Hypotheses:

**Current Study**

- **Gap in the Literature**
  - Little is known about how or why coparenting discord is a unique predictor of child adjustment

- **State of the Literature**
  - Coparenting is the ability of caregivers to coordinate with and support each other in their roles & responsibilities as parents
  - Coparenting conflict is consistently linked with an increased risk for externalizing behaviors in children

**Participants**

- 243 families (mothers, mother’s intimate partner, and child)
  - Average age of child at W1 = 4.6 years old
  - 56% of sample was female
  - Ethnicity/Race: 43% White, 48% Black or African American, 6% multiracial, 3% another race
  - SES: Median income: $36,000 per year
  - Education level of parents: 56% of sample was female
  - Education: 69% = HS diploma or GED
  - Employment status: 56% employed
  - Median income: $36,000 per year

**Method**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Waves</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Reporter</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Reliability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coparenting Discord</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Observation</td>
<td>Trained</td>
<td>A tridimensional interaction capturing coparenting conflict, disengagement, and warmth where parents and child worked together to build a Lego house.</td>
<td>Inter-rater Reliability = .35 - .86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s Insecure Representations</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Semi-</td>
<td>Trained</td>
<td>Child behavior consistent with oppositional defiance, overt hostility, and conduct problems.</td>
<td>Inter-rater Reliability = .35 - .87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s Externalizing Behaviors</td>
<td>1 &amp; 2</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Child behavior consistent with oppositional defiance, overt hostility, and conduct problems.</td>
<td>α = .70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interparental Conflict</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Mother &amp; Partner</td>
<td>Parental endorsement of child-rearing strategies (i.e., neglect/promising, conditional approval, love withdrawal, power assertion, disputed/resigned) to common scenarios that depicted child experiences with success, failure, and transgression.</td>
<td>α = .76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting Behaviors</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Mother &amp; Partner</td>
<td>Parental endorsement of child-rearing strategies (i.e., neglect/promising, conditional approval, love withdrawal, power assertion, disputed/resigned) to common scenarios that depicted child experiences with success, failure, and transgression.</td>
<td>α = .76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Results**

- **Coparenting discord at W1 predicted higher levels of children’s W1 insecure representations of the family**

**Conclusions**

- **What did we find?**
  - Children’s insecure representations of the family partially accounted for the association between coparenting discord and children’s behavior problems

- **Why might coparental discord undermine child security?**
  - Coparenting discord signals two things to children:
    - Parents are unable to coordinate to reliably provide the child with safety and security in the family unit
    - Parents are unable to encapsulate their conflict into the interparental subsystem

- **Why might insecure representations of the family predict children’s behavior problems in school?**
  - When encountering novel situations outside the home, children rely on their previously formed internal representations of the family to guide their processing of information and responses to novel interpersonal situations

- **Future Directions**
  - The current study is a first step in identifying linking mechanisms in the association between coparenting discord and child behavior problems
  - Future studies should examine other child mechanisms at work in this association

**Acknowledgements**

This research was supported by the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development fellowship (F31 HD054523) awarded to Patrick T. Davies and Melissa L. Sturge-Apple. We are grateful to the children, parents, and staff who participated in this project.