

Children's Appraisals as a Mediating
Factor in the Relation between Interparental Conflict and Child Adjustment

by

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the mediating role of children's self-reported appraisals in the relation between interparental conflict intensity and child adjustment. Both parent-reported and child-reported conflict intensity were used as predictor variables. Findings suggested that children's total appraisals mediated the relationship between child-reported conflict intensity and all four outcome variables (conduct disorder, depression, anxiety, and total adjustment). Additionally, children's appraisals of negative evaluation by others mediated the relationship between child-reported conflict intensity and depression, and both rejection and negative evaluation by others mediated the relationship between child-reported conflict intensity and anxiety. Only one mediational relationship was established when assessing conflict intensity through parent report, with children's appraisals of harm to others mediating the relationship between parent-reported conflict intensity and anxiety. Findings from this study outline the importance of assessing conflict and appraisals from the child's perspective as results indicated a higher level of mediating effects of child appraisals in the relation between conflict and child outcomes when assessing conflict from the child's perspective.

DEDICATION

I would like to thank my family for their unending love, support, encouragement, and understanding. You have truly been instrumental in this achievement and I could not have gotten to this milestone without each of you. To my parents, whose unwavering love and belief in me gave me the faith that I could achieve whatever I believed enough in myself to do. To my children and nephew, who have inspired me to keep going when I really wanted to stop, and who have given me a million reasons to continue and to model what hard work and determination can bring. To my husband for filling in and closing all the holes that remain when there was not enough of me to go around. And to my two mentors, Dr. Paul Miller and Dr. Linda Caterino, for always being available and willing to walk with me through this process and never giving up on me and for your undying patience, especially in the end. I would also like to thank Dr. Kathryn Nakagawa for remaining supportive and maintaining her place on my dissertation committee despite the length of time it took to complete.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Divorce is a well-established practice that has maintained consistent numbers over the course of the last thirty years. Current data from the National Vital Statistics System indicate that the divorce rate in the United States is at approximately 38% to 40%, with divorces occurring in 3.6 out of 1000 marriages nationwide (National Vital Statistics System, 2013). According to Hetherington (1999), as of 1996, over 45% of marriages in the United States ended in divorce. Similarly, Davies and Cummings (1994) state that approximately 40% of children born in the late 1970's and early 1980's will experience parental divorce, with the experience likely involving significant parental discord. High divorce rates have continued in recent decades (Heck & Walsh, 2000).

While divorce has been shown to be implicated in negative outcomes for children and adolescents, some research has shown that divorce may actually lead to better outcomes when children move from a tumultuous environment to a more tranquil one (Amato, Loomis, & Booth, 1995; Hetherington, 1999). Current research has begun to look at the mechanisms within the divorce process to better understand the relation between divorce and negative child and adolescent outcomes. Research has shown that children in high conflict families experience similar levels of adjustment problems both prior to and following the dissolution of the marriage (Amato, 1993), and the outcomes that had previously been attributed to divorce may likely be caused by conflict within the marriage.

Child appraisals have also received attention as a possible mediating factor in the relation between interparental conflict and negative child outcomes. Appraisals have been defined as “the process wherein a child evaluates the significance of an event for his or her well-being.” (Grych & Fincham, 1993). Several types of appraisals have been suggested in the literature, and appraisals have been categorized into two categories: threat appraisals and self-blame appraisals.

Several models have been suggested to attribute for varied child outcomes as a result of marital and interparental conflict. The Emotional Security Hypothesis suggests that it is the children’s concerns regarding their own emotional security that ultimately regulate their level of arousal and how they organize their response to marital conflict. In turn, these responses impact children’s long-term adjustment (Davies & Cummings, 1994). The Cognitive Contextual Model (Grych & Fincham, 1990) focuses on the child’s attempt to understand and respond to marital conflict, and outlines processes that may moderate the level of stress the child experiences within the conflict.

The purpose of this study was to assess the mediational role of children’s appraisals in the relation between both parent-reported and child-reported conflict intensity and child adjustment outcomes.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research has suggested that divorce can have large and long-lasting implications for the overall well-being of children. Some researchers contend that children who have parents who have divorced exhibit higher levels of aggression, impulsivity, hyperactivity, anxiety, and emotional problems for as long as eleven years after the divorce occurs, and the existence of heightened marital conflict prior to the divorce has been shown to be a large factor in these responses following the divorce (Davies & Cummings, 1994). A study conducted by Hetherington and Kelly (2002) concluded that 25% of individuals whose parents divorced had serious long-term social, emotional, or psychological problems in adulthood compared with 10% of individuals whose parents had never divorced; however, this also means that 75% of individuals whose parents did divorce did not exhibit any long-term impairment during adulthood. Similarly, Amato (2003) found that approximately 10% of children whose parents divorced grew up to experience poorer psychological health than would have been predicted if their parents had stayed together, 18% of children whose parents did divorce experienced more marital discord as adults than children whose parents stayed together, and 35% of children whose parents divorced reported experiencing worse relationships with their fathers than children whose parents stayed together.

Hetherington's 1999 review of literature surrounding divorce and interparental conflict involved central questions and research current to the time regarding adjustment of children in divorced families and the risks and protective factors that contribute to children's problems or well-being. In addition to problems immediately following the

divorce, children may also experience problems throughout the course of their development. This is particularly true for those children who demonstrated initial difficulties. It has been shown that, even for children who initially experience lower levels of problematic behavior and adjustment or for those children who seem to recover more quickly than other children, problems may arise in the future or be recurring due to particular events or developmental stages (such as adolescence) that may trigger problems that were thought to be under control. Compared to their peers in non-divorced homes, adolescents in divorced families are two to three times as likely to drop out of school, to become pregnant, to engage in antisocial and delinquent behavior, to associate with antisocial peers, to score above the clinical cutoff on standardized tests such as the Child Behavior Checklist (Achenbach & Edelbroch, 1983) or to be referred for clinical treatment (Amato, 1999; Amato & Keith, 1991b; Hetherington, 1999; Hetherington et al., 1992; McLanahan, 1999; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Simons & Associates, 1996; Zill et al., 1993). Compared to peers who grew up in continuously intact homes, adults who experienced parental divorce as children are less likely to have attended or completed college, are more likely to be unemployed and on welfare, and are more likely to have fewer financial resources (Amato, 1999; Keith & Finley, 1988; McLeod, 1991; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). They are also more likely to have problems in their relationships with parents and siblings (Amato, 1999; Aquilino, 1994; Cooney, 1994; Hetherington, 1999; White, 1992) and to experience difficulty in forming and maintaining other stable relationships, such as marital relationships (McLanahan, 1999; McLeod, 1991; Webster, Orbuch, & House, 1995; Zill et al., 1993).

There is agreement among many researchers that children who have experienced parental divorce are at a higher risk for a variety of negative outcomes (Cherlin, 1999). Indicators that have been frequently examined in divorce literature include: externalizing behaviors, internalizing behaviors, academic achievement, and the quality of social relationships. Studies that have included examinations of these indicators at discrete time intervals support the notion that children whose parents have divorced do indeed have more externalizing and internalizing behaviors, lower academic achievement, and more problematic social relationships than do children whose parents have never divorced (Cherlin, Furstenberg, Chase-Lansdale, Kiernan, Robins, Morrison, & Teitler, 1991; Emery, Waldron, Kitzmann, & Aaron, 1999).

The magnitude of the effects that have been found within this research appears to depend on the indicators of adjustment that have been examined (for example, externalizing behaviors, internalizing behaviors, academic achievement, and quality of social relationships), and there has been research that has failed to find differences on particular outcomes between the two populations (Ruschena, Prior, Sanson, & Smart, 2005). Additionally, although children have been shown to have more short-term adjustment difficulties immediately following their parents' divorce, research has indicated that these difficulties can lessen in severity or disappear completely following an initial adjustment period (Chase-Lansdale & Hetherington, 1990). Contradictory research indicates that individuals whose parents eventually divorced had more internalizing and externalizing problems prior to the divorce than individuals whose parents did not divorce; however, the divorce itself also contributed to higher levels of long-term internalizing and externalizing problems into adulthood (Cherlin, Chase-

Lansford, &McRae, 1998). It is important to note that studies using methodologically unsophisticated approaches (e.g., those that fail to control for socioeconomic status, time since divorce, or children's level of adjustment prior to marriage dissolution) may overestimate the effects of divorce on children. Discrepant findings may be a result of these early approaches, and studies looking at trajectories of adjustment within the divorce process have revealed that other factors (such as interparental conflict) may play a more crucial role in children's ability to adjust positively following divorce (Cummings, George, McCoy, & Davies, 2012).

Early research from the 60's and 70's held the assumption that a two-parent household was necessary for optimal childrearing outcomes and that divorce was so traumatic that children experienced significant and long-lasting negative effects from the event. However, this research used poorly designed methods where sample characteristics (such as clinical versus nonclinical) and mediating and moderating effects (such as time since parental separation and divorce, individual parent and child characteristics, family process variables, and other transactional factors that accompany divorce, such as economic declines and residential mobility, often involving moves to less desirable housing, neighborhoods, schools, and peer groups) were not considered. Although there is considerable consensus in the research literature that children in divorced families, on average, show more problems than those in non-divorced families, there is less agreement as to the size and significance of these differences. Some researchers argue that the differences are small (Amato & Keith, 1991; Avenevoli, Sessa, & Steinberg, 1984), have diminished as divorce has become more accepted and frequent (Amato & Keith, 1991),

and are notably reduced when the adjustment of the child preceding divorce is controlled (Block, Block, & Gjerde, 1989; Cherlin et al., 1991).

Hetherington (1999) argues that “in order to understand [the] diverse pathways and outcomes, it should be remembered that although divorce may be associated with stressful changes and challenges in family members' lives, it also may present a chance for escape from conflict, for more harmonious, fulfilling relationships, and the opportunity for greater personal growth, individuation, and well-being.” Children who move from a conflictual, abusive, or neglecting family situation to a more harmonious one show diminished problems following divorce (Amato, Loomis, & Booth, 1995; Hetherington, 1999). In particular, girls from divorced families may develop into exceptionally competent individuals with few behavioral problems or psychological disorders (Hetherington, 1989). It is important to note that these outcomes are specific to children who are moving from a highly conflictual family situation to one that is more tranquil.

Amato (1993) cites research that shows that children of divorce, prior to parental marital dissolution, have lower levels of well-being than children in intact families, demonstrating that problems for children are apparent prior to marital dissolution. Additionally, he states that children's well-being is inversely correlated with the level of post-divorce conflict that persists between parents. He adds that the greater majority of studies find that cooperation and low conflict between parents predicts positive divorce outcomes. Consequently, most longitudinal studies support the notion that the well-being of children improves with the passage of time since marital dissolution, with children's

adjustment being positively correlated with length of time since divorce. However, most cross-sectional studies do not support this idea. This may be due to conflict between couples persisting long after the divorce is final.

Within this argument, it has been pointed out that other factors impact children's adjustment outside of the divorce itself, and some of the positive effects associated with divorce that were previously noted are likely due to these factors. The findings of high rates of behavior problems both in children before divorce and in children in conflictual family situations has led some investigators to conclude that many of the outcomes attributed to divorce are caused by conflictual marriages and that divorce is a preferable alternative to remaining in a distressed marriage. This involves two questionable assumptions: first, that couples who will later divorce have the highest levels of marital conflict; and second, that conflict declines after divorce.

Offspring from happily married harmonious parents show fewer problems and greater well-being than those in divorced families or in families with high marital discord or distress (Amato & Booth, 1991; Amato et al., 1995; Hetherington, 1999; Simons, 1996). Immediately after divorce, children in divorced families exhibit more problems in adjustment than those in high conflict non-divorced families (Hetherington, 1999). The stress and changes accompanying the divorce transition take their toll. However, as children adapt to their new situation in a single-parent household, the pattern of differences changes. When divorce is associated with increased stress, conflict, and adversity, children, adolescents, and young adult offspring show more problems in divorced families than in high conflict non-divorced families (Amato et al., 1995;

Hetherington, 1999). When divorce is associated with a move to a more harmonious, less stressful situation, children in divorced families are similar in adjustment to those in intact families with non-distressed marital relations, and are higher in social responsibility and cognitive affect and lower in externalizing and internalizing problems than those in high conflict distressed marriages (Amato et al., 1995; Hetherington, 1999). Previous evidence suggests that if conflict is going to continue it is better for children to remain in an acrimonious two-parent household than to suffer divorce. If there is a shift to a more harmonious household, a divorce is advantageous to both boys and girls. However, even with low acrimony between the divorced parents, boys in low conflict divorced families are disadvantaged over those in low conflict non-divorced families.

Overall, current research supports the idea that there is more to the negative outcomes associated with divorce than simply the divorce itself. It is important to look more closely at the intricate nuances associated within the family interactions leading up to, during, and following divorce.

Interparental Conflict

It is also now being recognized that divorce is more of a process than a discrete event, and much research has now focused on the processes within divorce that may have the most profound impact on children's overall adjustment. More complex models are now used to understand and explain how divorce may be related to children's adjustment, including analyzing the mechanisms through which divorce may affect children's adjustment. Within these models, family processes have been argued to be more important than family structure (Dunn, Deater-Deckard, Pickering, & O'Connor, 1998;

Lansford, Ceballo, Abbey, & Stewart, 2001). Interparental conflict has been noted to be one such process. Children in families with high marital conflict exhibit many of the same problems in adjustment as those in divorced families, with externalizing disorders being most commonly reported.

Amato and Keith (1991) found that interparental conflict was a better predictor of children's functioning than changes in the family structure (such as marital status). In a meta-analysis conducted by Amato (2001), it is argued that the effects of divorce itself may be small and not universal. Using 67 studies published in the 1990's, Amato (2001) showed that 88% of the effects suggested lower well-being for children of divorce; however, of those, only 42% of the effects were significant. Lansford (2009) notes the existence of debate within the literature as to the degree to which these effects are due to the divorce itself versus other factors that co-exist within the process, such as children's exposure to interparental conflict.

Historical Foundation for Interparental Conflict. In the early 1990's, researchers began to develop theories related to interparental conflict. Amato (1993) outlined five perspectives relating to children's adjustment to divorce: Parental Loss Perspective, Parental Adjustment Perspective, Interparental Conflict Perspective, Economic Hardship Perspective, and Life Stress Perspective. The Parental Loss Perspective suggests that a two-parent household is better for children than a single-parent household, and that the absence of one parent is problematic for children's socialization. It also suggests that a decrease in the quality and quantity of contact with the non-custodial parent occurs, which results in a decline in overall parental support for

children. It is suggested that this results in poor academic achievement, low self-esteem, misbehavior, weaker parental authority structure, lack of parental supervision, and an increase in truancy, delinquency, and premarital pregnancy. The Parental Adjustment Perspective argues that the important mechanism in children's well-being through divorce is the psychological adjustment of the custodial parent. It is suggested that parents who are supportive and exercise a moderate degree of control facilitate the healthy development and well-being of their children. It is also suggested that parental stress impairs the quality of child-rearing skills, leading to negative consequences for children. The Interparental Conflict Perspective posits that the conflict between parents prior to and during the dissolution of the marriage is the mechanism responsible for decreased well-being in children. The Economic Hardship Perspective posits that it is the actual financial hardships brought on by the dissolution of the marriage, caused by lower levels of economic resources and, thus, a lower standard of living that is the foremost structure leading to a decrease in children's well-being. This perspective argues that a lowering of socio-economic status has a negative impact on health and nutrition, leads to a decline in or cessation of private lessons, educational toys, books, home computers, and other goods that facilitate academic success, and forces families to reside in lower socio-economic neighborhoods where poorly financed school programs, inadequate services, and high crime rates have a negative impact on children's well-being and could lead to juvenile involvement with delinquent peers and subcultures. The Life Stress Perspective is fairly general and incorporates aspects of the other four perspectives, suggesting that divorce is a stressful event for children where each of the previously mentioned factors

are additive stressors that result from divorce and ultimately combine to affect children's well-being as a result of divorce.

Of the five perspectives, the strongest support was found for that of the Interparental Conflict Perspective. As stated previously, numerous studies indicate that marital conflict has a negative impact on children's psychological adjustment (Cummings & Davies, 2002; Emery, 1982; Grych & Fincham, 1990). Amato (1993) explains that children react to interparental conflict with negative emotions (such as fear, anger, and distress). He also notes that children tend to be drawn into the conflict between parents and are sometimes forced to take sides. Additionally, Amato explains that children may attribute blame for interparental conflict to themselves. Although somewhat dated now, Amato's 1993 review revealed that 21 studies supported the hypothesis that children in high conflict intact families have a level of well-being lower than children in harmonious intact families, similar to children in high conflict divorced families, and lower than children in low conflict divorced families. Current research continues to support this view. Esmaeili and Yaacob (2011) found that adolescents who were exposed to post-divorce parental conflict were at an increased risk of high levels of delinquency due to parental rejection and withdrawal, parental hostility toward the adolescent, lack of parental warmth, corporal punishment, and parent-adolescent conflict. Shelton and Harold (2007) found that marital conflict was ultimately associated with increased psychological distress in children. And, El-Sheikh and Whitson (2006) found that increased marital conflict predicted increased adjustment problems two years after the occurrence.

In their model, Davies and Cummings (1994) state that marital conflict is a better predictor of children's overall adjustment problems than global marital distress, and add that the relation between marital conflict and children's adjustment remain even after controlling for global marital distress. A large array of adjustment problems have been predicted by marital conflict, including externalizing and internalizing disorders and multiple forms of maladjustment, and witnessing marital conflict has been reported by elementary school children as distressing (Davies & Cummings, 1994).

However, all conflict is not the same in its consequences for child development. Varying types of interparental conflict have been described, as well as the specific aspects of interparental conflict that may result in more negative outcomes for children. Research differentiating the types of conflict that children are exposed to suggests that children are also sensitive to non-verbal anger, with negative emotional responses being equal to that of exposure to verbal conflicts (Cummings, Vogel, Cummings, & El-Sheikh, 1989). Covert conflict, with more passive-aggressive undertones, has been linked to internalizing problems, whereas overt conflict, characterized by more physical and verbal behaviors, has been linked to externalizing problems (Beuhler et al., 1998). The focus of the conflict and the context in which the conflict occurs also has an impact on the outcome for the children involved. Conflicts about the child, especially those to which the child is directly exposed, or conflicts that involve physical violence or in which the child feels caught in the middle, have the most harmful effects (see Davies & Cummings, 1994, for a review). Cui, Donnellan, and Conger (2007) found that parental conflicts over child rearing predicted adolescent depressive symptoms and delinquency. Other research

has demonstrated similar findings, with greater levels of adolescent distress being related to conflicts that are about the adolescent (Tschann et al., 2002).

The theory goes on to posit that destructive marital conflict may have further negative impacts on other forms of family adversity by increasing the overall level of tension in children and families, by reducing the availability of parental support for children, and by increasing aggressiveness between siblings (Cummings & Davies, 1994). Marital conflict has been shown to cause problems in the functioning of the family system, particularly with parent-child relations, causing additional stress and emotional turmoil for children (Cummings & Davies, 1994; Cui, Donnellman, & Conger, 2007; Davies & Cummings, 1994; Emery, Fincham, & Cummings, 1992; Goeke-Morey, Cummings, & Papp, 2007). Grych, Raynor, and Fosco (2004) found that adolescent's triangulation into interparental disagreements mediated the relationship between interparental conflict and both internalizing and externalizing problems.

Conflict that is child-related has been shown to have serious negative effects, with research showing that children react to these types of conflict with greater shame, self-blame, and fear (Grych & Fincham, 1993). Other research has shown that marital arguments over child-rearing were better predictors of child behavior problems than either global marital distress or conflicts in areas not related to child-rearing (Snyder, Klein, Gdowski, Faulstich, & LaCombe, 1988). Child-rearing disagreements predicted children's emotional difficulties even after controlling for global marital adjustment and exposure to marital conflict (Jouriles et al, 1991).

Current literature with interparental conflict.

Early research established a solid foundational argument for the negative effects of interparental conflict and how this process in particular accounts for many of the effects that earlier research findings had argued could be attributed to divorce. It is no longer accepted that divorce is the key factor leading to poorer adjustment in children, but rather that mechanisms (interparental conflict in particular) within the process of marital relations account for more of the variation in children outcomes. Early research establishing the connection between interparental conflict and negative child outcomes within the realm of marital relationships has allowed more specific aspects of interparental conflict to be assessed.

Research looking at the role of parental factors (such as maternal depression) within the realm of interparental conflict has demonstrated that children's responses to interparental conflict are influenced by individual parental factors. Fear et al. (2009) (2009) found that higher levels of depressive symptoms in parents was associated with higher levels of interparental conflict and higher levels of internalizing symptoms in children and adolescents, and interparental conflict was positively associated with both internalizing and externalizing symptoms in children and adolescents.

Interparental conflict can also cause children to engage in certain types of coping that may not lead to favorable adjustment outcomes. In families where conflict is a common occurrence, disengagement coping (efforts to withdraw from the source of stress) and primary coping (such as efforts to resolve interparental conflict) have been shown to be related to higher levels of depressive symptoms, while secondary coping (such as the use of distraction techniques) has been shown to be related to lower levels of emotional symptoms (Nicolotti, El-Sheikh, & Whitson, 2003; Shelton & Harold, 2007).

Much has been established within research regarding the negative impact of interparental conflict on children's positive adjustment. Many aspects of this relationship have been examined; however many more have yet to be addressed. Current research continues to examine various aspects of this relationship.

Risk and resiliency. While research has consistently demonstrated the negative impact of interparental conflict on children, variables that influence how children respond to interparental conflict have also been examined. Research looking at overall child adjustment in response to multiple types of life stressors has identified risk and resiliency factors that influence the impact that various life stressors have on children. Many factors have been shown to influence child outcomes, and several factors could be considered either a risk or could help provide the opportunity for resiliency, depending on the manner of influence in the child's life. For example, family demographics, such as income level, parental age, and maternal education level, have been shown to influence children's adjustment to parental divorce, with lower income and younger parental age being associated with more negative outcomes and maternal education predicting more positive outcomes (Leon, 2003).

Resiliency has been defined by researchers as demonstrated competence in the context of significant challenges to adaptation (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). It is argued that resiliency is not a trait that all children possess or one that is an automatic outcome for children, but rather one that develops within areas of children's lives when they are protected by the positive actions of adults, by good nurturing, by their own individual assets (such as personality characteristics and intelligence), and by policies and practices that support their healthy development and reduce risk across key systems (Pedro-Carroll,

2005). Risk factors have been defined as variables that precede a negative outcome and increase the chances that the outcome will occur (Rogers, 2004). Multiple risk and resiliency factors have been suggested by researchers, including family demographic characteristics, maternal emotional well-being and parenting quality, social support, contact with the non-custodial parent, and individual child characteristics (Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 1999; Neighbors, Forehand, & McVicar, 1993; Pedro-Carroll, 2005; Sandler, 2003; Sandler, Wolchik, Davis, Haine, & Ayers, 2003; Wadsworth & DeCarlo Santiago, 2008).

Family environments are one factor that may exert influence as either a risk or a protective factor, on children's adjustment. Previous research has also argued that a warm and supportive family environment acts as a protective factor for children and children are likely to feel more secure in a family situation that is perceived by the child as warm, non-threatening, and cohesive (Garmezy, 1983). Parent-child relationships also have a large impact on a child's perception of the overall family climate, and good parent-child relationships provide a greater level of security for the child. Family factors specific to interpersonal relationships can also exert influence. Maternal depression has been shown to predict behavior problems in children above the influence of income and maternal education, despite whether or not the parents are divorced (Clarke-Stewart, Vandell, McCartney, Owen, & Booth, 2000). Additionally, Whiteside and Becker (2000) demonstrated, through a meta-analysis of twelve studies examining divorced families, that maternal depressive symptoms were associated with more child behavior problems and maternal warmth was associated with fewer child behavior problems. A study of 198 families conducted by Pett, Wampold, Turner, and Vaughn-Cole (1999) found that

maternal strain was associated with lower maternal support in divorced families, and this in turn predicted greater maternal negativity which was associated with children's behavior problems.

The identification of individual characteristics that lead to both positive and poor long-term adjustment outcome has been a focus of researchers. Many factors have been considered to play a role in the level of resiliency demonstrated by children, including age, gender, and personality. Additionally, research suggests that the stressors associated with divorce and interparental conflict can exacerbate already existing adjustment issues in children (Block et al., 1989; Elder, Caspi, & Nguyen, 1992; Hetherington, 1989, 1991). There are factors that have been shown to help reduce the effects of exposure to negative life events, such as divorce or interparental conflict. Hetherington (1989; 1991) states that children who are intelligent, competent, and who have an easy temperament, high self-esteem, an internal locus of control, and a good sense of humor are more likely to evoke positive responses and support from others and to be able to adapt to new challenges and stressful life experiences. She also notes that, although children who already have poor adjustment will be most vulnerable to the effects of divorce, some children develop problems as a result of the experiences prior to, during, or after divorce. Current research would suggest that one of the most influential factors in this process is that of interparental conflict (Cummings, George, McCoy, & Davies, 2012; DeBoard-Lucas, Fosco, Raynor, & Grych, 2010; Fear et al., 2009; Ghazarian & Buehler, 2010; O'Donnell, Moreau, Cardemil, & Pollastri, 2010).

Social support has been shown to be a resiliency factor for children of divorce, with studies showing that social support may alleviate parenting stress and thus buffer children from negative outcomes associated with the stress caused by parental divorce (Cochran & Niego, 1995; Hetherington, 1989). Social support may also act as a protective factor for children of continuously married parents, and may take the form of support from extended family, which has been shown to be positively correlated with social functioning for children of divorced parents, and from other adults in the child's life, such as day care providers (Leon, 2003). Contact with the non-custodial parent has shown mixed findings in its benefits for children of divorced parents. Emery (1999) found that, for older children, the amount of contact with the nonresident parent had little impact on the child's outcomes. Some research has found that more contact with the absent father following a divorce culminated in more negative outcomes for younger children (Solomon & George, 1999; Hodges, Wechsler, & Ballantine, 1979). But, Whiteside and Becker (2000) found no direct relationship between father contact and child outcomes. They did, however, find that more frequent contact with the father was associated with a better father-child relationship, which was in turn associated with fewer internalizing symptoms.

Hetherington's (1999) review suggests that children can vary greatly in how they respond to divorce depending on the interactions between children's individual characteristics and their experiences prior to, during, and after divorce. She argues that, given the resiliency factors and family processes, new problems may emerge, old problems may be exacerbated, or, children's adjustment may actually be enhanced by their parent's marital dissolution. Looking at individual characteristics that exist within

family systems and within individual children adds another level of consideration within the realm of interparental conflict and its ultimate effects on children's adjustment. Risk and resiliency factors are an important aspect of consideration for researchers seeking to gain a better understanding of the impact of interparental conflict on children's adjustment.

Individual child characteristics.

Gender. Individual child characteristics, such as gender, temperament, age, and individual coping styles, have been shown to have some impact on children's ability to adjust to divorce. Amato (2001) conducted a meta-analysis of 67 studies of older children which found no gender differences in most domains of adjustment with the exception that boys demonstrated more conduct problems than girls. There have been studies that indicate that some differences exist between genders; however, no studies have been replicated to show any patterns or trends within gender difference.

Temperament. Temperament can impact children's behavioral responses to conflict (Compas, 1987). Children's temperament has been shown to affect the relationship between interparental conflict and child adjustment. Some children are more reactive to stress in general (Compas, 1987; Kagan, 1983) and so may demonstrate a heightened sensitivity to conflict and thus have more intense reactions to conflict. Children's temperament also has been shown to have an effect on the parent-child relationship (Rutter, 1979; 1983), which may, in turn, have an impact on parent-child conflict and ultimately the emotional climate of the family. Hetherington (1989) examined the role of temperament in children's adjustment to divorce, and her findings indicated that infant temperament predicted adjustment of children at ten-years of age.

More specifically, children with difficult temperaments demonstrated less adaptability to stress even when high levels of support were available. Further findings indicate that the effect of temperament is dependent on several factors, including the personality of the mother, availability of social support, and the level of stress experienced. The “Goodness of Fit” model proposed by Chess and Thomas (1984) proposed that temperament as well as parents’ responsiveness play a role in children’s coping with interparental conflict. They suggest that children who are more sensitive to environmental stressors may not experience a significant level of distress as a result of the conflict if the child’s parents are quick and effective at responding when events occur; however, children could experience higher levels of stress if the parents are less responsive. The fit between the child and the parent thus becomes an important predictor of child adjustment and ability to cope with interparental conflict.

Age and developmental level. Risk and resiliency factors differ based on children’s age as well, especially in the domains of parenting quality that impact children at various developmental levels (Leon, 2003). Older children have been shown to have better adjustment in response to parental monitoring of children’s activities and parental involvement (Capaldi & Patterson, 1991; Kurtz, 1994; Martinez & Forgatch, 2002; Simons, Lin, Gordon, Conger, & Lorenz, 1999). Younger children have been shown to respond more to parental warmth and responsiveness (Heinicke, Guthrie, & Ruth, 1997; Hodges, Buchsbaum, & Tierney, 1983; Pett et al., 1999; Whiteside & Becker, 2000) and to cognitive stimulation (Clarke-Stewart et al., 2000; Poehlmann & Fiese, 1994). These differences are likely the result of developmental needs, where parental warmth and responsiveness are important protective factors during childhood and adolescence, but

parental monitoring and involvement become more important as children enter middle childhood and spend more time outside the home and with peers (Leon, 2003). Age may also play a role in how children respond to interparental conflict, with older children being more likely to become involved in their parents' conflicts, leading to more negative outcomes (Buchanan, Maccoby, & Dornbusch, 1991; Davies, Myers, & Cummings, 1996; Johnson, Gonzalez, & Campbell, 1987; Johnston, Kline, & Tschann, 1989). Rogers (2004) conducted a theoretical review of literature relating to risk and protective factors of young children in regards to post-divorce adjustment. Her findings indicate that, for children who experience divorce prior to the age of six, the loss of the non-custodial parent (not being present daily) and financial stress were identified as risk factors, and the child having good individual relationships with each parent following the divorce, maintaining daily routines, and maintaining familiarity (such as keeping familiar toys and objects available and maintaining a familiar environment) served as protective factors. Additionally, Rogers (2004) found that, for younger children, interparental conflict both prior to and following the divorce predicted child adjustment, with lower levels of conflict equating to better overall adjustment. Rogers (2004) argued that the quality of parenting often deteriorates following divorce (with parental stress leading to diminished parenting, less parental responsiveness, less parental patience, and less parental sensitivity), and this is considered another risk factor for young children. However, Rogers (2004) also found that extended family support can serve as a protective factor for young children, especially if the parent is psychologically unable to provide quality parenting following the divorce. Rogers (2004) also notes that siblings can serve as

protective factors for young children because they are able to buffer some of the stresses associated with divorce as well as provide additional social support to younger children.

Coping strategies. Children's individual coping strategies have been linked to overall adjustment as well, with poor coping skills (such as self-blame and inaccurate attributions, feeling of hopelessness, and fears of abandonment) being related to more difficulties for children (Kurdek & Berg, 1987) and higher rates of maladjustment being shown to have negative correlations with children's reliance on avoidance and wishful thinking when dealing with parental divorce (Armistead et al., 1990). Primary and secondary control coping were found to be associated with less anxiety, depression, and aggression among adolescents dealing with divorce-related stressors (Wadsworth & Compass, 2002), and active coping that involved active problem solving and positive thinking was found to increase children's feelings of confidence in their ability to cope with stressful family circumstances (Sandler, Tein, Mehta, Wolchik, & Ayers, 2000).

Children's Appraisals of Interparental Conflict

There are factors that have been shown to mediate the link between interparental conflict and child adjustment, including parenting practices, children's own appraisals of the conflict and its potential to be threatening to them, and children's placement of blame for the conflict (Rhoades, 2008). Appraisals have been defined as "the process wherein a child evaluates the significance of an event for his or her well-being." (Grych & Fincham, 1993). Grych and Fincham (1993) further explain that "significant events" are those that are related to the goals of an individual, involve communication of an emotional nature from someone significant to the individual, or produce pain or pleasure naturally. It is further noted that, although interparental conflict does not necessarily cause intrinsic

pain, it does involve emotional communication that is typically relevant to a child's need to feel secure, thus increasing the potential for it to be very significant to children.

Several types of appraisals have been examined in relation to their effect on children's adjustment within the context of interparental conflict. Appraisals, therefore, are defined as children's subjective evaluations of interparental conflict. Appraisal is the mechanism that allows children to derive the meaning of conflict in terms of the conflict's perceived cause, course, and its potential consequences (Fosco & Grych, 2007). Appraisals involve two dimensions: threat, which is defined as "the degree to which a child feels threatened by and unable to cope with the conflict;" and self-blame, "the degree to which the child blames him/herself for the conflict (Binkham & Fiese, 1997). Richmond and Stocker (2007) found that self-blame appraisals were consistent from childhood through adolescence; however, appraisals of threat were higher during childhood, with a large decline in threat appraisals being found during the transition from childhood to adolescence. Additionally, threat appraisals were found to stabilize again during adolescence.

Grych and Fincham (1990) found that children's appraisals of interparental conflict were influenced by the manner in which the conflict was expressed, as well as by children's relationships with their parents. Moreover, it has been shown that children's prior exposure to interparental conflict predicts their appraisals for future conflictual interactions (Grych, 1998; Grych, Harold, & Miles, 2003). Deboard-Lucas, Fosco, Raynor, and Grych (2010) found that, consistent with previous literature, interparental conflict was associated with higher levels of threat and blame, perceived threat was positively associated with internalizing problems, and blame was associated with higher

levels of both internalizing and externalizing problems. Other research has shown that children's appraisals of threat and blame, their emotional reactivity and distress, and triangulation into parental disagreements all mediate the relationship between parental discord and child maladjustment (Cummings, Schermerhorn, Davies, Goeke-Morey, & Cummings, 2006; Davies, Harold, Goeke-Morey, & Cummings, 2002; Grych, Harold, & Miles, 2003; Grych, Raynor, & Fosco, 2004). Fosco and Grych (2008) argue for conceptual models that "better reflect the interconnected nature of emotion, cognition, and family dynamics" that play a role in the effects of interparental conflict on children. Their study compared how well three theoretically derived configurations of mediators captured the nature of the relationship between interparental conflict, the hypothesized mediators, and children's internalizing and externalizing problems, and findings suggested that children's self-blaming attributions and emotional distress were uniquely associated with both internalizing and externalizing problems; however, perceived threat uniquely predicted internalizing problems and triangulation uniquely predicted externalizing problems (Fosco & Grych, 2008).

Looking at the conditions under which witnessing interparental conflict adversely affects children's functioning, current research examines factors that increase or decrease children's tendency to make appraisals that, in turn, increase their risk for maladjustment (Grych et al., 2003). Children's attachment to their parents has been argued to affect their ability to positively cope with interparental conflict by having a direct effect on children's sense of security (Bretherton & Muholland, 1999; Kerns, Klepac, & Cole, 1996). Interparental conflict can be a significant stressor for children due to its potential to threaten the harmony and stability of the family (Davies & Cummings, 1994; Grych &

Fincham, 1990). Grych and colleagues (2004) found that adolescents who reported more secure attachments to their mother also appraised interparental conflict as less threatening and that more secure adolescent-father attachment predicted lower levels of self-blame for interparental conflict. Additionally, secure parent-child attachment has been shown to reduce the impact of negative appraisals on children's adjustment due to children being more likely to seek reassurance and comfort from a caregiver when distressed if they are securely attached to the caregiver (Fraley, 2002). Davies, Harold, Goeke-Morey, and Cummings (2002) also demonstrated that parents were able to calm their children's fears or misconceptions about the stability of the family, helping children feel less responsible for interparental conflict.

Emotional Security Hypothesis

Individual characteristics of children have been studied more closely with specific theories as to characteristics that impact children's ability to adjust following divorce. Two theoretical models, in particular, have attempted to examine children's perceptions and characteristics when exposed to interparental conflict. The first of these is Davies and Cummings' (1994) Emotional Security Hypothesis. This model builds on attachment theory and argues that it is the children's concerns regarding their own emotional security that ultimately regulate their level of arousal and how they organize their response to marital conflict. In turn, these responses impact children's long-term adjustment. The authors explain that the manner in which children respond to marital conflict is not simply a direct function of the degree of anger and conflict involved in the marital relation, but rather is governed by the overall implications of the marital conflict for their own emotional well-being (Cummings & Davies, 1994). It is more than simply the

existence of fighting and conflict in the marriage and the unpleasant feelings that are expressed that impact the emotional health of children. It is the reflection of the overall family environment and the meaning of the conflict within that family environment that impacts children's adjustment. The Emotional Security Hypothesis suggests that children's emotional security helps regulate their level of emotional arousal, which in turn helps children cope better overall, leading to more secure adjustment. Children who are exposed to higher levels of or more intense parental conflict have chronic levels of arousal and dysregulation of their emotions and behaviors, leading to adjustment problems. Additionally, children may attempt to increase their own emotional security by attempts at regulating, reducing, or terminating the conflict between their parents. This may produce short-term positive results, but lead to more long-term problematic behavior; for example, a child may misbehave to distract parents from conflict, if this is then negatively reinforced by the parents thus increasing the chances of a recurrence of the undesired behavior in the future (Davies & Cummings, 1994). According to Davies and Cummings (1994), the context within which the marital conflict occurs has a large impact on children's ability to respond effectively and healthily to the conflict.

Interparental conflict in isolation does not account for children's responses. Rather, specific expressions of conflict have the propensity to undermine children's emotional security or to mitigate the impact of interparental conflict. The concepts of anger and conflict are complex and are comprised of multiple dimensions. It is essential to differentiate anger and conflict in order to understand their impact on children's adjustment within the context of interparental conflict. Therefore, Davies and Cummings (1994) focused on addressing four types of marital conflict that have been demonstrated

to have the largest impact on children's emotional security: frequency, form, content and resolution. Many studies link the frequency of marital conflict with negative adjustment in children (Cummings, Iannotti, & Zahn-Waxler, 1985; Cummings, Zahn-Waxler, & Radke-Yarrow, 1981; Emery & O'Leary, 1984; Heshorn & Rosenbaum, 1985; Johnston, Gonzalez, & Campbell, 1987; Jouriles, Pfiffner, & O'Leary, 1988; Long, Forehand, Fauber, & Brody, 1987; Wierson, Forehand, & McCombs, 1988). Cummings and colleagues. (1985) found that being exposed to more than one inter-adult conflict increased children's distress and aggression, suggesting that children become more emotionally insecure with increased exposure to adult conflict.

The form of the conflict is also a large predictor of children adjustment, with violence presenting the greatest risk for children in terms of adjustment problems and negative reactions (Cummings, Vogel, Cumminl-Sheikh, 1989; Jenkins & Smith, 1991; Jouriles, Murphy, & O'Leary, 1989; O'Brien, Margolin, John, & Krueger, 1991; Rossman & Rosenberg, 1992). Studies using home observations found that physical conflict between parents elicited more distress than did verbal anger (Cummings et al., 1981). Studies have also shown that more severe psychopathology in children is more highly associated with homes consisting of battered women than with nonviolent homes (Holden & Ritchie, 1991; Wolfe et al., 1985). Interspousal aggression is also highly correlated with parental aggression toward children and negative parenting, with an increased impact on children's feelings of security due to the combination of physical and psychological threat (Gelles, 1987; Hughes, 1988; Jouriles et al., 1987; Pagani, Japel, Vaillancourt, & Tremblay, 2010; Shelton & Harold, 2008;).

The content of parental conflict also has an impact on children's ability to regulate their emotional responses, with disputes over child-related issues being particularly stressful for children. Research has shown that conflict that develops over child rearing is a better predictor of child behavior problems than global marital distress or conflict resulting from subjects not related to the child (Jouriles et al., 1991; Snyder, Klein, Gdowski, Faulstich, & LaCombe, 1988). Conflict over child rearing has also been shown to produce not only externalizing problems in children, but also to produce internalizing problems as well (Grych & Fincham, 1993; Johnston et al., 1987; Jouriles, Murphy et al., 1991; Kaczynski, Lindahl, Malik, & Laurenceau, 2006; O'Donnell, Moreau, Cardemil, & Pollastri, 2010; Snyder et al., 1988; Sirvanli, 2005).

The last context involves the level of resolution associated with marital conflict, and states that the manner in which parental conflict is resolved influences children's response to the conflict as a whole. Many studies have supported the notion that resolution reduces children's negative reactions to adult conflict (Cummings, Ballard, El-Sheikh, & Lake, 1991; Cummings, Hennessy, Rabideau, & Cicchetti, 1994; Cummings, Simpson, & Wilson, 1993; Cummings & Smith, 1993; Davies & Cummings, 1994; Hennessy, Rabideau, Cicchetti, & Cummings, 1994). Additionally, resolution is not dichotomous, but exists along a continuum from no resolution to complete resolution where children are more sensitive to relatively subtle variations in the level of resolution with negative responses being more correlated with lower degrees of resolution (Cummings, Ballard, El-Sheikh, & Lake, 1991). Laboratory studies have also shown that children react less negatively to discord between couples who have consistently resolved

their previous conflicts versus those who have not historically resolved conflicts (El-Sheikh & Cummings, 1994).

Thus, the effect pathway proposed by the Emotional Security Hypothesis is as follows: emotional security first derives from children's experiential history with destructive marital conflict; next, emotional insecurity promotes adjustment problems, resulting in negative emotional arousal in response to conflict; these reactions in turn show stability over time (Cummings, 1987; Cummings, Hollenbeck, Iannotti, Radke-Yarrow, & Zahn-Waxler, 1986; Cummings et al., 1981; & Cummings, Zahn-Waxler, & Radke-Yarrow, 1984); and finally, these reactions organize multiple emotional, cognitive, and physiological elements of response (Cummings, 1987; Cummings & El-Sheikh, 1991; El-Sheikh et al., 1989).

Cognitive Contextual Model

The second model, proposed by Grych and Fincham (1990), The Cognitive Contextual Model, also looks at individual child characteristics that account for children's adjustment to marital conflict by offering a framework for understanding children's responses to interparental conflict and draws on studies conducted by Cummings and Cummings (1988) and Bradbury and Fincham (1987; 1989) in which influences on how children cope with inter-adult anger include the stimulus characteristics of the anger episode and individual characteristics of the child. Cummings and Cummings explain that most marital conflicts are characterized by some degree of anger or hostility. The context within which the conflict occurs and how children interpret interparental conflict play key roles in how children cope with this conflict

(Cummings & Cummings, 1988). Although this model acknowledges the importance of cognitive appraisals, Grych and Fincham argue that the framework offered by Cummings and Cummings does not provide enough detail on the role children's cognitions play. The model proposed by Grych and Fincham is derived from an adult model proposed by Bradbury and Fincham (1987; 1989) that "articulates the role of covert factors in behavior exchanges between intimates" (1990).

This framework proposed by Grych and Fincham focuses on the child's attempt to understand and respond to marital conflict, and outlines processes that may moderate the level of stress the child experiences within the conflict. The framework also highlights the importance of the context of the interparental conflict, children's cognitions, and the child's level of development. Although affect is not emphasized within this model, the authors recognize that cognitions and emotions are closely connected and argue that children's coping with interparental conflict involves the regulation of emotional arousal, as well as the enactment of effective behavioral strategies in which cognition plays a key role.

Grych and Fincham conceptualized interparental conflict as a stressor that leads the child to attempt to understand and cope with the conflict. They proposed that cognition and affect work together and function as appraisals that guide the child's coping behavior. Two levels of processing are proposed to occur within an episode of conflict: primary and secondary. Primary processing occurs when the child realizes that a stressful event is occurring and thus experiences an initial affective reaction. The specific characteristics of the conflict episode are thought to influence this initial appraisal. The child may then move to secondary processing, which is a more elaborate stage of

processing, wherein the child attempts to understand why the conflict is occurring and what the response should be. This level of processing requires the child to make an attribution as to the cause of the event, ascribe responsibility and blame, and then generate and assess potential coping strategies. This level of processing is also affected by the child's initial level of emotional arousal, which then tempers the child's affect aroused by the conflict. The child's affect and secondary processing guides the child in an attempt to cope with the conflict. Results from successful coping lead to a reduction of negative affect and results from unsuccessful coping which may maintain or increase the child's distress. Grych and Fincham noted that changes in parental behavior or the child's interpretation of the conflict may result in the process being repeated. They also add that the child may become directly involved with the conflict, which turns marital conflict into family conflict.

Grych and Fincham's outlined five components within their Cognitive-Contextual Model: properties of conflict episodes, context of conflict (including distal and proximal), children's processing of conflict (including primary and secondary), affect, and coping behavior. This model posits that several properties of conflict episodes are associated with children's responses to conflict, where intensity, content, duration, and resolution are the features of the conflict imposing the greatest impact on children. Conflicts with greater intensity are likely to cause greater distress in children. The authors stated that intensity can be determined by several factors, including the degree of negative affect or hostility expressed and the occurrence of physical aggression. Content can vary a great deal, but certain aspects of content, such as that pertaining to the child or the state of the marriage, may be more distressing for the child than other aspects that are less

threatening. Grych and Fincham argued that conflicts involving children are particularly distressing as they may cause the child to question their place in the family, their parents' feelings about them, or to blame themselves for the problems in the family. Duration has been shown to cause greater distress for children with longer lasting episodes because the child is exposed to the stressor for an extended period of time or children may become overwhelmed with longer episodes especially if the episodes are intense. Lastly, conflicts that are not resolved in a satisfactory manner may also be distressing to children, whereas conflicts that are consistently resolved in a constructive manner provide appropriate models of problem-solving and may facilitate the child's interactions with others. The positive effects of conflict resolution may be undermined by other features of the conflict, such as violence within the conflict. The context of the conflict is also examined within this model, and includes the psychological aspects of context (such as children's memory of past conflict).

The authors outlined two types of context: distal and proximal. Distal context encompasses the relatively stable or slowly changing factors (such as children's memory and temperament) and proximal context encompasses the thoughts and feelings children experience immediately prior to their processing of the conflict episode. There are several distal context factors that may have an effect on children's response to interparental conflict. The features that appear to have the largest impact include previous experience with conflict, perceived emotional climate, temperament, and gender. The authors presented a hypothesis that children's previous experiences with conflict affect their sensitivity to conflict and create expectations about the course of subsequent conflict, with children's experiences with interparental conflict having a particularly salient

impact. The dimensions of conflict episodes are also hypothesized to have a significant impact on children's specific memories of past conflict events. When previous conflicts have been frequent, intense, or poorly resolved and the content presented reflect a concern for the child or the marriage, children are likely to anticipate that future conflict will be similarly distressing.

Parents' explanations of past conflicts are also relevant as interparental conflict tends to be confusing, especially for younger children. It may not be clearly understood that people can have both positive and negative feelings towards someone, leading to a higher likelihood of young children blaming themselves for interparental conflict and dissolution of marriage. The impact of self-blame was examined by Grych and Fincham (1993) who found that, when twelve-year-olds responded to conflicts that involved either parent- or child-blaming with no explanation for the conflict, fear of becoming involved in the conflict as well as the child's desire to become involved in the conflict were decreased when the child was absolved of blame. Conflicts involving a focus on the children impact the manner in which children appraise and cope with the conflict. When conflict concerns children, the children involved report more shame and fear of being drawn into the conflict, and thus endorse coping responses involving more attempts at direct intervention, with more intense conflicts leading to greater negative affect and perceived threat (Grych & Fincham, 1993). Developmental aspects also play a role on the impact of self-blame in children's conflict appraisals. McDonald and Grych (2006) found that seven- to nine-year-old children were able to distinguish the properties of conflict from their own appraisals of the conflict, and self-blame (along with threat) mediated the link between interparental conflict and internalizing problems.

Parents' explanations are likely to be a critical factor in assuring that children understand (and thus appraise in a healthy manner) stressful life events, such as interparental conflict. Children's understanding of parents' explanations is also dependent on their cognitive ability and development. The perceived emotional climate is explained by Grych and Fincham as the child's perception of family relationships, which is influenced by their experiences within the family. Grych and Fincham also acknowledged the role of temperament, noting that some children may be more reactive and may demonstrate a heightened sensitivity to conflict, thus exhibiting more intense reactions. Also considered is the role of gender as an additional variable that affects the distal context for children, with research suggesting that different socialization experiences lead to different affective and behavioral responses to conflict in boys and girls. The authors used the example of boys being less likely to cry and more likely to exhibit aggression than girls, as aggression is more tolerated in boys and demonstrative emotions more tolerated in girls (Grych & Fincham, 1990).

The second type of context, proximal context, is noted to change rapidly as a conflict episode unfolds due to the existence of transient thoughts and feelings within the child that immediately precede the child's processing of interparental behavior with conflict. Grych and Fincham (1990) noted that the child's expectations for the course of the conflict as well as the child's current mood significantly impact proximal context for children. The child's expectations can either heighten or diminish their experience of distress during the conflict based upon similar previous conflict experiences. Additionally, the child's mood at the time of conflict can play a role in their processing of

the conflict by predisposing the child to either negative or positive feelings during the conflict.

Children's processing of conflict is proposed to take two forms: primary and secondary. Primary processing occurs when the child initially attends to the conflict and begins to extract information about the conflict in regards to its negativity, level of threat, and the level of relevance the conflict has to the child. This level of processing is analogous to primary appraisal (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), involving an estimation of threat or challenge being presented by a particular stressor. This level of processing is also influenced by a number of factors, including individual differences in affective response and developmental level. Most primary processing leads to secondary processing, but the authors noted that there may be situations where primary processing leads directly to overt behavior, such as when a child's cognitive or developmental level is too low to allow further processing or when intense arousal from conflict precludes or interferes with further cognitive processing.

Generally, children move from primary processing to secondary processing, where the child extracts further information from the conflict in an attempt to try to understand and cope with the situation. It is during this stage of processing that the authors hypothesize that children attempt to determine why the conflict is occurring (termed causal attribution), who is responsible for the conflict (termed responsibility attribution), and whether or not they have the skills necessary to successfully cope with the conflict (termed efficacy attribution). This level of processing is influenced by any

affect that is aroused during primary processing and thus modulates the child's initial reaction to the conflict (Grych & Fincham, 1990).

It has been argued that causal attributions play an important role in children's overall ability to cope with divorce (Kurdek, 1986). It is also suggested that causal attributions have an adaptive function for children (Fincham & Cain, 1986). Fosco and Grych (2007) proposed that attributional processing is elicited by events that are unexpected, personally relevant, and distressing. They noted that children are more likely to attempt to determine a cause for the conflict when anger is not frequently expressed within the family context due to its highly salient nature and its likelihood of producing distress for the child.

The cause of a conflict can take on any number of dimensions, including: the degree to which the cause is about the self, other people, or external circumstances (locus); the degree to which the cause is likely to reoccur (stability); and the degree to which the cause is seen as affecting other areas of life (globality). Overall, attributing negative events to internal, stable, and global factors has been shown to increase the impact of these events (Bradbury & Fincham, 1990; Peterson & Seligman, 1984). This would suggest that if a child views him or herself as the cause of parental conflict or views the conflict as being caused by stable and global factors, he or she is likely to experience higher levels of distress related to the conflict. Grych, Harold, and Miles (2003) discussed the impact of interparental conflict on children being dependent upon their own interpretation of the meaning of the conflict and its implications for their well-being, and noted that when children attribute blame to themselves for the conflict, they

experience guilt, shame, and sadness as a result. Responsibility attributions are similar to causal attributions and revolve around the concept of accountability. For children, this translates to attempting to determine whether or not blame should be attributed to something or someone. Both responsibility and blame attributions hinge on several criteria for adults, such as intention, motivation, capacity, voluntariness, and control (Shaver, 1985). Children's development factors into the degree to which these criteria are involved in the development of responsibility and causal attributions in the context of interparental conflict. However, Richmond and Stocker (2007) found that self-blame appraisals were relatively stable across development, and age was not related to whether or not children blamed themselves for interparental conflict. It was argued that if a child, over time, comes to view him/herself as the cause of marital conflict, that view then becomes solidified regardless of advances within the development of the individual, reflecting a broader attributional style for self-blame.

The authors argued that not all of these criteria are relevant with children, such as questioning whether or not parents maintain the capacity required to be held accountable for their actions and whether their behavior was voluntary or under their control. They contended that intent and motivation are more relevant factors for children when assessing responsibility and blame. It is further explained that when children make judgments of blame, it leads to specific emotions, with children who blame themselves feeling guilty or ashamed and children who blame parents feeling angry. Efficacy expectations relate to a child's belief in how well he or she can cope with the conflict. The authors stated that a child's belief regarding the course of the conflict (mild versus

intense, happily versus unhappily resolved) is distinctly different from the child's belief about his or her ability to cope with the conflict.

The latter, efficacy beliefs, are believed to be more directly linked to children's affect and behavior (Grych & Fincham, 1990). The authors suggested that if efficacy expectations are high, then children are more likely to feel hopeful and to engage in effective coping strategies, whereas if efficacy expectations are low, children are more likely to feel hopeless and helpless which is believed to diminish coping efforts. Bandura (1982) suggested that efficacy expectations are affected by a child's attributions, past coping efforts, and their level of affective arousal. Additionally, children who perceive greater levels of threat and who experience more intense negative affect may feel that they are less able to cope in an effective manner with conflict than children who do not. All factors are considered to be age and developmentally sensitive.

The next component of the Grych and Fincham (1990) model involves affective reactions to the conflict, and is hypothesized to be involved with the child's evaluation of the significance of the conflict, as well as in guiding the child's ensuing behavior (Grych & Fincham, 1990). It has already been suggested that interparental conflict likely produces negative affect in children, and research has shown that distress and anger are the most common emotional responses to witnessing conflict (Cummings & Cummings, 1988). When affect has been generated at the primary processing level, children's additional processing and behavioral responses can be further affected by the influence of children's expectations about future events, attributions, and their ability to generate affective coping strategies (Masters, Felleman, & Barden, 1981). Other research has

suggested that negative affect can also interfere with children's memory for positive events, which in turn makes it difficult for children to regulate their emotional responses (Nasby & Yando, 1982). Additionally, children may become overwhelmed by their own emotional reactions, making it impossible for them to move to secondary processing. The manner in which children cognitively process conflict is believed to affect the emotion experienced by the child as a result of the conflict.

Coping behavior is the last component of Grych and Fincham's (1990) framework, and is believed to take the form of either problem-focused or emotion-focused responses, with either strategy reducing emotional arousal if successfully executed. Problem-focused strategies are defined as "direct attempts to intervene in parental conflict," and emotion-focused strategies are defined as "attempts to regulate one's emotional response instead of attempting to change the situation" (Grych & Fincham, 1990). The authors further suggested that these two types of coping behaviors are interchangeable, and noted that that if direct interventions are unsuccessful, a child may attempt to change his or her emotional response to interparental conflict instead. It has been suggested that children engage in varying strategies in an attempt to regulate emotions, including making an attempt to change their interpretation of the event, focusing on more positive aspects of the situation, and holding themselves responsible for the event in an effort to maintain the belief that he or she can control similar situations in the future (retrospective control: Herzberger & Tenne, 1986). Research has demonstrated that children who are able to generate multiple coping strategies fair better than those who are not; however, if a child engages in only one coping strategy that is effective on a consistent basis, they may find equal success (Spivak & Shure, 1982).

Grych and Fincham posited that children's behavioral responses may ultimately change the course of the conflict by deescalating the conflict when attempting to intervene, which may also result in direct involvement of children in the conflict. This change in conflict may then lead to a new sequence in the processing cycle. Again, age and developmental level play a role in that older children are likely have acquired a wider array of coping skills and are also likely to have a larger social network of support from which to draw. Likewise, older children are also more able to engage in certain types of coping behaviors, such as emotion-focused coping strategies that rely on an individual's ability to cognitively restructure a stressful situation. The theory suggests that if coping strategies have been successful, they are likely to be repeated in future conflict episodes or events, but strategies that have been successful at interrupting marital conflict may become maladaptive when the child has been drawn into the conflict.

Current research has looked at aspects of Grych and Fincham's model and how children's appraisals of threat and self-blame may mediate the association between interparental conflict and behavioral problems in children. The model places emphasis on the cognitive aspects of the appraisal process, and argues that children's perceptions of the threat posed by interparental conflict, their beliefs in their own ability to cope effectively, and attributions made by children regarding the cause of the conflict are key in shaping children's immediate emotional and behavioral responses (Grych & Fincham, 1990). The model, however, does not discuss possible mechanisms by which this process may occur. Grych, Fincham, Jouriles, and McDonald (2000) expanded on the original model by looking at possible processes by which children's appraisals of threat and self-blame may affect their adjustment, and proposed that when interparental conflict results

in high levels of perceived threat or attributions of self-blame, children are more likely to develop internalizing problems such as anxiety and depression. They also contended that other processes associated with interparental conflict (such as modeling, disrupted parent-child relationships, and emotional dysregulation) would be primarily responsible for the development of aggressive, disruptive behavior in children from highly conflictual families.

Within the Cognitive-Contextual Model, appraisals are proposed to be influenced by certain aspects or dimensions of interparental conflict. Within their original argument, hostile and aggressive conflict is likely to be perceived by children as threatening because children may fear that their parents will turn the aggression or anger towards them, that a parent may get hurt, or that parents may divorce. Additionally, the original model proposed that conflict that is child-centered may lead to self-blame due to implications that the child did or failed to do something that ultimately created the conflict between the parents (Grych & Fincham, 1990). Grych, et al. (2000) argue that children who perceive conflict as threatening and are exposed frequently to this level of conflict, may develop persistent concerns about their own well-being, their parents, or the future of their family. They also suggested that when children blame themselves for causing interparental conflict, they may feel guilt, shame, or diminished self-esteem. Additionally, they argue that, for children who feel threatened by or responsible for interparental conflict and are unable to stop it from occurring, it may lead to the development of a sense of helplessness that may then produce other types of internalizing symptoms and problems. Results showed that children's appraisals of threat and self-

blame mediated the association between children's reports of interparental conflict and their own internalizing problems.

A study conducted by Grych, Harold, and Miles (2003) also looked at the mediational relationship of children's appraisals of threat and self-blame as related to interparental conflict and child adjustment from a longitudinal perspective. Findings indicated that children exposed to higher levels of interparental conflict at the initial time were more likely to have greater perceptions of threat and self-blame at a follow-up time (one year later, post-divorce). Perceived threat was then associated with increased internalizing problems in children at follow-up and self-blame was associated with increased externalizing problems at follow-up. Similarly, McDonald and Grych (2006), using the Cognitive-Contextual framework, found that threat and self-blame appraisals mediated the link between interparental conflict and internalizing problems. Fosco and Grych (2008) found that children's self-blaming attributions and emotional distress were uniquely associated with both internalizing and externalizing problems, whereas perceived threat uniquely predicted internalizing problems and triangulation uniquely predicted externalizing problems.

There has been a vast amount of research conducted in the area of appraisals of interparental conflict and their impact on children's adjustment; however, the vast majority of this research has relied on self-report of appraisals on itemized questionnaires or parent report, both of which limit children's responses. By approaching this concept from a qualitative approach, more insight into children's true responses to interparental conflict and how they then appraise the conflict can be gained.

Purpose of this Study

A direct link between interparental conflict and children's adjustment has been well established through previous research. Previous research has also begun to establish a mediational relationship, wherein the relationship between interparental conflict and child adjustment is mediated by the child's appraisal of the conflict. Children's exposure to interparental conflict is now being identified as a mechanism that typically leads to appraisals of threat by the child, which in turn leads to internalizing problems, such as anxiety and depression. Studies conducted by Rhoades (2008), Shelton and Gordon (2008), Xin, Chi, and Yu (2009), Atkinson, Dadds, Chipuer, and Dawe (2009), and McDonald and Grych (2006) have demonstrated that threat appraisals mediate the relationship between interparental conflict and internalizing problems in children using itemized self-report and parent-report formats. Researchers have yet to assess this link using open-ended self-reports from children to assess children's appraisals, or to utilize child self-report measures for other aspects of the mediational relationship, such as interparental conflict. It is proposed, as other research has demonstrated, that children's appraisal is the mechanism that underlies the relationship between interparental conflict and children's adjustment, and that this relationship holds when the conflict and appraisal aspects of the mediation model are assessed solely from child report. It is also proposed that this model will hold when children's appraisals are assessed from an open-ended question format as opposed to utilizing an itemized questionnaire.

Research has begun to identify parent hostility as a particularly salient aspect of interparental conflict that contributes to higher levels of adjustment difficulties for children. Beginning with Grych (1998), research has identified the level of hostility

expressed within interparental conflict as one of the most consistent predictors of children's appraisals. Grych used maternal report of interparental aggression and child-report via an itemized questionnaire to assess children's appraisals, and found that children's appraisals were most consistently predicted by the level of hostility reported. Similarly, Grych, Harold, and Miles (2003), using itemized child- and parent-report of interparental conflict, child itemized self-report of appraisals, and child itemized self-report of adjustment, found that marital hostility and overt marital discord were significantly related to children's appraisals of threat, and that children's appraisals of threat were then significantly related to higher levels of poor adjustment in children (including withdrawal, anxiety, and depression). Shelton and Harold (2008), using parent-report of interparental conflict and itemized self-report measures of appraisals and adjustment, found that marital hostility was significantly related to children's threat appraisals, which was then significantly related to avoidance behaviors in children.

To date, research has yet to address this link by assessing the construct of conflict intensity as opposed to hostility. While these constructs are similar, hostility infers either an overt or a covert degree of hostile behavior, unfriendliness, or opposition. Whereas intensity is a broader construct that encompasses the level of hostility being encountered. It broadens our understanding of this particular aspect of interparental conflict to include the quality and strength of the hostility. This study seeks to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the ways in which interparental conflict presents increased risk factors for children by using children's own open-ended responses to interparental conflict as opposed to a limited selection on a self-report measure, in addition to parents' interpretation of children's responses to interparental conflict, as well as to determine

which, if any, of children's responses generate more significant negative long-term adjustment in children. This study will attempt to demonstrate that conflict intensity (a construct similar to hostility, but broader in its scope) within child-reported interparental conflict will have a significant relation with children's self-report of appraisals, and children's own reports of appraisals of threat and self-blame will be more significantly related to negative outcomes in the form of internalizing problems (such as depression and anxiety), externalizing problems (such as conduct disorder), and overall adjustment (a total score that includes both internalizing and externalizing problems). Thus, this study will attempt to demonstrate that higher levels of conflict intensity within interparental conflict leads to higher levels of negative adjustment, and that children's perceptions of threat as a result of conflict intensity within interparental conflict leads to poorer adjustment in children. Additionally, this study will attempt to demonstrate that children's self appraisals of threat, as measured by open-ended questions, will mediate the relation between interparental conflict & child adjustment, with higher levels of perceived threat leading to poorer child adjustment.

Research Question 1. Will higher levels of child-reported conflict intensity within interparental conflict lead to poorer adjustment in children?

Hypothesis 1: Higher levels of child-reported intensity of interparental conflict will lead to poorer adjustment in children.

- a. Higher levels of child-reported conflict intensity within interparental conflict will lead to higher levels of internalizing problems (depression and anxiety).

- b. Higher levels of child-reported interparental conflict intensity will lead to higher levels of externalizing problems (conduct disorder).
- c. Higher levels of child-reported interparental conflict intensity within conflict will lead to higher levels of total adjustment problems.

Research Question 2. Will higher levels of parent-reported interparental conflict intensity lead to poorer adjustment in children?

Hypothesis 2: Higher levels of parent-reported conflict intensity within interparental conflict will lead to poorer adjustment in children.

- d. Higher levels of parent-reported conflict intensity within interparental conflict will lead to higher levels of internalizing problems (depression and anxiety).
- e. Higher levels of parent-reported conflict intensity within interparental conflict will lead to higher levels of externalizing problems (conduct disorder).
- f. Higher levels of parent-reported conflict intensity within interparental conflict will lead to higher levels of total adjustment problems.

Research Question 3. Will children's own appraisals of threat in response to interparental conflict intensity predict poorer child adjustment?

Hypothesis 3: Children's own threat appraisals in response interparental conflict intensity will predict poorer child adjustment.

Research Question 4. Will children's self-reported appraisals of threat mediate the relation between child-reported conflict intensity within interparental conflict and child adjustment?

Hypothesis 4: Children's self-reported appraisals of threat will mediate the relation between child-reported interparental conflict intensity and child adjustment, with higher levels of perceived threat leading to poorer child adjustment.

Research Question 5. Will children's self-reported appraisals of threat mediate the relation between parent-reported conflict intensity within interparental conflict and child adjustment?

Hypothesis 5: Children's self-reported appraisals of threat will mediate the relation between parent-reported interparental conflict intensity and child adjustment, with higher levels of perceived threat leading to poorer child adjustment.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Subjects

Mothers and their children were recruited from 1,200 divorce records covering a two year time span from public files in a municipal court in a major southwestern city. The target age for children was between nine and 12 years of age. Of the records available, 505 families were identified as eligible based on having children in this age range. These were the only requirements necessary to generate an invitation to participate. Letters requesting participation were mailed to all identified eligible families (52 letters were returned due to incorrect address and inability to forward). Follow-up phone calls were then made approximately two weeks after the initial mailings to the remaining 453 families in order to determine desired participation. Individuals called, introduced themselves by name, and explained the reason for their call in regards to the study being conducted by the university. The details of the study were explained and a set of pre-written questions were asked. A description of the project was shared, and confidentiality was discussed. If individuals were interested in participating, the caller completed a screening form with the individual to gain basic contact information and availability (see Appendix A for the recruitment telephone script). Of the 453 families, 142 were unreachable, 58 declined, and an additional 203 did not meet the remaining selection criteria (having ongoing post-divorce interparental conflict, involving raised voices in verbal disagreements, shouting, screaming, swearing, hitting, and/or shoving that was *witnessed* by the child at least once a month).

The final sample consisted of fifty, nine to twelve year-old children (25 female, 25 male) and their mothers (29-49 years-old; 81% Euro-American, 11% Mexican-American, and 8% other). The education level of mothers ranged from high school to graduate school with the largest percentage (35.8%) having some college education. The mother's employment mostly consisted of employment outside of the home or self-employment (87%), with weekly hours of employment ranging between ten and fifty hours (over half fell in the 40-50 hour range; 52.8%). The yearly income range for mothers was \$5,000 to \$90,000 with the largest percentage (20.8%) falling in the \$30,000 to \$35,000 range. All of the mothers had at least partial custody of the child.

Materials

Interparental conflict. An adapted scale derived from the Children's Perception of Interparental Conflict, parent version (Grych, Seid, & Fincham, 1992) and the O'Leary-Porter Overly Hostility Scale, parent report was used as part of the larger study (see Appendix B). The scale consisted of twenty-three items, asking how frequently the event occurred, scored from one (never) to five (very often). Three subscales were used: Frequency of Conflict, Intensity of Conflict, and O'Leary-Porter Overly Hostility Scale (1980). Cronbach alphas for the variables were as follows: Perception of Child's Relationship to Conflict, .56; Intensity and Duration, .83; the rest of the items, .92; and the total of all items, .94.

Appraisals. The "What I think and Feel" questionnaire was used as a measure of child self-report of threat appraisal (see Appendix C). Categories for children's self-reported appraisals of interparental conflict were adapted from the Program for Prevention Research (1990) and Sandler, Sheets & West (1996). A 20%

sample of transcripts was used initially to train coders in using the coding system. Initial appraisal codes included negative self-evaluation (when the child evaluates him or herself negatively), negative evaluation of others (fear of a negative evaluation of the child by another person), rejection by others (when a child thinks a significant other does not like or care for him or her or does not want to spend time with him or her), harm to self (when the child is being harmed or perceives future threat of harm, physically, emotionally, or psychologically), harm to others (future threat of someone other than the child being harmed or threatened physically, emotionally, or psychologically), criticism of others (child's negative evaluation of or disappointment with a significant other), and loss of desired object (loss of something materially, socially or academically). These codes combine to form the child-self report of threat appraisals. Chronbach Alphas for each of the Appraisal variables were as follows: harm to others, .46; rejection, .73; negative evaluation by others, .54; criticism of others, .05; negative self-evaluation, .71; loss of desired object, .44; and the summary scale (total scale, mean of all twelve items), .46.

Child adjustment. A condensed version of the Achenbach Child Behavior Checklist was used to assess child adjustment. (See Appendix D). Due to time constraints within the larger study, items selected from the Achenbach Child Behavior Checklist were used, representing only the scales for Anxiety, Depression, and Conduct Problems. A total score, representing all three variables was also included. The Anxiety scale consisted of six items, and had a Chronbach alpha of .83. The Depression scale consisted of seven items, with a Chronbach alpha of .67. The Conduct Problems scale consisted of six items, with a Chronbach alpha of .87. The total scale item yielded a Chronbach alpha of .87.

Procedures.

Data was collected as part of a larger study examining interparental conflict in relation to child appraisals, child coping, and child adjustment. The larger study was funded by NIMH, where fifty mothers and their 9-12 year-old children (50% female; 13% Hispanic/African American, 77% Euro American) observed and discussed one of two 1-minute videos (adapted from Braver, Griffin, Russulo, 1995) of a dramatized post-divorce interparental conflict witnessed by a child (all were professional actors). Each participating mother-child pair was videotaped as they discussed questions concerning: the nature of the conflict, the appraisals of the child actor in the video, suggestions for what the mother in the video could say/do to help the video child handle the event and his/her feelings about the event, and what the video child him/herself could do to cope with the event or his/her feelings about the event. In separate interviews with children, data were obtained about their recall of the coping strategies discussed with their mother, their response to their mother's coping socialization suggestions, and their appraisals of, and coping strategies in response to, interparental conflict in their own lives. In separate interviews, mothers described their strategies for attempting to get their children to consider different strategies for coping with interparental conflict, and completed questionnaires regarding interparental conflict, father-child affiliation, child communication competence, and coping socialization. These scales were used as part of the larger study. Only the questionnaires on interparental conflict, which are in the appendix, were used for this study.

For this study, data involving interparental conflict, child appraisals, and child adjustment were pulled from the larger data set. For the larger study, children and their

parents went to the university to participate in the study. Upon arrival, they were greeted by the researchers, and researchers introduced the activities by explaining the purpose of the study and providing a brief description of the tasks that they would be asked to complete. The mother and child were separated to complete individual tasks, each going with a different researcher. The child was asked to sign a consent form and was then given a card entitled “Thoughts and Feelings Questionnaire,” containing a color-coded Likert scale assessing the degree to which the child identified with each particular feeling or thought. The researcher read a series of statements regarding thoughts and feelings and the child used the cards to identify his/her response. Simultaneously, the mother was asked to complete a family characteristic and a child temperament questionnaire in a separate location with a separate researcher, both of which were also obtained as part of the larger study, but were not used for this study.

After the mother completed the questionnaire, the mother and child were reunited. It was explained that the video was about a boy/girl who sees and hears his/her parents arguing and were told, “Please remember that the child and adults are actors and that this is not something that really happened.” The child and mother then watched the video and their responses to a script of questions after they watched the video were taped-recorded.

The mother and child were then separated and interviewed by another researcher. The interview consisted of having the child recall the argument witnessed in the video, and then several open-ended questions regarding the video child’s thoughts and feeling were asked and responses were recorded. The recall of the argument between the mom and dad included three questions regarding the argument itself: what were the mom and

dad arguing about in the video, as best you can remember; can you remember what some of those things were that you thought that the boy/girl was feeling or thinking about; and was there anything that the girl/boy in the video was afraid might happen. During the next step, other data was collected in regards to coping for the larger study, but was not used as part of this study. The interviewer then asked the child an additional set of open-ended questions regarding their own thoughts and feelings regarding witnessing his/her own parents argue. The interviewer then administered the “What I Think and Feel Scale” (Appendix C) to the child in order to allow the child to respond to open-ended questions describing their own thoughts and feelings when they have witnessed their own parents argue.

During the time that the child was interviewed by the researcher, another researcher interviewed the mother regarding her own conflict experiences with her ex-spouse and the mother also completed a questionnaire describing her interparental conflict from what she perceived to be her child’s point of view.

Interparental conflict. Children's narrative descriptions of interparental conflict were rated separately by two coders. Conflict categories were derived from Grych, Seid & Fincham’s (1992) scale for assessing children’s perceptions of interparental conflict. Mothers self-reported the level of interparental conflict (Grych, Seid, & Fincham, 1992; O’Leary & Porter, 1980), and the interrater reliability for total level of conflict was .81 (percent agreement). Conflict categories include perception of child’s relationship to conflict (two items), intensity and duration of conflict (6 items), a category that combined the remainder of the scale items (13 items; i.e., “the child saw my ex-spouse and me

disagreeing,” “the child was aware when my ex-spouse and I argued or disagreed,” and “when my ex-spouse and I had a disagreement, we discussed it quietly,” etc.), and a total of all items (21 items). Chronbach alphas were as follows: perception of child’s relationship to conflict, .56; intensity and duration, .83; the rest of the items, .92, and total of all items, .94.

Appraisal coding and reliability. Children’s threat appraisals in response to interparental conflict at home were assessed during the individual interview of the child. The threat appraisals were coded into seven categories consistent with earlier research (Sheets et al., 1995). These categories were: 1) negative self-evaluation, 2) negative evaluation by others, 3) rejection by others, 4) harm to self, 5) harm to others, 6) criticism of others, and 7) loss of desired objects or activities. These scales then were collapsed into three factors: 1) negative self-appraisal (subscales: negative self-evaluation, negative evaluation of others, rejection of others, harm to self, and self-blame); 2) negative appraisal of others (subscales: harm to others and criticism of others); 3) negative appraisal of loss (loss of desired objects or activities). A fourth category, Negative affect, was added to assess children’s appraisals of emotional consequences to themselves or others in response to interparental conflict. Finally, a fifth category, self-blame, was also added due the prevalence of children’s statements indicating that in some way they (or the conflict video stimulus child) might be responsible in some way for the conflict, this was included in the first category of threat appraisal, negative self-evaluation (see Appendix F).

A reliability worksheet was used to calculate the statistics regarding the interrater reliability of the appraisal categories. For each case, the number of codes agreed on and

the number of codes disagreed on were added and then divided by the number of agreed codes to get a percentage. Interrater reliability (percent agreement) ranged from 63% to 96%, across the three factors and the two new codes, self-blame and negative affect (see Appendix G for individual reliability percentages for all categories and each variable).

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Correlation between Child-Reported Conflict Intensity and All Four Adjustment Variables

To examine hypothesis 1, Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to assess the relationship between child-reported interparental conflict intensity and the four adjustment variables (i.e., conduct disorder, depression, anxiety, and total adjustment). Using the Bonferroni approach to control for type one error across the six correlations, a p value of less than .005 ($.05 / 10 = .005$) was required for significance. The results of the correlation analyses presented in Table 1 show that none of the correlations reached a level of significance.

Table 1: Correlations between Child-Reported Conflict Intensity and All Four Child Adjustment Outcome Variables

Outcome Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Child-Reported Conflict Intensity
Conduct Disorder	2.876	1.255	0.21
Depression	3.142	1.023	0.03
Anxiety	3.455	1.073	-0.05
Total Adjustment	3.140	0.973	0.09

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Correlation between Parent-Reported Conflict Intensity and All Four Adjustment Variables

To examine hypothesis 2, Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to assess the relationship between parent-reported interparental conflict intensity and the four child adjustment variables, conduct disorder, depression, anxiety, and total adjustment. Using the Bonferroni approach to control for type one error across the six correlations, a p value of less than .005 ($.05 / 10 = .005$) was required for significance. The results of the correlation analyses presented in Table 2 show that parental report of interparental conflict intensity was positively correlated with conduct disorder ($r = .30, p < .05$).

Table 2: Correlations between Parent-Reported Conflict Intensity and All Four Child Adjustment Variables

Outcome Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Parent-Reported Conflict Intensity
Conduct Disorder	2.876	1.255	0.30*
Depression	3.142	1.023	0.15
Anxiety	3.455	1.073	0.14
Total Adjustment	3.140	0.973	0.23

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Correlation between Child-Reported Appraisals and All Four Adjustment Variables

To examine hypothesis 3, Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to assess the relationship between child-reported appraisals of threat in response to interparental conflict intensity and the four child adjustment variables. Using the Bonferroni approach to control for type I error across the eleven correlations, a p value of less than .005 ($.05 / 10 = .005$) was required for significance. The results of the

correlation analyses presented in Table 3 show that Harm to Others was positively correlated with Anxiety ($r = .36, p < .05$). Negative Evaluation by Others was positively correlated with Depression ($r = .35, p < .05$) and Total Adjustment ($r = .328, p < .05$). Criticism of Others was positively correlated with Conduct Disorder ($r = .39, p < .01$), Depression ($r = .31, p < .05$), Anxiety ($r = .47, p < .01$), and Total Adjustment ($r = .44, p < .01$). Negative Self Evaluation was positively correlated with Anxiety ($r = .35, p < .05$) and Total Adjustment ($r = .31, p < .05$). And, the Total of all Appraisal Items was positively correlated with Conduct Disorder ($r = .35, p < .05$), Depression ($r = .32, p < .05$), Anxiety ($r = .439, p < .01$), and Total Adjustment ($r = .41, p < .01$).

Table 3: Correlation between Child-Reported Appraisals of Threat and All Four Child Adjustment Variables

Threat Appraisals	Mean	Standard Deviation	Outcome Variables			
			Conduct Disorder	Depression	Anxiety	Total Adjustment
Harm to Others	2.950	0.764	0.25	0.05	0.36*	0.24
Rejection	1.770	0.790	0.18	0.28	0.24	0.26
Negative Evaluation by Others	1.880	0.760	0.23	0.35*	0.28	0.33*
Criticism by Others	2.280	0.694	0.39**	0.31*	0.47**	0.44**
Negative Self-Evaluation	2.180	0.879	0.22	0.27	0.35*	0.31*
Loss of Desired Object	2.560	0.793	0.21	0.11	0.12	0.17

Total	2.270	0.533	0.35*	0.33*	0.43**	0.41**
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* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Mediational Analyses

In the final analyses, hypotheses four and five, stating that children’s appraisals would mediate the link between conflict intensity and child outcomes, were examined. Mediation was analyzed using the bootstrapping method, which utilizes a hypothetical distribution of indirect effects using the data set being analyzed. This method has been shown to more accurately interpret data with small population sizes as it does not impose a normal distribution and allows for a more accurate distribution of an individual data set by obtaining a sample of the n that is representative of the smaller population being analyzed (Hayes, 2009). This method uses a resampling method, where the population “is repeatedly resampled during analysis as a means of mimicking the original sampling process” (Hayes, 2009, pg. 7). This is done with replacement, allowing for a new sample of n to be built from the original sample, while also allowing for individual cases that have been drawn to be thrown back and redrawn as the new sample is constructed. The estimates for path a (the link between interparental conflict and threat appraisals) and path b (the link between threat appraisals and adjustment) are then estimated with the resampled data and the product of path coefficients is generated. This process is repeated for a set number of times (typically at least 5000), which generates the same number (5000) of indirect effects. The resulting distribution will then function as an empirical approximation of a sampling distribution of the data’s sample n . An inference is then made regarding the size of the effect in this population using the same number (5000) of estimates to generate a confidence interval, which is accomplished by sorting the 5000

values from smallest to largest. This produces an ordered set, wherein lower bound of the confidence interval is defined as is the upper bound of the confidence interval, yielding a percentile-based bootstrap confidence interval. If the number zero is not between the lower and upper bound, the indirect effect can be described as zero, which is conceptually the same as rejecting the null hypothesis.

Hayes (2009) states that the bootstrapping method is more powerful than traditional methods of assessing mediation, such as the Sobel test and the causal steps approach, arguing that older methods impose assumptions about the shape of the sampling distribution of the indirect effect. He notes that bootstrapping uses an estimate of the indirect effect itself and does not require a standard error of the direct effect (where estimating the standard error of the effect was a weakness of previous methods). Previous research has demonstrated that the sampling distribution of path ab tends to be asymmetrical, with nonzero skewness and kurtosis (Bollen & Stine, 1990; Stone & Sobel, 1990). Hayes (2009) argues that tests assuming normality of the distribution should not be used when others are available that do not make this assumption. Hayes (2009) notes that current research using this method will sometimes do so as a supplement (similar to the Sobel test), which he states is not necessary and adds that bootstrapping is an acceptable stand-alone method.

Mediation was evaluated by estimating confidence intervals around the indirect effects, with regression-based path analysis (Preacher & Hayes, 2004) and nonparametric resampling (bootstrapping with correction; Preacher & Hayes, 2004). This procedure yields a path model that directly estimates the significance of indirect effects appropriately for smaller sample sizes (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). The paths that were

established for this study are as follows: *a*: the direct path from child appraisals of threat as measured by open-ended interview questions with the child to child outcomes (adjustment as measured by the parent questionnaire) ; *b*: the direct path between child appraisals of threat (as measured by open-ended interview questions with the child) and child outcomes (adjustment as measured by the parent questionnaire); and *c'*: the direct effect of interparental conflict intensity (as measured by both the parent and the child) on child outcome (adjustment as measured by parent questionnaire) after controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of threat (as measured by open-ended interview questions with the child). The estimated models for each of the adjustment outcomes are presented in figures 1 through 8. All correlations among the mediators were estimated and reported. Mediation effects are addressed below with regard to each of the four adjustment outcomes, and with each of the predictors. For all mediation analyses, the 95% confidence interval for the indirect effect of conflict intensity (*ab*) on each of the four adjustment variables was calculated using a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 samples to estimate the standard error of the indirect effect. There were a total of 56 mediation analyses run: 28 with child-report of interparental conflict and 28 with parent-report of interparental conflict.

Child-reported intensity.

Child-reported intensity with total adjustment. The first mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals of harm to others from child-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating total adjustment from both child-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of harm to others. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's appraisals of

harm to others were not significantly positively related to total adjustment ($a = -0.02, p = .92$). Contrary to hypothesis 4, child appraisals of harm to others did not significantly predict total adjustment while controlling for child-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.30, p = 0.24$). The direct effect of child-reported conflict intensity on total adjustment as adjusted by child appraisals of harm to others was not statistically significant ($c' = 0.12, p = 0.24$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.10 to 0.07).

The second mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals of rejection from child-reported conflict intensity, as well as estimating total adjustment from both child-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of rejection. Contrary to hypothesis 4, child appraisals of rejection were not significantly positively related to total adjustment ($a = 0.27, p = .09$). Contrary to hypothesis 4, child appraisals of rejection did not predict total adjustment while controlling for child-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.31, p = 0.20$). The direct effect of child-reported conflict intensity on total adjustment controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of rejection was not statistically significant ($c' = 0.03, p = 0.20$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.01 to 0.30).

The third mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals of negative evaluations by others from child-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating total adjustment from both child-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of

negative evaluations by others. Supporting hypothesis 3, children's appraisals of negative evaluation by others were marginally positively related to total adjustment ($a = 0.28, p = .06$). Contrary to hypothesis 4, child appraisals of negative evaluation of others did not significantly predict total adjustment while controlling for child-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.42, p = 0.08$). The direct effect of child-reported conflict intensity on total adjustment as adjusted by child appraisals was marginally significant ($c' = -0.01, p = 0.08$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. However, there was support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' did not contain zero (0.02 to 0.38).

The fourth mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals of criticism of others from child-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating total adjustment from both child-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of criticism of others. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's appraisals of criticism of others were not positively related to total adjustment ($a = 0.06, p = .62$). Supporting hypothesis 4, child appraisals of criticism of others did predict total adjustment while controlling for child-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.66, p = 0.01$). The direct effect of child-reported conflict intensity on total adjustment controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of criticism of others was statistically significant ($c' = 0.07, p = 0.01$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.06 to 0.23).

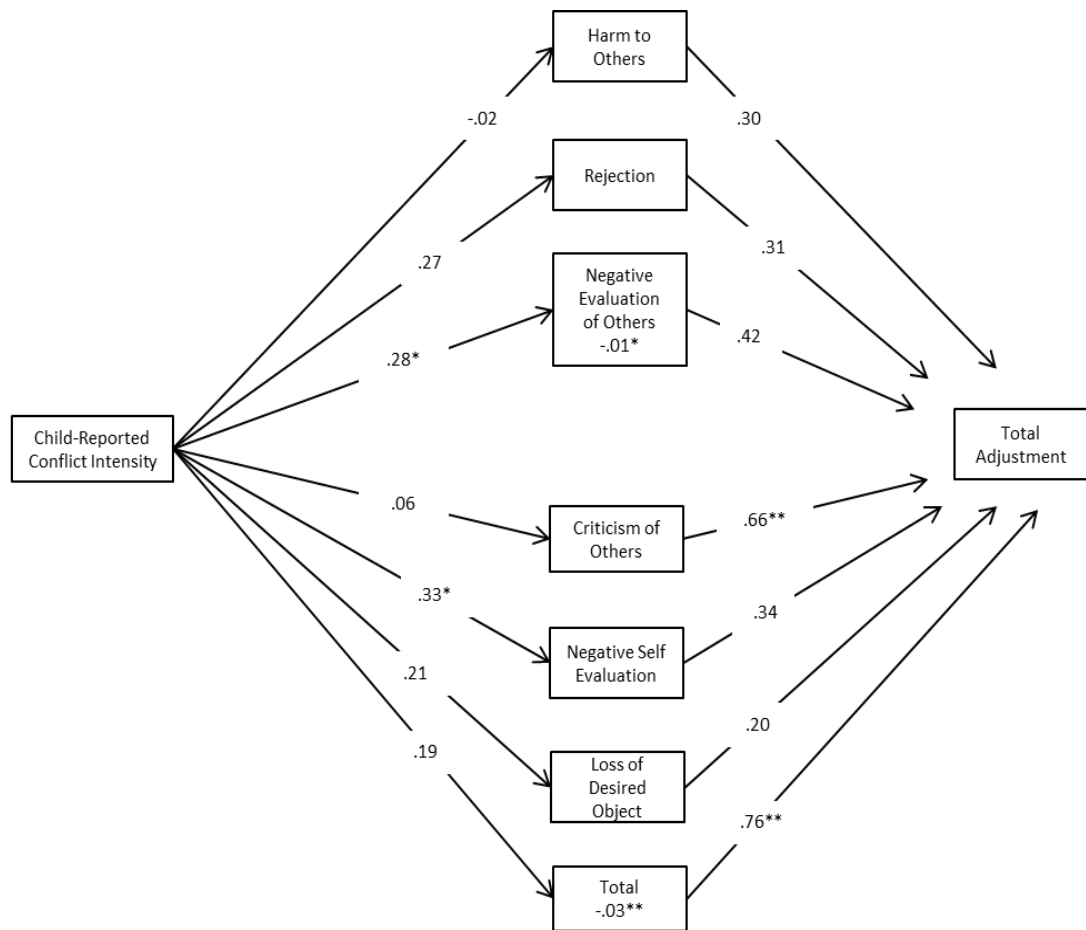
The fifth mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals of negative self-evaluation from child-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating total adjustment from both child-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of negative self-evaluation. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's appraisals of negative self-evaluation were not positively related to total adjustment ($a = 0.32, p = .06$). Contrary to hypothesis 4, child appraisals of negative self-evaluation did not predict total adjustment while controlling for child-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.340, p = 0.11$). The direct effect of child-reported conflict intensity on total adjustment controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of negative self-evaluation was not statistically significant ($c' = 0.00, p = 0.11$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.01 to 0.40).

The sixth mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals loss of desired object from child-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating total adjustment from both child-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of loss of desired object. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's appraisals of loss of desired object were not positively related to total adjustment ($a = 0.21, p = .17$). Contrary to hypothesis 4, child appraisals of loss of desired object did not predict total adjustment while controlling for child-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.20, p = 0.50$). The direct effect of child-reported conflict intensity on total adjustment controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of loss of desired object was not statistically significant ($c' = 0.07, p = 0.50$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment

while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.01 to 0.20).

The seventh mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child total appraisals from child-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating total adjustment from both child-reported conflict intensity and child total appraisals. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's total appraisals were not positively related to total adjustment ($a = 0.19, p = .07$). Supporting hypothesis 4, child total appraisals did predict total adjustment while controlling for child-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.76, p = 0.02$). The direct effect of child-reported conflict intensity on total adjustment controlling for the mediational pathway involving child total appraisals was statistically significant ($c' = -0.03, p = 0.02$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (0.03 to 0.40).

Figure 1: Direct paths from Child-Reported Conflict intensity to each Mediator Variable and Indirect Paths from each Mediator Variable to Total Adjustment while Controlling for Child-Reported Conflict Intensity.



Note: 1) Estimates are completely standardized; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.
 2) Only statistically significant mediation indicated within the mediation variable box.

Child-reported intensity with conduct disorder symptoms. The eighth mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals of harm to others from child-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating conduct disorder symptoms from both child-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of harm to others. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children’s appraisals of harm to others were not positively related to conduct disorder symptoms ($a = -0.02, p = .92$). Contrary to hypothesis 4, child appraisals of harm to others did not predict conduct disorder symptoms while controlling for child-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.41, p = 0.08$). The direct effect of child-

reported conflict intensity on conduct disorder symptoms controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of harm to others was not statistically significant ($c' = 0.35, p = 0.08$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.14 to 0.09).

The ninth mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals of rejection from child-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating conduct disorder symptoms from both child-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of rejection. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's appraisals of rejection were not positively related to conduct disorder symptoms ($a = 0.27, p = .09$). Contrary to hypothesis 4, child appraisals of rejection did not predict conduct disorder symptoms while controlling for child-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.21, p = 0.26$). The direct effect of child-reported conflict intensity on conduct disorder symptoms controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of rejection was not statistically significant ($c' = 0.28, p = 0.26$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.06 to 0.31).

The tenth mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals of negative evaluation by others from child-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating conduct disorder symptoms from both child-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of negative evaluation by others. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's appraisals of negative evaluation by others were positively related to conduct disorder

symptoms ($a = 0.28, p = .06$). Contrary to hypothesis 4, child appraisals of negative evaluation by others did not predict conduct disorder symptoms while controlling for child-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.31, p = 0.18$). The direct effect of child-reported conflict intensity on conduct disorder symptoms controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of negative evaluation by others was not statistically significant ($c' = 0.25, p = 0.18$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.02 to 0.36).

The eleventh mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals of criticism of others from child-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating conduct disorder symptoms from both child-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of criticism of others. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's appraisals of criticism of others were not positively related to conduct disorder symptoms ($a = 0.06, p = .62$). Supporting hypothesis 4, child appraisals of criticism of others did predict conduct disorder symptoms while controlling for child-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.74, p = 0.01$). The direct effect of child-reported conflict intensity on conduct disorder symptoms controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of criticism of others was statistically significant ($c' = 0.29, p = 0.01$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.07 to 0.26).

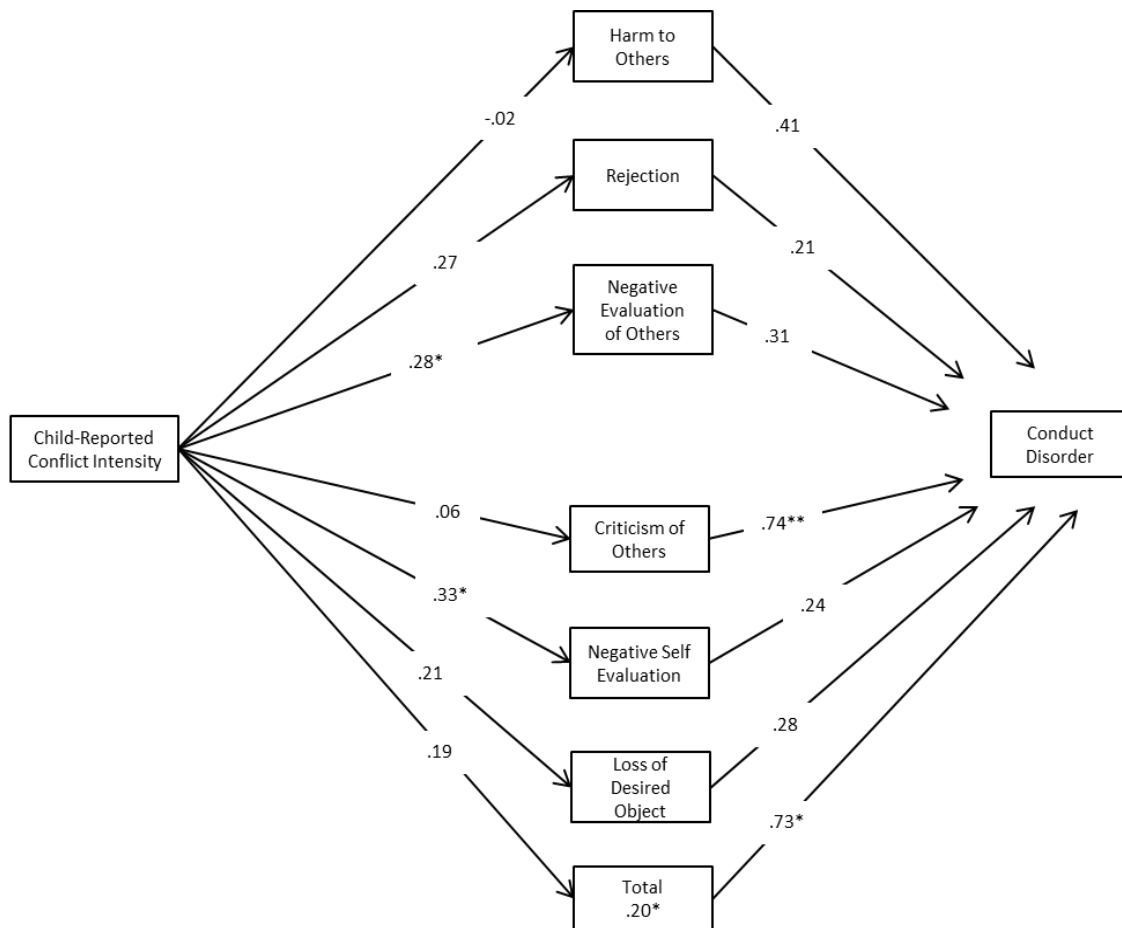
The twelfth mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals of negative self-evaluation from child-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating

conduct disorder symptoms from both child-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of negative self-evaluation. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's appraisals of negative self-evaluation were not positively related to conduct disorder symptoms ($a = 0.33, p = .06$). Contrary to hypothesis 4, child appraisals of negative self-evaluation did not predict conduct disorder symptoms while controlling for child-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.24, p = 0.20$). The direct effect of child-reported conflict intensity on conduct disorder symptoms controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of negative self-evaluation was not statistically significant ($c' = 0.26, p = 0.20$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.03 to 0.41).

The thirteenth mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals of loss of desired object from child-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating conduct disorder symptoms from both child-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of loss of desired object. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's appraisals of loss of desired object were not positively related to conduct disorder symptoms ($a = 0.21, p = .17$). Contrary to hypothesis 4, child appraisals of loss of desired object did not predict conduct disorder symptoms while controlling for child-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.28, p = 0.19$). The direct effect of child-reported conflict intensity on conduct disorder symptoms controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of loss of desired object was not statistically significant ($c' = 0.28, p = 0.19$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.02 to 0.28).

The fourteenth mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child total appraisals from child-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating conduct disorder symptoms from both child-reported conflict intensity and child total appraisals. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's total appraisals were not positively related to conduct disorder symptoms ($a = 0.19, p = .07$). Supporting hypothesis 4, child total appraisals did predict conduct disorder symptoms while controlling for child-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.73, p = 0.04$). The direct effect of child-reported conflict intensity on conduct disorder symptoms controlling for the mediational pathway involving child total appraisals was statistically significant ($c' = 0.20, p = 0.04$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' did not contain zero (0.01 to 0.45).

Figure 2: Direct paths from Child-Reported Conflict intensity to each Mediator Variable and Indirect Paths from each Mediator Variable to Conduct Disorder while Controlling for Child-Reported Conflict Intensity



Note: 1) Estimates are completely standardized; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.
 2) Only statistically significant mediation indicated within the mediation variable box.

Child-reported intensity with depression symptoms. The fifteenth mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals of harm to others from child-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating depression symptoms from both child-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of harm to others. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children’s appraisals of harm to others were not positively related to depression ($a = -0.01, p = .92$). Contrary to hypothesis 4, child appraisals of harm to others did not predict depression symptoms while controlling for child-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.06, p = 0.93$). The direct effect of child-reported conflict intensity on depression symptoms

controlling for the mediational pathway involving harm to others was not statistically significant ($c' = 0.05, p = 0.93$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.08 to 0.04).

The sixteenth mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals of rejection from child-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating depression symptoms from both child-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of rejection. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's appraisals of rejection were not positively related to depression symptoms ($a = 0.27, p = .09$). Contrary to hypothesis 4, child appraisals of rejection did not predict depression symptoms while controlling for child-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.37, p = 0.16$). The direct effect of child-reported conflict intensity on depression symptoms controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of rejection was not statistically significant ($c' = -0.05, p = 0.16$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.01 to 0.34).

The seventeenth mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals of negative evaluations by others from child-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating depression symptoms from both child-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of negative evaluations by others. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's appraisals of negative evaluation by others were not positively related to depression symptoms ($a = 0.28, p = .06$). Supporting hypothesis 4, child appraisals of negative

evaluation by others did predict depression symptoms while controlling for child-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.49, p = 0.05$). The direct effect of child-reported conflict intensity on depression symptoms controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of negative evaluation by others was statistically significant ($c' = -0.09, p = 0.05$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals . There was support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' did not contain zero (0.02 to 0.46).

The eighteenth mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals of criticism of others from child-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating depression symptoms from both child-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of criticism of others. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's appraisals of criticism of others were not positively related to depression symptoms ($a = 0.06, p = .62$). Contrary to hypothesis 4, child appraisals of criticism of others did not predict depression symptoms while controlling for child-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.49, p = 0.11$). The direct effect of child-reported conflict intensity on depression symptoms controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of criticism of others was not statistically significant ($c' = 0.02, p = 0.11$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.04 to 0.20).

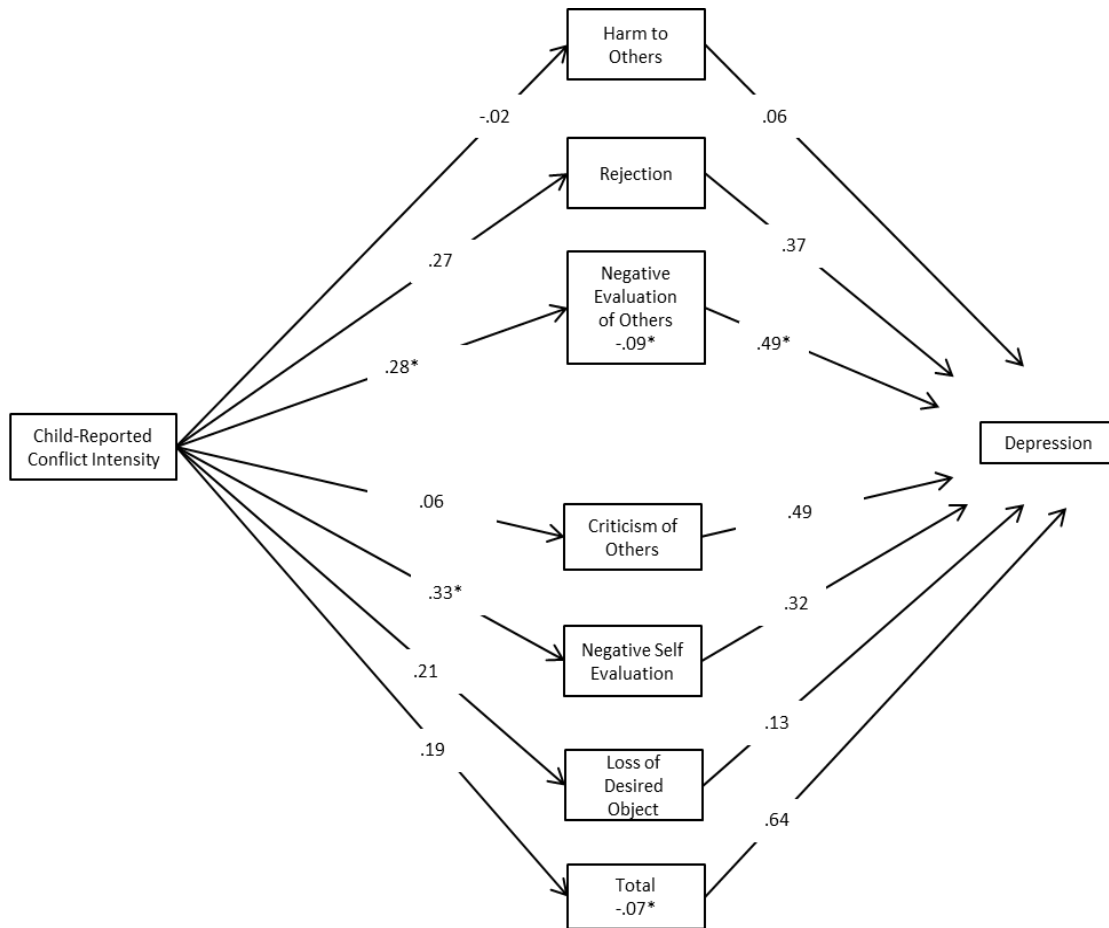
The nineteenth mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals of negative self-evaluation from child-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating depression symptoms from both child-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of

negative self-evaluation. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's appraisals of negative self-evaluation were not positively related to depression symptoms ($a = 0.32, p = .06$). Contrary to hypothesis 4, child appraisals of negative self-evaluation did not predict depression symptoms while controlling for child-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.32, p = 0.18$). The direct effect of child-reported conflict intensity on depression symptoms controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of negative self-evaluation was not statistically significant ($c' = 0.06, p = 0.18$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.02 to 0.38).

The twentieth mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals loss of desired object from child-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating depression Symptoms from both child-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of loss of desired object. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's appraisals of loss of desired object were not positively related to depression symptoms ($a = 0.21, p = .17$). Contrary to hypothesis 4, child appraisals of loss of desired object did not predict depression symptoms while controlling for child-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.13, p = 0.78$). The direct effect of child-reported conflict intensity on depression symptoms controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of loss of desired object was not statistically significant ($c' = 0.02, p = 0.78$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.03 to 0.19).

The twenty-first mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child total appraisals from child-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating depression symptoms from both child-reported conflict intensity and child total appraisals. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's total appraisals were not positively related to depression ($a = 0.19, p = .07$). Contrary to hypothesis 4, child total appraisals did not predict depression symptoms while controlling for child-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.64, p = 0.08$). The direct effect of child-reported conflict intensity on depression symptoms controlling for the mediational pathway involving child total appraisals was statistically not significant ($c' = -0.07, p = 0.08$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' did not contain zero (0.01 to 0.37).

Figure 3: Direct paths from Child-Reported Conflict intensity to each Mediator Variable and Indirect Paths from each Mediator Variable to Depression while Controlling for Child-Reported Conflict Intensity



Note: 1) Estimates are completely standardized; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.
 2) Only statistically significant mediation indicated within the mediation variable box.

Child-reported intensity with anxiety. The twenty-second mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals of harm to others from child-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating anxiety symptoms from both child-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of harm to others. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children’s appraisals of harm to others were not positively related to anxiety symptoms ($a = -0.02, p = .92$). Supporting hypothesis 4, child appraisals of harm to others did predict anxiety symptoms while controlling for child-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.49, p = 0.05$). The direct effect of child-reported conflict intensity on anxiety symptoms controlling for the

mediational pathway involving child appraisals of harm to others was statistically significant ($c' = -0.06, p = 0.05$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.14 to 0.11).

The twenty-third mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals of rejection from child-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating anxiety symptoms from both child-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of rejection. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's appraisals of rejection were not positively related to anxiety symptoms ($a = 0.27, p = .09$). Contrary to hypothesis 4, child appraisals of rejection did not predict anxiety symptoms while controlling for child-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.36, p = 0.20$). The direct effect of child-reported conflict intensity on anxiety symptoms controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of rejection was not statistically significant ($c' = -0.17, p = 0.20$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' did not contain zero (0.00 to 0.30).

The twenty-fourth mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals of negative evaluations by others from child-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating anxiety symptoms from both child-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of negative evaluations by others. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's appraisals of negative evaluation by others were not positively related to anxiety symptoms ($a = 0.284, p = .06$). Contrary to hypothesis 4, child appraisals of negative evaluation by others did not predict anxiety symptoms while controlling for child-

reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.44, p = 0.11$). The direct effect of child-reported conflict intensity on anxiety symptoms controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of negative evaluation by others was not statistically significant ($c' = -0.20, p = 0.11$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' did not contain zero (0.02 to 0.40).

The twenty-fifth mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals of criticism of others from child-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating anxiety symptoms from both child-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of criticism of others. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's appraisals of criticism of others were not positively related to anxiety symptoms ($a = 0.06, p = .62$). Supporting hypothesis 4, child appraisals of criticism of others did predict anxiety symptoms while controlling for child-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.80, p = 0.00$). The direct effect of child-reported conflict intensity on anxiety symptoms controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of criticism of others was statistically significant ($c' = -0.12, p = 0.00$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.08 to 0.26).

The twenty-sixth mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals of negative self-evaluation from child-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating anxiety symptoms from both child-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of negative self-evaluation. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's appraisals of negative self-

evaluation were not positively related to anxiety symptoms ($a = 0.32, p = .06$).

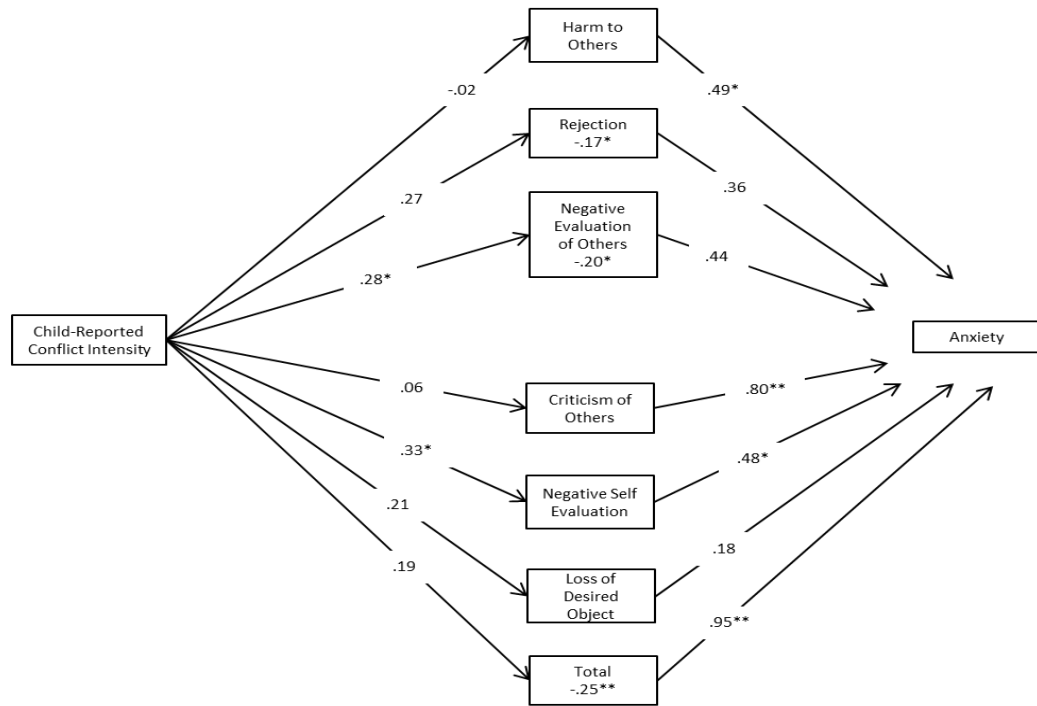
Supporting hypothesis 4, child appraisals of negative self-evaluation did predict anxiety symptoms while controlling for child-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.50, p = 0.03$). The direct effect of child-reported conflict intensity on anxiety symptoms controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of negative self-evaluation was statistically significant ($c' = -0.23, p = 0.03$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals . There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.01 to 0.44).

The twenty-seventh mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals loss of desired object from child-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating anxiety symptoms from both child-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of loss of desired object. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's appraisals of loss of desired object were not positively related to anxiety symptoms ($a = 0.21, p = .17$). Contrary to hypothesis 4, child appraisals of loss of desired object did not predict anxiety symptoms while controlling for child-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.18, p = 0.65$). The direct effect of child-reported conflict intensity on anxiety symptoms controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of loss of desired object was not statistically significant ($c' = -0.11, p = 0.65$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.03 to 0.22).

The twenty-eighth mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child total appraisals from child-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating anxiety symptoms

from both child-reported conflict intensity and child total appraisals. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's total appraisals were not positively related to anxiety symptoms ($a = 0.19, p = .07$). Supporting hypothesis 4, child total appraisals did predict anxiety symptoms while controlling for child-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.95, p = 0.01$). The direct effect of child-reported conflict intensity on anxiety symptoms controlling for the mediational pathway involving child total appraisals was statistically significant ($c' = -0.25, p = 0.01$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' did not contain zero (0.04 to 0.44).

Figure 4: Direct paths from Child-Reported Conflict intensity to each Mediator Variable and Indirect Paths from each Mediator Variable to Anxiety while Controlling for Child-Reported Conflict Intensity



Note: 1) Estimates are completely standardized; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.
 2) Only statistically significant mediation indicated within the mediation variable box.

Parent-Reported Intensity.

Parent-reported intensity with total adjustment. The twenty-ninth mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals of harm to others from parent-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating total adjustment from both parent-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of harm to others. Supporting hypothesis 4, children's appraisals of harm to others were positively related to total adjustment ($a = 0.34, p = .01$). Contrary to hypothesis 5, child appraisals of harm to others did not predict total adjustment while controlling for parent-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.22, p = 0.16$). The direct effect of parent-reported conflict intensity on total adjustment after controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of harm to others was

not statistically significant ($c' = 0.19, p = 0.16$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.04 to 0.24).

The thirtieth mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals of rejection from parent-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating total adjustment from both parent-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of rejection. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's appraisals of rejection were not positively related to total adjustment ($a = 0.19, p = .17$). Contrary to hypothesis 5, child appraisals of rejection did not predict total adjustment while controlling for parent-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.27, p = 0.09$). The direct effect of parent-reported conflict intensity on total adjustment controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of rejection was not statistically significant ($c' = 0.21, p = 0.09$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.02 to 0.25).

The thirty-first mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals of negative evaluations by others from parent-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating total adjustment from both parent-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of negative evaluations by others. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's appraisals of negative evaluation by others were not positively related to total adjustment ($a = 0.12, p = .38$). Supporting hypothesis 5, child appraisals of negative evaluation by others did predict total adjustment while controlling for parent-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.38, p = 0.03$). The direct effect of parent-reported conflict intensity on total adjustment

controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of negative evaluation by others was statistically significant ($c' = -0.22, p = 0.03$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.05 to 0.17).

The thirty-second mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals of criticism of others from parent-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating total adjustment from both parent-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of criticism of others. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's appraisals of criticism of others were not positively related to total adjustment ($a = -0.01, p = .94$). Supporting hypothesis 5, child appraisals of criticism of others did predict total adjustment while controlling for parent-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.67, p = 0.00$). The direct effect of parent-reported conflict intensity on total adjustment controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of criticism of others was statistically significant ($c' = 0.27, p = 0.00$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.14 to 0.13).

The thirty-third mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals of negative self-evaluation from parent-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating total adjustment from both parent-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of negative self-evaluation. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's appraisals of negative self-evaluation were not positively related to total adjustment ($a = 0.07, p = .66$). Supporting

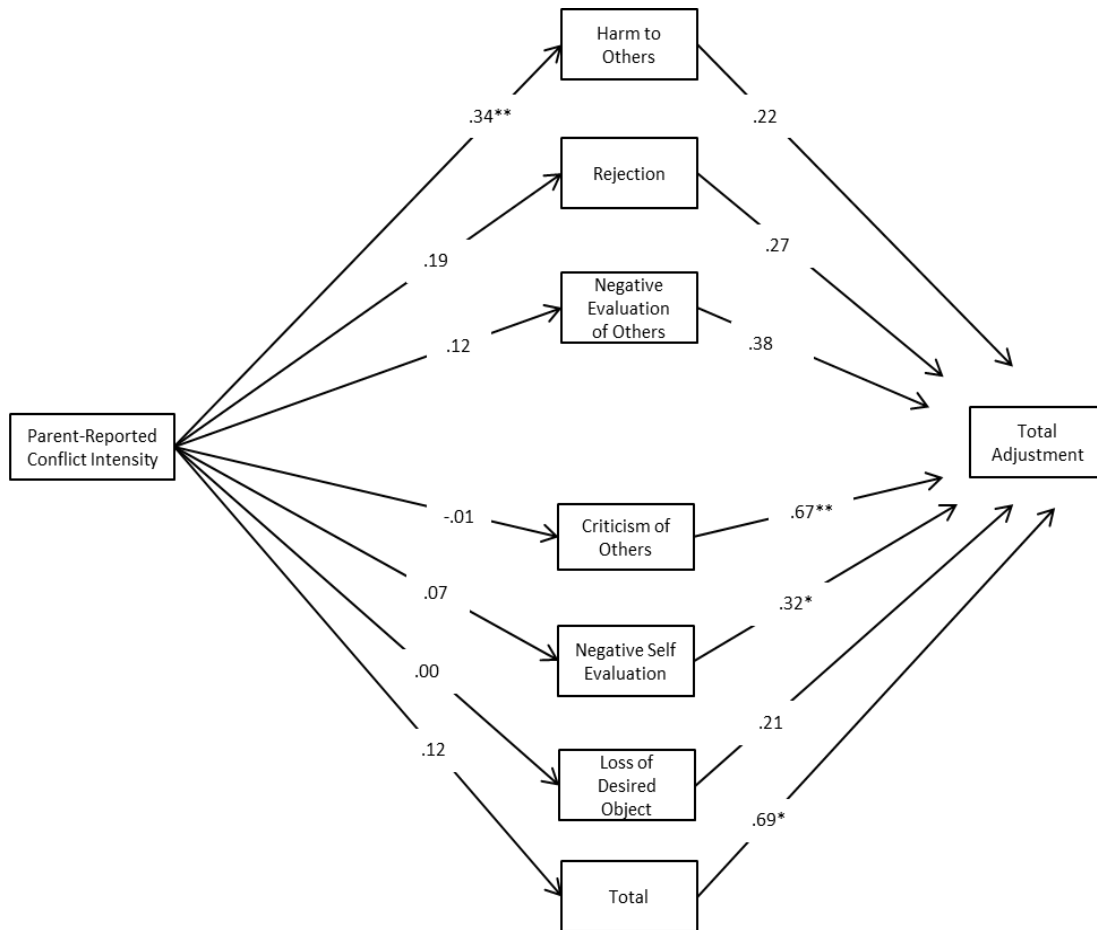
hypothesis 5, child appraisals of negative self-evaluation did predict total adjustment while controlling for parent-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.33, p = 0.04$). The direct effect of parent-reported conflict intensity on total adjustment controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of negative self-evaluation was statistically significant ($c' = 0.24, p = 0.04$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.08 to 0.18).

The thirty-fourth mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals loss of desired object from parent-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating total adjustment from both parent-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of loss of desired object. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's appraisals of loss of desired object were not positively related to total adjustment ($a = 0.00, p = .99$). Contrary to hypothesis 5, child appraisals of loss of desired object did not predict total adjustment while controlling for parent-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.21, p = 0.15$). The direct effect of parent-reported conflict intensity on total adjustment controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of loss of desired object was not statistically significant ($c' = 0.27, p = 0.15$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.07 to 0.07).

The thirty-fifth mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child total appraisals from parent-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating total adjustment from both parent-reported conflict intensity and child total appraisals. Contrary to

hypothesis 4, children's total appraisals were not positively related to total adjustment ($a = 0.12, p = .21$). Supporting hypothesis 5, child total appraisals did predict total adjustment while controlling for parent-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.69, p = 0.01$). The direct effect of parent-reported conflict intensity on total adjustment controlling for the mediational pathway involving child total appraisals was statistically significant ($c' = -0.18, p = 0.01$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.02 to 0.26).

Figure 5: Direct paths from Parent-Reported Conflict intensity to each Mediator Variable and Indirect Paths from each Mediator Variable to Total Adjustment while Controlling for Child-Reported Conflict Intensity



Note: 1) Estimates are completely standardized; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.
 2) Only statistically significant mediation indicated within the mediation variable box.

Parent-reported intensity with conduct disorder symptoms. The thirty-sixth mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals of harm to others from parent-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating conduct disorder symptoms from both parent-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of harm to others. Supporting hypothesis 4, children’s appraisals of harm to others were positively related to conduct disorder symptoms ($a = 0.34, p = .01$). Contrary to hypothesis 5, child appraisals of harm to others did not predict conduct disorder symptoms while controlling for parent-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.26, p = 0.07$). The direct effect of parent-reported conflict

intensity on conduct disorder symptoms controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of harm to others was not statistically significant ($c' = 0.35, p = 0.07$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.05 to 0.28).

The thirty-seventh mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals of rejection from parent-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating conduct disorder symptoms from both parent-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of rejection. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's appraisals of rejection were not positively related to conduct disorder symptoms ($a = 0.19, p = .17$). Contrary to hypothesis 5, child appraisals of rejection did not predict conduct disorder symptoms while controlling for parent-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.19, p = 0.09$). The direct effect of parent-reported conflict intensity on conduct disorder symptoms controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of rejection was not statistically significant ($c' = 0.41, p = 0.09$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.05 to 0.26).

The thirty-eighth mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals of negative evaluation by others from parent-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating conduct disorder symptoms from both parent-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of negative evaluation by others. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's appraisals of negative evaluation by others were not positively related to conduct disorder

symptoms ($a = 0.122, p = .38$). Supporting hypothesis 5, child appraisals of negative evaluation by others did predict conduct disorder symptoms while controlling for parent-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.32, p = 0.05$). The direct effect of parent-reported conflict intensity on conduct disorder symptoms controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of negative evaluation by others was statistically significant ($c' = 0.40, p = 0.05$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.04 to 0.20).

The thirty-ninth mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals of criticism of others from parent-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating conduct disorder symptoms from both parent-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of criticism of others. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's appraisals of criticism of others were not positively related to conduct disorder symptoms ($a = -0.01, p = .94$). Supporting hypothesis 5, child appraisals of criticism of others did predict conduct disorder symptoms while controlling for parent-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.78, p = 0.00$). The direct effect of parent-reported conflict intensity on conduct disorder symptoms controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of criticism of others was statistically significant ($c' = 0.45, p = 0.00$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.15 to 0.16).

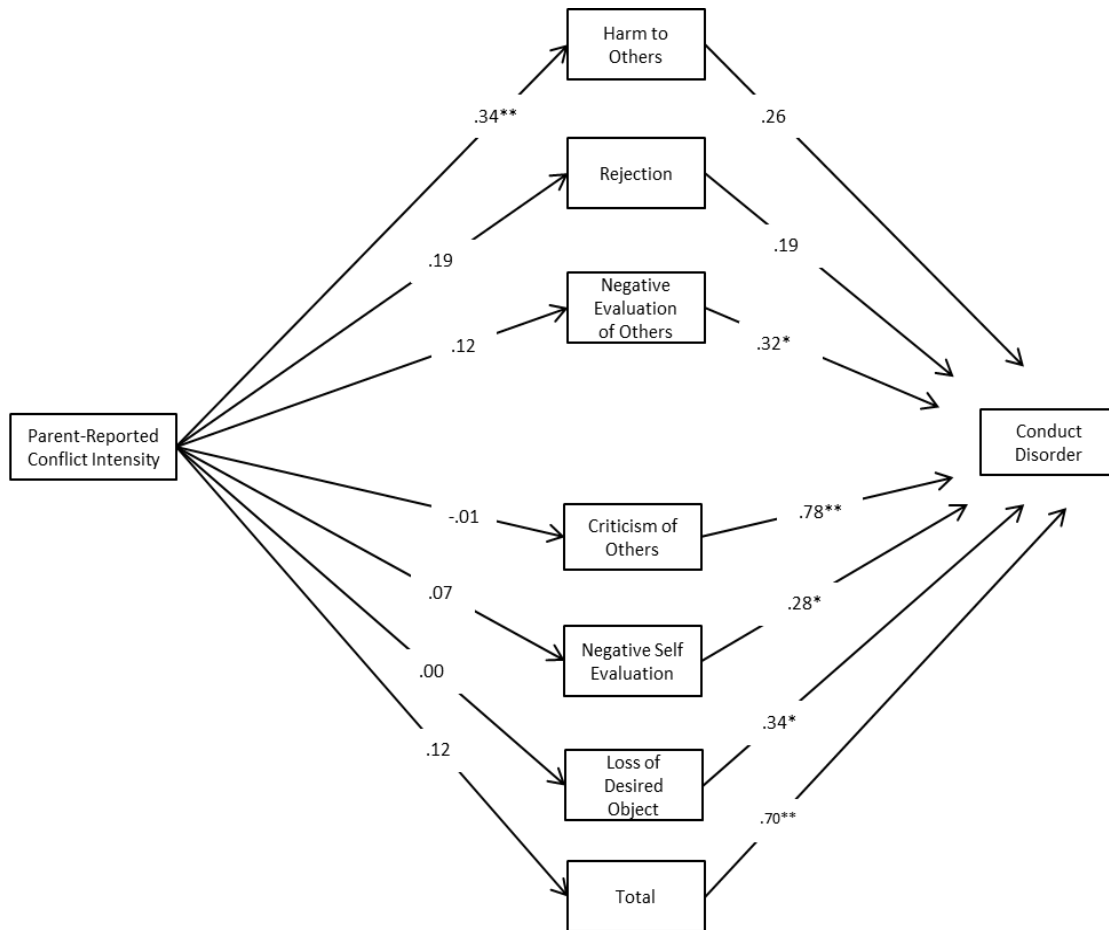
The fortieth mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals of negative self-evaluation from parent-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating conduct disorder symptoms from both parent-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of negative self-evaluation. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's appraisals of negative self-evaluation were not positively related to conduct disorder symptoms ($a = 0.07, p = .65$). Supporting hypothesis 5, child appraisals of negative self-evaluation did predict conduct disorder symptoms while controlling for parent-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.28, p = 0.05$). The direct effect of parent-reported conflict intensity on conduct disorder symptoms controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of negative self-evaluation was statistically significant ($c' = 0.42, p = 0.05$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.06 to 0.20).

The forty-first mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals of loss of desired object from parent-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating conduct disorder symptoms from both parent-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of loss of desired object. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's appraisals of loss of desired object were not positively related to conduct disorder symptoms ($a = 0.00, p = .99$). Supporting hypothesis 5, child appraisals of loss of desired object did predict conduct disorder symptoms while controlling for parent-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.34, p = 0.04$). The direct effect of parent-reported conflict intensity on conduct disorder symptoms controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of loss of desired object was statistically significant ($c' = 0.44, p = 0.04$), where c' is the change in

relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.11 to 0.11).

The forty-second mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child total appraisals from parent-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating conduct disorder symptoms from both parent-reported conflict intensity and child total appraisals. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's total appraisals were not positively related to conduct disorder symptoms ($a = 0.19, p = .21$). Supporting hypothesis 5, child total appraisals did predict conduct disorder symptoms while controlling for parent-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.70, p = 0.01$). The direct effect of parent-reported conflict intensity on conduct disorder symptoms controlling for the mediational pathway involving child total appraisals was statistically significant ($c' = 0.36, p = 0.01$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.03 to 0.30).

Figure 6: Direct paths from Parent-Reported Conflict intensity to each Mediator Variable and Indirect Paths from each Mediator Variable to Conduct Disorder while Controlling for Child-Reported Conflict Intensity



Note: 1) Estimates are completely standardized; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.
 2) Only statistically significant mediation indicated within the mediation variable box.

Parent-reported intensity with depression symptoms. The forty-third mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals of harm to others from parent-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating depression symptoms from both parent-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of harm to others. Supporting hypothesis 4, children’s appraisals of harm to others were positively related to depression ($a = 0.34$, $p = .01$). Contrary to hypothesis 5, child appraisals of harm to others did not predict depression symptoms while controlling for parent-reported conflict intensity ($b = -0.02$, $p = 0.60$). The direct effect of parent-reported conflict intensity on depression symptoms

controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of harm to others was not statistically significant ($c' = 0.19, p = 0.60$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.16 to 0.16).

The forty-fourth mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals of rejection from parent-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating depression symptoms from both parent-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of rejection. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's appraisals of rejection were not positively related to depression symptoms ($a = 0.19, p = .17$). Contrary to hypothesis 5, child appraisals of rejection did not predict depression symptoms while controlling for parent-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.33, p = 0.13$). The direct effect of parent-reported conflict intensity on depression symptoms controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of rejection was not statistically significant ($c' = 0.12, p = 0.13$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.02 to 0.31).

The forty-fifth mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals of negative evaluations by others from parent-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating depression symptoms from both parent-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of negative evaluations by others. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's appraisals of negative evaluation by others were not positively related to depression symptoms ($a = 0.12, p = .38$). Supporting hypothesis 5, child appraisals of negative

evaluation by others did predict depression symptoms while controlling for parent-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.45, p = 0.04$). The direct effect of parent-reported conflict intensity on depression symptoms controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of negative evaluation by others was statistically significant ($c' = 0.12, p = 0.04$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.05 to 0.20).

The forty-sixth mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals of criticism of others from parent-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating depression symptoms from both parent-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of criticism of others. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's appraisals of criticism of others were not positively related to depression symptoms ($a = -0.01, p = .94$). Contrary to hypothesis 5, child appraisals of criticism of others did not predict depression symptoms while controlling for parent-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.49, p = 0.06$). The direct effect of parent-reported conflict intensity on depression symptoms controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of criticism of others was not statistically significant ($c' = 0.19, p = 0.06$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.14 to 0.10).

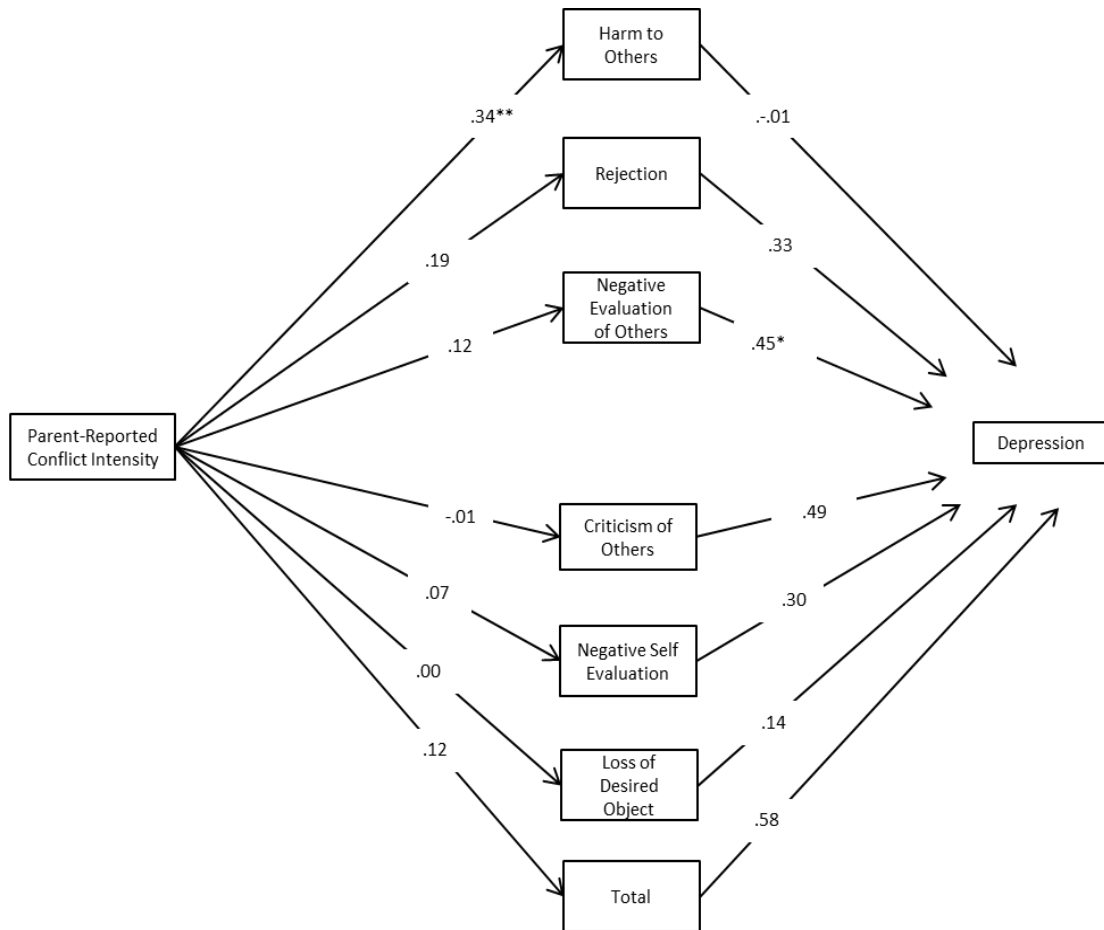
The forty-seventh mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals of negative self-evaluation from parent-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating depression symptoms from both parent-reported conflict intensity and child

appraisals of negative self-evaluation. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's appraisals of negative self-evaluation were not positively related to depression symptoms ($a = 0.07, p = .66$). Contrary to hypothesis 5, child appraisals of negative self-evaluation did not predict depression symptoms while controlling for parent-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.30, p = 0.13$). The direct effect of parent-reported conflict intensity on depression symptoms controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of negative self-evaluation was not statistically significant ($c' = 0.16, p = 0.13$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.08 to 0.18).

The forty-eighth mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals loss of desired object from parent-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating depression symptoms from both parent-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of loss of desired object. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's appraisals of loss of desired object were not positively related to depression symptoms ($a = 0.00, p = .99$). Contrary to hypothesis 5, child appraisals of loss of desired object did not predict depression symptoms while controlling for parent-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.14, p = 0.47$). The direct effect of parent-reported conflict intensity on depression symptoms controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of loss of desired object was not statistically significant ($c' = 0.18, p = 0.47$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.05 to 0.07).

The forty-ninth mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child total appraisals from parent-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating depression symptoms from both parent-reported conflict intensity and child total appraisals. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's total appraisals were not positively related to depression symptoms ($a = 0.12, p = .21$). Contrary to hypothesis 5, child total appraisals did not predict depression symptoms while controlling for parent-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.58, p = 0.07$). The direct effect of parent-reported conflict intensity on depression symptoms controlling for the mediational pathway involving child total appraisals was not statistically significant ($c' = 0.11, p = 0.07$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.01 to 0.27).

Figure 7: Direct paths from Parent-Reported Conflict intensity to each Mediator Variable and Indirect Paths from each Mediator Variable to Depression while Controlling for Child-Reported Conflict Intensity



Note: 1) Estimates are completely standardized; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.
 2) Only statistically significant mediation indicated within the mediation variable box.

Parent-reported intensity with anxiety symptoms. The fiftieth mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals of harm to others from parent-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating anxiety symptoms from both parent-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of harm to others. Supporting hypothesis 4, children’s appraisals of harm to others were positively related to anxiety symptoms ($a = 0.34, p = .01$). Supporting hypothesis 5, child appraisals of harm to others did predict anxiety symptoms while controlling for parent-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.49, p = 0.05$). The direct effect of parent-reported conflict intensity on anxiety symptoms

controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of harm to others was statistically significant ($c' = 0.01, p = 0.05$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' did not contain zero (0.03 to 0.41).

The fifty-first mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals of rejection from parent-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating anxiety symptoms from both parent-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of rejection. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's appraisals of rejection were not positively related to anxiety symptoms ($a = 0.19, p = .17$). Contrary to hypothesis 5, child appraisals of rejection did not predict anxiety symptoms while controlling for parent-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.29, p = 0.23$). The direct effect of parent-reported conflict intensity on anxiety symptoms controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of rejection was not statistically significant ($c' = 0.12, p = 0.23$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.03 to 0.27).

The fifty-second mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals of negative evaluations by others from parent-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating anxiety symptoms from both parent-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of negative evaluations by others. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's appraisals of negative evaluation by others were not positively related to anxiety symptoms ($a = 0.12, p = .38$). Contrary to hypothesis 5, child appraisals of negative

evaluation by others did not predict anxiety symptoms while controlling for parent-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.37, p = 0.13$). The direct effect of parent-reported conflict intensity on anxiety symptoms controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of negative evaluation by others was not statistically significant ($c' = 0.13, p = 0.13$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.03 to 0.21).

The fifty-third mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals of criticism of others from parent-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating anxiety symptoms from both parent-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of criticism of others. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's appraisals of criticism of others were not positively related to anxiety symptoms ($a = -0.01, p = .94$). Supporting hypothesis 5, child appraisals of criticism of others did predict anxiety symptoms while controlling for parent-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.79, p = 0.00$). The direct effect of parent-reported conflict intensity on anxiety symptoms controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of criticism of others was statistically significant ($c' = -0.18, p = 0.00$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.17 to 0.15).

The fifty-fourth mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals of negative self-evaluation from parent-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating anxiety symptoms from both parent-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of

negative self-evaluation. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's appraisals of negative self-evaluation were not positively related to anxiety symptoms ($a = 0.07, p = .66$).

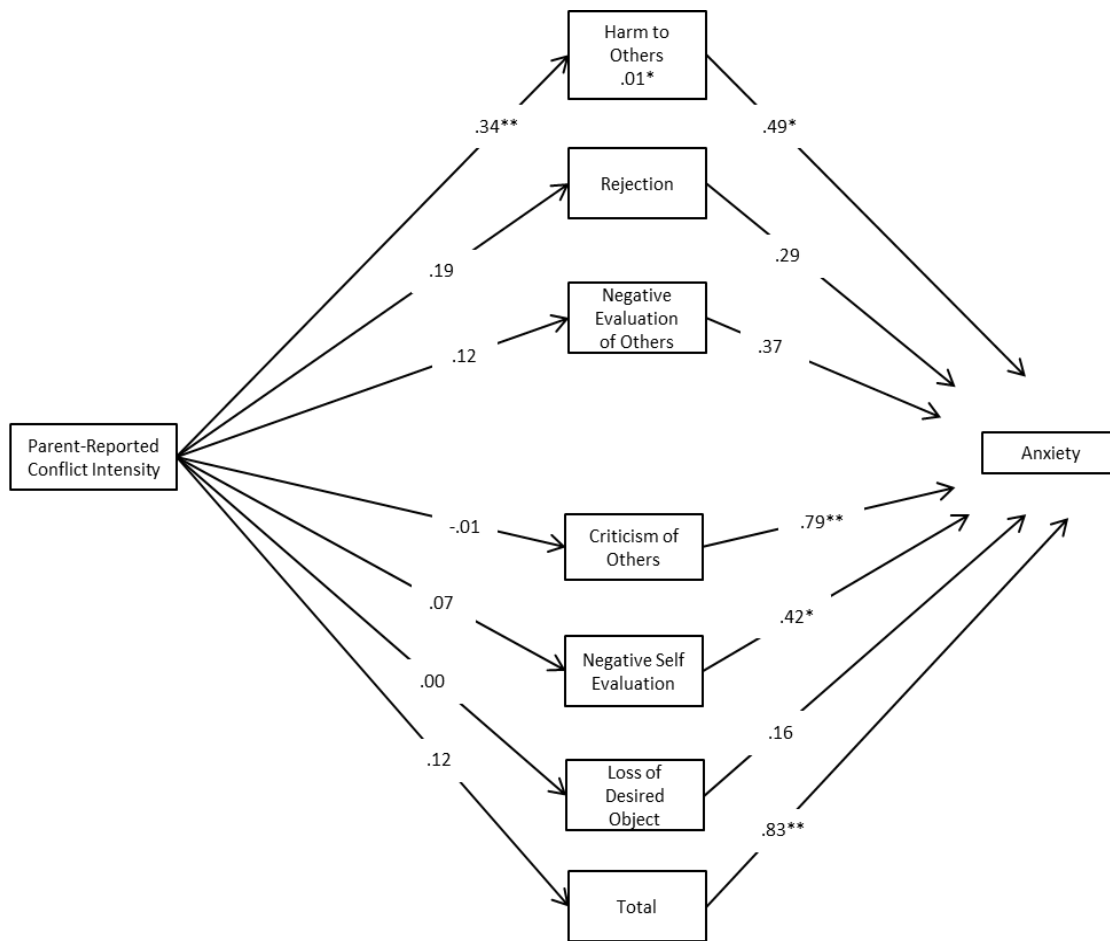
Supporting hypothesis 5, child appraisals of negative self-evaluation did predict anxiety symptoms while controlling for parent-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.42, p = 0.04$).

The direct effect of parent-reported conflict intensity on anxiety symptoms controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of negative self-evaluation was statistically significant ($c' = 0.13, p = 0.04$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.10 to 0.22).

The fifty-fifth mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child appraisals loss of desired object from parent-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating anxiety symptoms from both parent-reported conflict intensity and child appraisals of loss of desired object. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's appraisals of loss of desired object were not positively related to anxiety symptoms ($a = 0.00, p = .99$). Contrary to hypothesis 5, child appraisals of loss of desired object did not predict anxiety symptoms while controlling for parent-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.16, p = 0.49$). The direct effect of parent-reported conflict intensity on anxiety symptoms controlling for the mediational pathway involving child appraisals of loss of desired object was not statistically significant ($c' = 0.17, p = 0.49$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.06 to 0.07).

The fifty-sixth and final mediation analysis was conducted by estimating child total appraisals from parent-reported conflict intensity as well as estimating anxiety symptoms from both parent-reported conflict intensity and child total appraisals. Contrary to hypothesis 4, children's total appraisals were not positively related to anxiety symptoms ($a = 0.12, p = .21$). Supporting hypothesis 5, child total appraisals did predict anxiety symptoms while controlling for parent-reported conflict intensity ($b = 0.83, p = 0.01$). The direct effect of parent-reported conflict intensity on anxiety symptoms controlling for the mediational pathway involving child total appraisals was statistically significant ($c' = -0.07, p = 0.01$), where c' is the change in relation between child reported intensity and adjustment while controlling for appraisals. There was no support for mediation as the confidence interval for c' contained zero (-0.03 to 0.32).

Figure 8: Direct paths from Parent-Reported Conflict intensity to each Mediator Variable and Indirect Paths from each Mediator Variable to Anxiety while Controlling for Child-Reported Conflict Intensity



Note: 1) Estimates are completely standardized; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

2) Only statistically significant mediation indicated within the mediation variable box.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Much previous research has assessed the relation between interparental conflict and child adjustment. Even early literature that focused on the impact of divorce on children's adjustment acknowledged the effects of interparental conflict within the relation between divorce and child outcomes (Hetherington, 1999 & Amato, 2001). This relation has gained support as researchers have looked more closely at the intricate relations that occur within conflictual family situations (Esmeaili & Yaacob, 2011; Lansford, Ceballo, Abbey, & Stewart, 2001). Marital conflict has been argued to have a much greater impact on children's adjustment than divorce itself (Cummings & Davies, 2002; Emery, 1982; Grych & Fincham, 1990). For example, Esmaeili and Yaacob (2011) found that even post-divorce adolescents were at an increased risk of delinquency when exposed to interparental conflict after the dissolution of divorce. Other research has supported the notion that interparental conflict, and not divorce itself, presents more of a direct link to child adjustment, with this relation maintaining even after the divorce has been finalized and children have had time to adjust to a new family dynamic (El-Sheikh & Whitson, 2006; Shelton & Harold, 2007).

As research has shifted to assess more complex aspects of the divorce-adjustment continuum, it has become more accepted that child adjustment is more likely influenced by the mechanisms within the divorce process than by the divorce itself. Two such aspects of divorce that have received a great deal of attention include interparental conflict and children's appraisals of interparental conflict. A salient component of conflict that appears to have a significant impact on children's adjustment is that of

parent hostility, which has been demonstrated to contribute to higher levels of adjustment difficulties for children. Within Grych and Fincham's Cognitive Contextual Model (1990), it is noted that conflicts with greater intensity are likely to cause greater distress in children. Grych and Fincham further posit that intensity can be measured by several factors, including hostility. Therefore, it can be argued that hostility is a more narrow aspect of the context of interparental conflict, and assessing conflict intensity gives a broader picture of the impact of interparental conflict on children's adjustment. They added that the level of interparental conflict intensity impacts children's responses to the conflict (such as their appraisals of conflict) and thus, their adjustment.

As direct links have been established between interparental conflict and child adjustment, and researchers have begun to assess the particular aspects of interparental conflict intensity that have the most significant impact on adjustment, appraisals of the conflict made by the children involved have moved to the forefront on the list of critical factors in adjustment and divorce. The mediational effect of child appraisals on this relationship has become a focus in the literature (Atkinson, Dadds, Chipuer, 2009; DeBoard-Lucas, Fosco, Raynor, & Grych, 2010; Fosco & Grych, 2007; Gerald, Franck, Buehler, & Anderson, 2005). Marital hostility and overt marital conflict have been shown to be significantly related to children's threat appraisals, which are then related to children's adjustment difficulties (Grych, Harold, & Miles, 2003). The level of parental hostility has been shown to be one of the most consistent predictors of children's appraisals (Grych, 1998). It has been argued that child appraisals of threat lead to internalizing problems, such as anxiety and depression (Dadds, Chipuer, & Dawe, 2009; MacDonald & Grych, 2006; Rhoades, 2008; Shelton & Gordon, 2008; Xin, Chi, & Yu,

2009). Appraisals have been argued to be a mediating factor in the relation between interparental conflict and negative child outcomes (Atkinson, Dadds, Chipuer, 2009; Gerald, Franck, Buehler, & Anderson, 2005).

This study sought to replicate the relation between children's threat appraisals of interparental conflict intensity and child adjustment by establishing a direct link through correlational analyses. Despite strong support in the literature, and contrary to expectations, initial correlational analyses failed to demonstrate a direct significant relation between child-reported conflict intensity and any of the child outcome variables. The lack of support for these hypotheses may be due to the small sample size of the study or to the limited sample itself (there was not a large representation of families with high levels of conflict or with more intense levels of conflict). One relation did exist, that of parent-reported conflict intensity and conduct disorder symptoms in children. In addition to the small and limited sample, child adjustment was measured by the parent. This may also have contributed to a lack of significant relations in the analyses as children may have a better sense of their own internal states than parents, which would also explain the significant relation between parent-reported hostility and conduct disorder symptoms in children, as these symptoms are related to externalizing behaviors, and thus, more easily observable by parents. Parents are likely more adept at observing and reporting child externalizing symptoms than they would be at understanding and relaying children's internal states.

The link between children's threat appraisals in relation to interparental conflict intensity and child adjustment outcomes was also assessed. In this analysis, harm to

others was positively correlated to anxiety, negative evaluation by others was positively correlated to depression and total adjustment, criticism of others was positively correlated to all four child outcomes, negative self-evaluation was positively correlated to anxiety and total adjustment, and the total of all threat appraisals was positively correlated to all four child adjustment outcomes. Consistent with previous literature, child threat appraisals were found to have strong correlations to all aspects of child adjustment. This relation is particularly important to note as appraisals were assessed from the child's perspective as opposed to the parent's, demonstrating that children are able to assess and report on their own internal states, and that this then correlates to parents' reports of child adjustment.

Consistent with prior research, this study also proposed that children's appraisals are one mechanism that underlies the relation between interparental conflict and children's adjustment. It was further proposed that this relation would also exist when conflict is assessed from the child's perspective. Additionally, it was noted that research was lacking in assessing the specific construct of intensity within interparental conflict. Grych, Harold, and Miles (2003) found that marital hostility, as well as overt marital conflict, was significantly related to higher levels of poor adjustment in children, particularly internalizing behaviors such as withdrawal, anxiety, and depression. Shelton and Harold (2008) found similar results, with marital hostility being significantly related to avoidance behaviors in children. Both studies utilized parent-report of conflict intensity. Intensity encompasses a broader construct of interparental conflict than marital hostility, and it was argued in this study that using the level of interparental conflict intensity, as measured by the child, would provide a more in-depth understanding of the

mediational effects of children's appraisals on the relationship between interparental conflict and child outcomes. Therefore, this study assessed the mediational effects of child appraisals on the relationship between both child-reported and parent-reported conflict intensity and four child outcome variables (conduct disorder symptoms, depression symptoms, anxiety symptoms, and total adjustment). Additionally, this study examined children's self-report of appraisals using an open-ended interview format to assess the specific threat appraisals of each child. The advantage of this methodology was that it allows for the range of individual child responses, rather than requiring the child to respond to a pre-set list of threat appraisal items, which may or may not assess the range of their threat appraisal experiences.

The findings indicated that children's total negative threat appraisals did mediate the relationship between child-reported conflict intensity and all four outcome variables, symptoms of conduct disorder, depression, and anxiety, and total adjustment. However, many of the mediation results were non-significant when assessing individual threat variables versus the total threat appraisal variable. The total appraisal variable includes a wide range of threat appraisal variables, and thus encompasses a broader range of how the child appraises the level of threat that they experienced in response to interparental conflict intensity.

The mediational impact of children's total appraisals on internalizing problem behavior outcomes (such as anxiety and depression symptoms) made sense theoretically as previous research has established a strong relation between children's appraisals and internalizing problems (Cui, Donnellan, & Conger, 2007; Grover, Ginsburg, & Ialongo,

2005; O'Donnell, Moreau, Cardemil, & Pollastri, 2010). The mediational relation involving conduct disorder symptoms, however, has not been as well established in the literature. The current findings related to this may be attributed to the fact that total negative appraisals cover the whole range of threat appraisal variables, including internal (such as negative self-evaluation) and external (such as negative evaluation by others; rejection; and situational constructs like loss). It could be argued that these particular threat appraisals lead to a different type of parent-child dynamic which results in more externalizing behaviors from the child. For instance, if the child feels that his/her emotional or physical well-being is in jeopardy, he/she may resort to negative coping mechanisms, as well as attempts at intervening in the conflict that may present in the form of externalizing behaviors. Literature has argued that when children attempt to intervene directly into interparental conflict or if they choose coping strategies that involve venting or avoidance, they appear to experience a greater amount of adjustment difficulties than children who do not engage in this behavior (Davies & Forman, 2002; Jenkins, Smith, & Graham, 1989; Nicolotti, El-Sheikh, & Whitson, 2003; Shelton & Harold, 2007, 2008). In this argument, both children's attempts at coping, as well as their adjustment, may present in the form of externalizing problem behaviors, thus explaining the mediational value of total threat appraisals in the relation between interparental conflict intensity and conduct disorder symptoms.

It has been well established that both family characteristics (such as a history of conflictual interactions) and the property of the conflict itself (for example, intensity) predict children's appraisals of threat (Grych, Fincham, Jouriles, & McDonald, 1998; Grych, Harold, & Miles, 2003). These appraisals have also been found to be associated

with both internalizing and externalizing symptoms in children (Fosco & Grych, 2008; Grych, Harold, & Miles, 2003). Thus, when children are presented with high intensity interparental conflict, their responses in terms of behavioral symptoms in the form of either internalizing or externalizing symptoms would very likely be influenced by their appraisal of the conflict. Thus, children who experience appraisals that involve loss, rejection, or negative evaluation by others may react by demonstrating externalizing symptoms.

It is especially important to note that the mediational relations found between total appraisal and all four measures of the CBCL symptoms was with child-reported conflict intensity as the predictor. Children's own appraisals should have a larger impact on their adjustment when the conflict intensity is being assessed from the children's own point of view as children have more of an awareness of their internal state information. Children have been shown to be better reporters of their internalizing symptoms as they are better predictors of both their internal states as well as their appraisals, and parents have been shown to be better reporters of children's externalizing symptoms (Brown, Wolchik, Tein, & Sandler, 2007; Kliwer, Fearnow, & Walton, 1998; Lengua, Sandler, West, Wolchik, & Curran, 1999;).

When looking at the individual threat appraisal variables, negative evaluation by others mediated the relation between child-reported conflict intensity and depression symptoms. And, both rejection and negative evaluation of others mediated the relation between child-reported conflict intensity and anxiety symptoms. The finding that threat appraisals mediate the relation between exposure to interparental conflict and

internalizing behavior symptoms is consistent with prior research (Brown, Wolchik, Tein, & Sandler, 2007; Kliewer, Fearnow, & Walton, 1998; Lengua, Sandler, West, Wolchik, & Curran, 1999). The concept of being negatively evaluated or rejected by others has the potential to impact a child's self-esteem and sense of emotional security, which in turn has been demonstrated in the literature to lead to internalizing problems (such as anxiety and depression; Gorver, Ginsburg, & Ialongo, 2005). The current study replicates this relation with the use of qualitative assessments of children's self-reported threat appraisals.

When assessing conflict intensity from the parent's perspective, there were virtually no significant effects. The single mediational relation found was with harm to others, which mediated the relation between parent-reported conflict intensity and anxiety. This relation has also been well established in interparental conflict literature (Brown, Wolchik, Tein, & Sandler, 2007; Kliewer, Fearnow, & Walton, 1998; Lengua, Sandler, West, Wolchik, & Curran, 1999;).

These results are helpful when considering policy implications and specific practices involving children from conflictual family situations. These findings have suggested that children may be much better at assessing the level of interparental conflict they are exposed to, and in turn how they are appraising this conflict. And, although the adjustment outcome was measured from the parental perspective, findings indicated that children's appraisals did mediate the relation between their own report of conflict and their adjustment. This is important to consider when developing court-ordered parenting classes or divorce mediation where child factors are involved. It would be very helpful

for parents to have a much better understanding of the differences that exist between their own perspective of the conflict that is occurring and that of the children involved. By presenting parents with these findings during the course of parenting classes, parents may better understand the importance of appropriately managing conflict and assisting children through the process of constructively appraising conflict when it does occur.

Additionally, this information is also helpful to those in professions providing services to children and families experiencing conflict. Understanding that negative appraisals have the potential to develop into poor adjustment in children can help professionals understand the need to focus on appraisals and to assist children in looking at their own appraisals and helping them work towards making more healthy appraisals. It also allows professionals the mechanism to work with parents to expand their own understanding of the differences in their ability to correctly assess the level of conflict the child is experiencing and then to assist the child in making more healthy appraisals of the conflict. Professionals, such as psychologists, school psychologists, counselors, and social workers, working with children may be able to utilize approaches such as cognitive behavioral therapy to help children work through the appraisal process in a more effective manner. These professionals could assist children in reframing appraisals so that they are not viewing conflict as threatening and so that they are not engaging in self-blame as a result of the conflict. Helping children reframe their appraisals of the conflict they are exposed to would also allow children to engage in healthier coping mechanisms.

While findings in this study highlight the importance of assessing conflict from the child's point of view, there were several limitations to this study. First, the sample

size for this study was small, and future research would benefit from a larger sample size to allow for a broader understanding of the mediating effects of these relations. Other limitations include the sample itself, as there were a large number of families that were excluded due to either the age of the child or failure of the potential participant to respond, thus this small sample size might also only represent a highly selective group. The inclusion criteria for conflict within the family was also very generous, thus the effect sizes may be being impacted by the inclusion of families with much less conflict or less intense conflict than others. Thus, future research would benefit from insuring a broader inclusion criteria that would better capture families that experience a significant level of conflict, as well as those who experience highly intense conflict to assess if the effects sizes found in this study may have been stronger with higher levels of exposure to conflict. This may be accomplished by utilizing families from required parenting classes as subjects for future research projects, and the findings from this research could possibly be presented as a required component of the course. While the results of this study highlight the importance of assessing conflict from the child's point of view, future research would benefit from a larger, more specific sample to allow for a broader understanding of this mediational relation. Even with these limitations, it is notable that this study found effects even with low levels of interparental conflict. This suggests a powerful impact of interparental conflict intensity on children's own perceptions of threat and subsequent adjustment.

Additionally, future research would likely benefit from exploring how other child factors may contribute to children's measurement of interparental conflict, their self-reported appraisals of the conflict, and children's adjustment as a result of these

appraisals. Certain aspects, such as gender, temperament, and age, may have a large impact on children's ability to assess and appraise interparental conflict. For example, a very young child would likely not have the developmental ability to use more complex appraisals for interparental conflict, thus limiting their response set. In the same manner, older children and adolescents may utilize certain appraisals more than others as they have the capacity to understand more complex relationship dynamics. Research has shown that appraisals of interparental conflict can be reliably measured at fairly young ages, and also that perceptions of threat and self-blame function similarly for younger children (as young as 7 to 9 years) as they do for older children (McDonald & Grych, 2006). Future research could explore the age at which varying types of appraisals can be reliably measured (beyond threat and self-blame), as well as assessing self-report of conflict and adjustment at each of the varying ages measured. Research has also shown that age is a moderating factor in the relation between child appraisals and mother's reports of child adjustment problems, with appraisals being more positively related to problems in older children (Jouriles, Spiller, Stephens, McDonald & Swank, 2000). Assessing both younger and older groups of children while utilizing all self-report measures would be an extension to this study that might better explain the mediating relations that were demonstrated.

Children's temperament may also impact how children appraise the conflict as they may be more apt to appraise conflict either more negatively or more positively based solely on their temperament alone. For example, Derryberry, Reed, and Pilkenton-Taylor (2003) found that the basic motivational and attentional systems involved in temperament are comprised of relatively primitive coping mechanisms, and that as children develop,

primitive coping skills are aided by a child's increasing ability to assess situations and plan coping strategies in response to stressors. They further argue that temperamental patterns contribute to both adaptive and maladaptive outcomes, and that understanding motivational and attentional differences allows researchers to "take advantage of children's diverse personalities" (Derryberry, Reed, & Pilkenton, 2003). Other research has demonstrated that children's temperament, in conjunction with their appraisals of conflict and self-blame, are predictors of both their physical and psychosocial health (Gharehbaghy & Aguilar-Vafaie, 2008).

Previous literature has demonstrated that boys respond differently to conflict than girls (e.g., boys tend to intervene in conflict with more intrusive behaviors than girls in an attempt to stop it: Davies & Lindsay, 2004; Kerig, 1999; Shelton, Harold, Goeke-Morey, & Cummings, 2006), thus suggesting that the appraisals that lead to these particular coping mechanisms are also unique to gender. Cummings, Davies, and Simpson (1994) found gender differences in the cognitions and coping processes related to marital conflict and child adjustment, with threat appraisals predicting adjustment in boys and self-blame predicting internalizing problems in girls. Additionally, findings indicated that boys appeared more attuned to and less shielded from interparental conflict than girls (Cummings, Davies, & Simpson, 1994). Future research would benefit from assessing these relations from a child-reported standpoint. Therefore, exploring particular child-specific factors in relation to the link between interparental conflict and child outcomes would be an appropriate addition to the literature.

Lastly, there were mediation results where the regression coefficient for the relation between conflict intensity and the appraisal mediator were either not significant or only marginally significant, and the regression coefficient representing the relation between the appraisal mediator and the outcome variable, adjustment did not even approach significance. And, although there was clear nonsignificance for the second pathway of the indirect coefficient (the relation between children's appraisals and their adjustment), there was still a statistically significant mediation effect of their appraisals within the relation between conflict intensity and child outcome. This effect points to the existence of more complex statistical relations among the variables that go beyond the scope of the analyses outlined for this study (MacKinnon, Lockwood, Lockwood, West, & Sheets, 2002). In the absence of clear support for a simple mediational hypothesis, additional analyses are warranted, and would constitute another possible area of future research.

Based upon the pattern of these findings, it appears that the level of threat that children appraise impacts their overall adjustment following exposure to interparental conflict. This is especially true when we assess interparental conflict from the child's perspective as opposed to the parents' perspective. Additionally, when looking at more of the internalizing problematic behaviors (both depression and anxiety), it is noted that children's appraisals of actions that involve others' feelings that impact their own emotional and physical well-being (negative evaluation by others and rejection) mediate the relation with exposure to interparental conflict.

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APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT TELEPHONE SCRIPT

HELPING CHILDREN COPE WITH DIVORCE RECRUITMENT TELEPHONE SCRIPT

INTRODUCING YOURSELF/THE PROJECT

Hello, my name is _____. I'm calling from a project here at Arizona State University West called "Helping Children Cope with Divorce". We are part of a larger research effort that for the past 10 years has been studying the impact of divorce on children and ways that we might prevent the harmful impact that divorce can have on children. We obtained your name from the Maricopa County court records as someone who has recently finalized their divorce and has a child or children between 9 and 12 years of age . We recently mailed you a letter briefly describing our project.

Did you receive and have a chance to look at the letter about Helping Children Cope with Divorce?

IF NO, DID NOT RECEIVE/HAVE A CHANCE TO LOOK AT: Would this be a good time for me to take one minute to describe the project, and see if you might be interested in participating? USE INVITATION LETTER, REVIEW VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION/CONFIDENTIALITY.

IF NOT A GOOD TIME When might be a good time for me to call back?

** → WRITE TIMES ON CONTACT/SCREENING FORM

IF YES, DID RECEIVE Great! Would this be a good time for me to take one minute to very briefly describe the project, answer any questions you might have, and to see if you might be interested in participating?

IF NOT A GOOD TIME When might be a good time for me to call back?

** → WRITE TIMES ON CONTACT/SCREENING FORM

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT

In this project, as we said in our letter, we are trying to find out ways that mothers help their children learn to handle some of the usual difficulties that occur during the process of divorce, such as when moms and dads argue. We hope to gather this information so that other divorcing parents can use it to help their own children.

If you and your child are eligible and agree to participate, we are offering \$30.00 for your time and \$10.00 for your child's time (paid directly to each of you at the end of the session, unless you specify otherwise). The session would involve a single visit to ASU West for about 1- ½ to 2 hours at a time that is convenient for you -- in the late afternoon/early evening Weekdays, during the day on Saturday, or any time that best suits your schedule.

During the session, we will ask each of you to complete some questionnaires, watch together a very brief (about one-minute) video about a divorce situation in which actors portray parents who have a disagreement. We'll then ask you and your child to discuss, together, several questions about the video. After the video we would like to talk with each of you separately about your discussion of the video, and informally, to learn from both of you about the kinds of things you say and do with your child to help him/her handle times when there are disagreements between you and your ex-spouse.

Although the information is not considered highly personal, you would be free not to respond to any particular question. Also, the questions will be presented in a way that is intended to minimize any discomfort. However, if you express any concerns about any aspect of the session, those concerns will be addressed right away.

You and your child's participation in the project would be completely voluntary. There would be no consequences to you should you decide not to participate, or if you or your child decided at any time during the session that you no longer want to continue. We would stop the session at that point in time, and you would receive reimbursement for your participation.

Although there may or may be a direct benefit to you, a potential benefit of your participation would come from the opportunity to think about ways of communicating with and helping your child handle divorce-related events, including disagreements between you and your ex-spouse.

EXPLAIN FEDERAL CERTIFICATE OF CONFIDENTIALITY

Also, as indicated in our letter, you and your child's responses will be kept confidential through use of numeric subject codes, with any identifying information in a separate and secure location. In addition to the use of numeric codes to protect your confidentiality, this study is covered by a federal government Certificate of Confidentiality. This certificate means that none of your responses to our questionnaires could be used against you or your child and that my records cannot be subpoenaed. As I mentioned the questions we ask are not that personal, but we have added this extra level of confidentiality because we want you to feel completely comfortable talking with us about how you go about helping your child handle times when you have a disagreement with your ex-spouse. As you might expect, this certificate only applies to the information you or your child shares with us in the study. Finally, the results of the research study may be published, but your name or identity will never be revealed.

Do you think this might be something you could help us out with?

IF YES, INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING Great! Thank you. At this point, and if you have time, I now need to gather some BRIEF background information.

****→ GO TO CONTACT/SCREENING FORM.**

**** IF INTERESTED AND ELIGIBLE,**

1. MAKE AN APPOINTMENT FROM TIMES “AVAILABLE”
2. TELL HER THAT YOU WILL NEED TO CONFIRM THAT THIS TIME IS STILL AVAILABLE, AND THAT YOU WILL GET BACK TO HER OR LEAVE A MESSAGE ON THE MACHINE CONFIRMING THAT TIME
3. TELL HER THAT YOU WILL SEND A MAP OF ASU WEST WITH THE CONFIRMED TIME
4. CONFIRM MAILING ADDRESS to send map of ASUW with appointment time/date. ****→ NOTE ANY CHANGES ON CONTACT/SCREENING FORM**
5. TELL HER THAT SHE WILL RECEIVE A CONFIRMATION CALL ON THE DAY BEFORE HER APPOINTMENT

CLOSING STATEMENT FOR INTERESTED AND ELIGIBLE: Thank you very much for talking with me. We look forward to talking with you and _____ (child’s name) at ASU West on _____ (date) at _____ (time of appointment).

IMMEDIATELY CALL JENIFER (957-4693) TO TELL HER OR LEAVE A MESSAGE ABOUT THE APPOINTMENT:

- LEAVE
- FIRST NAMES OF MOTHER AND CHILD
 - CHILD’S AGE AND GENDER,
 - APPOINTMENT DATE AND TIME
 - ADDRESS OF MOTHER

- JENIFER WILL
- SEND OUT MAP
 - CONFIRM THAT THE TIME IS STILL AVAILABLE
 - LEAVE MESSAGES ON MACHINES FOR OTHER CALLERS THAT THE TIME SLOT IS TAKEN

A. IF HESITANT, OR LONG DELAY IN RESPONDING

May I ask if you have any reservations about participating?

1. ADDRESS EACH CONCERN AS NECESSARY
2. REASSURE ON THE FOLLOWING POSSIBILITIES:

* MY CHILD MIGHT BECOME UPSET This is unlikely because the video you will watch is played by actors and is not a real life situation. We will explain to your child that this video scene is not real. Also, we will be focusing on your child’s thoughts about and what s/he does, rather than on his/her feelings about divorce. We always do, however, monitor this closely and would stop the session ourselves if necessary. Of course, if at any time you or your child at any time feel like you would rather not continue, we would stop the session.. However, we really don’t anticipate that this session will cause that level of upset in your child.

* **MY CHILD WOULD NOT BE INTERESTED** In our past research, children generally have liked participating, and, of course, they also like the idea of having some spending money that they can get from participating.

* **NO TIME** This project will last the next three months--we could find a convenient time sometime over this period. (early Summer is o.k., as a last resort)

* **TOO FAR TO TRAVEL** We will pay for mileage if that is a concern (25 Cents a mile). Our main goal is to make it as easy as possible for you to participate because we can't learn these things from anyone but mothers and their children.

IF NO, NOT INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING

I understand. I'm not trying to get you to change your mind, but may I ask if there are any questions or reservations that you have that I might be able to address. **DO NOT PRESSURE, SIMPLE INQUIRE; GO TO CLOSING STATEMENT. IF QUESTIONS ARE ASKED AND ADDRESSED, ASK IF THERE ARE ANY FURTHER QUESTIONS, THEN ASK:** I understand that you said you were not interested in participating. Has discussing these questions changed your feelings about participating, or would you still rather not. **IF NOT GO TO CLOSING STATEMENT**

CLOSING STATEMENT FOR THOSE SAYING "NO" TO PARTICIPATION:

Thank you very much for taking time to listen to our request. Have a good (evening!/ETC)

IF INELIGIBLE BECAUSE OF TOO LITTLE CONFLICT: Congratulate her on doing so well! (e.g., Well, I feel compelled to say "congratulations!" because you have managed to handle any conflict in a way that minimizes the impact on _____ (child's name). I know that this takes effort and I want to acknowledge yours. However, because you have indicated such a low level of conflict with your ex at this time, I am not able to ask you to participate in this phase of the project. We are trying to talk with families that are handling a higher level of conflict right now. We are considering a later phase in our research during which time we will looking at families that seem to have minimized overt conflict. Would it be all right if we contact you at a later time to ask if you are interested in participating in that research? **→ NOTE THIS ON THE SCREENING COVER FORM.

IF INELIGIBLE BECAUSE OF TOO LITTLE CONTACT BETWEEN DAD AND CHILD: Ask if willing to be contacted for possible research focused on issues arising around minimal contact with dad. Use a form of explanation similar to the one above, but the reasons for this low level contact vary so much, that you may need to be sympathetic or congratulatory or something else.

APPENDIX B

PERCEPTIONS OF INTEPARENTAL CONFLICT (MOTHER REPORT)

The next set of questions concern your relationship with your ex-spouse. Please indicate how frequently each of the following have occurred since the beginning of the school year.

For each item “this child” refers to (child’s first name) _____

Never 1 *Rarely* 2 *Occasionally* 3 *Often* 4 *Very Often* 5

At some time since the beginning of the school year:

1. This child saw my ex-spouse and me disagreeing. 1 2 3 4 5
2. My ex-spouse and I got really mad when we argued. 1 2 3 4 5
3. This child was aware when my ex-spouse and I argued or disagreed. 1 2 3 4 5
4. When my ex-spouse and I had a disagreement, we discussed it quietly. 1 2 3 4 5
5. My ex-spouse and I were mean to each other even when this child
was around. 1 2 3 4 5
6. This child heard my ex-spouse and me arguing. 1 2 3 4 5
7. My ex-spouse and I said mean things to each other. 1 2 3 4 5
8. My ex-spouse and I argued. 1 2 3 4 5
9. My ex-spouse and I nagged and complained about each other. 1 2 3 4 5
10. My ex-spouse and I yelled when we had a disagreement. 1 2 3 4 5
11. My ex-spouse and/or I broke or threw things during an argument. 1 2 3 4 5

12. My ex-spouse and I pushed or shoved each other during an argument. 1 2 3 4 5

13. My ex-spouse and I argued over money matters in front of this child. 1 2 3 4 5

Never 1 *Rarely* 2 *Occasionally* 3 *Often* 4 *Very Often* 5

At some time since the beginning of the school year:

14. My ex-spouse and I argued over disciplinary problems in this child's presence. 1 2 3 4 5

15. My ex-spouse complained to me about my personal habits, like drinking, nagging, sloppiness, etc., in front of this child. 1 2 3 4 5

16. I complained to my ex-spouse about his personal habits, like drinking, nagging, sloppiness, etc., in front of this child. 1 2 3 4 5

17. There was physical hostility between me and my ex-spouse in front of the child. 1 2 3 4 5

18. My ex-spouse and I displayed verbal hostility (e.g., yelling, swearing) in front of this child. 1 2 3 4 5

19. My ex-spouse and I argued over visitation in front of this child. 1 2 3 4 5

20. My ex-spouse and I argued in front of this child. 1 2 3 4 5

21. This child heard me and my ex-spouse argue about "my role" in the family (housewife, working wife, etc.). 1 2 3 4 5

22. My ex-spouse and I displayed affection for each other in front of this child. 1 2 3 4 5

23. Children often go to one parent for money or permission to do something after having been refused by the other parent. How often would you say this child approached you or your ex-spouse in this manner with rewarding results? 1 2 3 4 5

APPENDIX C

POST INTERACTION TASK APPRAISAL, COPING, AND SOCIALIZATION OF COPING WHEN CHILD'S OWN PARENTS ARGUE

Child Appraisals of Parents' Arguing

Step 1: Open-ended interview:

Question 1: All moms and dads argue some of the time. so, when your mom and dad argue, what thoughts and feelings do you have when you see them arguing or disagreeing?

After EACH response, ask: Anything else you might be thinking or feeling about their arguing?

After child can't think of anymore responses, go back and probe for appraisals

(E.g. If child says, "sad"; Ask, "And you feel sad because...?")

(E.g., If child says, "I want them to stop"; Ask, "And you want them to stop because...?")

Question 2: Are you afraid or concerned that anything might happen when they argue? If yes, what might you be afraid might happen?

TAKE BRIEF NOTES. WHEN FINISHED SAY:

O.K. now, I'd like to get your opinions on some questions on this scale.
GO TO STEP 2: WHAT I THINK AND FEEL SCALE

Step 2: Questionnaire. WHAT I THINK AND FEEL Scale

READ QUESTIONNAIRE INSTRUCTIONS TO CHILD

SHOW THE "WHAT I THINK AND FEEL" SCALE

READ ITEMS TO CHILD AND RECORD RESPONSES

APPENDIX D

WHAT I THINK AND FEEL SCALE
(CHILD REPORT: SHORT VERSION)

Think of when your mom and dad argue. I'm going to read to you a list of some things that kids might think when that happens. For each one, please tell me how much you think each thing by choosing of the answers on this scale:

- I do not think this...1
- I think this a little2
- I think this somewhat...3
- I think this a lot.....4

When your mom and dad argue, how much do you think that:

- 1. Someone you care about is feeling worried or upset. 1 2 3 4
- 2. Someone you like doesn't want to see you or spend time with you. 1 2 3 4
- 3. Someone you like is angry at you and might punish you. 1 2 3 4
- 4. Someone you care about has acted badly and you are ashamed of them. 1 2 3 4
- 5. You have done something bad or wrong and it's your fault. 1 2 3 4
- 6. You might not get to do something that you want to do. 1 2 3 4

When your mom and dad argue, how much do you think that:

- 7. Someone you care about is being treated badly. 1 2 3 4
- 8. Someone you like doesn't care about you or want to help you with the things you need. 1 2 3 4
- 9. Someone you care about thinks that you have done something bad. 1 2 3 4
- 10. Something is wrong with your family. 1 2 3 4
- 11. You are not as good as other kids. 1 2 3 4
- 12. You might not get to spend time with someone you like. 1 2 3 4

APPENDIX E

CHILD BEHAVIOR CHECKLIST

Children oftentimes have difficulty adjusting to major changes in family situations. The checklist below describes a number of ways in which some children have been observed to react to such changes in the family during times of transition such as in divorce.

Please use the following scale to indicate the extent to which your child has engaged in any of the following behaviors **since the beginning of this school year**. Please respond to the item itself (the examples given for each item only cover a few of the possible behaviors).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never			Happens			Happens
Happens			Occasionally			All the Time

Please indicate the extent to which your child:

1. Has difficulty getting along with others. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
(e.g., argues with others a lot; is cruel to others; bullies others; is not liked by others, teases others a lot).
2. Has difficulty concentrating and focusing his/her attention. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
(e.g., can't concentrate or keep mind on things/homework restless; can't sit still; failing/doing less well at school)
3. Complains of feeling lonely. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
(e.g., feels s/he is has no friends, says s/he has no one to be with)
4. Becomes angry easily, fights with others, threatens others. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
(e.g., hot temper or tantrums; fights with others; threatens others; hangs out with troublemakers)
5. Worries about things. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
(e.g., feels anxious, nervous, tense)
6. Doesn't get involved socially with others. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
(e.g., likes to be alone; refuses to talk; secretive; stubborn, sulks)
7. Is destructive to/disrespects his/her things or things of others. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
(e.g., destroys/doesn't take care of possessions, steals)

8. Has thoughts or feelings s/he cannot seem to forget about. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
 (e.g., can't get a thought or feeling out of her/his mind; thinks about something over and over; constantly talks about the same issue)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
 Never Happens Occasionally Happens All the Time
 Happens

Please indicate to the extent to which your child:

9. Becomes emotionally upset/distressed about things. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
 (e.g., cries or gets upset easily; small things upset him/her)

10. Is disobedient to authority. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
 (e.g., disobeys at home or school, doesn't listen to or resists following rules)

11. Is fearful. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
 (e.g., fears animals, places, school, or doing certain things)

12. Daydreams. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
 (e.g., his/her mind wanders; looks "lost" in thought)

13. Is not remorseful or regretful after wrongdoing. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
 (e.g., doesn't feel guilty after being bad; doesn't make amends; lies or cheats; is untrustworthy)

14. Is overly demanding on him/herself. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
 (e.g., feels s/he must be perfect; can't make a mistake)

15. Has harmed or tried to harm himself/herself. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

16. Has problems in controlling his/her own behavior. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
 (e.g., screams a lot, shouts; is unusually loud in talking; brags or boasts; shows off, clowns around at wrong times; impulsive, acts without thinking; swears, uses obscene language)

17. Experiences physical problems. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
 (e.g., has twitches; feels dizzy; has aches and pains; get nauseous has problems with eyes; rashes; stomach aches, cramps; vomits)

18. Lacks energy and motivation to do things. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
(e.g., doesn't eat well; overtired but hasn't done anything;
sleeps more than others; seems uninterested in most things)
19. Has low opinion of self. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
(e.g., feels worthless or inferior; feels too guilty for things)

APPENDIX F

FACTOR CODES FOR APPRAISALS RELIABILITY

Factor 1 – Negative Self-Appraisals

1. Negative Self Evaluation (NSE)
2. Negative Evaluation by Others (NEO)
3. Rejection by Others (RO)
4. Harm to Self (HS)

Factor 2- Negative Appraisals of Others

1. Harm to Others (HO)
2. Criticism of Others (CO)

Factor 3- Negative Appraisals About Loss

1. Loss of Desired Objects or Activities (LODOA)

New Categories

1. Negative Affect (NA)

APPENDIX G

DEFINITION OF APPRAISAL CATEGORIES WITH RELIABILITY

FACTOR 1- NEGATIVE SELF-APPRAISALS (75%)

1. Negative Self-Evaluation (NSE). When the child evaluates him or herself negatively (63%).

- “I was being bad.”
- “I’m stupid, lazy and not strong enough.”

2. Negative Evaluation by Others (NEO). Fear of a negative evaluation of the child by another person (71%).

- “I’m afraid they’ll yell at me.”
- “...trying to do the dishes, the washer, and I was trying to do it so I would not get into trouble.”

3. Rejection by Others (RO). When a child thinks a significant other does not like or care for him or her or does not want to spend time with him or her (73%).

- “Afraid his dad will never come back for him.”
- “Afraid his dad will blame it on him.”

4. Harm to Self (HS). When the child is being harmed or perceives future threat of harm, physically, emotionally, or psychologically (must include mention of conflict) (80%).

- “I was afraid he was going to hit me.”
- “He got a headache from them yelling.”

FACTOR 2- NEGATIVE APPRAISALS OF OTHERS (82%)

1. Harm to Others (HO). Future threat of someone other than the child being harmed or threatened physically, emotionally, or psychologically (must include mention of conflict) (94%).

- “If she didn’t have a job... then she would run out of money.”
- “I’m afraid they might start hurting each other.”

2. Criticism of Others (CO). Child’s negative evaluation of or disappointment with a significant other (65%).

- “I feel that it’s all my dad’s fault and he caused anger on her.”
- “He throws his hands in the air and it kind of shocks me.”

FACTOR 3- APPRAISALS ABOUT LOSS (85%)

Loss of Desired Objects or Activities (LODOA). Loss of something materially, socially or academically (86%).

- “We want to see our dad, we don’t get to see him.”
- “My mom might die.”

NEW APPRAISAL CATEGORIES

1. Negative Affect (NA). The child's report of experiencing negative affect or an emotional reaction in response to interparental conflict (91%).

- "I feel mad."
- "I feel confused."

2. Self-Blame (SBLAM). When the child blames him or herself or his or her actions for the interparental conflict (96%).

- "I feel like it's my fault."
- "I caused the problem."

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