



# Evaluating School Protective Factors in the Effects of Interparental Conflict on Adolescent Threat Appraisals and Self-Efficacy

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## Introduction

- Interparental conflict (IPC) has been linked to a range of negative youth outcomes (Grych, Oxtoby & Lynn, 2013)
- The Cognitive Contextual Framework (Grych & Fincham, 1990) examines mechanisms that explain the association between IPC and youth outcomes, placing emphasis on two factors
  - ❖ Context in which conflict occurs
  - ❖ Interpretation of the conflict
- Adolescent perceived threat of Interparental conflict (IPC) predicts diminished self-efficacy (Fosco & Feinberg, 2015)
- This study proposes two competing hypotheses for how success in the school setting may offset the negative influence of IPC on adolescent self-efficacy
- **Hypothesis #1:** Success in the school context would diminish perceived threat of IPC, which in turn would lead to increased self-efficacy (Model 1)
- **Hypothesis #2:** Success in the school context would directly promote self-efficacy, compensating for the negative influence of perceived threat (Model 2)
- Discovering school protective factors for adolescent self-efficacy could inform school and family interventions

## Method

**Participants and Procedure**

- Randomly-selected subset of 6<sup>th</sup> graders and their families participating in PROSPER project (PROmoting School-community-university Partnerships to Enhance Resilience)
- 768 two-parent families
- 80% retention rate across waves
- 94.9% of female caregivers were identified as "mother", and 75.3 % of male caregivers were identifies as "father"
- 61% Iowa, 39% Pennsylvania
- The median household income was \$52,000 at T1 (in 2003)

**Demographic Information at T1**

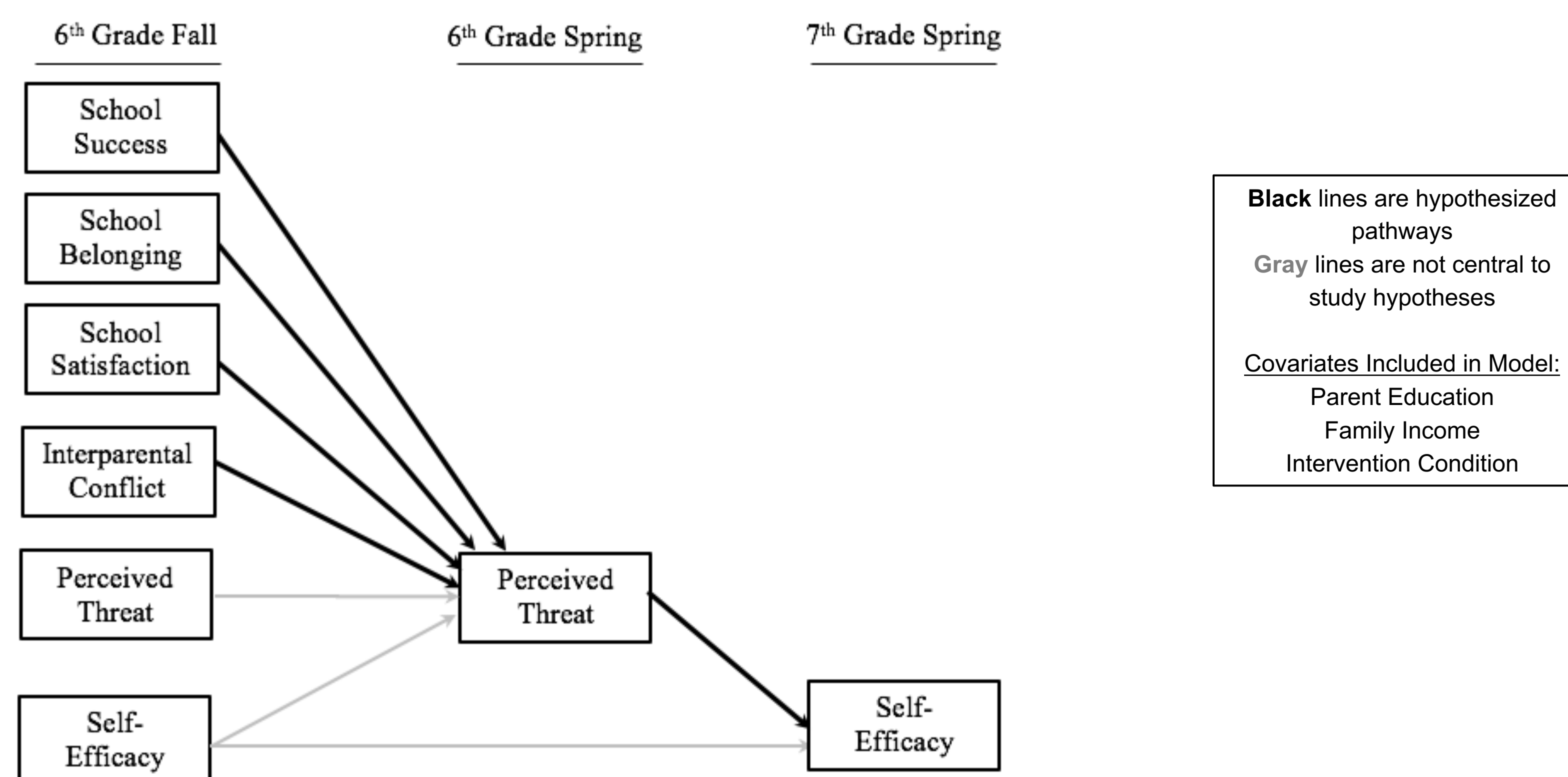
N	768 Families
<b>Age:</b>	
Adolescents	11.3 (SD=0.49)
Mothers	38.7 (SD=6.05)
Fathers	41.2 (SD=7.14)
<b>Adolescent Ethnicity:</b>	
White	89%
Hispanic	6%
African American	1%
Asian	1%
Other	3%

### Measures

- **Interparental Conflict:** 7 items (CPIC; Grych et al., 1992) about own and partner's behavior assessing frequency of conflict behaviors over the past month. "hit, push, grab, or shove you." (α range .83 - .90)
- **Perceived Threat:** 4 items (CPIC; Grych et al., 1992) assessing youth beliefs that IPC may have negative consequences for self, parents, or family. "When my parents argue, I'm afraid that something bad will happen." (α range .86 - .87)
- **Self Efficacy:** 5 items (Self-efficacy scale; Pearlin & Schooler, 1978) "I can do just about anything I really set my mind to." (α range .79-.80)
- **School Success:** 9 items assessing global success of prior school year. "I had an easy time handling the new academic demands made on me." (α range .80 – 0.81)
- **School Satisfaction:** 5 items assessing enjoyment of school. "When I get up in the morning, I feel happy about going to my school." (α range .79 – 0.84)
- **School Belonging:** 3 items assessing feelings of belonging at school. "I'm lonely at school." (α range .79 – 0.82)

## Results

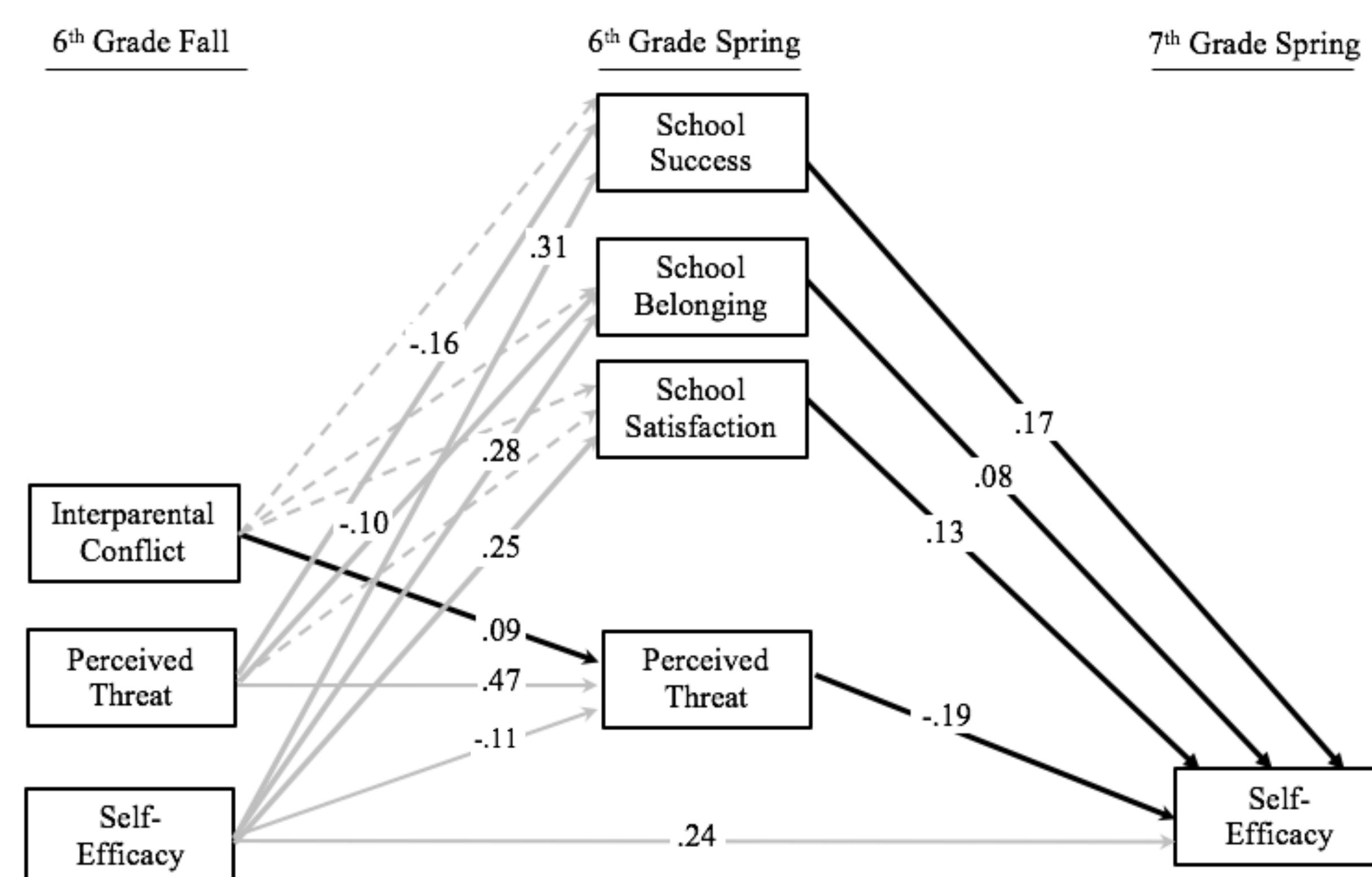
### Model 1: School Success as Threat Attenuator Hypothesis



**Note.** Path coefficients reflect standardized betas. Solid lines reflect statistically significant paths ( $p < .05$ ). Dotted lines are not statistically significant.

**Model fit**  $\chi^2(4) = 38.87, p = .00; CFI = 0.92; TLI = 0.65, RMSEA = .11$  (90%: .08-.14). Fit indices show that model 1 does not fit well with the data.

### Model 2: School Compensatory Hypothesis



**Note.** Path coefficients reflect standardized betas. Solid lines reflect statistically significant paths ( $p < .05$ ). Dotted lines are not statistically significant. Gender Comparisons of hypothesized paths:  $\chi^2(6) = 8.924, p = .18$ .

**Model fit**  $\chi^2(1) = 0.05, p = .83; CFI = 1.00; TLI = 1.03, RMSEA = .000$  (90%: .000-.058)

## Discussion

- Model 1 poor fit indicates school variables did not have a direct contextual influence on perceived threat, failing to support hypothesis #1. However, Model 2 indicates that school variables did compensate for the influence of perceived threat on self-efficacy, providing support for hypothesis 2.
- The impact of interparental conflict on youth development is well studied, but is often confined to the family context. This study builds upon existing IPC research by considering cross contextual protective factors for adolescent self-efficacy development, and suggests that positive experiences in school can offset risk incurred in the family context.
- These findings emphasize the value of school-based interventions for promoting social-emotional development for adolescents experiencing adversity in the family context.