

MARITAL AND COPARENTING QUALITIES: ASSOCIATIONS WITH
PARENTING COGNITIONS

by

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DEDICATION

To my family. Mom and Dad, thank you for your unending faith in me and your support.

To Jason, my coparent, thanks for being a wonderful partner. To Samantha, Elise, and

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ABSTRACT

Parenting self-efficacy is an important construct in understanding parents' choices about their child-rearing. Associations between marital and coparenting relationships have been established in prior research. Most of these studies used global assessments of marital quality, marital satisfaction, or measures of conflict to predict to the quality of the coparenting relationship. The present study is unique in that it utilizes multiple dimensions of marital quality, including satisfaction, maintenance strategies, and conflict, to examine the associations between marriage, coparenting, and parenting self-efficacy. These associations were explored using the Family Systems framework, comparing the explanatory power of the additive and compensatory processes. Of the marital quality indices, maintenance was the strongest, most consistent predictor of parenting cognitions for mothers and fathers, predicting to both parenting self-efficacy and meta-parenting. Mothers' reports of marital satisfaction were negatively associated with their, and their partner's, parenting self-efficacy. Undermining coparenting was predictive of parenting self-efficacy for mothers and fathers, but only predictive of meta-parenting for mothers. There was evidence supporting positive additive effects of marriage and coparenting on parenting self-efficacy. Maintenance for mothers, and marital satisfaction for fathers, combined with supportive coparenting to predict to even greater parenting self-efficacy. There was also support for the compensatory effect of marital quality on parenting self-efficacy for fathers. Fathers reporting higher levels of maintenance in combination with higher levels of undermining coparenting maintained their levels of parenting self-

efficacy while fathers reporting lower levels of maintenance also reported less parenting self-efficacy in the face of higher undermining coparenting.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, fathers have increased their participation in the home, especially in the care of the children. Evidence of this appears in the mainstream media through articles focused specifically on fathers as well as the mere existence of baby changing stations in men's public bathrooms. In addition to mainstream media attention, fatherhood has become a focus of many family researchers interested in examining the particular role fathers play as parents. This increased attention to fatherhood has inspired an interest in how mothers and fathers work together to parent their child and an interest in the effects of the coparenting relationship on individual adult development as well as child outcomes.

The construct of coparenting continued to develop over the past two decades. Originally, coparenting was discussed as a relationship between divorced/separated parents. Optimally, divorcing parents could develop a relationship with one another where they could continue to effectively raise their child even though they could not remain married. This view of coparenting is limited as it ignores people who are working together as a team of spouses and coparents to raise their child. Over time, authors have begun to get a handle on exactly what this relationship is, how it is distinct from the marital relationship, and how it relates to parenting outcomes. Coparenting has emerged as a significant influence on adult and child developmental outcomes. One set of outcomes examined are parents' cognitions about parenting.

‘Parenting cognitions’ is a term that can refer to a large number of thoughts about parenting. Sometimes these cognitions are referred to as beliefs. Other times, authors are describing values or attributions. Another set of parenting cognitions are beliefs regarding one’s own abilities as a parent. Most recently, meta-parenting has emerged as a construct that refers to parents’ intentional thoughts about their parenting and their child. It has been argued that meta-parenting is, in fact, what we are trying to influence when we develop parenting programs as these thoughts allow parents the ability to apply principles they learn in parenting programs to unique situations at home.

As such, parenting cognitions are an integral part of the parenting process. These thoughts have been identified as important, not only for the child, but as part of adult development as well. In their own right, parenting cognitions are important to study, however they are imperative to understand as part of the context of child development.

The present study has emerged from the author’s recent interest in the coparenting relationship, especially how the marriage and coparenting relationships may both contribute to parents’ parenting cognitions. An aim of this study is to gain knowledge about how the marital and coparenting relationships are associated with parenting cognitions and if these relationships interact in some way to predict parenting cognitions for mothers and fathers. Specifically, the present study offers information regarding a component of marital quality (relational maintenance) that has not been addressed by parenting researchers. Meta-parenting has not been examined as an outcome of marital and coparenting quality, and this study offers a unique picture of the connection between the influences of the marriage and coparenting relationships on parents’ thoughts about

their parenting and their child. Thus, the present study offers new insight into how the marital and coparenting relationships are related to parenting self-efficacy as well as the recently introduced construct meta-parenting.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The present study focuses on the family processes involving parental relationships and cognitions. The following will be a review of the theoretical perspectives and empirical literature informing this study. First there will be a brief overview of the variables that were included in this study and the model that was tested. The logic for the model and the variables will then be presented in more detail in the remaining sections.

In order to be successful in achieving a goal, one must have the ability to complete the necessary tasks associated with the goal. Parents require a great number of skills to effectively meet their parenting goals. These skills determine the quality of parenting provided for their child. Just as important as having the necessary skills to care for a child, however, is the belief that one possesses these skills. Cognitions regarding one's own ability to parent a child are called parenting self-efficacy beliefs. These cognitions are powerful in that they are related to taking on difficult tasks, staying with these tasks even in the face of adversity, and the mobilization of one's resources to complete each task and achieve one's goal. Thus, being a skilled parent is essential, but it is also essential that one believes that he or she is able to be an effective parent in order for parenting goals to be achieved.

Having confidence in one's parenting abilities is only part of parenting success. In addition to being confident, parents must actively think about their own parenting and the development of their child. Parents must recognize when things are going well and when they are not in the development of their children. If things are not going well, parents

must develop strategies for success and employ these strategies. Upon employing a parenting strategy, parents must also begin to evaluate the success of said strategy and decide whether or not to adjust their plan in order to achieve success. These thoughts are intentional and require effort on the parents' parts in order for their goals for their children's development to be achieved. Thus, when parents believe that they can be successful (parenting self-efficacy) and they make the effort to think about their parenting (meta-parenting) they move along the path to parenting success. As such, parenting self-efficacy and meta-parenting are cognitions that go hand-in-hand for parents to be successful.

Parenting is a role that requires an enormous investment of time and energy, therefore, successful parenting may also depend on the assistance available in performing that role. In American society, caring for children and raising them to adulthood is accomplished through the combined efforts of many adults. From parents to extended family members, teachers, pediatricians, and numerous other people in a community, children require the collaboration of a number of people so that they may successfully advance into adulthood. While quite a few people are responsible for the care and well-being of children, possibly the most influential people in the lives of children are their parents.

Parenting involves more than two individuals toiling away at the daily chores. Those individuals must work together and are dependent on one another. Over time, parents develop into a coparenting unit. Coparenting is an interdependent process that is developed through the interactions of the adults responsible for caring for a child.

Parental interactions involved in coparenting include supportive behaviors that help the partner achieve their parenting goals, approaching parenting as a shared endeavor, meaning no one person must take on the lion's share of the work, and coming together as a parenting team. Coparenting also consists of the negative behaviors that undermine the parenting goals of the partner (Van Egeren, 2004). Through regular interactions with their coparent, parents' cognitions about parenting and about themselves as parents may be influenced. When the coparenting relationship runs smoothly, parents may have greater confidence in their abilities as parents. They may also have a greater propensity to focus on their parenting, thus employing meta-parenting. When the coparenting relationship is struggling, parents may lose confidence in their ability to effectively meet their child's needs. This struggle may lead to the parent spending less mental energy on parenting and reduce their meta-parenting.

The quality of the marriage may also influence parents' cognitions about themselves as parents. Parents in a good marital relationship, who report higher satisfaction with their spouse and in their relationship and who engage in positive relational maintenance behaviors, may feel more confident about themselves as parents. They may gain confidence in their ability to interact effectively with their child because they interact constructively with their spouse. When the marital relationship is good, the spouses may also encourage each other as parents, raising each other's confidence in his or her parenting abilities. Parents who are satisfied with and engage in maintaining their marital relationship may support each other in thinking about their parenting and their child, thus they may engage in meta-parenting more often than less satisfied parents who

are not engaging in relational maintenance activities. Conflict may detract from a parent's confidence in his or her parenting. When parents regularly challenge one another on marital issues, these interactions may erode their sense of efficacy as parents.

Additionally, parents who are engaging in marital conflict with their spouse more often may not be as likely to support one another and may be too preoccupied with the conflict, and as a result, the parents spend less time thinking about their parenting and their child's development.

The marital/intimate relationship usually precedes the coparenting relationship chronologically. This has led researchers to assume that coparenting mediates the relationship between marital quality and parenting. There has been some evidence to support this view, but there have also been findings that support the reverse direction of influence. That is, the coparenting relationship was found to be related to later marital functioning (Schoppe-Sullivan, Mangelsdorf, Frosh, & McHale, 2004). It is possible that the associations between these two constructs are bidirectional. The present study seeks to examine the associations of coparenting with parenting cognitions at different levels of marital quality. Using this perspective, it is assumed that couples are engaging in coparenting in the context of the marital relationship. The rationale behind examining marital quality as a moderator in the associations between coparenting and parenting cognitions is that these subsystems are interdependent. That is to say, marital conflict may not actually cause poor coparenting, but in the context of a conflictual marriage, poor coparenting may have a greater impact on parenting. Alternatively, a marriage characterized by high satisfaction and maintenance behaviors by the spouses may be a

context in which good coparenting has the greatest positive effect on parenting cognitions.

The present study was designed to extend knowledge of associations between marital quality, coparenting, and parenting cognitions for parents of children in early childhood. This particular age of child was selected as it is likely that the quality and/or nature of the coparenting relationship changes through stages of child development (Van Egeren, 2004), and associations previously established empirically for parents of infants may change for parents as their child develops. From infancy into early childhood, fathers enter into a time of greater involvement in child care (Bailey, 2001). The child is also evoking parenting in new ways. As children begin to walk and explore, new limitations and rules are necessary to develop and impose in order to create a safe environment for the child. This means that the parents may be negotiating a different coparenting relationship as they are responding to the new abilities of their child.

Currently, there are few studies that focus on coparenting of children in early childhood. There is evidence of stability in the coparenting relationship in early infancy (Van Egeren, 2004) and into the third year (Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2004), but because there is little research on coparenting in early childhood, it is unclear whether or not coparenting changes for parents of children in this age group. The present study was not designed to address the issue of stability of coparenting, however, it is acknowledged that change may or may not occur in the coparenting relationship from toddlerhood to early childhood and from early childhood into middle childhood. This study focused on how

the relationships of the parents, as marriage partners and as coparents, are related to their parenting cognitions while the children were in early childhood.

The present study was designed to explore associations between marital quality, coparenting, and parental cognitions defined as parenting self-efficacy and meta-parenting. These associations were tested with data collected from families of children in early childhood with two biological or adoptive parents living together, either married or cohabiting. Below, is a review of the theories that informed the model of associations between marriage, coparenting, and parenting cognitions in the present study (Appendix D1). Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1999) was used to identify the proposed associations between marriage, coparenting, and parenting cognitions. Family Systems Theory (Minuchin, P., 1985; Minuchin S., 1974) was used to explore the possible processes by which aspects of the marital and coparenting relationships may influence parenting cognitions. Following the description of each theory is a description of how these associations have been tested empirically in the existing literature. Finally, the hypothesized associations in the model will be described.

The proposed model for this study was developed using tenants from Social Cognitive Theory and Family Systems Theory. Coparenting (as measured by solidarity, support, undermining, and shared parenting) was examined as a predictor of parenting cognitions (parenting self-efficacy and meta-parenting). Positive aspects of coparenting (solidarity, support, and shared parenting) were expected to be positively associated with parenting cognitions and negative coparenting (undermining) was expected to be negatively associated with parenting cognitions. Because the coparenting relationship and

the marital relationship were likely to interact with one another, marital quality (measured using relational maintenance, satisfaction, and conflict) was included in this study to examine direct associations with parenting cognitions and whether the associations between coparenting and parenting cognitions were different in the context of different levels of marital quality. These associations were predicted to follow direct, additive, and compensatory pathways. These pathways will be described in detail using Family Systems Theory.

Social Cognitive Theory

Social cognitive theory regards individuals as agents in their lives. Instead of the brain simply reacting to environmental stimuli, the brain is capable of generating ideas, behaving proactively, and reflecting on itself (Bandura, 1997; 2006). Behavior results from a process of triadic reciprocal causation. Involved in this complex set of relationships are three entities that exert influence upon each other. The three entities are: the individual (his/her internal factors: cognitions, emotions, and biological events), his/her behavior, and the external environment (including the context of the family) (Bandura, 1997; 1999).

As agents, individuals have four properties. The first is intentionality. Intentionality refers to the intentions that people have to achieve something. These intentions include the formation of strategies in order to achieve goals. The second property of human agency is forethought. Once a goal is set, people are able to anticipate outcomes for their behavior, and this guides and motivates them as they move into the future towards their goals. Self-reactiveness is the third property of human agency. Self-reactiveness refers to self-regulation as individuals move through the process of achieving their goals. The fourth property of human agency is self-reflectiveness. People are self-aware and are able to reflect on their own cognitions and behaviors in order to correct their strategy. These properties of human agency explain the power of people's thoughts to influence the environment around them (Bandura, 2006), and specifically how cognitions about parenting may influence their parenting quality. For the current study, the interest was in thoughts about being a parent and performing that role.

Understanding these of cognitions, especially their predictors, could be informed by employing tenants of Social Cognitive Theory. Below is a description of self-efficacy, following that is a description of parenting self-efficacy and meta-parenting, including how these cognitions are influenced by the individual's context.

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is a term that describes the perceptions people have about their own abilities to develop a plan of action, successfully complete each step in the process, and ultimately achieve a specific goal/objective (Bandura, 1995). Self-efficacy includes perceptions of one's abilities to successfully complete tasks, but is different from beliefs about locus of control. Locus of control is related to beliefs about whether or not one has any power to influence an outcome (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy beliefs begin with the assumption that it is possible to have an effect on an outcome, it centers on one's perceptions of one's own abilities to do what needs to be done in order to achieve a desired outcome.

Efficacy beliefs are related to many aspects of the choices people make and their level of success in achieving their goals. Self-efficacy influences the decisions people make about what objectives they wish to attempt to achieve (Bandura, 1997; 1999). If people believe that they are not capable of achieving an objective, they will not even attempt the task. It is a waste of energy/resources to put one's effort into a task that will not be successful.

The amount of effort people invest into achieving their goals is also related to self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1995). Once people decide to take a course of action, the

amount of effort they are willing to expend is related to their beliefs about their ability to successfully achieve their goal. This is especially true in the face of obstacles to success. When people face minor failures along the road, they are more likely to give up if they lack confidence in their ability to finish successfully. Confidence in the ability to be successful provides the stamina required to continue in a task that is difficult (Bandura, 1995).

Even with the same resources, self-efficacious people are more likely than people with little self-efficacy to achieve their goals (Bandura, 1997). Resources are used more efficiently when people believe that they are going to be successful. When people believe they can be successful, they focus on problem-solving and see difficulties as challenges to be overcome. When people are uncertain of their ability to achieve their goal, they focus on the possibility of failure and the problems/obstacles in their way.

Social cognitive theory explains how self-efficacy is constructed within the individual and how it is changed by contextual factors (Bandura, 1997). Past experiences shape the perceptions people have about their abilities to successfully complete tasks. If people have been successful in the past, they are more likely to expect to be successful in the future. Success, in this case, is based on the internal standards of the individual. If one does not achieve success in one's own eyes, perceptions of self-efficacy are not built (Bandura, 1997).

Viewing other people's success in achieving an objective is also related to one's own beliefs of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1995). Seeing that someone else has been successful, how they were able to be successful, and the qualities they possess that made

them successful can boost one's own feelings efficacy. Parents have the ability to model successful behaviors to each other due to their proximity to one another. Witnessing the partner having success in a parenting area may give the parent confidence in their own abilities because they see how their partner was effectively handling a parenting situation.

The evaluations others have about the likelihood of success are important in predicting feelings about one's own ability to successfully achieve one's goal (Bandura, 1997). Importantly, it is the evaluation of a person significant in the life of the individual that will be most influential on their perceptions of self-efficacy. When the individual has someone expressing confidence in their ability to achieve a goal, it can boost the individual's self-efficacy.

The context in which the objective must be achieved plays an important role in people's perceptions of their ability to be successful. Contextual factors such as environmental distractions, the presence and nature of onlookers, and the qualities/characteristics of the participants are important predictors of one's self-efficacy (Bandura, 1995). For instance, a parent may believe that they are able to teach their child how to put together a puzzle when they are at home, but may feel that they could not be successful in teaching their child how put together a puzzle when they are sitting in a room full of people and other children. Thus, it is important to understand how the context is involved in self-efficacy beliefs.

One way the context can influence whether people will feel efficacious about a task is through the effects of other people in the environment. Being in the presence of someone giving off the impression of high self-efficacy can diminish another's self-

efficacy (Bandura, 1995). When in a competitive situation, being in the presence of an opponent who seems exceptionally confident in their abilities and in the probability of their success can cause another to feel less confident in their ability to succeed.

Another way efficacy beliefs can be influenced by other people in the environment is through seemingly helpful offers of assistance. When one offers unnecessary help it can detract from another's feelings of efficacy. The offer of assistance communicates a lack of confidence in one's ability to accomplish a task. Additionally, when another completes tasks or provides unneeded assistance, people are divested/denied the opportunity to accomplish the task themselves and reap the reward of increased efficacy that results from mastering a task.

When audience expectations are high, self-efficacy can be influenced. Efficacy beliefs are usually based on internal standards, success measured by one's own idea of success, but in the presence of significant others whose standards are high, perceptions of one's own ability to complete a task may be diminished because they may feel as if they must perform the task to the standards of the significant other. Dwelling on the difficult aspects of a task can reduce one's feelings of efficacy. Being in the company of someone/people who dwell on the negative aspects of a task or on the difficulty of a task can also reduce self-efficacy because it focuses attention on how difficult the task will be to complete and takes attention away from the positive aspects of the task.

Parenting self-efficacy. Parenting self-efficacy is the set of individual parents' perceptions or beliefs about their abilities to complete the tasks necessary to raise their child (Coleman & Karraker, 1998). Self-efficacy is a dynamic construct and not a fixed

trait (Coleman & Karraker, 1998). The dynamic nature of self-efficacy means that it can be influenced by the environment, especially by the people important to the parent. The following review examines parenting self-efficacy and its relations to parenting involvement, parents' choices of behaviors, and parent enjoyment of parenting as well as child outcomes. Next, empirical studies of the determinants of parenting self-efficacy will be reviewed.

Self-efficacy is related to persistence when tasks become difficult. There is no reason to continue in the face of impediments when one believes he/she will fail anyway (Bandura, 1997). Involvement in parenting is most often studied in fathers. Fathers who have confidence in their parenting abilities are more engaged in child care and take more responsibility for parenting than fathers who lack parenting confidence (Sanderson & Thompson, 2002). Confident fathers also spend more time monitoring their child (Shumow & Lomax, 2002). Fathers' perceptions of their parenting abilities are related to father involvement in direct and indirect care of his child (Beitel & Parke, 1998; Bouchard & Lee, 2000; Shumow & Lomax, 2002). Jacobs and Kelley (2006) found that fathers' parenting self-efficacy beliefs were related to father involvement in the areas of: engagement (direct child care), accessibility (being available to provide care, not actively caring for the child, able to intervene if the child needs him), and responsibility (activities such as making decisions about appropriate activities and organizing essentials, i.e. buying clothes for the child).

Parents are not likely to choose to try a parenting strategy they believe they cannot successfully complete (Bandura, 1997). This means that if an optimal strategy is

more difficult to employ, parents lacking in self-efficacy may opt for a less desirable choice. Both parenting behaviors and parenting style are predicted by parenting self-efficacy. Parental warmth and control are correlated with parenting self-efficacy (Izzo, Weiss, & Shanahan, 2000; Luster & Kain, 1987).

Parenting self-efficacy is related to the mother's discipline style (Sanders & Woolley, 2005). Parental overreactivity and laxness are both predicted by parenting self-efficacy. This study measured self-efficacy in four ways: global self-efficacy, maternal self-efficacy, behavioral self-efficacy, and setting self-efficacy. Of the four measures of self-efficacy, behavioral self-efficacy, parents' beliefs about their ability to handle a stressful parenting situation, was the strongest predictor of lax parenting. In other words, parents who perceived themselves as able to handle stressful situations with their child were less likely to parent in a manner consistent with a lax parenting style (Sanders & Woolley, 2005).

Parenting quality is higher when parents are more confident in their abilities. Parenting self-efficacy mediates the relationship between difficult child temperament and home learning (Machida, Taylor, & Kim, 2002). African American parents' perceptions of parental efficacy predicts optimal child management strategies (Ardelt & Eccles, 2001; Elder, Eccles, Ardel, & Lord, 1995), this relationship exists for other ethnic groups as well, including: American Indian, Hispanic, and Anglo parents (MacPhee, Fritz, & Miller-Heyl, 1996).

Parents with high parenting self-efficacy see problems as challenges (Bandura, 1997). They spend their time working on the solution and pulling their resources

together. Parents with low self-efficacy tend to focus on the problem itself. They tend to spend time thinking about the risks of the venture instead of how to handle difficulties. Because of their ability to focus on a solution, efficacious people tend to use their resources more effectively and may lead parents to experience less stress (Bandura, 1999). Thus, parents with the same resources, but who have different levels of self-efficacy, can attain completely different outcomes of the same situation.

Parenting self-efficacy is related to parents' perception of their parenting experiences. Mothers who lack confidence in their parenting experience higher levels of stress (Mazur, 2006; Sepa, Frodi, & Ludvigsson, 2004). Efficacious parents are less likely to become irritated while interacting with an unresponsive child (Bugental & Shennum, 1984). Parenting self-efficacy is related to greater parenting satisfaction in mothers (Coleman & Karraker, 2000; Mazur, 2006) and fathers (Jacobs & Kelley, 2006).

Children's development is influenced by their parents' perceptions of their parenting abilities. Parenting self-efficacy is directly related to child outcomes. Coleman and Karraker (2003) found that parenting self-efficacy was related to children's developmental status and their behavior towards their mother. Maternal parenting self-efficacy is related to children's self-efficacy and academic success (Ardelt & Eccles, 2001).

The above studies highlight the importance of parenting self-efficacy for parenting and child outcomes. Parenting self-efficacy is a critical aspect of parenting success. For this reason, it is important to understand predictors of parenting self-

efficacy, especially how the marital and coparenting relationships are related to parenting self-efficacy for both fathers and mothers.

Predictors of Parenting Self-efficacy. Bandura (1997) indicates that there are many contextual influences that are related to people's perceptions of their own abilities to complete a task. This has been supported by research on the predictors of parenting self-efficacy. Parent gender, stress, social support, and children's temperaments have all been associated with levels of parenting self-efficacy. The following is a review of the literature on the predictors of parenting self-efficacy.

Parent gender may play a role in self-perceptions of parental efficacy. Mothers report greater parenting self-efficacy than fathers (Hudson, Elek, & Fleck, 2001; Riggio & Desrochers, 2006). This may be because mothers are more socialized to the role of parent. Additionally, mothers tend to take on more parenting work than fathers, thus, according to Social Cognitive Theory, may have experienced more successes in parenting which may reinforce mothers' perceptions of their parenting competence.

The emotional state of the parent is a predictor of parenting self-efficacy (Williams et al., 1987). It can be difficult to feel confident in parenting when parents are experiencing a great deal of stress. Parents who report greater stress report lower parenting self-efficacy (Jackson, 2000; Raikes & Thompson, 2005). A greater number of parenting daily hassles are related to lower parenting self-efficacy (Mazur, 2006). For mothers, parenting self-efficacy is predicted by emotional distress (Gondoli & Silverberg, 1997) and depression (Jackson & Huang, 2000; Teti and Gelfand, 1991). The emotional state of the parent may be influenced by the support or lack of support he/she receives,

particularly from the other parent. Thus, negativity in the marital and coparenting relationships could spillover into parenting via the effects of a negative relationship on parenting cognition.

Social support is one way the stress of parenting can be buffered (Thoits, 1986). When parents are supported by the people around them, it influences their self-perceptions. Parenting self-efficacy is often bolstered by the support parents receive from their social network of family and friends (Izzo, Weiss, & Shanahan, 2000; Jackson, 2000; MacPhee, Fritz, & Miller-Heyl, 1996; Teti & Gelfand, 1991). Social networks provide emotional and instrumental support to parents (MacPhee, Fritz, & Miller-Heyl, 1996), possibly giving parents' confidence that they can successfully complete difficult parenting tasks. Social support plays an important role in influencing parents' perceptions of their abilities as parents, but it is likely that one person in parents' social networks has the most influence.

Parents' spouses are an almost constant source of information about the parents' abilities as both usually live in the same house and have a great deal of contact with one another. It is likely that partner support has a stronger influence on parenting and parenting self-efficacy than the support of other network members (Elder, Eccles, & Lord, 1995; Simons, Lorenz, Wu, & Conger, 1993). For this reason, it is especially important to understand the relations between the marital and coparenting relationships and how these relations influence the parenting self-efficacy of both adults.

The marital relationship is associated with parenting self-efficacy. Marital satisfaction predicts fathers' perceptions of their parenting competence (Bouchard & Lee,

2000). Beyond satisfaction, there is very little information about how the marital relationship is related to parenting self-efficacy. For mothers, partner support is associated with a perception of ‘mother mastery,’ which a construct similar to parenting efficacy (Martire, Stephens, & Townsend, 1998). Specific aspects of the marital relationship and how the parents work together as coparents have rarely been examined in relation to parenting self-efficacy.

The coparenting relationship is also associated with parenting self-efficacy. Supportive coparenting from the mother is related to the father’s perceptions of his parenting competence (Bouchard, Lee, Asgary, & Pelletier, 2007). The present study will expand on these findings by including the associations between undermining, shared parenting, coparenting solidarity, and parenting efficacy cognitions.

Not all social support is beneficial to parents. When the support is provided by a person who is critical or undermining, parents’ perceptions of their own abilities are likely to suffer (Crittenden, 1985). It may be possible that when parents are supported too much, it can undermine their confidence in being able to handle parenting tasks on their own. Thus, it is not enough to understand how the amount of support is related to parenting self-efficacy, but instead, support should be viewed in the context of other aspects of parents’ relationships with each other and how all of the relational aspects are related to parenting self-efficacy.

Meta-parenting

Meta-parenting is a relatively new construct introduced by Hawk and Holden (2003, 2006). This concept refers to the degree to which parents are thoughtful about

their parenting and their child. These cognitions involve forethought, anticipating, and strategy development in regards to parenting children, concepts that fit well with Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 2006). Hawk and Holden (2006), in describing meta-parenting cognitions, classify meta-parenting thoughts into five categories: anticipating, assessing the child and assessing external influences on the child's development, problem solving, and reflecting. Below is a brief description of each of the types of meta-parenting and an explanation of how these cognitions fit with tenants from Social Cognitive Theory.

Anticipating. The cognitions parents have regarding issues or events that are going to occur in relation to their childrearing fit into the category of Anticipating meta-parenting cognitions (Hawk & Holden, 2006). These cognitions consist of plans for tomorrow as well as longer-term goals for the child. Bandura (2006) argues that part of human agency is the ability to use forethought. Parents use forethought when they anticipate issues that may develop as they plan for the day. Instead of being forced to react to the situation as it arises, parents are able to plan for their child's needs. For example, a parent must spend the day doing errands with their child and the child may become thirsty during that trip. The parent has the capacity to plan ahead and act on these cognitions, bringing a sippy-cup full of water, because they have anticipated that the child may need water while on the trip.

Assessing. There are two type of assessing cognitions. The first type is the assessments parents make regarding their child's development (especially in relation to the child's peers). An example of this type of assessment is comparing the child's

physical development (i.e. age at which he/she starts to walk) to his/her friends' physical development. The second type of assessing meta-parenting cognition is the assessment of the influence of things external to the child on the child's development in relation to the parents' goals (Hawk & Holden, 2006). For instance, parents may decide that the neighbor's child is a great influence on their child because the neighbor's child is teaching their own child how to read. Assessing is a type of meta-parenting cognition that is related to human agency through intentionality. Parents have intentions regarding the achievement of specific parenting goals. They assess their child, and the child's external influences, by reflecting on how well the child seems to be doing developmentally compared to the developmental goals of the parent.

Problem solving. Problem solving consists of parents identifying a problem with their parenting or their child. After a problem has been identified, parents develop a strategy to manage the problem. Later, parents will implement the solution and evaluate the effectiveness of their problem-solving strategy (Hawk & Holden, 2006). An example of problem solving is when a mother notices that her child is getting frustrated with the chore of cleaning his bedroom. The mother may decide to make a game of picking up the toys with her son. The room gets clean and the mother realizes that making a game of a chore worked well for her and her son. Problem solving fits with three of Social Cognitive Theory's properties of agency: intentionality, self-reflectiveness and self-reactiveness (Bandura, 2006). The parent is able to develop a strategy for achieving a parenting goal, then reflect on the effectiveness of their parenting strategies and finally react to that assessment by changing the strategy in order to achieve their parenting goals.

Hawk & Holden (2006) posit that the degree to which a parent engages in meta-parenting is influenced by parental characteristics, child characteristics, and environmental factors. Parent characteristics that have been examined in relation to meta-parenting are: formal education, parent age, parity, and intelligence. Of the four parent characteristics studied, only parity predicted meta-parenting. Mothers of fewer children engaged in more meta-parenting (Hawk & Holden, 2006). Meta-parenting cognitions are also influenced by child characteristics. Previously, associations between meta-parenting and child gender were examined. Meta-parenting, specifically anticipating, is higher for mothers of boys (Hawk & Holden, 2006).

Little is known about meta-parenting. Because there is only one published study to-date, there is little guidance for how to understand the role of these cognitions in the lives of parents. It is difficult to make predictions about the associations between characteristics of parents' context and their meta-parenting. Due to this lack of guidance, meta-parenting will be examined as a construct that is similar to parenting self-efficacy. Because both parenting self-efficacy and meta-parenting are cognitions that are related to human agency, they may exhibit similar patterns of associations with other constructs.

In addition to Social Cognitive Theory, Family Systems Theory provides a useful framework from which to make predictions about how parents' relationships influence their parenting cognitions. Family Systems theory guides thinking about how, within the family system, subsystems have influence on one another. Below is a description of Family Systems Theory and the internal family processes posited as linking subsystems to one another.

Family Systems Theory

According to Family Systems Theory (Minuchin, P., 1974), the family is a unit made up of individuals who are connected to the other members of the family.

Individuals within the family do not exist as separate beings, instead they influence each other through the relationships that exist within the family. Because individuals within the family exist in subsystems, issues that affect one family member affect other family members or the entire family in some way (Minuchin, S., 1985). Due to the interdependence of family members, the behavior of an individual should be examined in relation to the behaviors of other members of the family in order to understand the processes that underlie family functioning.

Within the whole family system are subsystems. Subsystems are characterized by different relationships between individuals within the family. These relationships are defined by their members, as they include some members of the family and exclude others. Subsystems have boundaries that vary in the degree of permeability to the amount of influence the other subsystems in the family are able to exert. Included in the family subsystems are: the spousal dyad, parental dyad, parent-child dyads, and the siblings. Just as individuals cannot be understood outside of the family context, the subsystems are mutually influenced and must be examined in relation to each other (Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993). The functioning of one subsystem is dependent on the functioning of the other subsystems in the family.

The marital relationship is the first subsystem to form in the family. This subsystem usually consists of two adults who are intimately involved with each other.

The marital relationship is related to, but exists separately from, the coparenting relationship, a second subsystem (Van Egeren & Hawkins, 2004). The marital relationship involves the husband and wife. The coparenting relationship is made up of the mother and father, and includes the participation of a child in some way as the child him/herself influences the mother-father relationship (Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2004).

With the arrival of a child, new subsystems emerge in the family. These subsystems include the coparenting, mother-child, and father-child dyads. The present study will focus on the coparenting subsystem. The coparenting relationship consists of all of the negotiations, struggles, and accomplishments the parents have working as a team to raise their children. This relationship cannot be dissolved by a divorce, but endures in some form even if the marital relationship is dissolved.

Family Systems Theory posits that the subsystems in the family are interrelated and that the quality of the relationship in one subsystem will have effects on the other subsystems in the family. The present study examines how the marital subsystem is related to the coparenting subsystem measuring multiple dimensions of both marital quality and the coparenting relationship. The marital subsystem will be examined using multiple indicators of marital quality and these indicators will be examined as possible moderators between the coparenting subsystem and parents' parenting cognitions.

Processes Linking Marital Relations, Coparenting, and Parenting Cognitions

The following is a review of mechanisms that have been identified and explored empirically to describe and explain the associations between the marital relationship and parenting. I will then extend these explanations to describe the possible paths of

association between the marital and coparenting subsystems and parenting cognitions. Marriage and parenting have been linked through spillover and stress buffering (Erel & Burman, 1995; Grych, 2002); processes to be explored as influencing linkages among dimensions of marriage, coparenting, and ultimately parenting cognitions.

Spillover (additive association). One explanation for how the marital relationship influences parenting is through the spillover of affect from one relationship into another. Prior research has primarily explored negative affect spillover. An example of the spillover hypothesis is when marital conflict negatively affects the parent-child relationships (Erel & Burman, 1995; Fincham & Hall, 2005; Grych, 2002). The spillover hypothesis posits that parental conflict is related to increased negative affect experienced by parents. This negative affect permeates into the parent-child relationship as the parent becomes overwhelmed with negative emotion (Grych, 2002). As a result, parents experiencing marital conflict often have more negative interactions with their children (Fincham & Hall, 2005; Kitzmann, 2000).

Negativity in the coparenting relationship may also influence the parent-child relationship through affect spillover. While there is some evidence that coparenting may serve as a mediator between marital conflict and parenting (Fincham & Hall, 2005; Floyd, Gilliom, & Costigan, 1998; Margolin, Gordis, & John, 2001), it is also possible that in the context of a conflictual marriage, the associations between the coparenting relationship and parenting cognitions may be stronger. As a result, a poor coparenting relationship in the context of marital conflict may have a greater influence on parents'

cognitions about their parenting efficacy than if only the coparenting or marital relationship is experiencing difficulty.

Stress buffering (compensatory association). A good marital relationship may buffer parenting or serve a compensatory function when the coparenting relationship is struggling. Spouses can serve as a social support for one another, providing information, physical and emotional assistance, and provide a model for parenting (Cochran & Brassard, 1979). Social support from social network members is beneficial to parents because it is related to reduced parenting stress and better psychological well-being (Belsky, 1984), more confidence in parenting skills (Jackson, 2000), and positive parenting practices (Marshall, Noonan, Marx, & Keefe, 2001; Meyers, 1999). Due to the proximity of the spouse to the parent, spousal support may be more influential for parents than general network support (Belsky, 1981).

Parents may spend so much emotional energy fighting with each other that they do not have enough emotional energy left over to be emotionally responsive to their child's needs. Parents experiencing marital stress are less sensitive parents (Pelchat, Bisson, Saucier, 2003; Sturge-Apple, Davis, & Cummings, 2006). Conflict is related to inconsistent parenting (Wilson & Gottman, 2002) and triangulation in the mother-father-child triad, with fathers experiencing higher marital conflict behaving in a more rejecting style with their child and mothers (Fincham & Hall, 2005). It is possible that husbands will withdraw from the coparenting relationship to avoid further conflict. Parents may be less willing to engage their partner in general, much less offer support to their partner.

The lack of support may lead to parents' having less confidence in their parenting abilities and as a result, the parents may also engage in meta-parenting less often.

Family systems theory posits that both the marital and coparenting subsystems in the family should influence the nature of the parenting subsystem, or parenting behaviors and cognitions. Family systems theory also makes clear that the influence of the marital and coparenting subsystems on parenting do not operate in isolation from one another. Limited attention has been accorded to the possible unique and interactive social influences of marriage and coparenting. However, in attempting to explore these dynamic interactions, and following from work identifying spillover and stress buffering effects, two types of interactions, additive and compensatory, emerge as likely processes by which parenting cognitions are influenced by the marital and coparenting subsystems. Additive effects would be observed if spouses who are satisfied with their marriages, engage in maintenance behaviors, and/or report little conflict would report parenting cognitions identified with successful parenting when they are also in coparenting relationships characterized by support and solidarity. Likewise, if the spouses are reporting little satisfaction and few maintenance behaviors, and/or high levels of conflict, the expectation would be that they would report low levels of self-efficacy and meta-parenting in the context of high levels of undermining coparenting. These additive effects follow from observations of spillover, where negative affects "spills" from one system to another exacerbating negative outcomes. Positive affect can also "spill" into other subsystems, increasing the likelihood of more positive outcomes in a subsystem.

On the other hand, compensatory effects may be observed when more positive qualities of one subsystem compensate for or buffer against negative qualities of the other dyadic subsystem. For example, supportive and effective coparenting may compensate for or buffer against the potentially damaging effects on parenting cognitions of less satisfaction in a marriage, or more spousal conflict. Alternatively, marital relations characterized by their positivity may compensate for the potentially negative effects of undermining coparenting on parenting cognitions. The compensatory model is an extension of the stress buffering model in allowing for a range of negative features of relationships, beyond stress induction, and focuses attention on the diverse functions of various subsystems within the family.

A goal of the present investigation was to examine the associations between the marital and coparenting relationships and parenting self-efficacy. The present study used a fine-grained approach in clarifying precisely how marital quality and the coparenting relationship are related to parenting cognitions (Figure D1). Especially important was testing the possible processes of additive and compensatory effects.

The following sections will explore more precisely the constructs of marital quality and coparenting. The indicators of marital quality and coparenting employed to test associations in the present study will be identified and described. Additionally, the associations that have been empirically established between marital quality and coparenting will be discussed.

Marital Quality

Marital quality is a multidimensional construct (Fincham & Hall, 2005). This means that marital quality is made up of multiple components that are related to one another. The components can be combined to measure marital quality as a whole or can be examined separately in order to focus on how specific aspects of marital quality are related to other variables. In the present study, marital quality will be examined using: conflict, satisfaction (Erel & Burman, 1995), and maintenance (Canary & Stafford, 1992). These indicators were selected after a review of the parenting literature. Satisfaction and conflict were selected because their associations with parenting have been established, making it possible to examine spillover and stress-buffering processes. Relational maintenance has not been examined in association with parenting cognitions or child outcomes, but has been studied as part of relationship quality in studies focused on adult close relationships. In these studies, maintenance consistently predicted to other indicators of relationship quality. Thus, it was possible to hypothesize associations between the marital quality indicators and parenting cognitions based on prior parenting and relationship research.

Satisfaction. An aspect of marital quality that is regularly included in studies examining marriage and parenting is satisfaction (Erel & Burman, 1995) Relationship satisfaction refers to a person's evaluation of the relationship and the partner involved in the relationship. Satisfaction can be measured as a global evaluation of the relationship and partner to provide a general assessment of the extent to which someone is happy with their relationship (Schumm, Paff-Bergen, Hatch, & Obiorah, 1986).

Conflict. A commonly used indicator of marital quality is conflict. There is a wide range in severity of conflict in relationships, from minor disagreements that do not seem to be harmful to the marital relationship (Gottman & Krokoff, 1989), to physical and emotional aggression that are disruptive to family functioning (Margolin, Gordis, & John, 2001). For the purpose of the present study, conflict will refer to arguments within the couple relationship.

Maintenance. Relational maintenance consists of the behaviors in which partners engage that sustain the relationship. These behaviors are designed to maintain and repair the relationship in the face of day to day stressors (Canary, Stafford, & Semic, 2002). Relational maintenance strategies are associated with relationship characteristics such as: control mutuality, liking, and commitment (Canary & Stafford, 1992; Canary et al., 2002; Stafford & Canary, 1991). Because relational maintenance strategies are behaviors in which partners choose to engage, they are active, thoughtful indicators of marital quality. More than a feeling (such as satisfaction) or a disagreement (conflict), these behaviors represent the thought and energy partners put into their relationship, and it may be precisely this type of investment that is associated with parents who are confident in their abilities as parents and engage in meta-parenting to a greater degree than parents who chose not to invest actively in their marital relationship.

Stafford and Canary (1992) posit that there are five subscales of relational maintenance: positivity, openness, assurances, networks, and sharing tasks. Positivity consists of behaviors that are cheerful and uncritical of the partner. Openness refers to the willingness of the spouses/partners to discuss the relationship and their desires for the

relationship. Assurances are the messages spouses send to each other regarding their intention to stay in the relationship. Networks subscale refers to the extent to which spouses rely on and interact with common friends and relatives. Sharing tasks refers to spouses doing their part to take care of responsibilities, including household chores (Canary & Stafford, 1992). Of special interest in the present study are the positive behaviors spouses report doing to make their interactions with their spouse pleasant and to build up the spouse in his/her own eyes (positivity) (Stafford & Canary, 2006). This subscale was selected because it represents the efforts spouses employ to make their relationship enjoyable. These efforts may be especially important when the couple becomes parents as the path may get bumpy at times.

Associations among the marital quality indices. The dimensions of marital quality are interrelated. Maintenance behaviors are related to marital satisfaction. Satisfied partners tend to engage in more maintenance behaviors than less satisfied partners (Stafford & Canary, 2006; Weigel & Ballard-Reisch, 1999). Since maintenance behaviors are employed in order to maintain and mend the relationship (Stafford & Canary, 2006), it is not surprising that when couples are engaging in maintenance behaviors they will report feeling satisfied with their relationship.

In summary, the marital dimensions of conflict, satisfaction, and maintenance are related constructs that serve different functions in marital relationships. As such, it is possible that each of these marital dimensions may be differentially associated with parenting cognitions and may interact with the coparenting relationship in unique ways to predict to parenting cognitions. Below, is a description of the coparenting construct,

which like the marital construct, contains multiple dimensions that are closely related, but serve different roles in the coparenting relationship.

Coparenting

Coparenting is the relationship between the people responsible for raising a child (Van Egeren & Hawkins, 2004; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2004). The coparenting relationship is related to the marital relationship, but is a distinct construct. While marriage begins on the wedding day, coparenting begins with the introduction of a child to the family (Van Egeren, 2004). Coparenting and marriage are also distinctly different relationships because coparenting continues even if the marital relationship ends. Marriage is not a requirement for coparenting. The coparents may or may not be married to one another, but can still be in a coparenting relationship (McHale, Kuersten-Hogan, & Rao, 2004).

The coparenting relationship encompasses the quality of coordination between the parents as well as the division of child-care labor related to raising children (McHale et al., 2004). Coparenting exists between the parents with regards to everything that is related to the parents and child. This means that labor associated with child needs is considered coparenting while labor that is not associated with caring for the child's needs is outside of the coparenting relationship (Van Egeren & Hawkins, 2004).

The concept of coparenting is triadic; parents only begin to relate to each other as coparents with the addition of the child (McHale et al., 2004). While the construct of coparenting is triadic, coparenting includes behaviors and cognitions outside the triadic interaction as well, such as: parents working together to organize a family routine, one

parent saying nice things to the child when the other parent is not present, and when a parent harshly criticizes the other parent (in private) about their parenting skills. Thus, coparenting involves overt and covert behaviors on the part of the parents in the presence and absence of the other parent, as well as the presence and absence of the child (Fincham & Hall, 2005).

McHale (1995) defines coparenting as the coordination between adults, involving their level of shared leadership and support for one another in their parent roles. Hostility-competitiveness, family harmony, and parent discrepancy, observed during a triadic interaction, were used by Mchale to measure the quality of the coparenting relationship. Additionally, the extent to which the coparents were child (vs. adult) centered in their interactions was included. This study found that marital distress was linked to hostile-competitive coparenting and discrepant levels of parental involvement (McHale, 1995). In another paper (Talbot & Mchale, 2004), coparenting was again observed and competition, cooperation, verbal sparring, coparental warmth, child-centeredness and endorsement of other parent were measured. Talbot and Mchale (2004) found that individual traits, paternal flexibility and maternal self-control, were directly related to coparenting harmony (a composite of cooperation, coparental warmth, and child-centeredness) and that these traits also moderated the effects of marital quality on coparenting negativity (composite of competition, verbal sparring, and the inverse of endorsement of the other parent score).

Another assessment of coparenting used the dimensions of pleasure, warmth, cooperation, displeasure, and competition (Schoppe-Sullivan, Mangelsdorf, Brown, &

Sokolowski, 2007). Families were rated by investigators as being high or low on supportive and undermining coparenting using these dimensions. Associations between marital quality and coparenting were then tested and the authors found that coparenting predicted later marital functioning (Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2007). There are many similarities between McHale (1995) and Schoppe-Sullivan et al. (2007) as both groups of authors include measures of warmth, cooperation, hostility, and competition.

The Parenting Alliance Inventory examines coparenting based on the parents' evaluations of their own relationship (Abidin & Brunner, 1995). Originally proposed by Weissman and Cohen (1985), parenting alliance is the degree to which parents are willing to communicate with each other, are invested in their child, and value each other's involvement and judgment as parents. The Parenting Alliance Inventory is related to marital satisfaction and positive child outcomes (Abidin & Brunner, 1995).

Regardless of the method used to measure coparenting, authors seem to agree that coparenting is comprised of components that are positive (i.e., support, warmth) and negative (i.e., hostility, competitiveness), as well as including an element of balance of involvement in parenting work between the parents. However, there are enough differences between the conceptualizations of coparenting that there can be some concern about what an author is actually intending to study when they use the term coparenting. In order to address the confusion and to attempt to bring some uniformity to the conceptualization and measurement of coparenting, Van Egeren and Hawkins (2004) took on the task of defining coparenting.

Van Egeren's (2004; Van Egeren & Hawkins, 2004) definition of coparenting was selected for the present study because it integrates previous research on coparenting efficiently and coherently. This definition includes four dimensions of coparenting quality. These dimensions were developed in order to help clarify the coparenting construct and facilitate the development of a precise, yet comprehensive, understanding of coparenting that will enable researchers to further examine the framework of coparenting and develop a greater understanding of this multifaceted construct. The components described by Van Egeren are very similar to components examined by the studies described above. For example, parenting alliance (Abidin & Brunner, 1995) is similar to supportive coparenting and coparenting solidarity. By breaking the coparenting construct into subconstructs, it becomes possible to examine in greater detail, the nature of the relations between the marital and coparenting relationships. Below are descriptions of Van Egeren and Hawkins's (2004) definition of four coparenting components that make up the coparenting construct.

Coparenting solidarity. Coparenting solidarity is the extent to which couples become a parenting team. It is evidenced by a sense of unity and a feeling of growing together as parents (Van Egeren & Hawkins, 2004). Even if parents do not completely agree, they are able to work out the differences and negotiate a solution.

Coparenting support. A supportive coparenting relationship is one where parents feel as if their partner supports them in achieving their parenting goals (Van Egeren & Hawkins, 2004). An example of a supportive coparenting behavior is a parent picking up a toy that was dropped so that the other parent can continue to play with the child.

Supportive coparenting behaviors can also be encouragement that boosts one's partner's feelings about himself/herself as a parent.

Undermining coparenting. An undermining coparenting relationship is one in which the parent feels as if their partner does not have faith in them as a parent. Undermining coparenting can take the form of behaviors, for example distracting a child from an activity with the other parent. Criticism is another form of undermining coparenting (Van Egeren & Hawkins, 2004). The criticism can happen in the presence of the child, thus possibly removing the other parent's authority in the eyes of the child. The criticism can also happen without the child being aware of it. Even if the child does not hear the criticism, the other parent may feel diminished as a parent and it may affect how that parent feels about himself/herself as a parent.

Shared parenting. Shared parenting is the extent to which the work of childrearing is balanced between the two parents (Van Egeren & Hawkins, 2004). Shared parenting is the parents' perceptions of their own and their spouse's involvement in parenting their child. When parenting is shared, the partner is seen as participating in the child care work and willing to take on a fair amount of responsibility. When parenting is shared, parents do not feel as if they are carrying the workload of caring for their child on their own.

Interrelations among the coparenting dimensions. In their study of parents of young children (assessed when the child was six months and then later at three years), Van Egeren and Hawkins (2004) found that the interrelations between the coparenting constructs are different for mothers and fathers. For mothers, undermining by father was

not related to solidarity, support, or shared parenting. For fathers, undermining by the wife was significantly and negatively correlated with solidarity, support, and shared parenting (Van Egeren & Hawkins, 2004). When fathers report that they are growing together with their partner as coparents, they also report higher levels of coparenting support and less criticism (undermining) of their partner (Van Egeren & Hawkins, 2004). The dimensions of coparenting are related to one another, but also appear to be distinct from one another, as illustrated by the differences in associations between mothers and fathers.

Associations Among Indices of Marital Quality and Coparenting

The associations between marital quality and coparenting have been established in previous research. Marital quality has been measured and tested as a general construct that includes multiple indices of marital functioning (Talbot & McHale, 2004). Also, the construct of marital quality has been divided into specific components of marital quality (i.e. conflict, satisfaction, and maintenance). The following is a review of the findings of studies examining marital quality and coparenting.

Marital quality and coparenting. When parents are experiencing marital distress, their coparenting is affected. Marital distress predicts higher hostility-competitiveness, lower levels of family harmony, and higher levels of parenting discrepancy in a family triadic interaction (McHale, 1995). When measured concurrently, overall marital quality is related positively to coparenting harmony and coparenting negativity, which are similar to Van Egeren's (2004) coparenting support and undermining coparenting (Talbot & McHale, 2004).

While marriage is often examined as a predictor of coparenting, it is possible the marital relationship is predicted by coparenting. Findings from one longitudinal study indicate that coparenting influences marital conflict; problems in the coparenting relationship can lead to conflicts in the marital relationship (Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2004). Van Egeren and Hawkins (2004) examined coparenting and the marital relationship longitudinally and found that when parents reported that parenting is shared with one another, they were more likely to perceive their marriage positively (Van Egeren & Hawkins, 2004). However, a third longitudinal study found a relationship between marriage, the parenting alliance and parenting, but failed to find an indication of a reciprocal relationship between marriage and parenting (Floyd, Gilliom, & Costigan, 1998). The conflicting findings make it difficult to determine whether marriage influences coparenting or coparenting influences marriage or whether the association is, in fact, reciprocal. The present study will not examine these relations longitudinally, however, it is possible the findings in this study will inform a follow-up study that will be longitudinal in design.

Satisfaction and coparenting. Marital satisfaction is related to better coparenting and parenting. Parents with more positive marital experiences also report more positive experiences in coparenting, as well as the amount of time mothers and fathers play together with their child (Van Egeren, 2004). Marital satisfaction is related to father's involvement in direct child-care activities (Jacobs & Kelley, 2006). It is possible that satisfied couples are more supportive of each other as coparents and engage in less

undermining. By creating a positive coparenting relationship, the parents may, in turn, feel more confident in their parenting skills.

Maintenance and coparenting. At this time, there do not seem to be empirical studies connecting marital maintenance to the coparenting relationship. However, using theoretical assumptions regarding the relations between dimensions of the marital relationship, one can argue that these various components of marital functioning will be transmitted to the coparenting relationship in a similar way. Supporting one another and avoiding undermining the other parent is essential for maintaining the coparenting relationship. Parents who engage in maintenance activities may be more likely to support one another as coparents and less likely to undermine each other and may have greater coparenting solidarity.

Conflict and coparenting. Marital conflict is related to various child outcomes, including: children's compliance to parental requests, as well as internalizing and externalizing behaviors (Kaczynski, Lindahl, Malik, & Laurenceau, 2006; Volling, Blandon, & Kolak, 2006). Marital conflict may be directly related to child outcomes or it may be partially or fully mediated by coparenting quality.

In their study of Mexican-American fathers, Formoso, Gonzales, Barrera, and Dumka (2007) examined the associations between marital conflict and fathers' parenting quality. Conflict was measured using the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976). Fathering quality consisted of four scales: acceptance, attachment, involvement, and monitoring. The Children's Report of Parent Behavior Inventory (Schaefer, 1965) was used to collect reports from both fathers and the children. The authors found that marital

conflict interacts with maternal work participation to predict child's reports of fathering quality. For families where the mother did not engage in paid labor, marital conflict predicted lower fathering quality (Formoso et al., 2007).

Another study invited families into a lab and asked parents to engage in a pleasant discussion and then a conflictual discussion and then compared their coparenting interactions after each discussion (Kitzmann, 2000). A significant number of parents who engaged in coparenting classified as democratic (both parents engaged in decision making and problem solving) after the pleasant discussion engaged in nondemocratic coparenting after the conflictual discussion. Additionally, fathers were less supportive or engaged with their sons after a conflictual discussion, but mothers' parenting during the interactions was unchanged. A second study also found differences in the effects of marital distress on coparenting based on child gender. McHale (1995) found that observed marital distress was related to hostile-competitive coparenting for parents of boys and discrepant levels of parental involvement for girls.

Coparenting, marriage, and parenting. Direct associations among indices of marriage, coparenting, and parenting quality have been established. However, there are mixed findings regarding the direction of the interactive influence between marriage and coparenting. Below is a description of two studies examining the mediational model involving marriage, coparenting, and parenting.

Margolin, Gordis, and John (2001) examined the mediational role of coparenting in the relationship between marriage conflict and parenting for parents of preschool children and parents of preadolescent children. Marital conflict was measured using a

scale developed in an earlier study of husbands' emotional and physical abuse of their wives (Margolin, John, & Foo, 1998). Coparenting quality (CQ) was measured by a scale developed using questions from Maccoby's Stanford Child Custody Study Interviews (Buchanan, Maccoby, & Dornbusch, 1991). Margolin et al. (2001) found support for coparenting serving as a mediator between marriage and parenting for both mothers and fathers. It is particularly interesting that marital conflict was measured using a questionnaire designed to assess general anger, physical abuse, and emotional abuse. Margolin et al. (2001) focused on severe marital conflict, including abuse, and do not seem to be evaluating the role of less severe conflict on coparenting and parenting. The present study examines conflict that is less severe in nature and how it is related to parenting cognitions through multiple components of the coparenting relationship.

A second study also supports the marriage-coparenting-parenting mediated model (Floyd et al., 1998). Marital quality was measured using the dyadic satisfaction and dyadic consensus subscales from the DAS (Spanier, 1976). Marital quality was also measured using observation of a discussion between the husband and wife about a problem in their relationship. Coparenting was measured using the Family Experiences Questionnaire (Frank, Jacobson, & Hole, 1986). Parenting quality was measured using observation of a joint activity including a parent and the child in the family's home. Marital quality, assessed using the DAS and observational methods, was related to parenting through the parenting alliance. Thus, mediation was observed.

The present study measured three aspects of marital quality (maintenance, marital satisfaction, and conflict) and examined the relationships between marital measures,

coparenting (solidarity, support, undermining, and shared parenting), and parenting cognitions (parenting self-efficacy and meta-parenting) to further understand how the marital subsystem and the coparenting subsystem influence parental cognitions. In the past, the mediational model has been used to understand the process by which the marital relationship influenced parenting, however, the marital and coparenting relationship may in fact have direct associations and interact to predict parenting cognitions. It may be that the associations between marriage and coparenting are reciprocal, with negative or positive affect in one relationship flavoring interactions in the other. These interactions may feed upon one another with affect spilling over from one type of interaction (marital or coparenting) to the other. Thus, models examining marriage as a moderator will be tested in order to determine if associations between coparenting cognitions are different in the context of different levels of the indices of marital quality (see Figure D1).

Hypotheses

The following research questions and hypotheses refer to the predicted associations among dimensions of marital quality, coparenting and parenting cognitions. First, the anticipated direct associations between marital and coparenting indicators and parenting cognitions (parenting self-efficacy and meta-parenting) will be described. Next, the anticipated associations between coparenting indicators and parenting cognitions at higher and lower levels of the marital quality indicators will be described. These hypotheses were informed by the two theoretical perspectives reviewed and the empirical associations already identified in the literature.

I. Social Cognitive Theory and the associated literature examining parenting self-efficacy suggests that this particular parenting cognition, with demonstrated significance for parenting behaviors and child outcomes, is the product of a variety of contextual factors, including qualities of the parent's relational context. This study extends this type of exploration by examining multiple dimensions of marital quality simultaneously, as well as the role of coparenting on these parental cognitions. The results should produce a more fine-grained understanding of which qualities of the dyad are influential in this regard and how they compare in their influence.

Research Question 1. How are different dimensions of marital quality and coparenting related to parenting self-efficacy?

Hypothesis 1a. Marital satisfaction, maintenance and coparental support, solidarity and shared parenting, regardless of reporter as self or partner, should promote or positively influence parenting self-efficacy.

Hypothesis 1b. Marital conflict or high undermining coparenting, regardless of reporter, should negatively impact parenting self-efficacy.

The existing literature has examined these associations employing different constructs of marital quality. Further, investigators have often failed to examine mothers and fathers simultaneously. The present investigation examines multiple dimensions of marital quality for both mothers and fathers, while adding two dimensions of coparenting as representing a new family subsystem with the potential to impact these parenting cognitions. Moreover,

these analyses employed data from cross-informants as predictors, exploring how perceptions, both one's own and one's spouse, of the relationship context impact this parenting cognition. The literature is incomplete with regards to hypotheses and supportive data to inform expectations of similarities or differences between mothers and fathers. Therefore, specific differences or similarities were not hypothesized and the analyses are exploratory in this regard.

Parenting cognitions have been identified as a central component of child rearing behaviors. The previous research question and the associated hypothesis examined one discrete element of parents' cognitions, or their feelings of efficaciousness in the parenting role. A newly emerging construct involving parents' thoughts about their children and childrearing, labeled meta-parenting, was included in these tests of the effects of qualities of these relational contexts. This strategy of exploring these associations with a second measure of a parenting cognition, or meta-parenting, was adopted in an attempt to evaluate these associations with a related, but ultimately distinct, parenting cognition. The expectation was that the associations would be essentially replicated in relation to meta-parenting, suggesting that parenting cognitions as a class are distinct, yet influenced by the qualities of close relationships in similar ways. Should similar associations emerge for the two different outcome variables, the evidence informing the role of those different

kinds of spousal relations in influencing parenting cognitions would be more powerful and convincing.

Research Question 2. How are different dimensions of marital quality and coparenting related to meta-parenting?

Hypothesis 2a. Marital satisfaction, maintenance and coparental support, solidarity and shared parenting, regardless of reporter as self or partner, should promote or positively influence meta-parenting.

Hypothesis 2b. Marital conflict or high undermining coparenting, regardless of reporter, should negatively impact meta-parenting.

- II. The prior set of research questions examined the independent effects of dimensions of marriages and the coparenting relationship on an individual's parenting cognitions. Family systems theory posits that in addition to these predicted direct associations, the marital and coparenting systems should exert influence interactively. Two types of interactions were explored: additive and compensatory associations. The additive interaction is evident when the combination of a higher marital quality indicator and higher quality coparenting is associated with greater parenting cognitions than when parents only report one of the two relationships as being more positive. Compensatory interactions are evident when in the face of distress in either the marital or coparenting relationship, if the other relationship is moderately good to very good, parenting cognitions are not negatively impacted.

Research Question 3. Do the different dimensions of marital quality and coparenting additively influence parenting cognitions? Two separate processes have been explored in the literature informing expectations. The first suggests that both positive and negative experiences in relationships usually defined as affect, can spillover, resulting in similar affective experiences in another relationship or family subsystem. Thus, positive affect in one family subsystem promotes or heightens the positive affect in a second subsystem. By extension, these analyses explored the question of whether positivity in two subsystems would be even more beneficial in promoting parenting cognitions identified as desirable. Likewise, the reverse was asked; whether negativity in two subsystems would have an even more detrimental effect on the parenting cognitions?

Hypothesis 3a. The impact of supportive coparenting on increasing parenting self-efficacy and meta-parenting will be positivity increased when embedded in marital relationships characterized by higher levels of satisfaction and maintenance. Thus, positivity in two subsystems will work additively to promote more optimal parenting cognitions.

Hypothesis 3b. The impact of undermining coparenting in reducing efficacy and levels of meta-parenting, will be most likely observed when marriages are characterized by higher levels of conflict. Thus, negativity in two subsystems will work to reduce or limit parenting cognitions identified as more optimal.

Research Question 4. Associated with family systems theory is a second proposition that positive qualities of one subsystem may buffer or compensate for the impact of the experience of negative interactions/affects inherent in a second subsystem. This tenet results in two related questions explored here. Can supportive coparenting protect against/compensate for the negative effects of high marital conflict, low satisfaction and maintenance in potentially reducing self-efficacy or meta-parenting? Similarly, can positive marital relations counteract or compensate for the potentially negative impact of undermining coparenting? The findings associated with tests of the stress buffering notion, led to the following hypotheses.

Hypothesis 4a. A compensatory effect will be observed, whereby, high levels of supportive coparenting will be associated with higher levels of self-efficacy or meta-parenting, even if the marital quality indices suggest distress in the marriage, or high conflict, low satisfaction and maintenance.

Hypothesis 4b. A compensatory effect will be observed, whereby high levels of positive indices of marital quality (e.g., satisfaction, maintenance) will be associated with higher levels of parenting self-efficacy or meta-parenting, even if parents are reporting higher levels of undermining coparenting.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Procedure

The internet was used to collect data for this study. Global Market Insite (GMI), a company specializing in creating on-line panels of research participants, was contracted to invite families to participate and instruct them on how to access the web-based survey. Parents were invited to participate in this study via email. Included in the email was the link to the survey. The first parent was given a log-in number to be used by the second parent to gain access to the second survey. In order to assure confidentiality, identifiers such as names and email addresses were not collected from participants. After both surveys were completed, participants were redirected to the GMI website so that they could be compensated for their participation. Respondents were compensated through GMI based on a point system. Points are earned by respondents when they complete surveys and after the respondent earns enough points to equal 50 dollars, GMI send the respondent a check. Based on the GMI compensation system, the survey for the present study was worth 10 dollars in points.

Sample

The present study consisted of 175 heterosexual married or cohabiting couples (350 total respondents). The majority of the mothers and fathers reported being White, Caucasian, or European American (mothers $n = 143$, 82%; fathers $n = 145$; 83%). Most couples were married ($n = 149$, 85%) the rest were cohabiting ($n = 26$, 15%). Mothers' average age was 34.89 years ($SD = 6.39$) and fathers' was 37.66 years ($SD = 7.75$). The

average age of the child was 4.89 years ($SD = 1.29$). Parents reported their relationship length to be on average 11.28 years long ($SD = 5.49$). A majority of the families in this sample reported having an income of 50,000 or greater (66.9%). For additional sample information see Table C1.

Measures

The following is a description of the scales used in the present study. These measures, except for meta-parenting were selected for inclusion in this study because they are commonly used to measure the constructs of interest in this study and their validity has been established. For meta-parenting, there are only two published studies using this construct and this scale is the only one that has been used to date. For a complete list of the measures used in this study, see Appendix B.

Marital Quality

Maintenance. Maintenance behaviors were measured using the positive subscale of a maintenance scale developed by Stafford and Canary (2006). The entire measure of marital maintenance could not be included in the present study as this questionnaire was online and the questionnaire needed to be appropriate in length for the level of compensation respondents were given. The positive subscale was selected because it assesses the positive behaviors parents enact in order to make their romantic relationship pleasant. Eight of the ten items were selected to assess the extent to which parents engaged in positive behaviors designed to promote enjoyable interactions with their partner. Respondents were asked to rate on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 7 (frequently) how often they engaged in specific behaviors. Examples of these behaviors

include: “Attempt to make our interactions very enjoyable, Am very nice, courteous, and polite when we talk,” and “Try to be romantic, fun, and interesting with him/her.” Alphas were acceptable (fathers = .98, Mothers = .87).

Satisfaction. Marital satisfaction was measured using the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (Schumm et al., 1986). This scale includes three items. These items are: “how satisfied are you with your marriage;” “how satisfied are you with your spouse/partner as a spouse/partner;” and “how satisfied are you with your relationship with your spouse/partner.” Internal reliability for this scale was good for mothers (alpha = .96) and fathers (alpha = .98). Respondents indicated their level of satisfaction by choosing one of seven options for each question (extremely dissatisfied, very dissatisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, mixed, somewhat satisfied, very satisfied, and extremely satisfied).

Conflict. Four items were used to assess marital conflict. These items come from a study by Choi and Marks (2008). Respondents were asked to rate how often they fight about four topics: finances, sex, time together, and chores. A Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 6 (almost every day) was used. Internal reliability was good for mothers (alpha = .77) and fathers (alpha = .81). It was important to discriminate between conflict over marital issues and conflict over parenting issues. Because conflict over parenting work (care of the child) relates to the construct of coparenting, couples were explicitly asked to report on conflicts about issues not involving the child.

Coparenting

All of the coparenting subscales (coparenting solidarity, coparenting support, undermining coparenting, and shared parenting) were measured using items from the Family Experience Questionnaire (FEQ; Frank, Jacobson, & Avery, 1988 as cited in Van Egeren & Hawkins, 2004) from which Van Egeren and Hawkins (2004), selected items from the 10-item FEQ solidarity subscale (used to measure coparenting solidarity), the 10-item FEQ denigrated spouse subscale (split into two parts used to measure coparenting support and undermining coparenting), and 8 items of the 10-item shared parenting scale (measured shared parenting). The four coparenting subscales (coparenting solidarity, coparenting support, undermining coparenting, and shared parenting) have shown convergent validity with the Coparenting Family Rating Scales (McHale, Kuersten-Hogan, & Lauretti, 2000).

Coparenting solidarity. Seven items were used to measure the degree parents feel that they and their partners are growing together and forming a close parenting relationship with each other. These items are designed to measure the extent to which parents feel they agree with their spouses about parenting issues and how parenting experiences have brought the couple together as a team. Examples of these items include: “Parenting has brought my spouse and me closer together;”, “My spouse and I agree on our ideas, guidelines, and rules for raising our children;” and “Parenting has given my spouse and me a focus for the future.” Four choices were given designed to assess the degree to which parents agree with the statements (strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree). This scale has previously had acceptable reliability for mothers (alpha

= .75) and for fathers (alpha = .80) (Van Egeren & Hawkins, 2004). The reliability in the present study was good for mothers (alpha = .89) and fathers (alpha = .88).

Coparenting support. In this study, the participants were asked about the supportiveness of their partner instead of how supportive they are of their partner. Supportive coparenting was measured using five items. Examples of these items are: “My spouse appreciates how hard I work at being a good parent,” and “My spouse backs me up as a parent.” Respondents can indicate the extent to which they agree with each item (strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree). Prior measurement of this dimension indicated strong reliability for both mothers (alpha = .78) and fathers (alpha = .83) (Van Egeren & Hawkins, 2004). The reliabilities for mothers (alpha = .84) and fathers (alpha = .88) were good in the present study.

Undermining coparenting. Participants were asked to indicate their perceptions of the extent to which they feel they are undermined or denigrated by their spouse when it comes to parenting. In order to measure parents’ perception of being undermined by their spouse, six items were used. When measured previously, this subscale had strong internal consistency (alpha = .82) for both mothers and fathers (Van Egeren & Hawkins, 2004). This scale had strong internal consistency in the present study as well (mothers’ alpha = .83, fathers’ alpha = .87). The undermining coparenting items are designed to measure the negativity of the spouse in the coparenting relationship. Examples of items are: “My spouse thinks I am a bad influence on the children,” and “As a parent, I cannot seem to do anything right in my spouse’s eyes.” Respondents had a choice of four responses for each question (strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree). This

scale was reverse coded in order to make interpretation of the findings easier. Higher scores represented more undermining.

Shared parenting. Eight items were used to assess the extent to which parents feel parenting is shared with their partner. These items measured parents' perceptions of the extent to which the parenting work is a joint venture with their partner. The original scale contained eight items ($\alpha = .84$ for mothers and $\alpha = .82$ for fathers Van Egeren & Hawkins, 2004). The internal consistency was strong in the present study for both mothers ($\alpha = .89$) and fathers ($\alpha = .82$). Examples of items used in the present study are: "my spouse is willing to make some personal sacrifices in order to help with the parenting;" "my spouse still wants to 'do his/her own thing' instead of being a responsible parent;" and "I feel overburdened as a parent because my spouse is often too involved with other things to carry a fair share of the load." Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree with the statements (strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree).

Parenting Cognitions

Parenting self-efficacy. Parenting self-efficacy can be measured globally or task-specifically. This study used a task-specific approach, but will ask about specific tasks within different categories of parenting responsibilities. When the measure is task-specific, it is important to have a measure that is centered on tasks that are salient for the time period in which the parents and child are developmentally.

In order to measure parenting self-efficacy, the Berkeley Parenting Self-efficacy Scale (Preschool Version), developed by Holloway and colleagues (2005), was used. This

scale contains questions designed to assess how well a parent believes they can parent their child. The scale consists of 10 items designed to measure how well a parent believes they can do specific parenting tasks. These questions were combined to create a composite parenting self-efficacy score by taking the mean of the 10 items; the alpha for this original scale was .82 (Yamoto, Holloway, & Suzuki, 2006). In addition to the 10 items described above, 15 items were added to the scale asking parents to rate themselves on their ability to help their child accomplish developmental tasks. Examples of the development tasks include: respect adults, express thoughts clearly, and to continue trying even when something is difficult. These items were developed by Holloway and colleagues for the Berkeley Parenting Self-efficacy Scale (Preschool Version) as well (personal communication, January 15, 2007). The two scales were combined and the internal reliability for the 25 item scale was acceptable for mothers (alpha = .95) and fathers (alpha = .96).

Meta-parenting. Meta-parenting was measured using Hawk and Holden's (2006) Meta-Parenting Questionnaire. The original measure consisted of 24 items assessing four subscales of meta-parenting. In order to keep the survey brief, modifications to this scale were necessary. For the present study, 14 items were selected from the original 24 to assess the extent to which parents actively thought about parenting their child. Items from each subscale identified by Hawk and Holden (2006) were included in the 14-item scale for the present study. The items were selected carefully and items that were extremely similar to other items or that were confusing were omitted and items that seemed to be the most relevant to the construct of meta-parenting and that best fit each of the subscales

were retained. Examples of items include: “How often do you stick with a problem-solving strategy you planned?;” “ When you are having a problem with your child, how often do you develop a strategy to deal with the problem?;” “ How often do you consider whether your child’s friends may be a positive or negative influence?” For all but two of the items, respondents were asked to use a 5-point Likert scale (1 - Never/Rarely, 5 – Constantly). The remaining two questions used a different 5-point Likert scale (1 – Not at all, 5 - Completely). Reliability for this scale was good for both mothers and fathers (alpha = .88 for both).

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Correlations were run in order to test associations among the study scales (See Tables C3 and C4). In order to compare mothers' and fathers' reports of their marriage, coparenting, and parenting cognitions, paired *t* tests were used. Hierarchical regressions were generated to test hypotheses regarding associations among marital quality indices, coparenting quality, parenting cognitions, and possible interactions between the marital and coparenting indices in predicting these cognitions. First, the results of the correlations among the study scales will be described. Next, similarities and differences between mothers and fathers will be explored using rank order comparisons (correlations) and mean differences (*t* tests). Finally, the regression analyses and the post hoc analyses of the interactions will be described and the results will be reported.

Supportive Coparenting

Coparenting solidarity, coparenting support, and shared parenting were all highly correlated with one another for both fathers and mothers (See Table C3). In order to avoid issues of multicollinearity and to increase parsimony, these three constructs were averaged to create a single variable labeled supportive coparenting for use in the regression analyses (included in Table C4). Undermining coparenting remained a separate subscale of coparenting. There was acceptable internal reliability of the aggregate variable for both mothers' and fathers' reports of having a supportive coparenting relationship ($\alpha = .95$) and fathers ($\alpha = .95$).

Correlations Among Marital Quality, Coparenting, and Parenting Cognitions

For both mothers and fathers, the marital and coparenting indices were highly intercorrelated (Table C4). Additionally, mothers' and fathers' scores were highly correlated with one another for each of those indices. Parenting self-efficacy was positively associated with maintenance, supportive coparenting, and meta-parenting and negatively associated with conflict and undermining coparenting for mothers. For fathers, parenting self-efficacy was positively associated with maintenance, satisfaction, and supportive coparenting and negatively associated with undermining coparenting. Meta-parenting was negatively associated with undermining coparenting for mothers. For fathers, meta-parenting was positively associated with maintenance, satisfaction, and supportive coparenting and negatively associated with undermining coparenting. For both mothers and fathers, parenting self-efficacy and meta-parenting were positively associated with one another.

Mean Differences Between Mothers and Fathers

Paired *t* tests were used to compare mothers' and fathers' reports of marital quality, coparenting, and parenting cognitions. Due to a lack of guidance from prior studies, differences between mothers and fathers were not predicted. Instead, these analyses were exploratory in nature. First, mean differences between mothers' and fathers' reports of marital quality indices will be provided. Next will be results of the comparisons of mothers' and fathers' reports of the coparenting relationship. Finally, mothers' and fathers' reports of parenting self-efficacy and meta-parenting will be compared.

Marital Quality

Maintenance. Between couples, mothers and fathers showed rank order stability in their reports of marital maintenance behaviors ($r = .50, p < .05$). Fathers reported engaging in fewer maintenance behaviors than mothers [(respectively, $M = 5.42, SD = 1.25, M = 5.61, SD = 1.00$), $t(174) = -2.22, p < .05$ (two tailed)].

Conflict. Mothers' and fathers' reports of marital conflict were highly correlated ($r = .85, p < .001$). The reports of frequency of conflict were not significantly different from one another.

Satisfaction. Mothers' and fathers' reports of marital satisfaction were significantly correlated ($r = .55, p < .01$). Fathers reported more satisfaction in their marriage ($M = 5.86, SD = 1.28$) than mothers [$(M = 5.61, SD = 1.37)$ $t(171) = 2.58, p < .05$ (two tailed)].

Coparenting

Supportive coparenting. Fathers' and mothers' reports of their perceptions of their coparenting relationship with their partner as supportive, unified, and reasonably shared, were significantly correlated ($r = .62, p < .01$). However, fathers reported significantly more supportive coparenting ($M = 3.91, SD = .49$) than mothers [$(M = 3.84, SD = .55)$, $t(172) = 2.09, p < .05$ (two tailed)].

Undermining coparenting. Mothers' and fathers' reports of undermining coparenting from their partner were highly correlated ($r = .49, p < .01$). There was a significant difference between mothers' and fathers' reports of feeling undermined by their spouse [$t(168) = 3.28, p < .01$ (two tailed)]. Mothers reported less perceived undermining from their spouse [$(M = 2.53, SD = .54)$ than fathers ($M = 2.69, SD = .63$)].

Parenting Cognitions

Parenting self-efficacy. Mothers' and fathers' reports of parenting self-efficacy were highly correlated with one another ($r = .57, p < .01$). However, mothers reported greater parenting self-efficacy ($M = 5.22, SD = .66$) than fathers [$(M = 5.10, SD = .71), t(173) = -2.52, p = .01$ (two tailed)]. Overall, mothers reported feeling more confident in their parenting abilities than fathers.

Meta-parenting. Parents' reports of meta-parenting were significantly correlated with their spouse's report of their own meta-parenting ($r = .55, p < .01$). Mothers reported more meta-parenting ($M = 3.59, SD = .72$) than fathers ($M = 3.24, SD = .77$), $t(170) = -6.39, p < .001$ (two tailed).

Regression Analyses

Four variables, child's gender, parents' relationship length, parents' marital status, and parent's level of education, were identified as having the potential to confound associations among the indices of marriage, coparenting, and parenting cognitions. Previous studies have established associations between child gender and parenting outcomes (e.g., Kaczynski, Lindahl, Malik, & Laurenceau, 2006; McHale, 1995). Exploratory analyses identified parents' relationship length, parents' marital status, and parents' level of education as possible confounding variables.

Both married and cohabiting parents were included in the present study however the possibility of differences between the married and cohabiting families on key study variables made comparing these two groups essential. Independent samples t tests were used to determine if there were significant differences between married and cohabiting

parents for seven study variables. Mothers and fathers were analyzed separately for all of the *t* tests. For mothers, only their reports of supportive coparenting were significantly different; mothers who were married reported more coparenting support ($M = 3.88$, $SD = .51$) than mothers who were cohabiting ($M = 3.59$, $SD = .69$), $t(172) = -2.01$, $p = .05$ (two tailed). Married fathers reported significantly less undermining coparenting ($M = 2.65$, $SD = .59$) than cohabiting fathers ($M = 2.95$, $SD = .79$), $t(171) = 2.28$, $p = .02$). Married fathers also reported greater marital/relationship satisfaction ($M = 5.94$, $SD = .10$) than cohabiting fathers ($M = 5.33$, $SD = .33$), $t(171) = -2.23$, $p = .03$).

In the present study, there were significant associations between parents' relationship length and meta-parenting for fathers ($r = -.16$, $p < .05$). Additionally, paternal level of education was associated with their reports of parenting self-efficacy ($r = .22$, $p < .001$) and maternal level of education was associated with their reports of meta-parenting ($r = .17$, $p < .05$). For these reasons, child gender, length of couple's relationship, couple's marital status, and parental level of education were treated as control variables in the following regression analyses. Associations among primary study variables with other demographic variables were examined and no additional significant associations were observed consistently.

The following describes the regression analyses used to test associations among marriage, coparenting, and parenting cognitions. Direct effects of marriage and coparenting indices were tested, as well as the interactive effects of marriage and coparenting on parenting cognitions. Due to the nonindependent nature of their reports, mothers and fathers could not be assessed in the same regression equations (Kenny,

Kashy, & Cook, 2006). Mothers and fathers were run separately, but their partners' reports of the marriage and coparenting relationships were included in each of their analyses. A total of eight regression analyses, four for mothers and four for fathers, were employed in testing the hypothesized associations on this study. For mothers and fathers, supportive coparenting and undermining coparenting were tested separately as predictors of parenting self-efficacy and meta-parenting.

In the first step of each of the regression equations, the four control variables were entered. The six marital indices (as reported by both the mother and father) and either the supportive coparenting or undermining coparenting subscale (from each parent) were entered into the second step of the equation to test direct effects of marriage and coparenting on parenting cognitions. In order to test marital quality indicators as moderators, the steps outlined in Baron and Kenny (1986) were used. The third step of the equation contained the interactive terms created by multiplying centered versions of each of the marital and coparenting indices (both the individual's and their partner's reports). For each regression, six interaction terms were entered into the third step, three reflecting the individual's reports of their marital quality interacting with either supportive or undermining coparenting and three reflecting the partner's reports of their marital quality interacting with either supportive or undermining coparenting.

Significant interactions were graphed using high, medium and low values obtained using the mean and plus one standard deviation and minus one standard deviation of the mean of the marital quality indicators (Figures D4, D5, and D6), and simple slope analyses were run in order to determine if the slopes were significant at

those values (Aiken & West, 1991). An alpha level of .05 was used for all statistical tests, and all eight equations were significant overall with R^2 values ranging from .28 - .52.

Control variables and parenting self-efficacy. Four control variables were entered into the first step of all of the regression equations. An examination of the $R^2\Delta$ values for the four equations predicting to self-efficacy revealed that two of these steps were significant and both of these were associated with the equations in which fathers' self-efficacy scores were regressed onto the control, marital, coparenting variables and the interaction terms. In both of these equations it was child's gender that was associated with a significant coefficient. For fathers, child's gender was associated with parenting self-efficacy. Overall, fathers of girls reported being significantly more confident in their parenting abilities than fathers of boys. Gender of child was not a significant predictor of parenting self-efficacy for mothers and marital status was not a significant predictor for mothers or fathers ($p > .10$).

Marriage, coparenting, and parenting self-efficacy (Hypotheses 1a and 1b). In the equations in which self-efficacy, either the mothers' or fathers', were regressed onto the control, marital, coparenting variables and the interaction terms, the $R^2\Delta$ values associated with these second steps were all statistically significant. The variance accounted for by these direct effects was .20 - .23 for mothers and .32 - .39 for fathers (see Tables C5 and C6). The findings regarding the direct associations between marriage, coparenting and parenting self-efficacy were mixed in their support for the present study hypotheses. Both mothers' and fathers' reports of their own marital maintenance behaviors were significantly associated with mothers' reports of parenting

self-efficacy ($\beta = .23, p < .05$ and $\beta = .25, p < .05$, respectively) when supportive coparenting was in the equation and when undermining coparenting was in the equation ($\beta = .27, p < .01, \beta = .19, p = .05$, respectively). The more mothers reported engaging in positive marital relationship maintenance, the higher they rated their parenting self-efficacy. Additionally, the greater the fathers' (mothers' spouses) reports of engaging in positive marital maintenance behaviors, the higher mothers rated their own parenting self-efficacy. When fathers reported engaging in greater amounts of positive maintenance behaviors they reported being more confident in their own parenting behaviors when supportive and undermining coparenting was in the equation ($\beta = .40, p < .001, \beta = .51, p < .001$, respectively).

Mothers' reports of marital satisfaction were negatively associated with fathers' reports of their own parenting self-efficacy in the equations including both of the coparenting terms ($\beta = -.22, p < .05$, supportive coparenting; $\beta = -.23, p < .01$, undermining coparenting). Higher maternal reports of marital satisfaction were related to lower parenting self-efficacy in fathers. For mothers, reports of their marital satisfaction were negatively associated with their own parenting self-efficacy when undermining coparenting was entered into the equation ($\beta = -.21, p < .05$). Higher maternal reports of their own marital satisfaction were related to lower reports of parenting self-efficacy. Marital satisfaction was not significantly directly related to parenting self-efficacy for fathers ($p > .10$).

Mothers' and fathers' reports of supportive coparenting were not significantly associated with parenting self-efficacy ($p > .10$). Mothers' reports of undermining

coparenting from their partner were associated negatively with their parenting self-efficacy ($\beta = -.28, p < .01$). Fathers' reports of feeling undermined by their partner were also significantly and negatively related to parenting self-efficacy ($\beta = -.32, p < .001$). When mothers and fathers reported feeling undermined by their partner, they also reported feeling less confident in their abilities to parent their child.

In summary, self-reported maintenance was predictive for both mothers and fathers regardless of which coparenting variable was in the equation. Self reported undermining coparenting was significantly and negatively associated with parenting self-efficacy for both mothers and fathers. These significant associations were as hypothesized. It appears that the partners' reports of marital quality and their experiences of the coparenting relationship were not generally related to parents' reports of their own parenting self-efficacy as the cross-informant report was predictive in only two instances (in that instance, fathers' reports of maintenance were positively and significantly associated with the mothers' parenting self-efficacy). While not part of the hypotheses, child gender played a role for fathers in predicting parenting self-efficacy.

The hypothesized direct association between supportive coparenting and parenting self-efficacy was not observed as the composite supportive coparenting variable was not significantly associated with this dependent variable. For fathers, the mothers' reports of marital satisfaction were significantly and negatively associated with their parenting self-efficacy. This did not fit hypothesized associations as the direction of the association was the opposite of what was expected. Finally, failing to support hypothesized associations were the following findings. When undermining coparenting

was included in equations, mothers' reports of marital satisfaction were significantly and negatively associated with self-efficacy. As with the equations including supportive coparenting, the partners' reports of undermining coparenting were not predictive of parenting self-efficacy and conflict as reported by either parent was not associated with parenting self-efficacy.

Direct effects of marriage and coparenting on meta-parenting (Hypotheses 2a and 2b). Four equations were generated in which the mothers' and fathers' reports of meta-parenting were regressed onto the control, marital, coparenting variables and the interaction terms (see Tables C7 and C8). The $R^2\Delta$ values associated with the first step including the control variables were significant in the two equations predicting to fathers' reports of meta-parenting. In both equations, it is the fathers' education levels that are associated with significant coefficients. More educated fathers reported in engaging in more meta-parenting.

All four of the second steps in these equations achieved significance. These results suggest that the direct associations account for approximately 11% of the variance in maternal meta-parenting, and 10% for fathers. Marital and coparenting associations with meta-parenting follow a similar pattern to those in the preceding four equations predicting to parenting self-efficacy. When undermining coparenting was included in the regression equations, maintenance was positively related to meta-parenting for both mothers and fathers ($\beta = .28, p = .01$ and $\beta = .22, p < .05$). Undermining coparenting was significantly and negatively associated with mothers' meta-parenting ($\beta = .19, p < .05$). These findings support hypothesized associations.

Contrary to expectations, marital satisfaction, conflict, and supportive coparenting were not significantly associated with meta-parenting for either mothers or fathers. As a result, the hypotheses regarding these marital and coparenting associations were not supported in the present study.

Interactive effects of marriage and coparenting on parenting self-efficacy and meta-parenting (Hypotheses 3a, 3b, 4a, and 4b). The interaction terms constructed by multiplying centered versions of the marital quality indices and the two coparenting indices were entered in the third steps of all eight equations. For the four equations predicting to parenting self-efficacy three of the $R^2\Delta$ values associated with the third step were statistically significant. None of the steps including interaction terms were statistically significant in the four equations predicting to meta-parenting (see Tables C5, C6, C7, and C8).

The interaction term maintenance X supportive coparenting proved to be significant in predicting to parenting self-efficacy for mothers ($\beta = .26, p < .05$). The post hoc analyses of this result is presented in Figure D4 which demonstrates that for mothers who are engaging in higher levels of maintenance activities, as supportive coparenting increases so does the likelihood of reporting more parenting self-efficacy. Levels of self-efficacy stay relatively constant at low levels of maintenance despite increases in supportive coparenting. This interaction, and the following significant interactions, were graphed using high and low values, obtained by adding and subtracting one standard deviation from the marital scales in the interaction.

The marital satisfaction X supportive coparenting interaction term was also associated with a significant coefficient in the equation predicting to parenting self-efficacy for fathers ($\beta = .24, p < .05$). This interaction is graphed and presented in Figure D5. The fathers' reports of supportive coparenting were only associated with increases in parenting self-efficacy in the context of being satisfied with the marriage. Marital satisfaction also interacted with undermining coparenting to predict parenting self-efficacy for fathers ($\beta = .15, p < .05$). A graph of this interaction is presented in Figure D6. While undermining coparenting was associated with decreased parenting self-efficacy at high, moderate and low marital satisfaction, the slope for fathers reporting greater marital satisfaction evidenced the greatest decline in parenting self-efficacy in the context of greater undermining coparenting.

For fathers, the interaction term consisting of their reports of marital maintenance X undermining coparenting proved significant in predicting their parenting self-efficacy ($\beta = .29, p < .001$). A graph of this interaction is presented in Figure D7. As undermining coparenting increased for fathers, their reports of parenting self-efficacy declined significantly in the context of low maintenance. In the context of a marital relationship in which fathers report engaging in fewer maintenance behaviors, undermining coparenting is associated with less parenting self-efficacy than for fathers reporting engaging in more maintenance behaviors.

Evidence of positive or negative additive associations can be seen to different degrees in the graphs of all of the interactions (Figures D4-D7). This evidence offers support for Hypothesis 3a. High and moderate levels of maintenance, coupled with the

highest level of coparenting are most predictive of parenting self-efficacy (Figure D4). The same pattern exists for fathers, where high marital satisfaction, coupled with supportive coparenting, was associated with higher levels of parenting self-efficacy (Figure D5) and higher marital satisfaction, coupled with lower undermining coparenting was related to higher levels of parenting self-efficacy (Figure D6). For fathers reporting lower levels of supportive coparenting, it appears that the additive hypothesis does not fit with the findings. For fathers with lower levels of supportive coparenting, higher levels of marital satisfaction are related to lower reports of parenting self-efficacy.

There was no support for a negative additive effect of high marital conflict and high undermining coparenting on parenting cognitions (Hypothesis 3b). Conflict did not interact with undermining coparenting while predicting to parenting self-efficacy or meta-parenting for mothers or fathers. Thus, the data failed to support Hypothesis 3b.

The compensatory effects of supportive coparenting on the associations between marital quality and parenting cognitions were not found (Hypothesis 4a). Higher levels of supportive coparenting did not buffer the effects of lower marital quality on parenting self-efficacy (Figure D5). For fathers reporting low levels of maintenance, the slope of the line representing the association between supportive coparenting and parenting self-efficacy was stable (ns). In the case of marital satisfaction the association between supportive coparenting and parenting self-efficacy was negative for mothers ($p < .05$).

There is some support for Hypothesis 4b which proposed a compensatory effect of marital quality on the association between undermining coparenting and parenting cognitions. High levels of maintenance compensated for higher undermining coparenting

for fathers (Figure D7). Under conditions of high maintenance, the parenting self-efficacy levels are stable despite increasing undermining coparenting. When maintenance is low, parenting self-efficacy decreases significantly when fathers report more undermining coparenting ($p < .001$). This latter association was evidence for additivity (Hypothesis 3b).

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The present study examined the associations among marriage, coparenting and parenting cognitions. Family Systems Theory and Social Cognitive Theory were used to inform predictions regarding the associations among marital quality indices, coparenting, and parenting cognitions. Direct associations among marital quality indicators, coparenting and parenting self-efficacy, then meta-parenting, were examined. Next, additive associations, where indicators of a good marriage (high satisfaction and maintenance and low conflict) combine with supportive coparenting to predict even greater parenting self-efficacy and meta-parenting and indicators of a poor marriage (low satisfaction and maintenance and high conflict) combine with undermining coparenting to predict even lower parenting cognitions were examined. Finally, possible compensatory associations, where positive aspects of either the marriage or the coparenting relationships (high maintenance, satisfaction or supportive coparenting) could buffer parenting cognitions in the face of negativity in the other relationship (high marital conflict or undermining coparenting) were tested. Below, the findings from this study are discussed and possible limitations are addressed. Finally, logical next steps for future studies are posited.

Marriage, Coparenting, and Parenting Cognitions

Particularly surprising was the consistent way in which reports of one's own maintenance was associated with parenting cognitions. Maintenance was a significant predictor of both parenting self-efficacy and meta-parenting in seven of the eight

regression equations. It may be that maintenance is a powerful indicator of the climate of the relationship. In the past, maintenance behaviors have been associated with commitment to the relationship and liking the partner (Canary et al., 2002). Spouses who are investing energy into making their interactions with their spouse positive may be people who have a sense self-efficacy about their close relationships. These parents may feel more efficacious in their parent-child relationships because they have experienced success in promoting positivity in their marital relationship.

In a prior study, high levels of life-stress, but not social support, were observed to be negatively associated with meta-parenting (Hawk & Holden, 2006). In the present study, undermining coparenting was significantly and negatively associated with meta-parenting. Supportive coparenting was not associated with meta-parenting. Positive messages (including social support) may not be enough to encourage the use of meta-parenting, instead, negative messages may be the powerful force interfering with one's cognitions.

Marital satisfaction, as reported by mothers was related to their own and fathers' parenting self-efficacy scores, but these associations were in a surprising direction. Mothers' reports of marital satisfaction were negatively associated with their own and their spouse's parenting self-efficacy. So, contrary to the initial hypotheses, greater marital satisfaction for mothers predicted less confidence in parenting abilities for both mothers and fathers. It is possible that less satisfied mothers put more effort into their parent-child relationship in order to compensate for the poor marriage. The greater investment of energy into the parent-child relationship may boost maternal confidence in

their parenting abilities. But if this were true, then maintenance would be negatively related to parenting self-efficacy as well, as mothers investing more energy into their marriage would presumably have less time to invest in their child. It is possible that mothers who are not satisfied in their marriages may need to engage in maintenance behaviors in order to sustain their relationships. Thus, while mothers may not be satisfied with their marital relationship, they may still engage in maintenance behaviors and may be focusing their attention on parenting, which may allow mothers to feel confident in their parenting abilities in the face of an unsatisfying marriage.

The lack of significant associations among some of the marriage, coparenting, and parenting cognition indices was also interesting. Using Family Systems Theory as a guide, it was expected that all of the indicators of marriage quality would have direct effects on parenting cognitions. It was surprising that marital conflict did not directly predict parenting self-efficacy or meta-parenting. According to the spillover model, negativity in the marriage should spill over into parenting cognitions. Social Cognitive Theory was also used to predict how the person's context should influence their cognitions and that a negative context, as indicated by high levels of conflict, would send negative messages to the parent, thus, influencing parental cognitions. These predicted associations were not supported in the present study.

One explanation for the lack of direct associations between marital satisfaction, conflict, and parenting cognitions may be the inclusion of the construct relational maintenance. Prior studies on marriage, coparenting and parenting did not include maintenance as an indicator of marital quality (e.g., Margolin et al., 2001; McHale, 1995;

Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2007). It is possible that had other studies included maintenance they would have similar results. In other words, once controlling for maintenance, satisfaction, conflict, and other forms of marital quality may not have predicted parenting in previous studies as well. Additionally, parenting behaviors were not assessed in this study. It is possible that maintenance predicts to parenting cognitions and that conflict and satisfaction predict to parenting behaviors once maintenance is taken into account.

The partners' scores were only significantly associated with parenting cognitions in two regressions. Fathers' reports of maintenance behaviors account for significant variance in maternal parenting self-efficacy, even when controlling for the effects of mothers' reports of maintenance. The present study is unique as it employs maintenance as a predictor of parenting cognitions, because of this, the findings in this study must be compared to studies examining associations among maintenance and other relational characteristics. One study found that reports of one's own maintenance behaviors were associated with commitment to the relationship (Ramirez, 2008). Another study examining associations between maintenance and relational characteristics found that one's commitment, liking and control mutuality in the relationship was predicted by one's perceptions of the partner's relational maintenance (Canary et al., 2002). It is possible that perceptions of partner's relational maintenance would be a stronger predictor of parenting cognitions than the partner's reports as one's own perceptions of his/her partner's behaviors may be more important than the partner's perception. The other partner score that was significantly associated with parenting self-efficacy was mothers' reports of marital satisfaction. For fathers, mothers' reports of marital

satisfaction were related to parenting self-efficacy when either supportive coparenting or undermining coparenting was included in the equation. This association was negative. It is possible that the explanation used above in relation to the negative association between maternal marital satisfaction and parenting self-efficacy, or that unsatisfied mothers may focus more on their parent-child interactions, applies to fathers as well. The fathers may focus on their parent-child relationship in place of their marital relationship and thus have more parenting experience and more confidence in their parenting abilities than fathers whose wives are more satisfied.

Additive and Compensatory Processes

By examining the slopes of the interactions between marital quality indices and coparenting predicting to parenting cognitions, support can be found for both additive and compensatory associations. Each of the four interactions (D4-D7) support additive effects of marital quality in combination with coparenting to predict parenting self-efficacy. High levels of maintenance in combination with higher supportive coparenting, and higher marital satisfaction combined with higher supportive coparenting, increased the likelihood of higher parenting self-efficacy. Additionally, low maintenance coupled with high undermining increased the likelihood of lower parenting self-efficacy. These findings are consistent with tenets from the Family Systems Framework (Minuchin, P., 1985; Minuchin, S., 1974). The marital and coparenting system influences one another, and the interaction between these two subsystems has the potential to influence parenting cognitions either positively or negatively. Often, the spillover association is tested using negative aspects of the marital relationship spilling negativity into the parent-child

relationship (e.g., Pelchat, Bisson, & Saucier, 2003; Sturge-Apple, Davis, & Cummings, 2006). The present study supports a positive spillover association as well.

There was also mixed evidence for a stress-buffering, or, compensatory association. When fathers reported their maintenance as being high, parenting self-efficacy did not decline in the face of high undermining coparenting. In this instance, fathers appear to be able to remain confident in their parenting abilities as long as they are engaging in activities meant to make the marital interactions positive. Supportive coparenting was not observed, however, to be effective in compensating for low maintenance or low marital satisfaction. Additionally, fathers' reports of higher marital satisfaction was associated with a greater decrease in parenting self-efficacy in the context of reports of greater undermining coparenting.

Several of the hypothesized associations were not observed. In the present study, many of the scales were highly correlated with one another. Two of the marital indices, satisfaction and maintenance, were highly correlated. Additionally, supportive coparenting was highly correlated with all of the marital scales. Because these scales were so highly correlated with one another, the interactive effects may have been obscured.

Comparing Mothers and Fathers

There were several small, but significant differences in mothers' and fathers' reports of their marital and coparenting relationships. Fathers reported fewer maintenance behaviors, greater marital satisfaction, a more positive coparenting relationship, and greater undermining than mothers. Mothers' and fathers' reports of conflict were not

significantly different from one another. These findings seem to indicate that as a whole, relationally, fathers invest less, experience greater satisfaction in the marriage, perceive greater support and greater undermining than mothers. The following explains these differences between mothers and fathers and describes how the findings are related to prior research.

While maintenance strategies have been examined in association with other relationship qualities, including control mutuality, commitment, liking, and satisfaction (Canary et al., 2002; Stafford & Canary, 1991), as well as, perceptions of equity (Canary & Stafford, 1992; Stafford & Canary, 2006), differences between husbands and wives have not been addressed in prior research, thus the findings in the present study cannot be compared to previous research. It is possible mothers engage in more maintenance behaviors than fathers because they are more socialized to focus on the family, thus mothers may believe it is their responsibility to care for the marital relationship.

In prior studies, fathers were more satisfied with their coparenting relationship than mothers (Van Egeren, 2004), which may be related to their experiencing coparenting as being more positive and shared than mothers, as was found in the present study. In the present study, fathers reported greater amounts of undermining from their partners than mothers. It is possible that mothers, likely with more childrearing experience (Belsky, Gilstrap, & Rovine, 1984), may be engaging in gatekeeping using undermining coparenting to control father involvement. Another possibility is that fathers may be more sensitive to criticism in their parenting than mothers as they are less confident in their parenting abilities, thus report greater perceptions of undermining coparenting.

The present study found that mothers reported greater parenting self-efficacy than fathers. This finding replicates previous studies comparing mothers and fathers (Hudson, Elek, & Fleck, 2001; Riggio & Desrochers, 2006). Mothers may be more confident in their parenting abilities as they are usually more involved in parenting activities than fathers (McWayne, Campos, & Owsianik, 2008). Mothers also reported greater meta-parenting than fathers. This finding cannot be connected to prior research as meta-parenting has not been studied in fathers. However, when considering this finding in light of tenets of Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 2006), more efficacious parents are more likely to engage in the work of parenting because they believe in their parenting abilities. These parenting tasks include planning outings and assessing the development of one's child.

Marriage and coparenting were associated with parenting self-efficacy and meta-parenting. Additionally, there was support for an additive association between marriage and coparenting when predicting to parenting self-efficacy and for the compensatory association of marital maintenance in buffering the effects of undermining coparenting on parenting self-efficacy. Mothers' and fathers' perceptions of their marriages and coparenting relationships, their beliefs about their abilities as parents, and their use of meta-parenting were compared and it was found that they do experience their marriage, coparenting, and parenting cognitions differently. These differences emphasize the need to have both mothers' and fathers' voices included when examining family processes.

This study was unique in that it provided the opportunity to examine mothers' and fathers' reports of marital quality (using maintenance, marital satisfaction, and conflict)

and coparenting and their associations with parenting self-efficacy and meta-parenting. Mothers and fathers reported on their relationships and parenting cognitions and this provided the opportunity to examine associations for both partners. Because couples participated in the present study, it was possible to include partner responses to test associations among each parent's reports of their marriage, coparenting, and parenting cognitions, thus providing a clearer picture of how cognitions are influenced by the context (represented by including both self and partner reports) in which one lives. Another unique aspect of the present study is its inclusion of meta-parenting as an outcome for both mothers and fathers. As meta-parenting is a newer construct, there are few published studies of this construct (Hawk & Holden, 2006; Holden & Hawk, 2003).

Limitations

Measurement and sampling issues arose in this study. Additionally, the nature of the online format may have influenced responses. Below is a description of the limitations of the present study. Following the description of the limitations of this study are ideas for improving the study and using the findings from this study to move forward to the next steps in examining associations among marriage, coparenting, and parenting cognitions.

Conflict was measured by asking four questions regarding the frequency of disagreements in four different areas of marital life. It may be that couples have frequent conflicts that cause little distress to the individuals. Also, the method by which the conflict is resolved, or not resolved, may be an important factor in determining the emotional impact of the conflict on the individuals. In these cases, simply counting the

number of conflicts the couple experiences would not be a good indicator of marital functioning. Thus, a measure combining frequency, intensity, and resolution may be necessary to assess the impact of conflict on parenting cognitions.

The sample was limited in its ethnic diversity. Most of the respondents reported being “White, Caucasian, or European-American.” The findings in this study may not be generalizable to other ethnic groups. Additionally, families in this study had a greater family income than the average family in the United States. This is likely due to the method of data collection. Online data collection requires that the respondent have access to a computer and be computer literate. Because of this, it is possible that lower-income families may not have the opportunity to participate. It is recommended that caution be used when applying these findings to lower income families.

Furthermore, it is not clear whether social desirability influenced parents’ responses. The online method of data collection offers more anonymity than traditional interview or survey techniques as the respondent can answer questions in the privacy of their own home and never has to come face-to-face with study personnel. Social desirability may arise, however, if a respondent was wary of responding negatively due to the presence of their spouse while they filled out the survey. Parents were asked to complete this survey alone, but due to the fact that it was accessible online, it is possible that parents may have responded while their partner was present, possibly even discussing the questions with one another, thus altering their responses systematically due to the presence of their partner. As with the case of surveys that are sent in the mail, the environment in which the parent fills out the survey cannot be controlled. As a result, the

potential for biased responses is a risk that must be acknowledged and researchers must design studies that provide the greatest opportunity for respondents to provide honest responses by protecting their information and explaining to respondents how their information will be protected.

Future Directions

Future studies should include an observational assessment of parenting and an assessment of child outcomes. While parenting cognitions are important to study in their own right, it would be advantageous to assess how these cognitions are translating to parenting and impacting child outcomes. Child outcomes such as emotional adjustment and social efficacy beliefs would be especially relevant as parents serve as both caretakers and models. Social Cognitive Theory posits that efficacious people persevere in the face of difficulty (Bandura, 1995). Parents with higher self-efficacy may be more likely to employ warm-responsive parenting practices even when they are frustrated. Children may be influenced by parental efficacy beliefs directly because the parent models appropriate responses to obstacles, teaching their child how to appropriately handle frustration and anger. Children may also benefit from their parents' self-efficacy indirectly through the warm, responsive parenting practices.

The current study consisted of mainly efficacious parents in, on average, moderately high quality marriages and coparenting relationships. In future studies, more effort will need to be put into collecting data from parents who are experiencing difficulty in their marital and/or coparenting relationship in order to examine how the coparenting

and marital relationships are related to parenting self-efficacy in the context of a struggling marital or coparenting relationship.

Initially, it was intended that multiple components of coparenting were to be examined separately in order to understand how specific aspects of coparenting were related to parenting self-efficacy. Due to the high correlations among the positive aspects of coparenting, multicollinearity was a concern. As a result, solidarity, support, and shared parenting were combined into one scale. It is important that the separate components of coparenting continue to be examined. In order to do this, more work needs to be done in order to measure these components of coparenting in such a way that reflects statistically the conceptual differences between these constructs. Now, we must develop a measure that reflects these differences and uses a finer grained lens to examine the components of coparenting.

While it was possible to compare mothers' and fathers' reports on individual constructs using t tests and bivariate correlations, differences in the associations between marriage quality, coparenting, and parenting cognitions based on parental gender could not be assessed using these analyses. In the future, hierarchical linear modeling should be used to test possible three-way interactions between marriage, coparenting, and gender of parent and parenting self-efficacy. It is anticipated, based on previous findings, that mothers and fathers will have different experiences of coparenting (Van Egeren, 2004).

Overwhelmingly, evidence points to boundaries between relationships being fluid. When fathers and mothers are included in a study and fathers' reports of marriage and parenting are significantly associated while mothers' reports are not significantly

associated, researchers argue that it is possible that mothers are better able to compartmentalize their marital and parenting relationships so that their parenting is not negatively influenced in the context of a bad marital relationship. Compartmentalizing is assumed based on lack of spillover, but additivity was observed. In the future, the ability to compartmentalize relationships should be directly measured as this may in fact moderate the relationship between marriage and parenting. At this time, there does not seem to be an available measure of this construct, however, it may be beneficial to develop a measure for it in the future.

In summary, this study demonstrates that qualities of the marital and coparenting subsystems are associated with parenting cognitions. Marital maintenance is an important piece in understanding how parenting cognitions are associated with the spousal subsystem. The coparenting subsystem is directly associated with parenting cognitions through undermining coparenting. Together, the marital and coparenting relationships provide additive and compensatory effects on parenting self-efficacy. When reports of marital and coparenting relationships are positive, there is an additive benefit to parents' parenting self-efficacy. Conversely, when reports of the marital and coparenting relationships are negative, parents are much less confident in their parenting abilities. There is also evidence that the marital relationship can compensate for higher levels of undermining coparenting. These findings support tenets from Social Cognitive Theory and Family Systems Theory, emphasizing that parenting cognitions are associated with the contexts in which parents exist.

APPENDIX A. MEASURES

Parenting Self-Efficacy

Berkeley Parenting Self-efficacy Scale (Preschool version)

<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Not at all</i>					<i>Very</i>
<i>confident</i>					<i>Confident</i>

How confident do you feel in doing the following?

1. Listen to your child
2. Understand your child's feelings
3. Control your emotions in front of your child
4. Avoid over-reacting when your child misbehaves
5. Create a peaceful, happy home
6. Set a good example by being polite and respectful to others
7. Explain things so that your child will understand
8. Praise your child when he/she does well
9. Discipline your child firmly when he/she misbehaves
10. Let your child know you love him/her

How confident do you feel in helping your child learn each of the following?

1. respect adults
2. express thoughts clearly
3. continue trying even when something is difficult
4. figure out what behavior is called for in different settings (e.g., at the park vs. in the library)
5. be polite (e.g., say "please" and "thank you")
6. how to tell time
7. avoid bothering others
8. do things independently
9. learn the alphabet
10. get along with other children
11. get enough exercise
12. stay neat and clean
13. eat a variety of nutritious food
14. avoid swearing or other rude language
15. be interested in learning new things

*Marital Quality***Maintenance:**

The following items concern things people might do to maintain their relationships. Please indicate the extent to which you perceive each of the following describes your current (over the past two weeks, for example) methods of maintaining your relationship.

1 (Never) - 7 (Frequently)

Attempt to make our interactions very enjoyable.

Am cooperative in the ways I handle disagreements between us.

Try to build up his/her self-esteem, including giving him/her compliments.

Ask how his/her day has gone.

Am very nice, courteous, and polite when we talk.

Act cheerful and positive when with him/her.

Do not criticize him/her.

Try to be romantic, fun, and interesting with him/her.

Marital Satisfaction:

Extremely Dissatisfied

Very Dissatisfied

Somewhat Dissatisfied

Mixed

Somewhat Satisfied

Very Satisfied

Extremely Satisfied

How satisfied are you with your marriage?

How satisfied are you with your spouse/partner as a spouse/partner?

How satisfied are you with your relationship with your spouse/partner?

Conflict:

How often do you and your partner argue about:

Finances

Sex

Time together/Recreation

Chores (not including chores associated with your child/ren)

*Coparenting***Coparenting solidarity:**

1. Parenting has brought my spouse and me closer together.
2. My spouse and I feel as though we are growing and maturing together through our experiences as parents.

3. After my spouse or I have handled a difficult situation with the children, we discuss it and try to figure out what we could have done better.
4. My spouse and I like to imagine together what our children will be like when they grow up.
5. My spouse and I agree on our ideas, guidelines, and rules for raising our children.
6. My spouse and I do not agree on when to punish and how to punish
7. Parenting has given my spouse and me a focus for the future.
8. My spouse and I agree on how much time we should spend with the children.
9. Having children has helped me to see positive qualities in my spouse that I never noticed before.
10. My spouse and I often talk together about what is best for our children.

Coparenting Support (from partner):

1. My spouse appreciates how hard I work at being a good parent
2. My spouse backs me up as a parent.
3. When I make a mistake with the kids, I can talk it over with my spouse
4. When I feel at my wits end as a parent, my spouse gives me the extra support I need.
5. My spouse makes me feel that I am the best possible parent for our children.

Undermining Coparenting (from partner):

1. My spouse thinks I am a bad influence on the children.
2. My spouse makes me look like the “bad person” in the eyes of our children
3. As a parent, I cannot seem to do anything right in my spouse’s eyes
4. I feel too ashamed about my mishaps with my children to talk them over with my spouse.
5. I am afraid of my spouse’s anger when I do something wrong with the kids.
6. My spouse does not trust my abilities as a parent.

Shared Parenting:

1. My spouse is willing to make some personal sacrifices in order to help with the parenting
2. My spouse tries to make sure I get some time for myself away from the children
3. My spouse helps out with the parenting whenever possible
4. I do not feel that parenting is as much of a sharing experience with my spouse as I hoped it would be.
5. My spouse pays too little attention to the children.
6. My spouse still wants to “do his/her own thing” instead of being a responsible parent.
7. My spouse sees parenting as my responsibility.
8. I feel overburdened as a parent because my spouse is often too involved with other things to carry a fair share of the load.

APPENDIX B. INFORMED CONSENT

Gamble-Merrifield Parenting Partnership and Cognitions Project

Welcome to the website where you will complete a survey about you and your spouse's parenting partnership and thoughts you have about parenting.

Please fill out this survey separately from your partner and do not discuss the survey until both of you have finished. Please read the information about consent below. If you agree to the conditions of the study, please click the box at the bottom of the screen.

PARTICIPANT DISCLAIMER FORM

Project Title: Gamble-Merrifield Parenting Partnership and Cognitions Project

You are being invited to participate voluntarily in the above-titled research project. The purpose of this project is to understand how parents work together to raise their children.

Married or cohabiting parents of pre-school aged children are invited to participate. You must be 18 years of age or older to participate. Your participation will involve filling out a survey on how you and your partner work together to parent your children. The survey will take about 15 to 25 minutes to complete.

There is no cost to you for participating in this online survey except your time. There are no direct benefits to you for your participation and no risks for subjects are expected in this study.

Participation in this survey is completely voluntary. You may decide not to begin or to stop filling out this survey at any time by closing your browser.

Only the project co-directors and members of the research team will have access to your online responses to the survey items. There will be no identifying information collected in this survey.

You can obtain further information about the study from the Principal Investigator, Kami Merrifield, at (520) 621-1295 or kmerrifi@email.arizona.edu. If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research participant, you may call the University of Arizona Human Subjects Protection Program office at (520) 626-6721. (If out of state use the toll-free number 1-866-278-1455.)

By completing the survey and returning it to me, you are giving permission for your information to be used for research purposes. Please read the following, check the three boxes if the statements are true for you and click on "Continue."

I am at least 18 years old and the adoptive or biological parent of one or more child between the ages of 2 and 6 years old.

I am married to or cohabiting with the other biological or adoptive parent of this child.

I have read the PARTICIPANT DISCLAIMER FORM and agree with all the terms and

conditions. I acknowledge that by completing the survey, I am giving permission for the investigator to use my information for research purposes.

APPENDIX C. TABLES

Table C1. *Sample Characteristics.*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Mothers' age	34.89	6.39
Fathers' age	37.66	7.75
Child's age	4.89	1.29
Parents' relationship length (years)	11.28	5.49

Variable	n	%
Marital Status		
Married	149	85.1
Cohabiting	26	14.8
Child gender		
Male	85	48.6
Female	90	51.4
Mothers' Education		
Not a high school graduate	3	1.7
High school or GED	29	16.6
Vocational/business/trade school	9	5.1
Some college	45	25.7
College degree	54	30.9
Some graduate education	7	4.0
Graduate degree	28	16.0
Fathers' Education		
Not a high school graduate	9	5.1
High school or GED	32	18.3
Vocational/business/trade school	4	2.3
Some college	39	22.3
College degree	45	25.7
Some graduate education	6	3.4
Graduate degree	40	22.9
Mothers' Employment		
Not employed	80	45.7
Part-time	32	18.3
Full-time	63	36.0
Fathers' Employment		

Not employed	19	10.9
Part-time	5	2.9
Full-time	151	86.3
Income (dollars per year)		
0-9,999	1	.6
10,000-19,999	8	4.6
20,000-29,999	11	6.3
30,000-39,000	18	10.3
40,000-49,999	20	11.4
50,000-59,999	26	14.9
60,000-69,999	19	10.0
70,000-79,999	19	10.9
80,000-89,000	17	9.7
90,000-99,999	10	5.7
100,000 or greater	26	14.9
Mothers' Ethnicity		
Asian or Pacific Islander, Asian-American	9	5.1
Black, African-American, Caribbean-American	6	3.4
Latino, Hispanic, Mexican-American	7	4.0
White, Caucasian, European-American	143	81.7
Other	9	5.1
Fathers' Ethnicity		
Asian or Pacific Islander, Asian-American	7	4.0
Black, African-American, Caribbean-American	11	6.3
Latino, Hispanic, Mexican-American	11	6.3
White, Caucasian, European-American	145	82.9
Other	1	0.6

Table C2. *Scale Characteristics.*

Scale	n	Min	Max	Range	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	α
Mothers							
Coparenting							
Solidarity	170	2.20	4.90	2.70	3.98	.56	.89
Support	172	2.20	5.00	2.80	4.20	.59	.84
Undermining (UP)	174	2.00	4.00	2.00	2.53	.54	.83
Shared parenting	169	1.50	4.38	2.88	3.44	.65	.89
Supportive Coparenting Relationship (SP)	174	2.30	4.74	2.43	3.84	.55	.95
MSAT	173	1.00	7.00	6.00	5.60	1.37	.96
Conflict	175	4.00	22.00	18.00	9.57	4.19	.77
Maintenance	175	1.00	7.00	4.75	5.61	1.00	.87
PSE	174	3.24	6.00	2.76	5.22	.66	.95
Meta-parenting	173	1.29	5.00	3.71	3.59	.72	.88
Fathers							
Coparenting							
Solidarity	168	2.20	4.90	2.70	3.98	.54	.88
Support	167	2.00	5.00	3.00	4.19	.62	.88
Undermining (UP)	173	1.33	4.67	2.67	2.69	.63	.87
Shared parenting	172	1.50	4.38	2.88	3.64	.53	.82
Supportive Coparenting Relationship (SP)	174	2.52	4.74	2.22	3.91	.63	.93
MSAT	174	1.00	7.00	6.00	5.86	1.27	.98
Conflict	175	4.00	22.00	18.00	9.41	4.48	.81
Maintenance	175	2.25	7.00	6.00	5.42	1.25	.93
PSE	174	2.44	6.00	3.56	5.10	.71	.96
Meta-parenting	172	1.21	5.00	3.71	3.24	.77	.88

Table C3. *Correlations Among Supportive Coparenting Subscales.*

	1	2	3	4
Coparenting Solidarity		.79**	.80**	.95**
Coparenting Support	.88**		.71**	.87**
Shared Parenting	.55**	.58**		.93**
Supportive Coparenting	.93**	.92**	.80**	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Note: Mothers' scores are the top of the diagonal, fathers' scores are the bottom.

Table C4. *Bivariate Correlation Matrix Among Study Scales.*

	1	2	3	7	8	9	10
Maintenance	<u>.50**</u>	.55**	-.39**	.47**	-.35**	.34**	.14
Satisfaction	.42**	<u>.55**</u>	-.39**	.48**	-.28**	.10	.01
Conflict	-.28**	-.29**	<u>.85**</u>	-.34**	.37**	-.19**	.09
Supportive Coparenting ^a	.53**	.53**	-.33**	<u>.56**</u>	-.59**	.30**	.13
Undermining Coparenting	-.39**	-.29**	.32**	-.62**	<u>.49**</u>	-.41**	-.18*
PSE	.56**	.24**	-.14	.39**	-.45**	<u>.57**</u>	.27**
Meta-parenting	.35**	.16*	.01	.27**	-.22**	.35**	<u>.52**</u>

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Note: Mothers' scores are the top of the diagonal, fathers' scores are the bottom, and the correlations between mothers and fathers are along the diagonal.

^aSupportive coparenting includes the scales: solidarity, coparenting support, and shared parenting.

Table C5. *Marital Quality, Supportive Coparenting and Parenting Self-efficacy.*

Predictors	Mothers			Fathers		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	ΔR^2	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	ΔR^2
Relationship length	.02*	.01		.00	.01	
Relationship status	-.04	.14		.06	.14	
Level of education	-.02	.03		.01	.02	
Child gender	.02	.10	.02	.22*	.09	.07*
MSAT	-.07	.05		.09	.05	
PMSAT	-.04	.05		-.12*	.05	
Conflict	-.03	.02		.04	.02	
PConflict	-.03	.02		-.03	.02	
Maintenance	.15*	.06		.29***	.06	
PMaintenance	.13*	.06		.04	.06	
Supportive Coparenting (SP)	.15	.13		.18	.13	
PSupportive Coparenting (PSP)	.08	.14	.20***	.09	.12	.32***
SP x Maint	.29*	.12		-.07	.09	
SP x MSAT	.00	.08		.18*	.07	
SP x Conflict	.04	.03		.01	.02	
PSP x PMaint	.15	.09		.11	.11	
PSP x PMSAT	-.09	.07		.04	.08	
PSP x PConflict	-.01	.02	.08*	.04	.02	.06*
Total R^2		.29			.44	
<i>F</i>		3.27***			6.61***	
<i>Df</i>		18, 147			18, 149	

Note. All coefficients were taken from the last step of the equation.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table C6. *Marital Quality, Undermining Coparenting and Parenting Self-efficacy.*

Predictors	Mothers			Fathers		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	ΔR^2	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	ΔR^2
Relationship length	.02	.01		.00	.01	
Relationship status	-.07	.15		-.07	.13	
Level of education	-.01	.03		.02	.02	
Child gender	.06	.09	.02	.22*	.08	.07**
MSAT	-.10*	.05		.05	.04	
PMSAT	-.02	.05		-.12**	.04	
Conflict	-.01	.02		.03	.02	
PConflict	.01	.02		-.01	.02	
Maintenance	.18**	.07		.23***	.05	
PMaintenance	.10*	.05		.06	.06	
Undermining Coparenting (UP)	-.34**	.11		-.36***	.08	
PUndermining Coparenting (PUP)	-.01	.09	.23***	-.11	.10	.39***
UP x Maint	-.03	.09		.23***	.06	
UP x MSAT	-.03	.08		-.11*	.06	
UP x Conflict	-.05*	.02		.00	.02	
PUP x PMaint	.04	.06		.06	.08	
PUP x PMSAT	-.09	.06		-.09	.08	
PUP x PConflict	.02	.02	.04	-.01	.02	.06**
Total R^2		.28			.52	
<i>F</i>		3.23***			8.95***	
<i>Df</i>		18, 147			18, 149	

Note. All coefficients were taken from the last step of the equation.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table C7. *Marital Quality, Supportive Coparenting and Meta-parenting.*

Predictors	Mothers			Fathers		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	ΔR^2	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	ΔR^2
Relationship length	.01	.01		-.02	.01	
Relationship status	-.20	.17		.09	.18	
Level of education	.11**	.04		.08*	.03	
Child gender	.04	.11	.05	.12	.12	.10**
MSAT	-.06	.06		.03	.07	
PMSAT	-.06	.06		-.05	.06	
Conflict	.02	.03		.02	.03	
PConflict	.01	.02		.01	.03	
Maintenance	.14	.08		.16*	.07	
PMaintenance	.05	.07		-.03	.08	
Supportive Coparenting (SP)	.17	.15		.16	.17	
PSupportive Coparenting (PSP)	.18	.16	.11*	.12	.16	.10*
SP x Maint	-.06	.14		.06	.12	
SP x MSAT	.05	.09		.02	.09	
SP x Conflict	-.04	.03		.05	.03	
PSP x PMaint	.17	.11		.06	.15	
PSP x PMSAT	-.11	.09		-.02	.10	
PSP x PConflict	.02	.03	.03	-.00	.03	.02
Total R^2		.19			.22	
<i>F</i>		1.87*			2.27**	
<i>Df</i>		18, 146			18, 148	

Note. All coefficients were taken from the last step of the equation.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table C8. *Marital Quality, Undermining Coparenting and Meta-parenting.*

Predictors	Mothers			Fathers		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	ΔR^2	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	ΔR^2
Relationship length	.01	.01		-.02	.01	
Relationship status	-.24	.17		.03	.18	
Level of education	.11**	.04		.08*	.03	
Child gender	.03	.11	.05	.09	.12	.10**
MSAT	-.06	.06		.04	.06	
PMSAT	-.00	.05		-.05	.06	
Conflict	.04	.03		.01	.03	
PConflict	-.01	.02		.03	.03	
Maintenance	.21*	.08		.13*	.06	
PMaintenance	.01	.06		.04	.08	
Undermining Coparenting (UP)	-.26*	.13		-.20	.12	
PUndermining Coparenting (PUP)	-.05	.11	.10*	.01	.13	.10*
UP x Maint	-.10	.11		.11	.08	
UP x MSAT	.01	.10		-.04	.08	
UP x Conflict	-.06*	.03		.01	.31	
PUP x PMaint	-.07	.07		-.01	.11	
PUP x PMSAT	-.07	.07		.11	.11	
PUP x PConflict	.03	.02	.05	-.01	.11	.03
Total R^2		.20			.23	
<i>F</i>		2.08**			2.40**	
<i>Df</i>		18, 146			18, 148	

Note. All coefficients were taken from the last step of the equation.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

APPENDIX D. FIGURES

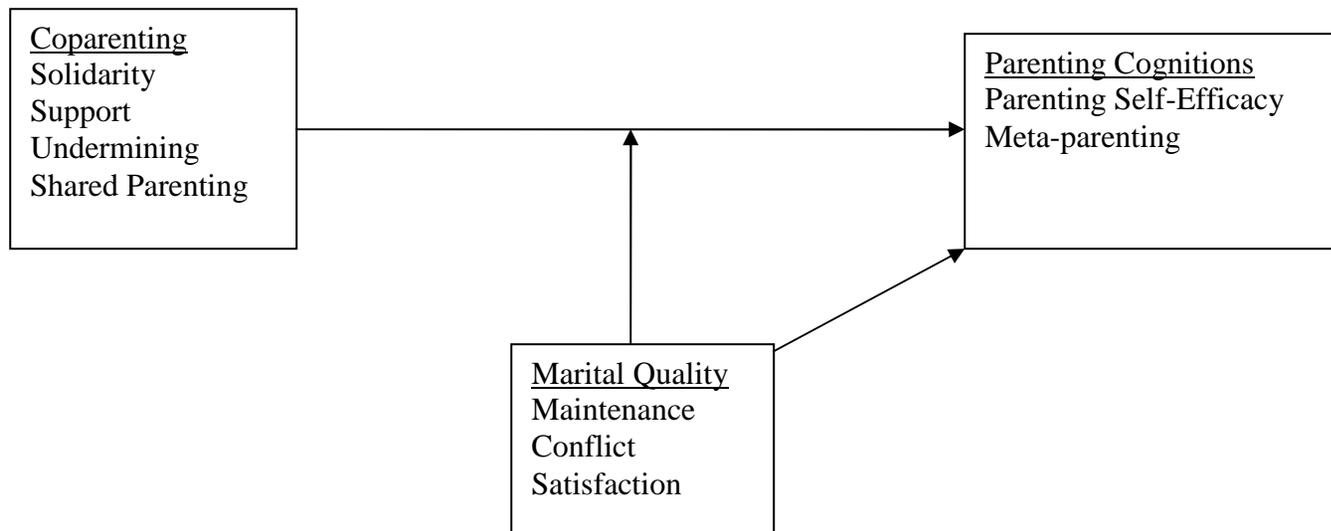
Figure D1. *Conceptual Model for Marital Quality, Coparenting, and Parenting Cognitions.*

Figure D2. *Supportive Coparenting and Parenting Cognitions: Testing Marital Quality as a Moderator.*

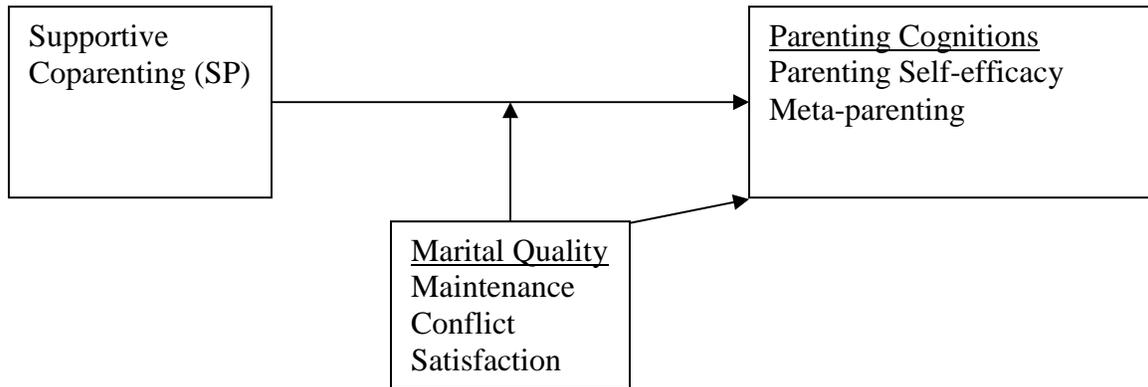


Figure D3. *Undermining Coparenting and Parenting Cognitions: Testing Marital Quality as a Moderator.*

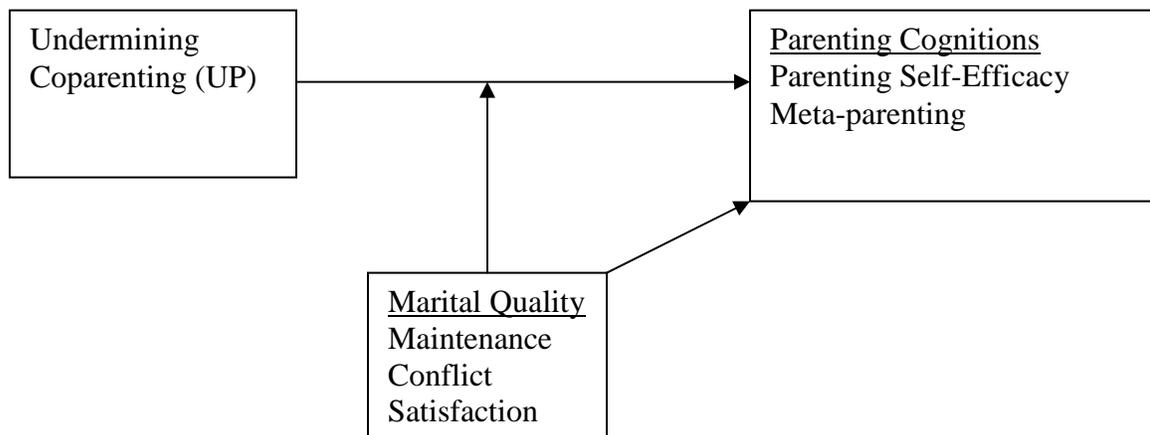


Figure D4. *Supportive Coparenting and Maintenance in Association with Mothers' Parenting Self-efficacy.*

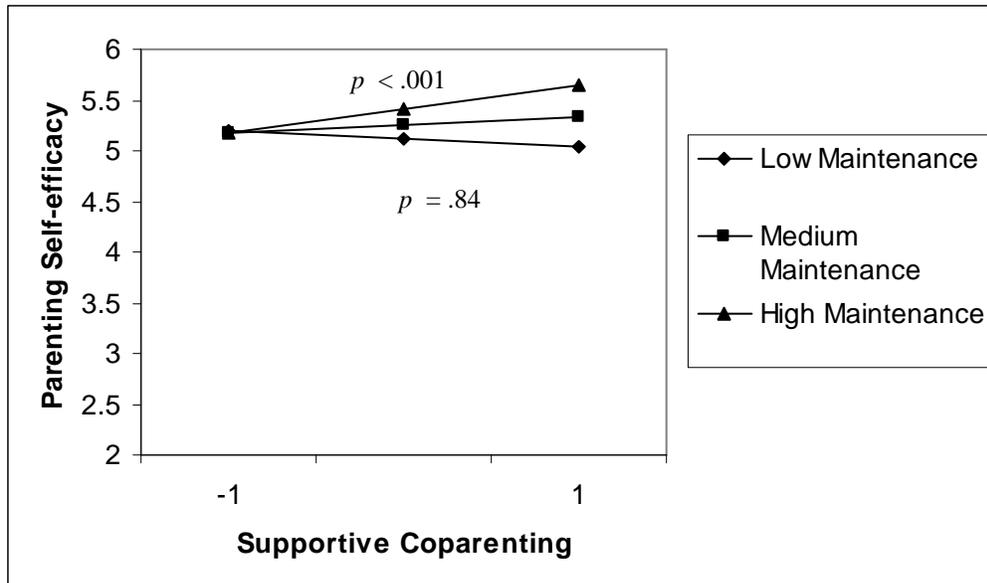


Figure D5. *Supportive Coparenting and Marital Satisfaction in Association with Fathers' Parenting Self-efficacy.*

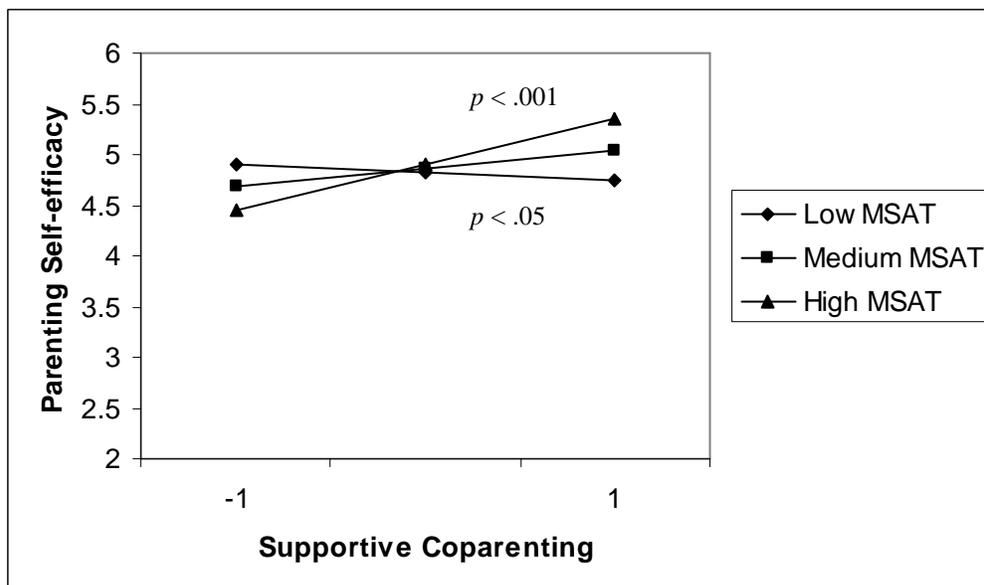


Figure D6. *Undermining Coparenting and Marital Satisfaction Interacting in Association with Fathers' Parenting Self-efficacy.*

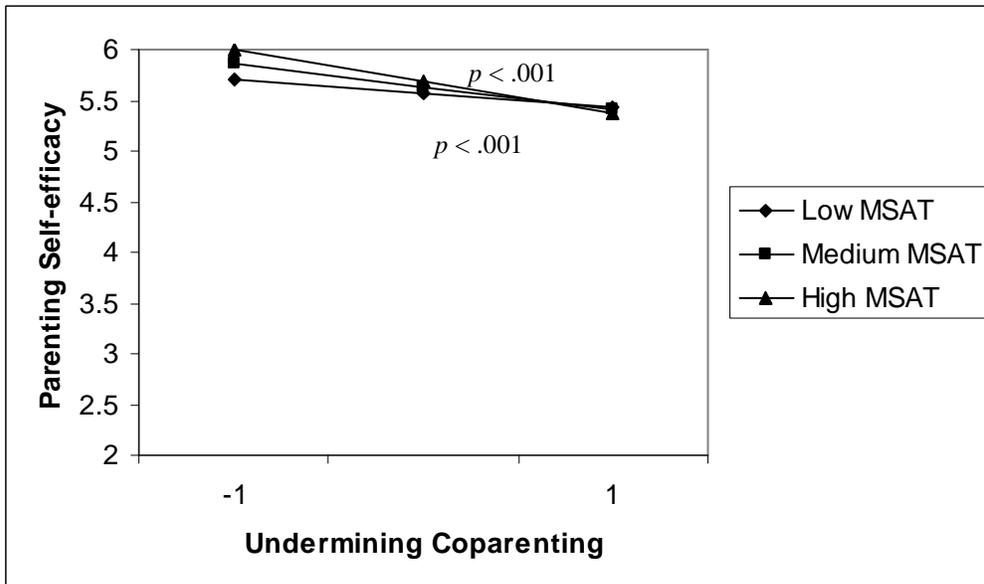
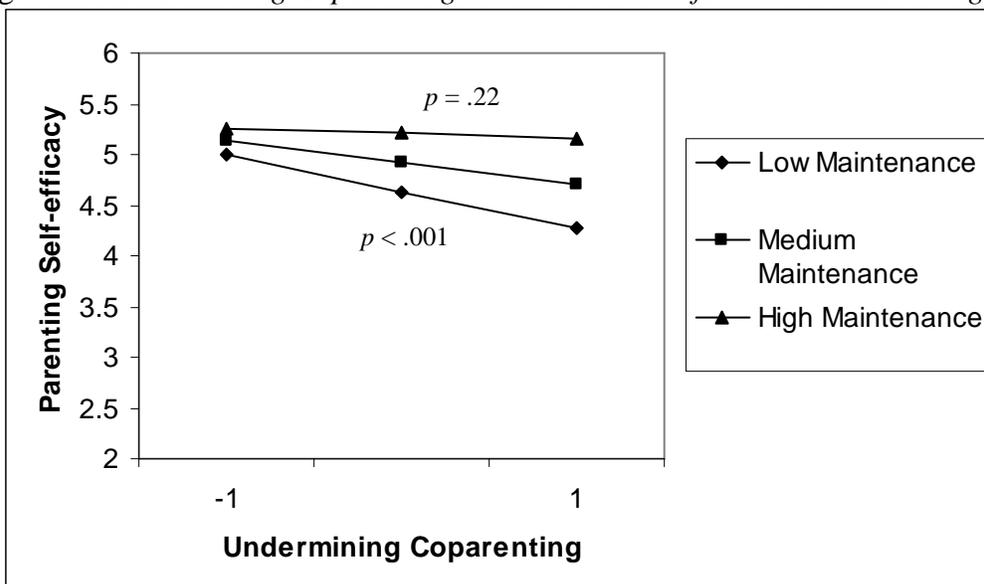


Figure D7. *Undermining Coparenting and Maintenance for Fathers' Parenting Self-efficacy.*



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