#56)**
- When I feel I may have made a mistake with our child, I can talk it over with my partner. **(#65)**

Shared Parenting. This dimension is characterized by the degree to which one or the other parent is responsible for limit-setting and each partner's sense of fairness about the way responsibilities are divided. Share parenting is assessed in two ways; balance of involvement and mutual involvement. Balance of involvement is the extent to which each partner interacts with the child relative to the other parent. Mutual involvement is the degree to which both parents are engaged with the child at the same time (Van Egeren & Hawkins, 2004)

- When there is a crisis with our child, my partner doesn't help me as much as I would like (-). **(#3)**
- I help discipline our child often. **(#7)**
- I demand too much of my partner as a parent (-). **(#10)**
- My partner is often too involved with other things to carry a fair share of the parenting load (-). **(#13)**
- My partner likes to play with our child, but then leaves the hard work to me (-). **(#19)**
- I am willing to make some personal sacrifices in order to help with parenting. **(#21)**

- My partner pays too little attention to our child (-). **(#23)**
- My partner often helps discipline our child. **(#25)**
- My partner plays with our child often. **(#28)**
- I do more than my fair share when it comes to parenting (-). **(#29)**
- My partner makes too many demands on me as a parent (-). **(#46)**
- My partner and I share parenting responsibilities fairly. **(#47)**
- I feel like I don't pay enough attention to our child (-). **(#48)**
- I have learned that if our child needs something important, I can rely on my partner to help provide it. **(#59)**
- I don't carry a fair share of the parenting load, because I am involved with other things (-). **(#62)**
- My partner is willing to make some personal sacrifices in order to help with parenting. **(#63)**
- I often play with our child. **(#67)**

Undermining Coparenting. In this dimension, partners employ strategies that prevent the other partner from accomplishing parenting goals. This component is evidenced by criticism and lack of respect for a partner's parenting decisions (Van Egeren & Hawkins, 2004). Undermining actions can be overt (i.e. intruding upon one another's interactions with the baby or criticism aimed at the partner) or covert (i.e. one parent makes comments about the other to the child or excludes partner from desired activity (McHale, 1997; McHale, Kazali, Robman, Talbot, Carleton, & Lieberson, 2004).

- I still do things my own we, even if my partner I have talked parenting issues over. **(#4)**
- I criticize the way my partner parents our child. **(#5)**
- My partner ignores rules we have set for our child. **(#11)**
- My partner says bad things about me in front of our child. **(#12)**
- My partner makes me feel like I am a bad influence on our child. **(#22)**
- I exclude my partner from special time with our child. **(#30)**
- My partner tries to have the last word on how we raise our child. **(#31)**
- My partner does things I don't like with our child when I am not around. **(#33)**
- I give into our child after my partner has said no. **(#34)**
- When my child and I are playing, my partner interrupts us and takes over. **(#41)**
- I ignore rules that we have been set for our child. **(#42)**
- Even if we have talked parenting ideas over, my partner does things his/her way. **(#45)**
- I try to have the last word in how our child is brought up. **(#51)**
- My partner gives in to our child after I have said no. **(#53)**
- My partner criticizes the way I parent. **(#57)**
- My partner excludes me from his/her special time with our child. **(#60)**
- I say bad things about my partner in front of our child. **(#66)**