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Coparenting in the Family of Origin and New Parents' Couple Relationship Functioning

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To better understand the long-term implications of coparenting quality for adult child outcomes, we examined the associations between coparenting quality in the family of origin (Generation 1; G1), and attachment avoidance and anxiety and perceived relationship functioning of new parents (Generation 2; G2) using a dyadic approach. Dual-earner families expecting their first child (n = 182) were followed across the transition to parenthood and assessed at the third trimester of pregnancy (3T) and 9 months after childbirth (9M). At 3T, parents reported on the coparenting quality in their families of origin, and attachment avoidance and anxiety. At 9M, the participants reported their perceptions of couple relationship functioning—dyadic adjustment and negative interaction. We found that at 9M, G1's coparenting quality predicted not only G2's own perceptions but also G2's partners' perceptions of relationship functioning. Further, mediational analyses showed that parents' G1 coparenting quality was associated with higher G2 self- and partner-perceived dyadic adjustment and lower G2 self-perceived negative interaction through G2 parents' lower attachment anxiety and avoidance. G1 coparenting quality was negatively associated with G2 partner-perceived negative interaction through G2 parents' lower attachment anxiety. Our findings suggest that coparenting relationships have long-term implications for human development even into adulthood.

Keywords: coparenting quality in the family of origin, couple relationship functioning, attachment avoidance, attachment anxiety, actor–partner interdependence mediation model (APIMeM)

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Family systems theorists emphasize the importance of understanding families as "complex, integrated wholes" (Minuchin, 1988, p. 8). According to this perspective, the individual functioning of each family member cannot be fully understood without considering the interdependence of multiple subsystems within the family (Cox & Paley, 1997). The coparenting relationship, or the ways in which parents negotiate their parental roles and share responsibilities in rearing children (Talbot & McHale, 2004), has been identified as a key family subsystem that may influence children's psychological adjustment (Karreman, van Tuijl, van Aken, & Dekovic, 2008; Schoppe-Sullivan, Weldon, Cook, Davis, & Buckley, 2009; Umemura, Christopher, Mann, Jacobvitz, & Hazen, 2015). Less supportive, more undermining coparenting relationships are linked to psychological malfunctioning among children, whereas more supportive and cooperative coparenting relationships are associated with child psychological well-being (Schoppe, Mangelsdorf, & Frosch, 2001). Most coparenting studies, however, have focused on outcomes in early childhood. Adult outcomes of parental relationships have been relatively neglected (Feinberg, Kan, & Hetherington, 2007). The present study aims to understand whether and how coparenting quality in the family of origin (Generation 1; G1) is associated with adult children's outcomes (Generation 2; G2).

According to the life course theory (Elder, Johnson, & Crosnoe, 2003), human development is a lifelong process. Although historically the vast majority of research on human development has focused on the first 18 years of people's lives (i.e., infancy, toddlerhood, childhood, and adolescence), the developmental process does not end at that point. In fact, childhood experiences play a critical role in shaping developmental outcomes in adulthood (e.g., Edwards, Holden, Felitti, & Anda, 2003; Fergusson, McLeod, & Horwood, 2013; Takizawa, Maughan, & Arseneault, 2015).

Adopting a life course perspective is especially salient at life course turning points. At the transition to parenthood, new parents typically experience a sharp increase in unpaid household work when adjusting to the new parenting and coparenting roles (Yavorsky, Kamp Dush, & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2015). Moreover, the majority of new parents who are in couple relationships experience a drop in relationship satisfaction (Lawrence, Rothman, Cobb, Rothman, & Bradbury, 2008) and an increase in negative commu-

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nication across the transition to parenthood (Doss, Rhoades, Stanley, & Markman, 2009). Such declines in couple relationship functioning not only undermine new parents' adjustment at the transition to parenthood but are linked with an elevated risk for child maladjustment, such as poorer language abilities and more behavior problems (Berger & McLanahan, 2015; Goldberg & Carlson, 2014; Grych & Fincham, 1990).

Several empirical studies have identified family of origin experiences as antecedents of couple relationship functioning at the transition to parenthood. Perren, von Wyl, Bürgin, Simoni, and von Klitzing (2005), for example, found that negative G1 marriage quality was associated with a steeper drop in G2 couples' own marital quality from pregnancy to 1-year postpartum. Similarly, Curran, Hazen, Jacobvitz, and Feldman (2005) found that new parents with negative representations of marriage in their families of origin reported the sharpest decline in behaviors that maintain closeness with the romantic partner after the birth of the child. Prospective investigations also report similar findings: parental conflict and divorce in mothers' family of origin predicted a greater decline in relationship functioning after the birth of the child (Doss et al., 2009). However, no studies have investigated the association between G1 coparenting quality and G2 couple relationship functioning at the transition to parenthood. Because children are more directly involved in coparenting relationships than romantic relationships between their parents (Margolin, Gordis, & John, 2001), G1 coparenting relationships may be a better predictor of G2 adult children's relationship functioning than G1 romantic relationships.

The Potential Mediating Role of Adult Attachment

Attachment theories posit that in childhood, individuals develop expectations (i.e., internal working models) about relationships based on their experiences with their primary caregivers, who are usually their parents (Bowlby, 1982). These internal working models guide people's behaviors and perceptions in later relationships (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). A meta-analysis has shown that coparenting quality predicts parent–child attachment for children younger than 18 years of age, even after accounting for the effects of the marital relationship and individual parenting (Teubert & Pinquart, 2010). Loving, supportive, and cooperative coparenting relationships might promote security in children, especially when they form their own romantic relationships. The family of origin experiences gained from observing coparenting relationships in childhood may become scripts through which adult children perceive and develop couple relationships and coparenting relationships of their own. Adult children who perceived their own parents as supportive coparents may have lower attachment anxiety (i.e., worry about their relationships) and avoidance (i.e., discomfort with closeness and interdependence) with their romantic partners, whereas the children of undermining parents who frequently argued with each other about child-related issues may have higher attachment anxiety and avoidance with their romantic partners.

In turn, romantic attachment is pivotal to relationship functioning between romantic partners (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Mikulincer and Shaver (2012) reviewed the associations between adult attachment and relationship functioning, showing that attachment anxiety was associated with more signs of distress during couple conversations, higher levels of conflict, and greater concern about losing affection. Attachment avoidance was also associated with signs of poorer relationship functioning including fewer affectionate exchanges with one's partner, a greater tendency to avoid the partner, low conversational engagement, and fewer intimate disclosures (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2012). Additionally, the attachment style of one partner also affects the other partner's perception of the relationship. Individuals with a partner possessing a secure attachment style report higher levels of relationship quality (Feeney, 2016), whereas individuals with high anxiety, in particular, may be less skillful in maintaining mutual relationship satisfaction (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2012). Individuals with high avoidance or anxiety and their partners are therefore less likely to experience high-quality romantic relationships. Given the proposed association between G1 coparenting quality and G2 romantic attachment, as well as the well-established link between romantic attachment and couple relationship functioning, it is hypothesized that G2 adult romantic attachment will mediate the association between G1 coparenting quality and G2 new parents' couple relationship functioning.

The Current Study

The current study examined whether and how coparenting quality in the family of origin predicted new parents' own perception and their partners' perception of couple relationship functioning across the transition to parenthood from a dyadic perspective. The first goal of this study was to test G1 coparenting quality as a predictor of not only one's own—but also the partner's—perception of G2 couple relationship functioning during the transition to parenthood. Because both coparenting quality and couple relationship functioning indicate the quality of a relationship that involves at least two parties, and arguably relationship functioning is influenced by both partners (Hazan & Shaver, 1987), we expected that G1 coparenting quality would predict not only one's own, but also the partner's perception of G2 couple relationship functioning. Literature has been mixed regarding whether and how parental gender plays a role in the association between family of-origin experiences and relationship functioning (e.g., Doss et al., 2009; Perren et al., 2005). For example, Perren et al. (2005) showed that both women's and men's family of-origin marriage predicted G2 marital quality. Doss et al. (2009), however, found that family of-origin experiences only predicted women's but not men's relationship satisfaction. We therefore also tested for parent gender differences in the associations between G1 coparenting quality and one's own and one's partner's perception of G2 couple relationship functioning.

The second goal was to test adult romantic attachment as the mediating mechanism of the association between G1 coparenting quality and G2 couple relationship functioning. Two dimensions of romantic attachment were measured: avoidance and anxiety. The two dimensions were examined separately as mediators. We focused on two dimensions of couple relationship functioning: dyadic adjustment and negative interaction. These two dimensions were also examined separately. In addition, models were tested with potential gender differences in mind in light of findings that indicate that low relationship satisfaction is more closely associated with anxiety for women and avoidance for men (Feeney, 2016). Specifically, we tested the following two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: The G1 coparenting quality will positively predict both one's own and one's partner's perceived G2

couple relationship functioning across the transition to parenthood.

Hypothesis 2: The G1 coparenting quality will positively predict both one's own and one's partner's perceptions of G2 couple relationship functioning through its negative association with G2's own attachment avoidance and attachment anxiety. That is, new parents' coparenting quality in the family of origin will be negatively associated with their attachment avoidance and attachment anxiety, which will in turn be negatively associated with their own and their partner's perceptions of G2 couple relationship functioning.

Method

Participants

Data were drawn from a Midwestern U.S. longitudinal study of 182 different-sex dual-earner couples followed across the transition to parenthood from the third trimester through 9 months postpartum. Participants were recruited through advertising in childbirth education classes, local newspapers, health care centers, and local businesses, and participant referrals. Eligible participants had to be (a) currently married or cohabiting couples, (b) each expecting their first biological child without prior parenting experience, (c) at least 18 years of age, (d) fluent in English, (e) working for pay full time, and (f) expecting to return to paid work at least part-time after the birth of the child. At 9 months postpartum, 161 families continued to participate. Attrition (11.5%) was mainly due to families becoming too busy to continue participation.

Among 182 pairs of participating parents, 86.3% (157 pairs) were married couples, and the remaining (25 pairs) were cohabiting. At the third trimester of pregnancy (3T), the fathers' average age was 30.2 years old (ranged from 18 to 50, $SD = 4.81$), and the mothers' average age was 28.24 years old (ranged from 18 to 42, $SD = 4.02$). Sixty-five percent of expectant fathers and 75% of expectant mothers held at least a bachelor's degree. Eighty-six percent of fathers and 85.2% of mothers were European Americans. Of the remainder, 12 fathers (6.7%) identified themselves as African American, 6 (3.3%) as Asian American, 1 (0.6%) as Pacific Islander, 6 (3.3%) as other races, and 1 (0.6%) as mixed race, with the remaining two fathers refusing to respond. Eleven mothers (6%) identified themselves as African American, 5 (2.7%) as Asian American, 4 (2.2%) as other races, and 7 (3.8%) as mixed races. The median household income was $81,000. After the birth of the infant, 51% of the families reported the infant was a boy, and 49% of the families reported that they had a girl.

Procedures

Data were collected at two time points across the transition to parenthood from 2008 to 2009: during the third trimester of pregnancy (3T) and 9 months postpartum (9M). At 3T, mothers and fathers reported information about their romantic attachment and about their families of origin, as well as demographic information. At 9M, mothers and fathers completed surveys on their couple relationship functioning. The protocol was conducted in accordance with the university's institutional review board. Parents were compensated with cash and gifts for their participation.

Measures

Coparenting in the family of origin: The third trimester (3T). G1 coparenting quality was measured with the father's and mother's self-report on a 12-item scale developed and used by Stright and Bales (2003). Specifically, the existence of supportive and undermining coparenting in the expectant parents' families of origin was reported on a 5-point scale (1 = *never*, 5 = *always*). Of the 12 items, six measured supportive coparenting in the family of origin, which reflects warmth and cooperation in managing coparental roles (e.g., "my parents backed up one another when disciplining me"). The other six items measured undermining coparenting, which represents competition and displeasure in sharing parenting responsibilities (e.g., "my parents used parenting techniques that they knew the other did not want them to use"). The undermining items were reverse-scored when computing the total G1 coparenting quality score, which was used in the subsequent analyses. The measure displayed excellent ($\alpha = .95$ for mothers; $\alpha = .94$ for fathers) internal consistency in the current sample.

Romantic attachment: The third trimester (3T). G2 parents' romantic attachment was measured with fathers' and mothers' self-reports on the 36-item Experiences in Close Relationships questionnaire (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998) at 3T. This measure consists of two 18-item attachment subscales: Avoidance, which describes discomfort with closeness and depending on others (e.g., "I get uncomfortable when a romantic partner wants to be very close"), and anxiety, which indicates fear of rejection and/or abandonment (e.g., "I worry a lot about my relationships"). Participants were asked to respond on a 7-point scale (1 = *disagree strongly*, 7 = *agree strongly*). This questionnaire demonstrated good to excellent ($\alpha = .92$ for mother avoidance; $\alpha = .90$ for mother anxiety; $\alpha = .88$ for father avoidance; $\alpha = .90$ for father anxiety) internal consistency in the current sample.

Dyadic adjustment: 9 months postpartum (9M). G2 parents' perceptions of overall couple relationship quality were measured with the brief version of the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Sabourin, Valois, & Lussier, 2005), which asks respondents to rate how often (1 = *never*, 6 = *all of the time*) three situations occur within their relationship (e.g., "how often do you discuss or have you considered divorce, separation, or terminating your relationship?") as well as to report their overall happiness in the relationship (0 = *extremely unhappy*, 6 = *perfect*). The scale showed acceptable ($\alpha = .74$ for mothers; $\alpha = .78$ for fathers) internal consistency in the current sample.

Negative interaction: 9 months postpartum (9M). G2 fathers and mothers rated their perceptions of relationship conflict on the Negative Interaction Scale (Stanley, Markman, & Whitton, 2002), which asks respondents how often (1 = *never or almost never*, 3 = *frequently*) four negative situations occur in their relationship (e.g., "little arguments escalate into ugly fights with accusations, criticisms, name calling, or bringing up past hurts"). The scale showed acceptable ($\alpha = .72$ for mothers; $\alpha = .70$ for fathers) internal consistency in the current sample.

Analysis Plan

First, in preliminary analyses, we examined potential differences in outcome variables in terms of demographic information (e.g., parents' age, race, education level, child gender, and household income). We then examined missing data, the descriptive statistics, and zero-order correlations of all study variables in SPSS 23.0. Next, we tested a series of actor–partner interdependence models (APIM; Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006) to examine the association from G1 coparenting quality to new parents' own perception of G2 couple relationship functioning (actor effect) and to partner's perception of G2 couple relationship functioning (partner effect). Finally, actor–partner interdependence mediation models (APIMeM; Ledermann et al., 2011) were tested with path analysis to examine the second hypothesis that G2 romantic attachment (i.e., avoidance and anxiety) mediated the association from G1 coparenting quality to new parents' own perception of G2 couple relationship functioning (actor effect) and to partners' perception of G2 couple relationship functioning (partner effect).

We used AMOS 23.0 to estimate the model fits and path coefficients. A bias-corrected bootstrapping procedure based on 5,000 bootstrap samples was performed to estimate the indirect effects. Specifically, phantom models (Macho & Ledermann, 2011) were used to test the standard errors and the confidence intervals (CIs) around indirect effects in the APIMeMs. For model fit indices, we reported the model chi-square with its degrees of freedom and p value, Steiger-Lind root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA; Steiger, 1990) and its 90% CI, Bentler comparative fit index (CFI; Bentler, 1990), and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) of each model, as recommended by Kline (2015). The null hypothesis of the chi-square test was that the proposed matrices and sample matrices are the same. RMSEA values below .05, .08, and .10 were considered indicators of close, reasonable, and mediocre fit, respectively (Browne & Cudeck, 1992). For the 90% confidence intervals, lower values less than .05 and upper values less than .08 were considered ideal. CFI values greater than .95 and SRMR values less than .08 indicated good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). To determine whether the paths in the APIM and APIMeM models differed by parent gender, we then constrained the paths to be equal across parent gender and conducted chi-square difference tests.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

The preliminary analyses first examined potential differences by demographic variables (i.e., parents' age, race, education level, child gender, and household income) in G2 perceived couple relationship functioning at 9M. We found that mothers' education level was positively associated with fathers' dyadic adjustment at 9M ($r = .17$, $p = .04$). Household income was also positively associated with fathers' dyadic adjustment at 9M ($r = .18$, $p = .03$). Parents' age and child gender were not significantly associated with any of the study variables. The results of Analyses of variance did not reveal significant group differences in parental dyadic adjustment or negative interaction by parental race/ethnicity. Therefore, parental education level and household income were included as covariates in the following analyses, whereas parental age, child gender, and parental race were not.

The means, standard deviations, missing rates, and ranges of the study variables and covariates are presented in Table 1. Missing data were mainly due to the attrition in our longitudinal project and participants' refusal to answer certain questions. Attrition analyses showed that among all the collected demographic variables, only maternal education explained the attrition from the project. Families with more highly educated mothers were more likely to participate in data collection at 9M. Missing value analysis containing all variables in Table 1 showed that the data were missing completely at random (MCAR; Little's MCAR test $\chi^2(103) = 126.70$, $p > .05$). Therefore, we imputed the missing data with the expectation maximization method (Gold & Bentler, 2000) prior to the following analyses. The zero-order correlations of all study variables and covariates are shown in Table 2.

Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations, Missing Rates, and Ranges of the Study Variables

Variables	*N*	*M*	*SD*	Missing rate (%)	Minimum	Maximum
Mother reported						
Mother education level	182	5.86	1.37	.00	1.00	8.00
Household income	181	7.51	2.96	.50	1.00	11.00
CFO	168	3.78	.92	7.70	1.00	5.00
Avoidance	179	1.87	.80	1.60	1.00	4.39
Anxiety	180	3.10	1.06	1.10	1.00	6.33
9M NI	153	1.58	.43	15.90	1.00	3.00
9M DA	154	5.23	.56	15.40	3.00	6.00
Father reported						
Father education level	182	5.45	1.54	.00	1.00	8.00
CFO	163	3.94	.81	10.40	1.67	5.00
Avoidance	174	2.13	.71	4.40	1.00	4.39
Anxiety	175	2.64	1.01	3.80	1.00	5.61
9M NI	151	1.60	.43	17.00	1.00	3.00
9M DA	151	5.18	.59	17.00	2.75	6.00

Note. CFO = coparenting in the family of origin; 9M = 9 months postpartum; NI = negative interaction; DA = dyadic adjustment.

Table 2
Zero-Order Correlations of the Study Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Father education level	—											
2. Mother education level	.61***	—										
3. Household income	.54***	.51***	—									
4. Mother-Cfo	.15	.22**	.10	—								
5. Father-Cfo	.14	.05	.18*	−.01	—							
6. Mother-Avoid	−.16*	−.15*	−.15*	−.28***	−.05	—						
7. Mother-Anxiety	−.15*	−.07	−.13	−.26***	.02	.31***	—					
8. Father-Avoid	−.06	−.01	−.08	−.10	−.25**	.10	.09	—				
9. Father-Anxiety	.02	.02	−.06	−.10	−.13	.04	.07	.40***	—			
10. Mother-NI-9M	−.14	−.12	−.13	−.10	−.18*	.10	.24**	.15	.19*	—		
11. Mother-DA-9M	.11	.09	.11	.17*	.21*	−.32***	−.18*	−.20*	−.22**	−.58***	—	
12. Father-NI-9M	−.06	.01	−.04	−.20*	−.12	−.02	.22**	.27***	.40***	.40***	−.33***	—
13. Father-DA-9M	.15	.17*	.18*	.23**	.12	−.19*	−.16	−.38***	−.30***	−.42***	.51***	−.44***

Note. Cfo = coparenting in the family of origin; Avoid = attachment avoidance; NI = negative interaction; DA = dyadic adjustment; 9M = 9 months postpartum.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Data Analyses

Actor–partner interdependence models (APIM). We fit two APIMs with G1 coparenting quality predicting G2's own and partners' perceived dyadic adjustment and negative interaction at 9M (see Figure 1). In the unconstrained model (see Figure 1a), new parents' dyadic adjustment at 9M was positively predicted by both one's own and partners' G1 coparenting, except for the path from fathers' G1 coparenting quality to fathers' G2 dyadic adjustment. The model demonstrated good fit, $\chi^2(2) = 2.54$, $p = .28$; RMSEA = .04; RMSEA 90% CI [.00, .16]; CFI = 1.00; SRMR = .02. Father-perceived negative interaction at 9M was negatively predicted by mothers' G1 coparenting quality, and mother-perceived negative interaction was negatively predicted by fathers' G1 coparenting quality. The actor effects for negative interaction were not significant. The model demonstrated good fit, $\chi^2(2) = 2.19$, $p = .34$; RMSEA = .02; RMSEA 90% CI [.00, .15]; CFI = 1.00; SRMR = .02.

In the constrained model, where the actor effects of fathers and mothers were treated as equal, and the partner effects of fathers and mothers were also constrained as equal (see Figure 1b), new parents' G1 coparenting quality predicted both one's own and partners' G2 relationship functioning. Both models demonstrated good fit (dyadic adjustment model: $\chi^2(4) = 2.88$, $p = .58$; RMSEA = .00; RMSEA 90% CI [.00, .15]; CFI = 1.00; SRMR = .02; negative interaction model: $\chi^2(4) = 2.42$, $p = .66$; RMSEA = .00; RMSEA 90% CI [.00, .10]; CFI = 1.00; SRMR = .02). The results of chi-square difference

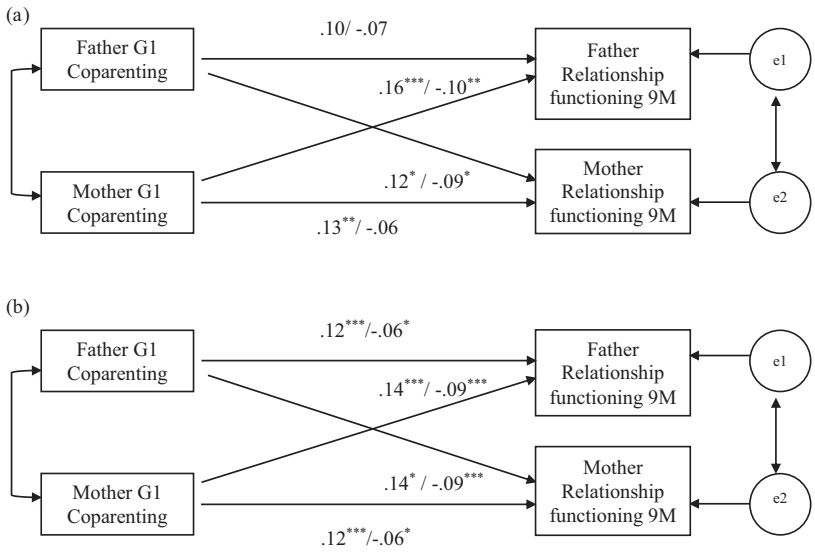

Figure 1. Unstandardized coefficients of the unconstrained (a) and constrained (b) actor–partner interdependence models (APIM) for coparenting in the family of origin and relationship quality at 9 Months (9M). The numbers before the "/" are coefficients for dyadic adjustment models, whereas the numbers after the "/" are coefficients for negative interaction models. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

tests showed that actor and partner effects examined in the model did not differ by parent gender (dyadic adjustment model: $\chi^2(2) = 0.34$, $p = .84$; negative interaction model: $\chi^2(2) = 0.23$, $p = .89$).

Actor–partner interdependence mediation models (APIMeM). We next fit four APIMeMs to examine if G2 romantic attachment (i.e., avoidance and anxiety) mediated the actor and partner effects of G1 coparenting quality on G2's own and their partners' perception of couple relationship functioning (i.e., dyadic adjustment and negative interaction) at 9M. The point estimates and 95% bootstrapped CIs of each total effect, direct effect, and indirect effect in the tested models are presented in Tables 3 and 4. We reported the path coefficient estimates for the both constrained models in Figures 2 and 3. The fully specified diagrams for the constrained and unconstrained Actor–partner Interdependence Mediation Models and the unstandardized path coefficients of the unconstrained models are available as supplemental materials.

Avoidance as a mediator predicting dyadic adjustment. A chi-square difference test showed that the equality constraints across parent gender did not worsen model fit $\chi^2(5) = 5.02$; $p = .41$. Therefore, the paths did not differ by parent gender. The results of indirect effects analyses fully supported attachment avoidance as a mediator for both actor and partner effects (see Table 3: constrained model). The unstandardized path coefficients are shown in Figure 2 as per recommendations of Kenny et al. (2006). The model displayed good fit, $\chi^2(15) = 13.81$; $p = .54$; RMSEA = .00; RMSEA 90% CI [.00, .07]; CFI = 1.00; SRMR = .05. New parents' G1 coparenting quality was negatively associated with their own attachment avoidance ($B = -0.25$, $p < .001$), which was in turn negatively associated with both their own dyadic adjustment ($B = -0.26$, $p < .001$) and partners' dyadic adjustment ($B = -0.10$, $p < .01$). In addition, parents' attachment avoidance mediated the association between G1 coparenting quality and their own G2 dyadic adjustment (indirect actor effect; point estimate = .06, 95% BCa CI [.04, .11]), as well as partner's dyadic adjustment (indirect partner effect; point estimate = .03, 95% BCa CI [.01, .06]).

Anxiety as a mediator predicting dyadic adjustment. A chi-square difference test showed that the equality constraints by parent gender did not worsen model fit, $\chi^2(5) = 1.02$; $p = .94$. Therefore, the paths did not differ by parent gender. The results of indirect effects analyses fully supported attachment anxiety as a mediator for both actor and partner effects (see Table 4: constrained model). The unstandardized path coefficients are shown in Figure 3. The model displayed good fit, $\chi^2(15) = 16.30$; $p = .36$; RMSEA = .02; RMSEA 90% CI [.00, .08]; CFI = 1.00; SRMR = .04. New parents' G1 coparenting quality was negatively associated with G2 parents' own attachment anxiety ($B = -0.25$, $p < .001$), which was in turn negatively associated with both their own dyadic adjustment ($B = -0.10$, $p < .001$) and their partner's dyadic adjustment ($B = -0.06$, $p = .03$). In addition, G2 parents' attachment anxiety mediated the association between their G1 coparenting quality and G2 parents' own dyadic adjustment (indirect actor effect; point estimate = .03, 95% BCa CI [.01, .06]), as well as their partner's dyadic adjustment (indirect partner effect; point estimate = .02, 95% BCa CI [.002, .04]).

Avoidance as a mediator predicting negative interaction. A chi-square difference test showed that the equality constraints by parent gender did not worsen model fit, $\chi^2(5) = 5.26$; $p = .38$. Therefore, the paths did not differ by parent gender. The results of indirect effects analyses provided support for attachment avoidance as a mediator only for the actor, but not for the partner effect (see Table 3: constrained model). The unstandardized path coefficients are shown in Figure 2. The model displayed good fit, $\chi^2(15) = 12.50$; $p = .64$; RMSEA = .00; RMSEA 90% CI [.00,

Table 3
Results From Actor–Partner Interdependence Model Predicting Relationship Quality: Attachment Avoidance as the Mediator

	Constrained model					Unconstrained model			
	Dyadic adjustment		Negative interaction			Dyadic adjustment		Negative interaction	
Effect	Estimate and 95% CI	*p*	Estimate and 95% CI	*p*	Effect	Estimate and 95% CI	*p*	Estimate and 95% CI	*p*
Father actor effect					Actor effect				
Total effect	.10 (−.004, .20)	.06	−.07 (−.15, .003)	.06	Total effect	**.12**** **(.04, .19)**	.002	**−.06*** **(−.12, −.01)**	.02
Indirect effect	**.08***** **(.03, .15)**	<.001	**−.03***** **(−.07, −.01)**	<.001	Indirect effect	**.06***** **(.04, .11)**	<.001	**−.02**** **(−.07, −.04)**	.003
Direct effect	.02 (−.09, .12)	.70	−.04 (−.12, .04)	.38	Direct effect	.05 (−.02, .13)	.17	−.04 (−.10, .01)	.12
Mother actor effect									
Total effect	.13** (.03, .23)	.01	−.05 (−.13, .02)	.15					
Indirect effect	**.05**** **(.02, .11)**	.001	−.01 (−.03, .01)	.50					
Direct effect	.08 (−.02, .19)	.13	−.04 (−.12, .03)	.23					
Father-to-mother partner effect					Partner effect				
Total effect	**.12*** **(.02, .23)**	.02	−.08 (−.18, .004)	.06	Total effect	**.13**** **(.06, .21)**	.001	**−.09**** **(−.15, −.03)**	.003
Indirect effect	**.03*** **(.001, .07)**	.04	−.02 (−.05, .002)	.09	Indirect effect	**.03**** **(.01, .06)**	.002	−.003 (−.02, .01)	.65
Direct effect	.09 (−.01, .20)	.07	−.07 (−.17, .03)	.17	Direct fefect	**.11**** **(.03, .19)**	.005	**−.09**** **(−.15, −.03)**	.005
Mother-to-father partner effect									
Total effect	**.14*** **(.03, .24)**	.01	**−.09*** **(−.16, −.02)**	.01					
Indirect effect	**.03*** **(.001, .07)**	.05	.01 (−.01, .03)	.27					
Direct effect	**.11*** **(.01, .22)**	.03	**−.10*** **(−.17, −.03)**	.01					

Note. Estimate = point estimate; 95% CI = 95% bootstrapped confidence intervals. The bold values highlighted the significant effects.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 4
Results From Actor–Partner Interdependence Model Predicting Relationship Quality: Attachment Anxiety as the Mediator

	Constrained model					Unconstrained model			
	Dyadic adjustment		Negative interaction			Dyadic adjustment		Negative interaction	
Effect	Estimate and 95% CI	*p*	Estimate and 95% CI	*p*	Effect	Estimate and 95% CI	*p*	Estimate and 95% CI	*p*
Father actor effect					Actor effect				
Total effect	**.10* (−.001, .2)**	.03	**−.07* (−.15, −.002)**	.04	Total effect	**.12** (.05, .20)**	.002	**−.06* (−.11, −.01)**	.02
Indirect effect	**.03* (.002, .07)**	.03	−.03† (−.07, .001)	.05	Indirect effect	**.03** (.01, .06)**	.002	**−.03*** (−.05, −.01)**	<.001
Direct effect	.08 (−.03, .18)	.11	−.05 (−.12, .03)	.22	Direct effect	**.09* (.10, .18)**	.03	−.03 (−.09, .02)	.21
Mother actor effect									
Total effect	**.12* (.03, .23)**	.01	−.05 (−.12, .02)	.18					
Indirect effect	.02 (−.01, .06)	.13	**−.02* (−.06, −.003)**	.02					
Direct effect	.10† (−.01, .22)	.08	−.02 (−.11, .05)	.49					
Father to mother partner effect					Partner effect				
Total effect	**.13* (.04, .23)**	.01	**−.09* (−.18, −.01)**	.04	Total effect	**.14*** (.06, .22)**	<.001	**−.09** (−.14, −.04)**	.001
Indirect effect	.02* (.001, .06)	.05	−.01† (−.04, 0)	.05	Indirect effect	**.02* (.002, .04)**	.02	**−.02*** (−.03, −.01)**	<.001
Direct effect	**.11* (.02, .21)**	.02	−.08† (−.17, .01)	.07	Direct effect	**.13** (.05, .21)**	.003	**−.07** (−.13, −.02)**	.008
Mother to father partner effect									
Total effect	**.14* (.03, .25)**	.02	**−.08* (−.15, −.01)**	.02					
Indirect effect	.01 (−.02, .04)	.59	**−.02* (−.05, −.003)**	.01					
Direct effect	**.14* (.02, .25)**	.05	−.06† (−.13, .01)	.07					

Note. Estimate = point estimate; 95% CI = 95% bootstrapped confidence intervals. The bold values highlighted the significant effects.
† $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

.06]; CFI = 1.00; SRMR = .04. Parents' G1 coparenting quality was negatively associated with parents' G2 attachment avoidance ($B = -0.25$, $p < .001$), which was in turn positively associated with their own perception of negative interaction ($B = 0.08$, $p < .01$), but not with their partner's perceptions of negative interaction ($B = 0.01$, $p = .70$). In addition, G2 parents' attachment avoidance mediated the association between G1 coparenting quality and their own G2 perception of negative interaction (indirect actor effect;

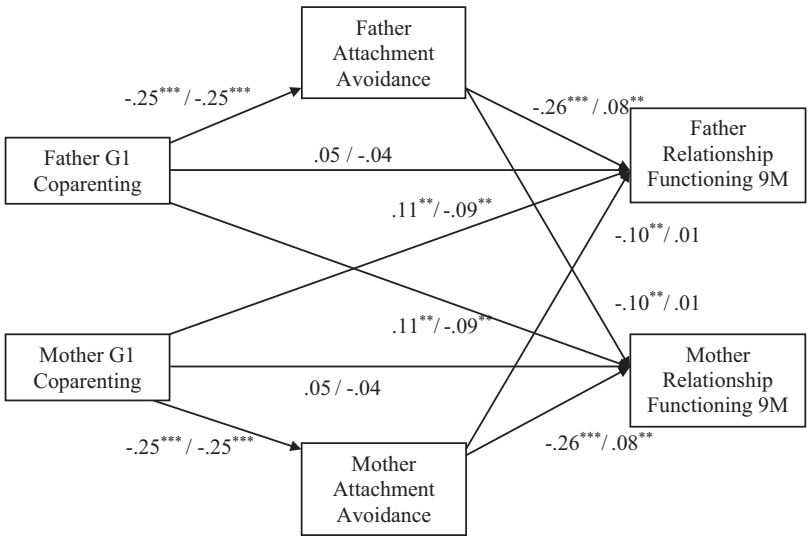

Figure 2. Unstandardized coefficients of the constrained actor–partner interdependence mediation model (APIMeM) for Generation (G1) coparenting quality, Generation 2 (G2) adult attachment avoidance, and G2 couple relationship functioning at 9 months (9M) postpartum. This model controlled for both parents' education levels and the household income, the effects of which were all nonsignificant. For ease of interpretation, covariance coefficients between error terms and exogenous variables are not presented. The numbers before the "/" are coefficients for dyadic adjustment models, whereas the numbers after the "/" are coefficients for negative interaction models. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

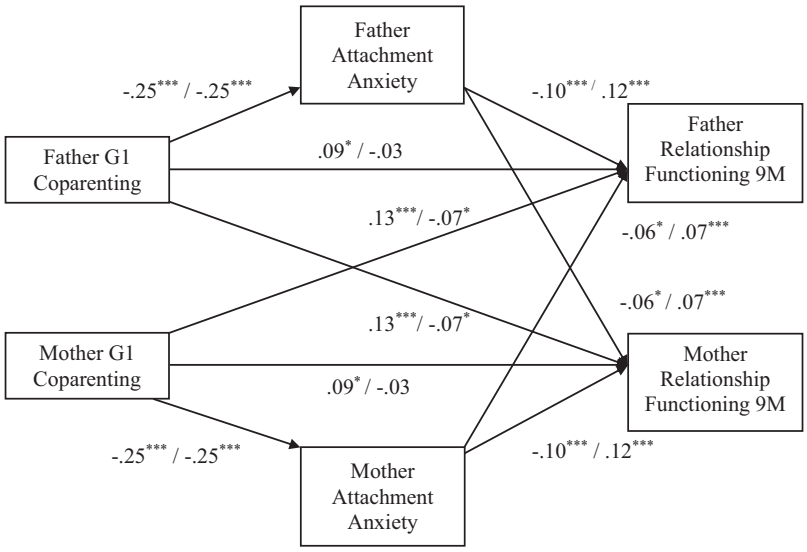

Figure 3. Unstandardized coefficients of the constrained actor–partner interdependence mediation model (APIMeM) for Generation 1 (G1) coparenting quality, Generation 2 (G2) adult attachment anxiety, and G2 couple relationship functioning at 9 months (9M) postpartum. This model controlled for both parents' education levels and the household income, the effects of which were all nonsignificant. For ease of interpretation, covariance coefficients between error terms and exogenous variables are not presented. The numbers before the "/" are coefficients for dyadic adjustment models, whereas the numbers after the "/" are coefficients for negative interaction models. * $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

point estimate = −.02, 95% BCa CI [−.07, −.04]). In contrast, the indirect partner effect through attachment avoidance was not significant (point estimate = −.003, 95% BCa CI [−.02, .01]).

Anxiety as a mediator predicting negative interaction. A chi-square difference test showed that the equality constraints across parent gender did not worsen model fit, $\chi^2(5) = 5.64$; $p = .34$. Therefore, the paths did not differ by parent gender. The results of indirect effects analyses consistently supported attachment anxiety as a mediator for both actor and partner effects (see Table 4: constrained model). The unstandardized path coefficients are shown in Figure 3. The model displayed good fit, $\chi^2(15) = 16.35$; $p = .36$; RMSEA = .02; RMSEA 90% CI [.00, .08]; CFI = 1.00; SRMR = .04. Parents' G1 coparenting quality was negatively associated with G2 parents' attachment anxiety ($B = -0.25$, $p < .001$), which was in turn positively associated with both their own perceptions of negative interaction ($B = 0.12$, $p < .001$) and G2 partner-reported negative interaction ($B = 0.07$, $p < .001$). In addition, G2 parents' attachment anxiety mediated the association between parents' G1 coparenting quality and their own perception of negative interaction (indirect actor effect; point estimate = −.03, 95% BCa CI [−.05, −.01]), as well as their partner's report of negative interaction (indirect partner effect; point estimate = −.02, 95% BCa CI [−.03, −.01]).

Discussion

Although it has been well established that coparenting relationship quality predicts child developmental outcomes (Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2009; Umemura et al., 2015), the current study expanded existing knowledge by investigating the associations between coparenting relationships in the family of origin and adult outcomes. Specifically, we found that G1 coparenting relationship quality predicted G2 parents' and their partners' perceived couple relationship functioning at 9 months after the birth of the couple's first child. We further identified attachment avoidance and anxiety as mediators of these associations. Parents' G1 coparenting relationship quality was positively associated with their own and their partner's perceptions of dyadic adjustment at G2 through its negative associations with G2 parents' attachment avoidance and anxiety. New parents' G1 coparenting quality was negatively associated with their own G2 negative interaction through its negative association with parents' attachment avoidance and anxiety. New parents' G1 coparenting quality was negatively associated with their partner's perceptions of negative interaction at G2 through its negative association with parent's own attachment anxiety. No gender differences were observed in the associations among coparenting in the family of origin, attachment (i.e., anxiety and avoidance), and relationship functioning (i.e., dyadic adjustment and negative interaction).

Our first hypothesis was that coparenting quality in the family of origin for each parent would predict both their own and their partners' relationship quality across the transition to parenthood. This hypothesis was supported. At 9 months postpartum, all actor and partner effects were significant; G1 coparenting quality was associated with the G2 perceived relationship functioning of not only the corresponding adult child, but also the partner of that adult child. No gender differences were found, indicating that the effect of G1 coparenting quality on G2 relationship satisfaction was similar for mothers and fathers, which is consistent with Perren et al. (2005). This is also in keeping with the findings of a recent meta-analysis that reported that the effect of gender on the associations between attachment anxiety and avoidance and relationship quality was weak (Li & Chan, 2012).

Our second hypothesis was that new mothers' and fathers' attachment avoidance and anxiety would mediate the association between one's own coparenting quality in the family of origin and both one's own and one's partner's perceived relationship quality. The results fully supported G2 attachment anxiety as a mediator for both the actor and partner effect of G1 coparenting on G2 dyadic adjustment and negative interaction. When partners reported lower levels of G1 coparenting quality, it was associated with higher G2 anxiety, which was in turn associated with lower reports of relationship satisfaction and higher reports of negative interaction. Attachment avoidance mediated the positive associations between G1 coparenting and G2 self- and partner-perceived dyadic adjustment and the negative association between G1 coparenting and G2 self-perceived negative interaction, but not partner-perceived negative interaction. These findings support attachment theory in that they illustrate the mechanisms by which attachment may play out in the family over generations.

Previous work has supported the idea that coparenting quality is related to parent–child attachment (Brown, Schoppe-Sullivan, Mangelsdorf, & Neff, 2010). Attachment theory suggests that these early parent–child attachment relationships help to establish an internal working model for future close relationships (Bowlby, 1982). Thus, a high-quality coparenting relationship in the family of origin likely influences the attachment style of the child, even as an adult. This attachment style, in turn, not only affects one's own perceptions of the couple relationship, but also affects one's partner's experiences of the relationship. Individuals whose partners have secure attachment styles, or lower levels of avoidance and anxiety, report higher levels of relationship quality (Feeney, 2016; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2012). Our findings certainly support the existence of such a process. When coparenting quality in the family of origin is high, the adult child is less likely to form an anxious or avoidant attachment style, which in turn affects not only the adult child's perception of couple relationship functioning, but also their partner's perception of couple relationship functioning.

One aspect of the mediation models that is worth further explanation is that attachment anxiety mediated both the actor effect and partner effects for negative interaction, whereas avoidance only mediated the actor effect. In other words, attachment anxiety was more closely linked to the partner's perceptions of negative interaction in the couple relationship than was attachment avoidance. An anxious attachment style is characterized by sought contact with the attachment figure, and is therefore associated with higher levels of conflict (Campbell, Simpson, Boldry, & Kashy, 2005; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2012). Those with higher attachment anxiety may elicit negative behavior from their partners because of their needy and demanding behaviors. Therefore, not only individuals with high attachment anxiety themselves, but also their partners, would perceive higher levels of negative interactions. In contrast, those with higher attachment avoidance, by virtue of their tendency to detach themselves emotionally from their partners, are characterized by less satisfaction in their couple relationships (Molero, Shaver, Ferrer, Cuadrado, & Alonso-Arbiol, 2011; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2012). They might also perceive a higher level of negative interaction themselves due to their personal preference for physical and emotional distancing (Feeney, 2016), but they do not necessarily tend to elicit more negative interactions, or have higher levels of partner-perceived negative interactions.

Some limitations of this study should be considered. First, we relied on a retrospective self-report measure of coparenting in the family of origin, which may compromise the reliability of our results. Memories of one's experiences in the family of origin can be shaped by later life events and participants' own characteristics, and may not necessarily be accurate. In particular, the recollection may be shaped by the attachment style. The correlational nature of this study does not allow us to make definite claims regarding directions of associations or draw causal conclusions. Second, all constructs were assessed via the same method—self-report surveys. Thus, path coefficients for actor effects may be overestimated due to single-reporter bias. Third, our sample comprised mostly middle class, European American families, which was not representative of the general population of new parents in the United States. Future research examining the generalizability of these findings in other samples is encouraged. Fourth, in order to distinguish the indirect effect through attachment anxiety from the indirect effect through attachment avoidance, the mediating roles of anxiety and avoidance were tested separately in different models. However, by testing anxiety and avoidance in separate models we were unable to draw conclusions regarding the relative importance of one mediator over the other.

Guided by family systems theory (Cox & Paley, 1997), life course theory (Elder et al., 2003), and attachment theory (Bowlby, 1982), this study expanded our understanding of the adult outcomes of coparenting relationships by testing the associations between coparenting in the family of origin and the couple relationship functioning of adult children. Moreover, instead of ending our inquiry at examining these direct associations, we proceeded to identify potential mechanisms underpinning these associations by testing indirect effects via attachment avoidance and anxiety. Taken together, our findings reveal the important role of coparenting relationships in attachment relationships and human development, even after children transition to adulthood and start their own families.

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