Journal of Child and Family Studies (2018) 27:3085–3095
https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-018-1094-4

ORIGINAL PAPER

Coparenting in the Context of Mother–Father–Infant versus Mother–Grandmother–Infant Triangular Interactions in Turkey

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Published online: 11 May 2018

Abstract
In this report, coparenting behaviors during triangular interactions among families raising a 3-month-old infant in Turkey are examined. Given the significant role played by extended family members in Turkish culture, coparenting dynamics were examined as mothers and babies played together with grandmothers, as well as together with fathers. Forty-five families took part, and 42 father–mother–baby and 33 grandmother–mother–baby triangular interactions of approximately 10 min in length were filmed during the *Lausanne Trilogue Play*. From videotapes of the interactions, individual and mutual coparenting behaviors were evaluated using the *Coparenting and Family Rating System: 3 Month Adaptation* (CFRS3M). Results indicated that while mothers' own parenting behavior when in the LTP role of Active Parent (AP) was comparable whether with fathers or grandmothers, their behavior when in the LTP role of third party parent (TPP) was comparatively more engaged while with fathers than while with grandmothers. Fathers were comparatively less engaged when occupying the TPP role than were mothers in the TPP role, while grandmothers showed more flirting and distracting behavior in the TPP role than did either fathers or mothers. These findings are significant in documenting meaningful distinctions in Turkish grandmothers' as well as in Turkish fathers' and mothers' coparenting propensities when engaging in triangular interactions with babies during the LTP.

Keywords Triangular interactions · Coparenting · LTP · Fathers · Grandmothers · Infants · Turkey

Infants' early dyadic relationships with parents and caregivers lay a foundation for later social, cognitive, and emotional development. In addition, the propensities of children's coparents to amicably communicate, collaborate and coordinate together within the mother–father–child 'triangle' play a significant role in supporting child development (McHale 2007; Favez et al. 2006). Historically, most studies of coparenting enrolled Western (North American or European) families, while coparenting in other family systems around the world received far less study. In recent years, new scholarship on coparenting involving Middle Eastern (Feldman and Masalha 2010) and South and Southeast Asian (McHale et al. 2014) families has arisen, with burgeoning attention given to the roles taken on by extended kin in multigenerational coparenting systems (Kurrien and Vo 2004). Kin caregivers—in particular, grandmothers—also play a pivotal role in Turkish family dynamics, and some consideration has been given to documenting generational differences in child-rearing attitudes (Sever 1989). However, more systemic analyses that consider coparenting dynamics operative in both mother–father–baby and mother–grandmother–baby triangles within the same family system have not yet been conducted within the Turkish culture.

Turkey stands as a bridge connecting the East and West geographically, and hence it is of conceptual interest that family processes in Turkish family culture can be characterized by both Eastern and Western features. In some respects, there remains a tradition of mutual interdependence within more traditional families, with an emphasis on family over individuals. In this regard, Turkish culture can be understood as chiefly collectivistic. However,

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there are also sub-cultural differences, such that people who reside in larger urban areas of Turkey perceive themselves as neither intensely collectivistic nor intensely individualistic (e.g., Göregenli 1997).

Kağıtçıbaşı (2007) observed that although modern urban Turkish families became more economically independent following social and economic changes, strong traditional values and emotional interdependence within and between generations have endured, continuing to reflect a 'culture of relatedness'. Closeness, intimacy, emotional interdependence, and relaxing of personal boundaries among family members is common. While such levels of interdependence might be perceived as 'enmeshment' through a Western lens, they are a norm among Turkish families (Sunar and Fişek 2005).

There have been other factors that have shaped the Turkish family. For example, the modernization of Turkey, which accelerated after the 19th century, resulted in increasing numbers of nuclear family households. In some urban regions, nuclear families have even become more widespread than extended family households (Topses 2008; Yavuz 2004), though extended families remain conventional in smaller cities and villages. Still, even among nuclear families in which married children are economically independent from their parents, connections with grandparents and relatives remain robust (Seven and Ogelman 2012). Habitual travel back and forth and staying closely connected with parents and relatives are common, regardless of rural or urban zone. Indeed, grandmothers are often responsible for taking care of young infants to offset high costs of daycare centers.

It is not just physical proximity that distinguishes the intergenerational connectedness of Turkish families. In Turkey as in other cultures where relatedness is as or more pronounced than individualism, extended family members also remain emotionally close to nuclear family members (Kağıtçıbaşı 2010). Approximately 75% of mothers are housewives in Turkey (TÜİK 2016), and mothers' social relationships are often limited to their extended family members (Baydar et al. 2012).

Mother–grandmother coparenting relationships remain very important. Turkish mothers who receive emotional and baby care support from grandmothers are less likely to punish and show demanding behavior toward their child (Güroğlu 2010). Support from extended family, especially in families of low socioeconomic status, is also positively related to mothers' warm and supportive parenting behavior (Baydar et al. 2012) and to children's vocabulary development (Baydar et al. 2014). Supportive relationships run both ways, as the quality of relationship between Turkish mothers and their own mothers is also related to the grandmother–grandchild bond (Friedlmeier et al. 2011). Such analyses underscore the importance of understanding the role of extended family members in Turkey to properly understand the early family dynamics that support child development.

To date, relatively few studies of families in Turkey have employed observational methodologies to document family system dynamics in nuclear or extended families. Though parents can describe their own coparenting behavior (McHale 1997), a unique window into both positive and problematic behavioral sequences and interactions that reflect coparenting cooperation, interference, and disengagement is provided when triangular interactions are observed (McHale and Alberts 2003; McHale et al. 2000). Mis-attuned parenting and problematic coalitions and boundaries within the system can be detected through observation, and addressed through relevant interventions and clinical therapies (McHale and Sullivan 2008; Favez and Frascarolo 2013).

One assessment paradigm that has proven well-suited for validly evaluating the family's coparenting dynamic is the Lausanne Trilogue Play (LTP; Fivaz-Depeursinge and Corboz-Warnery 1999). To date, LTP studies have been carried out primarily in Western countries, where characteristic patterns of cooperation, conflict, and disengagement have proven to be of particular interest and predictive value. The LTP is an innovative paradigm, allowing each coparent to take a turn serving in a role of Active Parent (directly engaged with the baby) and in a role of Third Party Parent (simply present as the other engages), before joining together as a family threesome in mutual play. A fourth LTP 'Part' places the infant in a Third Party Position as parents engage together. Studies of family processes using the LTP have been uncommon in Middle, South and Southeastern cultures. Some preliminary evidence with Israeli families does indicate the utility and acceptability of this method for establishing whether one partner is excluded or one partner dominates, whether parents interfere with one another's interactions with the child, or whether there is a lack of energy and joy in the triadic situation (Feldman et al. 2004). There are, however, numerous differences that distinguish the bilinear affinal kinship systems of countries like Israel with the descent patrilineal kinship system of countries like Turkey (Nauck and Suckow 2006) outline. There is hence value in beginning to explore the nature of evidence available from LTP investigations in understudied patrilineal countries and cultures.

There is also value in building a stronger understanding of the roles of grandmothers in families' coparenting systems. Grandmothers as coparents have not just been understudied in Turkey—until recently, their coparenting roles in all manner of family systems were not well understood. McHale and Irace (2011) argued that coparenting refers to the support and solidarity between *all* coparenting adults responsible for the care and upbringing

of children. In related scholarship (Brody et al. 1994) used the term 'cocaregiving' to describe situations where responsibility for a child's upbringing is shouldered by a caregiving partner who is not a biological parent, but rather a relative or other involved person.

Clearly, grandmothers are cocaregivers in millions of families worldwide. Jones and Lindahl (2011), reviewing studies of family dynamics in African, Asian, Native American, and Hispanic heritage families in the United States, detailed the frequency with which grandmothers across ethnic groups are involved in childrearing and contribute to both mother and child adjustment. Observations of mothers and grandmothers, however, have been few and far between. Chase-Lansdale et al. (1999) completed an early investigation utilizing observations of 3-year-old child-mother-maternal grandmother triangular interactions in African American families, and identified four coparenting patterns: mother and grandmother sharing coparenting of the child, mother in charge, grandmother in charge, and neither adult in charge. Families practicing collaboratively shared coparenting and families where mothers were in charge showed comparably positive outcomes, while families where neither mother nor grandmother were in charge *and* families where grandmother was in charge showed higher levels of conflict, lower levels of child compliance, and less emotional support and engagement.

Subsequently, McHale et al. (2013) completed an unusual observational study in which recently incarcerated mothers and the maternal grandmothers who had cared for the children while mothers were away interacted together in three-person family teaching and play interactions with preschool-aged children. Based on their analyses of the observations, they identified four distinctive patterns of coparenting alliance: mutually supportive, led but cooperative, strained, and imbalanced alliances. Their data indicated that mutually supportive and cooperative interactions between mother and grandmother were beneficial for children's adjustment during this period after mothers had returned home after time away; the other patterns were associated with poorer child adjustment.

In most prior studies of mothers and grandmothers, the coparenting grandmother studied has been the mother's own mother. This trend has reflected the matriarchal system dominant in many United States subcultures, particularly prominent among lower socioeconomic African American family systems. In Turkey, however, it is not only the child's maternal but also the child's paternal grandmother who are normatively and substantively involved with cocaregiving during the child's early years of life. Though few studies have focused on paternal grandmothers, their significance was established in work by Pashos (2000). Pashos found that in Germany and urban Greece (both modern Western societies), maternal grandparents, especially grandmothers, were rated as more intensive caregivers than paternal grandparents. However, this was not so for the patrilateral culture of rural Greece, where paternal grandparents, especially grandmothers, provided more care.

In multigenerational families, grandparental involvement begins early, and endures as families begin developing signature family practices and routines. Understanding early family patterns is hence very important, for triangular coparenting alliances have already begun consolidating by 3 months post-partum; early-emerging coparenting patterns show coherence over developmental time, predicting comparable patterns at 12 and at 30 months post-partum (McHale 2007). Three months post-partum appears to be a pivotal juncture for families. Earlier than this, during the initial weeks and months after the baby's birth, many families enjoy family and friend well-wisher support to an extent that does not endure. Hence prior to 3 months, a crystallized coparenting pattern has often not firmly taken hold. But *by* three months, families begin 'doing what they do' with samples of triangular behavior proving prognostic (McHale 2007).

Though there have been no comparable empirical studies of coparenting during the early post-partum months in Turkey, grandmothers in family systems marked by substantive grandparental involvement might be expected to have become firmly entrenched in the ongoing roles they will play as meaningful cocaregivers for the baby by 3 months. Moreover, infants themselves have begun contributing to early family process by 3 months post-partum (Fivaz-Depeursinge and Favez 2006; Fivaz-Depeursinge et al. 2010; McHale et al. 2008). Given the salience of infants' own emergent capacities at three months and the coalescence of triangular patterns documented through different frameworks and vantages in several countries where the LTP has previously been intensively studied, there is both good reason for and heuristic value in exploring early-emerging dynamics of coparenting systems in Turkish culture.

The current investigation was conceptualized to address the dearth of knowledge about early-emerging coparenting and triangular interactions in multigenerational family systems in Turkish culture. We chose to approach this issue by systematically observing and evaluating two sets of interactions—'mother–father–baby', and 'mother–grandmother–baby'—within the same family system. A standardized triangular context was employed, with all families navigating the LTP assessment together. Three exploratory hypotheses concerning mothers as coparents, and fathers and grandmothers as coparents, guided the work: First, it was anticipated that maternal behavior, whether in the LTP role of active parent (AP) or of third-party parent (TPP) would not materially differ within the

two sets of triangles. Second, with respect to comparisons of behaviors exhibited by mothers, fathers, and grandmothers, no individual AP parenting differences in touch, vocalizing, or expression of positive affect were anticipated. However, given the dynamic nature of grandmaternal involvement in Turkish families with young babies, grandmothers were expected to exhibit comparatively more *active* TPP behaviors (flirting, distractions) and comparatively fewer *passive* TPP behaviors (watching, not engaged; disengaged) than either mothers or fathers whilst in the LTP's TPP role. Finally, regarding global distinctions between mother–father–baby and mother–grandmother–baby dynamics, no unambiguous differences were theorized for most variables, with one exception: it was hypothesized that mother–grandmother interactions may receive higher scores for competition and for cooperation than mother–father interactions.

Method

Participants

Nine family health centers in Ankara helped contact families with 3-month old babies. Half of the Centers were located in neighborhoods of comparatively lower socio-economic standing. With the aid and collaboration of health workers at these Centers, 66 families were identified. Following a telephone introduction, the purpose and criteria of the study were explained to the families. Of the contacted families, 25 were ineligible due to a mismatch with study criteria (e.g., babies did not fall within the study's age parameters, parents were not married or living together). Thirteen families declined to participate for various reasons (e.g., discomfort being taped by cameras, concerns about the baby's health, lack of spousal interest). At the end, 28 families were successfully recruited from health centers. Seven additional families were identified through social networking, and 10 were recruited via 'snowballing' word of mouth from participating families.

Altogether, a total of 45 families participated. All babies were between 2 and 4 months of age (in days; $M = 103.8$, $SD = 12.15$, *range* = 66–127). Only one baby exceeded 120 days (by 7 days). Thirty-two babies were the first-child of the family, 11 had one older sibling, and 2 had more than two siblings. All parents were married for at least one year and living together. The average length of marriage was 28.44 in months ($SD = 27.28$, *range* = 12–108 months). The mothers ($M = 28.44$, $SD = 4.37$, *range* = 18–37) on average were three years younger than the fathers ($M = 31.37$, $SD = 4.05$, *range* = 23–41).

Among 45 mothers and 41 fathers reporting demographics, 3 mothers (6.7%) and 3 fathers (7.3%) were graduated from primary school, 6 mothers (13.3%) and 7 fathers (17.1%) graduated from elementary school, 11 mothers (24.4%) and 8 fathers (19.5%) graduated from high school, 14 mothers (31.1%) and 17 fathers (41.5%) graduated from university, and 11 mothers (24.4%) and 6 fathers (14.6%) had post-graduate degrees. Monthly incomes reported by parents (with TL converted to $) were as follows: four families (8.9%) had about 260$–518$, 14 families (31.1%) had 518$–1036$, 12 families (26.6%) had 1036$–2590$, 7 families (15.6%) had 2590$–3626$, 3 families (6.7%) had 3626$–5180$, 5 families (11.1%) had monthly income between 5180$–7770$. Parents' education level and monthly income reported were highly correlated ($r_{mothers} = .76$; $r_{\text{fathers}} = .75$; $p < .000$ for both).

Of the participating grandmothers (20 maternal and 13 paternal), 5 were living with the child and parents. The average age of grandmothers was 55 ($SD = 5.78$, range = 43–70). As anticipated for this culture, grandmothers spent significantly more time on average with babies than did fathers ($M_{fathers} = 3.5$ h vs. $M_{\text{grandmothers}} = 4.5$ h, $t(29) = 2.33$, $p < .05$). One participating mother identified an elder maternal aunt as coparent and asked that her aunt be recognized and honored as maternal grandmother, as she functioned in that role for the mother and the family, and was the elder helping the family with baby-care.

In 30 families, both the child's father and one of the child's grandmothers agreed to take part in the study interactions with the mother and baby. In another three families, only the grandmother (but not the father) consented; in 12 families, only the father (but not the grandmother) participated. In total, 42 father–mother–baby and 33 grandmother–mother–baby triangular interactions were observed.

Procedure

Data collection was carried out during home visits. The first and the third authors of this report completed all visits together. Family members were phoned and instructed that all agreeing family members (mother–father–grandmother–baby) should be home together during the time of the visit. Most visits were completed in a single observation, but four had to be re-visited because not all family members could be scheduled together at a common time. The average duration of the home-visits was 112 min ($SD = 32.86$, *range* = 60–210). While the LTP procedure itself took an average of only 20–25 min (10 min × 2 interactions, plus transition time), all home visits took significantly more time to complete. Respecting cultural traditions, we did not rush, and care was taken to: introduce ourselves, build rapport and a friendly atmosphere for the assessments (engaging in positive affective exchanges with the baby, accepting parents' offers of food),

read/explain consent forms and obtain signatures for consents. This 'getting to know you' stage routinely took approximately 30 minutes. Identification of relevant household spaces for the interactions and properly arranging the LTP setting and cameras, going through the instructions, assuring that parents understood fully, and seating and settling family members often took another 20–30 min. When babies needed to be soothed or fed during the visit, which occurred frequently, this also required extra time—as much as the family needed. Parents also completed surveys capturing demographic and other family characteristics, often adding another 30–40 min.

After consenting was completed and relevant space within the home established, LTP observations were completed first in all cases where the infant was not sleeping or crying. Family members were given the opportunity to determine which coparent (father or grandmother) would be first to join together with the mother to play with the baby (22 fathers joined first). Once LTP and survey data collection was completed, 100 TL (about 50$, supported by the Turkish Academy of Sciences, TÜBA) and a Middle East Technical University (METU) cup as a gift were given to the family members.

Lausanne Trilogue Play (LTP, Fivaz-Depeursing and Corboz-Warnery, 1999). So that triangular interactions could be observed and coded systematically, the LTP paradigm was used. There were needed practical adjustments to the setup for the LTP setting since the interactions were carried out not in a laboratory but in a home environment. Two chairs for parents and one standard infant carrier seat suitable for the child's age were arranged to form an equilateral triangle to encourage face-to-face trilogue interactions. It is important to note that one of the specially-constructed infant seats developed for the LTP's founding laboratory was not employed. Rather, the baby safely and securely reposed in the infant carrier seat. The infant's seat did not have a carrying arch. It was placed on a coffee or similar table already in the family home identified by families during the setup phase. This configuration allowed the baby to direct his/her attentional focus and energy on the interactions with the adults. The adults' chairs faced the infant's seat and were oriented toward one another at an approximately 60^{o} angle so as to facilitate their interaction with both the infant and one another. Adults were asked not to move their or the infant's seats because the cameras could not record them fittingly if they moved. There were two fixed cameras. One camera recorded the coparents, and the other camera captured the infant in close-up, full frontal view. Though the records were not digitally synchronized during filming, it was possible to subsequently establish the exact starting time for both the parents' and infant's video records.

The standard LTP administration was implemented, with family members navigating each of four Parts. In Part 1, one parent is active and plays with the infant while the other parent is simply present. In the second part, the parents switch the roles. In the third part, all three family members play together. In the final part, the infant becomes the third party as the adults interact together. Each part takes approximately 2 min, and parents decide when to initiate transitions between Parts. Researchers gave the instructions to coparents, answered any question that arose, started video recording, and then left the room with other family members. Coparents were asked to alert the researchers once they completed the interaction. Each LTP interaction was filmed privately and independently. Any siblings present at home remained in another room and were looked after either by the coparent who was not involved with the LTP session at that moment, or in cases where the other coparent was not present, by a research team member.

Measures

Coparenting and Family Rating System: 3 Month Adaptation (CFRS3M, Lieberson et al. 2004). To evaluate triangular interactions and observed coparenting during the LTP videotapes, the CFRS3M was used. Coding using this variation of McHale et al.'s (2000) Coparenting and Family Rating System (CFRS) proceeded in two stages, as per the manualized coding instructions. In the first stage, coders proceeded through the tape and rated several different behaviors for both individual parents, and for the coparenting duo, in discrete 10 s intervals. After doing so, the rater then provided a set of global 1–5 and 1–7 ratings to capture the overall clinical impression left by the family. In Parts 1 and 2, the behaviors of the *Active Parent (AP)* and the *Third Party Parent (TPP)* were evaluated separately; when in the role of the AP, the actor was rated on whether he/she *Vocalized* (V), *used Touch* (T), and *expressed Positive Affect* (PA) during each 10 s. When in the role of the TPP, the actor received scores from the CFRS3M's Third Party Parent list which signified whether he/she was *watching/affectively engaged, watching/affectively not engaged, interfering/flirting, interfering/distracting, distracted, or disengaged*. So for example, if the TPP mugged or made mouth noises for the baby, s/he received a code for 'interferes-flirts' or 'interferes-distracts' rather than 'vocalizes' or 'expresses positive affect'.

For Part 3, while individual parent-child behaviors (V, T, PA) continued to be coded, of utmost importance during this segment was the coparenting dynamic. Again in 10-second intervals, raters coded several behaviors indicating how well parents collaborated as they played together with the baby. Variables rated in Part 3 included: coparents'

'*Shared Positive Affect, Active Co-action, Benign Cooperation, Disengagement, Mis-coordination*, and *Active Competition'*. These indicators were judged as being present or absent within each 10-second interval. Individual parenting behaviors were then coded for Part 4.

The total number of times each observed variable (e.g., touches, was disengaged etc.) was observed and recorded was divided by the relevant number of time-intervals. For example, if mother was in the role of AP (2 + 1) for 2 min (120 seconds/10 seconds = 12 intervals), and then subsequently engaged in Parts 3 for another 3 min (180 s/10 s = 18 intervals), the total number of time intervals in which she was active was 30 (12 + 18). If she touched the baby 28 times during those 30 intervals, her touch score was 28/30 or 0.93. Micro variable scores could hence range from 0 (if never observed in any interval) to 1 (observed in every interval).

Once interval coding was completed, affording a micro-look at family tendencies, the global CFRS codes were rated. For the global ratings, which took into consideration activity across all four parts of the LTP, the coparents' overall *Cooperation, Competition, Warmth, Degree of Overstimulation, Disengagement*, and the couple's *Sensitivity to Baby* were each evaluated on a 1–7 Likert scale. *Verbal Sparring* was evaluated on 1–5 Likert scale. As in the original CFRS system, behavioral anchors were used as guides, but the CFRS3M manual also gave raters latitude to provide, for example, a higher competition rating to one family for whom there were only two or three brief, but vivid and telling instances of competitiveness, if their competitive acts impressed as more deliberate than other somewhat more numerous but less compelling competitive acts demonstrated by members of a different family. The first author rated all videotapes; 15 (20%) were also independently coded by the third author. The intra-class correlation coefficient with two-way random effect model (absolute agreement, average measurements) was conducted for each dual-coded family, and the average of the ICCs for the families was found as .81 (*range* = 0.51–0.95).

Data Analyses

The observed behaviors of coparents in the *'mother–father–baby"*and *'mother–grandmother–baby"* conditions were contrasted using paired t-tests. In all relevant between-groups analyses, context (triangle with father vs triangle with grandmother) served as the independent variable, with individual parenting and coparenting behaviors serving as dependent measures.

Results

For heuristic purposes, comparisons of all observed variables for both micro and macro variables of the CFRS3M in Parts 1 and 2 are presented below. There were no significant group differences between families having one or more children for any of the micro or macro variables.

Observed Individual AP and TPP Micro Codes

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, ranges) for all micro variables coded for mothers, fathers, and grandmothers during LTP Parts 1, 2 and 3.

Table 1 Means, standard deviations, and ranges for observed individual micro variables

	Mother–father–infant (n = 42)						Mother–grandmother–baby (n = 33)					
	Mother			Father			Mother			Grandmother		
	M	SD	Range	*M*	SD	Range	*M*	SD	Range	*M*	SD	Range
Active parent (AP) behaviors												
Vocalization	.89	.09	.62–1.00	.87	.15	.47–1.00	.84	.18	.14–1.00	.89	.15	.45–1.00
Touch	.69	.24	.13–1.00	.72	.24	.16–1.00	.67	.25	.14–1.00	.65	.28	.12–1.00
Positive affect	.95	.07	.75–1.00	.92	.12	.59–1.00	.93	.15	.29–1.00	.95	.08	.71–1.00
Third party parent (TPP) behaviors												
Watch/engaged	.96	.10	.48–1.00	.83	.19	.25–1.00	.89	.17	.36–1.00	.89	.17	.38–1.00
Watch/not-engaged	.07	.15	.00–.71	.16	.26	.00–.00	.14	.20	.00–.71	.06	.14	.00–.59
Disengaged	.03	.10	.00–.44	.06	.10	.00–.42	.02	.10	.00–.57	.04	.09	.00–.41
Interference/flirts	.02	.04	.00–.17	.04	.10	.00–.50	.04	.14	.00–.75	.12	.22	.00–1.00
Interference/distracts	.04	.11	.00–.50	.06	.12	.00–.44	.03	.08	.00–.33	.13	.22	.00–1.00

Notes: Active parent (AP) behaviors were observed and coded in the Part-1, Part-2, and Part-3 of the LTP

Third party parent (TPP) behaviors were observed and coded in the Part-1 and Part-2 of the LTP

Maternal behavior across contexts. As anticipated, maternal behavior when occupying the role of active parent (AP) was not materially different within the two sets of relationship triangles (Table 1). That is: mothers' own vocalization (V), touch (T), and shows of positive affect (PA) while in the AP role did not vary significantly as a function of whether they were interacting with fathers or grandmothers. However, analyses did uncover some unanticipated differences for mothers' TPP behaviors. Mothers were rated as watching/engaged more and as watching/not-engaged less frequently when occupying the TPP role with fathers than when occupying the TPP role with grandmothers [t (28) = 2.71, $p < .05$, $d = .50$; t (28) = 0−1.85, $p < .1$, $d = .40$; respectively].

Differences in behavior among coparents: Fathers and mothers. Multiple paired t-tests contrasting coparents' behaviors during the interactions revealed no significant differences between fathers and mothers as APs in Vocalization, Touch, or showing Positive Affect. On the other hand, in analyses of TPP behaviors, fathers as TPPs *when compared to mothers as TPPs* were less likely to watch/be affectively engaged, more likely to watch/not-engaged, and more likely to be disengaged [t (40) = 3.81, $p < .000$, $d = .86$, t (40) = , −2.04, $p < .05$, $d = .42$, t (40) = −1.86, $p < .10$, $d = .30$, respectively]. There were no significant differences between fathers and mothers for TPP codes signifying competitive behavior or intrusiveness (i.e., flirtations or distractions during the TPP role).

Differences in behavior among coparents: Grandmothers and mothers. There were no differences between grandmothers' and mothers' as APs in vocalizations, touches, or expressing positive affect. However, there were significant differences seen in third party behavior. First, as anticipated, and in contrast with the father-mother TPP comparisons, grandmothers when compared with mothers as TPPs were *less* likely to receive scores for watching/not affectively-engaged. Moreover, also consistent with hypotheses, grandmothers as TPPs were also more likely than mothers as TPPs to engage in behaviors that in Western samples are viewed as 'competitive', actively encroaching upon the AP's mother-baby interactions either in flirting or in distracting ways [t (31) = 2.6, $p < .05$, $d = .46$; t (31) = −3.03, $p < .01$, $d = .43$, t (31) = −2.36, $p < .05$, $d = .60$, respectively].

Differences in behavior among coparents: Grandmothers and fathers. Once again, there were no differences in the frequency of any AP behaviors. There were significant differences for their TPP behaviors. Compared to fathers as TPPs, grandmothers as TPPs were significantly less likely to be watching/not-engaged and more likely to be flirting and distracting [t (28) = 2.0, $p < .10$, $d = .48$; t (28) = −1.84, $p < .10$, $d = .47$; t (28) = −1.85, $p < .10$, $d = .40$; respectively].

Table 2 Means, standard deviations, and ranges for observed triadic micro variables

	Mother–father–infafant (n = 42)			Mother–grandmother–infant (n = 33)		
	Mean	SD	*Range*	Mean	SD	*Range*
Shared positive affect	.06	.07	.00–.25	.09	.12	.00–.50
Active co-action	.10	.13	.00–.55	.11	.15	.00–.05
Benign cooperation mother	.45	.22	.07–.86	.55	.22	.20–1.00
Benign cooperation father/grandmother	.37	.21	.00–.79	.36	.24	.00–.80
Miscoordination	.21	.16	.00–.67	.16	.16	.00–.71
Active competition	.07	.13	.00–.50	.05	.12	.00–.60
Disengagement mother	.01	.04	.00–.18	.01	.02	.00–.11
Disengagement father/grandmother	.01	.05	.00–.29	.00	.00	.00–.00
Shared positive moment	.02	.04	.00–.17	.01	.02	.00–.09

Note: The triadic micro variables were observed and coded only in the Part-3 of the LTP

Observed Triadic Micro Variables

In the third part of the LTP, coparents were asked to play with the baby together, and the triadic micro variables (*Shared Positive Affect, Active Co-action, Benign Cooperation, Disengagement, Mis-coordination*, and *Active Competition)* were coded. Table 2 presents the means, standard deviations, and ranges of triadic micro variables. Paired t-tests were conducted to compare 'mother–father–baby' and 'mother–grandmother–baby', and none of the triadic micro variables was found as significantly different between these two groups.

CFRS Global Codes

The descriptive statistics for global variables of the 3-month CFRS are presented in Table 3. Contrary to expectations, no overall differences were found for either competition or cooperation—or for any of the family process indicators—in comparisons between 'mother-father-baby' interactions and 'mother–grandmother–baby' interactions.

Finally, in exploratory analyses, global coparenting scores characterizing the triangular interactions involving maternal grandmothers and paternal grandmothers were compared. Although results did not show any major differences, the triangular interactions involving maternal grandmothers were characterized by significantly higher family warmth ($M = 5.11$, SD = 1.24) than were the

Table 3 Means, standard deviations, and ranges for observed macro (global) variables

	Mother–father–infant			Mother–grandmother–infant		
	(n = 42)			(n = 33)		
	Mean	SD	*Range*	Mean	SD	*Range*
Cooperation	4.14	1.14	2–7	4.24	1.15	2–7
Competition	2.95	1.86	1–7	2.36	1.48	1–6
Family warmth	4.67	1.08	3–7	4.55	1.28	3–7
Disengagement	1.91	1.23	1–5	1.52	1.00	1–4
Verbal sparring	1.38	.70	1–4	1.15	.36	1–2
Over stimulation	3.07	1.33	1–7	2.94	.83	1–5
Baby's stress	2.69	1.72	1–6	3.09	1.57	1–6
Couple's sensitivity	4.91	.91	2–7	4.91	1.01	1–6

Note: All parts of the LTP (1–4) were observed and evaluated in order to code Macro (global) variables

triangular interactions involving paternal grandmothers [$M = 3.77$, SD = .93, t (30) = 3.29, $p < .01$, $d = 1.22$].

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine and elucidate similarities and differences in how Turkish mothers engage in triangular interactions with their babies' fathers compared with how they interact with their babies' grandmothers, and to explore characteristic patterns of coparenting behavior by grandmothers and fathers. Though some prior studies suggested that harmonious cocaregiving between mothers and grandmother benefits child adjustment, to our knowledge no study in the literature had contrasted observed triangular interactions of mother–father–child with those of mother–grandmother–child in the same family. The choice of the LTP as an observational strategy allowed for observation of behavior within family triangles, rather than relying solely on estimates of parenting behavior from multiple dyadic transactions (McHale et al. 2000). Results provided stimulating preliminary data illuminating both overlapping and distinguishing features of Turkish mother–father–baby and mother–grandmother–baby triangles, of value to researchers seeking to better understand coparenting patterns in three-generational family systems.

In this first look at Turkish family triangles, several findings are worthy of note. First, a striking similarity characterizing both sets of interactions was that mothers, fathers, and grandmothers were all quite active; indeed, all regularly vocalized, touched, and showed positive affect to baby. Mothers were also consistent in their individual parenting behavior across family contexts. With respect to third party behaviors, on the other hand, there were significant differences. Third party behaviors are of particular interest in understanding coparenting, in that they signify whether parents lean toward being optimally engaged, overly engaged, or even somewhat disengaged when asked to be simply present with their coparenting partner. First, as compared with fathers, mothers were more likely to be present and engaged when in a third party role, yet did so without being flirtatious or distracting the baby. These data provide preliminary evidence not only that mothers remain comparatively more engaged as TPP coparents than fathers, but that they do so without distracting babies from fathers when fathers are APs. These coparenting competencies evident during mothers interactions with fathers augment prior scholarship that had been concerned principally with Turkish mothers in their roles as principal caregivers.

It is also of interest that a different perspective was afforded when mothers' third party behaviors while interacting with grandmothers were compared to those seen with fathers. Unexpectedly, though mothers were more likely to be watching/engaged when father was playing with the baby, this was not the case when grandmother was playing with the baby. This difference in watching while engaged could signify mothers' penchants to be more vigilant when babies are with fathers, more deferent when babies are with grandmothers, or simply more interested in father-baby interactions than in grandmother-baby interactions. Considering the fact that fathers in this study spent significantly less time on average with their babies each day than did grandmothers, father-baby interactions may have been more novel and stimulating for mothers, reflected by the mothers remaining present and engaged for more of the time. Mothers may see these limited times as a special opportunity to observe and enjoy interactions between their spouses and the young infant. Conversely, because grandmothers spend regular time with the baby during the early months, mothers may be relatively less captivated by their interactions. Also, if mothers view grandmothers largely as collaborators with childcare, they may reflexively lessen active engagement when assuming a third party role with the grandmother.

For their part, grandmothers showed more flirting and distracting behavior in the triangle when compared with both mothers and fathers. These flirtations and distractions appeared to be manifest as showing affection to baby rather than distrusting the mother. It seemed a bit difficult for grandmothers to hold back from exuding animated, positive affect even when they were supposed to be simply present while mother was playing with the baby. As lovely grandmothers, they might see it acceptable to distract whenever they want even if their contribution is not specifically sought. Grandmothers' observably more distracting behavior might be related to cultural norms of Turkish families. A high level of intimacy, emotional interdependence, and

loose personal boundaries among family members have been described as normative in Turkish culture (Sunar and Fişek 2005), perhaps giving context for what the CFRS3M recorded as grandmothers' distracting behaviors. Alternately, unique relational processes could explain three-generation interactions. For example, grandmothers might feel that they 'know better' than mothers, evoking their intrusion; mothers may not always agree with the grandmothers' behaviors, evoking mild disengagement.

Given the interesting differences in micro codes, it is of note that the global descriptors—cooperation, competition, disengagement, family warmth, and sensitivity to baby—did not differ when mothers were interacting with fathers or with grandmothers. While the full significance of this finding is not entirely clear, one possibility is that culturally-embedded informants agreed when they saw distraction, flirting, or mild acceding to the partner, but did not connect these behavioral patterns with clinically-meaningful patterns of conflict or disconnection. It is not conceivable to disentangle this possibility in that both coders for the current study were Turkish family scholars. There was, however, one interesting contrast from the exploratory analyses that did distinguish triangular interactions with maternal and paternal grandmothers, related to overall family warmth. Triangular interactions involving babies, mothers and maternal grandmothers were characterized by significantly higher levels of overall family warmth than parallel interactions involving paternal grandmothers. This does provide some indication that the CFRS3M codes were indeed being implemented discriminately. It is of conceptual interest that even though mothers played cooperatively with both maternal and paternal grandmothers in a spirit of politeness, they nonetheless co-created more warmth during the triangular interactions with their own mothers, perhaps because they felt a greater degree of intimacy with them.

Though it is too soon to assess the utility of the LTP for Turkish clinicians, these interesting preliminary findings hint that the paradigm may hold value for identifying family strengths. More work is needed to establish whether this tool might also be useful for Turkish interventionists in a clinical setting. While there would be great value to clinicians if the LTP and CFRS could be used to evaluate coparenting strengths and areas of need toward improving family functioning in their programs, the portability of the evaluation system beyond the research setting is not yet known.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Turning to limitations, there are several that should be considered when interpreting the results. First, the sample was a relatively small one, which reduced power for detecting smaller-sized effects. Second, the small size of the sample made impractical the conduct of meaningful within-culture analyses, such as examinations of differences related to geographic, educational or socioeconomic background. Third, employment of one main coder to rate mother–father–child interactions as well as mother–grandmother–child interactions has the potential to bias findings regarding comparisons of the two observational contexts, though the fact that the individual TPP behaviors rather than the global ratings were the ones capturing the chief differences does mitigate the concern about rater bias to some extent. But because no significant global coparenting differences between mother–father–baby and mother–grandmother–baby family triangles were documented, the import of the interesting micro code findings must await replication.

Notwithstanding these limitations, this study contributes to the literature by demonstrating that coparenting dynamics in Turkey can be meaningfully assessed with the paradigm and tools used. Moreover, inclusion of grandmothers in conceptualizing coparenting dynamics in Turkish families provides a more complete accounting of the infant's family situation and should be prioritized in future studies focusing on coparenting in multigenerational family systems. In future work the infant's own contribution to triangular interactions in both types of triads might also be explored, either by macro-analysis such as a measure of the family alliance, or by microanalysis of gaze and affect. Another possibility would be to enjoin Turkish clinicians and consider contrasting clinical vs. non-clinical families so as to analyze Turkish coparenting styles more precisely for their functional versus problematic characteristics.

In conclusion, future studies using the LTP may help provide a fuller understanding of coparenting and triangular dynamics and the relationships between such dynamics with other indicators of child and family functioning in Turkey. Such an understanding might be harnessed to help guide parents' conscious awareness of interconnected family relationships, and provide guidance for interventionists seeking to help families co-construct more harmonious family environments to support their infants' and young children's development.

Author Contributions S.S.E.: designed and executed the study, collected data, coded observations, ran the data analyses, and wrote the paper. N.S.: collaborated with writing of the study. E.S.: collaborated with data collection and coding observations. J.M.H.: collaborated with the design, writing of the study, and editing of the final manuscript.

Compliance with Ethical Standards This study represents work from a doctoral dissertation project completed by the first author and supported by the Turkish Academy of Sciences (TÜBA).

Conflict of Interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. The IRB approval for the study was provided by Middle East Technical University, Turkey.

Informed Consent Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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