Multiple Groups Invariance Testing of Coparenting Support and Unsupportive Coparenting Among Grandmothers

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Introduction

Feinberg's (2003) ecological model of coparenting considers coparenting a multi-dimensional construct that includes childrearing agreement, **support/undermining**, joint family management, and division of labor. Thus, coparenting relationship reflects the shared responsibility between caregivers and how they relate to each other in their childrearing roles.

Historically coparenting is considered a dyadic task between the child's biological parents. However, research on coparenting in diverse family forms such as adolescent families (Perez-Brena et al., 2015) and single parent families (Hilton & Macari, 1998) demonstrates that grandmothers often serve as coparents, yet very few measures in the U.S. have validated **grandparent's self-report of coparenting with adult children.**

STUDY AIM AND HYPOTHESIS
To investigate measurement invariance for supportive and unsupportive coparenting items for grandmothers based on coresidence with grandchildren.
- We hypothesize that measures will vary across coresident and non-resident grandparent families.
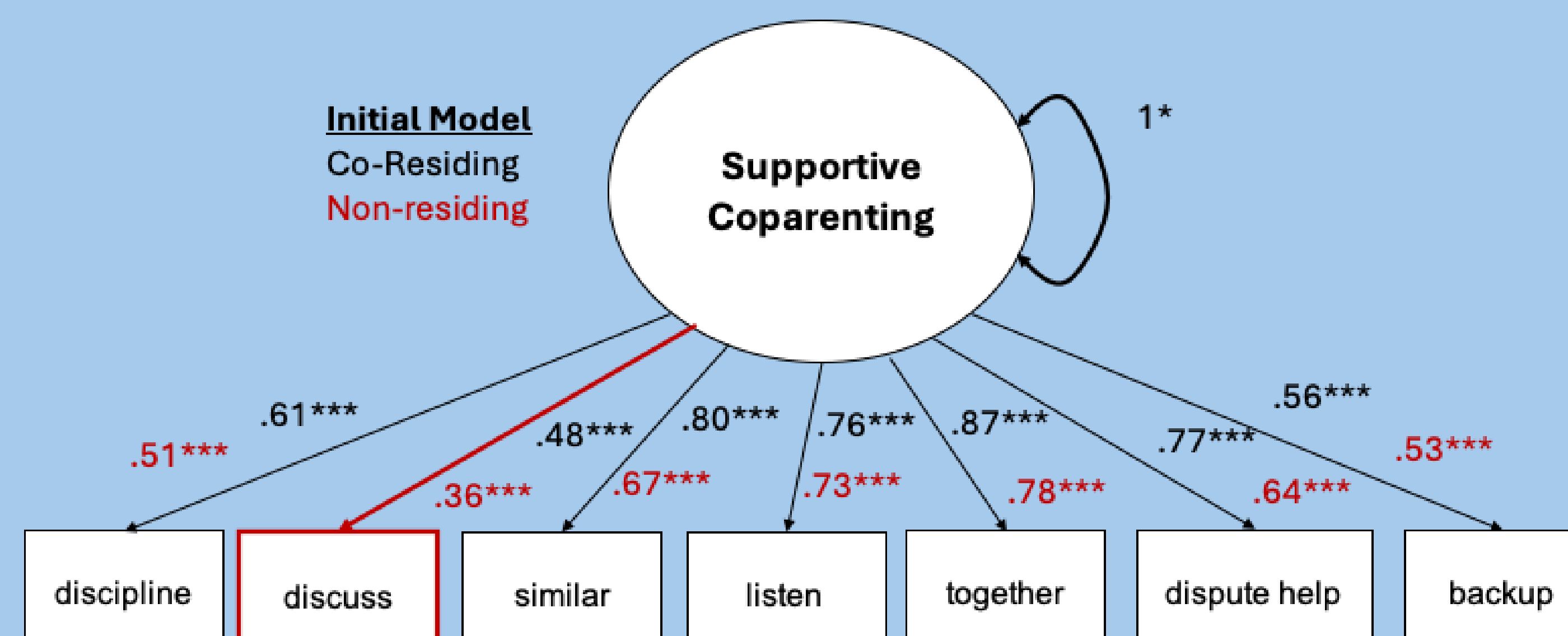
Methods

PROCEDURES AND PARTICIPANTS
- Data came from a larger online study of grandmothers (N = 534) who self-identified as providing regular care for their grandchildren in the United States.
- Study Sample: Co-residing and non-residing grandmothers (n = 474; 74% white, M_{age} = 55, SD = 8.10, 64% non-residing).
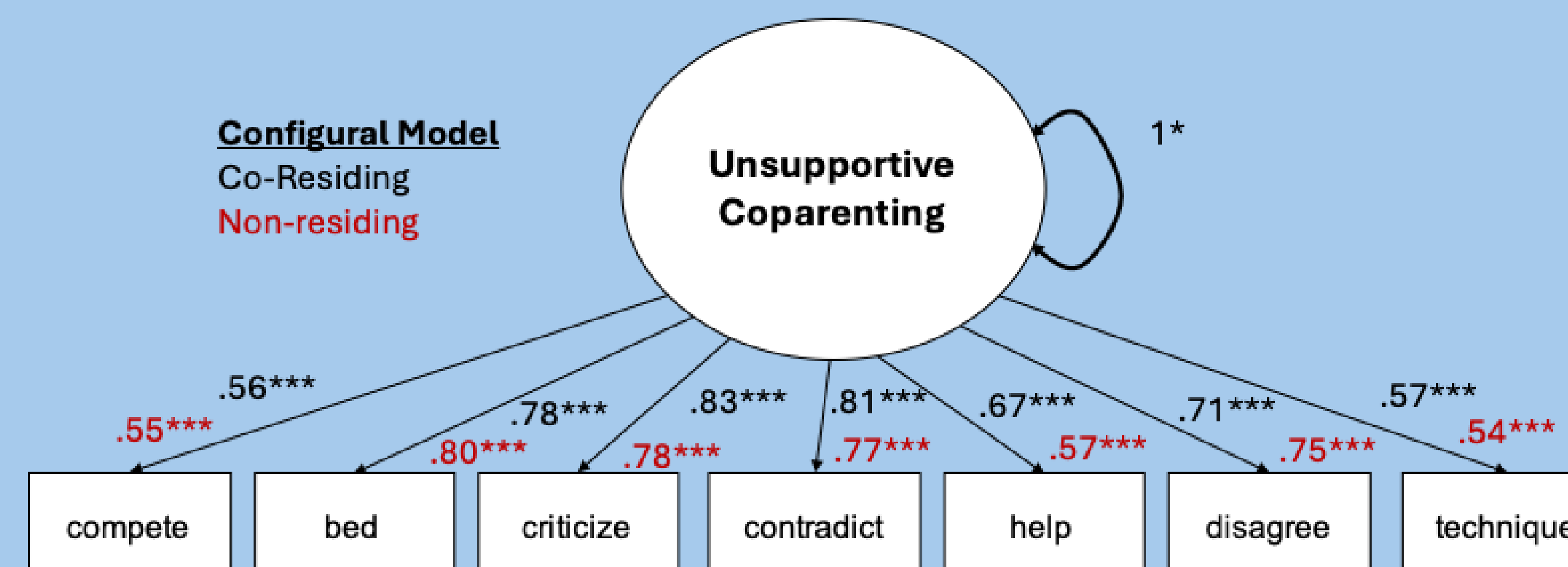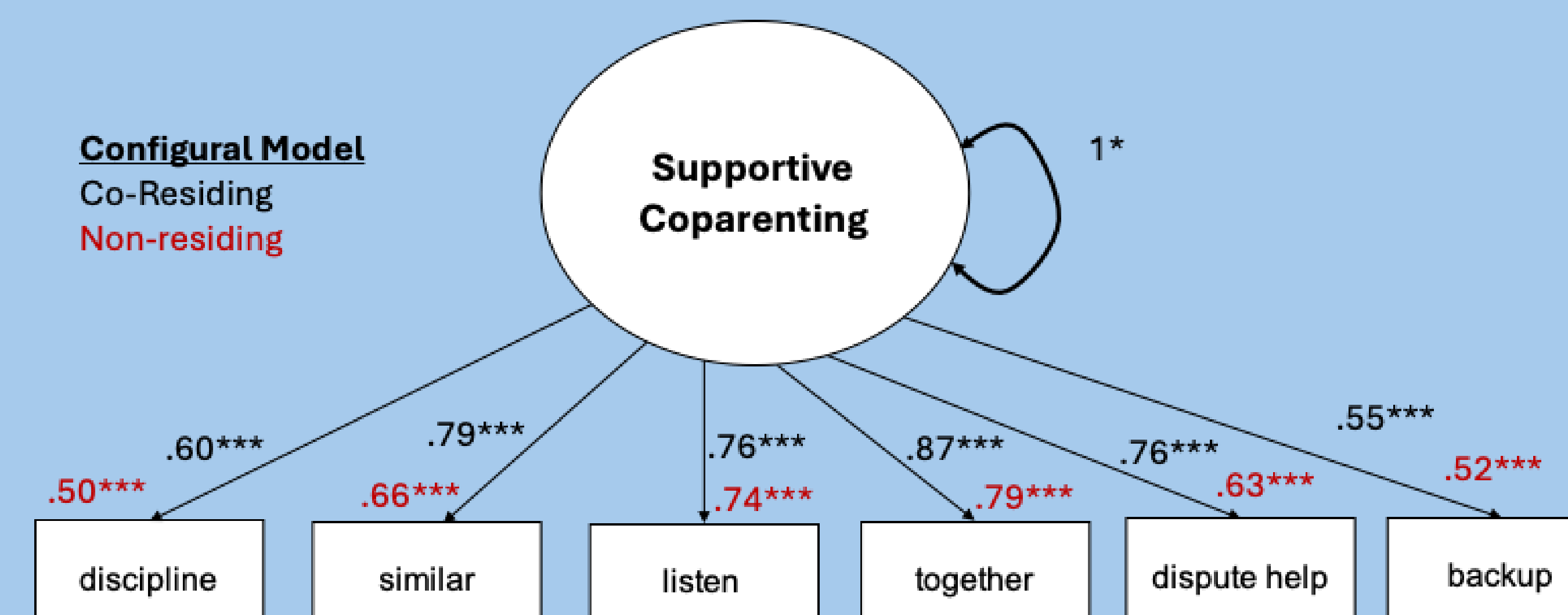- Mean parent age was 29(SD = 9.1) and mean grandchild age was 3(SD = 1.38).

MEASURES
Grandmothers self-reported on a commonly used coparenting measure (Stright & Bales, 2004) among parent samples using a 5-point Likert scale (1= never to 5=always).

Supportive Coparenting – 7 items	
Discipline	"Parent backs me up when I discipline my grandchild"
Discuss	"When parent doesn't agree with how I am handling my grandchild, he/she calmly discusses it with me."
Similar	"Parent and I use similar parenting techniques."
Listen	"When I tell parent something about my grandchild, he/she listens."
Together	"In general, I feel my grandchild's parent and I work well together with my grandchild"
Dispute Help	"When I am trying to settle a dispute between my grandchild and other children, parent helps me."
Backup	"When parent doesn't agree with how I am handling my grandchild, he/she still backs me up in front of my grandchild."
Unsupportive Coparenting – 7 items reverse coded	
Compete	"Parent competes with me for my grandchild's attention"
Bed	"When I ask for parent's help when trying to get my grandchild to bed, he/she ignores me."
Criticize	"My grandchild's parent criticizes my grandparenting in front of my grandchild"
Contradict	"When I tell my grandchild to do something, their parent contradicts me."
Help	"Parent doesn't help me with my grandchild when I need it."
Disagree	"When my grandchild wants something and I say no, their parent says yes."
Technique	"Parent uses parenting techniques that I have asked him/her not to use."

One item loaded differently for coresiding and non-residing grandmothers.

Removing this item led to constructs measuring the same for coresiding and non-residing grandmothers.

Results

Modeling the constructs separately best fit the data, χ^2 = 185 versus 921 for the 1 degree of freedom difference. The χ^2 difference test was statistically significant (χ^2 diff = 736, df = 1, $p < .001$), suggesting the unidimensional model had significantly worse model fit than the model specifying supportive and unsupportive coparenting as separate constructs.

Measurement invariance testing (Table 1) included comparing separate models for co-residing and non-residing grandmothers.

One Supportive Coparenting item did not exceed the .45 threshold for factor loadings.
- "When my grandchild's parent doesn't agree with how I am handling grandchild, he/she *calmly* discusses it with me"
- It was removed from further analysis.

Supportive and Unsupportive models appear to have figural invariance for co-residing and non-residing grandmothers.
- Both subscales can be used to measure coparenting across residential status.

The weak model fits the data worse.
- The weak invariance test results showed that the chi-square difference test was statistically significant; $\Delta\chi^2$ = 40.8, df = 13, p<0.001, and across fit indices CFI and MFI suggested small but meaningful differences (ΔCFI = -0.01and ΔMFI = -0.023) between supportive and unsupportive coparenting models across residential status.

Table 1
Measurement Invariance of Supportive Coparenting and Unsupportive Coparenting Across Grandmother Residency Status

Model	X²	*p*-value	CFI	ΔCFI	MFI	ΔMFI
Configural	245.237(128)	-	.954	-	.887	-
Weak	286.072(141)	0.000*	.943	-0.011	.862	-0.025

Note. Significant values (p < 0.05) are denoted with a *.

Conclusions & Implications

- Supportive and unsupportive coparenting constructs represent distinct dimensions.
- Perceptions of calm discussions might differ across residential status based on differences of frequency of contact or opportunities for discussion.
- Supportive and unsupportive coparenting can be measured the same across residential groups.
- Our study highlights the need for qualitative approaches in developing and using scales with specific populations and subgroups such as coparenting grandparents.