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## Two Decades of Coparenting Research: A Scoping Review

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The author confirms that the data supporting the findings of this study are available within the article [and/or] its supplementary materials.

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## **Abstract**

In response to recent theoretical advances in coparenting and increased scholarly interest, coparenting research in resident families has burgeoned in the past twenty years making it difficult to assess primary findings. This review integrates findings from the research and provides an overview of supported conclusions, offering access to the research in a manageable and approachable form. Research evidence demonstrates how the characteristics of each parent, the state of their romantic relationship, the contexts in which they reside, and their child's characteristics all influence how they function as a coparental team. Positive coparenting, in turn, leads to better marital relationships, greater parental well-being, more paternal involvement, and positive children's development. Implications of these findings for practitioners and suggested areas of research are also discussed.

*Keywords:* coparenting, family relations, parenting, father involvement, maternal gatekeeping

## **Two Decades of Coparenting Research: A Scoping Review**

In their efforts to promote healthy families, researchers and practitioners have long recognized that both the relationship between parents and the quality of their parenting have important effects on family well-being and children's outcomes (Belsky et al., 1996, Feinberg & Kan, 2008). Accordingly, both marital/couple relationships and parenting have received much research attention over the past century. More recently, however, scholars have taken an increasing interest in coparenting, which can be defined as the ways in which parents interact with each other in their roles as parents and coordinate their parenting. Recent studies have accumulated evidence that coparenting affects parents' well-being (Williams, 2018) and engagement (Buckley & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2010; Jia & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2011) and influences children's development both directly (Kwon & Elicker, 2012) and indirectly (Blandon, 2015; Cabrera et al, 2009). In general, cooperative, supportive coparenting in which both parents are mutually engaged and work towards common parenting goals leads to more positive outcomes. At the same time, competition between parents, disengagement, and behaviors undermining the other parent lead to a host of adverse effects. Although coparenting interacts reciprocally with a couple's marital or romantic relationship, it can be defined and examined separately. Furthermore, the tenor of coparenting creates a climate that is more proximal to the child than the broader marital relationship, and thus, is especially impactful for child outcomes (Van Egeren & Hawkins, 2004).

The importance of effective coparenting has become particularly evident as gender roles in the home and the workplace have shifted, resulting in more overlap in the responsibilities assumed by mothers and fathers. Demands for fathers' active involvement have increased with societal acknowledgment of the importance of fathers in the lives of their children and these

changes have required greater coordination and support between parents. Additionally, parents have had to increasingly learn to rely on each other and work together since the global pandemic of 2020 during which many parents took on additional responsibilities such as schooling their children. While the study of coparenting in divorced families has existed for some time, the study of coparenting in resident families is a relatively new field, taking root in the past 20 years. During this time, the scientific literature has quickly grown quite large, and understanding and integrating the findings from coparenting research can be challenging for practitioners and researchers alike. Furthermore, this research is rather complex because it lies at the intersection of other empirical fields (i.e. family processes, parenting, marital relationships) where the boundaries between fields are often blurred. Despite these difficulties, the past two decades represent the establishment of a firm foundation for coparenting research in resident families and have historical significance in the development of the field. Given the importance of this topic and the complexity and extensiveness of the relevant literature, a review of the research on coparenting is needed to mark the achievements of the field and provide a summary of the findings. Such a review is long overdue. To address this need, this article provides a synthesized review of the past two decades of research on coparenting in resident families and summarizes the conclusions that can be drawn from the literature. Utilizing Feinberg's (2003) ecological model of coparenting as a guide, this review organizes the research literature on coparenting between married/cohabiting resident parents in the U.S. and offers a model of coparenting that can serve as a comparison point for research on coparenting in other populations. Given such a summary, those familiar and unfamiliar with the field can gain a deeper understanding of the factors that *influence* coparenting and the factors that are *impacted by* coparenting and can ascertain the state of the research. By integrating the findings on coparenting, offering access to

them in a manageable and approachable form, and highlighting their implications for developmentalists, practitioners, parents, and researchers new to the field, I hope to encourage future research and greater application of the research findings.

### **Theoretical Background**

In family systems theory (Cox & Paley, 1997), the roots of coparenting reside in the premise that parents comprise the executive subsystem of the family and that their relationship and interactions influence the relationships and interactions between all other members of the family. The aspect of the executive subsystem that has historically received the most research attention is the functioning of the couple/marital relationship. However, the importance of coparenting has become more apparent in situations where parents were divorced or did not reside in the same household. Thus, most early studies of coparenting were conducted among such couples (Belsky et al., 1995).

Research on coparenting within resident families began to appear in the 1990s. McHale (1995) and Belsky et al. (1995) were among the first to observe parents' behaviors as they interacted with their infants in triadic episodes and organize those behaviors into early constructs of coparenting. In 2003, Feinberg proposed a conceptual model of coparenting consisting of four theoretical aspects; support/undermining, child-rearing agreement, division of child-related labor, and joint family management. In 2004, Van Egeren and Hawkins offered a modified version of Feinberg's conceptual model. They defined coparenting as composed of support, undermining, solidarity, and shared parenting. Additionally, they posited mutual responsibility for a child as the factor that distinguishes coparenting from other aspects of the couple relationship; and defined coparenting as a dyadic, as opposed to a triadic, process.

Despite these theoretical advances, researchers' assessments of coparenting in the literature do not always align with these models. Researchers' divergent approaches to the theoretical conceptualizations and measurement of coparenting have led to a host of different and sometimes conflated variables that can make the integration and application of the findings difficult. Much of the literature has focused on the support and undermining between resident parents. Less often, studies have focused on child-rearing agreement, solidarity, and the division of child-related labor among parents. More general constructs have also been assessed, such as coparental quality, harmony, alliance, and conflict, while other theoretical constructs such as joint family management and shared parenting have rarely been assessed. Thus, a secondary goal of this literature review was to integrate the disparate constructs through which coparenting has been studied and identify their relationships with other variables, thereby advancing a clearer conceptual understanding of coparenting in resident families.

To do so, I utilized Feinberg's (2003) *ecological model of coparenting* as a guide in identifying which of the covariates assessed in the literature are generally understood as antecedents or consequences of coparenting. In addition to his conceptual model of coparenting, Feinberg proposed a systemic ecological model of coparenting in which parent characteristics, the marital/romantic relationship, child characteristics, and child adjustment were all identified as factors *influencing* coparenting. In contrast, parent adjustment, parenting behavior, and child adjustment were identified as factors *influenced by* coparenting. Using this model to categorize and organize the literature, I integrated the resulting findings into six critical themes that emerged in the literature and addressed questions that researchers and practitioners may have as they seek to understand the importance and implications of coparenting. These themes are positioned as the foundations of coparenting, including 1) the influence of the couple's relational

functioning, 2) parents' characteristics, 3) children's characteristics, and 4) situational factors; and as the effects of coparenting, including 5) the effects on parents and 6) the effects on children. Lastly, I review a few select examples of coparenting interventions that address some of the issues highlighted in this summary of the coparenting literature. While reviewing and summarizing all coparenting interventions for resident families is beyond the scope of this literature review, highlighting a few examples provides an important context to the implications and suggested future directions for this field.

### **Method**

This review examines research articles published between 2000-2019 on coparenting in heterosexual married/cohabiting resident couples who share responsibility for a biological child. The decades encapsulating the 2000's and 2010's were chosen for this review as they captured the clear theoretical foundations of the field (Feinberg, 2003; Van Egeren & Hawkins, 2004) and the acceleration of research that followed. To create a manageable yet comprehensive scope of comparable studies that addressed the central concerns of the review, I included only scholarly peer-reviewed, empirical, quantitative studies conducted in the United States on coparenting in two-parent families consisting of heterosexual adult, resident parents. My last search was conducted on September 9, 2020.

I followed the PRISMA standards for reviewing studies (Moher et al., 2009). Although I started with a broad scope of databases (see Figure 1), I found that the overlap across databases appeared to be nearly complete and APA PsycInfo was sufficient in capturing most of the studies that fit my criteria. To ensure the inclusion of studies focused on coparenting in intact families and exclusion of those on coparenting among divorced couples, I used the search terms "coparenting, not divorce." I limited the search to scholarly peer-reviewed articles published



between 2000-2019. To ensure that the search was comprehensive, I maintained broad parameters for my search terms. I did not limit the search terms with specific constraints such as keywords, abstracts, or titles but instead drew from all incidences in which the word “coparenting” was associated with a scholarly peer-reviewed article (except those in which the term “divorce” was also associated with the article. This process produced 259 studies. I then reviewed the abstracts of those studies to determine whether they fit two additional criteria for inclusion: a) the central variables assessed and studied were specific constructs of coparenting rather than other constructs entailing more general family processes, and b) the sample included adult heterosexual married or cohabitating biological mothers and/or fathers residing in the United States. Although this review focuses on biological parents, some samples included biological parents and non-biological parents or did not distinguish between families that differed in biological relatedness; therefore, the findings reported herein represent adult resident parents, most of whom (but not all) are biological parents.

While important cultural variations in coparenting have been acknowledged (Jones, & Lindahl, 2011, McHale et al., 2014) and a growing number of studies on coparenting have been conducted with samples of parents residing in several countries, to maintain the scope of this review, these studies were excluded. I also excluded studies that focused on adolescent parents, non-resident parents, couples experiencing domestic violence, or those parenting disabled children as those did not represent the core demographic that was the focus of this review. Based on these criteria, my data set was narrowed to a total of 99 studies with dates of publication between 2004-2019 (see Table 1).

I then reviewed all 99 studies, noting the study’s sample, central variables, assessment method, and timing of assessment. Several studies were conducted using one of the large

national samples with publicly-available datasets [i.e., the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (ECLS) and the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study (FFCW)]. Although these datasets contain responses from both non-resident and resident parents, wherever possible, only findings specific to resident parents were used in this review. I also tracked the number of studies that used samples from these databases and other instances in which it appeared that the sample contained at least some of the same participants included in previous studies. For example, some researchers utilized various subsets of data from longitudinal datasets across studies. Whereas the repeated use of these samples allows researchers to study multiple research questions at a reduced cost, the replicability of results in common samples is not as strong as in unique samples. In Table 1, therefore, I have labeled studies that appear to use repeat samples to give the reader a sense of the degree to which findings in the overall literature have been conducted with clearly unique samples. In the following sections, I present the results for each of the main themes that arose from my analysis.

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

### **The Foundations of Coparenting**

Coparenting emerges in a pre-existing transactional context the moment a couple learns that they are expecting a child. The research literature on coparenting demonstrates how a couple's early interactions, both as partners and concerning their parental roles, lay a foundation for coparenting once their infant arrives. Furthermore, researchers (Altenburger et al., 2014; Kuerston-Hogan, 2017) have shown that prenatal assessments of coparenting are predictive of later coparenting using observational methods in which expectant parents role-play with a doll. In one such study, higher quality coparenting behaviors (cooperation, warmth) assessed via prenatal observations predicted more supportive and less undermining coparenting when the

child was nine months old, after controlling for marital relationship functioning (Altenburger et al., 2014). In fact, several researchers have demonstrated that prenatally-assessed coparenting behaviors show moderate stability through the infancy and toddler years (e.g., McHale & Rotman, 2007; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2004; Van Egeren, 2004), drawing attention to the importance of the prenatal period to later coparenting dynamics. In addition to the couple's early coparental behaviors, researchers have also demonstrated the importance of the general couple relationship, parents' characteristics, child characteristics, and situational factors as influences contributing to the foundation and ongoing dynamics of coparenting.

### **Couples' Relational Functioning**

Researchers have assessed couples' early marital/romantic relationship and coparenting (Altenburger et al., 2014; Christopher et al., 2015; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2016; Fagan & Palkovitz, 2011) using longitudinal methods which usually extend from the prenatal period through the early years of parenthood. As expected, coparenting was found to be associated with couples' early relationship in that the feelings of connectedness, warmth, and love that motivate supportive behaviors in the romantic domain also tend to spill over into the coparenting domain and manifest as coparental support (Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2016; Schoppe-Sullivan & Mangelsdorf, 2013; Talbot & McHale, 2004). Likewise, feelings of frustration, anger, and hurt that drive romantic conflict were found to manifest in the coparenting domain as conflict, undermining, and a perceived lack of coparental support from one's partner (Cabrera et al., 2009; Riina & McHale, 2015; also see Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2004). The direction of influence between the couple's relationship and coparenting is yet to be fully understood but is likely bidirectional as further elaborated on in the section on the effects of coparenting on parents.

### **Parents' Characteristics**

Researchers interested in how parents' characteristics influence coparenting have investigated the impact of several factors, including adult attachment (Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2016; Talbot et al., 2009), previous family-of-origin experiences (Cannon et al., 2008, Curran et al., 2009; Schoppe-Sullivan & Mangelsdorf, 2013), and each parent's mental health. Insecure adult attachment appears to be a risk factor for coparenting conflict and a lack of coparental cohesion (Talbot et al., 2009), as well as increased parenting stress over time (Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2016). Researchers have also shown that fathers' or mothers' attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) symptoms were predictive of fathers' perceptions of child-rearing disagreement (Williamson et al., 2017). Additionally, parental depression was shown to adversely affect coparenting for both parents (Williams, 2018).

Studies of the influence of parents' gender-role beliefs in coparenting have found that more traditional beliefs regarding gender roles were associated with increased coparental conflict (Kuo et al., 2017). Gender-role beliefs also interacted with personality in predicting mothers' negative coparenting behaviors (Cannon et al., 2008). Schoppe-Sullivan & Mangelsdorf (2013) demonstrated that mothers' having more progressive beliefs regarding fathers' parenting roles had a protective effect on coparenting, leading to more supportive coparenting in the presence of marital conflict. These results suggest that gender-roles beliefs are an important component in coparental processes. A literature review focused on the impact of gender-role beliefs on the distribution of household labor and parenting could provide a step forward in our current understanding of coparenting and future research in the field.

Researchers have also found that each parent's expectations of their own and their partner's ability to effectively coparent are likely to influence their actual behaviors as they transition to parenthood. For example, each parent's sense of self-efficacy around their parenting

is positively associated with perceptions of supportive coparenting from one's partner and negatively related to coparental conflict and undermining (Merrifield & Gamble, 2013). However, McHale & Rotman (2007) found that discrepancies in the beliefs of the two parents about parenting predicted less coparenting solidarity after their child was born. Likewise, Curran et al. (2009) found that during the prenatal period when parents held higher expectations of their well-being once they became parents, they offered lower levels of coparental support to their partner after the transition to parenthood. This finding was especially true for mothers, perhaps representing an early unrealistic view of parenthood that later impacted mothers' abilities to effectively coparent. Yet, one researcher found that parents' expectations for how they will coparent do not align with their later coparenting behavior (Kuerston-Hogan, 2017). To resolve these conflicting findings and expand our understanding of the predictors of early coparenting, additional research is needed to identify the specific types of expectancies and beliefs that influence coparenting and precisely how the effects of those expectancies and beliefs manifest.

Such studies of parental characteristics underscore the transactional nature of coparenting by focusing on what each person contributes and how those contributions affect one's partner in the coparenting domain. They, and future research on this aspect of coparenting, offer meaningful contributions to the field by suggesting possible risk and protective factors in coparenting that might be targeted through intervention efforts.

### **Child Characteristics**

Scholars have long acknowledged that influences in families run both ways, with children being influenced by, and influencing, their parents. The coparenting literature provides ample evidence of these transactional effects. For example, in the study mentioned earlier on ADHD, mothers' perceptions of coparental child-rearing disagreement were also predicted by their

child's ADHD (Williamson et al., 2017). Furthermore, the gender and temperament of their children influence how parents enact their coparenting relationship. Davis et al. (2009) found higher coparenting support between parents of infant girls than between parents of infant boys and controlling for child gender, they linked difficult infant temperament to less supportive coparenting over time. Findings from other studies also provide evidence that infants' difficult temperament is associated with increased undermining over time (Laxman et al., 2013; Solmeyer & Feinberg, 2011; also see Burney & Leerkes, 2010; Kim & Teti, 2014; McDaniel & Teti, 2012). Likewise, preschoolers' negative affect was associated with coparental undermining (Cook et al., 2009). However, coparental support has also been found to buffer the effects of a child's negative temperament; according to Solmeyer and Feinberg (2011), a child's having a difficult temperament predicted parental depression when coparenting support was low, but not when it was high.

Acknowledging the effects of the child's characteristics on how parents coordinate parenting aligns with a systems view. Future research on the reciprocal relationships between the impact of parents' coparenting on their children and their children's influence on their coparenting could help advance our understanding of the broader ecology surrounding coparenting. One of the few studies to take such a broad systemic approach examined the influence of the first-born child's externalizing behaviors on the parents' coparenting during the child's transition to siblinghood (Kolak & Volling, 2013). By accounting for the richer contexts in which coparenting is enacted, such studies can help draw attention to the individual, collective, and situational factors in coparenting.

### **Situational Factors**

Situational factors have been found to influence early and ongoing coparenting and several studies have accounted for situational factors either by including those factors as control variables or limiting the sample to specific sub-groups. (i.e. Mexican-origins, African American and dual-earners), see Table 1. Not surprisingly, poverty, stress, and racial discrimination have also been shown to affect coparenting negatively. For example, Riina and McHale (2012) linked stress resulting from economic strain and racial discrimination to lower levels of coparental satisfaction in African American families. Bronte-Tinkew et al. (2010) found that income level interacted with paternal stress and coparenting in a large sample of fathers from the FFCWB surveys. Additionally, in a study of mothers of Mexican-origin, lower levels of familial endorsement interacted with living in a disadvantaged neighborhood (characterized by poverty, unemployment, crowding, etc.) in predicting coparental cooperation. Even the disruptive use of technology and the level of chaos in the home have negatively influenced the quality of coparenting (McDaniel & Coyne, 2016; Whitesell et al., 2015). Accounting for other contextual factors, Bronte-Tinkew et al. (2009) investigated the degree to which the pregnancy was intentional and found lower levels of intentionality to be associated with less supportive coparenting and more coparenting conflict (also see Claridge & Chaviano, 2014).

Furthermore, acknowledging their potential influence, researchers have commonly controlled for variables such as income, education, and length of the couple/marital relationship (Teubert & Pinquart, 2010). While the use of controls does not provide direct knowledge of the relationships between these variables and coparenting they do suggest meaningful variations in the contexts in which coparenting is enacted. Studies that contribute to our understanding of those contexts and how they influence coparenting can help practitioners who are working with couples to improve their coparental interactions address such contextual

factors. Existing and future research on situational factors affecting family dynamics may suggest additional factors whose potential negative impact on coparenting merits further investigation.

### **What are the Effects of Coparenting?**

In addition to providing a better understanding of the roots of coparenting and factors that contribute to how it unfolds over time, a review of the research on coparenting offers evidence of the various *effects* of coparenting for both parents and children. Coparenting is thought to influence children's development directly and indirectly through its impact on the parenting behaviors of each parent (Van Egeren & Hawkins, 2004). Additionally, coparenting also has an important impact on parents' well-being. One of the more significant findings in the literature reveals how the coparenting behaviors of one's spouse have different effects on fathers than mothers, with those differences putting fathers at risk for lower levels of involvement with their children.

#### **Effects of Coparenting on Parents**

As previously indicated, the couple's relationship impacts coparenting but coparenting also influences the couple's relationship. Most research findings report a cyclical relationship in which attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors in the coparenting domain and the emotions and perceptions central to the couple relationship are mutually influential (Christopher et al., 2015; Estlein & Theiss, 2014; Fagan & Palkovitz, 2011). However, some researchers have found coparenting to have a more significant impact, in that supportive and harmonious coparents reported *subsequent* greater marital satisfaction. In contrast, marital outcomes were not predictive of later coparenting (Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2004). This finding suggests that some



parents may be able to put aside tensions in their marital relationship at the moment and work cooperatively as parents (Van Egeren & Hawkins, 2004).

Researchers have also investigated the effects of the coparental relationship on individual parents' sense of well-being and their confidence and competence in parenting. Merrifield and Gamble (2013) found that supportive coparenting was associated with parents' higher sense of parental self-efficacy or confidence in their ability to parent effectively, which is an important predictor of competent parenting. Numerous researchers have also demonstrated that supportive coparenting is associated with wellness indicators such as levels of stress (Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2010; Fagan & Lee, 2014; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2016) and depression (Don et al., 2013; Solmeyer & Feinberg, 2011). Meanwhile, coparenting conflict and undermining are associated with adverse effects on parental self-efficacy, stress, relationship happiness, and depression (Fagan & Lee, 2014; Merrifield & Gamble, 2013; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2016; Solmeyer & Feinberg, 2011). Likewise, coparental agreement has been associated with lower depression, more positive affect, and greater relationship satisfaction (Don et al., 2013).

### ***Differential Effects on Mothers and Fathers***

In addition to these general effects, the coparental behaviors of each partner have been shown to have unique influences on mothers and fathers. Research employing actor-partner interdependence models focuses on how the behaviors of one member of the couple affect the other member and help us understand these differential effects.

***Father involvement.*** Research findings suggest that fathers' engagement in quality interactions with their children is influenced by and reactive to the coparenting behaviors of mothers. For example, research has shown that fathers were more involved with their children when mothers were more encouraging of their parenting; and lower father involvement was

associated with fathers' increased perceptions of maternal criticism (Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2008). Similarly, mothers' perceptions of shared decision-making were associated with higher levels of father involvement, while child-rearing conflict was associated with decreased father engagement and responsibility (Hohmann-Marriott, 2011). However, other factors such as child gender and temperament are also important in understanding father involvement. Fathers tend to be more involved with sons than with daughters (Updegraff et al., 2001), and it seems that fathers are more likely than mothers to struggle with difficult infants, although both parents demonstrate stress under such conditions. Yet, even when controlling for child gender and temperament, researcher findings have provided support for the cyclical relationship between the quality of coparenting and fathers' involvement with their children (Cabrera et al., 2009; Fagan & Palkovitz, 2011; McClain & Brown, 2017; Pudasainee-Kapri & Razza, 2015).

The effects of coparenting on fathers' engagement with their children also depend, in part, on situational characteristics. For example, findings from a study comparing expecting couples who a) remained together but unmarried, b) married in response to pregnancy, and c) married before conceiving children showed that the couples who married before conceiving had lower levels of father involvement but also more cooperative coparenting compared to the other two groups (Hohmann-Marriott, 2011).

Some researchers have examined the associations between coparenting and father involvement from the lens of maternal gatekeeping. The concept of maternal gatekeeping rests on the idea that mothers have more control over children physically and psychologically and thus can control fathers' access to and involvement with their children (Schoppe-Sullivan et. al., 2008). Researchers have demonstrated variation in mothers' behaviors and attitudes concerning fathers' involvement with their children and categorized them as encouragement,

discouragement, and control (Allen & Hawkins, 1999). Aligning this theory with results found in the broader coparenting literature, higher rates of maternal discouragement and control have been associated with reduced father engagement, while maternal encouragement and greater parenting alliance have been correlated with higher rates of father involvement (Fagan & Cherson, 2017; Pudasainee-Kapri & Razza, 2015; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2008). These findings suggest that fathers' involvement in parenting is more vulnerable than mothers', and care should be taken to educate parents on its importance and effects on their coparental interactions.

*Differences by type of father involvement.* However, the effect of fathers' involvement on the coparental relationship is more complex and depends on the type of involvement in which the father is engaged. An interesting set of findings in the literature indicate that fathers' involvement in child-care-related activities (such as feeding and bathing) is associated with more maternal undermining (Buckley & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2010) and subsequent coparental conflict (Fagan & Cabrera, 2012). However, fathers' involvement in other activities such as *play* is either unrelated (Buckley & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2010) or is related to more supportive coparenting and less undermining (Jia & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2011), with less subsequent coparental conflict (Fagan & Cabrera, 2012). In a related research study investigating the degree of father involvement that the mother desired, it was found that mothers' violated wishes (regarding fathers' engagement in diapering, responding to infant crying, laundry, making babysitter/doctor arrangements, etc.) predicted levels of marital satisfaction and coparenting conflict (Khazan et al., 2008).

In summary, the quality of the coparenting relationship affects fathers' engagement with their children, which in turn influences mothers' coparental satisfaction and results in more or less coparental support of the father. While current research suggests some possible factors

affecting the cyclical nature of these relations, additional research is needed to flesh out the mechanisms at work.

### **Effects of Coparenting on Children**

The research literature suggests that coparenting conflict has an apparent and negative effect on children, often contributing beyond adverse outcomes due to marital conflict (Teubert & Pinquart, 2010). In contrast to the maintenance of marital relationships, the tasks of coparenting include coordinating the care and parenting of the child, which involves the child to some degree and is often enacted in closer proximity to the child than the marital relationship (Van Egeren & Hawkins, 2004). For these reasons, coparenting is thought to have particularly important effects on children, even after controlling for the impact of the couple or marital relationship.

One of the ways coparenting impacts children is through its effects on parenting behaviors. Self-reported coparenting conflict has been related to reduced positivity and warmth in mother-infant interaction (infants  $M_{age} = 9$  mons.; Cabrera et al., 2009) and increased hostile parenting (distressed, punitive, and minimization responses) in vignettes involving both older ( $M_{age} = 4.8$  years) and younger ( $M_{age} = 2.7$  years) siblings (Blandon, 2015). In other research, more positive coparenting was associated with more emotional availability during parenting, while more negative coparenting was associated with less emotional availability (Kim & Teti, 2014). One study even found that coparenting support was associated with parents' language use with their toddlers ( $M_{age} = 2.2$  years), in that fathers were more likely to use diverse language and more words during triadic interactions with their child when the couple was equally engaged (Bingham et al., 2013). Coparenting support has also been associated with higher parent involvement in their 9 years-old children's schooling (Berryhill, 2017).

The literature also contains research evidence demonstrating that coparenting has *direct* effects on children. For example, coparenting has also been associated across time with parent-infant attachment, although most of the research is based on mothers' perceptions of mother-child attachment (Caldera & Lindsey, 2006,  $M_{age\ of\ child} = 13.7$  mons; Pudasainee-Kapri & Razza, 2015, with children 3 years of age). One exception is a research study (Brown et al., 2010) employing observational methods in which supportive coparenting when infants were 3.5 months old was associated with greater attachment security between parent and child when the infants were 12 months old. However, this effect only held for boys. In another study, toddlers' ( $M_{age} = 26$  mons) compliance with mothers' requests was predicted by lower levels of negative coparenting and higher levels of balanced parental engagement after accounting for mothers' and fathers' parenting approaches (Kwon & Elicker, 2012). Coparenting was also related to child compliance in a study that linked sibling children's ( $M_{age\ younger\ sibling} = 2.25$  years,  $M_{age\ older\ sibling} = 4.83$  years) compliance to conscience development (i.e. affective discomfort and reparative response to wrongdoing; Groenendyk & Volling, 2007). LeRoy et al. (2013) found that fathers' rating of perceived maternal support and undermining when their infant was 6 months old predicted parents' subsequent rating of their infants' behavior problems at 12 mons of age. Furthermore, toddlers ( $M_{age} = 2.27$  years) embedded in supportive coparenting contexts were observed to be more well-regulated; but this finding only held for toddlers who had previously been high in negative affectivity (Altenburger et al., 2017), suggesting that coparenting may interact with other risk factors in its effects on children.

The literature also contains studies assessing coparental interactions in which parents leverage their children in their coparenting conflicts with each other, a phenomenon known as triangulation. While triangulation may occur somewhat outside the realm of coparenting, when

parents' use of triangulation is motivated by coparental competition or conflict, it becomes entangled in coparenting with adverse effects for children. For example, Groenendyk and Volling (2007) found coparental triangulation to negatively predict sibling children's ( $M_{age} = 2.25$  years and  $M_{age} = 4.83$ ) conscience development, even after controlling for the child's compliance with parental requests.

In summary, research has linked coparenting to children's moral development, problem behavior, attachment, and social functioning, both directly and through its effects on parenting. Given the importance of coparenting to child outcomes, more attention should be given to the coparenting relationship when working with families in which children are particularly vulnerable to negative outcomes. In addition, parenting interventions intended to improve child outcomes should train parents to work together and support each other to more fully address parents' behaviors that affect their children's development.

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### **What Can be Done to Support Healthy Coparenting?**

In line with the broader coparenting literature, research assessing coparenting interventions has grown over the past twenty years. While studies assessing the effectiveness of coparenting interventions were not the focus of this review, providing a few examples of the types of interventions studied and the results of their assessment provides greater clarity as to how the research findings on coparenting presented in this review might inform future interventions and research.

For example, the Family Foundations (FF) program (Feinberg & Kan, 2008) was one of the first coparenting interventions documented in the literature. First-time parents were trained in coparental conflict management, problem-solving, and effective communication as part of eight

childbirth education sessions delivered across the pre- to post-natal period. The program was designed to increase parents' sense of efficacy and to promote attachment security and closeness between parents. Research assessing the effectiveness of the FF program found declines in coparenting competition and increases in positive coparenting over the three years following childbirth (Feinberg et al. 2009), which mediated effects on more positive parental adjustment, less harsh parenting, and reduced child adjustment problems (Brown et al., 2012, Feinberg et al., 2009, 2010, 2014, 2015, 2016; Solmeyer et al., 2014). Other effects linked to the FF program include reduced maternal depression and anxiety, less distress in the parent-child relationship (Feinberg & Kan, 2008), children's healthier sleep patterns, and increased self-soothing (Feinberg, 2009). Even 5-7 years following the intervention, researchers have documented lower internalizing and externalizing problems among children in the intervention group than in the control group (Feinberg et al., 2014).

Researchers investigating other coparenting invention programs have also found positive results following the intervention. Mothers in a coparenting program demonstrated decreased negative communication and experienced less parenting stress compared to mothers in a parenting-only program (Petch et al., 2012; also see Doss et al., 2014), and parents engaged in less competition during family play following a coparenting and family-process intervention (Shapiro et al., 2011). Research on the effectiveness of an invention program for African American parents with an early adolescent child demonstrated a short-term positive effect on the couples' relationship functioning, which was associated with long-term positive changes in their coparenting (Lavner et al., 2019).

Taken together, the findings from these few interventions suggest that coparenting invention programs may have positive effects that extend beyond improvements in the couple's

coparental interactions, with impacts on parental adjustment, child adjustment, and family function. Additionally, research findings seem to suggest the Family Foundations program is highly effective in promoting more positive coparenting behaviors. Given the evidence of its effects, promoting similar types of coparenting training in all childbirth education programs seems reasonable and desirable.

### **Conclusions**

Although the literature on coparenting in resident families has burgeoned over the past 20 years, articles reviewing the literature are lacking. The purpose of this review was to fill that gap by providing the reader with a synthesized overview of the research findings in the field of coparenting in resident families. Nearly one hundred research studies were reviewed for this article, and their results were organized and synthesized to make them more accessible to scholars and practitioners alike.

### **Implications**

Drawing on the findings presented in this review, it is possible to provide some practical suggestions for how family practitioners might help to support healthy coparenting in their clients. For example, the research findings included in this review make it clear that the ways in which expectant parents conceive of their roles as parents and interact and coordinate their parenting have implications for their coparental relationship after the birth of their child. Accordingly, practitioners involved with couples during the prenatal period could work with expectant couples to assess their coparental dynamics and assist them in building a supportive and inclusive coparental partnership. The prenatal period is an ideal time to examine parents' gender-role ideology and help them to make conscious choices about their own engagement and how they create support for their partner's engagement. Practitioners can also assist expectant



parents in developing a shared understanding of their goals for their children and how they can work together towards achieving those goals. Findings from the literature also demonstrate the importance of each parent's full participation and cooperation in coparenting. Traditional gender roles, in which mothers are positioned as the primary caretaker, have undermined fathers' positions as equal parents, making it more difficult for fathers to participate in an effective coparental relationship. Mothers with more progressive gender role representations tend to have more supportive coparental relationships with their partners. Additionally, as seen in the literature on maternal gatekeeping, when mothers attempt to control fathers' involvement in parenting, fathers tend to disengage. These findings suggest that effective coparenting begins with a balance of power in which both parents are viewed as equally significant and necessary, an assumption that is a prerequisite to mutual coordination and effective teamwork. Practitioners and other professionals play an important role in helping parents to negotiate their positions in the family and establish balanced roles that optimize effective coparenting.

Findings from the research literature also clearly indicate that the characteristics of each parent, the state of their romantic relationship, the contexts in which they reside, and their child's characteristics all influence how they function as a parental team. Taken as a whole, the literature provides insight into the myriad of ways in which cooperative, supportive, mutually engaged coparenting leads to better marital relationships, greater parental well-being, more paternal involvement, and positive children's development. On the other hand, the literature also demonstrates the adverse effects of competitive, conflictual, and undermining coparenting on parent adjustment and children's behavior. Professionals can help parents better understand how they, both individually and as a team, contribute to their child's development and can educate parents on the costs of engaging in competitive and undermining coparental behavior to help

them establish more effective strategies for dealing with conflict (McConnell et al., 2008).

Professionals can also help parents understand how their children's unique difficulties challenge their coparental relationships and can assist them in developing strategies for identifying and interrupting negative dynamics.

The emerging evidence on coparenting interventions suggests that coparenting is a skill that can be advanced through education and training. Intervention efforts, such as The Family Foundations program (Feinberg & Kan, 2008), acknowledge the importance of the early foundations of coparenting and train expectant and first-time parents in effective teamwork skills. Such coparenting interventions should be promoted more broadly, especially to expectant families whose backgrounds and situational contexts make them more vulnerable to parenting difficulties. Additionally, expanded programs such as "involved fatherhood" programs (Holmes et al., 2020) that include coparenting in their intervention efforts can provide support to parents in various circumstances in need of coparenting education and training.

Given its significance, more attention should be drawn to the importance of coparenting in general, with educational promotions emphasizing effective teamwork among parents. Greater awareness of the importance of effective coparenting and the challenges that some parents face could help more parents attend to the conditions needed to more effectively coordinate their parenting and help them focus on the skills that create a welcoming environment for fathers' full participation. One way to increase such awareness could be working with organizations and individuals that serve families to provide coparental education and tips for effective coparenting in their services and media efforts.

## **Limitations**

While the research included in this literature review advances our understanding of the coparental relationship and its effects, it is focused on a specific context for coparenting; namely, coparent between resident heterosexual parents in the U.S. most of whom are biological parents to their children. It does not include all of the research that has been conducted on coparenting. Indeed, many coparental systems that arise from variations in family formations are not represented here, including non-resident coparenting (e.g. Coates et al. 2019), same-sex coparenting (e.g. Farr & Patterson, 2013), and parent-grandparent coparenting (e.g. Li & Liu, 2020). Furthermore, as a review summary, this article does not contain all the nuanced details available within individual studies. A number of important contextual factors were not addressed in this review, including variations in cultural background, parents' employment status, and variations in childcare arrangements, to name a few. Samples that focused on specific characteristics are noted in Table 1, however, these characteristics were not tracked across studies nor are findings organized by these characteristics. Likewise, this article does not reference all of the ways in which a focus on coparenting has been embedded in various interventions. Finally, this review focuses specifically on the construct of coparenting, even though the literature surrounding other closely-related constructs such as the quality of marital/couple relationships and family processes has much to contribute to our understanding of healthy coparenting.

### **Future Directions**

While the research included in this literature review advances our understanding of the coparental relationship and its effects, there is still much to learn and many unanswered questions can be proffered in response to this review. For example, is coparenting relatively stable beyond the toddler years? What are the long-term effects of variations in coparenting on

parents and children? Are coparental relationships malleable after many years? What are the contextual barriers to changes in coparenting? Research addressing the long-term adjustments in coparenting as families transition through childhood and adolescence is still lacking.

Additionally, it is unclear how differences in each parent's biological relationship with the child affect the couple's coparenting. How do remarried parents approach coordination of parenting, and what does effective coparenting look like in stepfamilies? Findings from the current literature may or may not apply to coparenting between parents who do not share the same biological relatedness with the children as most current studies do not distinguish between couples who are biological parents of the child and those who differ in biological relatedness. Additionally, while the coparenting literature demonstrates the effects of poor coparenting on children, there is still much to be learned regarding which aspects of poor coparenting have the most impact on children, for which children, and under what conditions.

The research on coparenting is still in its infancy, and there is much work to do. As described earlier, the development of explicit theoretical models has been critical in moving the research forward. However, additional advancements could be supported by an updated model of coparenting that draws together divergent approaches that exist in the current literature and more effectively organizes the constructs underlying coparenting to make future research findings more comparable.

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**Table 1**

Reviewed Research Studies on Coparenting

Year	Authors	Coparenting Constructs	Covariates	# of families	Timing of assessment <sup>b</sup>	Sample characteristics <sup>c</sup>
2004	Schoppe-Sullivan et al.	support/undermining	marital engagement/conflict	46	I, T	
2004	Talbot & McHale	harmony, negativity	marital quality, parental flexibility, and self-control	50	I	
2004	Van Egeren	harmony, competition, discrepancy	marital relationship, expectations of division of childcare, child temperament	101	P, I	
2005	Lindsey et al.	support, intrusion	congruency of childrearing beliefs, parent self-esteem, child gender, and temperament	60	I	
2006	Caldera & Lindsey	cooperation/competition	parent-child attachment	60	I	RS
2007	Baril et al.	conflict, cooperation, triangulation	marital love, adolescent risky behavior, and depressive symptoms	177	A	
2007	Bonds & Gondoli	support	marital adjustment, maternal warmth	148	C, A	
2007	Feinberg et al.	conflict	marital quality/disagreement, parent negativity, parent-adolescent conflict, adolescent adjustment	259	C, A	NEADS data
2007	Groenendyk & Volling	cooperation, conflict, triangulation	child compliance, conscience development	58	T, C	
2007	McHale & Rotman	cohesion, conflict	parents' future family outlook, differences in parenting beliefs	110	P, I, T	
2007	Schoppe-Sullivan et al.	support/undermining	infant temperament, marital quality	97	P, I	
2008	Cannon et al.	support/undermining	family-of-origin idealization, personality	97	P, I	RS
2008	Elliston et al.	withdrawal	engagement and warmth during triadic play; parent characteristics	115	P, I	
2008	Gordan & Feldman	support	parent behaviors in interactions with infants, marital satisfaction, infant temperament	94	I	dual earners
2008	Khazan et al.	collaboration, conflict	violated wishes concerning childcare involvement, marital satisfaction	119	P, I	
2008	Schoppe-Sullivan et al.	support/undermining, alliance	beliefs regarding fathers' roles, fathers' involvement, and competence	97	P, I	RS
2009	Bronte-Tinkew et al.	support, conflict	fathers' intentions with mistimed/unwanted pregnancy, parent depression, couple relationship happiness	1,278	I, T	ECLS-B
2009	Cabrera et al.	conflict	couple relationship conflict, father engagement, infant social development	735	I	ECLS-B, Mexican-American

Year	Authors	Coparenting Constructs	Covariates	# of families	Timing of assessment <sup>b</sup>	Sample characteristics <sup>c</sup>
2009	Cook et al.	support/undermining	child negative affectivity, marital adjustment	111	C	RS
2009	Curran et al.	support	representations/expectations about marriage and parenthood	80	P, I, T	
2009	Davis et al.	support/undermining	infant temperament	56	P, I, T	RS
2009	Schoppe-Sullivan et al.	support	children's effort control and externalizing behaviors	92	C	RS
2009	Talbot et al.	cohesion, conflict	adult attachment, marital quality	87	P, I	
2010	Bronte-Tinkew et al.	support	fathers' parenting aggravation and stress, father engagement	2139	I	FFCW
2010	Brown et al.	support	parent-infant attachment	68	I	
2010	Buckley & Schoppe-Sullivan	support/undermining	beliefs about father roles, father-involvement, dual-earning vs. single-earning families	80	C	RS
2010	Burney & Leerkes	positive/negative, division of labor	child temperament, marital quality	79	I	
2010	Isacco et al.	support	father involvement, relationship quality, parenting expectations, depression, and anxiety	742	I	FFCW
2010	Morrill et al.	alliance	marital quality, parenting	76	I, T, C, A	
2011	Fagan & Lee	support	social support, father engagement	1,540	T	FFCW
2011	Fagan & Palkovitz	support	father engagement, relationship quality	1,756	I, T, C	FFCW
2011	Hohmann-Marriott	cooperation	couple relationship formation, father involvement	5,407	T	ECLS-B
2011	Jia & Schoppe-Sullivan	support/undermining	father-involvement, child gender, dual-earner vs. single-earner families	112	C	RS
2011	Shapiro et al. <sup>i</sup>	support, competition	intervention, triadic interaction	181	P, I	
2011	Solmeyer & Feinberg	support/undermining	infant temperament; parental stress, depression, and self-efficacy	139	I, T	
2012	Cabrera et al.	conflict, shared decision-making	child's academic and social skills	5,650	I, T, C	ECLS-B
2012	Fagan & Cabrera	conflict	father engagement	3600	I, T, C	ECLS-B
2012	Feinberg et al.	quality	marital quality	152	I, T	
2012	Jia et al.	support/undermining	father-involvement, child externalizing, internalizing, and social competence	112	C	RS
2012	Kwon & Elicker	cooperation/ competition	parental control, parental engagement, and toddlers' committed compliance	68	T	
2012	McDaniel & Teti	quality	infant sleep, parental depression	150	I	



Year	Authors	Coparenting Constructs	Covariates	# of families	Timing of assessment <sup>b</sup>	Sample characteristics <sup>c</sup>
2012	Petch et al. <sup>i</sup>	intervention	parenting adjustment problems, parenting stress, relationship satisfaction, and adjustment problems, intrusive parenting	250	P, I, T	
2012	Riina & McHale	satisfaction	child characteristics, racial discrimination	192	A	African American, RS
2013	Bingham et al.	support/undermining	balanced involvement, language use with child	63	T	
2013	Don et al.	agreement	parental depression, positive affect & relationship satisfaction	77	I	
2013	Holland & McElwain	support, endorsement	marital quality, parent-child attachment	122	T	
2013	Kolak & Volling	support/undermining	child's externalizing behavior across the transition to siblinghood	223	I, T, C	
2013	Kwon et al.	quality	parenting control, child's social and emotional behavior	77	T	
2013	Laxman et al.	support/undermining	parent personality, infant temperament	79	T	RS
2013	LeRoy et al.	support/undermining	parenting, child behavior problems	164	I	
2013	Merrifield & Gamble	support/undermining	parental self-efficacy, marital relationship maintenance, satisfaction, and conflict	175	T, C	
2013	Schoppe-Sullivan & Mangelsdorf	support/undermining	marital quality, beliefs about fathers' roles, parents' personality	57	P, I	RS
2013	Scrimgeour et al.	cooperation	child's prosocial behavior	58	T, C	
2014	Altenburger et al.	support/undermining	marital relationship functioning	182	P, I	dual-earners
2014	Blandon et al.	cooperation/competition	child-centered parenting behavior, children's inhibitory control	58	T	RS
2014	Claridge & Chaviano	support	abortion consideration	2,496	I, T, C	FFCW
2014	Doss et al. <sup>i</sup>	alliance	relationship satisfaction and functioning	90	I, T	
2014	Estlein & Theiss	endorsement	similarity in parenting responsiveness & control, marital satisfaction	51	C	
2014	Fagan	alliance, conflict	father involvement	127	I	
2014	Fagan & Lee	conflict, shared decision making	partner relationship quality, paternal parenting stress	6100	T, C	ECLS-B
2014	Feinberg et al. <sup>i</sup>	intervention	couple negative communication, child internalizing, externalizing, and school adjustment	98	P, C	
2014	Kim & Teti	quality	emotional availability during parenting	106	I	
2014	Merrifield et al.	child-rearing agreement, joint decision making	marital quality, parental involvement	57	C	Mexican-origin

Year	Authors	Coparenting Constructs	Covariates	# of families	Timing of assessment <sup>b</sup>	Sample characteristics <sup>c</sup>
2014	Riina & McHale	joint decision making, joint involvement	adolescent behavior problems	201	A	
2014	Solmeyer et al. <sup>i</sup>	cooperation/competition	child adjustment problems	169	I, T	
2015	Blandon	conflict	parental physiological regulation, parental responses to children's negative emotion	70	T, C	RS
2015	Christopher et al.	cooperation, endorsement	marital satisfaction and conflict	96	T	
2015	Pudasainee-Kapri & Razza	support	father engagement, mother-child attachment	1371	I, T, C	FFCW
2015	Riina & McHale	satisfaction	marital quality, differences in childrearing attitudes	145	A	African Amer., RS
2015	Song & Volling	cooperation, triangulation, conflict	child temperament, child cooperative behavior	216	I, T, C, A	
2015	Whitesell et al.	quality	household chaos, parenting emotional availability	100	I	
2016	Barnett et al.	cooperation	familism beliefs, neighborhood disadvantage	71	T	Mexican-origin
2016	Feinberg et al. <sup>i</sup>	negativity/positivity	couple relationship quality, negative communication, parenting positivity/negativity	399	I	RS
2016	Le et al.	support/undermining	couple relationship quality	164	I, T	
2016	McDaniel & Coyne	quality	technology interference	203	I, T	
2016	Murphy et al.	competition	child externalizing behavior	108	T, C	
2016	Parent et al.	quality, mindfulness	dispositional mindfulness, mindful parenting, positive/negative parenting	485	I, T, C, A	
2016	Peltz et al.	cooperation	children's sleep problems, relationship satisfaction, family functioning	249	T	
2016	Schoppe-Sullivan et al.	support	prenatal adult attachment, marital quality, parental self-efficacy, parenting stress/satisfaction	182	P, I	dual-earners, RS
2017	Altenburger et al.	support/undermining	infant temperament, toddler dysregulation, and externalizing behaviors	182	P, I, T	dual-earners, RS
2017	Berryhill	quality	parental involvement in schooling	1895	C	FFCW
2017	Durtschi et al.	support	relationship quality, parental stress	848	I, T	FFCW
2017	Fagan & Cherson	support	fathers' engagement	3,605	T, C	FFCW
2017	Kuersten-Hogan	harmony, antagonism	coparenting expectations/representations	55	P, I	RS
2017	Kuo et al.	cooperation, conflict	transition to 2 <sup>nd</sup> child, child temperament, gender-role beliefs	241	C	
2017	Latham et al.	quality	coercive parenting, child's disruptive behavior	106	C	
2017	McClain & Brown	support	father involvement, relationship quality	1,275	I, T, C	FFCW

Year	Authors	Coparenting Constructs	Covariates	# of families	Timing of assessment <sup>b</sup>	Sample characteristics <sup>c</sup>
2017	Murphy et al.	shared decision-making, endorsement, cooperation/competition, support /undermining	father involvement	125	T	
2017	Reader et al.	quality	parental beliefs about responding to infants' night waking	167	I	
2017	Williamson et al.	child-rearing disagreement	ADHD symptoms in parents and children.	179	C	ADHD sample
2018	McDaniel et al.	positive	relationship quality, daily stressors, work hours, parent mood, parenting stress	174	C	
2018	Peltz et al.	cooperation, conflict	marital satisfaction, parent-child relationship satisfaction	249	T	
2018	Riina & Feinberg	support, conflict	financial strain, work hours, work satisfaction, community cohesion	635	A	dual-earners
2018	Williams	cooperation	parental depression	1459	I, T, C	FFCW
2019	Fagan & Palkovitz	support	father engagement	3,464	I, T, C	FFCW
2019	Gallegos et al.	support, child-centeredness	parenting competence, infant temperament, joint involvement	125	I	RS
2019	Lavner et al. <sup>i</sup>	positive	intervention, relationship functioning	346	C, A	African American
2019	Le et al.	support	relationship closeness	141	I	
2019	Zvara et al.	support/undermining	neuroticism, harsh intrusive parenting	182	I	dual-earner

<sup>b</sup>Prenatal (P); Infancy (I) 0-12 months old; Toddlerhood (T) 13 months -3 years old; Children (C) 4-12 years old; Adolescence (A) 13-18 years old

<sup>c</sup>Samples with unique characteristics, those drawn from publicly-available datasets, and samples that include participants reported on in multiple articles [e.g. subsamples that overlap, labeled as repeat samples (RS)] are noted. Nonshared Environment in Adolescent Development Study (NEADS), Early Childhood Longitudinal Study – Birth Cohort (ECLS-B); Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study (FFCW).

<sup>i</sup>It should be noted that this review does not include a review of coparenting interventions. Intervention studies generally did not meet the eligibility requirement for this review (central variables assessed were constructs of coparenting), with a few noted exceptions.

## Table 2

### Summary of Key Findings

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#### Key Findings

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Coparenting functions with regard to the expectations that each parent brings to the union, and it can be assessed quite robustly before the birth of the child.

Parents' adult attachment styles and mental health affect their coparenting.

More progressive gender-role beliefs are associated with more positive coparenting.

Children's age, gender, and characteristics (especially difficult ones) appear to be factors influencing coparental interactions.

Environmental factors such as poverty, stress, racial discrimination, and household chaos negatively affect coparenting.

Contextual factors surrounding parenthood (e.g. unexpected pregnancy) impact later coparenting.

The relations between couple's romantic relationship and coparenting have been found to be bidirectional. However, the effect of coparenting on a couple's marital satisfaction appears to be more pervasive than influences in the other direction.

The coparenting behaviors of mothers and fathers affect each other, but mothers' behaviors are particularly impactful in their effects on fathers.

Mothers' supportive coparenting is associated with fathers' greater engagement in parenting, while mothers' negative coparenting is associated with fathers' parental withdrawal.

Although fathers' involvement in parenting is influenced by mothers' coparenting, other factors such as the child's sex and temperament moderate this relationship.

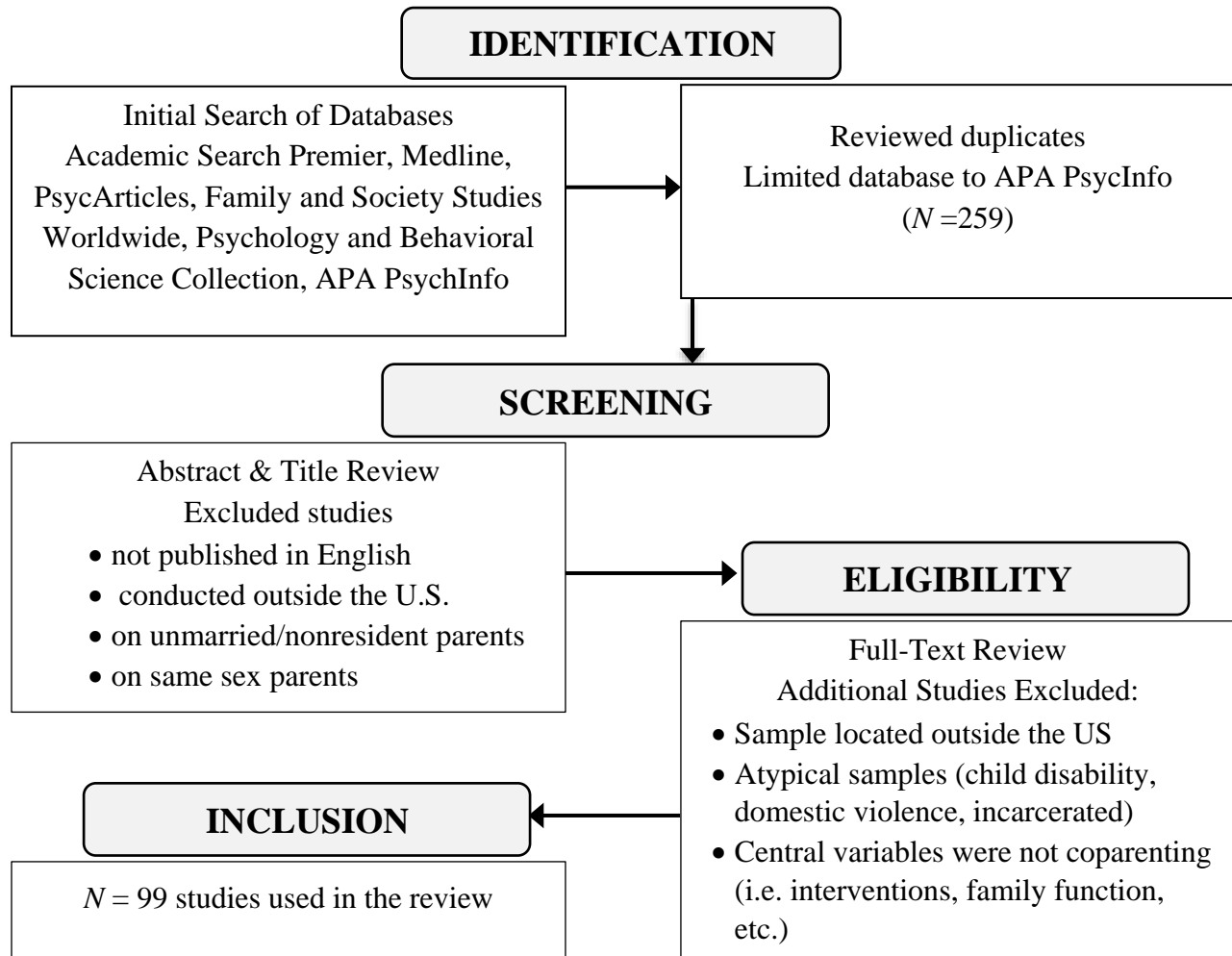
Coparenting affects each parent's ability to parent – in terms of their involvement/emotional availability, warmth, and attention.

Coparenting affects children's development indirectly via its effect on parenting and parent involvement.

Coparenting also appears to have a direct effect on children's development (e.g. effects on children's attachment, compliance, and conscience development) above and beyond its indirect effects via parenting and parental involvement.

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**Figure 1**



## **List of Figures**

Figure 1      Systematic review process of literature search and selection