



The Divorce Process and Child Adaptation Trajectory Typology (DPCATT) Model: The Shaping Role of Predivorce and Postdivorce Interparental Conflict

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Abstract

Divorce has been conceptualized as a process. Research has extensively demonstrated that it is pre/postdivorce family environment factors that primarily account for the variability in children's adaptation over parental divorce process rather than the legal divorce per se. Amongst various factors, interparental conflict has been consistently identified as a prominent one. Surprisingly, a single source is still lacking that comprehensively synthesizes the extant findings. This review fills this gap by integrating the numerous findings across studies into a more coherent Divorce Process and Child Adaptation Trajectory Typology (DPCATT) Model to illustrate that pre/postdivorce interparental conflict plays crucial roles in shaping child adaptation trajectories across parental divorce process. This review also summarizes the mechanisms (e.g., child cognitive and emotional processes, coparenting, parent–child relations) via which pre/postdivorce interparental conflict determines these trajectories and the factors (e.g., child gender and age, child coping, grandparental support) that interact with pre/postdivorce interparental conflict to further complicate these trajectories. In addition, echoing the call of moving beyond the monolithic conceptualization of pre/postdivorce interparental conflict, we also review studies on the differential implications of different aspects (e.g., frequency versus intensity) and types (e.g., overt versus covert) of interparental conflict for child adjustment. Last, limitations of prior studies and avenues for future research are discussed. The proposed framework may serve as a common knowledge base for researchers to compare/interpret results, detect cutting edges of the fields, and design new studies. The specificity, complexity, nuance, and diversity inherent within our proposed model await to be more fully revealed.

Keywords Divorce process · Interparental conflict · Child adaptation · Trajectory · Typology

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Although the overall divorce rates in the United States (U.S.) appear to have been declining since the 1980s, they still remain high today (Raley & Sweeney, 2020; Smock & Schwartz, 2020). According to the very recent family profiles reports, the overall U.S. divorce rate was 15.5 divorces per 1000 married women in 2019 (Reynolds, 2020) and even the first divorce rate was 14.9 divorces per 1000 women in a first marriage in 2018 and remained at this in 2019 (Reynolds, 2021). Notably, estimates by contemporary demographers suggest that approximately half of first marriages and about 60% of second marriages in the U.S. will eventually end in dissolution (e.g., Copen et al., 2012; Schoen & Canudas-Romo, 2006). Based on the U.S. Census data, nearly 1.1–1.2 million American children experience parental divorce per year (e.g., Kreider, 2007; Kreider & Ellis, 2011).

Analyses using data from the Survey of Income and Program Participation by the U.S. Census Bureau (Scherer &

Mayol-García, 2020) show that in 2018, among all 72 million children under 18 in the U.S., 2.1 million (2.9%) experienced a transition in parental presence or the presence of a parent's partner in the household during calendar year 2017. For these children, the most common change in number of coresident parents was the transition from two parents to one (41%), which was primarily driven by the dissolution of parental unions. The latest report released by the Statista Research Department (2021) indicates that the number of children under 17 living with single divorced parents in the U.S. in 2020 was 5.819 million. Against such demographic background, a substantial body of research has consistently demonstrated that transitions in parents' close relationships, especially parental divorce, are associated with a wide range of behavioral, psychological, and academic problems among children (see Amato, 2000, 2001, 2010; Raley & Sweeney, 2020; Reifman et al., 2001; Venta & Walker, 2021).

During the past decades, research on the link between parental divorce and children's adjustment has been characterized by two prominent trends (Demo & Fine, 2010, 2017; Harvey & Fine, 2010; Kelly & Emery, 2003). One is that, rather than a discrete event, divorce has been reconceptualized as a process unfolding over time, which typically begins years before the legal divorce and extends for years following the legal dissolution (Tullius et al., 2021). The other is that more and more researchers have shifted their focus from the average differences between children from continuously married families and those from divorced families to the issues related to how much variation there is in children's adaptation trajectories over the process of parental divorce and what factors can account for this variation.

A number of studies using data from diverse samples have demonstrated that it is actually the quality of the predivorce (e.g., Booth & Amato, 2001; Radetzki et al., 2021; Videon, 2002) or postdivorce family environment (e.g., Avci et al., 2021; Harper & Fine, 2006; Lamela et al., 2016; Weaver & Schofield, 2015; Whiteside & Becker, 2000) that primarily accounts for the great variability in children's adjustment rather than the parental legal divorce per se (Emery, 1982, 2011; Kelly & Emery, 2003; Kristjansson et al., 2009). Moreover, studies also have made significant progress in examining the association between family environment and child adjustment trajectories across the entire parental divorce process (i.e., before, during, and after the legal marital dissolution) by employing more advanced statistical methods such as growth mixture modeling, growth-curve models, and pooled-time series models and identifying the implicated moderating and mediating mechanisms (Kim, 2011; O'Hara et al., 2021; O'Hara et al., 2019a, 2019b; Sorek, 2020; Strohschein, 2005; Sun, 2001; Sun & Li, 2002, 2011; Xerxa et al., 2020).

Among the family environment factors affecting child adjustment to parental divorce, interparental conflict has

been the most thoroughly investigated during the past several decades (DeAnda et al., 2020; Kelly, 2000; McIntosh, 2003; O'Hara et al., 2021; O'Hara et al., 2019a, 2019b; van Dijk et al., 2020; Vandewater & Lansford, 1998). It has been consistently identified as a prominent factor that can account for the variability in children's adjustment trajectories across the entire parental divorce process (Amato & Rezac, 1994; Booth & Amato, 2001; Fabricius & Luecken, 2007; Gager et al., 2016; Lucas et al., 2013; Potter, 2010; Sandler et al., 2013; Xerxa et al., 2020). However, rather than ask whether pre/postdivorce interparental conflicts affect children's adjustment at one specific time point or divorce stage, some more pertinent questions should be: (a) whether interparental conflicts prior to and after parental legal dissolution may play a crucial role in shaping children's adaptation trajectories across their parents' entire divorce process and the nature and shape of these potential trajectories; (b) why pre/postdivorce interparental conflicts may determine the shapes of these trajectories; and (c) what factors may interact with pre/postdivorce interparental conflicts to further increase the variability in these trajectories.

Surprisingly, a single source is still lacking that comprehensively identifies or synthesizes the relevant findings that have been scattered throughout the literature. Thus, researchers in this field still lack a common knowledge base for comparing or interpreting results, for detecting the cutting edge of the field, or for designing new studies, and as a result new data are less likely to efficiently accumulate to catalyze theory development or effectively inform interventions in this area. Thus, organizing and integrating the available numerous specific findings on this topic into a more coherent framework is both theoretically and practically pressing.

The present article seeks to respond to the aforementioned calls by not only reviewing the existing research regarding the link between pre/postdivorce interparental conflicts and children's adjustment, but also integrating the literature to generate a conceptual divorce process and typology model that may inform and stimulate future research. Because parent's remarriage or repartnering after divorce may further complicate children's adjustment trajectories (for reviews, see Anderson & Greene, 2013; Cavanagh & Fomby, 2019; Ganong & Coleman, 2018; Coleman et al., 2000; Ganong et al., 2006; Ganong et al., 2019; Raley & Sweeney, 2020; Sun & Li, 2008, 2009; Sweeney, 2010) and reviewing this body of research is beyond the scope of the present review, the families we refer to here are those families that have experienced divorce but neither partner has remarried or repartnered. In addition, we acknowledge the fact that several comprehensive reviews of the broader literature on the implications of interparental conflict for child development have also been published (Davies & Cummings, 2015; Grych & Fincham, 2001; Harold & Sellers, 2018; Zemp et al., 2016). Notably, the present review

extends these reviews by specifically considering the influence of interparental conflict on child adjustment in the context of the parental divorce process. Additionally, its unique contribution also lies in the synthesis of scattered findings in a process and typology model, which not only echoes the calls for increased attention on trajectories and heterogeneity in child adaptation to parental divorce as a dynamic process instead of a static event, but also offers a more coherent and integrative framework that can be a knowledge base for future research.

Organized in four sections, the present review: (a) first illustrates a basic version of the Divorce Process and Child Adaptation Trajectory Typology (DPCATT) Model: (i.e., without considering potential mediators or moderators) and provides evidence to back up the children's adjustment trajectories across the divorce process as depicted in the DPCATT model; (b) reviews the mechanisms (i.e., mediators) through which predivorce and postdivorce interparental conflicts can determine the shapes of these trajectories; (c) summarizes the factors that may moderate the association between pre/postdivorce interparental conflicts and child adjustment, which may further contribute to acquiring an understanding of the variability in child adjustment trajectories; and (d) discusses the limitations of prior research and directions for future research.

A Conceptual Process and Typology Model of Predivorce and Postdivorce Interparental Conflict and Children's Adaptation Trajectories

Although divorces are often preceded by long-term marital conflicts, some marriages that end in divorce are characterized by few arguments and even moderate levels of happiness (Amato & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007), which suggests that the levels of predivorce interparental conflicts can be quite varied. In the aftermath of divorce, whereas most parents diminish their conflicts over time, some former spouses continue to remain highly conflicted with each other over issues like child support, custody, and visitation arrangements (Bertelsen, 2021; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002; Kelly, 2007; King & Heard, 1999; Maccoby et al., 1992; Visser et al., 2017), which indicates that the levels of postdivorce interparental conflict also can be quite varied (Drapeau et al., 2009; Fischer et al., 2005; O'Hara et al., 2019a, 2019b; Sbarra & Emery, 2008). Such facts highlight the need to consider a *taxonomy* of families that are characterized by distinct configurations of predivorce and postdivorce interparental conflicts. Accordingly, it is possible that divorced families can be at least categorized into four distinct subgroups based on the dimensions of the levels of predivorce and postdivorce interparental conflicts

(i.e., a low predivorce conflict and low postdivorce conflict group, a high predivorce conflict and low postdivorce conflict group, a low predivorce conflict and high postdivorce conflict group, and a high predivorce conflict and high postdivorce conflict group). Furthermore, this typology may generate opportunities for a wide range of potential child adjustment trajectories across the entire parental divorce process. Thus, it appears warranted to develop a process and typology model that depicts children's adjustment trajectories across their parents' divorce process (Fig. 1).

Predivorce Interparental Conflicts and Children's Predivorce Adjustment

A substantial body of research has consistently corroborated the detrimental effects of marital conflicts on children's concurrent and longitudinal development (for reviews, see Davies & Cummings, 1994; Fincham, 1994; Grych & Fincham, 1990, 2001; Harold & Sellers, 2018; Ran et al., 2021; van Eldik et al., 2020). Thus, for children whose parents eventually broke up after long-term high levels of marital conflict, their well-being is likely to deteriorate over time even prior to the actual parental legal divorce (see A_3 and A_4 in Fig. 1), whereas for children whose family lives preceding parental divorce were characterized by few arguments, little aggression, and even moderate levels of happiness, their predivorce adjustment may stay at relatively stable high levels (see A_1 and A_2 in Fig. 1).

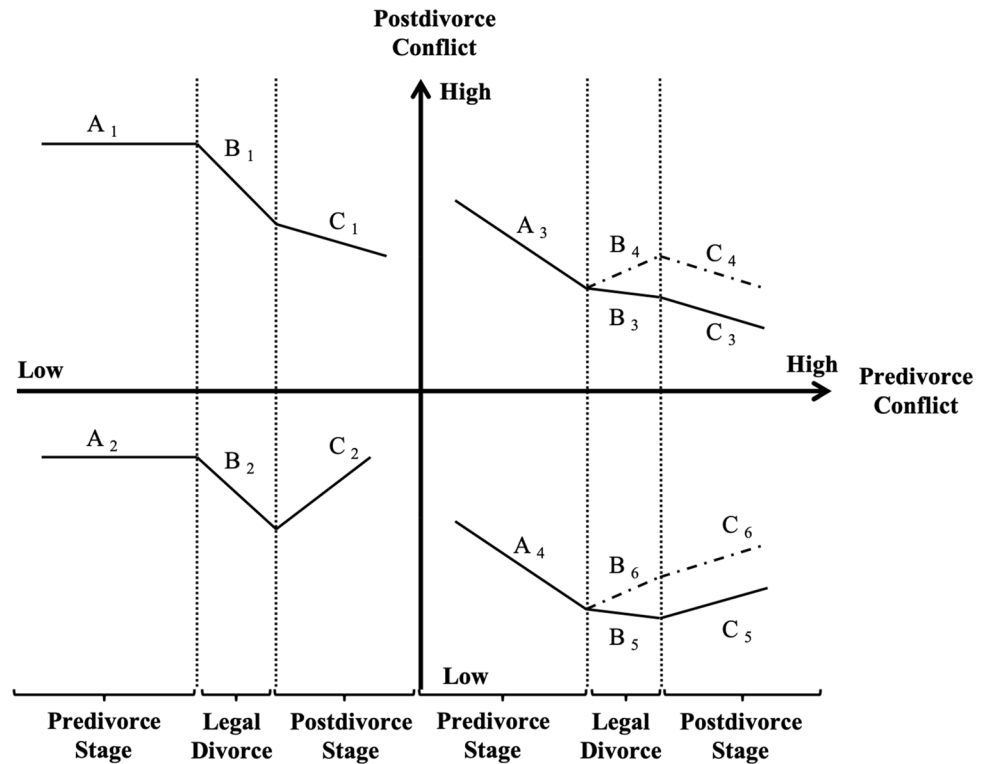
Indeed, one of the most consistent findings in the existing longitudinal research, which employed growth-curve models or pooled-time series models to examine children's adjustment trajectories across the entire parental divorce process, is that, even before marital breakup, children often exhibited higher levels of internalizing problems (e.g., depression) and externalizing problems (e.g., antisocial behaviors), and lower levels of academic achievement than children whose parents remained married, and such differences were mostly attributable to the more dysfunctional family environments (e.g., marital distress) within households that subsequently broke up (Strohschein, 2005, 2012; Sun, 2001; Sun & Li, 2002, 2011).

Predivorce Interparental Conflicts and Children's Initial Reactions to Parental Divorce

There is great heterogeneity in children's initial reactions to parental divorce (Harvey & Fine, 2010; Stewart et al., 1997). The levels of interparental conflict prior to marital dissolution are likely to determine children's immediate reactions to parental divorce and further influence their short-term

Fig. 1 The Divorce Process and Child Adaptation Trajectory Typology (DPCATT) Model.

Note. In this model, the trajectory lines refer to children’s adaptation as an average of adjustment in various domains because: **a** interparental conflict has comprehensively negative influences on various aspects of child development, although the magnitudes may be varied (Davies & Cummings, 2015; Grych & Fincham, 2001; Ran et al., 2021; van Eldik et al., 2020); and **b** this review represents a very first step to construct a conceptual model of pre/postdivorce interparental conflict and child adaptation trajectories. We acknowledge the model depicted above may be slightly different across child development outcomes, but addressing this question is beyond the scope of our review



adjustment following parental divorce (Amato, 2000; Harold & Murch, 2005; Hetherington, 2006). For children in high-conflict marriages, although parental divorce is inevitably painful, it is more likely to be perceived as an “optimal” choice or a great relief, and the adjustment of these children may be thus characterized by only slight declines (see B₃ and B₅ in Fig. 1) or even improvements (see B₄ and B₆ in Fig. 1) in the short term. However, for children in low-distress marriages, parental divorce is likely to be much more painful and to be perceived as an unexpected, uncontrollable loss and an acute life crisis, and these children may therefore experience a drastic worsening of their adjustment at least in the short-term following parental divorce (see B₁ and B₂ in Fig. 1).

Some empirical studies have corroborated such a conditional effect of pre-disruption interparental conflicts on children’s immediate postdivorce adjustment. The 12-year longitudinal study conducted by Amato et al. (1995) demonstrated that children in high-conflict marriages appeared to benefit from parental divorce, whereas children in low-conflict marriages appeared to suffer from parental divorce. Booth and Amato (2001) further speculated that children in high-conflict marriages might perceive parental divorce as an opportunity to escape from a toxic home environment, whereas children in low-conflict marriages might define parental divorce as an unanticipated tragedy, and they were more likely to make self-attributions for parental divorce and lack a sense of control over the sudden change in their

lives. In addition, in a nationally representative sample of Canadian children, Strohschein (2005) found an interaction between parental divorce and predivorce levels of family dysfunction (i.e., the absence of supportive, trusting, and respectful family relationships) in their effects on children’s adjustment, suggesting that children’s antisocial behaviors decreased when marriages in highly dysfunctional families were dissolved.

Similarly, results of a recent study by Brand et al. (2019) suggest that parental divorce is not uniformly disruptive to children’s educational attainment. Specifically, they found a negative effect of parental divorce on educational attainment among children whose parents were unlikely to divorce, but no academic consequences of parental divorce among children whose parents were likely to divorce (e.g., high levels of marital instability and conflict). They argue that for children whose parents are unlikely to break up, divorce is an unexpected shock, whereas children in high-risk marriages may well anticipate parental divorce and have grown accustomed to adversities in their lives through already high levels of family instability and conflicts even before the divorce. Likewise, using data drawn from the first three waves of the UK Millennium Cohort Study, Garriga and Pennoni (2020) also found that parental divorce appears to exert the most harmful effects among children whose parents enjoyed a very good parental relationship quality prior to separation.

In addition, based on data from a community sample (N = 585), Yu et al. (2010) tested the potential interactive

effects of marital conflict and divorce (measured from age 5 through age 17 years) on parent–adult children’s relationship quality (assessed at age 22 years). Although both marital conflict and divorce were found to be negatively associated with poorer parent–child relationship quality, an interaction between them indicated a stress relief pattern that “parental divorce, even as a stressful life event, may actually ameliorate some of the negative effects of marital conflict on children’s adjustment if divorce presents escape from the more stressful environment of a high-conflict family.” (p. 290). Specifically, for young adults whose parents remained in a high-conflict marriage, parents’ marital conflict was found to be associated with adult children’s feeling of less closeness and support and more conflict and control with their mothers. In contrast, for young adult children from divorced families, parents’ marital conflict (which was more likely to be characterized by violence than the non-divorced group) was not associated with subsequent conflict and control that adult children experienced with their mothers. As Yu et al. speculated, it is possible that after leaving a violent or abusive marriage, mothers tend to be more physically and mentally healthy and thus more able to establish a healthier relationship with their children, which in turn may facilitate children’s adjustment.

Postdivorce Interparental Conflicts and Children’s Postdivorce Long-Term Adjustment

While parental divorce represents a temporary stressful event that often creates short-term disturbance and subclinical levels of pains for some children, it is a chronic strain that causes long-term continuous decrements in well-being, which may further develop into pathological symptoms and persist well into adulthood, for some other children (Demo & Fine, 2010; Emery, 1999; Harvey & Fine, 2010; Lauermann-Billings & Emery, 2000). Thus, presumably, parental divorce can have either (or both) short-term or long-term consequences for children’s adjustment, depending on a variety of factors. As Hetherington (2006) stated (see also in a review by Hadfield et al., 2018), although parental divorce often may offer children opportunities to escape from aversive family contexts with high levels of interparental conflict, when examining child adjustment trajectories across the parental divorce process, we also should take the postdivorce family environment into consideration. What she referred to is that we should consider, in the aftermath of parental divorce, whether children actually move into more harmonious family contexts in which interparental conflicts considerably subside or children are still caught between divorced parents and suffer from continuously high levels of interparental conflict over issues like coparenting

arrangements. Her insightful point of view suggests that postdivorce interparental conflicts may be one of the most important factors that can play a crucial role in determining whether the immediate negative effect of divorce on children’s adjustment will further develop into a chronic strain that may persist into adulthood.

Therefore, in the proposed DPCATT Model, on average, for children whose parents have high levels of conflict after divorce, the immediate detrimental (see C_1 and C_3 in Fig. 1) effects of divorce on their adjustment are likely to be transformed into long-term chronic strains or the immediate beneficial (see C_4 in Fig. 1) effects of divorce on their adjustment are counterbalanced or even reversed and then are transformed into long-term chronic strains. However, for children whose parents have few arguments and little aggression after the breakup, they are likely to gradually recover from stress and pains associated with parental divorce (see C_2 and C_5 in Fig. 1), or the immediate positive effects of parental dissolution on their adjustment are further consolidated into long-term benefits (see C_6 in Fig. 1). Notably, we acknowledge that although the conditional effects of postdisruption interparental conflict on children’s postdivorce adjustment are theoretically sound, it is surprising to find that empirical research directly testing such effects still remain extremely scarce. However, some studies have provided indirect support (see the currently enclosed subsection entitled “Parental Involvement and Parent–Child Relationship Following Divorce”). Therefore, future research may particularly benefit from directly examining this part of our proposed model.

Mechanisms Through Which Pre and Postdivorce Interparental Conflicts May Shape Children’s Adaptation Trajectories Across the Divorce Process

By illustrating a basic version of the DPCATT Model, we try to address the question of whether interparental conflicts prior to and after parental legal dissolution may play a crucial role in shaping children’s adjustment trajectories across their parents’ entire divorce process and how the potential trajectories may look like. Then, a further question should be why predivorce and postdivorce interparental conflicts can determine the shapes of these trajectories, which is the central focus of the following section of the present review.

The past several decades have witnessed a proliferation of empirical studies seeking to understand and disentangle the complicated mechanisms through which pre/postdivorce interparental conflicts influence children’s adjustment. The identified mediators so far can be classified into multiple domains: (a) children’s perceptions and feelings, (b) parental personal well-being, (c) parenting behaviors and stress, (d)

the parent–child dyadic relationship, (e) the father–child–mother triadic relationship, (f) adult children’s relationships with their own partners, and (g) the third-party involvement in the divorce process (e.g., attorney).

Children’s Perceptions and Feelings

By testing a biopsychosocial model among 266 university students whose parents divorced before they were 16 years old, Fabricius and Luecken (2007) found that young adult children’s ongoing distress surrounding their parents’ divorces (e.g., loss, self-blame) mediated the association between interparental conflicts before divorce and up to 5 years after and their physical health indicated by headaches, dizziness, check pains, back pains, and nausea.

Using data from 58 divorced/separated families with children between the ages of 4 and 12 years, Lee (1997) found that postdivorce interparental conflict predicted children’s increased behavior problems, which was mediated by children’s continued contact with parents, children’s emotion experiences of anger and the use of support-seeking from parents as an emotion regulation strategy. In a sample of Spanish mother–adolescent dyads (between 12 and 16 years old) from both intact and divorced families, Martínez-Pampliega et al. (2021) found that, in divorced families, destructive interparental conflict was positively associated with children’s internalizing problems through a positive association with children’s perception of threat during interparental conflict. In addition, destructive interparental conflict was also found to be negatively associated with children’s perceived family satisfaction through a positive association with children’s perception of threat. Further, children’s perceived family satisfaction was negatively associated with parent–child hostility, which in turn was positively associated with children’s internalizing and externalizing problems. In contrast, children’s perception of self-blame during interparental conflict was only found to be positively and directly associated with their externalizing problems.

In a two-wave longitudinal study, Wolchik et al. (2002) examined the associations between children’s experienced stressors after parental divorce (e.g., mother and father argued in front of children, parents physically hit/hurt each other), fear of abandonment, mother–child relationship, and children’s adjustment problems among 216 children and their residential mothers. Results indicated that children’s reported time 1 fear of abandonment mediated the association between children’s reported time 1 divorce stressors and mothers’ reported time 2 children’s internalizing and externalizing problems. Similarly, in a sample of 559 children (ages 9–18), O’Hara et al. (2021) found that pretest postdivorce interparental conflict predicted child fear of abandonment 3 months later, which then predicted child- and

teacher-reported child mental health problems 10 months later. These findings may suggest that the deleterious effects of pre/postdivorce interparental conflicts on children’s adjustment may be realized at least partially, through resulting in some implicit hurts deep inside children’s hearts. Relatedly, children’s sense of belonging also could be an explanatory mechanism that await to be tested in future studies. Parental divorce or separation is often accompanied by changes in the home and social environments (e.g., increase in interparental conflict) in which children spend their time on a daily basis, they may experience a diminished sense of belonging to one or multiple social contexts (e.g., family, school, peer, or neighborhood), which in turn shapes their postdivorce adjustment (see a review by Rejaän et al., 2021).

In addition, it is also notable that existing research in this domain has been predominantly guided by the emotional security theory (Davies & Cummings, 1994) and the cognitive contextual framework (Grych & Fincham, 1990). However, the modest effect sizes highlight substantial variability between children in the strength of the relevant mediational pathways (see Rhoades, 2008; van Eldik et al., 2020). Prominent interparental conflict scholars (Davies & Sturge-Apple, 2007; Davies et al., 2021) thus have called for refinements to the classic models by underscoring that interparental conflict may not merely sensitize children’s distress and behavioral responses in the linear, dose–response manner as originally proposed. Considering a quadratic manner as suggested by the curvilinear models of risk sensitization (see Arbel et al., 2020; Repetti & Robles, 2016; Susman, 2006) may constitute a promising direction for future research in this field. To our knowledge, no study has tested such patterns specifically in divorce families, but research based on intact families has been emerging during the recent years (e.g., Davies et al., 2020, 2021).

Parental Personal Well-Being

Although the complex interplay between parental well-being, interparental conflict, parenting, and children’s adjustment has been extensively examined in intact families (e.g., Fisher et al., 2015; Schudlich et al., 2019; Shelton & Harold, 2008), it remains understudied in divorced families. Recently, using cross-sectional data from a sample of 144 parent–adolescent dyads in Iran, with 69 from divorced families, Asanjarani et al. (2021) found that parents’ depressive symptoms mediated the associations between interparental overt hostility and adolescents’ adjustment outcomes, including both behavioral problems and prosocial behaviors, specifically for divorced families. Despite the scarceness of available research, more efforts are needed to test the roles of parental well-being in the association between pre/postdivorce interparental conflict and child adaptation, given

the well-documented adult health consequences of relationship dissolution (see Whisman et al., 2022; Sbarra & Coan, 2017), the critical implications of parental well-being for both parenting and child adaptation (see Galbally & Lewis, 2017; Goodman & Brand, 2008), as well as the impacts of parental distress on interparental conflict and child adjustment in the context of divorce (see Fear et al., 2009; Lucas et al., 2013; Martínez-Pampliega et al., 2021; Taylor & Andrews, 2009; Trinder et al., 2008).

Parenting Behaviors and Stress

Fauber et al. (1990) investigated the associations between overt interparental conflicts, disrupted parenting behaviors, and children's adjustment among 51 young adolescents from recently divorced families. Results indicated that the negative association between postdivorce interparental conflicts and young adolescents' internalizing problems is mediated by disrupted parenting behaviors (e.g., maternal psychological control, maternal rejection/withdraw). Hakvoort et al. (2012) examined the associations between divorced mothers' relationships with their ex-partners, relationships with their children, and the experience of parenting stress among 117 divorced single mothers and 64 remarried mothers. Results indicated that maternal parenting stress following divorce fully mediated the association between postdivorce interparental conflicts over children's issues and children's relationship quality with their mothers after divorce. Lindsey et al. (2006) examined the potential consequences of family conflict in divorced and non-divorced families for boys' friendship status and friendship quality. They found that, in divorced families, parent-child and/or sibling conflict resolution strategy mediated the association between interparental conflict and boy's friendship extensiveness and/or animosity. All these findings may suggest that it is important to examine the association between interparental conflict and children's adjustment from the family systems perspective because the stress in the couple subsystem may spill over into the parent-child subsystem and further influences children's development.

Parent-Child Dyadic Relationships and Father-Child-Mother Triadic Relationships

The longitudinal study conducted by Kline et al. (1991) utilized a process model to examine how family relationships before and after legal divorce were linked to children's subsequent emotional and behavioral adjustment among 154 children. They found that predivorce marital conflicts were indirectly related to child behavioral

problems through postdivorce mother-child relationships. The aforementioned study conducted by Fabricius and Luecken (2007) also found that the quality of young adult children's long-term relationships with their biological fathers after their parents' legal divorce mediated the association between interparental conflicts and indicators of their physical health. In terms of the father-child-mother triadic relationships, Buchanan et al. (1991) investigated the associations between postdivorce interparental conflicts, children's feeling caught between parents, and children's adjustment 4.5 years after parental separation among 522 adolescents. Results indicated that interparental conflicts following divorce affected adolescents' postdivorce depression and deviance through children's feeling caught between their parents. Notably, in a recent study using data from 493 young adults from first marriage and divorced families, Schrodt and LaFreniere (2021) examined the mediating role of children's feeling of being caught between parents in the link between witnessing interparental conflict (i.e., demand/withdraw patterns and aggression) and children's mental health. Further, they also tested the potential moderating roles of parental confirmation (i.e., messages that acknowledge another person as unique, valuable, and worthy of respect) and divorce status in such indirect pathways. Most importantly, they found that paternal confirmation moderated the indirect effect of witnessing parents' demand/withdraw patterns on young adults' mental health via their feelings of being caught, and this moderation was also conditioned by divorce status. Simply put, results of this study suggest that nonresidential fathers who communicate with their children in highly confirming ways may provide a sense of relational reassurance and thus protect children from loyalty divides during exposure to interparental conflict after divorce, which in turn may promote children's postdivorce mental health.

In addition, following parental divorce or separation, the process of family restructuring may blur parent-child boundaries that are related to intimacy and power. Parentification, defined as the role reversal in the parent-child relationship wherein parents rely upon their children for emotional support (Peris & Emery, 2005), or as "a parent-child dynamic in which children assume adultlike caregiving responsibilities while parents fail to reciprocate appropriate caregiving and restrict children's developing autonomy" (Nuttall et al., p. 276). The typically stressful context of divorce and associated interparental conflict and parents' inappropriate disclosure likely elicit children's caregiving behaviors (Afifi et al., 2007; Nuttall et al., 2021). In response to parents' support-seeking, children may attempt to intervene in highly emotion-charged parental issues (e.g., interparental conflict) with destructive and ineffective strategies. The emotional burdens and experiences of failure in managing

parents' problems likely pose significant threats to children's adjustment (Peris & Emery, 2005). As such, parentification represents an explanatory mechanism that merits more attention in future studies.

Intergenerational Transmission

Adult offspring from divorced families often doubt their ability to successfully navigate close relationship challenges, question the value of marriage, hold pessimistic views towards marriage (see Shanholtz et al., 2021), are more likely to experience distress in their close relationships (Roper et al., 2020), and feel less dedicated to their relationships (Godfrey et al., 2018). Dennison and Koerner (2006) examined the implications of postdivorce interparental conflict for adolescents' attitudes about marriage in a sample of 194 mother-adolescent pairs (aged 11 to 17 years). They found that higher levels of postdivorce interparental conflict were predictive of adolescents' more negative attitudes towards marriage. Further, this association was exacerbated by maternal disclosures about financial concerns only among girls. That is, higher interparental conflict was especially predictive of less positive attitudes about marriage for girls who were also exposed to frequent maternal disclosures about financial concerns. As Dennison and Koerner interpreted, it is possible that as compared to boys, girls tend to identify more with their mothers (who are likely to be the residential parents) and thus may be more influenced by what their mothers disclose and are concerned about. In addition, following divorce women are more likely than men to experience financial difficulties. Witnessing mothers' financial troubles as a result of divorce, girls may make a connection between their mothers' marital life and their own possible future, which may translate into worries and pessimistic views on marriage.

A short-term longitudinal study conducted by Cui and Fincham (2010) examined the effects of parental divorce and predivorce marital conflicts on young adult children's romantic relationships among 285 young adults. They found that parental divorce and predivorce marital conflict were independently associated with young adult children's romantic relationships through different mechanisms. Specifically, whereas parental divorce was associated with young adults' low levels of relationship quality through adult children's negative attitudes toward marriage, positive attitudes toward divorce, and lack of commitment to their own intimate relationships, parents' predivorce conflicts were inversely associated with young adult children's romantic relationship quality through adult children's conflicts with their own intimate partners. Their findings suggest that there may be a long shadow of predivorce interparental conflicts on children's adjustment across their life course. A thorough

understanding of this phenomenon “should be useful not only to social scientists who study intergenerational transmission but also to practitioners who work with couples to achieve stable and satisfying relationships—especially those from unstable families of origin.” (Amato & Patterson, 2017, p. 736).

Attorney Involvement

By simultaneously investigating the family and legal indicators of child adjustment to parental divorce among families with young children, Pruett et al. (2003) found that the effects of postdivorce interparental conflicts on child outcomes were mediated not only by paternal involvement and parent-child relationship quality but also by attorney involvement. Specifically, couples who experienced greater postdivorce conflicts were more likely to utilize an attorney, which in turn predicted fewer internalizing problems in their children. One plausible explanation for this mediating effect might be that postdivorce interparental conflict often involves highly contentious issues (e.g., where the child would live, the amount of the child support order, visitation problems) that parents could neither ignore nor resolve on their own. The potential benefits of seeking assistance from third-party professionals may foster protective actions regarding the child and help to successfully navigate and contain the stress associate with both divorce and interparental conflict (Waller & Emory, 2018). Specifically, working with an attorney during the divorce process, the attorney may help absorb some of the harmful effects of interparental conflict on child development, especially as the interparental conflict escalates during the legal process. Considering that many divorcing parents determine their and their children's interests with the aid of legal counsel, this finding may hold important implications for the role of attorneys in a collaborative divorce model (Pruett et al., 2005). In addition, this finding also suggests that it is important to explore the question of why and how pre/post interparental conflicts influence children's adjustment from a more ecological perspective, whereby the influences of factors outside of family contexts are taken into consideration.

Factors that May Moderate the Association between Pre and Postdivorce Interparental Conflicts and Child Adaptation

One important limitation of the basic DPCATT model is that it depicts the association between interparental conflicts and children's adjustment trajectories across divorce process without considering potential moderators. In other words, in each stage of the divorce process, the association

between interparental conflicts and child adjustment may not be as simple as what we depicted in the basic DPCATT model; instead, an extensive variety of factors may moderate the association between pre/postdivorce interparental conflicts and child adjustment, which may further contribute to the variability in child adjustment trajectories. Thus, in the following section, we go beyond the average association between pre/postdivorce interparental conflicts and child adjustment trajectories to summarize factors that may moderate this link.

Children's Individual Characteristics

Children's age is one of the most thoroughly investigated children's individual characteristics that may moderate the association between pre/postdivorce interparental conflicts and child adjustment. Because developmental levels, especially the levels of social and cognitive development, significantly influence children's perceptions of and response to stressful life experiences, including parental divorce and interparental conflicts (Kurdek, 1993; Leon, 2003), major family changes are more likely to have greater impact in early childhood than they would have in other developmental stages. Indeed, young preschool children are more likely to think of interparental conflicts and parental divorce as their own fault and to fear abandonment than are older children, because they are at an age of more egocentric reasoning (Grych & Fincham, 1990; Wallerstein, 1983). Furthermore, because early childhood is a critical, formative stage for the establishment and development of children's attachment relationships with their caregivers, parental divorce, especially divorce with high levels of interparental conflicts, is likely to contribute to children's insecure attachment development (Carlson, 1998; Johnston & Campbell, 1988; Solomon & George, 1999a, 1999b). In addition, early childhood also is a sensitive period for the development of children's cognitive abilities, and existent studies suggest that high-conflict divorce may negatively influence children's quality of symbolic play, which is a key indicator of child cognitive ability (Johnston & Campbell, 1988).

Previous research also has demonstrated that the possibility that and the degree to which children feel caught between conflicted parents may vary across different development stages. In divorced families with high postdisruption interparental conflict, Johnston et al. (1989) found that loyalty conflicts declined in late adolescence, whereas Buchanan et al. (1991) found that older adolescents were more likely than younger adolescents to feel caught between their parents. Interestingly, it appears that both of the findings make sense, because older children may be not only more likely to distance themselves from one parent and form alliances with the other parent (Johnston et al., 1989), but also to

have greater emotional and cognitive abilities to empathize with both parents (Buchanan et al., 1991). In addition, some other researchers found that even young adult children from divorced families also might be caught in their divorced parents' conflicts, because parents tended to disclose their experiences in former marriages to adult children and use them as message delivers to communicate with former spouses (e.g., Afifi et al., 2009; Amato & Afifi, 2006).

Besides children's age, researchers also have attributed some of the variation in postdivorce child outcomes to children's gender (Kurdek, 1993). The most frequent and consistent finding is that parental divorce and pre/postdivorce interparental conflicts had more negative consequences for boys than for girls (e.g., Morrison & Cherlin, 1995). Several explanations have been proposed for this finding in previous research (Johnston et al., 1989; Lowery & Settle, 1985; Morrison & Cherlin, 1995; Warshak & Santrock, 1983): (a) there may be some physiological factors that may account for the greater difficulties encountered by boys than by girls (e.g., boys are more biologically predisposed toward aggression and girls' resilience such as precocity may help them cope with stressors); (b) parents may be more likely to expose boys than girls to their conflicts; (c) because most nonresident parents are fathers, the absence of a same-sex role model within the household may make boys especially vulnerable to interparental conflicts (e.g., boys living with mothers might experience more loyalty conflicts, because they are likely to not only feel a strong allegiance to their nonresident fathers but also be committed to their caregiving mothers); (d) the employed measures may not be equally sensitive to both boys' and girls' adjustment problems (e.g., girls' distress is more likely to be manifested in internalizing problems, whereas boys are more likely to have externalizing problems; and internalizing problems are more difficult to measure accurately than are externalizing problems, which may contribute to girls' lower rates of problems than boys); and (e) it also is possible that boys' initial problems (e.g., aggression) after parental divorce may represent their attempts to reestablish a masculine presence in the divorced family; unfortunately, when boys become more like their nonresident fathers, mothers are likely to vent some of their hostility toward fathers to their sons and this may further aggravate boys' problems. Theoretical speculations are intriguing and thought-provocative, but more efforts are needed to empirically elucidate the mechanisms that may effectively explain why girls and boys have differential vulnerability to pre/postdivorce interparental conflict, as research based on data from intact families has highlighted a number of potential avenues (e.g., Davies & Lindsay, 2004).

In addition, Kim et al. (1997) tested if locus of control (i.e., the extent to which individuals believe they can control events affecting them) could be counted as resilience for children of divorce and found that children exposed to

negative life events following parental disruption (including but not limited to interparental conflict) suffered from more psychological symptoms (e.g., depression) to the extent that they have little sense of control over stressful life events. Despite not being specific to postdisruption interparental conflict per se, Kim et al.'s findings may still suggest that, besides factors like age and gender, children's individual characteristics, such as personality, also merit attention when examining the association between pre/postdivorce interparental conflicts and children's adjustment. Furthermore, their findings also suggest that children do have agency or resilience to navigate the negative influences of parental divorce and interparental conflict. Likewise, in a sample of 240 children who had experienced parental divorce, O'Hara et al., (2019a, 2019b) found both main effects of child coping and child coping by interparental conflict trajectory interaction effects in predicting child psychopathology outcomes (e.g., mental health problems, substance use, and risky sexual behaviors) at the six-year follow-up after parental divorce. In general, results of this study suggest that youth's general coping capacity is a potentially modifiable protective factor for children facing parental divorce and that children in families with high levels of postdivorce conflict are particularly likely to benefit from coping-focused preventions. Notably, relevant intervention research suggests that intervention-induced improvements in parent-child relationship quality and parenting behaviors (e.g., discipline) may facilitate both short-term and long-term growth in children's coping processes (e.g., coping efficacy and active coping) and thus may help protect children against the consequences of divorce and related interparental conflict (e.g., Vélez et al., 2011).

Parental Involvement and Parent-Child Relationship Following Parental Divorce

At the outset of this section, a highly relevant term (i.e., coparenting) needs to be defined to avoid any potential confusion. Essentially, coparenting can be conceptualized as “an enterprise undertaken by two or more adults who together take on the socialization, care, and upbringing of children for whom they share responsibility” (McHale & Sirotkin, 2019, p. 138). Although there is still debate with respect to whether coparenting is a unidimensional or a multidimensional construct (Lamela et al., 2016; Saini et al., 2019), researchers have widely acknowledged that it involves multiple aspects of the interparental relationship, including (but not limited to) conflict as well as cooperation (see Feinberg, 2003; Margolin et al., 2001; McHale & Lindahl, 2011). Specifically, cooperation refers to “the extent parents exchange information about their child, support and respect each other as parents, as well as communicate to the child a climate of mutual loyalty”, whereas conflict can be defined as “the

extent of parental arguments or fights over childrearing as well as the extent of undermining the other parent through criticism, disparagement, or blame” (Teubert & Pinquart, 2010, p. 287). Accordingly, supportive coparenting is not merely characterized by the absence of destructive interparental conflict, but also encompasses proactive cooperation, constructive communication, and a shared commitment to childrearing between parents (Dush et al., 2011; Lamela et al., 2016).

In general, supportive coparenting helps preserve the nonresidential parent's involvement in childrearing after parental breakup and also has been widely demonstrated to be beneficial for child adjustment over parental divorce process (Adamsons & Pasley, 2006; Bergström et al., 2021; Lamela et al., 2016; Rejaän et al., 2021a, 2021b), despite that such effects have been somewhat challenged (see Amato et al., 2011; Beckmeyer et al., 2014; and relevant discussion in the concluding section). Further, interventions reducing interparental conflict among separated parents in custody disputes can improve coparents' relationship functioning and confidence in coparenting and thus promote their ability to work cooperatively (Owen & Rhoades, 2012).

Notably, findings of extant studies still remain highly mixed with respect to the complex roles of parental involvement and parent-child relationship quality in shaping the associations between pre/postdivorce interparental conflict and child adaptation. As such, we first provide an overview of such disparate findings and then discuss critical issues that may be implicated in the inconsistencies as well as some potential ways that may reconcile the mixed results. Using data from the National Survey of Families and Households, Amato and Rezac (1994) found that more frequent contact with nonresident fathers after divorce was associated with fewer problem behaviors for boys from divorced families when the postdivorce interparental conflicts were low, but more problem behaviors when the conflicts were high. Similarly, Kitzmann and Emery (1994) found that child custody settlements promoting ongoing contact between parents after divorce might offer both rewards and risks to child adjustment; that is, children could benefit when interparental relationship is cooperative, but might suffer when parents continue to fight with each other after breakup. Recently, using data from 1087 postseparation families in the Family Models in Germany (FAMOD) study, Augustijn (2021a) found that living in a joint physical custody arrangement was positively related to children's mental health, but when levels of interparental conflict were high children in joint physical custody arrangements displayed mental health problems that were comparable to those of children in sole custody arrangements.

Likewise, also based on the data derived from the FAMOD study (i.e., 284 children aged 11 to 14), Augustijn (2021b) found that children's experiences of parental loyalty

conflict behaviours moderated the association between custodial arrangements (i.e., joint versus sole) and children's mental health problems. Specifically, in the condition of low parental loyalty conflict behaviours, children in joint physical custody exhibited significantly less mental health problems than did those in sole physical custody, whereas in the condition of high parental loyalty conflict behaviours, there was no significant difference between the two groups in mental health problems. As McIntosh and Chisholm (2008) cautiously noted, professionals need to pay more attention to the accumulative risks for children whose care is divided between parents who lack the core relational infrastructure to support a healthy environment for shared care. Further, more efforts are needed to identify the circumstances in which joint physical custody arrangements may work to serve the best interest of all family members, even under the condition of high interparental conflict (Steinbach, 2019), especially considering that there is an increased likelihood over time that high-conflict couples may also enter joint physical custody arrangements and the socio-demographic profile of joint custody families is becoming more heterogeneous (Sodermans et al., 2013). As Pruett et al. (2014) summarized, "Critical variables in considering readiness for and the likely impact of overnight schedules include parents' psychological and social resources, the current nature of parental dynamics—particularly conflict, and the nature and quality of each parent–child relationship prior to separation." (p. 250). Indeed, accumulating evidence has indicated that the circumstances under which a given physical custody arrangement is practiced—and especially the quality of family relationships—are more important than the custody arrangement itself (see Steinbach & Augustijn, 2021; Steinbach et al., 2021).

In a longitudinal study of 121 children in the custody of mothers after parental divorce, Healy et al. (1990) found that frequent and regular paternal visitation after divorce was inversely associated with children's behavior problems when parents engaged in high protracted postdivorce conflicts, which suggests that paternal involvement after divorce may counteract the negative effects of postdivorce interparental conflict by reassuring children of the stability of their relationship with nonresidential fathers. Similarly, Sandler et al. (2013) found that the well-being of children in families with high postdivorce conflict was better when they spent adequate time with at least one parent (either father or mother) who provided high-quality parenting. This finding indicates that both high-quality maternal involvement and paternal involvement can serve as protective factors buffering the negative effects of postdivorce interparental conflicts on children's postdivorce adjustment. Some researchers (Kalmijn, 2016; Vanassche et al., 2013) have also studied postdivorce interparental conflict as a moderating factor in the association between parent–child contact and child

well-being. They found that nonresident father–child contact or shared residence was beneficial for child well-being when interparental conflict was low, but harmful for child well-being when interparental conflict was high. Likewise, results of a recent study by Herrero et al. (2020) also suggest that supportive coparenting could be a protective factor against the socioeconomic consequences associated with parental divorce for child well-being, but a risk factor in the situations of high interparental conflict. Modecki et al. (2015) examined profiles of nonresidential father engagement with their adolescent children ($N = 156$) 6 to 8 years following divorce and the prospective association between these profiles and offspring's psychosocial functioning 9 years later. They found that offspring of fathers who engagement was characterized by moderate involvement and low conflict had the highest academic achievement and the lowest externalizing problems 9 years later, as compared to offspring whose fathers had profiles indicating either the highest or lowest levels of involvement but higher levels of conflict. Such results suggest that greater paternal psychosocial support and more frequent father–adolescent contact do not outweigh the negative impact of interparental conflict on youth outcomes in the long term. In a sample of 70 adolescents from divorced families, Brody and Forehand (1990) found that adolescents who reported closer relationships with their noncustodial fathers and who perceived relatively high levels of interparental conflict displayed fewer internalizing problems (reported by their teachers) than adolescents who reported poorer relationships with their noncustodial fathers in conjunction with high levels of interparental conflict. Adolescents who reported both close relationships with their noncustodial fathers and low levels of interparental conflict demonstrated the lowest levels of internalizing problems (reported by their teachers).

Further, an even more complex picture has emerged in some other studies. Sobolewski and Amato (2007) examined the associations between parents' marital discord and divorce, parent–child relationship, and adult children's subjective well-being. They found that offspring reported the highest level of well-being when they grew up in a low-conflict married family and were close to both parents. In contrast, offspring who were close to neither parent and whose parents had a high-conflict relationship or were divorced had the lowest levels of well-being, which indicated a particular configuration that appeared to be the least optimal for child well-being (see pp. 1117–1118). Accordingly, they concluded that (see p. 1121): When married parents had a low-conflict relationship, it seemed that mothers' and fathers' positive parenting and close relationships with children would make independent contributions to child subjective well-being. When parents had a discordant relationship or divorced, children were no better off if they were close to two parents than to one parent only. Plausibly, in the context

of high interparental conflict, children's close relationships with both parents may actually confer an elevated risk of loyalty conflicts and also increase children's emotional costs associated with the frequent exposure to such conflicts. Thus, raising by two continuously married parents with a low-conflict relationship appeared to confer some unique benefits on child development. Interestingly, based on data from a sample of 559 children, a very recent study by O'Hara et al. (2021) did not find support for the protective effect of a high-quality parent–child relationship in the link between postdivorce interparental conflict and children's fear of abandonment. Instead, they found that postdivorce interparental conflict positively predicted fear of abandonment for children with high levels of father–child relationships, whereas for children with low and moderate levels of father–child relationships, postdivorce interparental conflict was not significantly related to fear of abandonment. Thus, such findings call into question the widely demonstrated protective effect of a high-quality parent–child relationship in the link between postdivorce interparental conflict and child adaptation.

Taken altogether, the complexity inherent within the associations among interparental conflicts, parental involvement, parent–child relationship, and children's outcomes merits much more systematic examination before reaching any conclusion. Existing research has highlighted several potential avenues for such future efforts. First, researchers need to consider both quality and quantity of parental involvement as well as their intertwined relations (e.g., the joint effects of parenting time, parenting quality, and interparental conflict on children's postdivorce adaptation; O'Hara et al., 2019a, 2019b). Prior studies have also extensively suggested that, across the parental divorce or separation process, the amount of time a parent spend with the child is necessary, but not sufficient for facilitating child adaptation (Adamsons, 2018; Amato & Gilbreth, 1999; Elam et al., 2019; Fabricius et al., 2012, 2016; Mahrer et al., 2016; Pruett & DiFonzo, 2014). Based on a meta-analysis of literature on nonresident fathering and child well-being, Adamsons and Johnson (2013) noted that “fathers matter not when they just spend time with their children, but when they spend time being involved in activities with their children and nurturing the father–child relationship.” (p. 596). In addition, greater nuance and increased specificity can be further obtained by examining whether and how different forms of parental involvement may differentially affect different aspects of child well-being (Adamsons & Johnson, 2013; Luecken et al., 2021; Palkovitz, 2007).

Second, it is critical to adopt a family systems perspective to take various adult figures, especially both mothers and fathers, into account. Although it is still in dispute whether the beneficial effects of high-quality parenting would be substantially reduced by high interparental

conflict following parental separation or divorce (Nielsen, 2017), accumulating research has generally indicated that following parental divorce children tend to have the best adaptation outcomes when parenting quality is high in both parents and interparental conflict is low. Moreover, there is also some evidence showing that high-quality parenting by one parent may compensate for the deleterious effects of interparental conflict and low-quality parenting by the other parent on child adjustment (Carr et al., 2019; King & Sobolewski, 2006; Lau, 2017; Mahrer et al., 2016, 2018; Sandler et al., 2008, 2012, 2013). As such, a more pertinent question that awaits to be more thoroughly addressed appears to be whether and how high-quality parenting following divorce or separation is beneficial for child adaptation in the presence of other conditions that often threaten child well-being (e.g., protracted, high levels of interparental conflict).

Third, as O'Hara et al. (2021) discussed, researchers need to consider that children vary in their susceptibility to postdivorce interparental conflict, for better and for worse. Parent–child relationship quality is amongst the wide range of factors that may confer such susceptibility. Specifically, it is possible that children who have particularly close relationships with their parents have much to lose if those relationships are threatened by high interparental conflict. Thus, future research in this field may benefit from incorporating the differential susceptibility theory (Belsky et al., 2007; Roisman et al., 2012) as a lens to more adequately understand the complexity inherent within the associations between pre-postdivorce interparental conflict, parent–child dynamics, and child adaptation outcomes.

Fourth, exploring potential curvilinear effects also constitutes a promising direction for future research seeking to clarify the intricate patterns for the joint effects of parenting time, parenting quality and interparental conflict on children's adaptation over the divorce process (Fabricius et al., 2016). For example, in a sample of 114 children aged 9–18 years who had one or both parents participated in a randomized comparative effectiveness trial of a court-based prevention program for high-conflict divorcing or separating families, O'Hara et al. () identified an intriguing quadratic association between fathers' parenting time (i.e., number of overnights per month) and fathers' parenting quality above and beyond a linear effect, indicating that although more fathers' parenting time was generally associated with better father–child relationships, there appeared to exist a certain threshold point beyond which more time did not contribute to a better relationship. Understanding the implications of parenting time allocation for high-conflict divorce families is important to court policy and intervention practice. Informed by O'Hara et al.'s study, the approaches that are particularly useful for identifying nonlinear effects (e.g., specifying a “good enough” amount of parenting time that

maximize parenting quality from both parents and thus the best interest of the child) should be more widely employed in this field in order to yield findings with high applied value.

Finally, it should be noted that the nature of the effects of shared parenting for child development in high-conflict divorced families might depend on child gender. Using data from 1,570 children with divorced parents, Vanassche et al. (2013) found that when there was high interparental conflict, joint physical custody was associated with more depressive symptoms for girls, but not for boys. In contrast, based on data from 1,285 children in single-parent families participating in the National Survey of Families and Households, Amato and Rezac (1994) tested the hypothesis that children's contact with nonresident parents decreased children's behavior problems when interparental conflict was low but increased children's behavior problems when interparental conflict was high. They found that this hypothesis was supported only among boys from divorced families. In addition, in a sample of 100 children obtained during the years 1981–1983 from family courts within the San Francisco Bay area, Johnston et al. (1989) identified some interesting patterns of gender differences, such that girls' affective and behavioral adjustment appeared to be more negatively affected by their frequent access to both parents in highly disputed joint custody, whereas boys who had more access to the less seen parent had lower social competence scores (e.g., involvement with friends and outside activities), but their behavioral adjustment was not significantly affected by high access to both parents. Thus, further clarifications of the associations among pre/postdivorce conflict, parenting and child adaptation call for more systematic examinations of gender differences (see Mahrer et al., 2018).

Social Network and Social Culture

In a convenience community sample of 136 divorced parents, Visser et al. (2017) found that parents who perceived more disapproval from their social network toward the other parent after divorce tended to have more co-parenting conflicts. Further, the willingness of parents to forgive the other parent's transgressions was found to partly account for this association: perceived social network disapproval was negatively related to forgiveness, which in turn was related to more interparental conflicts. Notably, Visser et al. further replicated these results in an independent clinical sample of 110 parents who were referred to intervention services at family treatment centers because children's well-being was found to be severely threatened and compromised by the severity of long-lasting interparental conflicts surrounding parental decisions. Although child outcomes and their associations with interparental conflicts were not directly examined, Visser et al.'s findings in the two independent samples

clearly highlight the importance of considering social network influences in relevant studies because they play critical roles in shaping divorced parents' perceptions and feelings toward each other and thus likely affect the severity of their conflict as well as its implications for child well-being.

In a sample of 2,625 men and 4,118 women from 39 countries on 6 continents, Gohm et al. (1998) investigated the associations between culture (e.g., individualism-collectivism), parental conflict, parental marital status, and the subjective well-being of young adult children. They found that collectivism lessened the impact of divorce after a high-conflict marriage and lessened the impact of marital conflict when a parent remarried. They speculated that children who experienced marital conflicts and divorce in collectivist cultures might be more likely to receive psychological and emotional support from the extended social network, which might provide some explanations for the protective effect of collectivism. Using data from Israeli families, Sorek (2020) identified grandparental and overall social support as resilience factors in coping with parental conflict among children of divorce. Specifically, the overall social support and grandparental support perceived by children buffered them against the negative impact of interparental conflict on their evaluations of life quality.

Taken collectively, these findings suggest that it is important to take factors at the broader ecological levels into consideration when studying the effect of pre/postdivorce interparental conflict on children's adjustment. In addition, the potential roles of siblings within the family systems (Davies et al., 2019; Noller et al., 2008; van Dijk et al., 2021) as well as the influences of important others beyond family members/relatives (e.g., teachers and peers) also merit more attention in future research (Laletas & Khasin, 2021). At the same time, it should be cautiously noted that these important others may also need assistance so that they can effectively provide support while avoiding the risk of being overwhelmingly bothered by the divorce and related interparental conflict issues (e.g., Levkovich & Eyal, 2021).

Beyond the Monolithic Conceptualization: Aspects and Types of Pre/Postdivorce Interparental Conflicts

Although the association between the frequency of pre/postdivorce interparental conflict and children's poor adjustment has been repeatedly demonstrated (e.g., Fauber et al., 1990; Forehand et al., 1994; Hakvoort et al., 2012), it is important to go beyond the monolithic conceptualization of pre/postdivorce interparental conflict (Lansford, 2009). That is, the characteristics of pre/postdivorce interparental conflict merit special attention. Consistent with this notion, prior research has differentiated the implications of different aspects (e.g.,

frequency versus intensity) and types (e.g., overt versus covert) of pre/postdivorce interparental conflict for parenting and child adjustment (Buehler et al., 1998; Davies & Cummings, 2015; Grych & Fincham, 1990; Maccoby et al., 1993; Petren et al., 2021).

Pre/postdivorce interparental conflict can vary in frequency, intensity, duration, content, and resolution; and it can be overt or covert (encapsulated), child-related or child-unrelated, verbal or physical, and well-managed or unresolved (Buehler et al., 1998; Cui et al., 2011; Davies & Cummings, 2015; Grych & Fincham, 1990; Hetherington, 1999; Kline et al., 1989). Moreover, children may feel caught between parents in some conflicts but not in others (Amato & Afifi, 2006; Buchanan et al., 1991). Additionally, in some marriages, the interparental conflicts do exist but are suppressed or avoided by parents to achieve civilized divorces (Futterman, 1980) or seemingly harmonious marriages (Kielpikowski & Pryor, 2008; Pryor, 1999; Pryor & Pattison, 2007). These conflicts are characterized by stonewalling, contemptuous silence, unresolved differences, and minimal communication, which may be particularly problematic for children's adjustment because these types of conflicts may prevent children from working through family tensions and parental disruptions.

Very few studies have particularly compared the effects of different aspects of pre/postdivorce interparental conflicts on children's adjustment. One exception is the study conducted by Buehler et al. (1998), which was concerned with the associations between youth's perceived frequency and styles of interparental conflicts and youth problem behavior. They found that, for youth in both nondivorced and divorced (mother-custody) families, hostile conflict styles were more strongly associated with problem behavior than was the frequency of disagreement. In terms of the effects of different types of pre/postdivorce interparental conflicts on children's adjustment, extant literature has shown that conflicts that are overt and child-related are more strongly associated with child maladjustment than conflicts that are covert and child-unrelated (Davies & Cummings, 2015; Grych & Fincham, 1990). Camara and Resnick (1989) investigated the styles of conflict resolution between divorced parents and their effects on children's adjustment. They found that moderate conflict accompanied by resolution involving negotiation and compromise contributed positively to children's postdivorce adjustment. Similarly, Hetherington (1999) found that adolescents were more likely to engage in externalizing behaviors when they were involved in parents' unresolved conflicts. Additionally, children's feeling caught between parents or experiencing loyalty dilemmas in interparental conflicts also contributes to their maladjustment following divorce, but children can adjust well to divorce if parents can maintain clear boundaries with children and encapsulate

conflicts in their couple subsystem (Amato & Afifi, 2006; Buchanan et al., 1991; Hetherington, 1999).

Notably, a recent study by Mitchell et al. (2021) explored whether child adjustment after parental separation might vary as a function of the type of intimate partner violence that mothers experienced during marriage. Only a significant three-way interaction for violence group (i.e., no violence vs. coercive controlling violence vs. situational couple violence) by child age group (i.e., ages 3–5 vs. ages 6–10 vs. ages 11–17) by child gender was identified for the child outcome of hyperactivity. Specifically, the interaction between violence group and child age was found only for boys; further, Boys ages 6–10 years whose mothers experienced coercive controlling violence had higher hyperactivity scores than those whose mothers reported no violence, whereas adolescent boys ages 11–17 whose mothers experienced coercive controlling violence showed less hyperactivity than those whose mothers reported no violence. Although Mitchell et al. tried to argue that the pattern of results might reflect developmental differences in children's dependence on maternal care or relationships dynamics between adolescent boys and their mothers (p. 987), their findings await to be further clarified and replicated.

Greater Attention to the Understudied Nuance and Diversity that are Inherent Within Our Proposed Model

A more nuanced delineation of the trajectories of child adjustment across parental divorce or separation process may partly hinge on a more thorough consideration of the course of interparental conflict over time. Both predivorce and postdivorce stages in our proposed model are relatively broad time periods, which can be further subdivided on a time scale with years or even months as the unit so as to more adequately capture the varied levels of interparental conflict over time. This important nuance is informed by Mahrer et al.'s (2018) literature review of empirical studies concerned with the associations between parenting time and parenting quality with children's adjustment in high-conflict divorced families. Specifically, they found that higher levels of shared parenting were related to poorer child adjustment in samples with high interparental conflict many years following the divorce, but typically not in samples that assessed interparental conflict during the divorcing process or in the 2 or 3 years following the divorce. Accordingly, Mahrer et al. concluded that “the positive or negative effects of higher levels of father parenting time in high-conflict divorces might depend on whether conflict is assessed more proximally to the divorce (within the first several years) or reflects conflict that persists over a more prolonged period of time.” (p. 342). From a methodological perspective, conducting more

extensively distributed assessments of interparental conflict, parenting, and child outcomes at multiple time points both closer to and further from the parental divorce or separation event may not only allow researchers to provide a subtler portrayal of child adjustment trajectories over time, but also serve as a potential way to effectively reconcile mixed results in extant research (see a similar discussion in O'Hara et al., 2019a, 2019b). Notably, an “optimal” and very informative way may be utilizing growth mixture modeling for latent trajectories to link (the typology of) trajectories of interparental conflict with (the typology of) trajectories of child adaptation across the entire divorce process to generate a more complete delineation of the temporal dynamics for their association with each other (for some examples, see Giallo et al., 2021; Kouros et al., 2010; O'Hara et al., 2019a, 2019b). We acknowledge that the current typology of child adaptation trajectories as defined by high and low levels of interparental conflict in predivorce and postdivorce broad stages represents a very initial step. Incorporating the critical nuance with respect to the course of interparental conflict across the divorce or separation process into our proposed model and examining its critical roles in diversifying child adaptation trajectories constitute promising directions for future research.

The diversity in the types of parental unions also merits greater attention (Ganong et al., 2015; McHale & Sirotkin, 2019). In particular, both cohabitation and nonmarital childbearing have increased dramatically during the past few decades (Sassler & Lichter, 2020; Seltzer, 2019), indicating a continued trend of “decoupling” of marriage and childbearing (Smock & Schwartz, 2020). In 1977, fewer than 1 million U.S. couples were cohabiting, but by 2017 there were nearly 8 million (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). In 1990 to 1995, 38% of nonmarital births were to cohabiting couples, and this percentage increased to roughly 62% in 2006 to 2013 (Lamidi, 2016). Furthermore, the overall increase in nonmarital births over time appears to be primarily due to the increase in births to cohabiting couples and not to the increase in nonunion childbearing (Lamidi, 2016; Wu, 2017).

The substantial increase of the number of children born in nonmarital unions gives rise to a new family form labeled as “fragile families” (Carlson & Högnäs, 2011; McLanahan & Beck, 2010). It has important implications for children's living arrangements, experiences of (co)parenting and family instability, and well-being in various domains (Brown et al., 2016; Manning, 2015; Waldfogel et al., 2010). These children on average face an elevated risk of parental breakup than do their counterparts born in wedlock (Musick & Micheltore, 2018; Osborne & McLanahan, 2007; Osborne

et al., 2007; Tach & Edin, 2013; Zilincikova, 2021), despite some emerging evidence showing that nonmarital unions (e.g., cohabitation) are demonstrating a trend of becoming more durable over time and thus appears to less likely decrease subsequent marital stability than before (Smock & Schwartz, 2020). Many unmarried parents are cohabiting when their child is born, but roughly two-thirds of their relationships have dissolved by the time when the child reaches 5 years old (McLanahan & Garfinkel, 2012). More specifically, one year after a nonmarital birth, 48% of fathers are living away from their child, rising to 56% and then to 63% at three and five years, respectively (Carlson et al., 2008).

These prominent demographic trends, along with the growing recognition of potential developmental benefits of paternal involvement (Lamb, 2010), have stimulated researchers', practitioners' and policymakers' great interest in understanding the factors that may facilitate and constrain nonresidential fathers' involvement and two parents' coparenting after the nonmarital relationship has ended (Fagan et al., 2009; Goldberg & Carlson, 2013; Laughlin et al., 2009; McHale et al., 2012). Among various factors, an emerging body of research has shown that interparental relationship quality, especially conflict, plays critical roles in shaping the (co)parenting processes specifically before and after the dissolution of nonmarital unions (Waller, 2012). Based on data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study (FFCW), Dush et al. (2011) examined whether couple relationship characteristics (i.e., commitment and quality) predicted initial levels of and change in supportive coparenting after relationship dissolution. They found that mothers in more committed relationships prior to the dissolution initially had significantly lower supportive coparenting. But over time, mothers who had been in more committed relationships increased in supportive coparenting. Mothers who had been in higher quality relationships prior to dissolution initially reported more supportive coparenting.

Also using the FFCW data, Waller (2012) found that cooperative coparenting appeared to be much more challenging when unmarried parents separated after the birth or were never together as a couple. Conflicted coparenting led to a larger decrease in father involvement than disengaged coparenting. In the context of poorer-quality coparenting relationships, it was conflict that mattered for fathering, not just parents' inability to cooperate. Drawing on data from unmarried parents living apart, findings of a mixed-method study by Waller and Emory (2018) indicated that post-separation conflict in the coparenting relationship influenced unmarried parents' decisions about whether to establish a legal visitation agreement. Using data from the FFCW study, Waller and Emory (2014) examined the circumstances of unmarried parents living apart 5 years after

having a child together as compared to those of previously married parents. They found that unmarried parents living apart had more barriers to father involvement and co-parenting than previously married parents who lived apart. Furthermore, unmarried parents who did not have a close relationship at the time of their child's birth had the weakest connections 5 years later, reporting lower levels of nonresident father contact, parental relationship quality, paternity establishment, and in-kind support than other parents living apart. Likewise, in a sample of adolescent couples, Fagan et al. (2003) found that interparental conflict was negatively associated with young nonresident unmarried fathers' prenatal involvement, regardless of whether the father and mother were still romantically involved with each other.

Given the aforementioned implications of interparental relationship quality, including conflict, for child's experiences of living arrangements and (co)parenting over the dissolution process of nonmarital unions, it seems warranted to further expect significant roles of nonmarital breakups as well as the potentially implicated interparental conflict in shaping child development trajectories. However, after a comprehensive literature search, it is surprising to find that such topics have received little research attention (see Karberg & Cabrera, 2020; Wu et al., 2008 for two identified studies on the consequences of nonmarital union dissolution for child development). Empirical findings and theoretical perspectives derived from studies of married unions may be poorly suited to the experiences of nonmarital unions, especially considering the extensive evidence indicating the uniqueness of nonmarital unions as compared to marital unions in both compositional and institutional characteristics (Brown, 2010; Musick & Bumpass, 2012; Perelli-Harris & Styrac, 2018; Soons & Kalmijn, 2009; Tach & Edin, 2013). As such, systematically examining the similarities and differences in our proposed model between nonmarital and marital unions also constitutes a promising direction for future research.

In addition, the last several decades have also witnessed a great increase in the number of children living in households headed by sexual minority or LGBTQ* couples (Cao et al., 2016; Gates, 2013; Patterson et al., 2021; Russell et al., 2020). Yet, we still know very little about the dissolution experiences of sexual minority unions and the associations between pre/postdisruption interparental conflicts and children's adjustment trajectories within these families (Farr et al., 2020; Gahan, 2017, 2018; Goldberg & Romero, 2018; Goldberg, & Allen, 2013; Jiménez-Cabello et al., 2021; Tasker, 2013). Moreover, the legalization of same-sex marriage in many countries as a landmark (Cao et al., 2017; Dush & Manning, 2022; Frost, 2015) has further contributed to the heterogeneity within the group of sexual minority couples. It may be also imperative to test the applicability of our proposed model to married versus unmarried sexual minority unions. This represents another

important but understudied facet of diversity that is inherent within our proposed model.

Key Limitations of Prior Literature, Directions for Future Research, and Conclusions

Based on the present systematic review of previous literature regarding the association between pre/postdivorce interparental conflicts and child adjustment, three important conclusions can be reached. First, interparental conflicts prior to and after legal dissolution can play a crucial role in shaping children's adjustment trajectories across the entire divorce process. Even before marital breakup, children often exhibited lower levels of adjustment than children whose parents remained married, and such differences may be mostly attributable to more dysfunctional family processes characterized by higher levels of marital conflicts within households that subsequently broke up; predivorce marital conflict may influence children's short-term postdivorce adjustment by conditioning children's perceptions of parental divorce; and postdivorce interparental conflicts may considerably influence whether the short-term acute stress children suffer from parental divorce (e.g., unanticipated loss) will be transformed into long-term chronic strains and whether the immediate benefits children get from parental divorce (e.g., relief) will be consolidated into long-term resilience.

Second, predivorce and postdivorce interparental conflicts may influence children's adjustment across the divorce process through multiple important mediators including children's perceptions and feelings (e.g., loss, self-blame, and fear of abandonment), parenting behaviors and parenting stresses, the quality of the parent-child dyadic relationship and the father-child-mother triadic relationship, adult children's relationships with their own partners, and even third-party involvements in the divorce process (e.g., attorneys). Third, a variety of factors may interact with pre/postdivorce interparental conflicts to further increase the variability in children's adjustment trajectories across the parental divorce process: children's individual characteristics (e.g., age, gender, locus of control), parental involvement, the nature of interparental conflicts (e.g., overt versus covert), and even the macro-level social culture (e.g., individualism versus collectivism).

Thus, effectively integrating the identified various mediators and moderators into the basic DPCATT Model and testing an advanced version of this proposed model will be an interesting and promising direction for future research. In addition, although we have suggested a number of possible avenues for future inquiries over the course of this review, there are more issues that we believe are also central to moving research in this field forward.

1. Many of the empirical studies reviewed here are not explicitly theory-based investigations. Even though theories were discussed in some of the studies, they were only used as lenses or perspectives to frame the study or interpret findings (Amato, 1993; Hetherington et al., 1998). However, theoretical development in this field requires researchers to deduce, explicate, and test hypotheses from theories more deliberately, explicitly and systematically (Demo & Buehler, 2013).
2. Whereas accumulating studies have continuously demonstrated that children's adjustment following parental divorce is likely to be contingent on the levels of both predivorce marital conflict and postdivorce interparental conflicts, few studies have employed *process-oriented* approaches and simultaneously taken *both* the pre and postdivorce family environment factors, especially interparental relationship characteristics (e.g., conflict), into account when investigating the association between parental divorce and children's adjustment trajectories across the entire parental divorce process (Kim, 2011; Strohschein, 2005; Sun, 2001; Sun & Li, 2002). This is thus still a very promising direction for future research efforts. Furthermore, it is likely that the implications of postdivorce family environment factors for child adaptation may depend on the levels of the same factors during the predivorce period. For example, the more a parent was involved in childrearing before divorce, the more important postdivorce parent–child contact is for child well-being (Poortman, 2018). In addition, it is also possible that predivorce family environment factors are important selection mechanisms that are both associated with postdivorce family environment quality and children's postdivorce adaptation (Havermans et al., 2017; Pardo et al., 2020).
3. Although some existent studies have moved beyond the monolithic characterizations of pre/postdivorce interparental conflicts to investigate the effects of different types and different aspects of such conflicts on children's adjustment, we should note that children's adjustment also is multidimensional (Fine, 2000; Kurdek, 1993; Sweeper & Halford, 2006). It is possible that one certain type or one certain aspect of interparental conflict has more salient effects on some adjustment problems than on others. Thus, there is a need to identify how specific types or aspects of predivorce and postdivorce interparental conflicts are related to specific child outcome domains (i.e., increased specificity; Buehler, 2020; van Eldik et al., 2020). Relatedly, future research in this field may benefit from adopting a developmental psychopathology perspective (Cicchetti & Rogosch, 1996; Masten & Cicchetti, 2010; Repetti et al., 2011) to test the possibility that interparental conflicts in the divorce process likely set in motion cascades involving various developmental processes that can ultimately lead to life-long outcomes in diverse domains (Davies et al., 2018; Harold & Sellers, 2018).
4. Children's painful memories and personal stories, especially their inner emotion about parental divorce and conflicts, are difficult to be fully captured by standard measures (Ganong et al., 2019; Harvey & Fine, 2010). However, most of the existent empirical studies in this field are quantitative. By integrating qualitative methods (e.g., in-depth interviewing, narrative account-making) into existent designs (e.g., a mixed-method approach), we can get a richer description and a more vivid understanding of how divorce and related conflicts are experienced by children and parents (e.g., Ahrons, 2007; Bergman & Rejmer, 2017; Francia & Milliar, 2015; Maes et al., 2012; Miller et al., 2017; Stokkebekk et al., 2019; Treloar, 2018, 2019).
5. Notably, some studies suggest that the implications of postdivorce cooperative coparenting relationship for children's adjustment may not as robust as predicted in previous literature (Amato et al., 2011; Beckmeyer et al., 2014, 2019). These studies have challenged the prevailing notion that a “good” divorce is a panacea for improving children's well-being in postdivorce families, which highlights the necessity of more research systematically examining the complexity inherent in the link between postdivorce coparenting relationship and children's adaptation. To better inform practice, researchers need to: (a) more systematically identify similarities and differences between mothers and fathers in postdivorce coparenting barriers (Russell et al., 2016); (b) clarify the extent to which parent–child contact can be best arranged to create a postdivorce coparenting system that “optimally” supports both parents' and children's well-being (Beckmeyer et al., 2019; Sandler et al., 2013); and (c) pay greater attention to other aspects of former spousal relationships that are beyond postdivorce coparenting (e.g., boundary ambiguity that is defined as confusion and disagreement over the nature of and expectations for their ongoing relationship) (Beckmeyer, Krejnick, et al., 2021; Beckmeyer et al., 2021; Beckmeyer, Markham, et al., 2021; Madden-Derdich et al., 1999).
6. Some additional mixed (yet interesting) findings await to be more systematically clarified. For example, although a number of studies conducted in different decades have yielded evidence supporting that children in high-conflict marriages appeared to benefit from parental divorce (e.g., Amato et al., 1995; Booth & Amato, 2001; Brand et al., 2019; Garriga & Pennoni, 2020; Strohschein, 2005), some exceptional results

do exist in a handful of studies indicating that when parental separation occurs in families with low levels of interparental conflicts, parental separation does not predict (the increases in) child adaptation problems (e.g., Xerxa et al., 2020). Such inconsistencies highlight the intriguing necessity of testing moderating factors and the possibility of curvilinear associations (e.g., a threshold level of predivorce interparental conflict in shaping developmental consequences of parental divorce).

7. Although research using variable-centered approaches has yielded numerous meaningful findings, the person-oriented approaches are uniquely useful for tackling the understudied heterogeneity beyond the average group and wait to be more widely utilized in this field. For example, using latent profile analyses researchers can more adequately: reveal the complexity inherent within the configuration patterning of interparental conflict, contact, and support and its implications for child adjustment within divorcing families (e.g., Elam et al., 2016; Modecki et al., 2015), examine the profiles of children's threat appraisals, self-blaming attributions, and triangulation in relation to behavior problems (e.g., Fosco & Bray, 2016), or explore the concordance or discord profiles of both mothers' and fathers' conflict behaviors in relation to parenting and child outcomes (e.g., Kopystynska et al., 2017).
8. In the broader literature on the association between interparental conflict and child adjustment, a biopsychosocial perspective has been widely adopted (see a review by Harold & Sellers, 2018). In sharp contrast, research particularly focusing on the roles of child psychophysiological and neurobiological processing (e.g., vagal regulation, cortisol activation) and genetic factors in the developmental implications of pre/post-divorce interparental conflicts remains sparse (Davidson et al., 2014; Troxel & Matthews, 2004). Thus, it is pressing to conduct more examinations in this field that are guided by a more integrative, biopsychosocial perspective.
9. In the broader literature on implications of interparental conflicts for child development, researchers pay increased attention to investigating the independent effects of and the interactive effects between interparental constructive/cooperative and destructive/hostile conflicts (e.g., Davies et al., 2012; McCoy et al., 2009; Zemp et al., 2019; Zhou et al., 2020). Yet, very few efforts have been devoted to testing such effects in the context of parental divorce as a process. This may constitute a promising direction for future research, which is also in line with recent calls for more systematic illustrations of complexity, specificity, and strengths inherent within the associations between family processes and child well-being (Becher et al., 2019; Buehler, 2020). Training programs on constructive ways of handling conflicts during divorce process have obvious applied value.
10. Interparental conflicts and child adaptation during the divorce process are likely to be associated with each other in transactional fashions (Cui et al., 2007; Davies et al., 2016; Xerxa et al., 2020). Prior studies have predominantly examined such associations at the mean-level (i.e., the average associations for a given group), yet the relevant dynamics are also theorized at the within-family level: For a given family, changes in interparental conflicts predict subsequent corresponding changes in child adaptation during the divorce process and vice versa. As Curran and Bauer (2011) stated, the application of statistical models that can generate unambiguous estimates of both within-person effects and between-person effects is important for psychosocial research because: (a) the two effects are not necessarily consistent with each other and sometimes generalizing from one to the other may result in an error of inference; and (b) examining only one level of complex two-level effects or simply mixing up the two levels of variance in analyses would preclude researchers from obtaining a more complete and accurate understanding of the true nature of the focal associations. Notably, statistical approaches that can help effectively disaggregate between-family and within-family effects in the focal associations are already available (see Orth et al., 2021; Usami et al., 2019) and have been increasingly utilized to address substantive research questions in recent studies (e.g., Cao et al., 2021; Zhou et al., 2021). Researchers who are interested in more appropriately delineating temporal dynamics of the link between interparental conflicts and child adaptation during the divorce process are highly encouraged to use such techniques.
11. Although the comprehensive and enduring implications of interparental conflict (during pregnancy) for young children's (e.g., infants and toddlers) development have been extensively demonstrated (e.g., Ramsdell & Brock, 2020; Towe-Goodman et al., 2012; Zhou et al., 2017), there is still a dearth of research considering such effects in the context of parental divorce (Heinicke et al., 1997; Ram et al., 2002). Surprisingly, almost all of the existing research in this field are based on samples of adolescent and/or young adult children. This is a critical omission given the elevated levels of life stress during (the transition to) early parenthood, very young children's high susceptibility to disruptions in family processes, and the heightened risk of conflicts and divorce during the early years of marriage

and parenthood (Doss et al., 2009; Kluwer & Johnson, 2007; Perry-Jenkins et al., 2007).

12. Last, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has caused considerable stress for individuals, couples, as well as families worldwide. Amid the pandemic, divorced and separated couples with children face unique legal, financial, and coparenting challenges (Goldberg et al., 2021; Lebow, 2020). Interparental conflicts surrounding both general and COVID-19-related issues may become more frequent and/or salient (e.g., renegotiating financial support obligations in the context of job loss; difficulties in finalizing divorce due to court closures; transitioning between households and handling remote schooling for those with shared physical custody). Therefore, timely examinations on the developmental consequences of interparental conflicts during the divorce process that occur in the pandemic context are likely to yield important implications for both family and legal professionals working with divorced, divorcing, and separated parents.

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