



Coparenting and Family Social Support Across Different Family Forms

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Abstract

- 40% of children in the United States are born to unmarried parents, compared to 30% in 1990.
- There has been a rise in out of wedlock births.
- Understanding how coparenting works across different family types (e.g., married, cohabiting, non-residential) is increasingly important.
- Coparenting support is linked to healthy development and fewer behavioral problems.
- Primary aim: study how family support is related to coparenting conflict and support across family structure for low-income mothers and fathers experiencing the transition to parenthood.

Research Questions

Question #1: Do the mean levels of coparenting conflict and support differ between married, cohabiting, and single-parent families?

Question #2: How does family support modify the relationship between family structure and coparenting for mothers and fathers?

Methods

Procedure

- Interviews conducted during mothers' return to work (approx. 4 months postpartum) (T1) and one-year postpartum (T2).

Measures

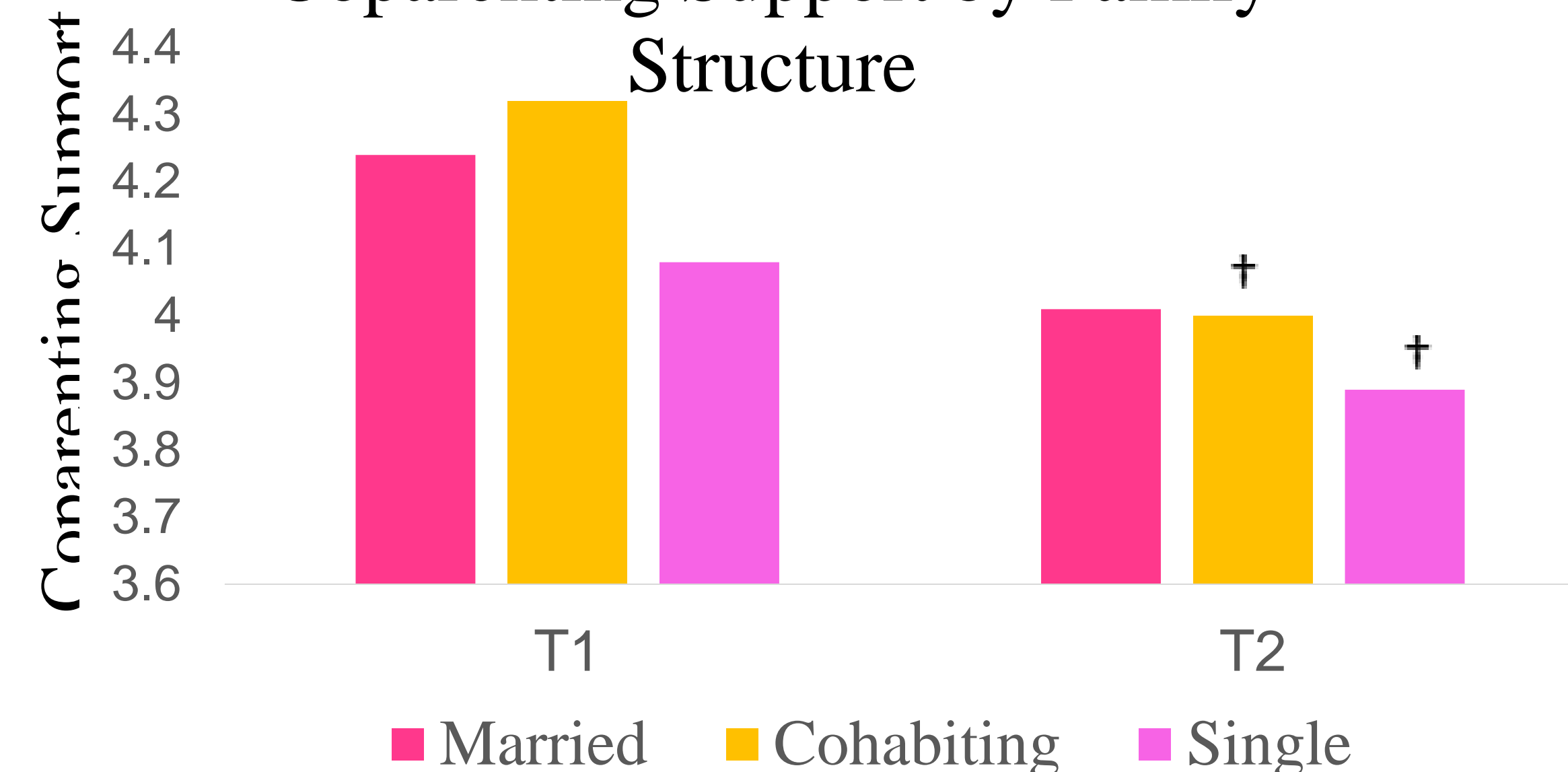
- **Family Support:** Perceived social support from family (T1 and T2)
- **Coparenting Conflict:** Disrespect and disagreement toward other parent's childrearing (T1 and T2)
- **Coparenting Support:** Positive affirmation toward other parent's childrearing ability (T1 and T2)

Participants

- 270 mothers and fathers from low-income families experiencing the transition to parenthood (25-28 years old)
- Family Structure: 20% married, 50% cohabiting, 30% single
- Race/Ethnicity: 38% White, 35% Latina, 20% African American, 6% Multiracial, 1% Asian.
- Median Income: \$35,000

Results & Discussion

Figure 1. Differences in Maternal Coparenting Support by Family Structure



#1: Coparenting support was marginally higher for cohabiting mothers ($M_{support} = 4.14$) compared to single mothers ($M_{support} = 3.69$) one-year postpartum ($F(2, 106) = 2.76, p = .07$).

Figure 2. Differences in Paternal Coparenting Conflict by Family Structure



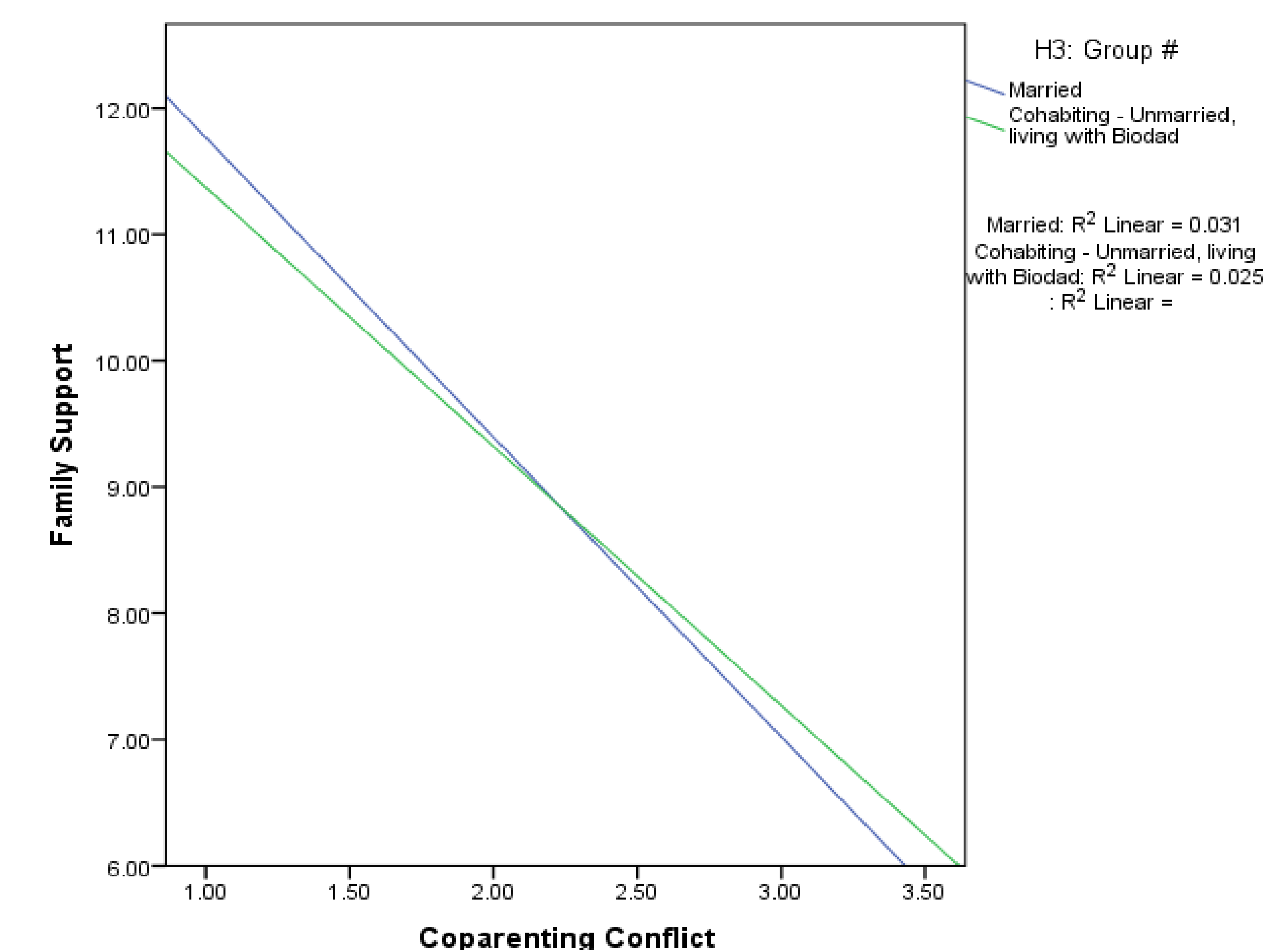
#1: Coparenting conflict was higher for cohabiting fathers ($M_{conflict} = 1.59$) compared to married fathers ($M_{conflict} = 1.34$) one-year postpartum ($F(1, 63) = 13.24, p = .001$).

Figure 3. Differences in Paternal Coparenting Support by Family Structure



#1: Married fathers ($M_{support} = 19.76$) experienced more coparenting support than cohabiting fathers ($M_{support} = 16.79$) after mothers' return to work ($F(1, 69) = 4.42, p = .04$).

Figure 4. Paternal Family Structure x Family Support Interaction on Coparenting Conflict



#2: Family support modified the relationship between family structure and coparenting conflict ($B = .07, t(69) = 4.42, p < .001$). Under conditions of high family support, married fathers have less coparenting conflict than cohabiting fathers. Under conditions of low family support, married fathers have more coparenting conflict than cohabiting fathers.