<u>Options when Observing Coparenting</u>

Where? Home or Lab
Advantages/disadvantages to both – most observational assessments/coding systems can be used successfully in either context – exceptions would be some highly structured assessments (see below)

When to observe coparenting?
- Most observations done between 3 months and 5 years of child age
- Most observations done with one child present (focal child)*
- Can even be done prior to the child's birth (prenatal Lausanne Trilogue Play; Carneiro, Corboz-Warnery, & Fivaz-Depeursinge, 2006, *Infant Mental Health Journal*)

*for an exception see Szabó, Semon Dubas, & van Aken, 2012, *Journal of Family Psychology*; also, Anna and I are working with Jen Wong at Ohio State to code observed coparenting discussions without the child present

Structured vs. Unstructured
Semi-structured*
- Free play w/toys
- Clean-up task
- Play w/goal
- Childcare task
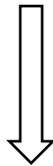
Highly structured**
- Still face
- Lausanne Trilogue Play

*used in many of my studies
**see McHale & Rotman (2007)

Length and timing of observations
Range is from 3 min to 30 min; depends upon age of child & other goals of the study; 10-15 min adequate, especially if more structured tasks are used
- Age of child
- Time of day – child alertness, desire to capture particular routines (e.g., mealtime)
- Frequency of observations

Coding decisions
- Code at the individual or subsystem level?
- Code at more global (e.g., every 5 min; this is what our team typically does) or micro level (e.g., every 15 or 30 sec)*

*for an example of micro coding of coparenting see Feldman & Gordon, 2008, *Family Process*

Coding process
- Usually use teams of two coders; have had success w/undergraduates; m-f teams
- Training period using episodes from previous studies plus new episodes
  - First, watch episodes together in a group and discuss coding scales
    - Modify coding scheme as necessary
  - Next, let coders rate same episodes independently and compare their ratings
- Begin "real" coding of new episodes*
  - At first, have coders overlap on all episodes, and check reliability
  - Use gammas or ICCs
  - If reliability is good, gradually reduce the number of overlapped episodes
  - Aim for 25-30% overlap

*Coders need to watch episodes 3 times, discuss and conference on difficult episodes - if lots of disagreement, use original scores for reliability but conferenced (or averaged) scores for data; Random order of episode coding and random selection of episodes for overlap is essential

Managing coded data
- Drop scales with low reliability or variability (e.g., "anger")
- Often combine positive scales to tap supportive coparenting and negative scales to tap undermining coparenting
- Keep support and undermining separate even if moderately negatively correlated

Our coparenting coding system (handout – most recent version used in New Parents Project)
- Developed using unpublished coding scales of Cowan and Cowan (1996) and used in some form or another in every Schoppe-Sullivan lab paper
- 8 basic scales: pleasure, warmth, cooperation, interactiveness, displeasure, coldness, anger, competition
- Warmth/coldness and pleasure/displeasure are sometimes easier to assess at the level of the individual, although in prior studies we assessed them at the coparenting team level
- Includes maternal gatekeeping scales developed by Bayer (1992) and used in Schoppe-Sullivan et al. (2008), *Journal of Family Psychology*, and Cannon et al. (2008), *Family Process*

Other coparenting observational coding systems
- McHale, Kuersten-Hogan, & Lauretti's Coparenting and Family Rating System
  - Nancy Hazen's lab at UT Austin has modified this system, see, for ex:
    - Umemura, Christopher, Mann, Jacobvitz., & Hazen (2015), *Child Psychiatry & Human Development*
- Belsky, Crnic, & Gable (1995), *Child Development*
  - 2 hours of naturalistic observations per family, coparenting incidents identified & coded
  - given costs of time and money, this is not usually attempted