

Spring 2016

The Impact of Religion and Culture on Coparenting in Morocco

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The Impact of Religion and Culture on Coparenting in Morocco

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for MOR, SIT Abroad, Spring 2016.

ABSTRACT

Coparenting is an important relationship between mothers and fathers, which children can benefit from. Coparenting involves the active role mothers and fathers play in raising a child as well as communication between mothers and fathers regarding child related issues. Findings show that positive coparenting relationships lead to overall more satisfaction among both mothers and fathers in terms of child rearing. Additionally, positive parental involvement, especially father involvement, is shown to result in overall better psychological, physiological, and emotional development among children. Identifying ways to create positive interactions and ways to coparent can improve a child's development. This study involves interviews with 8 mothers and fathers in Rabat, Morocco. This study aims to identify ways Moroccan couples coparent, working together to raise their children. A small link was found between increased coparenting and increased levels of father involvement. A link was also found between religion and gender roles within the family. Specifically, this study analyzes how Islam influences gender roles within the family and how fathers engage with their children. This study analyzes how cultural values, gender roles, and societies influences play a role in the coparenting relationship among Moroccan families. This paper will look at how Islam in Morocco affects the dynamic between men and women in terms of child rearing.

Codes: Individual and Family Studies, Sociology, Gender Studies

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INTRODUCTION

Coparenting defines the way in which mothers and fathers work together to raise a child (McHale, 2004). The coparenting relationship is composed of support between two coparents, shared responsibility for the child, and reduced parent related conflict (Belsky et al., 1995; McHale, 1995; Kuersten-Hogan, & Rao, 2004). A strong coparent alliance, which has high levels of support and responsibility and low levels of parent conflict, has been shown to be beneficial for children's overall psychological and emotional development (McHale, et al., 2014).

Father involvement has also been seen to be a useful factor for child development. Engagement with children including play and child care, accessibility to child, and responsibility for child care coordination are all important components of active father involvement (Lamb, 1987). Cultural values and traditions have influenced family dynamics in many parts of the globe, resulting in indirect father involvement within the family (Hohmann-Marriott, 2011).

Islam plays a role in how Muslims live out their daily lives, influencing the family dynamic and parenting within the family (Franceschelli, 2014). To many Muslims around the world, Islam provides a framework for roles mothers and fathers take in the family, with mothers as child care takers and fathers as financial support and decision makers (Weatherhead, 2015).

This paper aims to delve into coparenting and father involvement within Islamic Moroccan families. How does Islam influence the coparenting relationship among Moroccan families and affect father involvement in child-rearing? Using data collected from eight individual one on one interviews, the analysis focuses on mothers and fathers in Morocco, centering on key questions to obtain a holistic perspective on parenting in Morocco. The analysis focuses on coparenting, father involvement, and Islam's role in the family. The results from the interviews were stratified into relevant themes that address the research question aforementioned.

Both mother and father responses were didactically analyzed in order to comprehensively examine the coparenting relationship and family role.

The purpose of the study is to (1) understand the way Islam influences the coparenting relationship among Moroccan families; (2) to clarify the different ways in which Moroccan fathers are involved in their children's lives; (3) to understand how different types of father involvement relates to child well-being and development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

With Respect to Coparenting

Coparenting refers to the way parents work together to raise their child (McHale, et al., 2014). Though the title, coparenting, contains the word parent, coparenting encompasses the relationship of the people responsible for child rearing. This relationship can be between a mother and a father, a mother and a grandmother, two extended family members, or any combination (McHale, 2004). Ultimately, any person responsible for the upbringing of a child is included in the coparenting relationship. According to research conducted by McHale (2004), most coparenting relationships are between unwed couples, and many coparenting relationships are with couples who are non cohabiting and in families in which there is no mother or father at all. Because every family system is unique, the coparenting relationship is fluid and multidimensional, composed of the mother-father relationship along with the parent-child relationship (McHale, et al., 2014). Much research being conducted on child development analyzes the coparenting relationship since the coparenting relationship is at the center of both family and child functioning (Hohmann-Marriott, 2011).

The coparenting relationship encompasses many elements and involves a great deal of collaboration between the two coparents. Successful coparenting relationships require both partners to feel supported by one another, for responsibility to be equally shared when engaging with the children, and dissonances to be discussed (Belsky et al., 1995; McHale, 1995; Kuersten-Hogan, & Rao, 2004). McHale (2004) found that supportive, strong coparent alliances involve coparents who both provide for and support the other coparent emotionally and physically. Because of the need for cohesion and commitment, support, including emotional, physical, and financial, are all key components of the coparenting relationship. Additionally, each coparent needs not only support the other, but also perceive they are being supported and validated by the other coparent (McHale, 2004). A coparenting relationship does not necessarily mean that there is a lack of dissonance, however, it means that upon disagreements, coparents are communicating effectively with one another (McHale, 2004). Within a coparenting relationship, there is bound to be a dissonance among belief systems, that being what parents want for their children. It is critical that within the relationship, coparents are both invested in the child, value the others active involvement with the child, have mutual respect for the others opinions, and most importantly, actively communicate with one another, in order to come to agreements on incongruities (McHale, 2004).

Positive coparenting alliances take into account the previously discussed elements, including support, respect, and responsibility (Belsky et al., 1995; McHale, 1995; Kuersten-Hogan, & Rao, 2004). Researchers have found that the most effective coparenting relationships require parents to communicate regularly, usually daily, about strengths and challenges related to child rearing (McHale, et al., 2014). Additionally, in order to have cohesive communication, parents should highlight the positives, come to mutual agreements, and avoid critiquing the other

parents parenting (McHale, et al., 2014). Moreover, individual child-parent time should also emphasize building the other parent up, rather than denigrating the other parent who is not currently actively involved (McHale, 2004).

It is vital to understand the coparenting relationship as it is highly correlated to child development and child outcome. Feinberg (2014) discovered that the coparenting relationship better predicts child outcome than couple or romantic relationships. Whether a couple is intimately involved is not as important for child outcome as the coparenting relationship is. When coparents support one another, both equally involved and responsible for childcare with marginal parent-related disagreement, coparents are better able to successfully parent their children (Hohmann-Marriott, 2011). For unmarried or separating couples, it is also important to note that coparents can have healthy, positive coparenting relationships even if they have negative marriage or intimate relationships (Hohmann-Marriott, 2011).

A positive coparenting relationship not only benefits the coparents, but studies have shown that positive coparenting relationships benefit the child(ren). Positive coparenting alliances in the child's first year of life have been shown to correlate with healthier child adjustment later in life (McHale, et al., 2014). Additionally, unhealthy coparenting alliances have been correlated with child problems later in life, including emotional and behavioral challenges as well as maladjustment (McHale, et al., 2014). Scientist have equivocated this correlation with biological development among infants. The limbic system, most commonly known for emotion regulation, develops at an accelerated rate during the first year of life. It is predicted that positive coparenting relationships, which have minimal dissonance and antagonism, help infants emotional development, leading to stronger emotional regulation later in life (McHale, et al., 2014).

Negative coparenting relationships can often lead to lack of respect for one another, a perceived lack of support, and active parent conflict, leaving children with unpredictable messages (Hohmann-Marriott, 2011). As discussed earlier, lack of regular communication between coparents regarding child rearing and the parenting relationship can result in parent related conflict. Varying belief systems paired with lack of coordination, leads to inconsistent parenting for the child(ren) as well as an increase in negative dissonance (McHale, 2004). Many internal factors such as a dissonance among system belief, can negatively alter the coparenting relationship, however, external factors can also play a role in the coparenting relationship. Economic stressors and social stressor related to financial stability have been shown to create conflict within the coparenting relationship of low-income families (Feinberg, 2014).

Coparenting conflict, whether internally or externally triggered, has been found to negatively impact children (Feinberg, 2014). Though conflict in general is not beneficial for children, coparent conflict related to child rearing has been shown to negatively affect child development, both psychologically and emotionally. This is because coparenting conflict often occurs in front of the children, as it is related to child rearing. Often times, because the conflict is related to the children and occurs in front of the children, children feel responsible for the conflict, more so than non-child related conflict (Feinberg, 2014). Negative coparenting can lead the child to feelings of uncertainty, instability, and worry, and consistent feeling of instability have then been correlated with behavior problems at home and school (McHale, et al., 2014). According to a study conducted by Mchale (2004), children who's parents reported high levels of coparenting conflict at home were more likely to be anxious, aligning with data previously collected in American preschools. As discussed previously, distressed coparenting was found to correlate with child maladjustment later in life (McHale, et al., 2014). Additionally, "Problems

with coparenting during infant, toddler, preschool, and elementary school years have been related to a wide variety of child problems, including problems with social adaption, poorer preschool and school achievement, anxiety, and aggressiveness” (McHale, et al., 2014).

Father Involvement

The coparenting relationship is composed of two individuals, working together to raise a child. These roles are often times associated with mothers and fathers. However, there is a disparity, globally, regarding active parenting. Globally, women are the primary child caretakers, often responsible with the burden of all child-related tasks, while men are typically not actively involved in the child-rearing process (McHale, 2004). This burden of child rearing that has been cast solely on women, leads to weaker coparenting relationships as well as negative consequences for children. Parental involvement can be categorized into two different categories: direct and indirect. Direct involvement includes hands on interactions with the children, including dressing, feeding, and bathing. Indirect parent involvement includes financial support (Hohmann-Marriott, 2011). Both direct and indirect parental involvement contributes to child wellbeing, however, many fathers are only indirectly involved in child-care, often times being the bread winner and leaving the direct involvement to the mothers (Knox,2011). However, father involvement helps build a health foundation in the child development process, and direct involvement is crucial for this process. Direct father involvement includes engagement with children including caregiving and play, accessibility to children in order to engage, and responsibility of child-related activities and planning including school and after school events (Lamb, 1987). In order to positively influence their children’s lives, fathers need to take a front seat in the day to day planning and caregiving.

Father involvement is not only beneficial for the coparenting relationship, but it is also important for child development. As discussed by Lamb, (1987), fathers need to be actively engaged in their children's lives, partaking in caretaking and play activities. Not only does this help foster a relationship between a father and his children, but it also helps children's development, as a great deal of child development happens through play and social interactions (Hohmann-Marriott, 2011). Additionally, when fathers take responsibility for child related planning such as after school activities, the coparenting relationship is often improved, as mothers and fathers take responsibility and support each other in the parenting process (Hohmann-Marriott, 2011). Research conducted by Knox (2011) has found that positive father involvement, including engagement and shared responsibility of child related tasks, is correlated with collaborative couple relationships. Therefore, it can be assumed that positive father involvement is associated with a healthier, more effective coparenting relationship. This relationship is also seen to be transverse: not only does an increase of father involvement lead to an increase in positive coparenting, but positive coparenting has been shown to lead to an increase in father involvement. Studies have shown that positive coparenting relationships lead to fathers who take on more responsibilities with in the child rearing process and have more positive child-parent interactions (Hohmann-Marriott, 2011). It is important to note however, that quantity of father involvement is not necessarily correlated with child well being but instead quality (Knox, 2011). Therefore, fathers who do not cohabit with their children can still play an active role in their children's lives, and contribute to the children's well being. Additionally, fathers who do cohabit with their children are not necessarily more supportive than non-cohabiting fathers, if cohabiting fathers are not actively engaged and involved with their children.

Research has shown that father involvement with child rearing is a critical aspect within the coparenting relationship and overall child development. However, there are many barriers that prevent active father involvement within child caretaking. Socioeconomics can act as a barrier to success, leading low-income fathers to be less involved in their children's lives. A study conducted by McHale (2004) found that middle and upper middle class fathers have higher levels of active engagement with their children when compared to working class families. Additionally, Mohmann-Marriott (2011) found similar findings, revealing that more highly educated couples had better, more effective coparent relationships, with more father involvement, when compared to less educated couples. Economic stressors can create barriers that lead to weaker coparent alliances (Feinberg, 2014). In low-income families, high cost of private childcare results many families to have one parent working outside the home while one parent stays home to care for the children. This often times results in mothers being the primary caretaker, while fathers have less direct involvement with their children (Feinberg, 2014). Additionally, research has revealed that an increase in the number of children can lead to a decrease in father involvement. According to McHale (2004), couples with more than one child experiences less collaboration in terms of child rearing. Second and third born children experienced less joint coparent attention than their first born counterparts.

Father involvement is correlated with the coparenting relationship. Positive coparenting relationships have been correlated with more father involvement, but more father involvement also correlated with positive coparenting relationships (Hohmann-Marriott, 2011). Furthermore, fathers with better coparenting alliances have been shown to be more engaged with their children, have more positive interactions, and share more responsibilities with the other coparent regarding child-rearing. While poorer coparenting relationships are more likely to have less

engaged fathers and more coparent conflict (Hohmann-Marriott, 2011). Research conducted by Hohmann-Marriott (2011) found that negative coparent relationships could weaken the fathers inclination to be actively involved with his child's life, and result in father absence.

Because coparenting relationships have been shown to affect the level and extent of father involvement, mothers play a key role in father involvement. Within the coparenting relationship, mothers can act as gatekeepers, restricting the amount of father involvement within the shared child's life. McHale (2004) describes how when mothers act as a gatekeeper to information regarding the shared child, fathers may be less likely to be involved with their child and withdraw. Some researchers believe that society creates "gatekeeping" mothers, creating mothers who are knowledgeable regarding child-rearing. It is believed that, since mothers are predominantly the primary caretakers of children, society prepares mothers for child rearing, while fathers are not prepared or taught as much (McHale, 2004). Specifically, several studies have shown the first few months after childbirth are challenging for many mothers, because fathers levels of involvement decrease, leading mothers to foster resentment towards the father, ultimately leading mothers to explicitly or implicitly deny the father interactions with the children (McHale, 2004). This act of gatekeeping, denying the father access to the child, can also lead fathers to withdraw from the parent relationship. Though mother's gatekeeping can result in father withdrawal, mothers can also play a vital role in improving father involvement. Mothers can increase father involvement by encouraging fathers to be actively involved with their children as well as supporting them in the coparenting relationship (Hohmann-Marriott, 2011). Furthermore, when mothers allow fathers to play an active role in decisions regarding child-rearing, fathers are more likely to continue to be engaged and responsible for child related matters (Hohmann-Marriott, 2011). Ultimately, father involvement with child rearing is

important for child wellbeing and development, and coparents should work together in order to foster a healthy relationship.

Coparenting in the Islamic World

Family dynamics and gender roles within the family are fluid and vary culture to culture. Cultural values and norms influence the way mothers and fathers interact with their children as well as the role they play in their children's lives. Family dynamics differ among each family and can include different values and expectations. Researcher Franceschelli (2014) describes family dynamics as "the idea that the family provides the social context where resources of different types, such as social standing and economic capital but also values, aspirations, skills, religion and languages, are passed on from parents to children." Islamic values influence the way in which families function, often leading to a divide in gender roles. A study conducted by McHale (2004) compared Palestinian Arab families and Israeli Jews, looking specifically at family dynamics and gender roles. McHale (2004) found that Palestinian Arab families were more authoritarian, parent-led, with a family structure based on family hierarchy and obedience to elders. Additionally, Palestinian families showed less coparenting cooperation when compared to their Israeli Jew counterparts. McHale (2004) also found that family interactions were not thought of as teaching opportunities, resulting in little parent-child interaction or toy use.

Islam is one of the largest religions globally, with around 1.5 billion followers worldwide (Al-Mateen and Afzal, 2004). Additionally, "many Muslims prioritize their religious identity over ethnic or national identity" (Roy, 2004). Religion is a personal choice and can be expressed differently in each individual's life. Islam teaches specific values and often times dictates how Muslims behave and act in their public and private lives (Franceschelli, 2014). Each individual Muslim has variations in beliefs, values, and practices, depending on their culture and specific

sect of Islam, however, Islam often plays a major role in the way people live their lives (Weatherhead, 2015). Franceschelli (2004) interviewed different South Asian Muslim communities, in order to identify how people perceive their religion. Franceschelli (2004) found that “Islam was perceived by respondents as ‘more than a religion, but a way of life’ in the sense that it forged not only such everyday practices as clothing and eating but also social relationships and views of the world.”

Islam plays a huge role in the way families run and parents raise their children in the Islamic world. Muslim parents tend to integrate their parenting with religious texts such as the Quran, communicating a sense of right and wrong. Research has found that Islam, when used in parenting, gives parents more control over their children because every rule created by the parent is tied to Islam (Franceschelli, 2014). Core values and principles are often in accordance with Islam (Scourfield, 2015). Research has also shown that interpretation of Islamic doctrines is dependent on outside influences. Franceschelli (2014) describes Islamic capital as the influence of religion, culture, and social class. Therefore, religion alone does not determine how parents parent nor does it determine the family dynamics. One study conducted found that “less-educated parents from a lower socio-economic background tended to refer more closely to Islam, whilst higher-educated parents felt they needed to integrate and support religious explanations with other sources of evidence” (Franceschelli, 2014). In this case, the influence of religion on parenting was different among different socioeconomic classes. In an interview with a young Pakistani Muslim man, he believed that patriarchal laws and gender differences were nothing to do with Islam but instead were purely constructed by tradition and culture (Franceschelli, 2014).

Islam provides a framework for how Muslims should live out their lives. Within Islam, a framework for how families should function, particularly, how mothers and fathers should work

in the home, was developed. Islam has constructed the family gender roles, with men being the breadwinners working outside the home and women serving as the child caretakers (Weatherhead, 2015). Additionally, mothers are seen as educators for the children, teaching them right and wrong through Islamic texts (Franceschelli, 2014). Through an interview with a young Bangladeshi Muslim woman, Franceschelli (2014) described how, according to Prophet Mohammad, paradise lied beneath the feet of your mother. Therefore, mothers hold the knowledge and power to teach the children (Franceschelli, 2014). Additionally, expectations of women is high, believing that if they are not mothers or good mothers, they fail society. It is viewed that woman's only role is to be mothers, to educate and raise children (Franceschelli, 2014). However, because changes in economics, more and more women are working outside the home in Muslim societies, leaving women juggling the task of caring for children and working a full time job (Hossain, 2015).

When mothers are expected to be the child caretakers and fathers are expected to be the breadwinner, there ends up being a disparity in the coparenting relationship of Islamic families. As discussed previously, a positive coparenting relationship involved communication, engagement, and shared responsibility (McHale, 2004). However, the cultural factors influenced by Islam, alter what it means to be a father in these cultures. Men's role in the family has been influenced by "hegemonic models of masculinity" and result in uninvolved, unengaged fathers as well as an unbalanced coparenting relationship (Hossain, 2015). Hossain (2015) describes how the interpretation of the Qur'an and Sunnah shape the role fathers play in the family as well as sociocultural norms influence the ways in which fathers act. Studies have show that because both religion and cultural norms make women responsible for childcare, many fathers withdraw

themselves from day to day child care, including play and child engagement (Franceschelli, 2014).

Much of the research that has been conducting regarding family dynamics, coparenting, and father involvement, has only looked at American and European families (McHale, 2004). Because of the influence Islam has on daily life, this information gathered from Western countries could not necessarily be generalized to Muslim cultures. Additionally, the research that has been done regarding Islamic culture and Muslim families is based on South Asian Muslims. Islam, though practiced by about 1.5 billion people worldwide, is practiced by diverse cultures and cannot be generalized to all Islamic countries. (Al-Mateen, 2004). This research project will analyze Islam's influence on family dynamics and gender roles within Moroccan Families.

The Current Study

The current study examines the coparenting relationship in Islamic Moroccan families. The study explores how fathers engage with their children and what role fathers play in the child rearing process. Finally, the study explores how both social norms and Islamic values influence the perceptions and expectations of mothers and fathers in the family. Key aspects of coparenting, including support, responsibility, and dissonance, as well as aspects of father involvement including, engagement, accessibility, and responsibility are examined through one on one qualitative interviews. The data includes a sample of parents, both mothers and fathers, with children ages 6 months to 14 years old. Mothers and fathers were individually asked about their coparenting relationship including perceived support and cohesion. Mothers were asked about father involvement and fathers were asked about their involvement with their children. Responses were coded and analyzed to understand the coparenting relationship and father

involvement within the sample families, also addressing differences in perception verses reality of support.

METHODOLOGY

Assumptions

Based on previous research, it is hypothesized that cultural values in the medina, influenced by Islam, will have a strong effect on Moroccan family dynamics, influencing fathers to take a less hands on role in the child rearing process.

Data

The analysis used data collected from face-to-face, one on one interviews with mothers and fathers. The sample of this analysis is mothers and fathers 18 years and older who have children between the ages of 6 months and 14 years old. The child did not need to cohabit with both parents in order for both parents to participate. Both parents do not need to participate in the study, however, both parents were encouraged to participate. The caregivers should be biologically related to their child, natives to Morocco, live in Rabat, Morocco, and self identify as Muslim. Participants were recruited from the Old Medina in Rabat Morocco using word of mouth. Potential participants were informed that a study was being conducted regarding experiences of parenting and they may be eligible to participate. If potential participants were interested in participating, they were screened in order to make sure they met all study requirements. One on one interviews were conducted in order to give the participants the opportunity to share their personal perspective on parenting as well as their experiences thus far as a parent in a coparenting relationship. The initial sample included 4 mothers and 4 fathers, all who completed the one on one interview.

Interviews were conducted in Moroccan Standard Arabic, Darija, by a translator, and later transcribed back into English in order to be coded and analyzed. Interview questions were translated into Darija, Moroccan Arabic, so that participants would understand the questions. Each interview was approximately 30 minutes, conducted at the location of the participants choice, either the participants home or a public location such as a café. Prior to conducting the interview, participants signed an informed consent form. Each interview was audio recorded then later transcribed, coded, and analyzed looking for common themes. In order to protect the participants, each participant was deidentified and study information was kept confidential.

A major strength of semi-structured interviews is they allow for rich, in depth data because the participants can talk freely and share openly while also sticking to a specific topic with richer and in depth data (Eft&Preskill, 2009). Individual interviews also allow for differences in opinions to be voiced. Interviewing both mothers and fathers allows for a dyadic analysis, comparing the responses of the two respondents based on the same set of variables: coparenting, father involvement, religion, and perception. A major strength of using dyadic analysis is that it allows for comparisons to be made between the two dyads and data can be collected from both groups in a reliable and valid manner. Much of the current research on family dynamics, coparenting, and father involvement collected data from only mothers. There is a huge disparity in the research between responses from mothers and responses from fathers. Comparisons of perception versus reality can be made between differences in mother and father responses to questions. Eight qualitative interviews allow the data to be more generalizable to the population and to reduce saturation. An exceptional amount of data will be collected through these semi-structured interviews and over collection and saturation will be avoided.

Several research limitations limit the scope and generalizability of the findings.

Participants were recruited based on word of mouth and could have had relations with people conducting the study. It is vital to keep responses and information confidential and deidentify all data in order to protect the identity of the participants. Also, the interviews were conducted in Darija, by a translator, afterwards, translated back into English for coding and analysis. It was vital that the translator understood the interview questions in order to conduct the interview effectively. The English to Arabic translation of the interview also needed to be accurately translated in order for the question responses to be valid.

Variables

Coparenting. This study measured the strength of the coparenting relationship through the three components of a coparent relationship: support, responsibility, and reduced dissonance (Belsky et al., 1995; McHale, 1995; Kuersten-Hogan, & Rao, 2004). Each component was assessed by asking open-ended questions regarding the topic. The first core aspect of coparenting was support, measured through two open ended questions regarding the parents perceived support as well as frequency of communication regarding the child. The second core aspect of coparenting was responsibility, measured through one open ended question regarding if the duties of parenting were equally shared between both mother and father. The third core aspect of coparenting was reduced dissonance, measured through two open ended questions regarding frequency of parent related conflict and resolution of parent related conflict. In the data analysis, coparenting was measured on a continuum, from weak coparent alliance to strong coparent alliance. Reports of active communication, shared parent responsibility, and low level reports of active conflict resulted in stronger coparent alliances. Inversely, reports of low communication

between parents, a disparity in shared responsibility, and high levels of parent related conflict, resulted in weaker coparent alliances.

Father Involvement. The current analysis measured father involvement through three open ended question, focusing on the three components of father involvement: engagement, accessibility, and reliability. Father engagement was measured by asking mothers “How often does your husband spend time engaging with your child” and fathers “How often do you spend time engaging with your child”. Father accessibility was measured by asking mothers, “how much time does your husband spend time alone with your children when you are not there?” and fathers “how much time do you spend time alone with your children when your wife is not there?” Finally, father responsibility was measured by asking mothers, “How often does your husband take part in child-planning activities” and fathers, “How often do you take part in child-planning activities”. Reports of active engagement, accessibility, and responsibility resulted in high levels of father involvement while reports of low engagement, accessibility, and responsibility resulted in low levels of father involvement. Mother and father responses were compared in order to measure differences in perceived father involvement.

Religion. The study measured religions influence on the parenting dynamic through two open-ended questions. Religions role in parenting was measured by asking mothers and fathers, “What role does religion play in your parenting?” Religions role in gender dynamics was measured by asking mothers and fathers, “What role does religion play in your family order?” Responses were coded and analyzed, comparing religions roles to coparenting and father involvement responses, looking for general trends.

Perception of father involvement. The data analysis also compared father involvement with perceptions on father's role in the family. Perception was measured by asking mothers and fathers, "What do you think a father should do for his children?" Mothers were asked "Does your husband satisfy what a typical father should do?" and fathers were asked, "Do you satisfy what a typical father should do?" Assessing mothers and fathers perception of what they believe fathers *should* do allows for comparisons to be made between actual involvement and desired involvement.

Parent/Child composition. General demographic information was collected from each participant including age, age of spouse, number of children, gender of child, income level, marital status, religion, highest level of education, and employment status.

Analysis

In order to properly analyze the data that was gathered from the focus groups, a thematic analysis of the recordings was conducted. The themes were selected based on the following categories: coparenting relationship, father involvement, religious influences, and perception on parenting. Each category proved integral in the feedback that the participants gave during the one on one interviews. The one-on-one interviews were later transcribed and coded, determining common themes within the responses.

RESULTS

Table 1 reveals the demographics of the selected sample. The mean age of the mothers was 39.75 while the mean age of the fathers was 48. All participants identified as Muslim and were currently married to their child's biological parent. The average income of the families was 3437.5durhams per month with a standard deviation of 1095durhams. Six of the eight

participants had a less than high school education and one participant had no education at all, with two having a college degree. On average, men had 10 years of formal schooling while women had 5 years of formal schooling. 75 percent of men worked part of full time while 75 percent of women were stay at home mothers.

Table 1. Parent/Child Composition and Demographic (N=8)

		Standard		Standard
	Mother	Deviation	Father	Deviation
Age (years)	39.75	11.966	48	15.18
Number of				
Children	2.6		2.6	
Income	3437.5 dh	1095.09 dh	3437.5 dh	1095.09 dh
Marital Status	Married		Married	
Religion	Muslim		Muslim	

Coparenting

The initial analysis focused on the coparenting relationship between the mother and the father, addressing the multidimensional aspects of coparenting including support, responsibility, and reduced dissonance. After coding and data analysis, the three components of coparenting were addressed. The majority of participants felt supported by their spouse in regards to parenting their child. One participant, a mother, stated she did not feel supported, stating, “no, he works a lot. Does not help much with the child. He only watches soccer” (Participant 07). The

majority of participants also stated that they talked daily with their spouse regarding the child(ren). One mother stated that her and her husband support each other, stating, “When I go somewhere, he watches the kids, and when he goes somewhere I watch the kids”.(Participant 01).The responses of mothers and fathers was didactically analyzed to determine validity and reliability of father responses, which then revealed consistency in both parents responses. Responsibility was measured using one open ended question in which the majority of parents felt that the duty of parenting was equally shared between them and their spouse. Two participants, who were husband and wife, stated that parenting is shared within the household among themselves and the extended family. Another participant, a mother, stated, “I do a lot, he does a little.” (participant 05).When asked to elaborate of how muchshe does, participant 05 stated that she does 70 to 90 percent of the childcare work. The father stated that he believed the duty of parenting is shared equally, but “he does a little bit and she does a lot.” (Participant 06).Though, based on the sample averages, mothers are doing a larger amount of child care, both mothers and fathers believe the work is being shared equally. The final component of co-parenting, dissonance, was measured using two open ended questions. The majority of participants reported some conflict within the relationship about once a week, but most couples are able to come to an agreement. One participant stated “Conflict is necessary. But we don't have conflict all the time. Sometimes we agree and sometimes we don't. There is not a lot and there is not a little” (Participant 05).

Father Involvement

The second component of this analysis looked at father involvement which was divided into three subgroups in order to be better analyzed, including engagement, accessibility, and responsibility. The majority of participants reported a higher level of mother involvement than

father involvement. Additionally, fathers seemed to report a higher level of involvement than their spouses reported of them having. One father participant stated, “I take my son to cycling every week” (Participant 02). Another father participant stated during the summer he takes his children swimming. Additionally, the same father stated, “now that I do not work a lot I am home with my kids a lot” (Participant 06). One mother stated, “he does not do much, I do everything. He sometimes plays with our child. I do 80 to 90 percent of everything.” (Participant 07). Father accessibility was reported to be high by both mother and father participants. Participant 05 stated, ““Whenever he is home he is with them. When I am not there, he is there.” This statement was also confirmed when the father stated he was home from 4pm until nighttime almost everyday. Father responsibility was reported to be high by father participants than mother participants reported. However, majority of fathers reported the wife doing more child related tasks than they did. One mother stated, “He is not always present but the extended family is here to help” (Participant 01). Another mother stated, “He works a lot so he only spends times with the child on weekends. Maybe 1-2 hours a week. she is all the time with the child.” (Participant 07). The majority of fathers also addressed that though they spend time with the children, the spendless time than their wife does. One father stated, “normally the children are with their mother” (Participant 08). The same father also stated that he only takes part in 15% of child related tasks. Responsibility included logistical scheduling of childcare, taking care of sick children, and feeding. One father participant stated that he is not always present but the extended family is (Participant 02). Another father stated that he is home a lot and helps his children whenever they need it (Participant 06). On mother participant reflected a great deal about how her husband was when the children were little, however she did not address how he is currently.

She stated, “when they were kids he fed them more than I did. When they were younger he would take them and drop them off at school.” (Participant 05).

Religions Influence

All participants reported that religion, specifically Islam, influences the way they parent their children. One father stated, “Everything in Islam is what we implement into the parenting. Parenting and Islam go hand in hand. You cant raise your kids without Islam” (Participant 06). Another father stated, "When I pray, my son sees me praying and comes pray next to me." It is something. You don't have to do Ramadan, and do this, it goes smoothly. When he repeats it day after day it becomes an attitude” (Participant 2). All participants agreed that Islam was a crucial part in living a good life and they taught their children what they knew about Islam. When asked if Islam influences the gender roles or family order, there was a discrepancy in responses. Families stated that Islam says men and women are equal. However, some families stated men and women had certain gender roles while others believed that men and women shared the same roles. One father participant stated, “religion says that parents should treat their kids justly and good” (Participant 06), however the participant avoided the gender roles in his answer. The mother participant stated, “religion says that both mom and dad should play a role. In this time its mom and the dad. in the old times maybe. Maybe back in the old, before, the men were the breadwinners and the mom took care of the house. Now its equal” (Participant 05). Other participants did not believe this to be true and believed men should be the breadwinners and women should take care of the children. Father participant 02 stated, “The father has to work and get money and the mother has to take care of the children. American people think the opposite.” The wife reiterated the same idea saying that women are responsible for child care (Participant 01).

Perception of father involvement

Perception of father involvement varied from couple to couple with the majority of fathers believing they are satisfied with their current level of involvement and a majority of mothers stating they would want their husband to be more involved with the children but that they are satisfied. One father stated, “This is all that I can do. I do all that I can. It’s not a lot and its not a little” (Participant 06). The same father stated previously that his wife took care of 80 percent of all child related tasks while he helped her with some. The mother stated that she is satisfied with the current level of involvement but, “She wants them to have a good relationship. To always be talking and know about them. The raising is good the discipline is good but she wants him to be more involved with the everyday.” (Participant 05). Another mother, who previously stated that she does 80 to 90 percent of all childrearing, stated she was satisfied with the husbands involvement. When asked to elaborate, she stated, “I want him to spend time with family, spend more time with our child, and watch less soccer. That is really important” (Participant 07). When didactically analyzed, father involvement was not consistent between mother and father responses. Overall, fathers believed they were actively involved with their children while mothers seemed to take on the majority of the childcare duties.

DISCUSSION

The current study first measured the coparenting relationship using three constructs including support, responsibility, and dissonance. Increased levels of support, increased levels of responsibility, and decreased levels of child related dissonance is calculated to be positive, effective coparenting relationship while the transverse would lead to a poor, weak coparenting relationship. The majority of participants stated that they felt supported by their partner. However, it is important to note that fathers were more certain in their responses with a clear yes,

while three of the mothers did not give a direct yes but instead explained that the relationship was okay. The majority of couples also reported high levels of communication, indicating that most couples in the study felt supported by their partner. Regarding responsibility, all but one participant stated that they believed the responsibility of coparenting was equally shared.

However, both men and women agreed that women were doing more of the direct parenting. It is important to recognize that participants felt that the duty of parenting was *equally* shared even though the women were responsible for a much larger percentage of the daily tasks. One reasoning for this disparity can be seen within both the Moroccan Family Code as well as traditional family values found in Morocco in which men and women's role in the family is not to be equally but rather to compliment one another (Scourfield, 2015). Women are viewed as child care takers and men are viewed as breadwinners. Therefore, both men and women could consider the role of parenting to be equally shared if women are doing the childcare and men are the breadwinners. The role of parenting may be seen as equal and shared as long as each gender is fulfilling the customary gender role within the family. Lastly, all couples reported some dissonance regarding parenting, but dissonance appeared to be minimal and infrequent. The collected data reveals the parents in this study to have a positive coparenting relationship on average with only one parent, a mother, reporting a poor coparenting relationship.

The current study measured father involvement using Lamb's (1987) constructs including engagement, accessibility, and responsibility. Mothers and fathers appear to report a different level of father involvement that is inconsistent in many responses. Fathers appeared to report a much higher level of engagement, stating that they spent a great deal of time with their children, playing with them, helping with homework, and caring for them. Mother reports seem to refute this, with the majority of mother reports stating the father engages occasionally, a few hours a

day, but the majority of child engagement comes from mothers. Both fathers and mothers reported that the children spend the majority of time with the mother and the father does not spend much time alone with their child. This finding aligns with (McHale, 2004) who found that society often times “prepares” mothers for the role of child rearing, while fathers lack the knowledge and support, leading to less involved fathers. The fathers in this study may be less involved with their children because they do not feel knowledgeable, compared to their wife, with raising their children. This may be why the majority of fathers do not spend extended periods of time alone with their children. Mothers and fathers also reported fathers taking less responsibility for daily childcare tasks such as feeding and dropping children off at school. The majority of fathers stated that they helped their wife with taking care of the children, but the rhetoric focused more on helping rather than being equally responsible for taking care of their children. Similarly, fathers reported a high level of accessibility when compared to mother reports. Many father participants stated that they were home in the evenings and for lunchtime, making themselves accessible to their children. However, many mother reports stated that the fathers spent the time at home enjoying personal, leisure activities, such as watching soccer. Additionally, many mothers stated that fathers left for many hours each day and would come back late, often times after the children were in bed.

This study revealed a discrepancy between coparenting and father involvement. Previous research has highlighted that effective coparenting relationships lead to more father involvement (Hohmann-Marriott, 2011). Additionally, positive father involvement and positive co-parenting relationships are highly positively correlated ((Knox,2011). This study however, found the majority of couples to have a positive coparenting relationship but a significantly discrepancy with father involvement. The majority of mothers and fathers reported that they felt supported by

their spouse in terms of child rearing. Additionally, majority of couples reported low levels of child related dissonance and felt that responsibility was shared. High levels of support and responsibility with low levels of dissonance result in a positive coparenting relationship. The data then revealed that fathers are less engaged, less accessible, and take on a significantly lower amount of parent responsibility when compared to their wife. This study shows that there seems to be a positive coparenting relationship with a low level of father involvement.

The discrepancy between this research and previous research could be due to the differences in social norms within an Islamic country. Six of the eight participants believed that fathers should financially support their children and mothers should take care of the children. Interestingly, the two participants who did not believe this were in a household in which the mother worked full time and the father worked only 8 hours a week. Many traditional Islamic families believe that mothers should be the educator while fathers should be the bread winners ((Franceschelli, 2014). If the perception of the role of a father is different in Islamic families, it could explain why families have positive coparenting relationships but low levels of father involvement. Many fathers in this study seemed to be removed from the daily responsibilities of childcare, however, both mothers and fathers reported that they believed the fathers were satisfied with their current level of involvement. (Franceschelli, 2014). Families may see the coparenting relationship as complementary versus equal, leading fathers to take a backseat in the child rearing process (Franceschelli, 2014). There also seemed to be a difference in what the definition of accessible and responsible for the participants. Many fathers reported the time they were not home as “accessible” time for their children. However, many mothers reported the fathers not being accessible, watching TV, going out with friends, and not spending time with their children. Simply being in the room with the child does not mean a person is involved, if

there is no interactions occurring. However, because of this difference in definition, fathers self report of involvement was higher than mothers reports of the fathers.

Interviewing both mothers and fathers as well as conducting didactic analysis strengthened the validity of this study as well as allowed for comparisons of responses. This study only focused on families within the Rabat Medina. The medina is a more concentrated, traditional area of the country, and therefore does not depict the lifestyle of views of other citizens of the country. Additionally, this study was conducted using a translator, making it possible for some responses to be misconstrued or lost in translation. This study relied solely on self-report and did not use any observation of scales to collect data.

This study of the influence of Islam on family dynamic and gender roles, specifically father involvement, indicates substantial influence of Islam in the family. Through didactic analysis and examination, this research shows that for many Muslim families in Rabat Morocco, family dynamics, including father involvement, are strongly influenced by religious values. Additionally, the research showed a disparity between mother and father involvement with their children, with mothers burdened by the majority of child care needs.

ACKNOLEDGMENTS

This research was conducted while I was studying in Rabat Morocco with the School of International Training with the Center for Cross Cultural Learning. I thank TaiebBelghazi, NawalChaib, Stephanie Bordat, Marwah Al-Jilani, and SanaeChfor their support throughout this research.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A- Mother Survey

- العُمر? Age
- عُمر الزوج Age of spouse?
- كم ابن/ابنة لديك؟ How many children do you have?
- عُمر الاطفال Age of Child:
- جنس الأطفال Gender of child:
- الدخل Income:
- الحالة العائلية/الزوجية Marital Status:
- الدين Religion:
- ما هو مستواك الدراسي؟ What is the highest level of education you received?
- الماستر Graduatedegree
 - الاجازة Bachelorsdegree
 - سنتان جامعتان Associates degree
 - بعض الوقت في المدرسة / الثانوية / الجامعة Somecollege
 - البكالوريا High schooldiploma
 - اقل من المستوى الثانوي Lessthanhighschool
- ما هو الخيار الذي يتناسب مع وضعيتك المهنية الحالية؟ Which of the following best describes your current employment status?
- عاطل Unemployed
 - عمل في وقت الفراغ Employed part time
 - عمل كامل كل اليوم Employed full time
 - عمل خاص /خُر Self employed
 - ربة بيت Homemaker
 - طالبة Student
 - غير قادرة على العمل Unable to work
 - متقاعدة Retired

Coparenting

	English	Arabic
	Do you feel supported by your husband regarding parenting your children?	<u>هل تشعرين بأى مساندة من طرف الزوج فيما يخص تربية الأولاد؟</u>
	How often do you talk with your husband about your child	<u>كم مرة تتكلمين مع لزوج حول أمور الأولاد؟</u>
	Do you feel the duty of parenting is equally shared between you and your husband?	<u>هل تشعرين أن مسؤولية تربية الأولاد مشتركة بشكل عادل بينك وبين الزوج؟</u>
	How often do you have conflict about your child with your husband?	<u>كم مرة يكون هناك خلاف مع الزوج حول الأولاد؟</u>
	Are you and your husband able to talk about differences in opinion about parenting and come to a conclusion/compromise?	<u>هل أنت والزوج قادران على الكلام اختلاف الرأى فيما يخص طريقة تربية الأولاد؟ هل تتوصلان إلى حل وسط؟</u>

Father Involvement

	English	Arabic
	How often does your husband spend time engaging with your children? Eg. Reading books, playing, doing homework Eg. discipline them Express affection towards them-hug	<u>كم مرة تلاحظين أن الزوج يقضى وقته مع الأولاد؟</u> <u>قراءة الكتب – اللعب- فعل الواجبات</u> <u>تربيتهم بطريقة لائقة- التعبير عن مشاعر محبته لهم</u>
	how much time does your husband spend alone with your children when you are not there?	<u>كم من الوقت الزوج يقضى وقته مع الأولاد عندما تكونين غائبة عن البيت؟</u>
	How often does your husband take part in child-planning activities Eg, picking children up from school, dropping them off, staying home when children are sick Feeding, dressing, nurturing	<u>كم مرة الزوج يشارك في أنشطة مخصصة للأولاد؟</u> <u>مثال:</u> <u>أخذهم من/ألى المدرسة</u> <u>البقاء معهم فى البيت فى حاة المرض</u> <u>إطعامهم و تغذيتهم و مساعدتهم فى ارتداء الملابس..الخ</u>

Religion

<u>English</u>	<u>Arabic</u>
What role does religion play in your parenting?	<u>أي دور يلعب الدين في تربية الأولاد؟</u>
What role does religion play in your family order? Does religion play a role in who parents the children	<u>أي دور يلعب الدين في نظام عائلتك/اسرتك؟ هل الدين يحدد من يُربي الأولاد؟</u>

Perception

<u>English</u>	<u>Arabic</u>
What do you think a father should do for his children?	<u>ماذا يجب على الأب فعله للأولاد؟</u>
Does your husband satisfy what a typical father should do?	<u>هل تظنين أن الزوج مقنع في طريقة تربيته للأولاد؟</u>

Other

<u>English</u>	<u>Arabic</u>
Is there anything that your husband does as a father that you think is important that we haven't talked about yet?	<u>هل هناك شيء يفعله الزوج كأب تظنينه مهم و لم نتكلم عنه بعد؟</u>

- Unemployed عاطل
- Employed part time عمل في وقت الفراغ
- Employed full time عمل كامل كل اليوم
- Self employed عمل خاص /حر
- Homemaker ربة بيت
- Student طالبة
- Unable to work غير قادرة على العمل
- Retired متقاعدة

Coparenting

	<u>English</u>	<u>Arabic</u>
	Do you feel supported by you wife regarding parenting your children?	هل تشعر بأى مساندة من الزوجة فى تربية الأولاد؟
	How often do you talk with your wife about your children?	كم مرة تتكلم مع الزوجة حول أمور الأولاد؟
	Do you feel the duty of parenting is equally shared between you and your wife?	هل تشعرى أن مسؤولية تربية الأولاد مشتركة بشكل عادل بينك و بين الزوجة؟
	How often do you have conflict about your children with your wife?	كم مرة يكون هناك خلاف مع الزوجة حول الأولاد؟
	Are you and your wife able to talk about differences in opinion about parenting and come to a conclusion/compromise?	هل أنت والزوجة قادران على الكلام حول اختلاف الرأى فيما يخص طريقة تربية الأولاد؟ هل تتوصلان إلى حل وسط؟

Father Involvement

	<u>English</u>	<u>Arabic</u>
	How often do you spend time engaging with your children? Eg. Reading books, playing, doing homework Eg. discipline them Eg. Express affection towards them- hug	كم مرة تقضى وقتك مع الأولاد؟ قراءة الكتب – اللعب- فعل الواجبات تربيتهم بطريقة لائقة- التعبير عن مشاعر محبته لهم
	how much time do you spend alone with your children when your wife is not there?	كم من الوقت تقضى مع الأولاد عندما تكون الزوجة غائبة عن البيت؟
	How often do you take part in child-planning activities? Eg, picking children up from school, dropping them off, staying home when children are sick	كم مرة تشارك فى أنشطة مخصصة للأولاد؟ مثال: أخذهم من/إلى المدرسة البقاء معهم فى البيت فى حالة المرض إطعامهم و تغذيتهم و مساعدتهم فى ارتداء

	Eg. Feeding, dressing, nurturing	الملايس..الخ
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Religion

English	Arabic
What role does religion play in your parenting?	ي دور يلعب الدين في تربية الأولاد ؟
What role does religion play in your family order? Does religion play a role in who parents the children?	أي دور يلعب الدين في نظام عائلتك/اسرتك؟ هل الدين يحدد من يربي الأولاد؟

Perception

English	Arabic
What do you think a father should do for his children?	ماذا يجب على الأب فعله للأولاد؟
Do you satisfy what a typical father should do?	هل تظن أنك كأب مقتنع بطريقة تربيتك للأولاد؟

Other

Is there anything that you do as a father that you think is important that we haven't talked about yet?	هل هناك شيء تفعله كأب تظن انه مهم و لم نتكلم عنه بعد؟
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