

AN EXPLORATION OF THE INFLUENCE OF THE
COPARENTING RELATIONSHIP ON POST-DIVORCE
FATHERHOOD AND WELLBEING

By

JEREMIAH E. GRISSETT

Bachelor of Arts in Pastoral Christian Ministries with an
Emphasis in Youth Ministry
Oral Roberts University
Tulsa, Oklahoma
2010

Master of Science in Marriage and Family Therapy
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, Oklahoma
2015

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Oklahoma State University
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Dissertation Approved:

Matt Brosi PhD

Dissertation Adviser

Nathan Hardy PhD

Brandt Gardner PhD

Amanda Baraldi PhD

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Abstract: Previous research has examined factors that influence fathers' involvement with their children following a divorce, but few have explored how these factors are related to one another. Key variables found to predict father involvement including divorce factors, influence of others, post-divorce adjustment, parenting factors, and the coparenting relationship were utilized for this study. The purpose of this investigation is to explore the correlational relationships among these key variables utilizing path analysis to examine multiple relationships among the key variables within the same model. Theoretical frameworks from family systems theory and role and findings from previous empirical literature were utilized in the formation of this model, which was explored using path analysis with a sample of 124 divorced fathers who had recently completed a coparenting education class. Key findings include direct effects between the influence of others, specifically the fathers' perception of their child's desire for the father to be in the child's life, and fathers' parental self-efficacy, value of father role, and self-esteem, and between legal process satisfaction and perceived stress. Indirect effects were found for the relationships between fathers' perception of their coparents' desire for the father to be in the child's life and value of father role and perceived stress through cooperative coparenting and coparenting efficacy respectively. Additionally, legal process satisfaction and pre-divorce conflict were found to have indirect effects on value of father role through cooperative coparenting. Implications for coparenting education, legal support, and clinical work with divorced fathers is discussed and directions for future research are presented.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

With demographers estimating that nearly half of marriages in the United States will end in divorce (Kennedy & Ruggles, 2014), researchers have worked to better understand how divorce impacts both parents and children. Much of the work has been conducted to best understand how to protect the children subjected to divorce from the potential negative impacts (see Demo & Fine, 2017, for a review). With that work, continued involvement from both parents has been identified as one of the most important protective factors for children of divorce (Barber & Demo, 2006). Meta-analyses of the research on nonresidential father involvement have found positive forms of father involvement to be associated with increased child wellbeing (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999; Adamsons & Johnson, 2013). Adamsons and Johnson (2013) found certain types of father involvement had greater influence on child wellbeing, specifically involvement in child-related activities, having positive father-child relationships, and engaging in multiple forms of involvement (e.g., in-person, text messages, phone calls). Despite all of these positive effects of father involvement, nonresidential father involvement has been found to decline over time post divorce (King et al., 2004; McNamee et al., 2014). This issue is complex and understanding why father involvement changes so much has been a

focus of many researchers over the past several decades.

In 1993, Ihinger-Tallman and colleagues published their mid-range theory of father involvement post-divorce, which has gone to be cited in over 300 published works. In their theory, Ihinger-Tallman and colleagues (1993) propose “the key element in father involvement postdivorce is the degree of a father’s identification with the status and roles associated with being a parent” (p. 551). They go on to propose the following variables as potential moderators of the relationship between fathers’ parenting role identity and father involvement: mother’s preferences and beliefs, father’s perceptions of mother’s parenting skills, father’s emotional stability, mother’s emotional stability, sex of child, coparental relationship—competition and cooperation, father economic well-being and employment stability, and encouragement from others (Ihinger-Tallman, Pasley, & Buehler, 1993).

Stone and McKenry (1998) tested and expanded Ihinger-Tallman’s (1993) theory of nonresidential father involvement and conceptualized that role clarity, satisfaction with the legal system, joint custody, time since divorce, and father’s perception of their relationship with their child would additionally play a role in father involvement. In their analyses, Stone and McKenry (1998) tested the moderating variables Ihinger-Tallman and colleagues (1993) proposed in the original model and found no statistical significance to support the moderations. However, the following variables were found to have both direct and indirect effects on father involvement: role clarity and child relationship quality. Furthermore, direct effects were found for father parenting role identity, joint custody, and satisfaction with the legal system and mediator effects were found for father parenting role identity.

Working from these two seminal works, many other researchers have continued to explore father involvement post-divorce in order to further understand this phenomenon.

Some of the research, for example, found that nonresidential fathers reported feeling less competent in their fathering role than residential fathers, however fathers who reported feeling more competent were more likely to be more involved than those who did not (Minton & Pasley, 1996). Another aspect that has been explored include factors related to the coparenting relationship; ongoing conflict with coparent, greater geographical distance from child, and lack of clarity in father role were found to be related to lower levels of father involvement (Leite & McKenry, 2001, 2006). Additional key variables have been identified in the research literature as impacting post-divorce father involvement including: *Parental Self-Efficacy* (e.g., Murdock, 2013; Sevigny et al., 2016); *Father's Desire to be in the child's life and Others' Desire for him to be in the child's life* (e.g., Hallman et al., 2007; Bastaits & Mortelmans, 2017); *Adjustment after Divorce* (e.g., Kruk, 2010; Willén, 2015); *Divorce Legal Process* (e.g., Arditti & Kelly, 1994; Köppen et al., 2018); and the *Coparenting Relationship* (e.g., Ahrons & Miller, 1993; Viry, 2014). Additional variables in the divorce process that may be of note are *Pre-Divorce Conflict* (e.g., Amato & Hohmann-Marriot, 2007; Maccoby et al., 1990) and *Initiation of Divorce* (e.g., Baum, 2003; Arditti & Kelly, 1994).

With all of this information regarding father involvement, what is missing from the research is an examination of how the predictors of involvement might be related to one another and how they are developed and subsequently predict positive father involvement following divorce or separation. While statistical relationships between some of these variables have already been identified in previous literature, these relationships are limited to explorations of pairs of these items. The purpose of this study is to explore the correlational relationships among these key variables utilizing path analysis to examine multiple

relationships among the multiple variables within the same model. Using theoretical frameworks from systems theory and role theory and findings from previous empirical literature, a model of post-divorce adjustment for fathers will be identified and tested.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Overview of Theory

There are two theories that will be used to support the proposed model for this study. The first is role theory which was chosen due it being a common theory utilized in fatherhood research for decades. The second is family systems theory as it has identified a framework through which this researcher can more clearly outline the relationships of influence among the chosen variables.

Role Theory

The core concept of role theory is that people “behave in ways that are different and predictable depending on their respective social identities and the situation” (Biddle, 1986, p. 68). This implies that there are characteristics, behaviors, and expectations for given social positions and the person in these positions has the choice to act out their given role. There is disagreement in the social sciences about the process through which role expectations are created (see Biddle, 1986 for overview), however the understanding that the roles either chosen or placed upon someone influence how one interacts with the world around them is generally agreed upon.

Previous research has utilized role theory to further understand parenting behaviors and decisions, particularly for parents after divorce (e.g., Ihinger-Tallman, et al., 1993; Stone & McKenry, 1998). Role theory is of particular interest to this study on divorced fathers as they are going through a period of role shifting and changing. When married with children, fathers fulfill the spouse/partner/coparent role to their spouses and fulfill the father role for their children. After divorce or separation, fathers' roles shift to distant coparent and often nonresidential father. Fathers must then choose to fully take on the responsibilities of these new roles or allow the expectations of these new roles to go unmet. This is where the four key concepts of role theory come into play for the father: Consensus, Conformity, Role Conflict, and Role Taking (Biddle, 1986). Consensus occurs when the person taking on or being placed in the role agrees with the expectations they and others have for them in that role. Conformity is the process where someone adjusts their expectations of their role and complies with the expected responsibilities of that role. Role conflict exists when consensual expectations for the responsibilities and behaviors of a role do not exist amongst those involved. Role taking is the act of stepping into and taking on a role established by others; success for this process is often determined by the accuracy with which someone interprets others' expectations for a role and enacts them (Biddle, 1986).

This study hopes to extend the previous research by examining the relationships between predictors of father involvement through the theoretical framework of role theory. Doing so will create further understanding of divorced fathers' efforts to fulfill the expectations set for them in their evolving fathering roles after divorce.

Family Systems Theory

Systems theory was originally developed as a universal theory to span multiple scientific disciplines in order to explain the relationships and behaviors of objects within a system (i.e., objects that share relationships and attributes with one another; Bavelas & Segal, 1982). In the 1950's, a group of psychiatrists and psychologists began applying systems theory to their conceptualizations of families in which a member was diagnosed with schizophrenia and thus family systems theory was born (Bavelas & Segal, 1982). Family systems theory proposes that family systems are organized and maintained via communication that occurs within the system. This concept fits well with role theory in that the communication discussed in family systems theory is the mechanism through which expectations of roles are identified.

Family systems theory has identified three characterizations of family systems: (a) wholeness and order (i.e., the whole is great than the sum of its parts and has properties that cannot be understood simply from the combined characteristics of each part), (b) hierarchical structure (i.e., a family is composed of subsystems that are systems in and of themselves), and (c) adaptive self-organization (i.e., a family as an open, living system, can adapt to change or challenges). (Cox & Paley, 2003, p. 193)

Understanding that family systems are greater than the sum of the individuals in the family outlines the pattern of influence that occurs within a system. The consequences of one member's behavior does not simply impact that one person but rather the family system as a whole. How a family system responds is determined by their feedback patterns as they attempt to maintain homeostasis (Bavelas & Segal, 1982).

Family systems naturally organize themselves into subsystems based on similarities and attributes such as parent and child subsystems. This was first realized when family therapists noticed that problems between the parent and child often impacted the relationship between the parents; further examination recognized that poor parent-child relationships often formed in family systems where the marriage relationship experienced high levels of distress (Cox & Paley, 2003). This naturally structured nature of family systems leads researchers to conceive that families function best when this structure is protected. This however does not mean that families need to stay together to function well; there can still be healthy structure in a divorced family that produces healthy and effective communication.

Family systems are adaptive and self-preserving, meaning that family systems will pursue homeostasis when possible, even developing maladaptive patterns in the process. Families exist along the lifespan, thus they will experience many expected and unexpected transitions (Cox & Paley, 2003). Understanding this helps to conceptualize that families experiencing divorce would seek ways to preserve functioning wherever possible. Specifically, this plays out in fathers' efforts to find balance in their adjustment process to maintain their personal wellbeing and their ability to fulfill their fathering roles. Overall, family systems theory provides insight into the interactions and patterns of families and theoretical constructs through which this study hopes to better understand the divorce process for fathers; additionally, family system theory has been used in research for decades to understand such family processes (e.g. Beal, 1979; Amato, Kane, & James, 2011).

Outcome Variables

This literature review highlights how each of the outcome, predictor, and mediator variables have been found to be related to father involvement with children through past empirical research or connecting them through theory. The outcome variables in the study have been grouped into two categories, parenting factors and adjustment factors. The parenting factors included in this study are parental self-efficacy, value of father role, and father's desire to be in child's life. The adjustment factors included in this study are self-esteem and perceived stress.

Each of the outcome variables have been related to father involvement with their children through various pathways and have been identified as outcome variables in this study due to their salience to father involvement. Along with highlighting previous findings connecting them to father involvement, the goal is to highlight a proposed connection with the predictor and mediator variables.

Parenting Factors

Parental Self-Efficacy. Father parental self-efficacy has long been studied as an important factor that predicts parenting behavior. The concept of self-efficacy was originally proposed by Albert Bandura and is defined as one's belief in their abilities to perform a given task or perform in a given situation successfully (Bandura, 1997).

Parental self-efficacy is a more specific case of the general concept of self-efficacy and is defined as a parent's expectations of their ability to parent successfully (Jones & Prinz, 2005).

In their review of studies on parental self-efficacy, Coleman and Karraker (1997) concluded that parental self-efficacy is a strong predictor of parental functioning and that

parents should have faith in their parenting abilities to optimize their parenting quality. In their review, Jones and Prinz (2005) found parental self-efficacy to be strongly linked to parenting behaviors, skills, and strategies that promote positive child development across the studies they examined. Additionally, parental self-efficacy has been positively associated with parental involvement and positive parenting in mothers (Ardlet & Eccles, 2001; Hill & Bush, 2001) and fathers (Trahan, 2017). These findings highlight the importance of self-efficacy as an important target of interventions given the research demonstrating fathers' confidence in their ability to parent properly increasing the likelihood of engaging in positive parenting behaviors. For fathers who are struggling to stay involved in their children's lives, this study proposes that feeling confident in their abilities may lead fathers to more actively pursue involvement and opportunities to practice quality parenting with their children.

While there is quite a bit of literature examining parental self-efficacy as a predictor variable for multiple outcomes, there are few studies that explore the development of parental self-efficacy. According to Coleman and Karraker (1997), there are four main schools of thought that explain the development of parental self-efficacy: it is a product of the parent's attachment to their parents, it is developed from the influence of the culture or community the parent lives in, it develops from the parent's experience with children, or it develops from the parent's cognitive/behavioral preparation for their role as a parent. The biggest flaw in these conceptualizations is that the literature has historically focused on the development of mothers' parental self-efficacy, thus even less is known about the development of fathers' parental self-efficacy. Within the dearth of research on fathers, one study found that the quality of the marital relationship predicted

parental self-efficacy in mothers and fathers, and found that general self-efficacy predicted parental self-efficacy in mothers and parenting stress predicted parental self-efficacy in fathers (Sevigny & Loutzenhiser, 2010). Even though the participants were in an intact relationship, the relational findings of Sevigny and Loutzenhiser (2010) are of particular interest to this study as it highlights that the quality of the parents' relationship plays a role in the development of their parental self-efficacy. Other research demonstrates that general self-efficacy predicts parental self-efficacy for mothers and fathers; hostile/coercive parenting behaviors and child behavior problems predicts parental self-efficacy for mothers; and supportive/engaged parenting behaviors predicted parental self-efficacy for fathers (Murdock, 2013). Despite it being widely agreed upon throughout the research literature that parental self-efficacy is an important factor for positive parenting behavior, there is little consensus and research that identifies how it is developed.

Further examinations of fathers' parental self-efficacy have found it to moderate the relationship between father depression and parenting warmth, suggesting that parental self-efficacy can serve as a resilience factor for fathers with low engagement with their children (Trahan & Shafer, 2019). This finding is of particular interest for this study as fathers going through divorce may experience higher levels of emotional distress than fathers in intact relationships, thus parental self-efficacy could play a role in moderating how their emotional distress impacts their involvement with their children. This shows that parental self-efficacy has the potential to not only benefit children by increasing their time with their fathers but can also protect fathers from other hurdles such as depression that they would have to overcome to be more involved with their children.

Furthermore, little research has been done on parental self-efficacy following divorce. Finzi-Dottan and Cohen (2016) found both divorced custodial and non-custodial fathers to have higher levels of paternal self-efficacy than married fathers, with custodial divorced fathers having the highest paternal self-efficacy of the three. Additionally, the study found that paternal self-efficacy was associated with paternal involvement and warmth regardless of custody status (Finzi-Dottan & Cohen, 2016). Similar to parental self-efficacy, father competence has been found to be linked to fathers' involvement with children, however this finding was based on mothers' ratings of the fathers' competence and the sample contained residential fathers as well as nonresidential fathers (Fagan & Barnett, 2003). Due to the lack of clear research on divorced fathers and parental self-efficacy, this study hopes to add to this literature by identifying pathways explaining some of the development of parental self-efficacy in fathers after divorce.

Value of Father Role. Fathers' approaches and perceptions of their parenting roles has been studied as an aspect of father involvement with their children for decades. Both of the seminal works used as part of the foundation of this study identified aspects of fathers' identity and role as factors influencing father involvement with their children. Stone and McKenry (1998) found that role clarity in terms of what new responsibilities they had as a non-residential father played a role in determining their level of involvement. Additionally, Leite and McKenry (2006) found that a lack of clarity of how to properly enact the nonresidential father role was connected to lower levels of involvement with children. Role clarity is necessary to enact the fathering responsibilities assigned to one's role. Findings from a qualitative study of married and divorced-nonresidential fathers identified seven different roles with which fathers recognized:

provider, teacher, protector, disciplinarian, caretaker, supporter, and coparent (Olmstead et al., 2009). It is easy to see how it might be difficult to sort out one's role as a recently divorced, non-residential father after experiencing significant shifts in roles. One can postulate that an understanding of their role allows fathers to feel more confident in their abilities to fulfill the child involvement aspects of their father role.

Ihinger-Tallman and colleagues (1993) proposed that the salience of the father role over other roles in fathers' lives (e.g., provider, romantic partner) will determine how they respond with more appropriate parenting behaviors across parenting situations. When a role is more salient to an individual, they value it more and give more attention and focus to it, and the opposite is true for roles that are less salient. One study found that nonresidential fathers who identified their fathering role as at least moderately salient were just as involved with their adolescent children as residential fathers (Bruce & Fox, 1999), and increased salience of fathering identity has been found to predict increased involvement over time (DeGarmo, 2010).

Interestingly, one study found that the level of father involvement predicted several factors associated with nonresidential fathers enacting their role (Liete and McKenry, 2002, 2006). This alludes to the idea that for fathers to act on their role they may need opportunities to test them out with their children, thus involvement with their children could help clarify and solidify fathers' role clarity. Additional research has found in married couples that the mothers' beliefs regarding fathers' roles moderated the relationship between fathers' investment in their fathering roles and their involvement with their children (McBride et al., 2005). Applying this finding to divorced or separated couples, one might propose that the quality of the coparenting relationship might impact

how fathers' value their fathering roles. With how fathers value their roles as parents being such an important factor for father involvement with their children, this study hopes to highlight pathways of influence to aid divorced fathers in increasing the value they place on their parenting role.

Desire to Be in Child's Life. The last parenting outcome factor in this study is the fathers' desire to be in their children's lives. Despite the common assumption that if a father desires to be in their child's life they will work to increase their involvement, there is very little research that has examined this desire as a variable of worth. During the literature search for this project, only one study was identified that discussed the divorced father participants' desires to spend time with their children as a factor that influenced fathers' behaviors (Hallman et al., 2007). There are two reasons that the researcher of this study has considered that explain this gap in the literature. The first is that researchers assume that fathers generally want to be in their children's lives and thus do not look to explain how to increase their desire only how to utilize their desire to overcome obstacles to increase involvement. The second is that divorced fathers typically rate their desire to being in their children's lives relatively high; thus there is little to no statistical variance in the responses and measures for fathers' desire to be with their children do not bring about quality results. Regardless, the researcher of this study views fathers desire to be with their children as a valuable piece of this study's final model.

Conceptually, one might relate fathers' desire to be in their children's lives to the literature outlined above about the salience of parenting roles in divorced fathers. If a father exhibited high levels of desire to be in his child's life, he may also highly value his role as a father. Due to the dearth of literature examining divorced fathers' desire to be in

their children's lives, this study will include father's desire to be in the child's life as an outcome variable to identify any potential predictors that have not been identified in the research literature to date.

Adjustment Factors

In order to maintain positive functioning in life, one must adjust and adapt following any significant change in life. The adjustment process for individuals after divorce will be a fairly unique experience for each person, however there are some common experienced people go through. People going through a divorce generally experience some level of deterioration of their physical and mental health (Bertoni et al., 2018). Fathers have been found to experience more emotional distress following a divorce than women, particularly if the fathers were close to their children prior to the divorce (see Kruk, 2010, for a review). With men already less likely than women to pursue treatment for mental health (Addis & Cohane, 2005), this decline in emotional and mental wellbeing following divorce is of great concern. Some individuals have been found to become more emotionally flexible to manage their negative emotions after their divorce more effectively, while others become more emotionally rigid holding on to their feelings of anger and depression (Willén, 2015). Social support in the form of affiliation with a formal group for separated parents is associated with lower levels of depression, satisfaction with their relationships with their children, and better coparenting abilities (Bertoni et al., 2018).

The two adjustment variables that will be examined in this study are self-esteem and perceived stress. It is important to examine self-esteem on its own apart from parental self-efficacy because fathers' general wellbeing is often overlooked in the

divorced literature to focus on the wellbeing of the children. Highlighting general wellbeing factors for fathers is an important piece of this study. Perceived stress is the fathers' ratings of their level of stress over the previous month. With this being a cross-sectional study, the perceived stress variable in the model can be used to better understand how the fathers' past experiences, as measured by the predictor variables, might be impacting them at the time of the survey.

Predictor Variables

The predictor variables in this study have also been split into two groups, divorce factors and influence of others factors. The variables were identified as possible predictors based on common themes identified in the divorced fathering literature.

Divorce Factors

Legal Process. In a divorce with no children, the legal process focuses mostly on the division of financial assets, whereas the legal process in a divorce with children adds a major focus on custody and visitation of the children. The decisions surrounding the custody and visitation of the child are typically made either between the divorcing parenting utilizing attorney or mediator service or by a family court judge. The latter option is done when there is a more contentious divorce situation that cannot be resolved without the advisement of a court figure. It is this contention that often carries over into the coparenting relationship after a legal decision has been made, which subsequent shapes parent-child interactions.

The pattern of court custody decisions in the U.S. has varied greatly over time (see DiFonzio, 2014, for review). Of note is the engendered nature of the decisions over the past century. Through the 20th century, custody decisions transition from the paternal

preference rule giving custody to fathers as they were the primary providers to the “tender years” doctrine of giving custody to mothers as they were the primary caregivers (DiFonzio, 2014). However, both of these common practices imbedded the “rule of one” belief that there is to be one primary parent and one infrequent visiting parent following a divorce. Overcoming these precedents has been a difficult process despite the belief in these “rule of one” policies weakening over the past few decades into the 21st century.

Despite shared custody being more common today than it has ever been, there is the belief that a bias against fathers still exists in the custody decisions of family courts across the U.S. (Nielsen, 2011). In a study examining suspected bias in custody decisions, 367 individuals chosen for jury duty were given a range of vignettes outlining families in different divorce situations. When asked what custody decision they would make for these families if they were the judge, 69% of the participants reported they would give both parents in the vignettes equal time with their children; when asked what they think will happen to these families in today’s courts and legal environment, only 28% of the participants thought the parents would be awarded equal time with their children (Braver et al., 2011). Despite there being no clear evidence or research proving that such bias exists, this is of great importance because parents who believe they will experience bias against them in the court system may choose a custody arrangement that is not ideal for them to avoid receiving an even less favorable ruling by a “biased” judge (Nielsen, 2011). These findings provide support for the argument that fathers who do not have shared custody are not necessarily less interested in being more involved with their children; they may have chosen a custody arrangement that was not fully what they

desired in order to avoid expected bias from family court judges, to shorten the legal process, and to avoid potential or real conflict with their coparent.

Using concepts from systems theory, one could assume that the stress fathers often experience from their legal process would impact other areas of their adjustment following the divorce. This current study is interested in the relationships between fathers' perceptions of their legal process satisfaction and the following variables: involvement with children, parenting factors/behaviors, adjustment after divorce, and the coparenting relationship.

A recent study found that fathers who shared joint custody were more likely to stay involved in their children's lives over time than fathers who did not (Köppen et al., 2018). A particularly interesting finding is that fathers who take more responsibility for the divorce are more likely to engage in positive parenting practices after the divorce settlement (Baum, 2003). These findings highlight the influence the divorce process has on fathers' parenting practices long after the divorce has been settled suggesting a long-lasting systemic effect.

The legal process has been shown to have a significant impact on the relationship between coparents after the divorce. When a couple is not able to work through their differences without going before a family court judge, it can be assumed that there is some stress amidst their contentious relationship. There is empirical evidence to suggest that parents who go through litigation in a family court situation experience longer periods of coparenting conflict following the settlement than parents who chose to go through mediation (Sbarra & Emery, 2008). Additional research found that coparents with more formal custody arrangements maintained better boundaries and

communication patterns than coparents with less formal custody arrangements (Markham et al., 2017). These studies show the value in working to have a more supportive and structured legal process and clarity of coparenting responsibilities for the sake of the coparenting relationship following the settlement. Another study found that experiencing a less hostile divorce process and being satisfied with financial child support agreement predicted quality coparenting relationships (Bonach, 2005). The length of the divorce process also has an impact on the coparenting relationship with longer litigation processes having a negative impact on the coparenting relationship (Baum, 2003). Along with improving their parenting practices as discussed above, fathers who take more responsibility for the divorce have been found to have better relationships with their coparent (Arditti & Kelly, 1994).

With these previous findings, the current researcher finds it necessary to include fathers' perceptions of their legal process satisfaction into the proposed model with the aim to support previous literature on the topic. This study hopes to also provide clarity to understand the extent to which the legal system experience impacts fathers and their adjustment.

Level of Conflict Pre-Divorce. In a study examining open-ended responses from 208 divorced individuals, Amato and Previti (2003) identified infidelity, incompatibility, drinking/drug use, and growing apart as the four most common reported reasons for divorce among their participants. Hawkins et al. (2012) found “growing apart” and “not able to talk together” as the two most common reasons for divorce in their sample. Once a couple or an individual in the marriage has experienced one or some of the above reasons for divorce, they then work through their decision to divorce or reconcile their

relationship. This can be a long decision process for some where they experience significant unhappiness in their relationship for quite some time (Gottman, 1993), however there is no clear understanding of the divorce decision process (Allen & Hawkins, 2017). Regardless of the reason for divorce, it is fair to believe that there is at least some conflict between the two partners leading up to their decision to divorce, and this conflict can have a significant impact on post-divorce adjustment.

The identified impact pre-divorce conflict has on the coparenting relationship varies across the research literature. For some individuals, leaving a high conflict relationship may improve their wellbeing after the divorce and thus improve their relationship with their former spouse. In their qualitative study of divorced parents, Ferraro et al. (2016) identified a “bad to better” group whose relationships with their coparents improved following the divorce. Some of the identified factors that improve their relationships included focusing more on the children and not being in the same stressful atmosphere together (Ferraro et al., 2016). Another study found that individuals who left high-distress marriages experienced increased happiness after their divorce, whereas those who left a low-distress relationship experienced decreases in happiness (Amato & Hohmann-Marriot, 2007). These findings suggest that leaving a high conflict relationship may have a positive impact on adjustment following divorce. On the contrary to these findings, several studies have shown that increased conflict pre-divorce led to continued conflict in the coparenting relationship (Hardesty et al., 2016, 2017; Maccoby et al. 1990). Of particular interest in these studies is the type of conflict experienced. Hardesty et al. (2016, 2017) found that couples who experienced intimate partner violence had lower quality coparenting relationships that included high levels of hostility

between coparents. One study found the ability to practice forgiveness toward one's ex-spouse to be the strongest predictor of quality coparenting (Bonach, 2005). If forgiveness plays such an important role in the coparenting relationship, it can be conceived that couples who had higher levels of conflict before the divorce would have lower levels of coparenting relationship quality due to an inability to work through their pre-divorce conflict in order to forgive their coparent.

With the understanding from family systems theory that families adapt to pursue homeostasis (Cox & Paley, 2003; Bavelas & Segal, 1982), it is fair to consider that some of the conflict pre-divorce could have been failed efforts to maintain homeostasis. One might think that these failed patterns of adjustment may also persist into the coparenting relationship subsequently impacting the quality of the coparenting relationship. The finding discussed above and this connection to family systems theory warrant including pre-divorce conflict as a predictor variable in the current study.

Initiation of Divorce. One of the more common factors researched related to relationship dissolution is the effect of divorce initiation (i.e., dumper, dumpee, or mutual) on post-divorce adjustment. Being the initiator has been associated with more positive adjustment following the end of the relationship (Wang & Amato, 2000; Yildirim & Demir, 2015). Some researchers have considered that this more positive adjustment is related to a greater sense of control during the separation and dissolution process (Gray & Silver, 1990). However, just because the initiator may feel in more control during the aftermath, researchers suggest that the initiator might feel a heightened level of distress during the decision-making process before dissolution is initiated (Kitson, 1992; Melichar & Chiriboga, 1988). It has also been found that in heterosexual

relationships it is more often the woman who initiates the end of the relationship (Braver et al., 1993). This gendered finding plays an interesting role for couples in the United States as they navigate their expected responses to a divorce or breakup based on their gender. The “dumpee” from the relationship is more likely to experience long periods of adjustment and increased levels of negative feelings (i.e., hurt, depression; Sprecher, 1994; Wang & Amato, 2000). In regards to parenting after divorce, it has been found that fathers who assume more responsibility for the divorce and view themselves as the initiator are more likely to fulfill their parenting duties and experience more positive relationships with their ex-spouses (Baum, 2003; Arditti & Kelly, 1994).

Initiator status plays an interesting role throughout the divorce literature, thus it is important to include it in this exploratory study. The research literature is lacking in explanations of how initiator status impacts fathers after divorce, thus additional research is needed to examine how fathers adjust to divorce in response to their coparent being the initiator or the decision being mutual. Based on the previous research, it is expected that the fathers in this study who identified themselves as the initiator will have adjusted better to the divorce than those who were not the initiator. It can be expected that fathers may adjust well to the divorce when it is a mutual decision due to them having a sense of responsibility in the decision, however this study seeks to provide clarity for this phenomenon.

Influence of Others

According to role theory, when someone is placed into a new role that person will look to those around them to identify the expectations set for that role (Biddle, 1986). For fathers, these expectations are often placed upon them by society at large, extended

family, and, most directly, their coparent (Parke, 2002). As they begin to parent for the first time, fathers are exploring many different influences and expectations from others that determine how they fulfill their roles as fathers. This outside influence on one's behaviors and decisions is referred to as external locus of control (Barnet, 1990). It is fair to conceive that this influence would continue to impact fathers after a divorce and fathers would have to work through their own parenting expectations in concert with the expectations of those around them. Previous research supports this assumption as divorced fathers have been found to have higher levels of external locus of control than mothers (Barnet, 1990).

For this predictor variable of the influence of others, this researcher is interested in how fathers' perceptions of others' desires for the fathers to be in their children's lives impact fathers' parenting, adjustment, and the coparenting relationship. The specific others of interest to this study are the child, the coparent, and the fathers' current partner if applicable. Following role theory, it is expected that these important figures in fathers' lives will have an influence on how fathers enact their fathering roles after divorce. Additionally, it is expected that the perception of others' desire will have an influence because it can be argued that one's perception is their reality (Watzlawick et al., 1967). Inclusion of these variables in the proposed model provides further understanding of fathers' experiences after divorce and what determines their involvement with their children.

Indirect Effects

As discussed above, the coparenting relationship influences and is influenced by many factors after divorce. With it being such an important factor for fathers after

divorce, it has been identified as a possible indirect effect between the above outcome and predictor variables.

Coparenting Relationship

It is important to remember that the coparenting relationship existed before the divorce, it just looks very different after the divorce. This transition for fathers can often result in role ambiguity where fathers are not sure what they are to do and how to parent their children either from a distance or as their primary caregiver (Madden-Derdich et al., 1999). This role ambiguity can be exacerbated by the enactment of gatekeeping by the primary caregiver. Gatekeeping is the process where one parent interferes with the ability of the other parent to properly fulfill their parenting roles and duties (Trinder, 2008). Some researchers have proposed that mothers will enact maternal gatekeeping as a way to control their position of power in the family system (Allen & Hawkins, 1999). While it is understood that fathers can practice paternal gatekeeping, maternal gatekeeping has been the primary focus of the research on the topic as women are typically the primary caregivers and tend to practice such behavior more often. Though gatekeeping is not a specific variable of interest in the current study, it is important to acknowledge the action of maternal gatekeeping as it plays a factor in the development of a healthy coparenting relationship. One study found that divorced mothers identified themselves as “captains” of the coparenting team, placing a higher responsibility on themselves to determine what is best for the children (Ganong et al., 2015). This study also found certain factors that increased mothers trust in their children’s fathers (e.g., perceiving fathers as adequate caregivers; Ganong et al., 2015), Taking on this role of “captain” is in a sense an act of maternal gatekeeping, even if the mothers are practicing inclusive parenting behaviors.

The quality of the coparenting relationship has been found to play a significant role in divorced fathers' involvement with their children (Ahrons & Miller, 1993). Ongoing conflict between former spouses has been shown to lead to less parental involvement (Leite & McKenry, 2006). One study identified the coparent relationship to be a more important factor in predicting father involvement than the father's geographic location (Viry, 2014). Increased cooperation between coparents was found to increase father involvement (Finzi-Dottan & Cohen, 2016). Maintaining the coparenting relationship has value in nearly every area of fathers' post-divorce adjustment. Gürmen et al. (2017) found that maintaining a certain level of positive involvement and emotional connection with their coparent improved the coparenting relationship for fathers. With all of the negative outcomes for coparent conflict and all of the positive outcomes for quality coparenting, it is evident that improving the coparenting relationship should continue to be a target of post-divorce interventions for both mothers and fathers.

As outlined throughout this study so far, the coparenting relationship is a critically important factor in fathers' post-divorce adjustment. With past empirical research identifying associations between the coparenting relationship and nearly every other variable in this study, this researcher believes that exploring the mediation capacity of the coparenting relationship will be a strong addition to the research literature on fathers' post-divorce adjustment and involvement with their children. The specific coparenting variables examined in this study are coparenting efficacy, the father's belief in the coparenting relationship, and cooperative coparenting, the father's assessment of the quality of the coparenting relationship.

Research Questions

Given the lack of research on specific relationships between predictors of father involvement after divorce, this study seeks to identify pathways amongst key variables that highlight a developmental process through which father involvement can be increased. This will allow for increased understanding of fathers' adjustment processes following divorce and identify clear targets of interventions focusing on improving father involvement after divorce. The following research questions will be addressed and hypotheses with more specific sub-hypotheses addressing each proposed path in the research questions are provided:

Research Question 1: Do the identified divorce factors (i.e. Legal Process Satisfaction, Initiation of Divorce, Pre-Divorce Conflict) and influence of others predict fathers' parenting factors (i.e. Parental Self-Efficacy, Value of Father Role, Desire to be in Child's Life) and adjustment factors after divorce (i.e. Self-Esteem, Perceived Stress)?

Hypothesis 1: The influence of others variables will have a direct and positive influence on the identified parenting factors.

- 1a. An increase in Child's Desire will predict an increase in Parental Self-Efficacy.
- 1b. An increase in Child's Desire will predict an increase in Value of Father Role.
- 1c. An increase in Child's Desire will predict an increase in Father's Desire.
- 1d. An increase in Coparent's Desire will predict an increase in Parental Self-Efficacy.

1e. An increase in Coparent's Desire will predict an increase in Value of Father Role.

1f. An increase in Coparent's Desire will predict an increase in Father's Desire.

1g. An increase in Current Partner's Desire will predict an increase in Parental Self-Efficacy.

1h. An increase in Current Partner's Desire will predict an increase in Value of Father Role.

1i. An increase in Current Partner's Desire will predict an increase in Father's Desire.

Hypothesis 2: The identified divorce factors will have a direct and positive influence on the identified adjustment factors.

2a. An increase in Legal Process Satisfaction will predict an increase in Self-Esteem.

2b. An increase in Legal Process Satisfaction will predict a decrease in Perceived Stress.

2c. Fathers who initiated divorce and fathers whose divorce was a mutual decision will have higher Self-Esteem compared to fathers whose partner initiated divorce.

2d. Fathers who initiated divorce and fathers whose divorce was a mutual decision will have lower levels of Perceived Stress compared to fathers whose partner initiated divorce.

2e. An increase in Pre-Divorce Conflict will predict a decrease in Self-Esteem.

2f. An increase in Pre-Divorce Conflict will predict an increase in Perceived Stress.

Hypothesis 3: The influence of others variables will have a direct and positive influence on the identified adjustment factors.

3a. An increase in Child's Desire will predict an increase in Self-Esteem.

3b. An increase in Child's Desire will predict a decrease in Perceived Stress.

3c. An increase in Coparent's Desire will predict an increase in Self-Esteem.

3d. An increase in Coparent's Desire will predict a decrease in Perceived Stress.

3e. An increase in Current Partner's Desire will predict an increase in Self-Esteem.

3f. An increase in Current Partner's Desire will predict a decrease in Perceived Stress.

Hypothesis 4: The identified divorce factors will have a direct and positive influence on the identified parenting factors.

4a. An increase in Legal Process Satisfaction will predict an increase in Parental Self-Efficacy

4b. An increase in Legal Process Satisfaction will predict an increase in Value of the Father Role.

4c. An increase in Legal Process Satisfaction will predict an increase in Father's Desire.

4d. Fathers who initiated divorce and fathers whose divorce was a mutual decision will have higher Parental Self-Efficacy compared to fathers whose partner initiated divorce.

4e. Fathers who initiated divorce and fathers whose divorce was a mutual decision will have higher Value of the Father Role compared to fathers whose partner initiated divorce.

4f. Fathers who initiated divorce and fathers whose divorce was a mutual decision will have higher Father's Desire compared to fathers whose partner initiated divorce.

4g. An increase in Pre-Divorce Conflict will predict a decrease in Parental Self-Efficacy.

4h. An increase in Pre-Divorce Conflict will predict a decrease in Value of the Father Role.

4i. An increase in Pre-Divorce Conflict will predict a decrease in Father's Desire.

Research Question 2: Is there an indirect relationship from the predictor variables (identified divorce factors and the influence of others) and the outcome variables (father's parenting factors and adjustment factors after divorce) through the identified coparenting variables?

Hypothesis 5: The influence of others variables will have an indirect effect on the identified parenting factors through the coparenting variables.

- 5a. Child's Desire will have an indirect effect on Parental Self-Efficacy through Coparenting Efficacy.
- 5b. Child's Desire will have an indirect effect on Value of Father Role through Coparenting Efficacy.
- 5c. Child's Desire will have an indirect effect on Father's Desire through Coparenting Efficacy.
- 5d. Child's Desire will have an indirect effect on Parental Self-Efficacy through Cooperative Coparenting.
- 5e. Child's Desire will have an indirect effect on Value of Father Role through Cooperative Coparenting.
- 5f. Child's Desire will have an indirect effect on Father's Desire through Cooperative Coparenting.
- 5g. Coparent's Desire will have an indirect effect on Parental Self-Efficacy through Coparenting Efficacy.
- 5h. Coparent's Desire will have an indirect effect on Value of Father Role through Coparenting Efficacy.
- 5i. Coparent's Desire will have an indirect effect on Father's Desire through Coparenting Efficacy.
- 5j. Coparent's Desire will have an indirect effect on Parental Self-Efficacy through Cooperative Coparenting.
- 5k. Coparent's Desire will have an indirect effect on Value of Father Role through Cooperative Coparenting.

5l. Coparent's Desire will have an indirect effect on Father's Desire through Cooperative Coparenting.

5m. Current Partner's Desire will have an indirect effect on Parental Self-Efficacy through Coparenting Efficacy.

5n. Current Partner's Desire will have an indirect effect on Value of Father Role through Coparenting Efficacy.

5o. Current Partner's Desire will have an indirect effect on Father's Desire through Coparenting Efficacy.

5p. Current Partner's Desire will have an indirect effect on Parental Self-Efficacy through Cooperative Coparenting.

5q. Current Partner's Desire will have an indirect effect on Value of Father Role through Cooperative Coparenting.

5r. Current Partner's Desire will have an indirect effect on Father's Desire through Cooperative Coparenting.

Hypothesis 6: The identified divorce factors will have an indirect effect on the adjustment factors through the coparenting variables.

6a. Legal Process Satisfaction will have an indirect effect on Self-Esteem through Coparenting Efficacy.

6b. Legal Process Satisfaction will have an indirect effect on Perceived Stress through Coparenting Efficacy.

6c. Initiation of Divorce will have an indirect effect on Self-Esteem through Coparenting Efficacy.

6d. Initiation of Divorce will have an indirect effect on Perceived Stress through Coparenting Efficacy.

6e. Pre-Divorce Conflict will have an indirect effect on Self-Esteem through Coparenting Efficacy.

6f. Pre-Divorce Conflict will have an indirect effect on Perceived Stress through Coparenting Efficacy.

6g. Legal Process Satisfaction will have an indirect effect on Self-Esteem through Cooperative Coparenting.

6h. Legal Process Satisfaction will have an indirect effect on Perceived Stress through Cooperative Coparenting.

6i. Initiation of Divorce will have an indirect effect on Self-Esteem through Cooperative Coparenting.

6j. Initiation of Divorce will have an indirect effect on Perceived Stress through Cooperative Coparenting.

6k. Pre-Divorce Conflict will have an indirect effect on Self-Esteem through Cooperative Coparenting.

6l. Pre-Divorce Conflict will have an indirect effect on Perceived Stress through Cooperative Coparenting.

Hypothesis 7: The influence of others variables will have an indirect effect on the adjustment factors through the coparenting variables.

7a. Child's Desire will have an indirect effect on Self-Esteem through Coparenting Efficacy.

7b. Child's Desire will have an indirect effect on Perceived Stress through Coparenting Efficacy.

7c. Child's Desire will have an indirect effect on Self-Esteem through Cooperative Coparenting.

7d. Child's Desire will have an indirect effect on Perceived Stress through Cooperative Coparenting.

7e. Coparent's Desire will have an indirect effect on Self-Esteem through Coparenting Efficacy.

7f. Coparent's Desire will have an indirect effect on Perceived Stress through Coparenting Efficacy.

7g. Coparent's Desire will have an indirect effect on Self-Esteem through Cooperative Coparenting.

7h. Coparent's Desire will have an indirect effect on Perceived Stress through Cooperative Coparenting.

7i. Current Partner's Desire will have an indirect effect on Self-Esteem through Coparenting Efficacy.

7j. Current Partner's Desire will have an indirect effect on Perceived Stress through Coparenting Efficacy.

7k. Current Partner's Desire will have an indirect effect on Self-Esteem through Cooperative Coparenting.

7l. Current Partner's Desire will have an indirect effect on Perceived Stress through Cooperative Coparenting.

Hypothesis 8: The identified divorce factors will have an indirect effect on the father parenting factors through the coparenting variables.

8a. Legal Process Satisfaction will have an indirect effect on Parental Self-Efficacy through Coparenting Efficacy.

8b. Legal Process Satisfaction will have an indirect effect on Value of Father Role through Coparenting Efficacy.

8c. Legal Process Satisfaction will have an indirect effect on Father's Desire through Coparenting Efficacy.

8d. Initiation of Divorce will have an indirect effect on Parental Self-Efficacy through Coparenting Efficacy.

8e. Initiation of Divorce will have an indirect effect on Value of Father Role through Coparenting Efficacy.

8f. Initiation of Divorce will have an indirect effect on Father's Desire through Coparenting Efficacy.

8g. Pre-Divorce Conflict will have an indirect effect on Parental Self-Efficacy through Coparenting Efficacy.

8h. Pre-Divorce Conflict will have an indirect effect on Value of Father Role through Coparenting Efficacy.

8i.. Pre-Divorce Conflict will have an indirect effect on Father's Desire through Coparenting Efficacy.

8j. Legal Process Satisfaction will have an indirect effect on Parental Self-Efficacy through Cooperative Coparenting.

8k. Legal Process Satisfaction will have an indirect effect on Value of Father Role through Cooperative Coparenting.

8l. Legal Process Satisfaction will have an indirect effect on Father's Desire through Cooperative Coparenting.

8m. Initiation of Divorce will have an indirect effect on Parental Self-Efficacy through Cooperative Coparenting.

8n. Initiation of Divorce will have an indirect effect on Value of Father Role through Cooperative Coparenting.

8o. Initiation of Divorce will have an indirect effect on Father's Desire through Cooperative Coparenting.

8p. Pre-Divorce Conflict will have an indirect effect on Parental Self-Efficacy through Cooperative Coparenting.

8q. Pre-Divorce Conflict will have an indirect effect on Value of Father's Role through Cooperative Coparenting.

8r. Pre-Divorce Conflict will have an indirect effect on Father's Desire through Cooperative Coparenting.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

General Procedures

Parents seeking divorce in the state of Oklahoma are required to attend a divorce education program. The Coparenting for Resilience (CPR) program is one of the resources in Oklahoma that divorcing parents have to meet this requirement. In an effort to further understand divorced parents' unique experiences, the CPR research team received approval from the Oklahoma State Internal Review Board to send out a survey to the parents who had previously completed their divorce education program. As an incentive to complete the survey, the potential participants were informed that the first 100 respondents would receive a \$20 Amazon gift card. The data was collected during the summer of 2018. Participants' responses from this data collection will be analyzed for this current study.

Participants

Participants consist of 124 men who have filed for divorce and attended a court-mandated divorce education program. The participants' ages ranged from 20 to 60 with the mean age being 38.21 with a standard deviation of 8.32. This sample was ethnically homogenous with 81.5% of the participants identifying themselves as white/Caucasian

and 18.5% identifying as non-white (4.8% Black/African American, 4% Hispanic/Latino, 1.6% Asian, 4% Native American, 4% two or more races). The participants were highly educated with 87.9% reporting having received at least some college or tech school. The breakdown of participants' reported education is as follows: 12.1% High school or GED, 29% Some College or Tech School, 4% Tech School, 44.4% College Degree, 8.1% Master's Degree, and 2.4% Doctorate or other Professional Degree. Additionally, the majority of the participants in this sample reported making near or above the 2018 Oklahoma average income (\$51,424, United States Census Bureau, 2018) with 63.7% of participants reporting income of more than \$50,000 a year. Participants reported yearly income as follows: 1.6% <20,000; 18.5% 20,001-30,000; 9.7% 30,001-40,000; 6.5% 40,001-50,000; 12.9% 50,001-60,000; 15.3% 60,001-70,000; 7.3% 70,001-80,000; 28.2% > 80,001.

Measures

Parenting Factors

To assess father's parenting views, researchers sought to measure parental self-efficacy, fathers' value of the father role, and fathers' desire to be in their children's lives. Participants responded to scales measuring parental self-efficacy and value of father role and responded to a single item measuring their desire to be in their children's lives.

Parental Self-Efficacy. Parental self-efficacy scale consists of four items measuring their views on their parenting skills. Participants responded to the prompt "*The following questions are about parenting, how strongly do you agree or disagree with these statements?*" This scale included items such as "*I have confidence in myself as*

a parent,” and *“I know I am doing a good job as a parent.”* Participants’ responses to each item were coded as such: 1=*Strongly Disagree*, 2=*Disagree*, 3=*Mixed Feelings*, 4=*Agree*, 5=*Strongly Agree*. Participants’ scores on the Parental Self-Efficacy scale are as follows: Range=12-20, M=17.78, SD=2.42. Cronbach’s alpha for the parental self-efficacy scale is .876.

Value of Father Role. Value of Father Role scale consists of seven items measuring participants view on their roles as fathers. Participants responded to the prompt *“How much do you agree with each statement below?”* This scale included items such as *“My contributions as a father matter.”* Participants’ responses to each item were coded as such: 1=*Strongly Disagree*, 2=*Disagree*, 3=*Agree*, 4=*Strongly Agree*. Participants’ scores on the Value of Father Role scale are as follows: Range=12-28, M=25.15, SD=3.24. Cronbach’s alpha for the value of the father role scale is .722.

Desire to Be in Child’s Life. Participants’ desire to be in their children’s lives was measured using a single item. Participants responded to the prompt *“On a scale of 1-10, how much do you agree with the following statements: I want to have a relationship with my children.”* Participants’ scores on this item are as follows: Range=5-10, M=9.93, SD=0.52.

Adjustment Factors

To assess participants level of adjustment at the time of the assessment, researchers sought to measure self-esteem and perceived stress using validated scales for each.

Self-Esteem. Participants’ level of self-esteem was measured using six-items from the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1979). Participants responded to the

prompt “*Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement.*” This scale included items such as “*I take a positive attitude towards myself.*” Participants’ responses were coded as such: 1=*Strongly Disagree*, 2=*Disagree*, 3=*Agree*, 4=*Strongly Agree*. Participants’ scores on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale are as follows: Range=14-24, M=21, SD=2.74. Cronbach’s alpha for the self-esteem scale is .813.

Perceived Stress. Participants’ level of stress was measured using the four-item version of the Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen et al., 1983). Participants responded to the prompt “*The questions in this scale ask you about your feelings and thoughts during THE LAST MONTH.*” This scale included items such as “*How often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?*” Participants’ responses were coded as such: 1=*Never*, 2=*Almost Never*, 3=*Sometimes*, 4=*Fairly Often*, 5=*Very Often*. Participants’ scores on the four-item Perceived Stress Scale are as follows: Range=4-18, M=9.01, SD=2.31. Cronbach’s alpha for the perceived stress scale is .718. It is important to note that there is missing data from 50 participants for this question, however the bootstrapping technique discussed below should manage the missing data for this item effectively. It is unknown why such a large percentage of participants did not complete this scale.

Divorce Factors

To assess fathers’ experiences during their divorce process, researchers sought to measure their Legal Process Satisfaction, level of conflict pre-divorce, and initiation of divorce. Participants responded to a scale measuring their Legal Process Satisfaction and

single items measuring their perception of the conflict in their marriage pre-divorce and who initiated the divorce.

Legal Process Satisfaction. Fathers' perceptions of their Legal Process Satisfaction was measured using an eight-item scale. Participants' responded to the prompt "*The following questions are about your experience with the legal system. Please report how much you agree with the following statements.*" This scale included items such as "*I felt I was adequately respected by judges, lawyers, and other legal professionals.*" Participants' responses were coded as such: 1=*Strongly Disagree*, 2=*Disagree*, 3=*Agree*, 4=*Strongly Agree*. Participants scores on the scale are as follows: Range=8-32, M=19.4, SD=6.26. Cronbach's alpha for the Legal Process Satisfaction scale is .921.

Level of Conflict Pre-Divorce. Fathers' perception of the level of conflict in their marriage pre-divorce was measured using a single item. Participants responded to the prompt "*All things considered, what was the overall level of conflict with your co-parent before you divorce?*" and rated their pre-divorce conflict on a 10-point scale with 1=*Not at all conflictual* and 10=*Extremely Conflictual*. Participants scores on this question are as follows: M=7.01, SD=2.23.

Initiation of Divorce. Participants were asked to respond to the prompt "*Who initiated the divorce or separation?*" with one of three options. The participants' responses are as such: I did=38.7%, My co-parent did=45.2%, We mutually agreed to divorce/separate=16.1%.

Influence of Others

Perceived Desire for Father to Be in Child's Life. Fathers' perception of their children's, co-parents, and current partners' desire for the fathers to be in their children's lives using individual items for each perceived desire. Participants responded to prompts such as *"On a scale of 1-10, how much do you agree with the following statements: I believe my children want me in their lives,"* with two additional statements for their co-parents and current partners. Participants' scores for their perception of their children's desires are as follows: Range=1-10, M=9.53, SD=1.54. Participants' scores for their perception of their co-parents' desires are as follows: Range=1-10, M=7.49, SD=3.15. For the perception of their co-parents' desires, there was a "0" option if this question was not applicable for the participant. A total of 88 participants gave applicable responses to this item and their scores are as follows: Range=1-10, M=9.51, SD=1.48.

Coparenting Relationship

To assess fathers' perceptions of their coparenting relationship quality, researchers sought to measure coparenting efficacy and cooperative coparenting. Participants responded to two scales that were adapted from previously validated scales for married couples measuring their perceptions of the efficacy of their coparenting relationship and the level of cooperation in their coparenting relationship.

Coparenting Efficacy. Coparenting efficacy was measured using a seven-item scale that was adapted for co-parents from the Relationship Efficacy Scale (Fincham et al, 2000). Participants were asked to respond to the prompt *"Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements concerning the disagreements and conflicts that arise between you and your co-parent."* This scale included items such

as *"I am able to do the things needed to settle our conflicts."* The participants' responses were coded as such: 1=*Strongly Disagree*, 2=*Disagree*, 3=*Somewhat Disagree*, 4=*Neither Agree nor Disagree*, 5=*Somewhat Agree*, 6=*Agree*, 7=*Strongly Agree*. The participants' scores on the Coparenting Efficacy Scale are as follows: Range=7-49, M=24.07, SD=10.86. Cronbach's alpha for the coparenting efficacy scale is .927.

Cooperative Coparenting. Cooperative coparenting was measured using an eleven-item scale that was adapted for divorced co-parents from a 14-item coparenting questionnaire (Margolin et al., 2001). Participants were asked to respond to the prompt *"How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding your co-parent?"* This scale included items such as *"My co-parent and I make joint decisions about our child."* The participants' responses were coded as such: 1=*Strongly Disagree*, 2=*Disagree*, 3=*Neither Agree nor Disagree*, 4=*Agree*, 5=*Strongly Agree*. The participants' scores on the Cooperative Coparenting Scale are as follows: Range=11-55, M=28.16, SD=12.25. Cronbach's alpha for the cooperative coparenting scale is .94.

Plan of Analysis

Following previous empirical research and theory, a conceptual model to explore if the independent variables legal system experience, initiator of divorce, level of conflict pre-divorce, and fathers' perception of how much their child, co-parent, and current parent desires for the father to be in their children's lives influence the dependent variables fathers' parental self-efficacy, fathers' value of fathering role, fathers' desire to be in their children's lives, perceived stress, and self-esteem directly and indirectly through the coparenting relationship variables of coparenting efficacy and cooperative coparenting. This model would be tested using a path analysis to identify which paths

hold constant when included in the model as a whole. However, the sample being used for this study is not large enough to provide the necessary power for such a large analysis. To address limitations of the sample size and power of the available data, this model will be broken down into four smaller models.

In each of the four models, the two coparenting relationship factors (coparenting self-efficacy and cooperative coparenting) will be examined as potential mediators between different sets of the dependent and independent variables. The first model will focus on the path between the fathering dependent variables (parental self-efficacy, fathers' value of fathering role, and fathers' desire to be in their children's lives) and the independent variables of the fathers' perception of others' desires for him to be in their children's lives. The second model will focus on the path between the father adjustment dependent variables (self-esteem and perceived stress) and the divorce factors independent variables (Legal Process Satisfaction, initiation of divorce, level of conflict pre-divorce). The third model will analyze the path between the father adjustment dependent variables and the fathers' perceptions of others' desire for him to be in their children's lives independent variables. The fourth and final model will examine the path between the fathering dependent variables and the divorce factors independent variables. Further breakdown into even smaller sub-models maybe done as needed. Additionally, control variables may be dropped to reduce the complexity of the model.

Bootstrapping is the recommended methodological procedure to overcome the lack of power related to the sample size and the asymmetric confidence intervals in mediation (Wu & Jia, 2013). Analyses will be conducted using *Mplus* because it can accommodate both bootstrapping and the missing data as per the literature (Muthén &

Muthén, 2017). Models will be estimated using Maximum Likelihood. Each model will be examined for model fit using the following statistics and the criteria for each: Model Chi-Square Test of Model Fit, $p > .05$; Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) $< .06$; Comparative Fit Index (CFI) $> .95$; Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) $< .08$ (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Four separate path analysis models were run to test the two research questions and eight hypotheses and their sub-hypotheses. Model 1 was conducted to explore Hypotheses 1 and 5; Model 2 explored Hypotheses 2 and 6; Model 3 explored Hypotheses 3 and 7; and Model 4 explored Hypotheses 4 and 8. Each statistical model was analyzed using *Mplus* and was evaluated for global fit and adjustments to each model were made to improve the global fit following both empirical and theoretical evidence.

In each of the models, the exogenous variables were correlated with one another as were the coparenting variables. The correlations between the endogenous variables residuals were set to zero to allow for there to be degrees of freedom (*df*) in each of the models for the path analyses to be run. The unstandardized coefficients are reported for the results of each model.

Model 1

Model 1 examined the direct effects of the influence of others variables (perception of child's, coparent's, and current partner's desire for the father to be in the child's life) on to the coparenting relationship variables and the father parenting variables, and the indirect effect of the influence of other variables on the father parenting

variables through the coparenting relationship variables. Regarding the item of current partner's desire for the father to be in the child's life, not all participants had a current partner; thus, a separate subsample was created with just the participants who reported having a current partner (n=88).

Model 1a

First analyses of Model 1a with all 124 participants showed decent model fit (*Chi-Square Test*, $p = 0.1763$; $RMSEA = 0.072$, C.I. = 0.0-0.182; $CFI = 0.995$; $SRMR = 0.023$; $df = 3$). In order to improve model fit, the correlations of the residuals were examined to identify potential paths that were excluded from the original model that if added would improve model fit. The correlation between the Value of the Father Role and Parental Self-Efficacy parenting outcome variables was rather high (0.754), thus a correlation path between these two variables was added. This improved model fit to an acceptable level (*Chi-Square Test*, $p = 0.5509$; $RMSEA < 0.001$, C.I. = 0.0-0.153; $CFI = 1.00$; $SRMR = 0.015$; $df = 2$).

Table 1a outlines the significant paths for Model 1a. (See Table 8a in the appendix for full results of the model.)

Table 1a

Statistically Significant Results of Hypothesized Paths of Model 1a

Direct Effects				
Variables	β	S.E.	p	Std. β
<u>Parental Self-Efficacy</u>				
Child's Desire	0.688***	0.168	<0.001	0.438
Coparent's Desire	-0.229*	0.102	0.024	-0.299
<u>Value of Father Role</u>				
Child's Desire	1.115***	0.188	<0.001	0.53
Coparent's Desire	-0.217*	0.106	0.041	-0.212
<u>Father's Desire</u>				
No significant paths				
Indirect Effects				
Variables	β	S.E.	p	Std. β
<u>Value of Father Role</u>				
Cooperative Coparenting				
Coparent's Desire	0.491*	0.109	<0.05	0.479

Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, † $p < .1$

The results of the direct effects of this model provided statistical support for Hypotheses 1a (“An increase in Child’s Desire will predict an increase in Parental Self-Efficacy”) and 1b (“An increase in Child’s Desire will predict an increase in Value of Father Role”). This model showed that a one-unit increase in Child’s Desire predicted a 0.688-unit increase in Parental Self-Efficacy and a 1.115-unit increase in Value of Father Role controlling for all other paths regressed on to Parental Self-Efficacy and Value of Father Role.

Hypotheses 1c-1f were rejected due to either no statistical support in the model or unexpected findings. Hypotheses 1d (“An increase in Coparent’s Desire will predict an increase in Parental Self-Efficacy”) and 1e (“An increase in Coparent’s Desire will predict an increase in Value of Father Role”) were rejected because an increased in

Coparent's Desire was found to have a negative effect on both Parental Self-Efficacy and Value of Father Role. Further discussion of these unexpected findings in the next chapter.

The results of the indirect effects in this model showed support for Hypothesis 5k ("Coparent's Desire will have an indirect effect on Value of Father Role through Cooperative Coparenting") with an estimated unstandardized effect of 0.491 and a 95% bootstrap CI [0.278, 0.713]. There was no other statistical support for the sub-hypotheses of Hypothesis 5a-5j and 5l.

Model 1b

Analyses of Model 1b showed poor model fit (*Chi-Square Test*, $p = 0.0315$; $RMSEA = 0.149$, C.I. = 0.039-0.267; $CFI = 0.98$; $SRMR = 0.027$; $df = 3$). Examining the correlations of the residuals showed a high correlation between the residuals of Parental Self-Efficacy and Value of the Father Role. A correlation between these two endogenous variables was added which led to acceptable model fit (*Chi-Square Test*, $p = 0.5553$; $RMSEA < 0.001$, C.I. = 0.0-0.181; $CFI = 1.00$; $SRMR = 0.01$; $df = 2$).

Table 1b outlines the significant paths for Model 1b. (See Table 8b in the appendix for full results of the model.)

Table 1b

Statistically Significant Results of Hypothesized Paths of Model 1b

Direct Effects				
Variables	β	S.E.	<i>p</i>	Std. β
<u>Parental Self-Efficacy</u>				
Child's Desire	0.834†	0.443	0.06	0.411
Coparent's Desire	-0.232*	0.115	0.043	-0.278
<u>Value of Father Role</u>				
Child's Desire	1.241**	0.395	0.002	0.485
<u>Father's Desire</u>				
No significant paths				
Indirect Effects				
Variables	β	S.E.	<i>p</i>	Std. β
<u>Value of Father Role</u>				
Cooperative Coparenting				
Coparent's Desire	0.558*	0.140	<0.05	0.531

Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, † $p < .1$

All findings except one from Model 1a held for Model 1b with the subsample of only father's with current partners. Hypothesis 1a ("An increase in Child's Desire will predict an increase in Parental Self-Efficacy") was not supported in this subsample with direct effect of Child's Desire onto Parental Self-Efficacy no longer being statistically significant ($p = 0.06$). There were no statistically significant paths from the Desire of Current Partner variable, thus Hypotheses 1g-1i were rejected.

The indirect effect found in Model 1b also supported Hypothesis 5k ("Coparent's Desire will have an indirect effect on Value of Father Role through Cooperative Coparenting") with an estimated unstandardized effect of 0.558 and a 95% bootstrap CI [0.299, 0.787]. There was no statistical support for Hypotheses 5m-5r.

Model 2

Model 2 examined the direct effects of the divorce factors (Legal Process Satisfaction, Initiation of Divorce, and Pre-Divorce Conflict) on the coparenting relationship variables and the adjustment factors (Self-Esteem and Perceived Stress), and the indirect effect of the divorce factors on the adjustment factors through the coparenting relationship variables. First analyses of this model showed poor model fit (*Chi-Square Test*, $p = 0.0039$; $RMSEA = 0.243$, C.I. = 0.112-0.407; $CFI = 0.961$; $SRMR = 0.048$; $df = 1$). Examination of the correlations of the residuals showed a high correlation (-1.738) between the endogenous variables, Perceived Stress and Self-Esteem. A correlation between these two variables was added in the next step of the model, however adding this path fully identified the model and no fit statistics were given. The model was then examined conceptually to determine if there was a path that could be removed based on theory to add a degree of freedom. It was determined that the direct path between Pre-Divorce Conflict and Perceived Stress be removed because it is expected that any influence Pre-Divorce Conflict may have on Perceived Stress would be through the coparenting relationship variables. This was a hypothesized path and removing it from the model voids Hypothesis 2f. This third step of the model improved model fit significantly leading to acceptable model fit (*Chi-Square Test*, $p = 0.9762$; $RMSEA < 0.001$, C.I. = 0.0-0.0; $CFI = 1.00$; $SRMR < 0.001$; $df = 1$).

Table 2 outlines the significant paths for Model 2. (See Table 9 in the appendix for full results of the model.)

Table 2

Statistically Significant Results of Hypothesized Paths of Model 2

Direct Effects				
Variables	β	S.E.	<i>p</i>	Std. β
<u>Self-Esteem</u>				
No significant paths				
<u>Perceived Stress</u>				
Legal Process Satisfaction	-0.099*	0.042	0.019	-0.267
Indirect Effects				
Variables	β	S.E.	<i>p</i>	Std. β
<u>Perceived Stress</u>				
Coparenting Efficacy				
Legal Process Satisfaction	-0.041†	0.024	>0.05	-0.112

Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, † $p < .1$

The results of Model 2 provided statistical support for Hypothesis 2b (“An increase in Legal Process Satisfaction will predict a decrease in Perceived Stress”) with a one-unit increase in the Legal Process Satisfaction predicting a 0.099-unit decrease in perceived stress controlling for all other paths regressed on the Legal Process Satisfaction. There was no statistical support for Hypotheses 2a and 2c-2f.

There was no statistical significant evidence for indirect effects in Model 2, thus Hypotheses 6a-6l were rejected. The indirect from Legal Process Satisfaction to Perceived Stress through Coparenting Efficacy neared significance ($p = 0.085$), thus giving support for future research to examine the relationships among these variables further.

Model 3

Model 3 examined the direct effects of the influence of others variables on to the adjustment factors and the coparenting relationship variables and the indirect effects of the influence of others variables onto the adjustment factors through the coparenting

relationship variables. Just like Model 1 that included the item related to the current partner, Model 3 has been split into two models with one containing all participants without the current partner variable (Model 3a) and another with just the participants with current partners (Model 3b).

Model 3a

Initial analyses of Model 3a showed poor model fit (*Chi-Square Test*, $p = 0.0126$; $RMSEA = 0.205$, C.I. = 0.076-0.372; $CFI = 0.980$; $SRMR = 0.049$; $df = 1$). After examining the correlations of the residuals, the high correlation between Perceived Stress and Self-Esteem (-1.536) directed us to add a correlation path between these two variables, just like in Model 2. This step led to a fully identified model and the model was reexamined theoretically and conceptually to identify a possible path to remove to give the model at least one degree of freedom. After consideration, it was decided that the direct path from Perceived Child's Desire to Perceived Stress was removed because researcher considered the child to have the least power to influence the father, thus this direct path did not seem necessary. This was a hypothesized path and removing it from the model voids Hypothesis 3b. Once this path was removed, analyses of this model showed acceptable model fit (*Chi-Square Test*, $p = 0.4028$; $RMSEA < 0.001$, C.I. = 0.0-0.222; $CFI = 1.00$; $SRMR = 0.018$; $df = 1$).

Table 3a outlines the significant paths for Model 3a. (See Table 10a in the appendix for full results of the model.)

Table 3a

Statistically Significant Results of Hypothesized Paths of Model 3a

Direct Effects				
Variables	β	S.E.	<i>p</i>	Std. β
<u>Self-Esteem</u>				
Child's Desire	0.562*	0.218	0.010	0.312
<u>Perceived Stress</u>				
No significant hypothesized paths				
Indirect Effects				
Variables	β	S.E.	<i>p</i>	Std. β
<u>Perceived Stress</u>				
Coparenting Efficacy				
Coparent's Desire	-0.157*	0.070	<0.05	-0.216

Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, † $p < .1$

Results from Model 3a showed statistical support for only Hypothesis 3a (“An increase in Child's Desire will predict an increase in Self-Esteem”) with a one-unit increase in Child's Desire predicting a 0.562-unit increase in Self-Esteem controlling for all other paths regressed onto Self-Esteem. No statistical support for Hypotheses 3b-3d was found in this model.

The results of the indirect effects in this model showed support for Hypothesis 7f (“Coparent's Desire will have an indirect effect on Perceived Stress through Coparenting Efficacy”) with an estimated unstandardized effect of -0.157 and a 95% bootstrap CI [-0.306, -0.036]. No other evidence for indirect effects was found in this model, thus Hypotheses 7a-7e, 7g-7h were rejected.

Model 3b

Analyses of Model 3b showed decent model fit (*Chi-Square Test*, $p = 0.099$; *RMSEA* = 0.140, C.I. = 0.0-0.351; *CFI* = 0.991; *SRMR* = 0.034; *df* = 1). The same steps to improve model fit for Model 3a were taken for Model 3b. The third step of the model

after adding a correlation between Perceived Stress and Self-Esteem and removing the direct back from Perceived Child's Desire to Perceived stress resulted in acceptable model fit (*Chi-Square Test*, $p = 0.8253$; $RMSEA < 0.001$, C.I. = 0.0-0.17; $CFI = 1.00$; $SRMR = 0.004$; $df = 1$). Again, this was a hypothesized path and removing it from the model voids Hypothesis 3b.

Table 3b outlines the significant paths for Model 3b. (See Table 10b in the appendix for full results of the model.)

Table 3b

Statistically Significant Results of Hypothesized Paths of Model 3b

Direct Effects				
Variables	β	S.E.	p	Std. β
<u>Self-Esteem</u>				
Child's Desire	0.655†	0.370	0.076	0.294
<u>Perceived Stress</u>				
No significant hypothesized paths				
Indirect Effects				
Variables	β	S.E.	p	Std. β
<u>Perceived Stress</u>				
Cooperative Coparenting Coparent's Desire	-0.211†	0.127	>0.05	-0.275

Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, † $p < .1$

The results of the analysis of Model 3b showed no significant direct effects. Hypothesis 3a (“An increase in Child's Desire will predict an increase in Self-Esteem”) was not supported in this subsample with direct effect of Child's Desire onto Self-Esteem no longer being statistically significant ($p = 0.076$). There were no statistically significant paths from the Desire of Current Partner variable, thus Hypotheses 3e and 3f were rejected.

The significant indirect effect found in Model 3a was no longer significant in Model 3b with the subsample of fathers with a current partner. The indirect effect from Coparent's Desire to Perceived Stress through Cooperative Coparenting was no longer significant ($p = 0.098$). There were no indirect effects from the Current Partner's Desire to either of the outcome variables in this model, thus Hypotheses 7i-7l were rejected.

Model 4

Model 4 examined the direct effects of the divorce factors onto the father parenting variables and the coparenting relationship variables and the indirect effects of the divorce factors onto the father parenting variables through the coparenting relationship variables. Analyses of this model showed poor model fit (*Chi-Square Test*, $p < 0.001$; $RMSEA = 0.255$, C.I. = 0.173-0.347; $CFI = 0.900$; $SRMR = 0.052$; $df = 3$). Correlations of residuals were examined and the correlation between the residuals Value of the Father Role and Parental Self-Efficacy (2.361) suggested that a correlation path between these two endogenous variables should be added to the model. However, doing this only slightly improved model fit. For step 3, the residuals were examined again and the residuals of Value of the Father Role and Father's Desire to be in the Child's Life showed the highest correlation (0.241). Adding a correlation between these two endogenous variables slightly improved model fit. The model was examined theoretically and conceptually and it was determined that the direct path from Pre-Divorce Conflict to Value of the Father Role should be removed because it is expected that the only impact Pre-Divorce Conflict would have on the Value of the Father Role would be through the coparenting relationship variables. Removing this path from the model negates Hypothesis 4. This fourth step improved the model fit but there was still evidence for

poor model fit with some of the fit statistics. It was then determined that the direct paths between Pre-Divorce Conflict and Parental Self-Efficacy and Father's Desire to be in the Child's Life would be removed in a fifth step following the same conceptual thinking as step four. Removing these paths then negates Hypotheses 4g and 4i. This fifth step improved model fit to an acceptable level, but a sixth step was taken to further improve model fit. In the sixth step, a correlation between Parental Self-Efficacy and Father's Desire to be in the Child's Life was added due to the correlation of the residuals of these two items in the fifth step (0.224). This sixth step results in the best fitting model (*Chi-Square Test*, $p = 0.9005$; $RMSEA < 0.001$, C.I. = 0.0-0.064; $CFI = 1.00$; $SRMR = 0.007$; $df = 3$).

Table 4 outlines the significant paths for Model 4. (See Table 11 in the appendix for full results of the model.)

Table 4
Statistically Significant Results of Hypothesized Paths of Model 4

Direct Effects				
Variables	β	S.E.	p	Std. β
<u>Parental Self-Efficacy</u>				
No significant paths				
<u>Value of Father Role</u>				
No significant hypothesized paths				
<u>Father's Desire</u>				
No significant paths				
Indirect Effects				
Variables	β	S.E.	p	Std. β
<u>Value of Father Role</u>				
Cooperative Coparenting				
Legal Process Satisfaction	0.100*	0.032	<0.05	0.194
Pre-Divorce Conflict	-0.206*	0.063	<0.05	-0.142

Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, † $p < .1$

The results of the Model 4 analysis showed no statistical support for the hypothesized direct effects, thus Hypotheses 4a-4i were rejected.

Model 4 showed evidence for two indirect effects. The first indirect effect supported Hypothesis 8k (“Legal Process Satisfaction will have an indirect effect on Value of Father Role through Cooperative Co-parenting”) with an estimated unstandardized effect of 0.1 and a 95% bootstrap CI [0.043, 0.166]. The second indirect effect supported Hypothesis 8q (“Pre-Divorce Conflict will have an indirect effect on Value of Father Role through Cooperative Co-parenting”) with an estimated unstandardized effect of -0.206 and a 95% bootstrap CI [-0.326, -0.080]. There was no other statistical support for the sub-hypotheses of Hypothesis 8a-8j, 8l-8p, and 8r.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore how the influence of others in a father's life (child, coparent, and current partner) and different divorce factors (Legal Process Satisfaction, Pre-Divorce Conflict, and Initiation of Divorce) influence fathers' post-divorce parenting (Parental Self-Efficacy, Value of the Father Role, and Desire to be in Child's Life) and wellbeing (Perceived Stress, Self-Esteem), and to explore if there were indirect effects between these factors through the coparenting relationship factors (Coparenting Efficacy and Cooperative Coparenting). The hypothesized relationships among these variables were estimated and analyzed in four path analysis models, and the results of these analyses support four hypothesized direct effects and four hypothesized indirect effects. The significant results can be organized into three main groups: child's influence on fathers, coparent's influence on fathers, and divorce factors.

Child's Influence on Father

The findings related to the fathers' children and coparents support the theoretical assumptions of role theory that individuals in a new role (e.g., divorced father) will look to others to help clarify their new responsibilities (Biddle, 1986). In Models 1 and 3, father's perception of their child's desire for the father to be in the child's life directly

predicted Parental Self-Efficacy ($\beta = 0.688$, S.E. = 0.168), Value of Father Role ($\beta = 1.115$, S.E. = 0.188), and Self-Esteem ($\beta = 0.562$, S.E. = 0.218). These results support the findings from Stone and McKenry (1998) that identified the quality of the father's relationship with the child to have direct and indirect effects on father involvement. The findings from the current study regarding Child's Desire tell a unique story about the father relationship that has not been well captured in the research literature. For one, it is important to highlight that this item is measuring the father's perception of the child's desire. This informs those who work with divorced fathers that fathers' perception of their relationships play a large role in their parenting and adjustment. Clinicians can work with fathers to reframe their perceptions to a more helpful and positive viewpoint of their relationships with their children. Additionally, this finding further illuminates the importance of the relationship between the fathers and their children. It has been well researched that involvement with the father is beneficial for the child (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999; Adamsons & Johnson, 2013), but these findings show that it benefits the father as well by potentially increasing their sense of Parental Self-Efficacy, Value of Father Role, and Self-Esteem. This mutually beneficial relationship that benefits both father and child adjustment post-divorce can be used as motivation for fathers to stay involved in their children's lives.

Further research is needed to better understand what additional factors may lead fathers to feel wanted by their children. With Child's Desire being exogenous in the models, this study cannot speak directly to what may influence the development of this item. Conceptually, it is expected that it would partially be influenced by fathers having the opportunity to spend more quality time with their children, which is often dependent

upon fathers' relationship with their coparents. It may be that fathers' perceptions of their children are influenced by their perceptions of their coparents or vice versa. Untangling this web of influence would lead to more precise interventions for clinicians and coparenting educators.

Coparent's Influence on Father

In Models 1 and 3, the perception that the coparent wanted the father in the child's life had an indirect effect on Value of Father Role through Cooperative Coparenting ($\beta = 0.491$, S.E. = 0.109) and on Perceived Stress through Coparenting Efficacy ($\beta = -0.157$, S.E. = 0.07). The coparenting relationship is often identified as one of the most important factors that determines adjustment and parenting for both parents following a divorce (Ahrons & Miller, 1993; Brokker, 2006). The findings of this study that the coparenting relationship is important to fathers' parenting and adjustment is nothing new; however, these findings highlight an important understanding of the role that fathers' perceptions of their coparent plays in the coparenting relationship and thus their parenting and adjustment. The perception that the father is wanted in their children's lives by the coparent seems to validate their roles as father and lessen the stress that comes with the adjustment to the role of divorce father.

These findings support previous findings regarding maternal gatekeeping and fathers' sense of competence being affected by time with their children (Fagan & Barnett, 2003). Gatekeeping is already included as a concept of many coparenting education courses, however these talking points on gatekeeping can be taken a step further by encouraging coparents to advocate for their coparents' relationship with their children. This helps to ensure fathers feeling wanted by their children and valued by coparent and

can be a protective factor to prevent fathers from disengaging from their parenting roles. Furthermore, feeling unwanted can lead to poor coparenting relationships and poor parenting attitudes and adjustment for fathers, which can potentially lead to fathers distancing themselves from their children. Any professionals working with parents post-divorce should work with each side to help them feel included in their children's lives.

Divorce Factors

In Model 2, Legal Process Satisfaction was found to have a direct effect on Perceived Stress ($\beta = -0.99$, S.E. = 0.042). While it was expected that the legal process would have an effect on fathers' post-divorce adjustment, this direct effect is of note as it adds to the understanding of the overarching impact the divorce process has on father wellbeing. While the focus of the legal process is to finalize the divorce and create a legal outline for the coparenting duties and relationships, the findings of this study indicate that how the legal process is conducted and experienced has a significant effect on fathers' adjustment after the divorce. Legal professional should focus on the process as well as the outcome to aid families in navigating the difficult experience of divorce more effectively.

In Model 4, there are two indirect effects that highlight how Legal Process Satisfaction ($\beta = 0.1$, S.E. = 0.032) and Pre-Divorce Conflict ($\beta = -0.206$, S.E. = 0.063) influence Value of Father Role through Cooperative Coparenting. The direct paths from the divorce factors to Cooperative Coparenting were expected based on previous research findings (see review in Bokker, 2006). What is unique from the study is the role that the coparenting relationship played in how the divorce factors influenced how the fathers valued their role. These results indicate that a positive legal system experience can lead to

a more cooperative coparenting relationship and then continue to impact fathers' post-divorce parenting. With the majority of states requiring coparenting education courses for divorcing parents (Salem, Sandler, & Wolchik, 2013), it may be that many legal systems expect this to be enough to promote cooperative coparenting. However, the findings of this study support the notion that cooperative coparenting is influenced before the divorce is finalized and legal professionals can play a role in providing direction, assistance, and support for parents going through the divorce process to ensure a cooperative coparenting relationship.

The influence Pre-Divorce Conflict has on Value of Father Role through Cooperative Coparenting is supported by family systems theory as what has happened in the relationship in the past can continue to impact the relationship in the present. As family systems seek homeostasis when going through the process of adaptation (Cox & Paley, 2003), falling into old patterns of conflict may be a family system's attempt to maintain homeostasis. The results of this study regarding Pre-Divorce conflict highlight the previous conflict as a point of intervention for mediation or mental health professionals. Helping divorcing couples to work through their conflict even after their romantic relationship has ended can have significant effects on how they are able to cooperate as coparents in the future. This working through past conflict is an effort to separate the events from the past from the current coparenting relationship to improve the coparents' cooperation and how fathers' value their parenting role, thus improving the overall functioning of this new family system.

Additional research should look into the impact of Pre-Divorce Conflict on Legal System Satisfaction and how this affects the overarching model of post-divorce

adjustment. There may be a predictive path between these variables that more comprehensively illuminates the patterns families experience throughout the divorce process.

Unexpected Findings

In Model 1, an increase in Coparent's Desire was expected to predict an increase in Parental Self-Efficacy and Value of Father Role (Hypotheses 1d and 1e, respectively). The findings showed that there was a significant direct path between the variables, however Coparent's Desire was found to have a negative effect on both parenting factors. A one-unit increase in Coparent's Desire was found to predict a 0.229-unit decrease in Parental Self-Efficacy and a 0.217-unit decrease in Value of Father Role. A theoretical understanding of these results is outside of the scope of this study, however it might be considered that this effect may be related to the fathers sensing unwanted influence on their parenting behaviors from their coparent. If the father thinks that the coparent wants them to be more involved than the father wants to be, this may lower his belief in his parenting abilities and his desire to act on his role as a father. No clear conclusion can be made to explain this result at this time, however future explanation and study is warranted.

There were no significant findings for the Current Partner's Desire item on the fathers' parenting and wellbeing factors, however some of the results that were identified in the models with all of the participants (Models 1a and 3a) were no longer significant when the fathers without partners were removed. Child's Desire was a significant predictor for Parental Self-Efficacy in Model 1a and for Self-Esteem in Model 3a, but these paths were no longer significant when the fathers without a current partner were

removed and the direct path for Current Partner's Desire was added for Models 1b and 3b. Any empirical conclusions cannot be drawn from this result without further testing, but it is an intriguing observation. The accounting for the influences of multiple important figures in the fathers' life adds valuable nuance to the understanding of fathers' post-divorce parenting and adjustment, and this unexpected result draws attention to how the power of influence may change for fathers when additional significant relationships are added to the web of influence. This additional observation warrants further analyses to identify whether the fathers' children or current partners' have a greater effect on their post-divorce parenting and adjustment.

Lastly, divorce initiator status was hypothesized to have direct and indirect effects on the parenting and adjustment outcome variables, but no significant results were identified. However, of interest for future research is the significant relationships this item had on the coparenting factors. The Divorce Initiation item was included in Models 2 and 4; this item did not show a significance in Model 4, but in Model 2 it was found that fathers who initiated the divorce had lower Coparenting Efficacy and Cooperative Coparenting scores ($\beta = -4.581$, $\beta = -4.69$, respectively) than fathers whose divorce was initiated by coparent or by a mutual decision. Knowing that initiator status has been shown to play a key role in post-divorce adjustment (Wang & Amato, 2000; Yildirim & Demir, 2015), these direct effects warrant additional exploration. It could be that fathers who initiated the divorce had high levels of conflict pre-divorce and thus had lower expectations for the possibility of having a positive coparenting relationship post-divorce, but confirmation of such conjectures is outside the scope of this project.

Limitations

While the findings of this study will make significant contributions to the research literature on divorce and fatherhood, these contributions are not made without limitations. The first limitation is related to the survey items utilized to collect the dataset utilized for this study. The dataset was cross-sectional and thus inferences on prediction and temporal precedence were limited to theoretical understandings and assumptions. Furthermore, the survey items were self-report, measuring the participants' perceptions of themselves and others rather than a true measurement of the items. Next, there was not a quality measure of time since divorce utilized in the data collection process, thus any post-divorce adjustment cannot properly be attributed to the passing of time. Additionally, there was no item identifying if the fathers in the sample had custody of their children, thus the results cannot directly be applied to residential or non-residential fathers. The lack of an item accounting for the custody status invalidated the measures of fathers' time with children as it could not be determined if their time with their children was due to having custody or having close relationships with their children and coparents. Lastly, since all of the participants were recruited from fathers who had completed a court-mandated coparenting education program, there was an issue with socially desirable responses for some items leading to little variance between participants' responses. For example, the item Fathers' desire had very little variance because most fathers answered in the 8-10 range, thus limiting the ability to effectively predict this item.

Few of the significant results within the study had large effect sizes. With only 124 participants, this study was limited to what it was going to be able to strongly predict. Additionally, much of the variance was absorbed by other items included in the model,

thus smaller effect sizes. Future use of this dataset should consider smaller, more compatible analyses in order to identify stronger effects between the items. Lastly, with such a small sample and so many paths estimated in the model, there is a risk that these models were also over fit to the sample. While theory drove the construction of the model and the processes of improving the global fit, there is a risk that the results of this study may not be replicable with a different data set. Further analyses should be conducted to confirm these findings.

Future Research

The results of this study have highlighted significant additions to the literature on these topics and provided solid direction for potential future research as well. This study examines only a piece of the larger picture of adjustment following divorce. Future research could explore how coparents' views of each others' parenting abilities and practices influence their own approaches to parenting. This would expand on the understanding of the influences and development of fathers' post-divorce parenting behaviors. Further research could examine how coparenting relationships differ based on the reason for divorce. This would allow legal professionals, clinicians, and coparenting educators to respond more directly to families' needs based on their pre-divorce experiences. With the perception of others' desire factors playing a large role in this study, further research to better understand the formation of fathers' perceptions of others' desires for them to be in their children's lives is warranted. Further consideration for fathers with multiple coparents and how having children from multiple relationships may impact fathers' parenting practices and adjustment. Lastly, additional research should be conducted to explore the adjustment process for mothers as well. Potential

multilevel modeling analyses utilizing samples from both mothers and fathers to examine difference both within and between groups would make a great impact on the understanding of the divorce adjustment process for the entire family.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A
IRB Approval



Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: 07/19/2018
Application Number: HS-18-36
Proposal Title: Divorced Father's Experience in Co-Parenting.

Principal Investigator: MATT BROSI
Co-Investigator(s): Todd Spencer
Faculty Adviser:
Project Coordinator:
Research Assistant(s): Ethan Jones

Processed as: Exempt

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

The final versions of any recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are available for download from IRBManager. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be approved by the IRB. Protocol modifications requiring approval may include changes to the title, PI, adviser, other research personnel, funding status or sponsor, subject population composition or size, recruitment, inclusion/exclusion criteria, research site, research procedures and consent/assent process or forms.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any unanticipated and/or adverse events to the IRB Office promptly.
4. Notify the IRB office when your research project is complete or when you are no longer affiliated with Oklahoma State University.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact the IRB Office at 223 Scott Hall (phone: 405-744-3377, irb@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hugh Crethar'.

Hugh Crethar, Chair Institutional
Review Board

Table 5
Sample Demographics (N = 124)

Variable	Category	<i>n</i>	Percent
Age	20-30	15	12.1%
	31-40	50	40.3%
	41-50	30	24.2%
	51-60	9	7.3%
	Missing	20	16.1%
Ethnicity	White/Caucasian	101	81.5%
	Black/African-American	6	4.8%
	Hispanic or Latino	5	4%
	Native American	5	4%
	Asian	2	1.6%
	2 or more races	5	4%
Education	High School or Ged	15	12.1%
	Some College or Tech School	36	29%
	Tech School	5	4%
	College Degree	55	44.4%
	Master's Degree	10	8.1%
	Doctorate or Professional Degree (PhD, MD, JD, etc.)	3	2.4%
Annual Income	<\$20,000	2	1.6%
	\$20,001 - \$30,000	23	18.5%
	\$30,001 - \$40,000	12	9.7%
	\$40,001 - \$50,000	8	6.5%
	\$50,001 - \$60,000	16	12.9%
	\$60,001 - \$70,000	19	15.3%
	\$70,001 - \$80,000	9	7.3%
	> \$80,001	35	28.2%

Table 6
Bivariate correlations

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Parental Self-Efficacy		-.011	-.011	-.016	-.106	-.095	-.011	.141	.045	-.021	.105	.053	-.001
2. Value of Father Role			-.008	-.011	-.075	-.022	-.008	.099	-.025	-.07	-.035	.127	.023
3. Father's Desire				-.011	-.074	-.067	-.008	-.029	.031	.072	-.035	.016	-.016
4. Self Esteem					.155	.018	-.012	.141	.296**	.081	-.035	.166	.083
5. Perceived Stress						-.059	-.074	.04	-.09	.055	-.214*	-.008	.046
6. Legal System Satisfaction							-.067	.05	.18*	.333***	-.027	.429***	.446***
7. Pre-Divorce Conflict								.098	.031	-.044	.037	-.077	-.1
8. Divorce Initiation									.059	.207*	-.053	.225*	.271*
9. Child's Desire										.363***	.384***	.333***	.307**
10. Coparent's Desire											.072	.596***	.806***
11. Current Partner's Desire												.071	.047
12. Coparenting Efficacy													.773***
13. Cooperative Coparenting													

Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, † $p < .1$

Table 7
Variable Descriptive Statistics

Scale	<i>n</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Range	Cronbach's α
Outcome Scales					
Parental Self-Efficacy	122	17.78	2.42	12-20	.876
Value of Father Role	123	25.15	3.24	12-28	.722
Self-Esteem	122	21	2.74	14-24	.813
Perceived Stress	74	9.01	2.31	4-18	.718
Predictor Scales					
Legal System Satisfaction	124	19.4	6.26	8-32	.921
Mediator Scales					
Coparenting Efficacy	123	24.07	10.86	7-49	.927
Cooperative Coparenting	121	28.16	12.25	11-55	.94
<hr/>					
	<i>n</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Range	
Outcome Items					
Father's Desire	123	9.93	0.52	5-10	
Predictor Items					
Child's Desire	124	9.53	1.54	1-10	
Coparent's Desire	124	7.49	3.15	1-10	
Current Partner's Desire	88	9.51	1.48	1-10	
Pre-Divorce Conflict	123	7.01	2.23	1-10	
Divorce Initiation					
			%		
Father Initiated Divorce	48	38.7			
Coparent Initiated Divorce	56	45.2			
Mutually Initiated Divorce	20	16.1			

Table 8a
Results from Model 1a Path Analysis

Direct Effects				
Variables	β	S.E.	<i>p</i>	Std. β
Parental Self-Efficacy				
Child's Desire	0.688***	0.168	<0.001	0.438
Coparent's Desire	-0.229*	0.102	0.024	-0.299
Coparenting Efficacy	0.017	0.030	0.564	0.077
Cooperative Coparenting	0.027	0.032	0.394	0.141
Value of Father Role				
Child's Desire	1.115***	0.188	<0.001	0.53
Coparent's Desire	-0.217*	0.106	0.041	-0.212
Coparenting Efficacy	0.010	0.029	0.735	0.033
Cooperative Coparenting	0.158***	0.033	<0.001	0.604
Father's Desire				
Child's Desire	0.094	0.105	0.37	0.282
Coparent's Desire	-0.015	0.021	0.483	-0.092
Coparenting Efficacy	-0.004	0.004	0.286	-0.083
Cooperative Coparenting	0.004	0.008	0.607	0.102
Coparenting Efficacy				
Child's Desire	0.915*	0.453	0.043	0.129
Coparent's Desire	1.893***	0.278	<0.001	0.549
Cooperative Coparenting				
Child's Desire	0.383	0.387	0.322	0.048
Coparent's Desire	3.110***	0.220	<0.001	0.792
Indirect Effects				
Variables	β	S.E.	<i>p</i>	Std. β
Parental Self-Efficacy				
Coparenting Efficacy				
Child's Desire	0.016	0.030	>0.05	0.01
Coparent's Desire	0.032	0.057	>0.05	0.042

Parental Self-Efficacy				
Cooperative Coparenting				
Child's Desire	0.011	0.021	>0.05	0.007
Coparent's Desire	0.085	0.101	>0.05	0.111
Value of Father Role				
Coparenting Efficacy				
Child's Desire	0.009	0.030	>0.05	0.004
Coparent's Desire	0.018	0.054	>0.05	0.018
Value of Father Role				
Cooperative Coparenting				
Child's Desire	0.060	0.065	>0.05	0.029
Coparent's Desire	0.491*	0.109	<0.05	0.479
Father's Desire				
Coparenting Efficacy				
Child's Desire	-0.004	0.004	>0.05	-0.011
Coparent's Desire	-0.007	0.007	>0.05	-0.046
Father's Desire				
Cooperative Coparenting				
Child's Desire	0.002	0.007	>0.05	0.005
Coparent's Desire	0.013	0.025	>0.05	0.08

Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, † $p < .1$

Table 8b
Results from Model 1b Path Analysis

Direct Effects				
Variables	β	S.E.	<i>p</i>	Std. β
Parental Self-Efficacy				
Child's Desire	0.834†	0.443	0.06	0.411
Coparent's Desire	-0.232*	0.115	0.043	-0.278
Current Partner's Desire	0.091	0.380	0.81	0.055
Coparenting Efficacy	0.058	0.038	0.128	0.25
Cooperative Coparenting	-0.003	0.038	0.928	-0.017
Value of Father Role				
Child's Desire	1.241**	0.395	0.002	0.485
Coparent's Desire	-0.160	0.135	0.238	-0.152
Current Partner's Desire	0.169	0.280	0.545	0.081
Coparenting Efficacy	-0.010	0.035	0.77	-0.035
Cooperative Coparenting	0.171***	0.041	<0.001	0.679
Father's Desire				
Child's Desire	0.130	0.203	0.521	0.259
Coparent's Desire	-0.015	0.025	0.554	-0.072
Current Partner's Desire	0.164	0.161	0.309	0.397
Coparenting Efficacy	-0.006	0.006	0.352	-0.099
Cooperative Coparenting	0.007	0.010	0.478	0.137
Coparenting Efficacy				
Child's Desire	-0.083	0.745	0.911	-0.01
Coparent's Desire	2.208***	0.329	<0.001	0.616
Current Partner's Desire	0.217	0.553	0.695	0.03
Cooperative Coparenting				
Child's Desire	-0.287	1.041	0.783	-0.028
Coparent's Desire	3.259***	0.281	<0.001	0.783
Current Partner's Desire	0.120	0.827	0.885	0.014

Indirect Effects				
Variables	β	S.E.	p	Std. β
Parental Self-Efficacy				
Coparenting Efficacy				
Child's Desire	-0.005	0.053	>0.05	-0.002
Coparent's Desire	0.128	0.086	>0.05	0.154
Current Partner's Desire	0.013	0.042	>0.05	0.008
Parental Self-Efficacy				
Cooperative Coparenting				
Child's Desire	0.001	0.048	>0.05	0.000
Coparent's Desire	-0.011	0.125	>0.05	-0.013
Current Partner's Desire	0.000	0.034	>0.05	0.000
Value of Father Role				
Coparenting Efficacy				
Child's Desire	0.001	0.029	>0.05	0.000
Coparent's Desire	-0.022	0.077	>0.05	-0.021
Current Partner's Desire	-0.002	0.020	>0.05	-0.001
Value of Father Role				
Cooperative Coparenting				
Child's Desire	-0.049	0.174	>0.05	-0.019
Coparent's Desire	0.558*	0.140	<0.05	0.531
Current Partner's Desire	0.021	0.145	>0.05	0.01
Father's Desire				
Coparenting Efficacy				
Child's Desire	0.000	0.006	>0.05	0.001
Coparent's Desire	-0.013	0.014	>0.05	-0.061
Current Partner's Desire	-0.001	0.004	>0.05	-0.003
Father's Desire				
Cooperative Coparenting				
Child's Desire	-0.002	0.014	>0.05	-0.004
Coparent's Desire	0.022	0.032	>0.05	0.107
Current Partner's Desire	0.001	0.009	>0.05	0.002

Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, † $p < .1$

Table 9
Results from Model 2 Path Analysis

Direct Effects				
Variables	β	S.E.	<i>p</i>	Std. β
Self-Esteem				
Legal Process Satisfaction	-0.033	0.047	0.479	-0.076
Pre-Divorce Conflict	-0.020	0.134	0.882	-0.016
Father Initiated Divorce	0.192	0.700	0.784	0.034
Coparent Initiated Divorce	-0.177	0.640	0.782	-0.032
Coparenting Efficacy	-0.006	0.042	0.887	-0.023
Cooperative Coparenting	0.019	0.038	0.608	0.087
Perceived Stress				
Legal Process Satisfaction	-0.099*	0.042	0.019	-0.267
Father Initiated Divorce	-0.811	0.723	0.262	-0.171
Coparent Initiated Divorce	0.343	0.705	0.627	0.074
Coparenting Efficacy	-0.065*	0.032	0.045	-0.304
Cooperative Coparenting	-0.013	0.025	0.6	-0.07
Coparenting Efficacy				
Legal Process Satisfaction	0.639***	0.161	<0.001	0.368
Pre-Divorce Conflict	-1.090**	0.390	0.005	-0.224
Father Initiated Divorce	-4.581*	2.329	0.049	-0.206
Coparent Initiated Divorce	-2.223	2.323	0.339	-0.102
Cooperative Coparenting				
Legal Process Satisfaction	0.751***	0.157	<0.001	0.384
Pre-Divorce Conflict	-1.658***	0.419	<0.001	-0.302
Father Initiated Divorce	-4.690*	2.279	0.04	-0.187
Coparent Initiated Divorce	0.619	2.250	0.783	0.025

Indirect Effects				
Variables	β	S.E.	p	Std. β
Self-Esteem				
Coparenting Efficacy				
Legal Process Satisfaction	-0.004	0.027	>0.05	-0.009
Pre-Divorce Conflict	0.006	0.048	>0.05	0.005
Father Initiated Divorce	0.027	0.219	>0.05	0.005
Coparent Initiated Divorce	0.013	0.136	>0.05	0.002
Self-Esteem				
Cooperative Coparenting				
Legal Process Satisfaction	0.015	0.029	>0.05	0.033
Pre-Divorce Conflict	-0.032	0.065	>0.05	-0.026
Father Initiated Divorce	-0.091	0.207	>0.05	-0.016
Coparent Initiated Divorce	0.012	0.096	>0.05	0.002
Perceived Stress				
Coparenting Efficacy				
Legal Process Satisfaction	-0.041 [†]	0.024	>0.05	-0.112
Pre-Divorce Conflict	0.071	0.046	>0.05	0.068
Father Initiated Divorce	0.297	0.226	>0.05	0.063
Coparent Initiated Divorce	0.144	0.192	>0.05	0.031
Perceived Stress				
Cooperative Coparenting				
Legal Process Satisfaction	-0.010	0.019	>0.05	-0.027
Pre-Divorce Conflict	0.022	0.044	>0.05	0.021
Father Initiated Divorce	0.062	0.140	>0.05	0.013
Coparent Initiated Divorce	-0.008	0.062	>0.05	-0.002

Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, [†] $p < .1$

Table 10a
Results from Model 3a Path Analysis

Direct Effects				
Variables	β	S.E.	<i>p</i>	Std. β
Self-Esteem				
Child's Desire	0.562*	0.218	0.010	0.312
Coparent's Desire	-0.163	0.131	0.212	-0.185
Coparenting Efficacy	-0.019	0.043	0.654	-0.075
Cooperative Coparenting	0.033	0.046	0.469	0.148
Perceived Stress				
Coparent's Desire	0.163	0.121	0.178	0.223
Coparenting Efficacy	-0.083*	0.034	0.014	-0.393
Cooperative Coparenting	-0.048	0.032	0.136	-0.256
Coparenting Efficacy				
Child's Desire	0.918*	0.454	0.043	0.13
Coparent's Desire	1.891***	0.278	<0.001	0.549
Cooperative Coparenting				
Child's Desire	0.303	0.357	0.397	0.038
Coparent's Desire	3.094***	0.217	<0.001	0.794
Indirect Effects				
Variables	β	S.E.	<i>p</i>	Std. β
Self-Esteem				
Coparenting Efficacy				
Child's Desire	-0.017	0.044	>0.05	-0.01
Coparent's Desire	-0.036	0.081	>0.05	-0.041
Self-Esteem				
Cooperative Coparenting				
Child's Desire	0.010	0.026	>0.05	0.006
Coparent's Desire	0.103	0.143	>0.05	0.118

Perceived Stress				
Coparenting Efficacy				
Child's Desire	-0.076	0.052	>0.05	-0.051
Coparent's Desire	-0.157*	0.070	<0.05	-0.216

Perceived Stress				
Cooperative Coparenting				
Child's Desire	-0.015	0.024	>0.05	-0.01
Coparent's Desire	-0.148	0.099	>0.05	-0.203

Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, † $p < .1$

Table 10b
Results from Model 3b Path Analysis

Direct Effects				
Variables	β	S.E.	<i>p</i>	Std. β
Self-Esteem				
Child's Desire	0.655†	0.370	0.076	0.294
Coparent's Desire	-0.041	0.157	0.793	-0.045
Current Partner's Desire	0.253	0.258	0.328	0.138
Coparenting Efficacy	-0.015	0.049	0.755	-0.06
Cooperative Coparenting	0.031	0.050	0.54	0.14
Perceived Stress				
Coparent's Desire	0.094	0.132	0.475	0.123
Current Partner's Desire	-0.260	0.275	0.344	-0.17
Coparenting Efficacy	-0.060	0.040	0.134	-0.28
Cooperative Coparenting	-0.065†	0.039	0.099	-0.351
Coparenting Efficacy				
Child's Desire	-0.083	0.761	0.913	-0.01
Coparent's Desire	2.208***	0.328	<0.001	0.616
Current Partner's Desire	0.217	0.571	0.704	0.03
Cooperative Coparenting				
Child's Desire	-0.323	1.000	0.747	-0.032
Coparent's Desire	3.265***	0.282	<0.001	0.785
Current Partner's Desire	0.076	0.748	0.919	0.009
Indirect Effects				
Variables	β	S.E.	<i>p</i>	Std. β
Self-Esteem				
Coparenting Efficacy				
Child's Desire	0.001	0.041	>0.05	0.001
Coparent's Desire	-0.034	0.111	>0.05	-0.037
Current Partner's Desire	-0.003	0.034	>0.05	-0.002

Self-Esteem

Cooperative Coparenting

Child's Desire	-0.010	0.065	>0.05	-0.004
Coparent's Desire	0.101	0.166	>0.05	0.11
Current Partner's Desire	0.002	0.051	>0.05	0.001

Perceived Stress

Coparenting Efficacy

Child's Desire	0.005	0.051	>0.05	0.003
Coparent's Desire	-0.132	0.091	>0.05	-0.173
Current Partner's Desire	-0.013	0.038	>0.05	-0.008

Perceived Stress

Cooperative Coparenting

Child's Desire	0.021	0.087	>0.05	0.011
Coparent's Desire	-0.211†	0.127	>0.05	-0.275
Current Partner's Desire	-0.005	0.063	>0.05	-0.003

Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, † $p < .1$

Table 11
Results from Model 4 Path Analysis

Direct Effects				
Variables	β	S.E.	<i>p</i>	Std. β
Parental Self-Efficacy				
Legal Process Satisfaction	-0.059	0.039	0.131	-0.153
Father Initiated Divorce	0.012	0.696	0.986	0.002
Coparent Initiated Divorce	-0.200	0.667	0.764	-0.041
Coparenting Efficacy	0.043	0.034	0.208	0.194
Cooperative Coparenting	0.008	0.030	0.798	0.039
Value of Father Role				
Legal Process Satisfaction	0.043	0.035	0.209	0.084
Father Initiated Divorce	0.385	0.764	0.615	0.058
Coparent Initiated Divorce	0.314	0.683	0.645	0.049
Coparenting Efficacy	0.042	0.035	0.241	0.14
Cooperative Coparenting	0.128***	0.029	<0.001	0.49
Father's Desire				
Legal Process Satisfaction	-0.006	0.008	0.405	-0.077
Father Initiated Divorce	0.193	0.275	0.483	0.183
Coparent Initiated Divorce	0.236	0.234	0.312	0.23
Coparenting Efficacy	0.000	0.005	0.933	0.01
Cooperative Coparenting	0.004	0.005	0.409	0.106
Coparenting Efficacy				
Legal Process Satisfaction	0.643***	0.161	<0.001	0.369
Pre-Divorce Conflict	-1.099**	0.390	0.005	-0.225
Father Initiated Divorce	-4.564†	2.337	0.051	-0.205
Coparent Initiated Divorce	-2.246	2.324	0.334	-0.103
Cooperative Coparenting				
Legal Process Satisfaction	0.780***	0.162	<0.001	0.395
Pre-Divorce Conflict	-1.601***	0.431	<0.001	-0.289
Father Initiated Divorce	-4.258†	2.412	0.078	-0.169
Coparent Initiated Divorce	1.211	2.389	0.612	0.049

Indirect Effects

Variables	β	S.E.	<i>p</i>	Std. β
Parental Self-Efficacy				
Coparenting Efficacy				
Legal Process Satisfaction	0.028	0.024	>0.05	0.072
Pre-Divorce Conflict	-0.048	0.044	>0.05	-0.044
Father Initiated Divorce	-0.198	0.212	>0.05	-0.04
Coparent Initiated Divorce	-0.097	0.151	>0.05	-0.02
Parental Self-Efficacy				
Cooperative Coparenting				
Legal Process Satisfaction	0.006	0.024	>0.05	0.015
Pre-Divorce Conflict	-0.012	0.049	>0.05	-0.011
Father Initiated Divorce	-0.033	0.152	>0.05	-0.007
Coparent Initiated Divorce	0.009	0.077	>0.05	-0.041
Value of Father Role				
Coparenting Efficacy				
Legal Process Satisfaction	0.027	0.025	>0.05	0.052
Pre-Divorce Conflict	-0.046	0.044	>0.05	-0.031
Father Initiated Divorce	-0.190	0.229	>0.05	-0.029
Coparent Initiated Divorce	-0.093	0.159	>0.05	-0.014
Value of Father Role				
Cooperative Coparenting				
Legal Process Satisfaction	0.100*	0.032	<0.05	0.194
Pre-Divorce Conflict	-0.206*	0.063	<0.05	-0.142
Father Initiated Divorce	-0.547	0.346	>0.05	-0.083
Coparent Initiated Divorce	0.156	0.310	>0.05	0.024
Father's Desire				
Coparenting Efficacy				
Legal Process Satisfaction	0.000	0.004	>0.05	0.004
Pre-Divorce Conflict	0.000	0.006	>0.05	-0.002
Father Initiated Divorce	-0.002	0.030	>0.05	-0.002
Coparent Initiated Divorce	-0.001	0.018	>0.05	-0.001

Father's Desire

Cooperative Coparenting

Legal Process Satisfaction	0.003	0.004	>0.05	0.042
Pre-Divorce Conflict	-0.007	0.009	>0.05	-0.031
Father Initiated Divorce	-0.019	0.030	>0.05	-0.018
Coparent Initiated Divorce	0.005	0.017	>0.05	0.005

Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, † $p < .1$

Figure 1
Hypothesized Model 1a

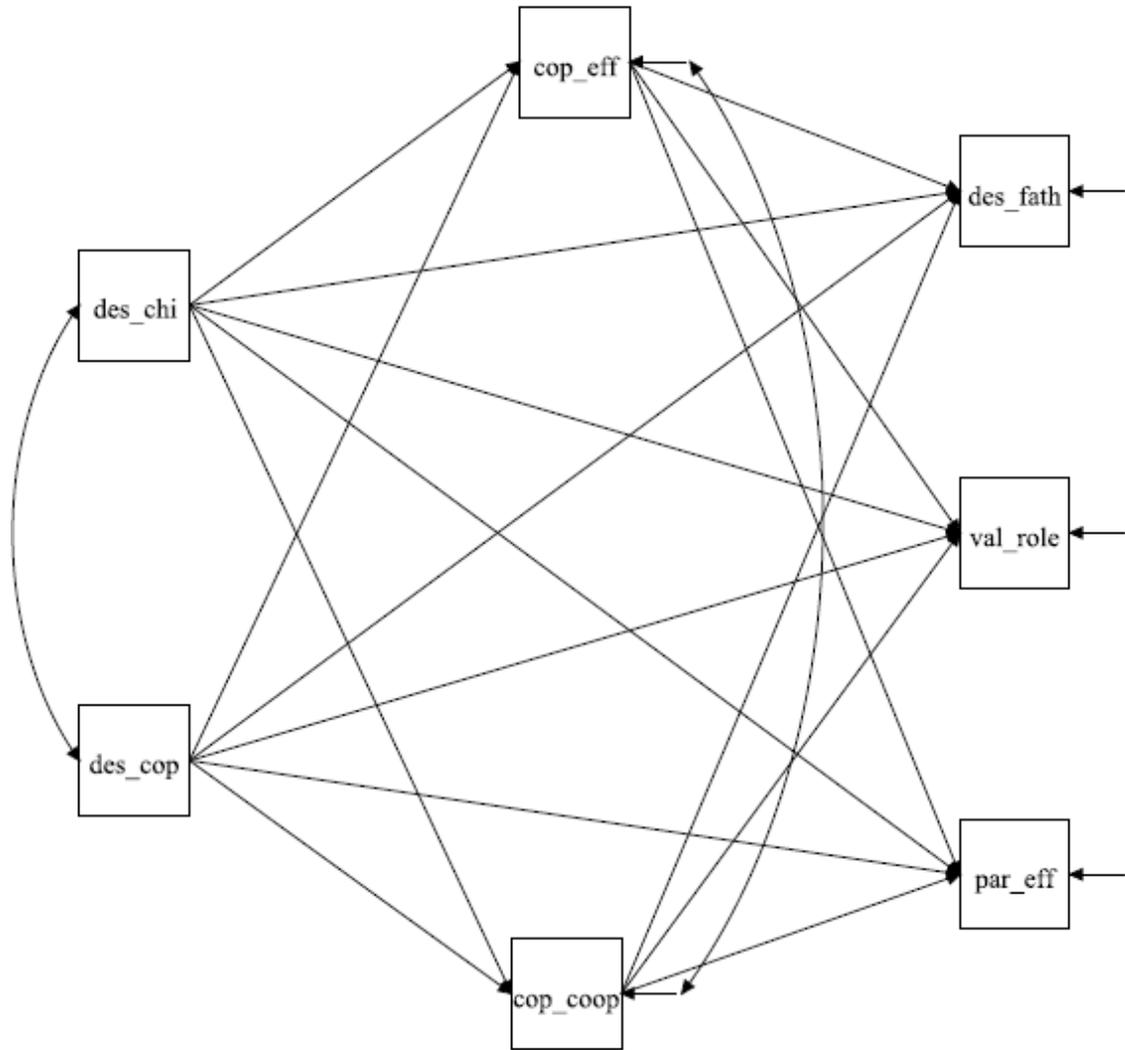


Figure 2
Adjusted Model 1a

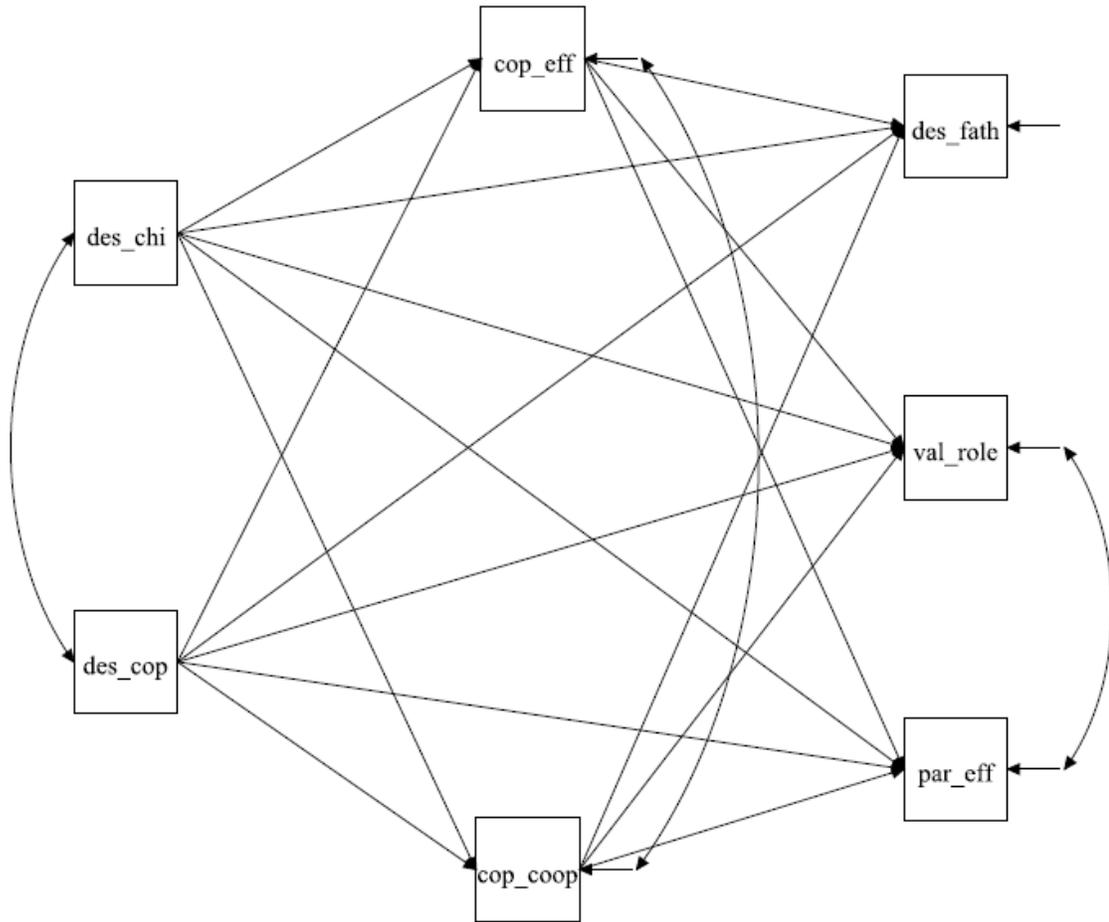


Figure 3
Hypothesized Model 1b

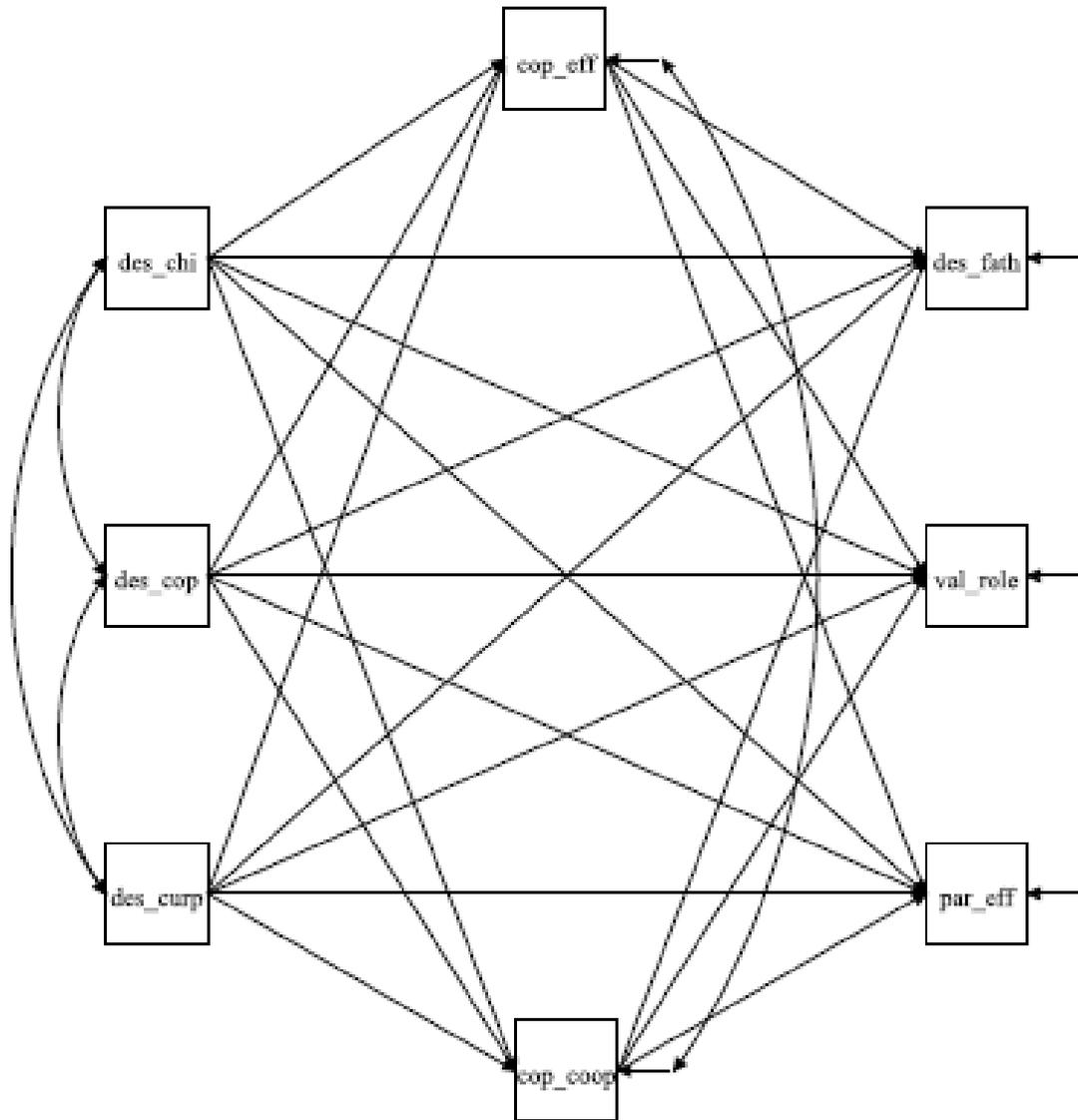


Figure 4
Adjusted Model 1b

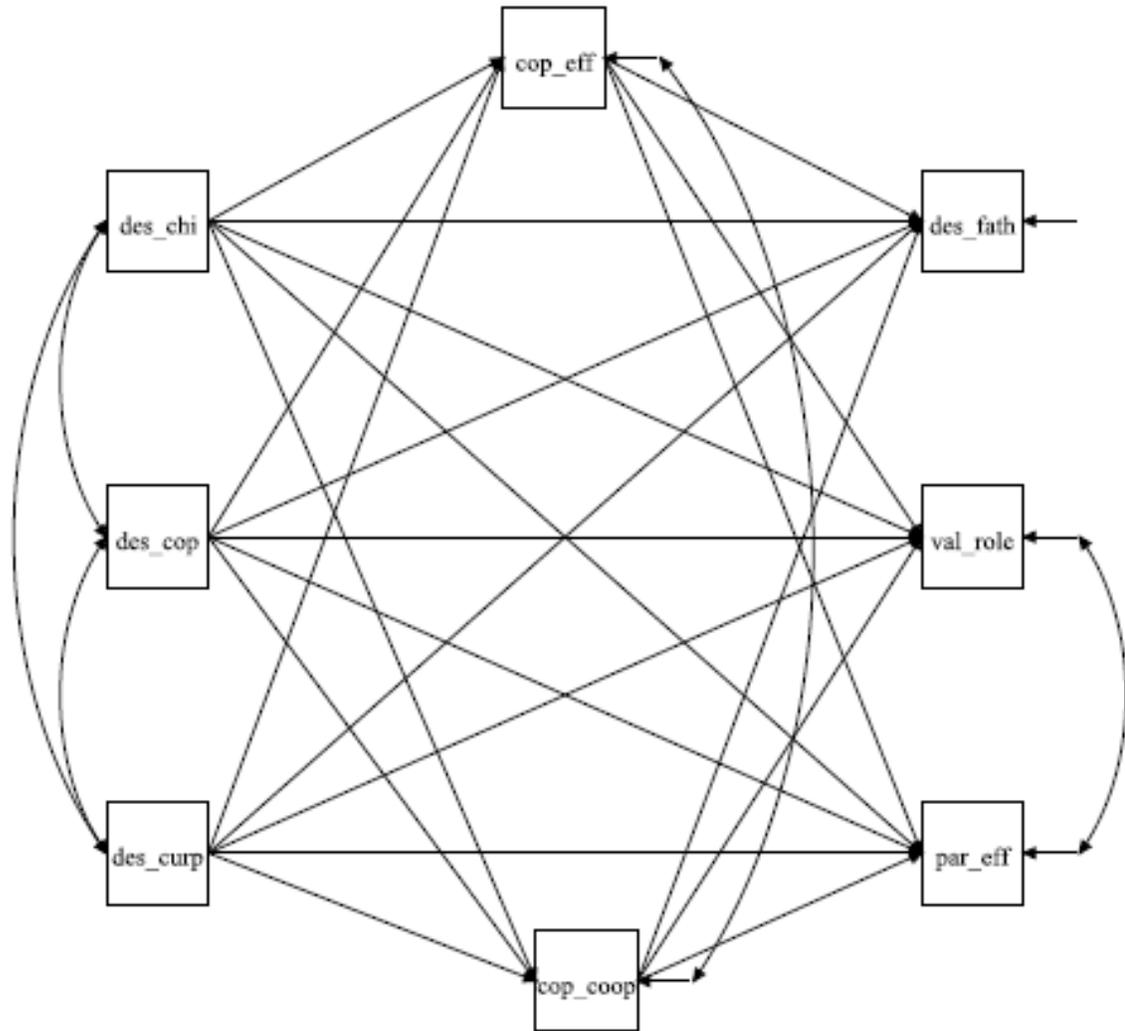


Figure 5
Hypothesized Model 2

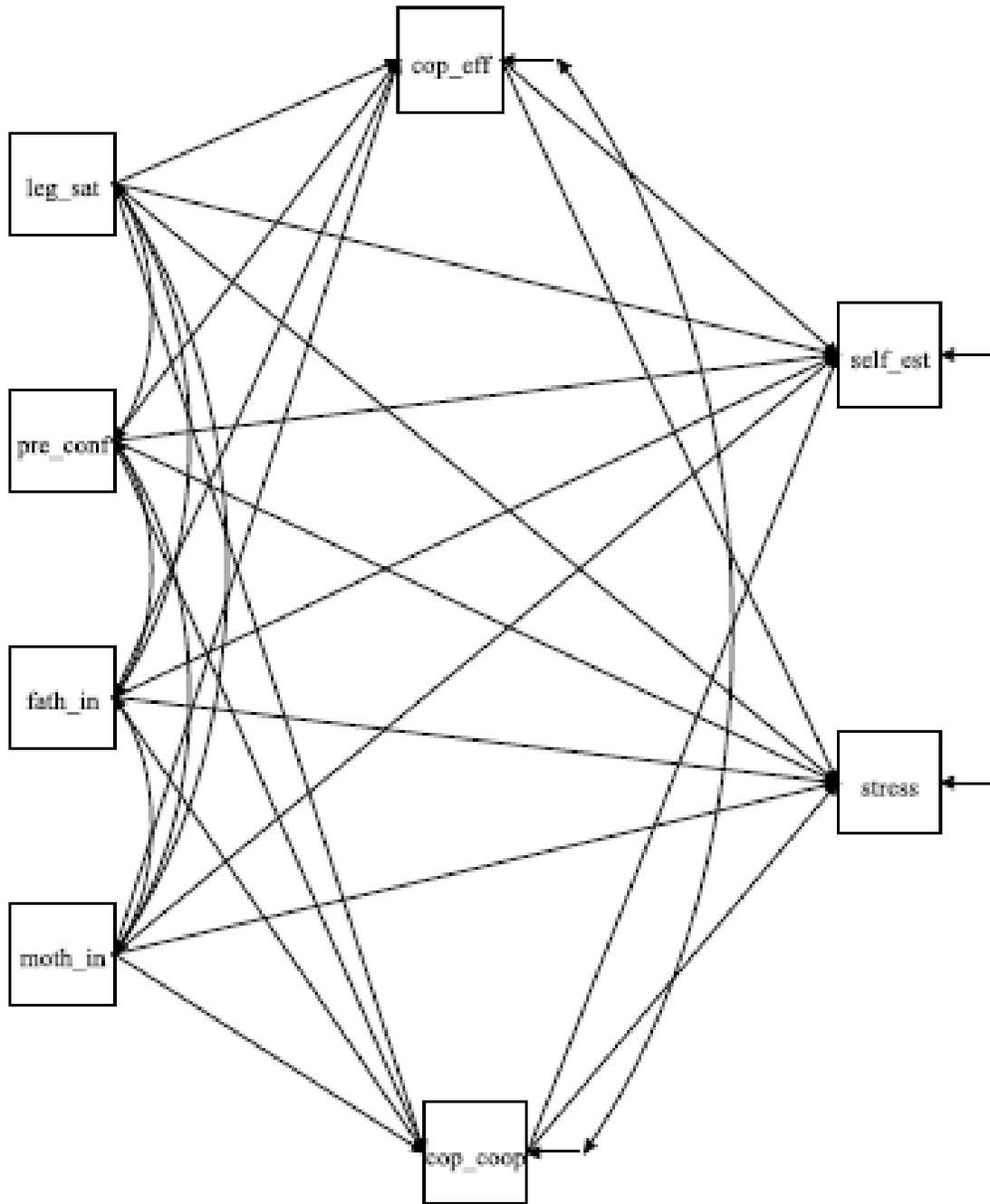


Figure 6
Adjustment Model 2

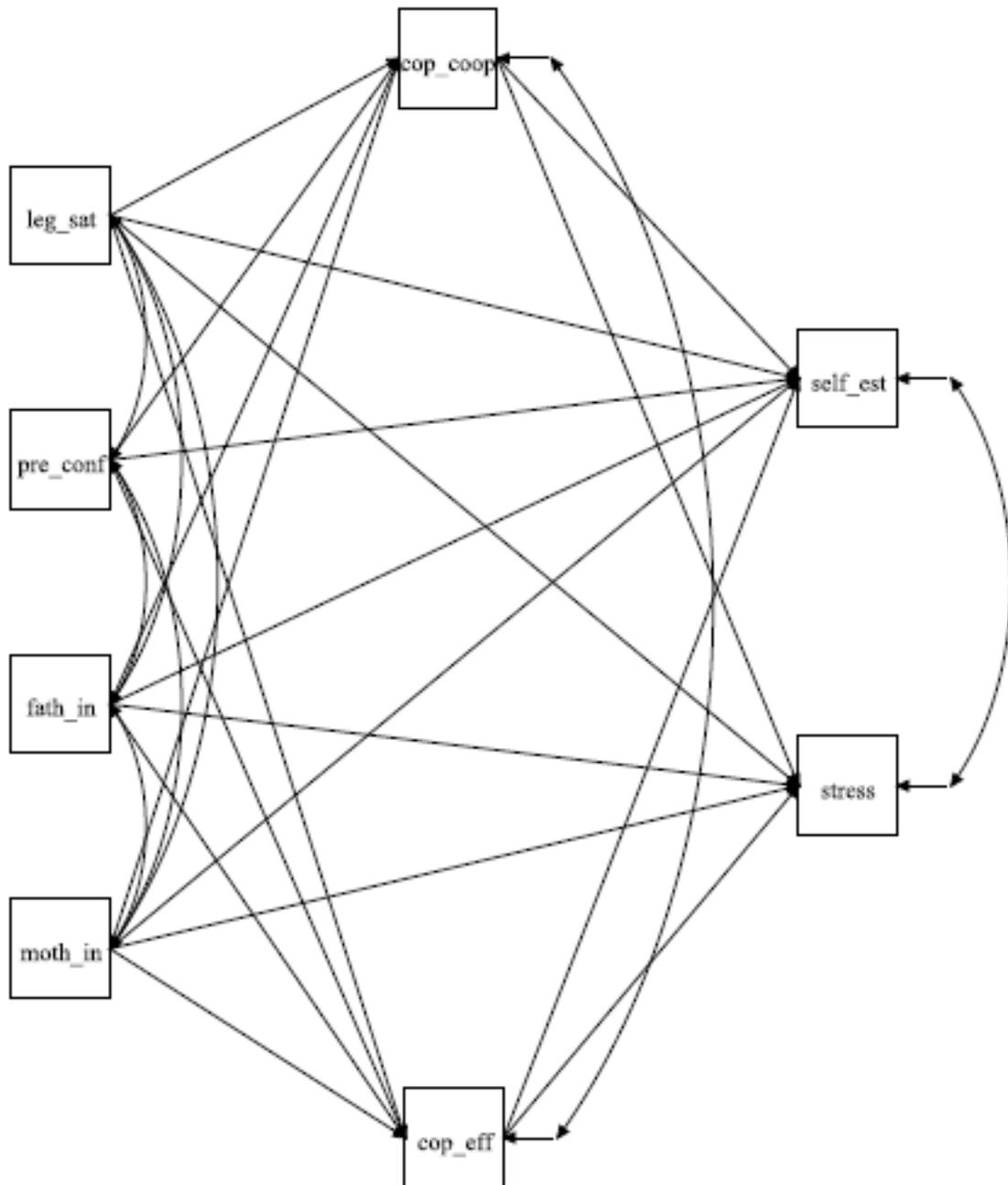


Figure 7
Hypothesized Model 3a

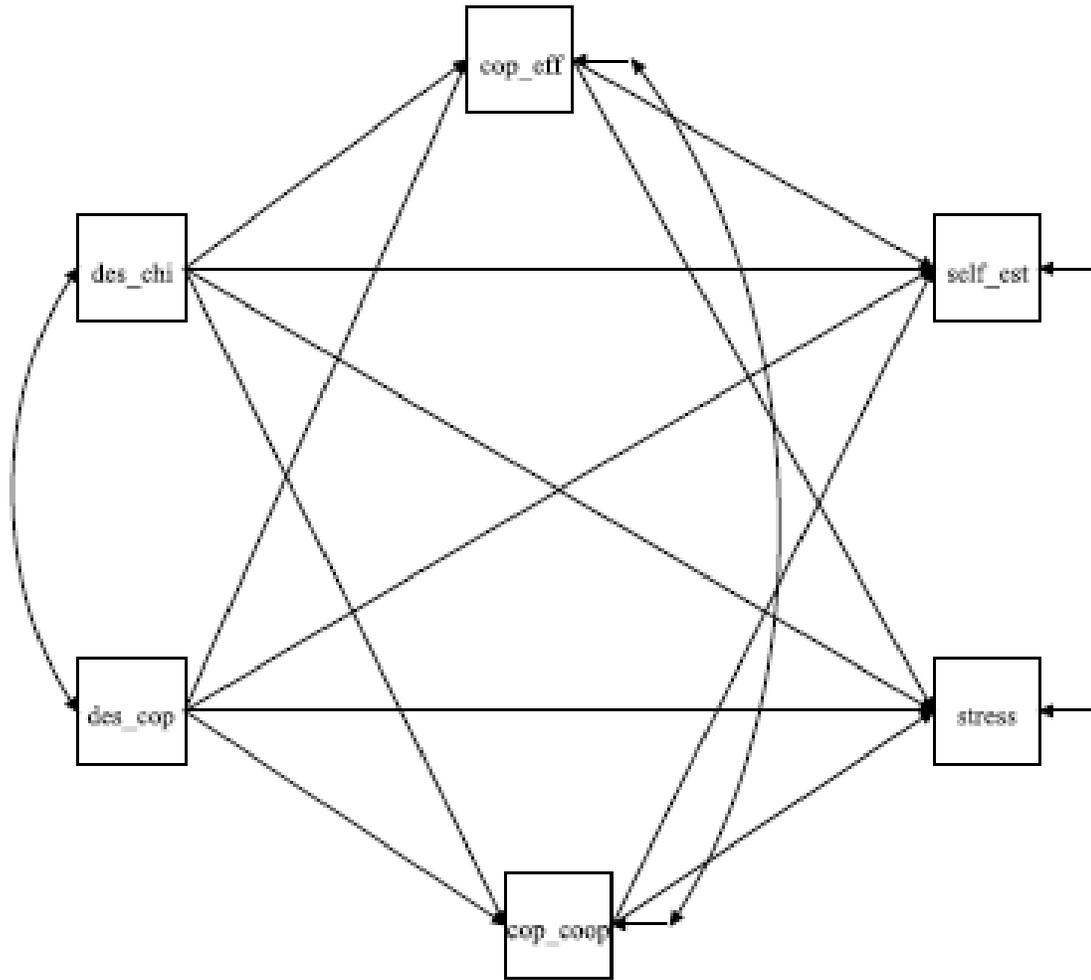


Figure 8
Adjusted Model 3a

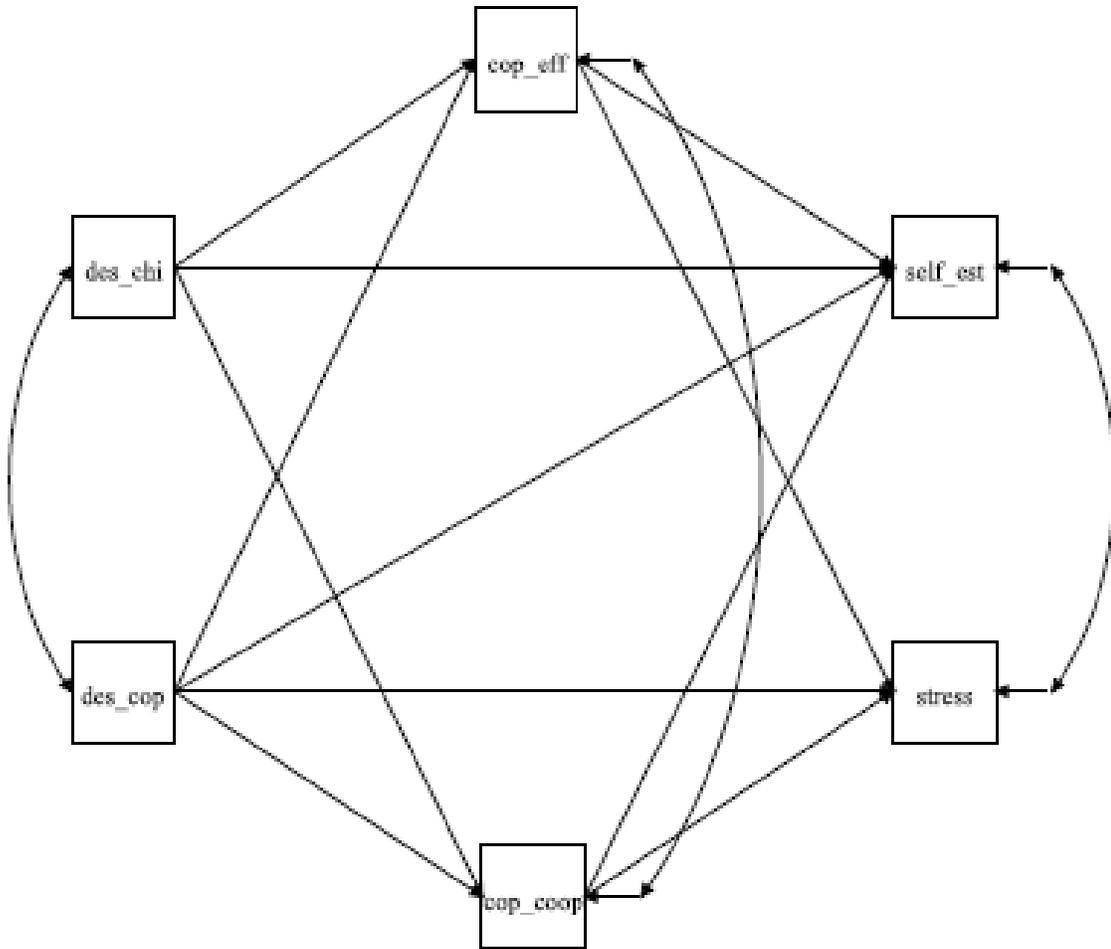


Figure 9
Hypothesized Model 3b

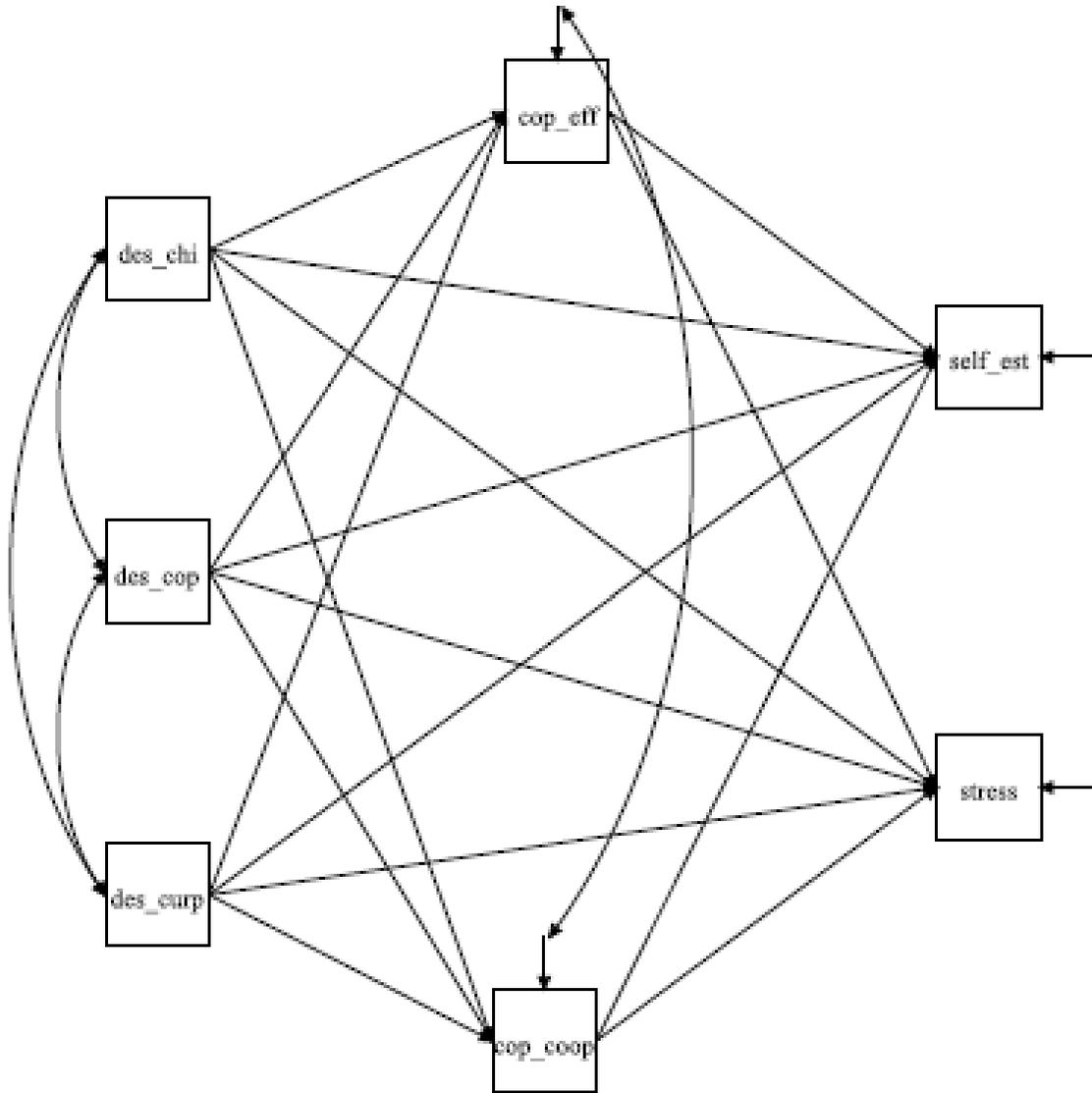


Figure 10
Adjusted Model 3b

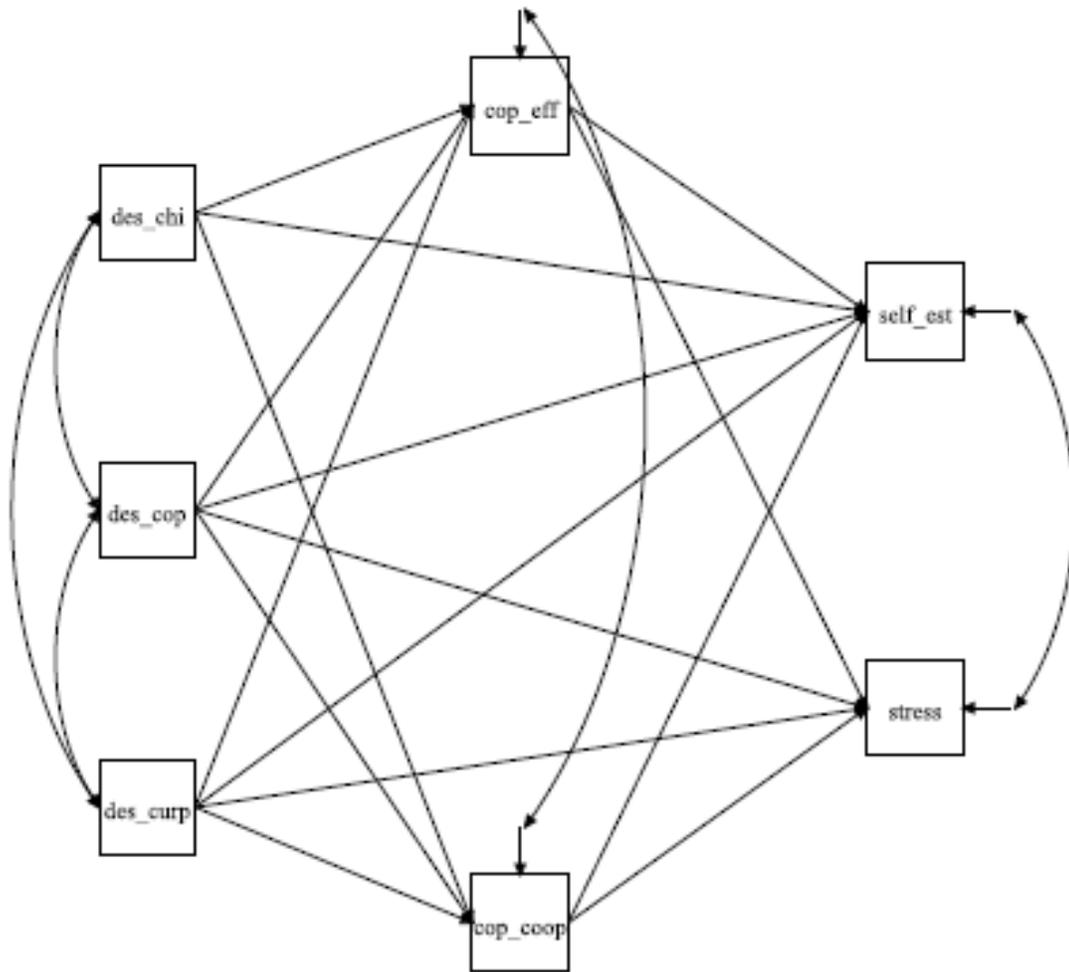


Figure 11
Hypothesized Model 4

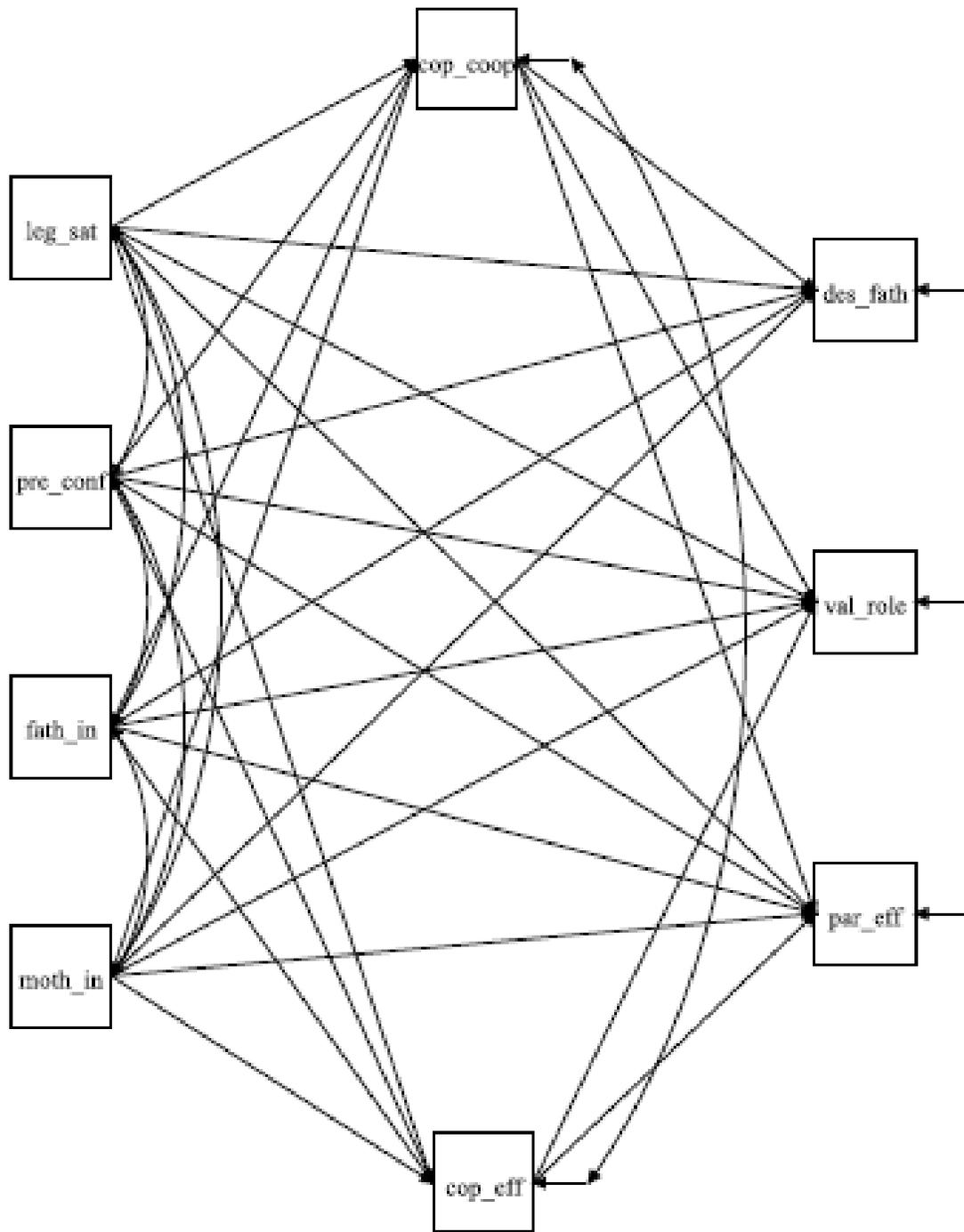


Figure 12
Adjusted Model 4

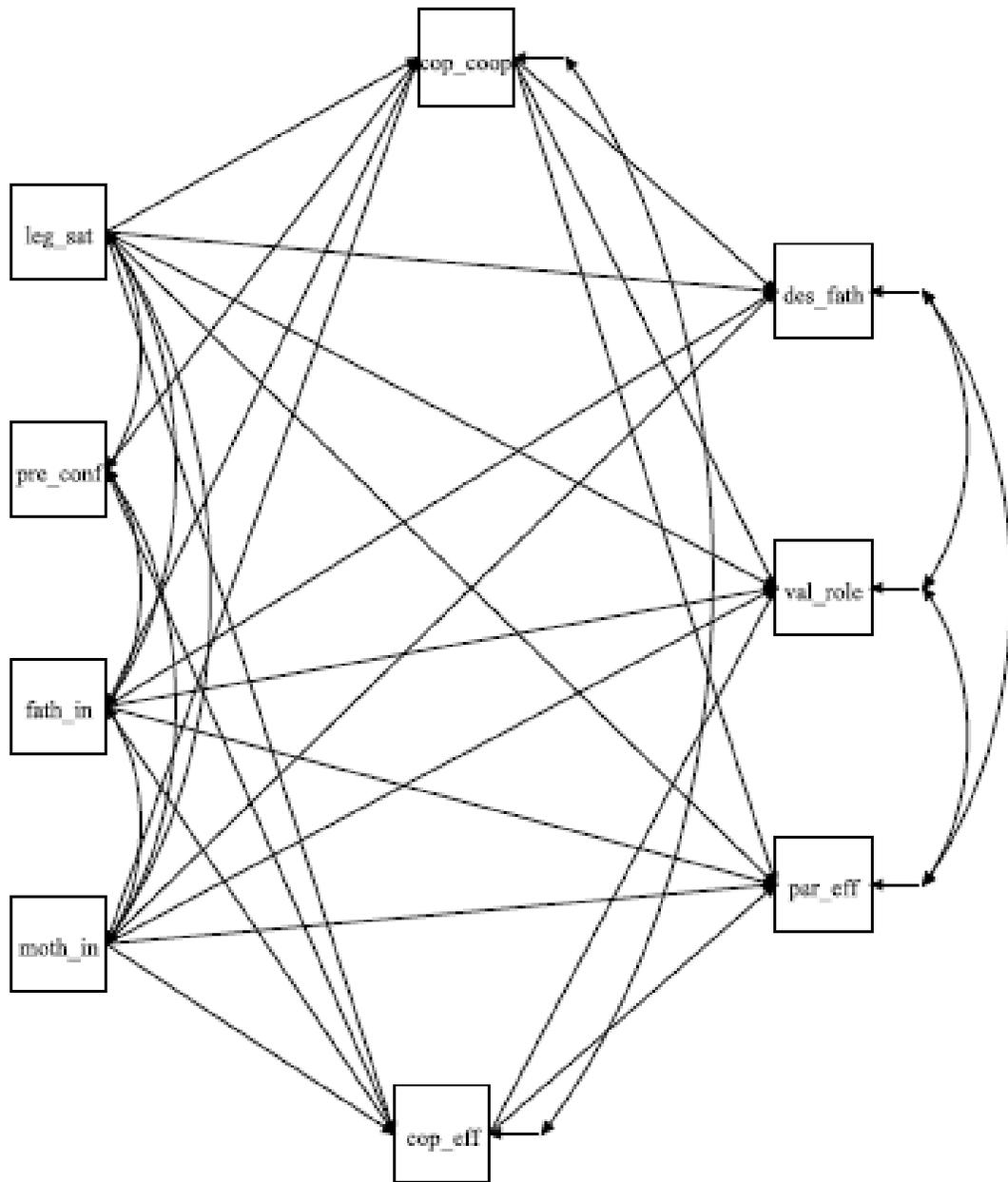


Table 12
Coparenting Efficacy Scale

7-Item, 7-point Likert Scale

“Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements concerning the disagreements and conflicts that arise between you and your co-parent.”

(1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Somewhat Disagree, (4) Neither Agree nor Disagree, (5) Somewhat Agree, (6) Agree, (7) Strongly Agree

*1 – “I have little control over the conflicts that occur between my co-parent and I.”

*2 – “There is no way I can solve some of the problems in my co-parenting relationship.”

3 – “When I put my mind to it I can resolve just about any disagreement that comes up between my co-parent and I.”

*4 – “I often feel helpless in dealing with the problems that come up with my co-parent.”

*5 – “Sometimes I feel that I have no say over issues that cause conflict between my co-parent and me.”

6 – “I am able to do the things needed to settle our conflicts.”

*7 – “There is little I can do to resolve many of the important conflicts between us.”

Notes: Items with an * were reverse coded for analyses. High scores indicate higher levels of belief in the coparenting relationship.

Table 13
Cooperative Coparenting Scale

11-Item, 5-point Likert Scale

“How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding your coparent?”

(1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Somewhat Disagree, (3) Neither Agree nor Disagree, (4) Somewhat Agree, (5) Strongly Agree

*Q23_1 – “My co-parent contradicts the decisions I make about our child.”

*Q23_2 – “My co-parent makes negative comments, jokes, or sarcastic comments about the way I am as a parent.”

*Q23_3 – “My co-parent undermines me as a father.”

Q23_4 – “My co-parent and I discuss the best way to meet our child’s needs.”

Q23_5 – “My co-parent and I share information about with each other.”

Q23_6 – “My co-parent and I make joint decisions about our child.”

Q23_7 – “My co-parent and I try to understand where each other is coming from.”

Q23_8 – “My co-parent and I respect each other’s decisions made about our child.”

*Q23_9 – “My co-parent makes it hard for me to spend time with our child.”

*Q23_10 – “My co-parent makes it hard for me to talk with our child.”

*Q23_11 – “My co-parent tells our child what he/she is allowed and not allowed to say to me.”

Notes: Items with an * were reverse coded for analyses. Higher scores indicate higher levels of cooperation in the coparenting relationship.

Table 14
Value of Father Role Scale

7-Item, 4-point Likert-type Scale

“How much do you agree with each statement below?”

(1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Agree, (4) Strongly Agree

Q27_1 – “My kids would be better without me.”

*Q27_2 – “I feel valued by my kids.”

*Q27_3 – “My contributions as a father matter.”

*Q27_4 – “My children view me as an important person in their life.”

Q27_5 – “It would be easier for my co-parent and children if I disappeared.”

Q27_6 – “Sometimes the stress of working with my co-parent makes me believe it’s not worth it.”

Q27_7 – “I would like to be more involved with my children, but my co-parent makes it difficult for this to happen.”

Notes: Items with an * were reverse coded for analyses. Higher scores indicate higher more value placed on the fathering role.

Table 15
Legal Process Satisfaction Scale

8-Item, 4-point Likert-type Scale

“The following questions are about your experience with the legal system. Please report how much you agree with the following statements.”

(1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Agree, (4) Strongly Agree

**Q29_1 – “During my divorce I felt powerless in the legal system.”

**Q29_2 – “I felt that the courts don’t value fathers as much as mothers.”

Q29_3 – “I believe that the legal system encourages fathers to remain engaged with their children.”

**Q29_4 – “The legal system makes it harder for fathers to stay involved with their children.”

Q29_5 – “I felt I was adequately respected by judges, lawyers, and other legal professionals.”

Q29_6 – “Overall I believe fathers are supported through the divorce process.”

**Q29_7 – “You felt like you had to ‘fight’ for your rights as a father.”

Q29_8 – “I believe that my co-parent and I were treated equally during our divorce.”

Notes: Items with an * were reverse coded for analyses. Higher scores indicate fathers’ more positive views of their legal process experience.

Table 16
Parental Self-Efficacy Scale

4-Item, 5-point Likert-type Scale

“The following questions are about parenting, How strongly do you agree or disagree with these statements?”

(1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Mixed Feelings, (4) Agree, (5) Strongly Agree

Q37_1 – “I have confidence in myself as a parent.”

Q37_2 – “My parenting skills are effective.”

Q37_3 – “I know I am doing a good job as a parent.”

Q37_4 – “I have all the skills necessary to be a good parent to my child.”

Notes: Higher scores indicate higher levels of fathers’ perceived parental self-efficacy.

Table 17
Perceived Stress Scale

4-Item, 5-point Scale

“The questions in this scale ask you about your feelings and thoughts during THE LAST MONTH.”

(1) Never, (2) Almost Never, (3) Sometimes, (4) Fairly Often, (5) Very Often

Q39_1 – “How often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?”

**Q39_2 – “How often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?”

**Q39_3 – “How often have you felt that things were going your way?”

Q39_4 – “How often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?”

Notes: Items with an * were reverse coded for analyses. High scores indicate high levels of stress over the past month.

Table 18
Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

6-Item, 4-point Likert-type Scale

“Below is a list of statements dealing with you general feelings about yourself. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement.”

(1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Agree, (4) Strongly Agree

Q41_1 – “I feel that I have a number of good qualities.”

Q41_2 – “I feel that I’m a person of worth, at least on as equal plane with others.”

Q41_3 – “I am able to do things as well as most other people.”

Q41_4 – “I take a positive attitude towards myself.”

Q41_5 – “On the whole I am satisfied with myself.”

**Q41_6 – “*All in all, I am inclined to feel that I’m a failure.*”

Notes: Items with an * were reverse coded for analyses. High scores indicate high levels of fathers’ self-esteem/confidence.

VITA

Jeremiah E. Grissett

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Dissertation: AN EXPLORATION OF THE INFLUENCE OF THE COPARENTING
RELATIONSHIP ON POST-DIVORCE FATHERHOOD AND
WELLBEING

Major Field: Human Development and Family Science

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in Human
Development and Family Science at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater,
Oklahoma in May, 2021.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in Marriage and Family
Therapy at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in 2015.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts in Pastoral Christian
Ministries with an Emphasis in Youth Ministry at Oral Roberts University,
Tulsa, Oklahoma in 2010.

Experience:

Research Associate, Oklahoma State University, 2017 – 2019
Teaching Associate, Oklahoma State University, 2017 – 2019

Professional Memberships:

American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy
National Council on Family Relations