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Based on data from a sample of 120 Mexican immigrant couples, this study tested an estimated actor-partner interdependence model (APIM) in which the linkages between spouses' perceptions of marital quality (i.e., marital warmth and marital negativity), spousal incongruence in familism attitudes, and spouses' coparenting satisfaction were examined. The model simultaneously explored the moderating effects of spouses' incongruence in familism attitudes, a key Latino cultural value that reflects family cohesion, obligations, and interdependence. Results showed significant actor effects from marital warmth to coparenting satisfaction. Wives' marital warmth was associated with higher levels of wives' coparenting satisfaction and husbands' marital warmth was associated with higher levels of husbands' coparenting satisfaction. A significant interaction qualified the actor effect for wives' marital warmth to her coparenting satisfaction. Spouses' incongruence in familism attitudes moderated this association indicating that the expected positive association between wives' marital warmth and her coparenting satisfaction was present *only* for couples with low spousal incongruence in familism attitudes (i.e., couples in which spouses are in close agreement on familism attitudes). Marital negativity and incongruence on familism attitudes were not significantly related to spouses' coparenting satisfaction. Findings underscore the link between spouses' marital warmth and their coparenting satisfaction and suggest that effective coparenting is nested within the context of a warm and supportive relationship.

MEXICAN IMMIGRANT COUPLES' MARITAL QUALITY AND COPARENTING
SATISFACTION: THE ROLE OF SPOUSES' INCONGRUENCE
IN FAMILISM ATTITUDES

by

Yuliana Rodriguez

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To the UNIDOS families who made this study possible.

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of
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Committee Chair _____

Committee Members _____

Date of Acceptance by Committee

Date of Final Oral Examination

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	vi
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS AND LITERATURE REVIEW	5
III. METHOD	20
IV. RESULTS	26
V. DISCUSSION	31
REFERENCES	39
APPENDIX A. TABLES AND FIGURES	49
APPENDIX B. COPARENTING ENCYCLOPEDIC ENTRY	54

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1. Descriptive Statistics ($N = 120$)	49
Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations between the Variables	51

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1. Conceptual Model and Hypothesized Associations among Constructs	50
Figure 2. APIM Model Results of Conceptual Model (<i>N</i> = 120)	52
Figure 3. LOOP/PLOT in Mplus Visually Illustrating the Significant Interaction between Wives' Marital Warmth and Spouses' Incongruence in Familism Attitudes on Wives' Coparenting Satisfaction	53

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

With 11.4 million residents in the U.S. in 2013, Latinos of Mexican origin represent the largest country of origin group in the United States among the nation's 40 million immigrants (Gonzalez-Barrera & Lopez, 2013). Partly due to high fertility rates and earlier childbearing, Latinos are a young population and Mexican-origin Latinos, more specifically, are younger than both the U.S. population and Latinos overall (Pew Hispanic Center, 2011). Mexican immigrants are also more likely than native-born Mexicans to be married—58% vs. 34% respectively. As a group, Mexican-origin Latinos are slightly more likely (45%) to be married than Latinos overall (43%; Gonzalez-Barrera & Lopez, 2013). Also, compared to other Latinos and non-Hispanic Whites, Mexican-Americans and native born Mexicans are more likely to be married at younger ages. Whereas only one fifth of 20- to 24- year old non-Hispanic Whites are married, approximately one-third of Mexican Americans in the same age range are married (Oropesa & Landale, 2004).

Still, little is known about the marriage and coparenting experiences of couples of Mexican origin living in the United States despite the large representation of this population that has high marriage rates and earlier childbearing. This lack of knowledge is problematic because couples of Mexican origin living in the United States have higher rates of marital dissolution during the childrearing years than those in Mexico and their

White counterparts in the United States (Bramlett & Mosher, 2001; Phillips & Sweeney, 2005). Furthermore, scholars have voiced concern that marriages of Mexican origin couples are at risk given unique stressors faced by this group even though it is believed that spouses typically espouse values that are supportive of family relationships and the value of children (Oropesa & Landale, 2004). Clearly, a focus on marital relationships in the childrearing years is important. More specifically, empirical attention is needed to better understand the link between marital and coparenting relationships of Mexican origin couples while also attending to the role of potentially family supportive cultural values in explaining this link.

Coparenting involves the manner in which parents work together in their parenting roles (Feinberg, 2003). Although it is linked to characteristics of marital relationships, coparenting is distinct from marital quality. Parents' individual and joint marital quality has been found to critically influence couples' coparenting effectiveness (Abidin & Brunner, 1995; Cowan & Cowan, 1995). Furthermore, married parents' satisfaction with coparenting varies over time with fluctuations in spouses' self-reported marital quality (Riina & McHale, 2013). With a few notable exceptions (Fagan & Cabrera, 2012; Riina & McHale), most research on coparenting does not include ethnic minority families or attend to processes that may uniquely predict coparenting satisfaction for spouses who are not White and middle class. Importantly, findings from a study conducted with a sample of 145 dual-earner African American middle and working-class couples suggested that the link between spouses' marital quality and their coparenting satisfaction varied based on the extent to which mothers and fathers agreed

on parents' beliefs about raising sons versus daughters. This finding closely aligns with theoretical principles outlined by Huston in his social ecology of marriage model (Helms, Supple, & Proulx, 2011; Huston, 2000) and underscores the potential for spouses' compatibility in cultural beliefs about family roles to serve as a context in which coparenting and marital relationships unfold.

The current study extends the literature linking marital quality to coparenting satisfaction by examining this association using a sample of Mexican-origin families, the largest Latino group that represents a rapidly growing segment of the United States' population (U.S. Census Bureau News, 2010). Importantly, the present study adopts an ecological and culturally informed approach to the study of marriage and family relationships among Latinos (Helms, Supple, & Proulx, 2011) and examines the role of spouses' familism attitudes in understanding the link between marital quality and coparenting satisfaction. Familism attitudes are a key Latino cultural value, which reflect family cohesion, obligations, and interdependence (Cauce & Domenech-Rodriguez, 2002) and are particularly salient for Mexican immigrant spouses who are raising children while also adapting to life in the U.S. Because the process of cultural adaptation and immigration can vary within couples and is often gendered, the extent to which husbands and wives endorse values that are linked to their shared collectivistic heritage are subject to variation as well. Moreover, couples may find that parenthood and childrearing reveal schisms or points of disagreement in spouses' beliefs about the importance of family versus individual pursuits (Helms, Hengstebeck, Rodriguez, Mendez, & Crosby, under review). The extent to which Mexican immigrant husbands'

and wives' familism attitudes are incongruent is likely to be an additional factor that plays a role in spouses' coparenting satisfaction.

Informed by culturally informed ecological theoretical perspectives of marriage (Helms, Supple, & Proulx, 2011; Huston, 2000), I will examine the links between spouses' reports of coparenting satisfaction and their reports of marital warmth, marital negativity, and familism attitudinal incongruence within couples, including the potential moderating role of spouses' familism attitudinal incongruence in explaining the association between marital quality and coparenting satisfaction (see Figure 2).

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS AND LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, I discuss how Huston's (2000) social ecological framework for understanding marriage supports the current projects' focus on spouses' perceptions of marital qualities, spousal incongruence in familism attitudes, and spouses' coparenting satisfaction. Next, I introduce compatibility theories of mate selection and marriage and discuss how they offer further support for the proposed conceptual model. Following the discussion of these two theoretical frameworks that inform the goals of this study, I review the empirical literature in support of the hypothesized conceptual model.

Theoretical Foundations Informing the Proposed Study

Huston's Social Ecology of Marriage Framework. Huston's (2000) three-level model for viewing marriage was originally designed to provide an interdisciplinary framework for studying marital relationships in a social and ecological context. More recently, this socioecological framework has been adapted to inform the study of marriage among Mexican-origin couples living in the United States (Helms et al., 2011). In his original model, Huston identified three central elements. These include the macroenvironment, individual properties, and marital behavior. The macroenvironment accounts for both the larger macrosocietal context (e.g., cultural context) and dimensions of the social environment in which individuals and their marital behavior are embedded (Huston, 2000). In Helms and colleagues' (2011) extension of Huston's model, they

underscore an awareness of couples' macroenvironment as a starting point for researchers interested in studying the marital experiences of Mexican immigrants. These authors argue that attending to culturally relevant dimensions of the macroenvironment will better inform the development of research questions and equip scholars to study marriage among immigrants in a manner that goes beyond simple replications of studies previously conducted with White and middle class subjects.

Huston's model further distinguished marital behavior from individual spouses' personal characteristics and perceptions of the marital relationship by including individual properties as a central element in the model. Individual properties consist of two key components including spouses' intrapersonal qualities (i.e., spouses' beliefs and attitudes) and evaluations of each other and the marriage. Although the model does not specifically identify spouses' incongruence in familism attitudes as an area of inquiry, the emphasis in the model on individual properties and the larger cultural context of marriage offers theoretical support for its inclusion in the current study. In the current study, familism attitudes would reflect a culturally relevant individual property (i.e., a cultural belief or attitude about family) that may or may not be endorsed similarly within couples of Mexican origin in the context of cultural adaptation (i.e., macroenvironment dimension). In addition, although Helms et al. did not address couples' coparenting relationship specifically, their adaptation of Huston's model advocated for a focus on marital behavior in the context of parenthood by adding elements to the model that are unique to parents (e.g., spouses' evaluations of one another as coparents, coparenting behavior). Therefore, in the current study, coparenting satisfaction would reflect an

individual property in that it pertains to spouses' evaluation of their coparenting relationship and their personal evaluations of their perceptions of coparenting behavior (i.e., a parenting related behavioral component of the marital relationship). The third element in Huston's model, marital behavior, focuses on the marital dyad itself and represents spouses' interactions and shared activities. In the current study, the marital warmth and marital negativity constructs reflect spouses' marital behavior in the model. Researchers often measure these constructs through lab-based observations of marital behavior, but Huston's description of marital behavior in his model can also pertain to displays of warmth, affection, and connection, as well as hostility and negativity. These constructs have also been assessed by researchers in a variety of ways including self-report.

Taken together, Helms et al.'s (2011) adaptation of Huston's (2000) social ecology of marriage framework is useful for orienting the focus of the current study given its explicit attention to the marital relationship in the context of parenthood and its interaction with dimensions of cultural context unique to couples of Mexican origin. Both in Huston's original model and in the more recent adaptations of the model for the study of Mexican-origin couples and families (Helms et al., 2011), an emphasis is placed on an ecological approach that attends to spouses' evaluations of their coparenting relationships (i.e., coparenting satisfaction), spouses' perceptions of marital behavior (i.e., marital warmth and marital negativity), and the pertinent and culturally-informed dimensions of spouses' individual properties (i.e., spouses' familism attitudes) that are relevant for and likely to vary among Mexican immigrant parents. Furthermore, the

dyadic nature of coparenting satisfaction, including the possibility for within-couple variations in husbands' and wives' perceptions of the coparenting relationship, is underscored and supports the proposed model's examination of actor and partner effects of husbands' and wives' perceptions of marital warmth and marital negativity to both spouses' reports of coparenting satisfaction.

Compatibility Theories of Mate Selection and Marriage. Compatibility theories of mate selection and marriage maintain that individuals who are matched in particular characteristics have a greater chance of forming harmonious and mutually satisfying relationships (Levinger & Rands, 1985). The empirical work on marital compatibility has mainly focused on the extent to which partners who marry have similar social, psychological, and physical characteristics (Kerckhoff, 1976; Surra, 1990) and whether such similarity is linked with marital satisfaction (e.g., Heaton & Pratt, 1990; Crohan, 1992) and marital stability (e.g., Hill, Rubin, & Peplau, 1976; Kurdek, 1993). According to this framework, the compatibility between partners' preferences and tendencies seemingly influences the likelihood that the couple will agree or disagree with various matters. Importantly, courting partners and spouses experience the consequences of each other's attitudes and preferences (Huston & Houts, 1998). For example, arguments may result if the man believes that women should care for the house and the woman believes that the responsibility for household work should be shared. The less well matched partners are, the more ambivalence they are likely to feel about their relationship and the more turbulent their relationship is likely to be. In contrast, couples who are well matched will likely be more engaged in their relationship and more satisfied. Although

compatibility theories of mate selection and marriage have not been applied to examine the impact that incongruences in cultural attitudes have on couples, I believe this framework is useful in explaining and understanding how a match or mismatch in cultural attitudes, such as familism, a key Latino cultural value, can impact spouses' coparenting satisfaction.

In the coparenting literature, in addition to coordinating parenting behaviors, effective parenting also involves coordination of husbands' and wives' attitudes about parenting, including cultural attitudes that influence parenting practices (Riina & McHale, 2013). Scholars have suggested that cultural practices and attitudes shape parenting, but researchers have not yet tested the role of cultural practice and attitudes in coparenting behavior or satisfaction (Solmeyer et al., 2011). Given that familism has been suggested to be one of the most important cultural values of Latinos (Alvirez & Bean, 1976; Marin & Gamba, 2003; Moore, 1970) and consistent with compatibility theories of mate selection and marriage, I propose that Mexican immigrant parents' coparenting satisfaction will be linked to the extent to which husbands and wives agree/disagree on familism attitudes.

Associations between Marital Quality and Coparenting Satisfaction

Although there is overlap between characteristics of coparenting and marital relationships, theory and empirical evidence suggest that coparenting is distinct from other dimensions of marriage (Abidin & Brunner, 1995). The coparenting relationship represents a unique family subsystem that is separate from the marital relationship. The main distinction of the coparenting relationship lies in the implicit or explicit

involvement of the child; therefore, coparenting communications and systems are triadic in nature. Thus, the coparenting relationship appears to offer a unique window into family functioning that cannot be obtained from assessments of marital quality or processes alone.

Coparenting is an important area of study because the quality of the coparental relationship is associated with a range of child outcomes. The coparenting research among divorced couples shows that family relationships after divorce matter in that children's adjustment is facilitated when nonresident and resident parents are positively involved in their children's lives within the context of cooperative coparental relationships (Hetherington & Stanely-Hogan, 2002). Moreover, various studies have documented that the quality of coparenting between cohabiting or married adults is an important predictor of a range of child outcomes in two-parent nuclear families, just as in post-divorce family systems (McHale & Cowan, 1996). In this context, healthy coparenting partnerships are defined as those which assure that children receive adequate care, control, and nurturance. These coparental relationships provide children with a sense of predictability, stability, and security in the family (McHale, 1997). When coparenting partners support one another and are "on the same page" with respect to family rules, practices, and discipline, they help provide this sense of predictability and stability. Currently, little is known about the coparenting relationship in the context of immigration, as cultural adaptation and acculturation may pose new challenges for parents and as parents negotiate coordinated parenting in a new environment. The implications of the coparenting relationship for the family unit highlights the importance

of understanding parents' coparenting satisfaction, particularly during a time of rapid change such as cultural adaptation. Also, given strong ties between coparenting experiences and marital qualities (Margolin, Gordis, & John, 2001), it is also necessary that we understand the marital and attitudinal factors that may be linked to mothers' and fathers' coparenting satisfaction.

The literature supports the link between characteristics of the marital relationship and the coparental relationship. Studies have linked low levels of supportive coparenting to a variety of marital indicators including hostility (Katz & Gottman, 1996), low self-reported marital quality (Gordon & Feldman, 2008), defensiveness during child-related disagreements (Margolin et al., 2001), and low engagement in marital discussions (Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2004). In addition, Margolin et al. (2001) examined the links between qualities of marital relationships and coparenting characteristics from an emotional spillover and dyadic perspective. Results showed that high marital warmth and low marital conflict were associated with more positive coparenting among parents of young children. Although most studies have examined the relationship between marital quality and coparenting at the same point in time, the few existing longitudinal studies confirm the strong ties between marital quality and coparenting satisfaction over time. For example, Riina and McHale's (2013) 3-year study of 145 African American mother-father dyads with pre- to late-adolescent-age offspring found that changes in marital warmth were positively related, and changes in marital conflict were negatively related to changes in coparenting satisfaction, with stronger links for fathers than mothers (*see also*

Bonds & Gondoli, 2007; Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2009; McHale et al., 2004; Van Egeren, 2004).

Coparenting Satisfaction in Mexican Immigrant Families

Currently, Latinos represent the largest minority group in the nation with those of Mexican origin making up the largest subgroup (Pew Hispanic Center, 2011). Taking into consideration that Mexican Americans comprise the majority of Latinos and are the largest and fastest growing minority group in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), examination of family dynamics including marital and coparenting relationships in this group is timely and necessary. Latinos living in the United States constitute a young population with a median age of 27 compared to 41 among Whites in 2009 (Saenz, 2010). This is in part due to high fertility rates and earlier childbearing, which are factors that reflect cultural beliefs about the value of children and family relationships (Helms, Supple, & Proulx, 2011). Moreover, based on recent longitudinal analysis of marital instability, among Mexican American women, 40.9% of first marriages had dissolved by the 10th year, a rate higher compared to their foreign-born counterparts (i.e., 13%) and non-Latino Whites (i.e., 31.6%; Bramlett & Mosher, 2001; Phillips & Sweeney, 2005). Despite these high fertility rates and earlier childbearing with a risk of marital disruption during the childrearing years, most studies of couples of Mexican origin living in the United States have overlooked both marital and coparenting relationships among this group (Solmeyer et al., 2011).

Furthermore, despite values that are generally supportive of family relationships and childrearing, scholars have voiced concern that Mexican-origin couples and families

may be at risk given unique challenges they are likely to face living the United States (Oropesa & Landale, 2004). In addition to normative stressors associated with parenting, the majority of Mexican immigrant couples living in the U.S. raise their children in a socioeconomic context of disadvantage and marginalization while also dealing with stressors related to adaptation to the host culture (Helms, Supple, & Proulx, 2011; Rodriguez, Myers, Mira, Flores, & Garcia-Hernandez, 2002). It has been noted that social and cultural influences outside the family shape parents' attitudes and values about childrearing and family relationships (Feinberg, 2003; McHale et al., 2002). Importantly, marital partners approach acculturation in their own unique way, such that immigrant parents may acculturate at different rates resulting in discrepancies in cultural values (including familism) that are likely to affect their satisfaction with the coparenting relationship and the potentially protective link between marital quality and coparenting satisfaction (Chance, Costigan, & Leadbeater, 2013). Understanding the relation between within-couple attitudinal discrepancies and coparenting satisfaction among Mexican origin families is relevant given that cultural values influencing parenting norms are distinct in Mexican origin and American cultures. For example, the stronger orientation toward interdependence within Latino groups, as opposed to individual independence, highlights the importance of cultural values such as *familismo* for families of Mexican origin (Harkness & Super, 2002; Sotomayor-Peterson et al., 2012).

To date, most researchers have examined coparenting and its links with children's development in families headed by heterosexual, White, middle-class, married or divorced couples using measures developed with White families with virtually no

attention given to culturally relevant predictors of coparenting satisfaction or moderators of the marital quality-coparenting link. More recent literature has begun to focus on coparenting in mother-grandmother-headed families, step-families, families headed by gay and lesbian partners, and cohabiting and/or unmarried partners (McHale et al., 2002). An exception is a study by Fagan and Cabrera (2012) in which they used the birth cohort of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Survey data to examine different aspects of paternal engagement (e.g., cognitive stimulation, physical care) in relation to coparenting conflict. Although this study was not a within group study of Mexican immigrant couples, their data consisted of a small group of Latinos, therefore providing an introduction to our knowledge on coparenting among Latinos in the US. Still, there is scant research examining how coparenting processes might vary for partners who are not White and middle-class. It may be that variations in coparenting processes exist based on ethnic group membership and that variations in coparenting satisfaction may be impacted by spouses' endorsement of cultural norms and values, extended kin interactional patterns in the family, normative family structure configurations, and factors related to the larger socio-political landscape that privileges White, middle-class families (Lindahl & Malik, 1999). An understanding of culturally relevant predictors of coparenting satisfaction in groups that are underrepresented in empirical research is needed and is likely to shed light on the manner in which larger sociocultural factors manifest themselves in daily family dynamics, including the coparenting of children as well as the extent to which spouses' marital quality is linked to their satisfaction with their coparenting relationship.

The Role of Spousal Incongruence in Familism Attitudes

I propose to extend the coparenting literature by examining familism attitudes, a key Latino cultural value which reflects family cohesion, obligations, and interdependence (also called family as referent; Cauce & Domenech-Rodriguez, 2002; Sabogal et al., 1987). Family cohesion is the perceived support and emotional closeness from the family and is related to the perception of family members as reliable providers of help and support to solve problems. Familial obligations is related to the perceived *need* to provide material and emotional support to members of the extended family. Family as referent is related to the *influence* of relatives on the individual's behavior and attitude formation (Knight et al., 2010; Sabogal et al., 1987).

Various authors have proposed that variation in Mexican immigrants' familism attitudes is likely to occur as part of the process of cultural adaptation due to increasing contact with the U.S. mainstream culture (Marin & Gamba, 2003). Findings from studies on the relationship between familism and acculturation have been mixed regarding changes in behavioral and attitudinal aspects of this value among Latino immigrants adapting to life in the U.S. (see Keefe, 1980; Padilla, 1980). For example, Rueschenberg and Buriel (1989) found among Mexican Americans in the Los Angeles County area that basic internal family functioning (i.e., cohesion, expressiveness conflict, organization, and control) remained the same among the three acculturation groups examined (which they labeled unacculturated, moderately acculturated, or acculturated). However, external aspects of family functioning (i.e., independence, achievement orientation, intellectual/cultural orientation, and active/recreational orientation) were found to change

as acculturation levels increased such that families became less Mexican oriented and increasingly involved in US social systems with acculturation. Yet a different study using a variety of dimensions of cultural beliefs about family (e.g., respect, child-rearing practices, gender role differentiation) showed no effect of acculturation on the strength of familism attitudes (Negy, 1993).

Research by Sabogal et al. (1987) sought to clarify the direction of change in Latino individual's familism attitudes during cultural adaptation to life in the U.S. Three components of attitudinal familism were measured including familial obligations (i.e., related to the perceived need to provide material and emotional support to members of the extended family), perceived support from the family (i.e., related to the perception of family members as reliable providers of help and support to solve problems), and family as referents (i.e., related to the influence of relatives on the individual's behavior and attitude formation). Findings demonstrated that some aspects of the cultural value of familism (e.g., perceived support from the family) did not change; perceived support from the family remained strong and personally important regardless of having acculturated to the host culture of the United States. At the same time, other components or aspects of the cultural values of familism (i.e., familial obligations and the power of family members as referents) did diminish in importance as acculturation progressed. These findings supported previous research and theorizing suggesting that variation in familism attitudes among Latinos immigrants is likely during the process of cultural adaptation and is therefore an important to study among this group (e.g., Edgerton & Karno, 1971; Grebler, Moore, & Guzman, 1970; Mindel, 1980).

It is well established in both theoretical and empirical literatures that heterosexual marital experiences are differentiated by gender and that marriage is a dyadic enterprise comprised of two often distinctly different experiences: “his” and “hers” (Bernard, 1972; Crouter & Helms-Erikson, 2000). It is entirely possible, and highly probable, that husbands and wives of Mexican origin may experience acculturation at different rates and, therefore, a mismatch in their attitudes of familism stemming from these divergent experiences as immigrants. Although there are no known studies addressing Mexican immigrant husbands’ and wives’ incongruence in familism attitudes specifically, past literature on the links between acculturation and changes in familism attitudes, as well as with compatibility theories of mate selection and marriage, would suggest that variation in the within-couple agreement in familism attitudes is likely. In turn, interparental incongruence in attitudes about familism could reflect coparenting disagreement, putting their satisfaction with coordinating parenting efforts at risk.

Although no studies have directly tested the association between spouses’ familism attitudes and coparenting satisfaction or the extent to which the link between marital qualities and coparenting satisfaction is moderated by spousal incongruence in familism attitudes, researchers have used familism values to explain coparenting dynamics (e.g., joint decision-making in Mexican-origin families; Caldera, Fitzpatrick, & Wampler, 2002; Solmeyer et al., 2011). I propose that agreement between spouses on culturally specific values about the importance of family are likely to be important in both predicting husbands’ and wives’ coparenting satisfaction among Mexican immigrant couples and in explaining the link between marital quality and coparenting satisfaction.

More specifically, given the centrality of familism values to the importance of family and culturally prescribed family roles, high levels of incongruence (i.e., low agreement about familism values) may eliminate the positive effects of marital warmth on spouses' coparenting satisfaction and amplify the negative effects of marital negativity on spouses' coparenting satisfaction; whereas low incongruence (i.e., within-couple compatibility in familism attitudes) may strengthen the proposed link between marital warmth and spouses' coparenting satisfaction and reduce the negative effects of marital negativity on spouses' coparenting satisfaction.

In sum, a review of the literature reveals multiple conceptual gaps. Accordingly, the goals of this study are to (1) examine whether husband and wives' marital warmth and marital negativity are linked to their coparenting satisfaction and to (2) test the moderating role of incongruent attitudes towards familism on links between spouses' marital qualities and coparenting satisfaction. It is hypothesized that marital warmth will be positively related to coparenting satisfaction, that marital negativity will be negatively linked to coparenting satisfaction, and that spousal incongruence in familism attitudes will be negatively related to coparenting satisfaction. In addition, it is predicted that spousal incongruence in familism attitudes moderates the relationship between marital warmth and coparenting satisfaction such that under conditions of low agreement (i.e., high incongruence) about familism values, the positive effects of marital warmth will be reduced. It is also predicted that spousal incongruence in familism attitudes moderates the relationship between marital negativity and coparenting satisfaction such that under

conditions of low agreement (i.e., high incongruence) about familism values, the negative effects of marital negativity on coparenting satisfaction will be exacerbated.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Sample and Procedure

Data were gathered in 2007-2008 as a part of a larger study of contextual stress and marital relationships in Mexican-origin families in the child-rearing years at the advent of the U.S. Great Recession. Study participants were 120 Mexican-origin immigrant couples (240 individuals) residing in North Carolina and recruited via cultural insiders and snowball sampling methods within predetermined census tract locations in several central North Carolina counties. Initial contacts with couples were done in person by Latino project staff, social service workers, and community contacts, either in couples' homes or at social service agencies that serve the Latino community. During initial contacts, the goals of the research project were described, eligibility criteria were reviewed, and details regarding the nature of the interview were provided. All eligible couples that expressed interest in the study were interviewed with the exception of one couple that withdrew prior to interviewing.

To be included in the larger study, both wives and their husbands had to agree to participate, couples had to be legally married or "living as married" (cohabiting), be living together in the same household, and have an elementary school-aged or younger firstborn child living in the home. Also, couples had to include at least one spouse of Mexican descent, and both spouses had to be of Latin American origin. Both spouses

were from Mexico for the majority of couples (89%) and most spouses were first-generation immigrants (96% of wives and 100% of husbands). 69% of couples were legally married and 31% were “living as married” (consensual unions). Ninety-eight percent of husbands, and 54% of wives were employed. Fifty-six percent of couples had other adults living in the home, most often reporting one or two additional household members. Participating couples resided in small towns (55%), cities (26%), and rural areas (19%). Census track data from 2008 showed that 95% of couples in the sample lived in neighborhoods characterized by high poverty. Nearly half of participating couples (49%) lived in neighborhoods classified as 50% Hispanic. Table 1 contains additional sample demographic characteristics for the full sample.

During 2-3 hour home interviews conducted by bilingual, Latina project staff. The study was described to the couple jointly in general terms and consent was obtained from each spouse. In addition to collecting background information, information about spouses’ individual well-being, marital quality, the extent to which they endorsed familism attitudes, their familiarity with and acceptance of various dimensions of Anglo and Latino culture, their perceptions of neighborhood quality, economic hardship, acculturative stress, and how satisfied they were in their coparenting relationship was gathered. Respondents had the option of being interviewed in either Spanish or English; however, all but one interview was conducted in Spanish. Interviewers read each survey question and possible responses aloud to reduce problems associated with variations in literacy. Wives and husbands were interviewed separately. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected as part of the larger study, and only measures with

demonstrated reliability and validity with Latino samples were used. Home interview visits were arranged at the couples' convenience and couples were compensated with a \$50 gift card for their time.

Measures

All measures used in the current study had been used in prior work with Latino populations and were available in both Spanish and English. All measures demonstrated adequate reliability (see Table 2 for Cronbach's alphas).

Marital Warmth. To assess marital warmth, the 9 item warmth subscale of Braiker and Kelley's (1979) Relationship Questionnaire was completed by wives and husbands. Respondents were asked to think about the past year and use a 9-point scale ranging from 1-9, with higher scores indicative of higher levels of warmth, when answering the items. Items assessed the positive emotional aspects of the marriage (e.g., "To what extent do you love your spouse at this stage?"; "How close do you feel to your spouse?"). Responses were averaged.

Marital Negativity. Three items from the original 5-item marital negativity subscale of Braiker and Kelley's (1979) Relationship Questionnaire were used in the current study based on the results of confirmatory factor analyses that suggested the exclusion of two of the five original items due to low magnitude in their factor loadings (see Helms, et al., 2014). Respondents were asked to think about the past year and use a 9-point scale ranging from 1 to 9, with higher scores indicating higher levels of marital negativity, to score their responses to the three item scale. The items assessed spouses' perceptions of negativity in the marriage (i.e., "How often do you and your spouse argue

with one another?"; "How often do you feel angry or resentful toward your spouse?"; "When you argue, how serious are the arguments?"). Responses were averaged to create the scale score.

Coparenting Satisfaction. A five item scale was used to assess each spouses' satisfaction with their coparenting relationships (Riina & McHale, 2013). The subscale was derived from a modified version of the Domains of Satisfaction Scale initially developed by Huston, McHale, and Crouter (1986). The original scale was developed to assess spouses' satisfaction with general domains of marriage (e.g., marital communication, the division of childcare, the division of housework) and was later adapted for use with Mexican Americans by Updegraff and her colleagues (Wheeler, Updegraff, & Thayer, 2010) to include domains of marriage identified as uniquely valued for Latino couples (e.g., relationships with relatives, Mexican culture, and traditions). The five item coparenting satisfaction subscale was introduced by Riina and McHale and reflects parents' satisfaction with coparenting-specific dimensions of their relationships. Respondents were asked to think about the past year and use a 9-point scale ranging from 1= *extremely dissatisfied* to 9= *extremely satisfied* when answering the five coparenting items (e.g., How satisfied are you with the extent to which you and your husband/wife agree on important child-rearing decisions?"; "How satisfied are you with how well you and your husband/wife cooperate in your activities as parents in the everyday care of your child?"). Higher scores indicated higher levels of coparenting satisfaction.

Spousal Incongruence in Familism Attitudes. Spouses' familism attitudes were assessed using The Mexican American Cultural Values Scale (MACVS), which was

developed by Knight and colleagues (2010). Because we were not interested in differentiating between different aspects of familism values, we followed the recommendations of Knight and colleagues to create a composite score comprised of 16 items representing aspects of familism pertaining to family obligations, views of family as referent, and family support and emotional closeness. Respondents were asked to use a 5-point scale ranging from 1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree when responding to the 16 items (e.g., “It is always important to be united as a family.”; “Children should be taught to always be good because they represent the family.”) Cronbach’s alphas were .72 for wives and .68 for husbands. Spouses’ incongruence in familism attitudes was created as the absolute value of husbands’ average score on familism attitudes subtracted from wives’ average score on familism attitudes. Higher scores represent higher within-couple incongruence in spouses’ familism attitudes.

Data Analytic Strategy

Preliminary analyses were conducted to examine the means, standard deviations, and bivariate associations among the study variables. To examine the proposed linkages between spouses’ perceptions of marital quality (i.e., marital warmth and marital negativity), spousal incongruence in familism attitudes, and spouses’ coparenting satisfaction, structural equation modeling (SEM) via Mplus 7.2 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2012) was conducted. As illustrated in Figure 1, an estimated actor-partner interdependence model (APIM; Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006) was conducted to explore the main effects of marital warmth, marital negativity, and spouses’ incongruence in familism attitudes on wives’ and husbands’ coparenting satisfaction. The model

simultaneously explored the moderating effects of spouses' incongruence in familism attitudes on the association among spouses' marital quality and coparenting satisfaction (i.e., familism incongruence X marital warmth and familism incongruence X marital negativity). Moreover, dispositional and structural factors that might have accounted for these associations were included as controls in the APIM model. These controls included age of firstborn, years in the U.S., marital status (i.e., legally married vs. "living as married"), wives' and husbands' depressive symptoms, and number of children in the household.

The APIM analytic approach accounts for possible interdependence in the dyadic data, estimates the effect of a person on him or herself (actor effects) and the effect of the partner (partner effects), and also provides a mechanism for explicitly taking into account measurement error. Model fit was evaluated using the model chi-square statistic, the Comparative Fit Indices (CFI), the Root Mean Squared Error Approximation (RMSEA), and the Standardize Root Mean Squared Residual (SRMR). According to Hu and Butler (1999) and Kline (2011), a good fitting model is indicated by a nonsignificant chi-square statistic, CFI values greater than .95, RMSEA values less than .05, and SRMR values less than .08. Missing data was addressed using full information maximum likelihood estimation methods (FIML), which allows for estimation of the models using all available data.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Results are presented in two parts. Part one addresses findings from preliminary analyses including bivariate associations among the study variables and descriptive analyses, mean comparisons of spouses' reports of marital quality, spousal incongruence in familism attitudes, and spouses' reports of coparenting satisfaction. Part two presents findings from an estimated APIM model conducted to explore the linkages between wives' and husbands' marital warmth and marital negativity, spousal incongruence in familism attitudes, and spouses' coparenting satisfaction. Note that dispositional and structural factors that might have accounted for these associations were initially included as controls in the APIM model. However, the inclusion of these factors did not alter model findings and were therefore excluded for parsimony.

Preliminary Analyses

Correlation Results. Bivariate Pearson correlations were computed with key model variables. Correlations reflect the degree of relatedness among variables and can range from -1.0 to 1.0 , with $\pm .1$ to $.3$ indicating a weak association, $\pm .3$ to $.5$ indicating a moderate association, and $\pm .5$ to 1.0 indicating a strong association (Cohen, 1988). The majority of bivariate associations were weak to moderate in strength. Correlation results are presented in Table 2. Various significant bivariate associations between the independent variables in the study were found. Wives' marital warmth was

positively associated with husbands' marital warmth. Wives' marital warmth was also negatively associated with wives' marital negativity and husbands' marital negativity. Furthermore, husbands' marital warmth was negatively associated with husbands' marital negativity; wives' marital negativity was positively associated with husbands' marital negativity. Finally, wives' coparenting satisfaction was positively associated with husbands' coparenting satisfaction.

Several significant associations were found between the independent and dependent variables. Wives' marital warmth was positively associated with wives' coparenting satisfaction. In addition, husbands' marital warmth was positively associated with wives' and husbands' coparenting satisfaction; wives' marital negativity was negatively correlated with wives' coparenting satisfaction; and husbands' marital negativity was negatively associated with wives' and husbands' coparenting satisfaction. Also, at the bivariate level, spousal incongruence in familism attitudes was not significantly associated with any of the study variables.

Descriptive Analyses. A series of t-tests for dependent samples were conducted to examine wives' and husbands' reports of marital warmth and negativity, familism attitudes, and their coparenting satisfaction. There was no significant difference in wives' and husbands' reports of marital warmth ($t = -1.25$, ns). There was, however, a significant difference in wives' and husbands' marital negativity ($t = 3.94$, $p < .001$). Wives reported higher levels of marital negativity ($M = 3.74$, $SD = 1.81$) than husbands ($M = 3.05$, $SD = 1.50$). There was also a significant difference in wives' and husbands' reports of coparenting satisfaction ($t = -2.72$, $p = .01$). Husbands reported higher levels

of coparenting satisfaction ($M = 8.05$, $SD = 1.07$) than wives ($M = 7.67$, $SD = 1.37$).

There was an additional significant difference in wives' and husbands' reports of familism ($t = -3.88$, $p < .001$). Husbands reported higher levels of familism ($M = 4.56$, $SD = .32$) than did wives ($M = 4.38$, $SD = .40$).

Test of the Hypothesized Model. The baseline APIM model was saturated and did not provide fit statistics. As recommended by Peugh, DiLillo, and Panuzio (2013), all paths were constrained to be equal across wives and husbands to free up degrees of freedom and acquire fit statistics. However, as recommended by Peugh and colleagues, the paths that varied across wives and husbands were freed. These paths included one interaction term (i.e., husband's warmth X spouses' incongruence in familism values on husbands' coparenting satisfaction) and two direct effects (wives' marital warmth on husbands' reports of coparenting satisfaction and husbands' marital warmth on wives' reports of coparenting satisfaction). A wald test was then conducted to evaluate these modifications (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2010). According to the wald test, these modifications did not worsen the fit of the model to the data [$\chi^2 = 2.27$, $p = 0.893$]. As shown in Figure 3, the final APIM model provided a good fit to the data [$\chi^2 = 2.02$, $p = 0.846$; CFI = 1.00; RMSEA = .00; SRMR = .01] (Hu & Butler, 1999; Kline, 2011).

Results showed significant actor effects from marital warmth to coparenting satisfaction. Wives' marital warmth was associated with higher levels of wives' coparenting satisfaction (i.e., $B = .63$, $p = .00$). Husbands' marital warmth was associated with higher levels of husbands' coparenting satisfaction ($B = .65$, $p = .00$). In addition, a significant interaction qualified the actor effect for wives' marital warmth to coparenting satisfaction

suggesting that incongruence in familism attitudes moderated the association ($B = -.17, p = .04$). The means of the interaction were plotted using the loop plot function in Mplus (Muthén, & Muthén, 1998-2010; see Figure 4). Findings indicated that the expected positive association between wives' marital warmth and wives' coparenting satisfaction was present *only* for couples with low spousal incongruence in familism attitudes. In other words, at *low* levels of familism incongruence (i.e., couples in which spouses are in close agreement on familism attitudes) there was a *strong* association between wives' marital warmth and wives' coparenting satisfaction. In contrast, at *high* levels of familism incongruence (i.e., couples with more divergent values about familism attitudes) there was *no association* between wives' marital warmth and wives' coparenting satisfaction.

Contrary to the hypothesis, there were no significant partner effects in the model. Wives' marital qualities were not significantly linked to husbands' reports of coparenting satisfaction and husbands' marital qualities were not significantly linked to wives' reports of coparenting satisfaction. In addition, unlike the findings for wives, spousal incongruence in familism attitudes did not moderate the association between marital warmth and coparenting satisfaction for husbands. It is also noteworthy that marital negativity was not related with either spouses' reports of coparenting satisfaction. Moreover, the extent to which spouses disagreed in their familism attitudes was not directly linked with either spouses' coparenting satisfaction.

Overall, these findings align with other work (see Riina & McHale, 2013) conducted on African American couples regarding established links between wives' and husbands' reports of marital warmth and their reports of coparenting satisfaction. That is,

the extent to which spouses feel a sense of belongingness and closeness in their marriages appears to be related to how satisfied they are with their coparenting. These findings further underscore the importance of spouses' agreement on familism attitudes, a key Latino cultural value (Cauce & Domenech-Rodriguez, 2002) in understanding the link between wives' marital warmth and coparenting satisfaction while also suggesting that effective coparenting is nested within the context of a warm, supportive relationship.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Informed by Hustons' (2000) ecological model and compatibility theories of mate selection and marriage, this study explored the links between spouses' reports of coparenting satisfaction and their reports of marital warmth, marital negativity, and familism attitudinal incongruence within couples. In both Helms et al.'s (2011) adaptation of Huston's (2000) social ecology of marriage framework is useful for orienting the focus of the current study given its explicit attention to the marital relationship in the context of parenthood and its interaction with dimensions of cultural context unique to couples of Mexican origin. Compatibility theories of mate selection and marriage further suggest that a match or mismatch in cultural attitudes, such as familism, a key Latino cultural value, can impact spouses' coparenting satisfaction. Thus, it was hypothesized that spousal incongruence in familism attitudes would moderate the association between marital quality and coparenting satisfaction.

Findings

It was hypothesized that marital warmth would be positively related to coparenting satisfaction, that marital negativity would be negatively linked to coparenting satisfaction, and that spousal incongruence in familism attitudes would be negatively related to coparenting satisfaction. In addition, it was predicted that spousal incongruence

in familism attitudes would moderate the relationship between marital warmth and coparenting satisfaction such that under conditions of low agreement (i.e., high incongruence) about familism values, the positive effects of marital warmth would be reduced. It was also predicted that spousal incongruence in familism attitudes would moderate the relationship between marital negativity and coparenting satisfaction such that under conditions of low agreement (i.e., high incongruence) about familism values, the negative effects of marital negativity on coparenting satisfaction would be exacerbated.

Results showed significant actor effects from marital warmth to coparenting satisfaction. As hypothesized, wives' marital warmth was positively associated with wives' coparenting satisfaction and husbands' marital warmth was positively associated with husbands' coparenting satisfaction. That is, higher marital warmth for wives was associated with higher levels of wives' perceived coparenting satisfaction and higher marital warmth for husbands' was associated with higher levels of husbands' perceived coparenting satisfaction. Consistent with these findings, Riina and McHale's (2013) work conducted on African American couples found links between wives' and husbands' reports of marital warmth and their reports of coparenting satisfaction. However, Riina and McHale found that the link between marital warmth and coparenting satisfaction was stronger for fathers. These findings align with past research with White families, showing that husbands' parenting is more susceptible than wives to problems in the marriage (Kolak & Volling, 2007) as well as to positive marital experiences (Coiro & Emery, 1998; Kerig, Cowan, & Cowan, 1993). Unlike Riina and McHale, the current

study did not find a gender difference in the strength of the association (i.e., marital warmth was similarly linked to coparenting satisfaction for both wives and husbands) and suggest that the extent to which spouses feel a sense of belongingness and closeness in their marriages appears to be similarly related to how satisfied they are with their coparenting.

In addition, there was partial support for the hypothesis that spousal incongruence in familism attitudes would moderate the association between marital warmth and coparenting satisfaction for wives. A significant interaction qualified the actor effect for wives' marital warmth to coparenting satisfaction suggesting that incongruence in familism attitudes moderated the association. Therefore, although there was no gender difference in the strength of the association between marital warmth and coparenting satisfaction for wives and husbands as mentioned above, findings from the significant interaction indicated that the expected positive association between wives' marital warmth and wives' coparenting satisfaction was present *only* for couples with low spousal incongruence in familism attitudes. In other words, at *low* levels of familism incongruence (i.e., couples in which spouses are in close agreement on familism attitudes) there was a *strong* association between wives' marital warmth and wives' coparenting satisfaction. In contrast, at *high* levels of familism incongruence (i.e., couples with more divergent values about familism attitudes) there was *no association* between wives' marital warmth and wives' coparenting satisfaction. This finding was not anticipated. It was expected that the positive link between wives' marital warmth and coparenting satisfaction would be lessened under conditions of high levels of familism

incongruence. This finding may suggest that being in agreement on familism values is more important for wives than for husbands. In other words, it may be that for wives being on the same page as their husbands in terms of their cultural values is so important that, in marriages in which wives and husbands are not in close agreement on their attitudes about familism, the link between wives' marital warmth and wives' satisfaction with the way her and her husband coparent disappears. In addition, these findings are supported by compatibility theories of mate selection and marriage, which suggest that a match or mismatch in cultural attitudes, such as familism, a key Latino cultural value, can impact spouses' coparenting satisfaction. Unlike for wives, there was no support for the moderation hypothesis for spousal incongruence in familism attitudes on the association between marital warmth and coparenting satisfaction for husbands.

Contrary to the hypothesis, there were no significant partner effects in the model. Wives' marital qualities were not significantly linked to husbands' reports of coparenting satisfaction and husbands' marital qualities were not significantly linked to wives' reports of coparenting satisfaction. Also, the hypothesis that marital negativity would be linked to coparenting satisfaction was not supported; neither wives' nor husbands' marital negativity was associated with spouses' reports of coparenting satisfaction. Moreover, contrary to the hypothesis, the extent to which spouses disagreed in their familism attitudes was not directly linked with either spouses' coparenting satisfaction.

Conclusion

Despite values that are generally supportive of family relationships and childrearing, scholars have voiced concern that Mexican-origin couples and families may

be at risk given unique challenges they are likely to face living the United States (Oropesa & Landale, 2004). Yet, most researchers have examined coparenting and its links with children's development in families headed by heterosexual, White, middle-class, married or divorced couples using measures developed with White families with virtually no attention given to culturally relevant predictors of coparenting satisfaction or moderators of the marital quality-coparenting link. In addition to normative stressors associated with parenting, the majority of Mexican immigrant couples living in the U.S. raise their children in a socioeconomic context of disadvantage while also dealing with stressors related to adaptation to the host culture (Helms, Supple, & Proulx, 2011; Rodriguez, Myers, Mira, Flores, & Garcia-Hernandez, 2002). Findings from the present study contribute to this gap in the literature linking marital quality to coparenting satisfaction by examining this association using a sample of Mexican-origin families and by examining the moderating influence of spousal incongruence in familism attitudes in explaining the link between marital qualities and coparenting satisfaction. The present study also drew attention to the importance of understanding the relation between within-couple attitudinal discrepancies and coparenting satisfaction among Mexican origin families given that cultural values influencing parenting norms are distinct in Mexican origin and American cultures.

These findings have several applied implications for clinicians and programs serving married and "living as married" Latino families. First, as established in both theoretical and empirical literatures, marital experiences are differentiated by gender and marriage is a dyadic enterprise comprised of two often distinctly different experiences

(Bernard, 1972; Crouter & Helms-Erikson, 2000). Therefore, it is highly probable that husbands and wives of Mexican origin may experience a mismatch in their attitudes of familism stemming from their divergent experiences as immigrants. Clinicians and other individuals working with Latino families should be hesitant to assume that wives and husbands have similar cultural values and should be mindful of the potential for incongruence in cultural values, such as familism, related to cultural adaptation. Intervention efforts with couples may provide an opportunity to explore and discuss how much or how little spouses' values surrounding cultural values, such as familism, align with one another. It is important for practitioners working with Latino couples to be mindful of the potential for incongruence in cultural values related to cultural adaptation to impact wives' and husbands' perceived coparenting satisfaction. Findings from the current study suggest that, indeed, the extent to which parents agreed on their familism attitudes did vary and, more importantly, was mostly linked to wives' coparenting satisfaction.

Second, given findings from the current study suggesting that marital warmth is significantly linked to both wives' and husbands' coparenting satisfaction, practitioners should guide parents in understanding the importance of remaining connected to one another through the process of raising children while also adapting to life in the U.S. for their satisfaction with one another as coparents. However, findings from the current study indicating that the expected positive association between wives' marital warmth and wives' coparenting satisfaction was present *only* for couples with low spousal incongruence in familism attitudes, emphasize the need for programming efforts that

assist parents in understanding that demonstrations of warmth in the marriage create a context that will help strengthen their ability to work well together as coparents in raising their children. Moreover, practitioners and clinicians should highlight that, particularly for wives, agreement about cultural values, combined with warmth in the relationship, will increase spouses' satisfaction with their coparenting arrangement. That is, while husbands seem to be satisfied with their coparenting as long as there are high levels of marital warmth in their marriage, wives' coparenting satisfaction is influenced by how much their own familism attitudes align with their husbands' familism attitudes as well as the level of marital warmth in the relationship. Therefore, encouraging discussions about cultural values and guiding parents towards being on the "same page" or in resolving their differences around cultural values may be critical to parents' ability to coparent effectively.

In addition, given the scant research examining coparenting processes among families who are not White, middle-class or heterosexual, little is known about possible variations in coparenting among Latinos. It is possible that extended kin interactional patterns contribute to multiple coparental relationships unlike those defined in the currently limited literature. Clinicians and researchers should consider the possibility of this variation and the potential for additional adults living in the home to take part in the parenting of the child/children in the home.

Limitations and Future Directions

The present study contributes to the literature in that no other studies have examined the moderating influence of spousal incongruence in familism attitudes in

explaining the link between marital qualities and coparenting satisfaction. However, some limitations of the present study should be addressed. It is important to note that this sample represents a unique group in an emerging immigrant section of the country. Moreover, given participants' educational levels, geographic location, and language use (i.e., that they were all predominantly Spanish speaking), the findings of this study are certainly not generalizable to all Mexican Americans.

In addition, it is recommended that future research with a larger sample test the ways that the empirically proposed dimensions of familism (i.e., family cohesion, obligations, and family as referent) are related to coparenting satisfaction. It is possible that different dimensions are linked to coparenting in unique or similar ways. Also, future research should consider other possible control variables that might impact the link between marital qualities, incongruence in familism values, and coparenting satisfaction. The study was also limited to Mexican origin couples at one time point. Future research should consider longitudinal data collection, which will help clarify how familism attitudes among spouses change or remain stable over time and how its influence on spouses' coparenting satisfaction may change with the number of years living in the United States. In addition, qualitative and mixed-method studies are an important next step in gaining a greater understanding of familism attitudes as defined and experienced by Mexican origin couples, particularly across different generational status groups (e.g., first generation versus second generation).

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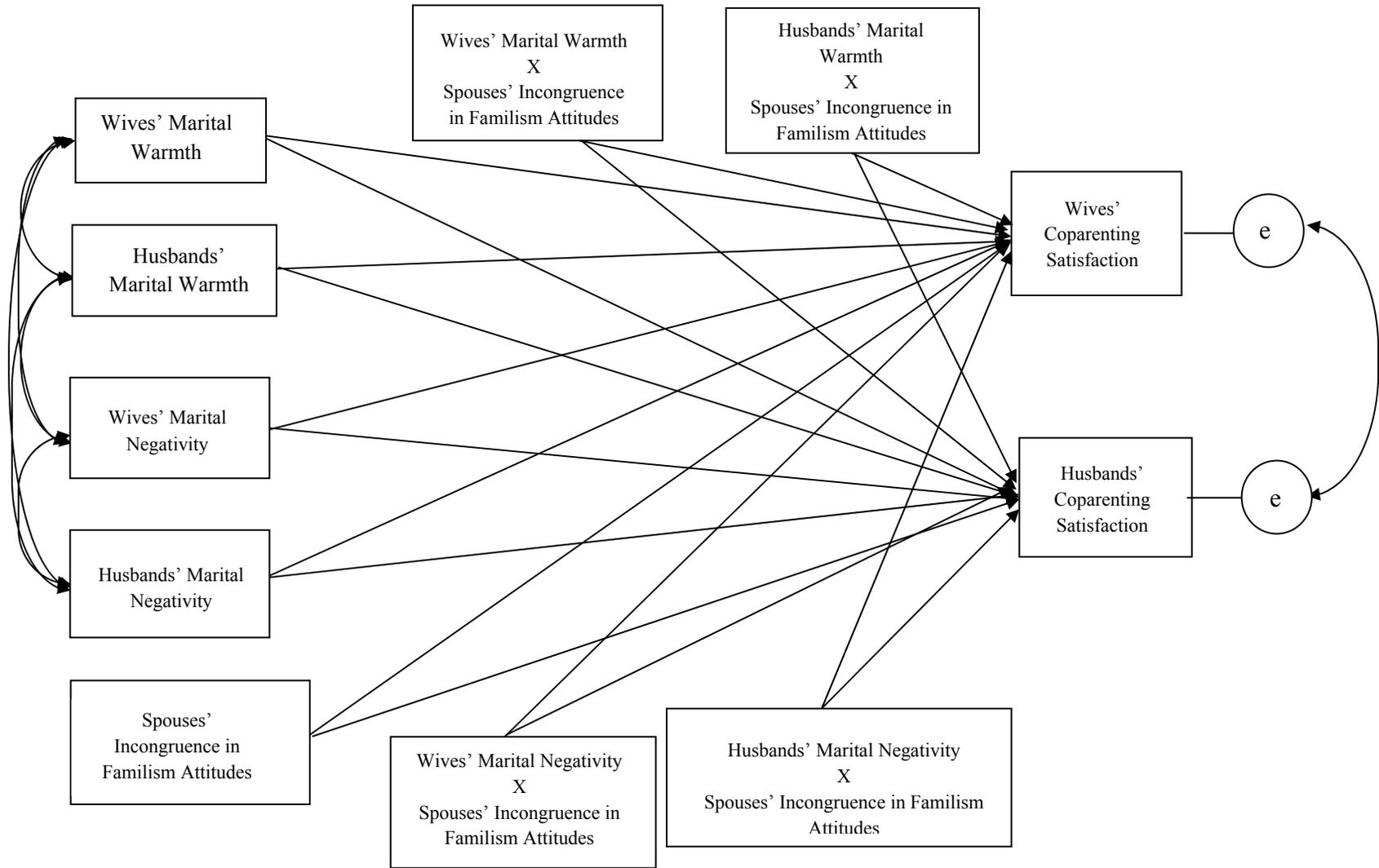
APPENDIX A

TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics (N = 120)

Variables	<i>M</i>	SD	Range
Age (in years)			
Wives	28.13	5.46	18 – 47
Husbands	30.33	5.79	18 – 48
First Born	5.87	3.88	<1 – 13.64
Years in the U.S.			
Wives	8.81	4.41	<1 – 22
Husbands	11.40	5.26	2 – 27
Nuclear Family Size	4.07	0.92	3 – 7
Education (in years)			
Wives	9.66	3.17	0 – 16
Husbands	9.01	3.18	1 – 18
Marital Duration (in years)	7	3.96	1 – 15
Income (annual)			
Family Income	\$32,874	\$11,902	\$8,000 – \$62,000
Wives	\$15,138	\$6,559	\$2,500 – \$31,600
Husbands	\$24,647	\$8,713	\$8,000 – \$69,000

Figure 1. Conceptual Model and Hypothesized Associations among Constructs.



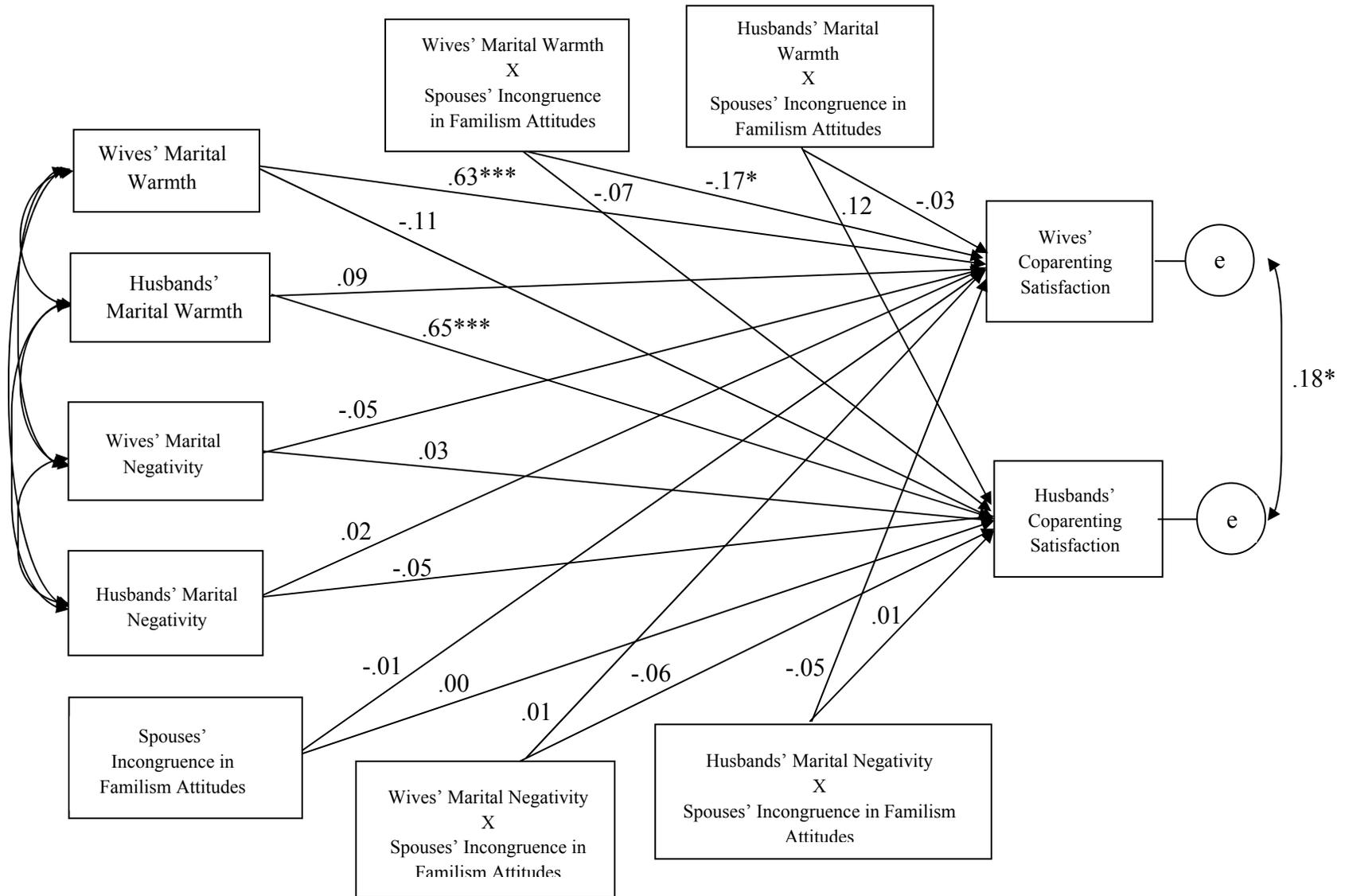
Note: Residual terms corresponding to husbands' and wives' coparenting satisfaction were correlated to account for interdependence.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations between the Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Wives' Marital Warmth	--						
2. Husbands' Marital Warmth	.315***	--					
3. Wives' Marital Negativity	-.306**	-.146	--				
4. Husbands' Marital Negativity	-.283**	-.307**	.339***	--			
5. Spouses' Incongruence in Familism Attitudes	-.128	-.005	-.007	.067	--		
6. Wives' Coparenting Satisfaction	.614***	.242**	-.263**	-.194*	-.072	--	
7. Husbands' Coparenting Satisfaction	.131	.637***	-.010	-.211*	.067	.214*	--
<i>M</i>	8.192	8.295	3.744	3.054	.412	7.667	8.056
<i>SD</i>	.788	.698	1.812	1.496	.334	1.336	1.066
α	.86	.84	.72	.59	N/A	.90	.87

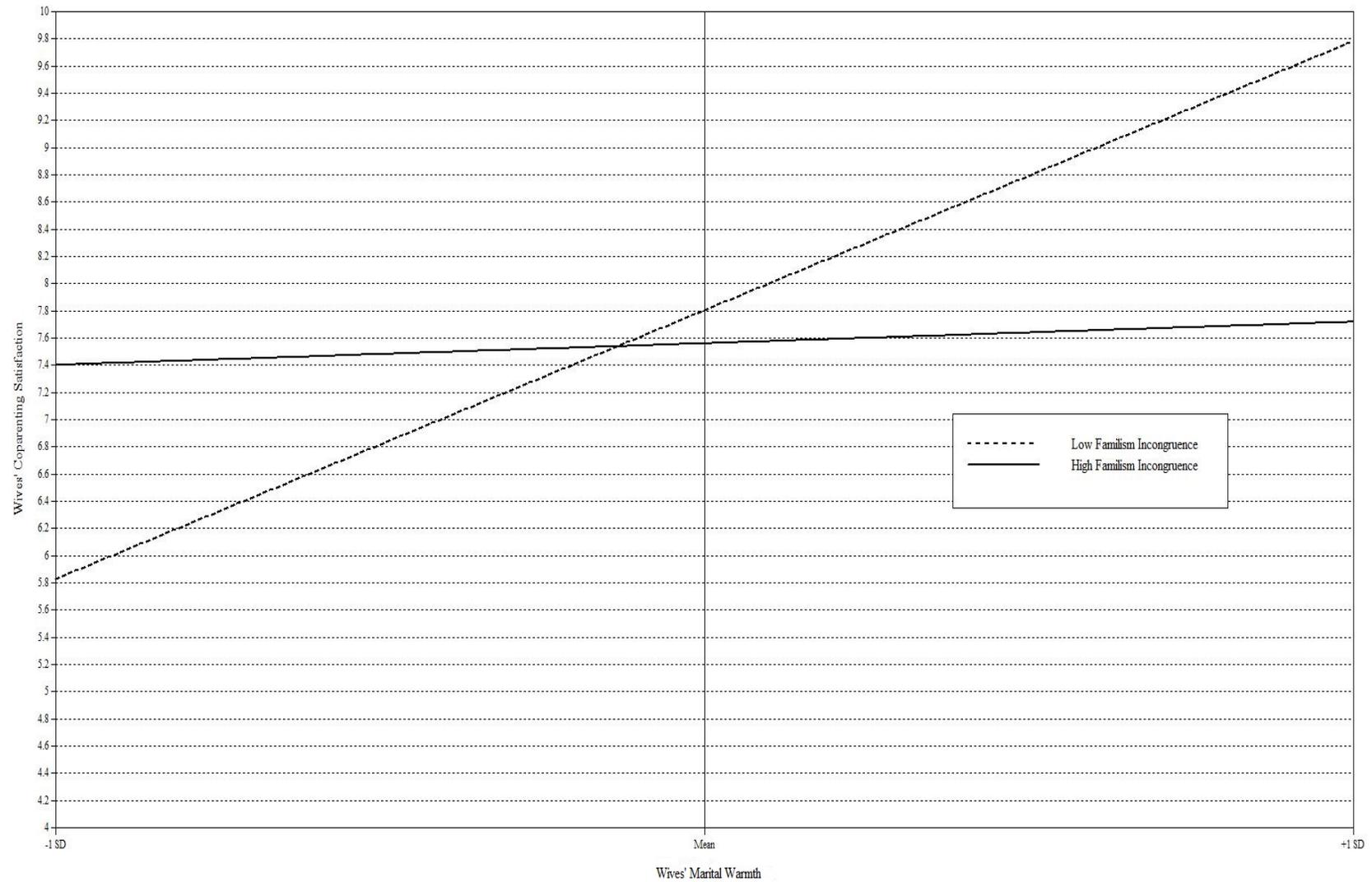
Note: * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$; $N = 120$

Figure 2. APIM Model Results of Conceptual Model (N = 120).



Note: Figure values are standardized parameter estimates. Model fit indices: $\chi^2 = 2.02, p = 0.85$ (ns); comparative fit index = 1.00; room-mean-square error of approximation = .00; standardized root-mean-square residual = .01. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Figure 3. LOOP/PLOT in Mplus Visually Illustrating the Significant Interaction between Wives' Marital Warmth and Spouses' Incongruence in Familism Attitudes on Wives' Coparenting Satisfaction.



APPENDIX B

COPARENTING ENCYCLOPEDIA ENTRY

Rodriguez, Y., & Helms, H. M. (in press). Coparenting. In C. Shehan (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Family Studies*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.

Abstract

Coparenting refers to the way two adults work together in their parenting roles. Coparenting partnerships exist in all kinds of families including married couples with children, divorced parents who have a shared child or children, people who have a child together but never married, or any two or more people who work together to raise a child. Healthy coparental relationships are characterized by coparents that support one another and provide their children with a sense of stability and security. Unhealthy coparental relationships consist of adults that undermine one another's parenting while also competing openly for children's affection and loyalty. While the literature has revealed a variety of coparenting types, predictors of coparenting types, and links between coparenting and children's development, an understanding of coparenting in underrepresented groups (i.e., partners who are not White, middle-class or heterosexual) in the literature is needed.

Main Text

The term *coparenting* refers to the way two individuals work together in their parenting roles and the support they provide for one another in the raising of children for whom they share responsibility (Feinberg 2003). Coparenting can refer to how a married couple works together in parenting children, but it can also refer to divorced parents,

people who have a child together but never married, or any two or more people who are working together to raise a child (e.g., a grandmother or stepfather). At the onset of the family therapy movement in the mid-1950s, clinicians voiced concerns arising from coparents who were unable to develop reciprocal, cooperative roles. For example, Lidz, Cornelison, Fleck, and Terry (1957) studied families of adolescent and young adult children with schizophrenia and identified two distinct problematic coparenting patterns: openly antagonistic coparenting and overbearing parenting. In the first pattern, partners undermined one another with their children while also competing openly for children's affection and loyalty. The second problematic coparenting pattern involved an overbearing parent partnered with a coparent who did not balance or refute, but instead accepted or permitted the overbearing efforts of the parent. In both cases children were triangulated into interadult relational conflict in a manner that clinicians identified as problematic for child development.

The idea of solidarity in the alliance between the family's coparenting adults was first written about by Salvador Minuchin (1974) through his portrayal of functional and dysfunctional coparenting systems within families. He described families as consisting of a number of different subsystems, including marital, coparenting, parent-child, and sibling subsystems. In particular, he conceptualized the coparenting adults as the family's *executive system* and underscored how the functional or dysfunctional nature of the coparenting relationship was a key influence in children's development. A decade later, in an influential article published in *Child Development*, Patricia Minuchin (1985) further advanced coparenting research by confronting a common bias in the extant

literature of the time which emphasized dyadic, parent-child interactions—particularly mother-child relations—as key in shaping children’s emotional development. Rather, informed by Family Systems Theory, she proposed the importance of the interactions of coparents with their shared child through an examination of triadic relationships in families. In this seminal paper, Minuchin argued for a change in focus from an emphasis on the dynamics of two-person relationship systems (i.e., mother-child dyads) to those of three-person relationship systems (triads). She suggested that children’s development could not be fully understood without examining whole-family dynamics within which individual development is embedded.

The coparenting field took a further leap in the late 1970s and early 1980s as more families were raising children in postdivorce family systems. As divorced parents found themselves in need of coordinating their efforts across multiple households, clinically oriented researchers began to focus on the importance of the coparental relationship following divorce for children’s post-divorce adjustment. The coparenting research among divorced couples shows that the quality of the coparental relationship is associated with a range of child outcomes following union disruption. Although parental divorce is associated with an increased risk of behavioral, psychological, and academic problems among children (Amato, Kane, & James 2011), the post-divorce family environment is an important predictor of variations in children’s adjustment to their parents’ divorce. For example, children are at higher risk for maladjustment when coparents argue frequently, maintain inconsistent rules, and attempt to undermine one another’s authority or relationship with their shared children. In contrast, children of

coparents who communicate with one another about their parenting goals, who support each other's parenting goals, and who do not triangulate their child in interadult conflict tend to be better adjusted than other children during and after the divorce transition (Hetherington & Stanely-Hagan 2002). Family relationships after divorce matter in that children's adjustment is facilitated when nonresident and resident parents are positively involved in their children's lives within the context of cooperative coparental relationships. Additional evidence indicates that successful coparenting relationships are beneficial for children's socioemotional development. Cooperative coparenting is associated with greater father-child visitation and with the quality of the nonresident parent-child relationship. Importantly, positive nonresidential father involvement has been linked to children's behavioral outcomes, academic achievement, and psychological well-being. Taken together, both family therapists and divorce researchers agree that problems in coparenting (i.e., low support and high undermining) are detrimental, and positive coparenting (i.e., high support and low undermining) is beneficial for children's development.

In the 1990s the idea of coparental solidarity gained importance within nuclear, non-divorced families. In a special issue of *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development* edited by McHale and Cowan (1996), a group of researchers introduced the study of coparenting in nonclinical samples of coresident, non-divorced, married families. Since the publication, various studies have documented that the quality of coparenting between cohabiting or married adults is an important predictor of a range of child outcomes in two-parent nuclear families, just as in post-divorce family systems. In

this context, healthy coparenting partnerships are defined as those which assure that children receive adequate care, control, and nurturance. These coparental relationships provide children with a sense of predictability, stability, and security in the family (McHale, 1997). When coparenting partners support one another and are "on the same page" with respect to family rules, practices, and discipline, they help provide this sense of predictability and stability. Scholars maintain that supportive coparenting partnerships, termed coparental solidarity, are only made possible when parenting adults acknowledge, respect, and value the roles and parenting of the partner.

Several fundamental dimensions of coparenting have been over the past decade. These include: Solidarity- the amount of solidarity and support that exists between the coparents; Antagonism- the frequency and intensity of disputes and the undoing of the coparenting adult's efforts; Division of Labor- the manner in which the family divides child care roles and labor; and Mutual Agreement- the degree to which each of the coparental adults actively participate in organizing and managing their children's everyday lives and the decisions shaping them (Kuersten-Hogan, 2007). Overall, studies of coparenting demonstrate the importance of solidarity for children's well-being during infancy, childhood, adolescence, and even during young adulthood. However, very few longitudinal studies have examined stability in coparenting over time. It is possible that coparenting may be displayed differently throughout the family's development as coparenting styles may differ at different phases in the child's life.

In addition to identifying distinct dimensions of coparenting, contemporary scholars who study coparenting within married, two-parent families, also emphasize how

the coparenting relationship represents a unique family subsystem that is separate from the marital relationship. This distinction between marital and coparenting relationships is important for several reasons. First, most often, the marital relationship predates the coparenting relationship and each follows its own trajectory. However, the coparenting relationship and the marital relationship may be related as they are both parts of the larger family system. For example, couples who engage in a high degree of marital conflict, in general, may demonstrate more undermining (i.e., parents criticize each other's parenting strategies, interfere with each other's parenting efforts) and less supportive coparenting. The main distinction of the coparenting relationship lies in the implicit or explicit involvement of the child; therefore, coparenting communications and systems are triadic in nature. Moreover, although both the marital relationship and the coparenting relationship have been found to be linked with child outcomes and parenting, coparenting more strongly predicts child outcomes and parenting practices than does the marital quality. Similarly, supportive coparenting and marital intimacy have been found to contribute to adaptive parenting and child outcomes in different ways. Thus, the coparenting relationship appears to offer a unique window into family functioning and child development that cannot be obtained from assessments of marital quality or processes alone.

What factors play a role in how parents coparent with one another and the quality of these coparenting relationships? The literature sheds light into a variety of coparenting types and factors that predict these types. Typologies of coparenting include families where the parenting partners are connected and supportive; families where the coparents

are non-supportive, antagonistic, and undermining; families where the coparents are disconnected from one another and where, often, one parent may also be disconnected from the child; and families whose focus is principally on the child with little positive connection between the adults. Moreover, the literature identifies factors that shape coparental relationships, thus predicting the above coparenting types. Some of the factors that predict coparenting quality are demographic in nature while others are more psychological or relational. Although the information is sparse and studies have not found major effects, family size and child birth order are two family characteristics known to predict the quality of coparental relationships. Findings suggest that as family size increases, attention to the children is more evenly distributed between parents. Parent characteristics, including educational attainment, age, and gender have also been linked with coparenting. A few studies indicate that higher educational attainment by one or both parents may be associated with more harmonious coparenting interactions, while others have indicated that mother-father compatibility is most important (i.e., parents who had a greater difference in education level showed less supportive coparenting; Belsky et al. 1996). Although no conclusive findings have established whether parental age affects coparenting, some findings suggest that coparenting quality might have as much to do with parents' development maturity as their actual age. Also, studies indicate that during infancy fathers show more positive and supportive coparenting compared to mothers (e.g., Gordon & Feldman, 2008), whereas studies in preschool and preadolescent samples indicate that mothers showed more cooperative coparenting behavior than fathers (e.g., Margolin, Gordis, & John 2001). Moreover, parents' psychological security (e.g., self-

esteem) and well-being (e.g., depression) have also been connected to coparental relationships as has parents' personality traits, specifically flexibility and self-control. Collectively, these findings suggest that these parental psychological resources strengthen coparenting relationships and protect them from the effects of marital distress. Some characteristics of children, such as gender and child temperament, are also predictors of coparental relationships. More positive coparenting is found in families with easier temperament children versus those with children with more difficult temperaments. There is evidence of mutual influence in the link between child temperament and coparenting. In a longitudinal investigation by Davis et al (2009), infant difficulty was associated with a decrease in supportive coparenting across time, and conversely, early supportive coparenting was associated with a decrease in infant difficulty. More research is still needed to understand the processes through which child characteristics are linked to coparenting. Finally, characteristics of the marital relationship have been linked to the coparental relationship. Studies have linked low levels of supporting coparenting to a variety of marital indicators including hostility, low self-reported marital quality, defensiveness during child-related disagreements, and low engagement in marital discussions. The few existing longitudinal studies have confirmed the strong ties between marital quality and later coparenting such that the quality of early coparenting can either enhance or erode the quality of the marriage over time.

In sum, coparenting partnerships exist in all kinds of families. To date, most researchers have examined coparenting and its links with children's development in families headed by heterosexual, White, middle-class, married or divorced couples using

measures developed with White families. More recent literature has begun to focus on coparenting in mother-grandmother-headed families, step-families, families headed by gay and lesbian partners, and cohabiting and/or unmarried partners (McHale et al. 2002). Still, there is scant research examining how coparenting processes might vary for partners who are not White, middle-class or heterosexual. It may be that variations in coparenting exist based on ethnic group membership, social class, and parents' sexual orientation (and the intersection of these factors) due to differences in cultural norms and values, extended kin interactional patterns, normative family structure configurations, and the larger socio-political landscape that privileges White, middle-class, and heteronormative families (Lindahl & Malik 1999). An understanding of coparenting in groups that are underrepresented in empirical research is needed and is likely to shed light into the manner in which larger sociocultural factors manifest themselves in daily family dynamics including the coparenting of children.

SEE ALSO: Parenting Styles; Separation, Marital; Transition to Parenthood; Adjustment to Divorce; Custody Disputes; Child Development; Family Systems Theory; Children in Families; Marital Conflict

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Further Readings

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