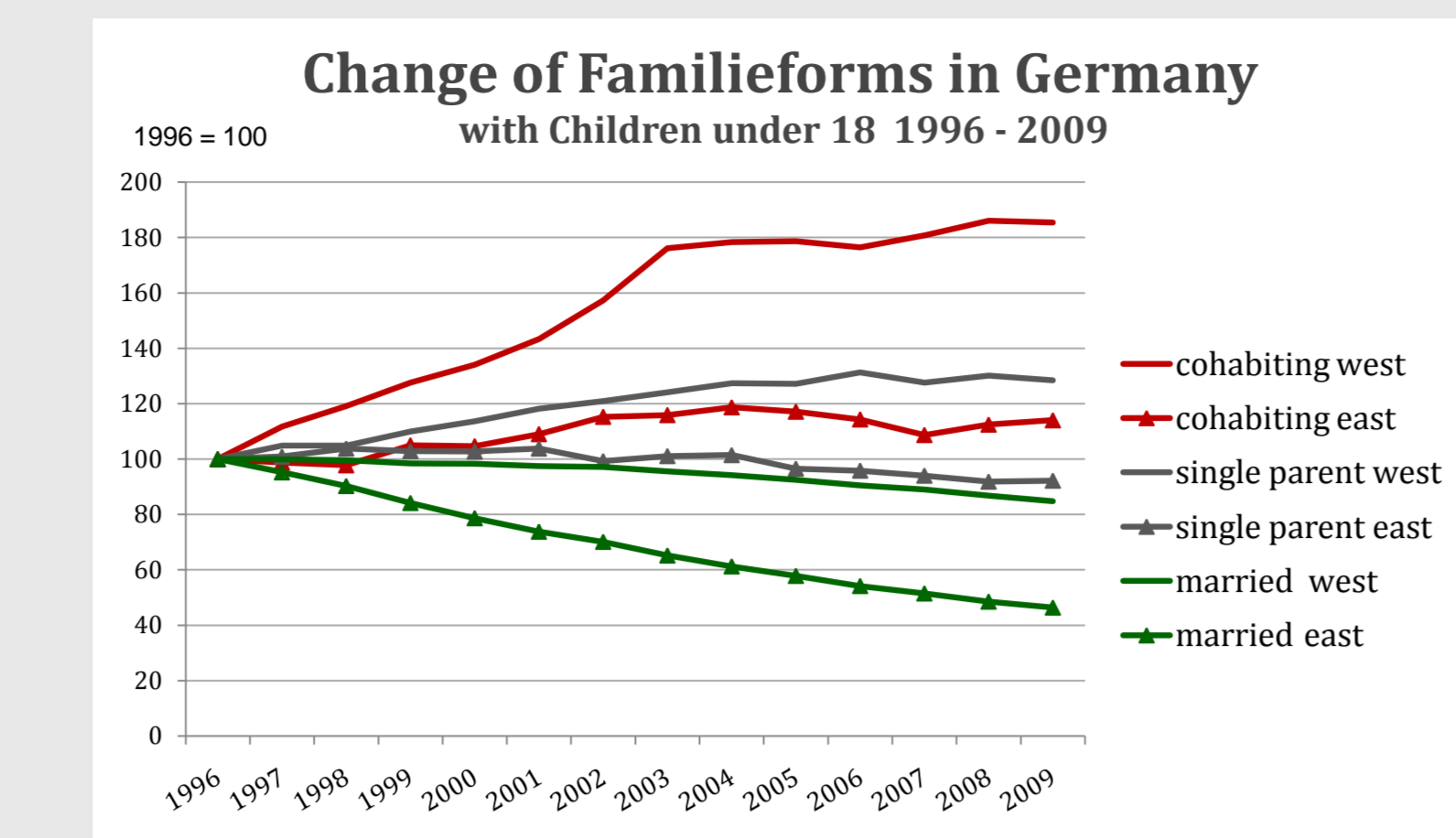


**Theory & Hypothesis**

The importance of **Coparenting** has become increasingly acknowledged as predictor of child development (e.g. Teubert & Pinquart, 2010). Coparenting refers to the way how mothers and fathers cooperate and support or undermine each other's efforts in the parenting role. In his ecological model of coparenting, Feinberg (2003) highlights the **interparental relationship** as a central antecedent (cf. Margolin et al., 2001, Schoppe et al., 2004, Talbot & McHale, 2004). Many studies have evidenced **spill-over-effects** of the **interparental relationship** into the quality of **parenting** which in turn influences **children's adjustment** (e.g. Benson, Buehler, & Gerard, 2008, Erel & Burmann, 1995). Accordingly, the present study investigates the mediating role of coparenting in linking the interparental relationship to child adjustment.



Source: Mikrozensus (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2011); own calculations

Our focus is on **nuclear families**. In Germany, an increasing number of couples makes the transition to parenthood without being married. Since little is known about these families, our focus is on such (previously) **unmarried families**.

**Research Questions**

- > **Parenting as mediator** linking relationship satisfaction → child adjustment?
- > **Coparenting as mediator** linking relationship satisfaction → child adjustment?
- > **The role of coparenting** in links between relationship satisfaction, parenting and child adjustment?

**Instruments**

Scales	Subscales & Examples	n	α
<b>Coparenting</b> Coparenting Scale for Parents with Preschool Children (CSPPC, Langmeyer & Walper, in prep.)	<b>Cooperation</b> <i>We decide important things in child rearing jointly.</i>	8	.873
	<b>Differences &amp; Conflict</b> <i>We have different rules regarding sleeping time, food, or watching tv.</i>	6	.775
	<b>Triangulation &amp; Undermining</b> <i>The other parent disregards rules set by me.</i>	7	.859
<b>Quality of Relationship</b> Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS, Hassebrauck, 1991)	<b>Relationship Satisfaction</b> <i>In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?</i>	7	.930
	<b>Parental Engagement</b> <i>Play or go in for something with the child.</i>	6	.649
<b>Parenting</b> Alabama Parenting Questionnaire (APQ, Lösel, Beelmann, Jaurisch, Scherer, Stemmler, Wallner, 2003)	<b>Positive Parenting</b> <i>Say the child if it has been something done very well.</i>	6	.766
	<b>Oppositional-Aggressive Behavior</b> <i>Destroys intentionally objects or toys.</i>	10	.825
<b>Child Adjustment</b> Verhaltensbeurteilungsbogen für Vorschulkinder (VBV-3-6, Berner, Fleischmann & Döpfner, 1992)	<b>Hyperactivity</b> <i>Stays 15 minutes or longer at a toy.</i>	8	.719
	<b>Social Competence</b> <i>Tells the parents of its own volition its experiences.</i>	8	.719
	<b>Emotional Problems</b> <i>Starts easily to cry, is very sensitive.</i>	8	.636

**Sample**

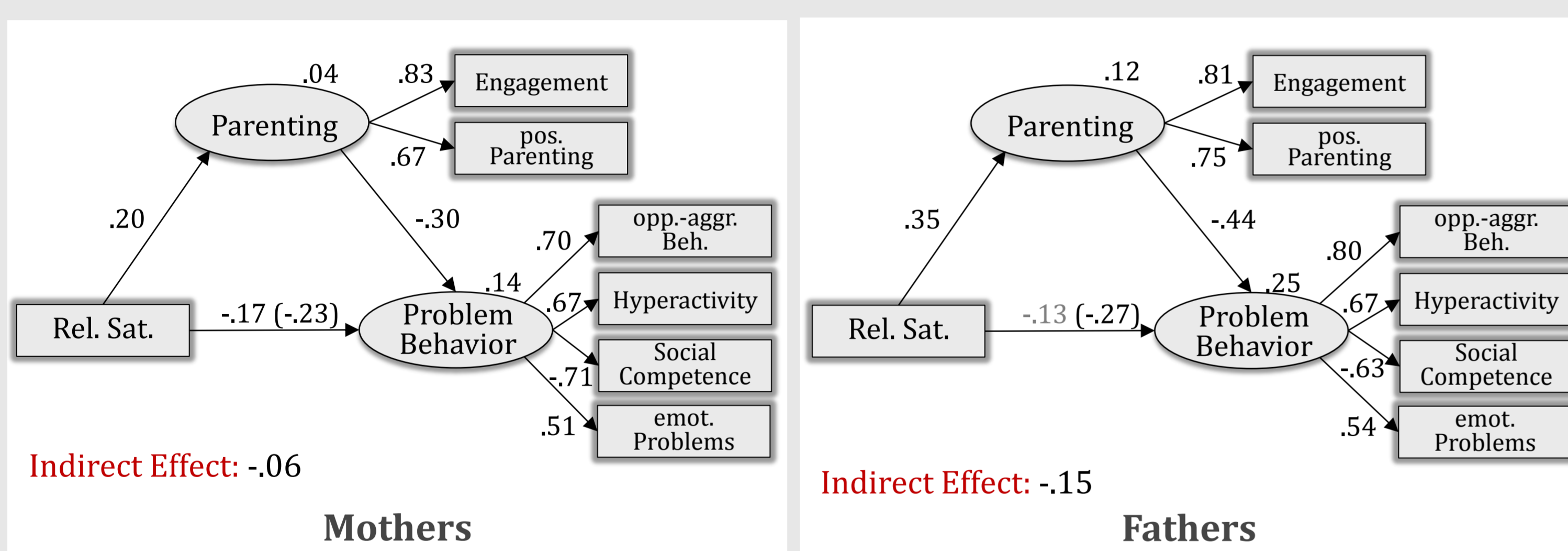
	Individual Data		Dyadic Data			Individual Data		Dyadic Data	
	mothers	fathers	mothers	fathers		mothers	fathers	mothers	fathers
N	228	121	87 dyads		relationship duration (years) M(SD)	9.0(4.2)	8.6 (4.0)	8.5 (3.8)	
age (in years) M(SD)	34.5 (5.8)	37.1 (7.8)	33.4 (6.1)	36.5 (7.7)	married	32.9 %	33.9 %	36.8 %	
highest graduation					child female	51.8 %	46.3 %	51.7 %	
upper school degree	54.8 %	52.9 %	52.9 %	48.3 %	child age (in years) M (SD)	4.1 (0.9)	4.2 (1.0)	4.1 (1.0)	
intermediate school degree	30.3 %	23.1 %	32.2 %	25.5 %					

**Methods**

For mediation hypotheses (Baron & Kenny, 1986) **Structural Equation Models (SEM)** with Monte Carlo bootstrapped indirect effects (cf. Hayes, 2009) were estimated (AMOS 19.0). To control gender effects **Multi-Group-Analyses (MGA)** were performed. There the chi-square differences ( $\Delta\text{Chi}^2$ ) between the unconstrained model and the equality constraint model in the structural weights were calculated. To analyse the dyadic data we performed a **Actor-Partner Interdependence model (APIM)**; Kenny, Kashy, & Cook 2006). A critical alpha of .05 was assumed in our analyses.

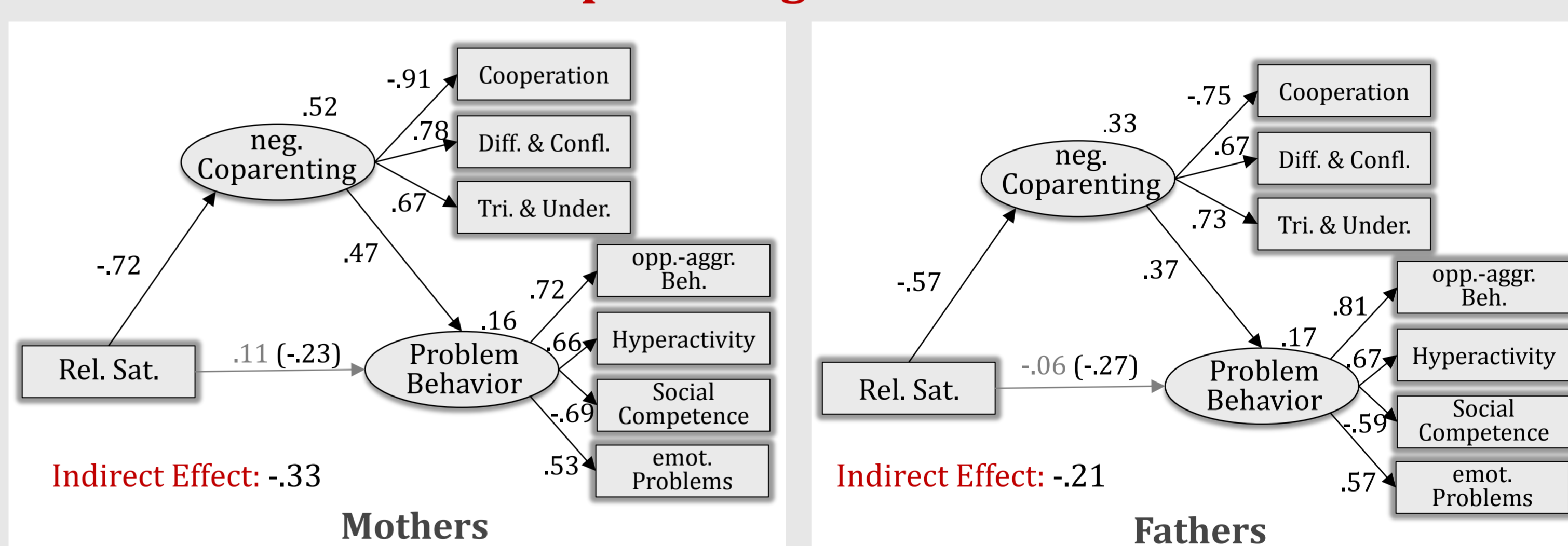
**Results**

**Parenting as Mediator**



Model-Fit:  $\text{Chi}^2 = 50.60, df = 24, \text{Chi}^2/df = 2.11, p = .001; CFI = .96, RMSEA = .06; MGA: \Delta\text{Chi}^2 = 5.39, \Delta df = 7, n.s.$   
For both mothers and fathers **Parenting** acts as a **mediator** between Relationship Satisfaction and Child Adjustment: partial mediation for mothers (decreased effect) and full mediation for fathers (effect n.s.).

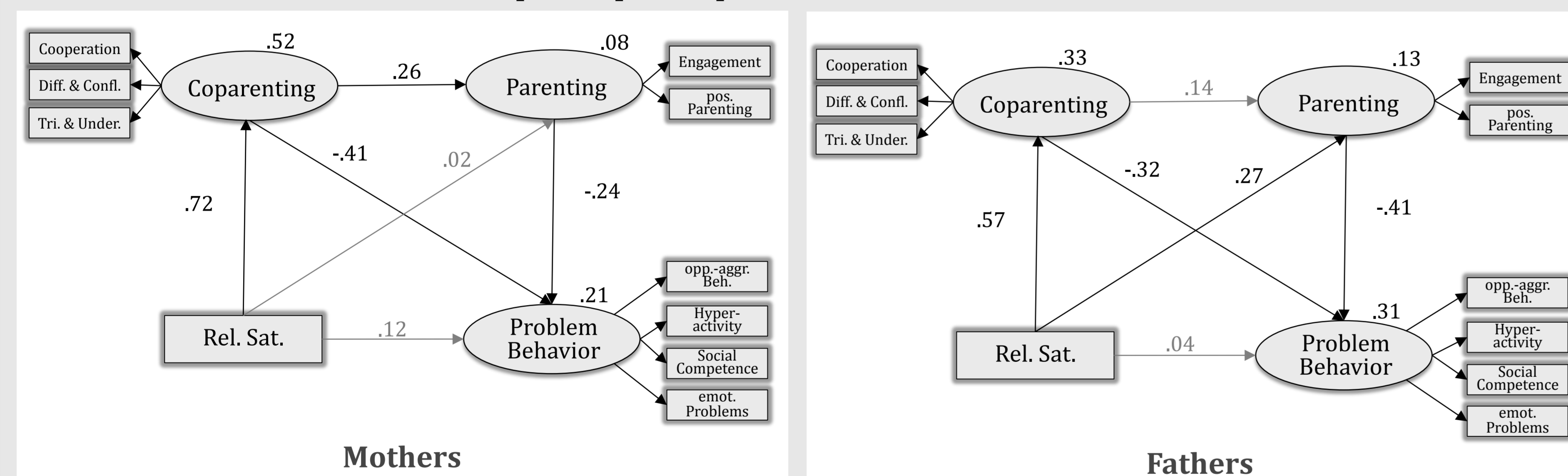
**Coparenting as Mediator**



Model-Fit:  $\text{Chi}^2 = 68.09, df = 36, \text{Chi}^2/df = 1.89, p = .001; CFI = .96, RMSEA = .05; MGA: \Delta\text{Chi}^2 = 10.68, \Delta df = 8, n.s.$   
For mothers as well as fathers **Coparenting** functions as a **mediator** between Relationship Satisfaction and Child Adjustment: In both cases the effect disappears (full mediation).

**Interplay between Coparenting, Relationship Satisfaction, Parenting, & Child Adjustment**

**Multiple-Step Multiple Mediator Model (Hayes, 2009)**

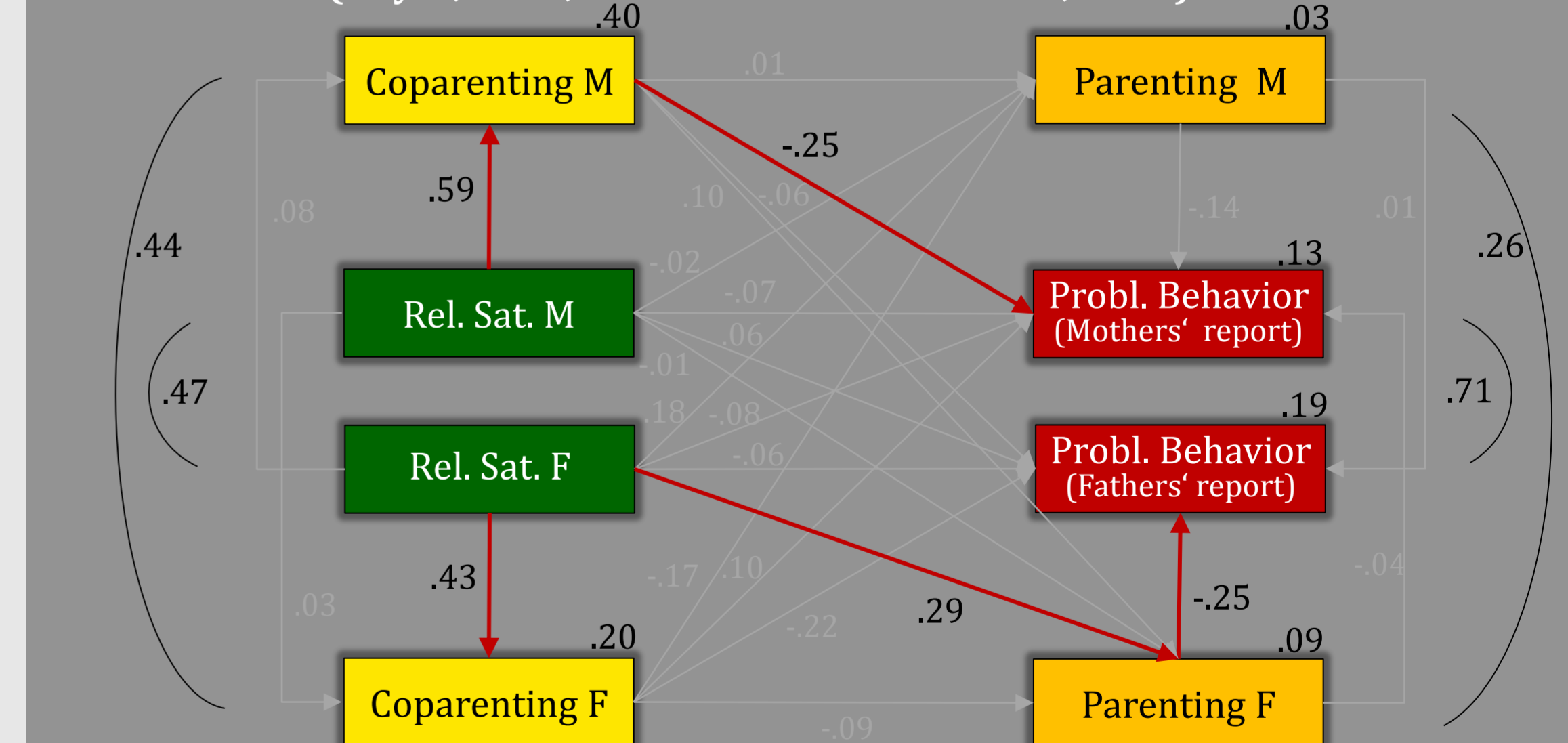


Model-Fit:  $\text{Chi}^2 = 124.11, df = 60, \text{Chi}^2/df = 2.07, p < .000; CFI = .94, RMSEA = .06; MGA: \Delta\text{Chi}^2 = 14.41, \Delta df = 12, n.s.$

Parental **Coparenting** and **Parenting** jointly mediate effects of Relationship Satisfaction on Child Adjustment (complete mediation for women and men). The effect from Relationship Satisfaction across Coparenting to Child Adjustment is identical for mothers and fathers, but there are also gender differences: For mothers, Relationship Satisfaction is linked to Parenting via Coparenting only. For fathers, Relationship Satisfaction

affects Parenting directly. For either parent, Coparenting as well as Parenting show independent effects on Child Adjustment. **Dyadic analysis** support that Coparenting plays a more important role as mediator for mothers, whereas Parenting is a stronger mediator for Fathers. Note: There are only significant actor-effects in the dyadic model.

**Dyadic Analysis: Actor-Partner Multiple-Step Multiple Mediator Path-Model (Hayes, 2009, Ledermann & Bodenmann, 2006)**



Model-Fit:  $\text{Chi}^2 = 2.53, df = 1, \text{Chi}^2/df = 2.53, p = .112; CFI = .99; RMSEA = .13$

**Conclusion**

- > As expected, there are **strong connections between Relationship Satisfaction and both parents' report on Coparenting**.
  - > **Coparenting proves a strong mediator** linking Relationship Satisfaction to Child Adjustment for both parents.
  - > **For fathers**, this also holds for **Parenting** which is directly affected by Relationship Satisfaction and strongly linked to Child Adjustment. **For mothers**, however, Parenting is less affected by Partnership Satisfaction and mediates its effects on Child Adjustment only indirectly and partially.
  - > **Coparenting and Parenting** act as two **serially linked mediators** between Relationship Satisfaction and Child Adjustment for mothers, but as **rather independent parallel mediators** for fathers. Interestingly, fathers' positive parenting seems less dependent on Coparenting but rather on Partnership Satisfaction.
- Limitations:**
- Our analyses focus on **families formed out of wedlock**. Higher variance & salience of partnership quality than for married parents?
  - **Cross-sectional data!** Therefore, no causal interpretations are allowed ⇒ need for longitudinal investigations.

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