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Examining Children's Cognitions in Response to Interparental Conflict

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Abstract

Extensive research has found that interparental conflict is associated with children's adjustment and cognitive appraisals. This study aims to address two questions. First, does exposure to interparental conflict predict children's immediate and long-term cognitions regarding interparental conflict? Second, do children's immediate and long-term cognitions predict internalizing problems, such as anxiety and depression? Children ages 9- to 11-years-old ($n = 96$; 59 females, 1 gender-neutral) were shown video presentations of conflict between two actors portraying a married couple. Children evaluated the actors' behaviors as good or bad, and these evaluations were used as a measure of their immediate cognitions regarding interparental conflict stimuli. These immediate cognitions were compared to measures of children's long-term cognitions regarding interparental conflict, exposure to interparental conflict, and internalizing problems using bivariate correlation and simple regression analyses. In contrast to the hypotheses, more exposure to interparental conflict did not predict immediate or long-term cognitions, nor did immediate or long-term cognitions predict children's internalizing problems. Implications for future studies comparing immediate and long-term cognitions are discussed.

Keywords: interparental conflict, internalizing problems, children, cognition

Introduction

Extensive research has examined the relationship between interparental conflict and child adjustment. Broadly defined, child adjustment is “the adaptiveness and appropriateness of children’s behavior, emotional well-being, self-concept, and achievement” (Grych & Fincham, 1990, p. 268). While marriages tend to have some degree of conflict, the way this conflict is expressed and negotiated can either positively or negatively influence the behaviors, emotions, and cognitions of children (Goeke-Morey, Cummings, Harold, & Shelton, 2003). Other key dimensions of interparental conflict that are linked to child outcomes are the frequency, intensity, and duration of the conflict (Grych & Fincham, 1990). Interparental conflict that is poorly resolved, hostile, and involves the child is especially salient and has potential negative implications for child adjustment (Grych, Seid, & Fincham, 1992). Thus, what is most crucial regarding the implications for child adjustment is not necessarily *whether* couples have conflict, but rather *how* they confront and resolve conflict (Zemp, Bodenmann, & Cummings, 2016).

Previous research has shown that interparental conflict is related to children’s cognitive appraisals, such that more exposure to interparental conflict is associated with more negative long-term cognitions (Goeke-Morey, Papp, & Cummings, 2013). While much research has examined children’s long-term cognitions, there is very limited literature about immediate cognitions in response to interparental conflict. One way to methodologically address this gap is to use children’s responses to video presentations of simulated interparental conflict between two actors pretending to be a couple. By using video presentations to measure and elicit immediate cognitions, there is an opportunity to compare children’s immediate cognitions about controlled, simulated conflict episodes to their long-term cognitions they have built up about their own parents’ relationship. Furthermore, studying children’s different cognitions in response to

interparental conflict could help broaden understanding of the mechanisms that link interparental conflict to child adjustment outcomes.

The goal for the current study is to further examine how interparental conflict predicts children's different cognitions and internalizing problems, and to demonstrate the importance for parents to constructively engage in conflict in order to support the development of their children. This study also aims to increase knowledge about children's internalizing behaviors in relation to children's immediate cognitions about interparental conflict. Considering the potential lifelong impacts of internalizing problems, it is crucial to continue expanding research about the etiology of these behaviors in order to make progress towards preventing them.

Children's Cognitions

A mechanism underlying associations between interparental conflict and child outcomes, referred to as a mediator, is children's cognitive processes and their influence on children's emotions and behavior (Cummings & Davies, 2002; Grych & Fincham, 1990; Grych et al., 1992). Children's cognition involves the interpretations and implications that children draw from conflict (Grych et al., 1992; Grych, Harold, & Miles, 2003). These cognitive appraisals mediate how exposure to interparental conflict predicts adjustment (Grych et al., 2003; Fosco & Grych, 2010). Children's cognitive appraisals regarding interparental conflict are an attempt to understand and cope with interparental conflict as a stressor in their life and they serve as an interpretive filter that influences how children internalize interparental conflict (Grych & Fincham, 1990; Gerard, Buehler, Franck, & Anderson, 2005).

Grych and Fincham (1990) developed a framework to address children's cognitions regarding interparental conflict and suggested that interparental conflict prompts three questions for children: "What is happening?," "Why is it happening?," and "What can I do about it?"

These questions develop from two types of processing. Primary processing surrounds whether the child identifies the conflict as threatening or self-relevant. This may then lead to secondary processing, which relates to how children cope with and understand the conflict, as well as their attributions of blame (Grych & Fincham, 1990). If children's attempts to cope are successful, they can reduce distress, while conversely, unsuccessful coping may lead to prolonged or increased distress. Furthermore, the way children interpret and understand conflict varies as a function of characteristics of the conflict, contextual factors, and level of cognitive development (1990).

Using this framework, Grych et al. (1992) developed the Children's Perception of Interparental Conflict Scale (CPIC) to measure various dimensions of children's long-term cognitions about interparental conflict. The prompt at the beginning of the questionnaire states, "We would like to know what kind of feelings *you* have when *your* parents have arguments or disagreements." As such, the CPIC assesses the role of children's experiences and long-term cognitions by measuring children's general schemas and perspectives about the interparental conflict between their own parents. Furthermore, the CPIC measures dimensions of interparental conflict that have been linked to child adjustment outcomes.

There are three subscales within the CPIC: Conflict properties, Threat, and Self-blame. The Conflict Properties scale in the CPIC considers dimensions of interparental conflict according to the frequency, intensity, and resolution tactics of the conflict. This scale includes questions such as "My parents are often mean to each other even when I'm around," or "Even when my parents stop arguing they stay mad at each other." A higher score on this scale indicates conflict that involves more hostility, occurs more often, and is poorly resolved. Research has found that being exposed to conflict with more negative properties puts children at

greater risk for adjustment problems (Cummings & Davies, 2002; Grych et al., 2003).

Furthermore, a higher Conflict Properties score is related to higher scores on the other subscales of the CPIC, such that hostile and frequent conflict is more likely to elicit self-blame and be perceived as threatening (Grych et al., 1992; Grych et al., 2003; Lindahl & Malik, 2011).

The Threat subscale of the CPIC measures two dimensions: perceived threat and coping efficacy. Perceived threat measures the level of threat experienced by respondents during interparental conflict, while coping efficacy measures respondents' belief that they will be able to manage conflict effectively (Fosco & Grych, 2010). There are various reasons a child may feel threatened by interparental conflict, such as fear that they will be drawn into the conflict, that the conflict will lead to separation or divorce, and that a disagreement could escalate into aggression between their parents (Grych et al., 1992). This is measured on the CPIC by questions such as "When my parents argue I'm afraid that something bad will happen" and "When my parents argue or disagree there's nothing I can do to make myself feel better."

A longitudinal study by Shelton and Harold (2008) evaluated adolescents' appraisals following exposure to interparental conflict as predictors of avoidance, which they define as attempts to disengage or escape from their parents' conflict. The study found that threat appraisals predicted increased avoidance, which suggests that when children feel threatened and unable to cope, they are more prone to using avoidance strategies when responding to interparental conflict (Shelton & Harold, 2008). Studies have found inhibition of emotional expression and prolonged avoidance to be associated with increased child adjustment problems, particularly anxiety and depression (Davies & Cummings, 1998; Nicolotti, El-Sheikh, & Whitson, 2003). However, it is worth noting that some studies have found that avoidance is

associated with decreased anxiety when it is accompanied by other adaptive strategies like self-calming and distraction techniques (O'Brien, Margolin, & John, 1995).

Another subscale of the CPIC is Self-blame. This revolves around children's attributions that they are at fault for the conflict (self-blame) or that the conflict is about them (content) (Grych et al., 1992; Lindahl & Malik, 2011). It is measured by questions such as "My parents often get into arguments when I do something wrong," and "Even if they don't say it, I know I'm to blame when my parents argue." Grych et al. (1992) suggested that children who are more prone to blaming themselves for conflict may experience more shame about the conflict and also be more likely to intervene. In addition, a study by Gerard et al. (2005) considered children's appraisals related to self-blame and their perceptions of conflict. By using teacher and child reports to assess internalizing problems, Gerard et al. found that self-blame was associated with internalizing problems. The authors suggested that children experiencing more self-blame may experience more guilt for creating family distress, or helpless if they feel unable to repair the conflict. Consequently, without adaptive strategies to relieve these negative emotions, children may experience more internalizing problems.

As stated, there is limited research about children's immediate cognitions. While long-term cognitions reflect broad views about children's parents' relationship and their exposure to interparental conflict, immediate cognitions reflect the appraisals and perceptions children make about interparental conflict as they witness it. Goeke-Morey et al. (2003) presented children with controlled video presentations of various interparental conflict tactics and used the children's evaluations of the videos to distinguish between classifications of interparental behaviors. They did not test how children's appraisals of the presentations were related to internalizing problems or prior exposure to interparental conflict. A study by Schermerhorn, Bates, Puce, and Molfese

(2017) presented task-irrelevant auditory probes during the same video presentations used by Goeke-Morey et al. (2003) and measured event-related potentials, a measure of electrical activity in the brain. While the study did find an association between smaller event-related potentials and more adjustment problems, it did not find significant results related to the different behaviors portrayed in the videos. As such, more research is needed to examine immediate cognitions elicited by interparental conflict stimuli and how these cognitions are related to internalizing problems.

Internalizing Problems

Many of the conflict-related cognitions that the CPIC targets are related to internalizing problems. Children who report frequent, hostile, and poorly resolved interparental conflict exhibit higher levels of internalizing problems such as anxiety and depression (Grych et al., 1992). Grych et al. (1992) argued that the relationship between interparental conflict and internalizing problems depends on the degree to which children feel threatened and blame themselves when conflict occurs, rather than exposure to conflict itself. They also proposed that children who blame themselves for interparental conflict might be subjected to deficits in self-esteem, which may contribute to symptoms of depression. Grych et al. (2003) found that children who perceive conflict as a threat to themselves or the stability of their family and who were unable to cope effectively with interparental conflict showed higher levels of anxiety and depressive symptoms. Additionally, Fosco and Feinberg (2014) found that perceptions of threat undermined children's self-efficacy, which consequently increased emotional distress and decreased emotional well-being. Children who perceive conflict as more threatening may also experience fear or anxiety due to concerns of family stability, personal safety, or being drawn into the conflict (Gerard et al., 2005). Furthermore, Grych et al. (1992) suggested that children

who feel more threatened by conflict and struggle to cope might develop more anxiety when the conflict is prevalent.

A study by Fosco and Grych (2008) investigated children's cognitive appraisals as a mediator between interparental conflict and adjustment outcomes using both the CPIC and the CBCL. They found self-blame and threat cognitions to both be reliable predictors of internalizing problems, even when these cognitions were examined simultaneously with children's emotional reactions to a conflict-solving task they witnessed between their own parents. Gerard et al. (2005) suggested that cognitive appraisals of threat and self-blame are more "personally relevant" so they can more readily evoke personal distress and intrusive emotions, which in turn, can lead to internalizing problems.

Future studies will need to continue to establish how children's cognitive appraisals, specifically immediate cognitions, predict children's adjustment. It is possible that children who are more likely to have negative immediate cognitions about conflict stimuli, such as controlled video presentations of interparental conflict episodes, may experience more internalizing problems. If children are more prone to immediately perceive interparental conflict in a negative light, they may hold more negative schemas about their family relationships and the environment around them, which in turn, could be related to more symptoms of anxiety and depression. More research is needed to further investigate the pathway between children's immediate cognitions and internalizing problems.

Current Study

This study considers two different types of cognitions. Studies have focused almost exclusively on long-term cognitions regarding exposure to conflict, often measured by responses on the CPIC. Evaluations of how children respond to conflict have centered on reflections by

both parents and children, mostly through questionnaires. However, there has been a gap in the literature surrounding immediate cognitions and how children make appraisals of interparental conflict directly after witnessing it. This study will methodologically fill this gap using controlled video presentations of interparental conflict stimuli. In addition, this study will assess the links between children's long-term cognitions and immediate cognitions, and consider how the interparental conflict to which children are exposed at home may serve as a predictor for each of these cognitions. This study will also examine the association between immediate cognitions and internalizing problems, as well as the association between long-term cognitions and internalizing problems.

Given the past research evaluating children's cognitive appraisals in relation to interparental conflict, I have developed three hypotheses. First, I hypothesize that more negative immediate cognitions, that is, a higher tendency to view the behaviors shown in the video presentations in a negative light, will be correlated with more negative long-term cognitions, that is, higher reports of Self-blame, Threat, and Conflict Properties on the CPIC. Second, I hypothesize that more exposure to interparental conflict will predict more negative immediate and long-term cognitions. Finally, I hypothesize that more negative immediate and long-term cognitions will predict more internalizing problems.

Methods

Participants

This study used data collected from the Kids and Parents Project at the University of Vermont. Participants were 96 children (50 males, 1 gender neutral), ages 9 to 11 years ($M = 10.57$, $SD = 0.89$) and their mothers. Data from an additional 23 children were not used due to technical difficulties or declining to complete a second visit. Recruitment took place in the

northeastern United States through publicly available birth records, flyers in public places, information distributed to local schools, and advertisements in local newspapers and magazines. To be eligible, children had to be able to read at a 4th grade reading level or higher and had to live with their biological parents, who had to be married to each other. Mothers provided informed consent and children who were 11 years old provided assent (children younger than 11-years-old are deemed unable to give assent per the University's IRB). Mothers and children received monetary compensation for their involvement. The University's Institutional Review Board approved the experimental protocol.

Representative of the geographic population where the data was collected, 91.7% of the child participants were identified as Caucasian, 6.3% as being of more than one race, 1.0% as American Indian or Alaska Native, and 1.0% as Asian. Approximately 59.4% of mothers indicated their annual combined family income as higher than \$80,000, while 22.9% of mothers reported incomes in the range of \$65,001 - \$80,000, 9.4% in the range of \$40,001 - \$65,000, 6.2% below \$40,000, and 2.1% did not report income data. The mean length of marriage was about 15 years ($M = 14.48$, $SD = 4.13$), and the most common level of education attainment for mothers was completion of a master's degree.

Measures

Cognitive responses. For this research, there were two measures for children's cognitions. The first was the Children's Perceptions of Interparental Conflict Scale (CPIC; Grych, Seid, & Fincham, 1992), which was used to measure children's long-term, continuous cognitions of interparental conflict. The CPIC is a 48-item questionnaire with a three-point scale comprised of 2 (True), 1 (Sort of true), and 0 (False). There are three subscales within the CPIC: Conflict Properties, Threat, and Self-blame. For each subscale, a higher score reflects a more

negative form of appraisal or conflict. While the CPIC does not specify the time frame it addresses, the questionnaire is used to represent more general schemas that the child holds about interparental conflict in their own family, as opposed to the child's views about a specific conflict episode or the child's behavior within a conflict episode. Adequate internal consistency was obtained for each subscale: Conflict Properties ($\alpha = 0.89$), Threat ($\alpha = 0.80$), and Self-Blame ($\alpha = 0.74$).

The second measure for children's cognition was responses to a series of 28 video presentations of simulated interparental conflict, which were developed by Mark Cummings and his colleagues (Goeke-Morey et al., 2003). This "Video Presentation Task" was used to represent children's immediate cognitions following exposure to interparental conflict stimuli.

Furthermore, responses to the video presentations were used to measure children's cognitions about individual conflict behaviors in the context of a specific, simulated conflict episode. The video presentations were each 5 to 15 seconds long and showed two actors pretending to be a couple acting out different conflict behaviors. The experimenter provided a background story for the videos and asked the children to imagine the actors as their own parents. Children viewed 26 video segments, plus 2 practice segments. Following each segment, children were asked about each actor separately and whether they thought what the mom and dad did was good and/or bad. Responses were provided on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 0 ("Really good") to 4 ("Really bad"). Averages were computed across all video segments for responses regarding each parent actor. Cronbach's α was 0.79 for responses about the dad actor's behavior and 0.80 for responses about the mom actress' behavior.

Interparental Conflict. To measure children's exposure to interparental conflict in their own family, this study used the O'Leary-Porter Scale (OPS; Porter & O'Leary, 1980). Mothers

completed this 10-item questionnaire consisting of questions like “How often do you and/or your spouse display verbal hostility in front of your child?” The questionnaire uses a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Very often), with higher scores corresponding to more exposure to interparental conflict. Adequate internal consistency was found ($\alpha = 0.78$).

Internalizing Problems. To evaluate the presence of internalizing problems among child participants, this research used the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL; Achenbach, 1991). Mothers completed this questionnaire of 113 items answered on a 3-point scale, where they indicated whether or not each statement is true of their child from 0 (Not true as far as you know) to 2 (Very true or often true). The CBCL includes three subscales for internalizing behaviors: Somatic Complaints (e.g., nausea, headaches), Anxious/Depressed (e.g., nervous, high strung or tense), and Withdrawn (e.g., would rather be alone than with others). In this sample, Cronbach's α s were unacceptably low for the Somatic Complaints and Withdrawn subscales, so they were not included in the analyses as individual subscales. However, they were included in the Internalizing raw score. For the Anxious/Depressed subscale, Cronbach's α was 0.84 and for the Internalizing raw score, Cronbach's α was 0.86.

Data Analyses

To study the association between immediate cognitions and more long-term cognitions in response to interparental conflict, I computed bivariate correlations between the CPIC and the responses to the video presentations. For considering interparental conflict as a predictor of both types of cognitions, I computed regressions for the associations between the OPS and both the CPIC and the video responses. Lastly, to test cognition as a predictor of internalizing problems, I calculated simple regressions between the CBCL and both the CPIC and video responses.

Results

Correlations

Table 1 presents means, standard deviations, and correlations for demographic variables such as age and socioeconomic status (SES) and measures of cognitions, conflict, and internalizing problems. A number of significant correlations between variables were found. Specifically, the CBCL Anxiety/Depressed subscale was significantly positively correlated with the CBCL Internalizing raw score. The CPIC Conflict Properties subscale was significantly positively correlated with both the CPIC Threat subscale and the CPIC Self-Blame subscale. The Conflict Properties subscale was also positively correlated with the OPS. That is, more negative child perceptions of conflict properties were correlated with more exposure to interparental conflict. Also, child responses about the dad actor's behavior and child responses about the mom actress' behavior in the Video Presentation Task were positively intercorrelated. Finally, SES and child responses about the mom actress' behavior in the Video Presentation Task were positively intercorrelated, such that higher SES was correlated with children's perceptions that the behavior of the mom actress was more negative across the video segments. There were no significant correlations between video responses and the OPS.

Testing Marital Conflict as a Predictor of Cognitions

Multiple regression analyses were conducted using SPSS (IBM SPSS Statistics, Version 22.0.0.0) to test whether exposure to interparental conflict predicted immediate and long-term cognitions regarding interparental conflict. For each regression, SES and child age were mean-centered and entered as covariates. Scores on the OPS and subscales of the CPIC were mean-centered. OPS scores did not significantly predict the behavior of the dad actor ($B = .00$, $t(92) =$

.42, $p > .05$), nor the behavior of the mom actress ($B = .00$, $t(92) = -.32$, $p > .05$). SES significantly predicted the behavior of the mom actress ($B = .08$, $t(92) = 2.57$, $p < .05$).

For long-term cognitions, analyses used scores on the CPIC for the Self-Blame subscale, Threat subscale, and Conflict Properties subscale. OPS was not a significant predictor of Self-Blame ($B = .09$, $t(88) = 1.57$, $p > .05$) and only a marginally significant predictor of Threat ($B = .19$, $t(88) = 1.71$, $p < .10$). However, OPS was a significant predictor of Conflict Properties ($B = .66$, $t(88) = 4.56$, $p < .001$).

Age was not a significant predictor of any measure (Video responses about dad actor: $B = .00$, $t(92) = .13$, $p > .05$, video responses about mom actress: $B = -.02$, $t(92) = -.59$, $p > .05$, Self-Blame: $B = .10$, $t(88) = .39$, $p > .05$, Threat: $B = -.47$, $t(88) = -.90$, $p > .05$, Conflict Properties: $B = .07$, $t(88) = .10$, $p > .05$). Other than video responses about the behavior of the mom actress, SES also was not a significant predictor of any measure (Video responses about dad actor: $B = .05$, $t(92) = 1.70$, $p > .05$, Self-Blame: $B = -.08$, $t(88) = -.31$, $p > .05$, Threat: $B = .16$, $t(88) = .30$, $p > .05$, Conflict Properties: $B = .64$, $t(88) = .92$, $p > .05$).

Testing Cognitions as a Predictor of Internalizing Problems

Multiple regression analyses were conducted to test whether both long-term and immediate cognitions predicted internalizing problems. Separate regressions were run for the CBCL Anxiety/Depression subscale and the CBCL Internalizing raw score after both CBCL scores were mean-centered. A multiple regression was run for video responses regarding each actor paired with each CPIC subscale. For each regression, SES and age were mean-centered and entered as covariates.

For simplicity of presentation, these results can be found in Table 2 – Table 7. None of the independent variables significantly predicted either measure of internalizing problems when

controlling for each other. That is, measures of long-term cognitions did not predict internalizing problems when controlling for measures of short-term cognitions, and vice versa. Age and SES both were not significant predictors for either dependent variable in any of the regression analyses.

Discussion

The current study aimed to examine the relationship between exposure to interparental conflict and children's cognitions about interparental conflict in a sample of elementary-aged children. It also studied the relationship between long-term and immediate cognitions and the role these cognitions have in predicting internalizing problems. Contrary to hypotheses, negative immediate cognitions were not correlated with negative long-term cognitions. Likewise, exposure to conflict was not a significant predictor of negative cognitions, nor were negative cognitions significant predictors of internalizing problems.

The first analysis aimed to compute correlations between immediate cognitions and long-term cognitions. The goal of the video presentations was to measure children's immediate cognitions regarding specific, controlled presentations of interparental conflict stimuli, while the CPIC served as a measure of long-term cognitions that children hold about interparental conflict between their own parents. As such, I hypothesized that a higher tendency to have negative evaluations of the actors' behaviors in the video presentations would be correlated with higher reports of Self-Blame, Threat, and Conflict Properties on the CPIC. However, I found no significant correlations among these variables, suggesting that children's long-term cognitions about interparental conflict in their own families are not related to their immediate cognitions about simulated interparental conflict.

The second hypothesis proposed that more exposure to interparental conflict would predict more negative immediate and long-term cognitions. Extensive research has found exposure to interparental conflict to be associated with children's appraisals regarding interparental conflict (Davies, Myers, Cummings, & Heindel, 1999; Fosco & Grych, 2007; Goeke-Morey et al., 2003; Goeke-Morey et al., 2013). I did not find evidence supporting that exposure to interparental conflict is related to either long-term or immediate cognitions. One reason for this could be restricted variability of OPS scores. The conflict levels in the current sample ($M = 16.23$, $SD = 4.05$) were lower than those found in other samples; for example, Schermerhorn, Bates, Puce, and Molfese (2015) reported mean OPS scores of 18.70 ($SD = 5.01$) and Porter and O'Leary (1980) reported mean OPS scores ranging from 18.30 ($SD = 5.82$) to 23.69 ($SD = 7.91$).

The third hypothesis proposed that more negative cognitions would predict internalizing problems, considering that research has found children's appraisals to be robust predictors for internalizing problems (Grych et al., 1992; Harold, Osborne, & Conger, 1997; Kim, Jackson, Conrad, & Hunter, 2008). Both cross-sectional and longitudinal research has found links between adjustment problems and children's appraisals of threat and self blame (Buehler, Lange, & Franck, 2007; Grych et al., 2003). A study by Davies and Cummings (1998) had children listen to an audiotape of a verbal conflict between a man and a woman whom they were asked to imagine as their parents, and found that children's insecure immediate representations of interparental conflict predicted internalizing problems. However, I did not find either type of cognition to be a significant predictor of internalizing problems. Future research could use longitudinal methods to measure internalizing problems, in order to see how immediate cognitions are related to the development of anxiety or depression later on.

It is possible that other factors not considered in this study could moderate the relationship between interparental conflict and children's outcomes. As such, the lack of significant results in this study may be due to unexamined moderating variables that potentially influence the strength of the relationship between interparental conflict and internalizing problems. One possible variable is children's temperament. Grych and Fincham (1990) proposed that temperament might affect the relationship between interparental conflict and adjustment problems, specifically when a child has more difficulty regulating their emotions or is more reactive to stress. Furthermore, a study by Hentges, Davies, and Cicchetti (2015) found that children high in irritable temperament had poorer adjustment problems in contexts of high interparental conflict. Another possible variable is attributes of the parents themselves, such as parents with a history of depression. A study by Fear et al. (2009) found that higher levels of depressive symptoms in parents were associated with more interparental conflict as well as more internalizing problems among children and adolescents. Considering the current study did not find significant results, future research could further examine possible moderators of the link between interparental conflict and adjustment outcomes in order to better understand what factors or conditions influence the strength of the relationship between these two variables.

There were several limitations to this study. While representative of the geographic population studied, the participants of the study were largely identified as Caucasian and there was limited representation of other racial identities. Furthermore, almost 60% of the families had a household income of greater than \$80,000, and almost 50% of the mothers had attained either a Master's or Doctoral degree. Having more variation among these demographics could make the data more generalizable to other populations. Also, the video presentations may lack generalizability since the children are answering questions about the actors rather than their own

parents. However, as Goeke-Morey et al. (2003) point out, the video presentations allow interparental conflict behaviors to be precisely controlled for and presented identically across participants. Furthermore, it should be noted that these video presentations have been deemed reliable in previous studies.

Another limitation of the current study was limited statistical power. A post-hoc power analysis with the program G*Power (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009) indicated that regression models using OPS to predict CPIC and video presentation scores only had enough power to detect a medium effect size but not a small effect size. The same was true of regression models using CPIC and video presentation scores to predict internalizing problems. Future research could possibly improve the power of the video presentations by using a statistical approach that examined responses to each video individually rather than averaging responses across the videos.

The current study examined whether immediate and long-term cognitions are linked to interparental conflict and whether either of these types of cognitions predict internalizing problems. While the study did not find significant results for these tests, the study provides a preliminary examination of the relationship between immediate and long-term cognitions, which has not been thoroughly addressed in the existing literature. Furthermore, the results of the study yield directions for future research, which may be valuable when further attempting to understand how children's appraisals are affected by interparental conflict. Considerable research has found that interparental conflict is associated with children's thoughts and behaviors, and it is important to continue researching this relationship in order to effectively understand how to prevent negative cognitions and adjustment outcomes.

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Table 1

Correlations and Descriptive Statistics

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Dad Videos	---									
2. Mom Videos	.86**	---								
3. Self-Blame	.2	.16	---							
4. Threat	-.13	-.11	.2	---						
5. Conflict Properties	-.01	-.03	.30**	.55**	---					
6. OPS	.04	-.04	.17	.17	.44**	---				
7. Internalizing	.04	.08	.07	.12	-.05	.17	---			
8. Anxious/Depressed	.02	.09	.11	.11	-.03	.2	.93**	---		
9. Child Age	.03	-.05	.05	-.08	.05	.08	-.07	-.09	---	
10. Family SES	.17	.26*	-.03	.02	.08	-.02	-.12	-.14	.05	---
Mean	1.99	1.89	1.65	6.98	9.07	8.35	5.42	3.1	10.58	5.35
Standard Deviation	.26	.27	2.18	4.45	6.34	4.23	5.36	3.48	.89	1.01

Note. OPS = O'Leary-Porter Scale. Child Age: Listed in years. SES = Socioeconomic Status. Family SES: 1 = 0-\$10,000, 2 = \$10,001-25,000, 3 = \$25,001-40,000, 4 = \$40,001-65,000, 5 = \$65,001-80,000, 6 = \$80,001+

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

Table 2

Regression Analysis for Self-Blame Subscale Predicting Child Internalizing Score

Variable	Model 1: Evaluations of Dad Actor's Behavior			Model 2: Evaluations of Mom Actress' Behavior		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Dad videos	.99	2.29	.05			
Mom videos				2.08	2.23	.10
Self-Blame	.14	.27	.06	.11	.27	.05
Child age	-.40	.64	-.07	-.35	.64	-.06
Family SES	-.76	.67	-.12	-.88	.68	-.14

Table 3

Regression Analysis for Self-Blame Subscale Predicting Child Anxiety/Depression Score

Variable	Model 1: Evaluations of Dad Actor's Behavior			Model 2: Evaluations of Mom Actress' Behavior		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Dad videos	.34	1.47	.03			
Mom videos				1.38	1.43	.11
Self-Blame	.17	.17	.11	.15	.17	.10
Child age	-.35	.41	-.09	-.32	.41	-.08
Family SES	-.53	.43	-.13	-.62	.44	-.16

Table 4

Regression Analysis for Threat Subscale Predicting Child Internalizing Score

Variable	Model 1: Evaluations of Dad Actor's Behavior			Model 2: Evaluations of Mom Actress' Behavior		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Dad videos	1.58	2.25	.08			
Mom videos				2.60	2.19	.13
Threat	.15	.13	.13	.16	.13	.13
Child age	-.33	.64	-.05	-.27	.64	-.04
Family SES	-.82	.66	-.13	-.95	.67	-.15

Table 5

Regression Analysis for Threat Subscale Predicting Child Anxiety/Depression Score

Variable	Model 1: Evaluations of Dad Actor's Behavior			Model 2: Evaluations of Mom Actress' Behavior		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Dad videos	.85	1.45	.06			
Mom videos				1.83	1.41	.14
Threat	.09	.08	.12	.10	.08	.13
Child age	-.29	.41	-.07	-.25	.41	-.06
Family SES	-.58	.43	-.15	-.68	.43	-.17

Table 6

Regression Analysis for Conflict Properties Subscale Predicting Internalizing Score

Variable	Model 1: Evaluations of Dad Actor's Behavior			Model 2: Evaluations of Mom Actress' Behavior		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Dad videos	1.21	2.24	.06			
Mom videos				2.22	2.19	.11
Conflict Properties	-.03	.09	-.03	-.03	.09	-.03
Child age	-.37	.64	-.06	-.33	.64	-.05
Family SES	-.77	.67	-.12	-.89	.68	-.14

Table 7

Regression Analysis for Conflict Properties Subscale Predicting Child Anxiety/Depression Score

Variable	Model 1: Evaluations of Dad Actor's Behavior			Model 2: Evaluations of Mom Actress' Behavior		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Dad videos	.63	1.45	.05			
Mom videos				1.61	1.41	.12
Conflict Properties	-.01	.06	-.02	-.01	.06	-.01
Child age	-.32	.42	-.08	-.29	.41	-.07
Family SES	-.55	.43	-.14	-.65	.44	-.16